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obedience of faith*

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It was recognized by participants that problems which occupy the lives of those outside the faith must have a biblical answer in order to effectively communicate the gospel.<sup>4</sup> Some of the areas follow on from the **Declarations**, indicating the desire to see more fully articulated some of the real concerns of mission. One example is the call to work on a theology of martyrdom. It is clear that the **Declarations** are a call to action and may be one of the most enduring legacies of the Iguassu Consultation.

The final section, entitled **Pledge**, reaffirms the urgency of the task of world evangelisation. Rooted in Trinitarian theology, the **Pledge** is a common commitment to prayer, reflection, and action. Ending with the eschatological vision of [Rev. 7:9](#), the **Iguassu Affirmation** looks forward to the great wedding feast of our Lord and Saviour.

This issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology* presents some of these papers, but unfortunately the printed page cannot give the sense of discussion at the consultation. As a participant and co-chair of the affirmation drafting committee, I can affirm the consultation was an honest attempt at defining the key issues in mission. As noted above, it was a working consultation with the final **Iguassu Affirmation** the product of the input from the entire group. The participants were serious about the nature of the task facing the church. There were signs of hope, areas of concern, and a clear sense that the work of mission was dependent on the power and presence of God, as mediated through the Holy Spirit indwelling believers.

Iguassu is now part of mission history, but we pray its legacy may continue to shape the history of the church. Many mission professors present at Iguassu indicated their intention to use **The Iguassu Affirmation** in their classes. It is certainly a seminal document defining the areas of mission at the turn of the millennium.

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## **Iguassu Affirmation**

**World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission  
Foz de Iguassu, Brazil  
October 10–15, 1999**

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<sup>4</sup> It seems to this observer that it is a healthy sign that missions are dealing with the issues that occupy the minds of our hearers. The apostle Paul used a similar approach in dealing with those to whom he would proclaim Christ.

## **PREAMBLE:**

We have convened as 160 mission practitioners, missiologists and church leaders from 53 countries, under the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission in Foz de Iguassu, Brazil on October 10–15, 1999 to:

1. Reflect together on the challenges and opportunities facing world missions at the dawn of the new millennium;
2. Review the different streams of twentieth-century evangelical missiology and practice, especially since the 1974 Lausanne Congress;
3. Continue developing and applying a relevant biblical missiology which reflects the cultural diversity of God's people.

We proclaim the living Christ in a world torn by ethnic conflicts, massive economic disparity, natural disasters and ecological crises. The mission task is both assisted and hindered by technological developments that now reach the remotest corners of the earth. The diverse religious aspirations of people, expressed in multiple religions and spiritual experimentation, challenge the ultimate truth of the Gospel.

In the twentieth-century, missiology witnessed unprecedented development. In recent years, reflection from many parts of the church has helped missions to continue shedding paternalistic tendencies. Today, we continue to explore the relationship between the Gospel and culture, between evangelism and social responsibility and between biblical mandates and the social sciences. We see some international organizations—among them the World Evangelical Fellowship, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, and the AD2000 and Beyond Movement—that have begun a promising process of partnership and unity.

Increased efforts at partnership have been catalyzed by an emphasis on methodologies involving measurable goals and numerical growth. Flowing from a commitment to urgent evangelization these methodologies have shown how our task might be accomplished. However these insights must be subject to biblical principles and growth in Christlikeness.

We rejoice in diverse missiological voices emerging around the world, but we confess that we have not taken them all into our theory and practice. Old paradigms still prevail. Participation by and awareness of the global church, as well as mission from people of all nations to people of all nations, are needed for a valid missiology in our time.

Our discussions have invited us to fuller dependence on the Spirit's empowering presence in our life and ministry as we eagerly await the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the light of these realities, we make the following declarations:

## **DECLARATIONS**

Our faith rests on the absolute authority of the God-breathed Scriptures. We are heirs of the great Christian confessions handed down to us. All three Persons of the Godhead are active in God's redeeming mission. Our missiology centers on the overarching biblical theme of God's creation of the world, the Father's redeeming love for fallen humanity as revealed in the incarnation, substitutionary death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ultimately of the redemption and renewal of the whole creation. The Holy Spirit, promised by our Lord, is our comforter, teacher and source of power. It is the Spirit who calls us into holiness and integrity. The Spirit leads the Church into all truth. The

Spirit is the agent of mission, convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We are Christ's servants, empowered and led by the Spirit, whose goal is to glorify God.

We confess the following themes as truths of special importance in this present age. These themes are clearly attested to in the whole of the Scriptures and speak to the desire of God to provide salvation for all people.

1. **Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church and Lord of the Universe.** Ultimately every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. The lordship of Christ is to be proclaimed to the whole world, inviting all to be free from bondage to sin and the dominion of evil in order to serve the Lord for His glory.
2. **The Lord Jesus Christ is the unique revelation of God and the only Savior of the world.** Salvation is found in Christ alone. God witnesses to Himself in creation and in human conscience, but these witnesses are not complete without the revelation of God in Christ. In the face of competing truth claims, we proclaim with humility that Christ is the only Savior, conscious that sin as well as cultural hindrances often mask Him from those for whom He died.
3. **The good news of the salvation made possible by the work of Jesus Christ must be expressed in all the languages and cultures of the world.** We are commanded to be heralds of the Gospel to every creature so that they can have the opportunity to confess faith in Christ. The message must come to them in a language they can understand and in a form that is appropriate to their circumstances. Believers, led by the Holy Spirit, are encouraged to create culturally appropriate forms of worship and uncover biblical insights that glorify God for the benefit of the whole church.
4. **The Gospel is good news and addresses all human needs.** We emphasize the holistic nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament demonstrate God's concern with the whole person in the whole of society. We acknowledge that material blessings come from God, but prosperity should not be equated with godliness.
5. **Opposition to the spread of the Gospel is foremost a spiritual conflict involving human sin and principalities and powers opposed to the Living God.** This conflict is manifested in different ways, e.g. fear of spirits or indifference to God. We recognize that the defense of the truth of the Gospel is also spiritual warfare. As witnesses of the Gospel, we announce that Jesus Christ has power over all powers and is able to free all who turn to Him in faith. We affirm that in the cross God has won the victory.
6. **Suffering, persecution and martyrdom are present realities for many Christians.** We acknowledge that our obedience in mission involves suffering and recognize that the church is experiencing this. We affirm our privilege and responsibility to pray for those undergoing persecution. We are called to share in their pain, do what we can to relieve their sufferings, and work for human rights and religious freedom.
7. **Economic and political systems deeply affect the spread of God's kingdom.** Human government is appointed by God, but all human institutions act out of fallenness. The Scriptures command that Christians pray for those in authority and work for truth and justice. Appropriate Christian response to political and economic systems requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
8. **God works in a variety of Christian traditions and organizations, for His glory and the salvation of the world.** For too long believers, divided over issues of church organization, order, and doctrine—such as the gifts and ministry of the

Holy Spirit—have failed to recognize each other’s work. We affirm, bless, and pray for authentic Christian witness wherever it is found.

9. **To be effective witnesses of the holy God, we need to demonstrate personal and corporate holiness, love and righteousness.** We repent of hypocrisy and conformity to the world, and call the church to a renewed commitment to holy living. Holiness requires turning from sin, training in righteousness and growing in Christlikeness.

## **COMMITMENTS**

We commit ourselves to continue and deepen our reflection on the following themes, helping one another to enrich our understanding and practice with insight from every corner of the world. Our hearts’ desire is the discipling of the nations through the effective, faithful communication of Christ to every culture and people.

### **1. Trinitarian Foundation of mission**

We commit ourselves to a renewed emphasis on God-centered missiology. This invites a new study of the operation of the Trinity in the redemption of the human race and the whole of creation, as well as to understand the particular roles of Father, Son and Spirit in mission to this fallen world.

### **2. Biblical and Theological Reflection**

We confess that our biblical and theological reflection has sometimes been shallow and inadequate. We also confess that we have frequently been selective in our use of texts rather than being faithful to the whole biblical revelation. We commit ourselves to engage in renewed biblical and theological studies shaped by mission, and to pursue a missiology and practice shaped by God’s Word, brought to life and light by the Holy Spirit.

### **3. Church and Mission**

The Church in mission is central to God’s plan for the world. We commit ourselves to strengthen our ecclesiology in mission, and to encourage the global church to become a truly missionary community in which all Christians are involved in mission. In the face of increasing resistance and opposition from political powers, religious fundamentalism and secularism, we commit ourselves to encourage and challenge the churches to respond with a deeper level of unity and participation in mission.

### **4. Gospel and Culture**

The Gospel is always presented and received within a cultural context. It is therefore essential to clarify the relationship between Gospel and Culture, both in theory and practice, recognizing that there is both good and evil in all cultures. We commit ourselves to continue to demonstrate the relevance of the Christian message to all cultures, and ensure that missionaries learn to wrestle biblically with the relationship between Gospel and culture. We commit ourselves to serious study of how different cultural perspectives may enrich our understanding of the Gospel as well as how all worldviews have to be critiqued and transformed by it.

### **5. Pluralism**

Religious pluralism challenges us to hold firmly to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Savior even as we work for increased tolerance and understanding among religious

communities. We cannot seek harmony by relativizing the truth claims of religions. Urbanization and radical political change have bred increased interreligious and ethnic violence and hostility. We commit ourselves to be agents of reconciliation. We also commit ourselves to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in faithfulness and loving humility.

## **6. Spiritual Conflict**

We welcome the renewed attention given in recent decades to the biblical theme of spiritual conflict. We rejoice that power and authority is not ours but God's. At the same time we must ensure that the interest in spiritual warfare does not become a substitute for dealing with the root issues of sin, salvation, conversion and the battle for the truth. We commit ourselves to increase our biblical understanding and practice of spiritual conflict while guarding against syncretistic and unbiblical elements.

## **7. Strategy in Mission**

We are grateful for many helpful insights gained from the social sciences. We are concerned that these should be subject to the authority of Scripture. Therefore we call for a healthy critique of mission theories that depend heavily on marketing concepts and missiology by objectives.

## **8. Globalized Missiology**

The insights of every part of the church are needed and challenges encountered in every land must be addressed. Only thus can our missiology develop the richness and texture reflected in the Scriptures and needed for full obedience to our risen Lord. We commit ourselves to give voice to all segments of the global church in developing and implementing our missiology.

## **9. Godly Character**

Biblical holiness is essential for credible Christian witness. We commit ourselves to renewed emphasis on godly living and servanthood, and we urge training institutions, both missionary and ministerial, to include substantive biblical and practical training in Christian character formation.

## **10. the Cross and Suffering**

As our Lord called us to take up our crosses, we remind the church of our Lord's teaching that suffering is a part of authentic Christian life. In an increasingly violent and unjust world with political and economic oppression, we commit to equip ourselves and others to suffer in missionary service and to serve the suffering church. We pursue to articulate a biblical theology of martyrdom.

## **11. Christian Responsibility and the World Economic Order**

In a world increasingly controlled by global economic forces, Christians need to be aware of the corrosive effects of affluence and the destructive effects of poverty. We must be aware of ethnocentrism in our view of economic forces. We commit ourselves to address the realities of world poverty and oppose policies that serve the powerful rather than the powerless. It is the responsibility of the church in each place to affirm the meaning and value of a people, especially where indigenous cultures face extinction. We call all Christians to commit themselves to reflect God's concern for justice and the welfare of all peoples.

## **12. Christian Responsibility and the Ecological Crisis**

The earth is the Lord's and the Gospel is good news for all creation. Christians share in the responsibility God gave to all humanity to care for the earth. We call on all Christians to commit themselves to ecological integrity in practicing responsible stewardship of creation, and we encourage Christians in environmental care and protection initiatives.

## **13. Partnership**

As citizens of the Kingdom of God and members of Christ's body, we commit ourselves to renewed efforts at cooperation because it is our Lord's desire that we be one and that we work in harmony in His service so that the world will believe. We acknowledge that our attempts have not always been as equals. Inadequate theology, especially in respect to the doctrine of the church, and the imbalance of resources has made working together difficult. We pledge to find ways to address this imbalance and to demonstrate to the world that believers in Christ are truly one in their service of Christ.

## **14. Member Care**

Service of the Lord in cross-cultural environments exposes missionaries to many stresses and criticisms. While acknowledging that missionaries also share the limitations of our common humanity and have made errors, we affirm that they deserve love, respect and gratitude. Too often, agencies, churches, and fellow Christians have not followed biblical guidelines in dealing with cross-cultural workers. We commit ourselves to support and nurture our missionary workers for their sakes and for the Gospel witness.

## **PLEDGE**

We, the participants of the Iguassu Missiological Consultation, declare our passion as mission practitioners, missiologists and church leaders for the urgent evangelization of the whole world and the discipling of the nations to the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In all our commitments we depend on the Lord who empowers us by the Holy Spirit to fulfill His mission. As evangelicals, we pledge to sustain our biblical heritage in this ever-changing world. We commit ourselves to participate actively in formulating and practicing evangelical missiology. Indwelt by the Spirit, we purpose to carry the radical good news of the Kingdom of God to all the world. We affirm our commitment to love one another and to pray for one another as we struggle to do His will.

We rejoice in the privilege of being part of God's mission in proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation and hope. We joyfully look to the Lord's return and passionately yearn to see the realization of the eschatological vision when people from every nation, tribe, and language shall worship the Lamb.

To this end may the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified. Hallelujah!

Amen.