

**Twenty-Eighth North American LCJE Meeting
St. Louis, February 28-30, 2011**

**Jewish Evangelism at Edinburgh 1910, Edinburgh 2010 and Cape Town 2010
Kai Kjær-Hansen**

Two world conferences on mission were held in 2010 in connection with the celebration of the centenary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910. I am going to give a brief account of how mission to the Jewish people was treated at these two conferences.

But first: How did they view the issue in Edinburgh 1910?

Edinburgh 1910

In *Edinburgh 1910* there was a clear affirmation of Jewish evangelism:

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ – Himself after the flesh a Jew – should give to the presentation of Christ to the Jew its rightful place in the Great Commission. It is not a task to be left to a few enthusiastic believers, but the obligation and responsibility of the whole Christian Church. The Gospel must be preached to the Jew wherever he may be found.

These words have been taken from a rather long section on “The Jews” in the *Report of Commission I: Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World*. Contemporary representatives of the Jewish Missions are pleased. It nevertheless meets with criticism at an international conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in June 1911. The criticism does not apply to what is said in the *Report of Commission I* but what it does *not* say in the *Report of Commission IV*, which deals with mission to the Non-Christian Religions.

In the critique from the leaders of Jewish Missions in Stockholm it is said:

But we protest especially against the leaving out of Judaism, i.e. Modern Judaism, from the report of Commission IV, which deals with the Non-Christian Religions of the earth. Such omission of the religion of the modern Jew from the list of the religions of the mission-field, which is the world, must cause the readers of the report to think that modern Judaism is closely related to Christianity, and there is thus the danger of the impression being made that active missionary effort among the Jews is unnecessary.

... Modern Judaism should be classed among non-Christian religions because it denies the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, even though it may agree with the first article of the Apostles’ Creed. We therefore protest earnestly especially against the action of Commission IV of the great World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in leaving out Modern Judaism in its discussion of Non-Christian Religions.

If this omission of “Modern Judaism” in Commission IV is purely accidental or if it reflects a basic theological position on the Jewish people among some of the drafters, I dare not say.

Edinburgh 2010

At our meeting in Atlanta in March last year I mentioned that “Edinburgh 2010” – a multi-denominational and international project – were going to hold a minor conference in Edinburgh in June 2010, and I informed you about the position papers that were available prior to the conference. Among them were two on Jewish evangelism, both positive. I myself submitted a paper entitled “The Scandal of Jewish Evangelism. From Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010”. One of my points

was: “If Christian mission to the Jewish people is rejected, the door is wide open to a rejection of Christian mission to other peoples.”

What happened then in Edinburgh 2010 concerning Jewish mission?

In the short mission statement with the title “Common Call” which was issued from Edinburgh 2010 it is said, among other things:

2. Remembering Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world’s salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths – and no faith – to the uniqueness of Christ. Our approach is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message; it builds friendship, seeks reconciliation and practises hospitality.

One cannot be other than pleased with the clear call to witness and mission and the mention of “a renewed sense of urgency” (under point 1). Especially the mention of “the uniqueness of Christ” in point 2 is important. This uniqueness is related to “witness among people of other faiths – and no faith”. These words are only meaningful for me if witness to the Jewish people is included.

It is for time to show if this conclusion is too optimistic.

Sammen med andre position papers the two on Jewish mission/evangelism are to be included in the Edinburgh 2010 publication “Christian Mission Among Other Faiths”. This is a reason to rejoice. So as to that there are no grounds for complaint for those who are involved in Jewish mission.

And yet, as the author of the comprehensive report which introduces the document “Christian Mission Among Other Faiths” I find myself in an awkward situation, for the message of Jewish evangelism is *not* included in their report. Not with one word. Not with one reference. The silence is remarkable, and although one cannot know the reason for this silence, it is hard not guess. Evasion or concealment of this matter is almost worse than downright contradiction.

As to the question of Jewish mission, Edinburgh 2010 is a far cry from Edinburgh 1910. One hundred years ago there was a clear affirmation of Jewish mission, an affirmation that is not eliminated by the “omission” in Commission IV. In the *report* from Edinburgh 2010: a total silence on this matter, a silence that cries out.

Lausanne III – Cape Town 2010

Out of Lausanne II in Manila 1989 came the “Manila Manifesto” with the following unambiguous paragraph on the necessity to share the gospel with Jewish people:

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to “the Jew first...”. We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.

We have repeatedly reminded key persons in Lausanne III about this paragraph *prior* to Lausanne III. We have also sent to them excerpts from the critique formulated by Jewish Missions in Stockholm 1911 concerning the statement from Edinburgh 1910. Our approach has been: We cannot even begin to imagine that there should not also from Cape Town go out a clear call to Jewish evangelism. I am pleased to say that we were not disappointed.

In Manila 1989 there was considerable disagreement between the Jew group and some of the drafters of the Manila Manifesto. The paragraph was only included after some struggle. I have a vivid memory of this and did not want to experience it again in Cape Town.

In a mail of October 1, 2010, immediately before the beginning of Lausanne III, I sent another mail to Chris Wright, chairman of the drafting committee, and concluded with these words:

I remember that the paragraph in the Manila Manifesto from 1989 on Jewish people's need of the gospel was added only after a lot of discussion and "stubbornness" from the LCJE group. It caused a lot of frustration and bruises. I hope – with this insisting note – to be able to avoid that in Cape Town.

To make a long story short: In Cape Town there was no hint of disagreement or struggle between the drafters of the Cape Town Commitment and the LCJE group. I may even add that the proposal for a "Jew paragraph" which we handed to the drafters in Cape Town was expanded and even improved. Of course there should come a clear call to Jewish evangelism from Lausanne III! It is included in part II of the Commitment, chapter IIB, and reads:

Building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world

1. The peace that Christ made

Reconciliation to God is inseparable from reconciliation to one another. Christ, who *is* our peace, *made* peace through the cross, and *preached* peace to the divided world of Jew and Gentile. The unity of the people of God is both a fact ('he made the two one'), and a mandate ('make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'). God's plan for the integration of the whole creation in Christ is modelled in the ethnic reconciliation of God's new humanity. Such is the power of the gospel as promised to Abraham.

We affirm that whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, in the way that Paul describes the Gentiles, they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus. There is no difference, said Paul, between Jew and Gentile in sin; neither is there any difference in salvation. Only in and through the cross can both have access to God the Father through the one Spirit.

We continue, therefore, strongly to affirm the need for the whole Church to share the good news of Jesus as Messiah, Lord and Saviour with Jewish people. And in the spirit of Romans 14-15, we urge Gentile believers to accept, encourage and pray for Messianic Jewish believers, in their witness among their own people.

It may not seem much. And quite right: nothing decisively new is being said. And yet I am very pleased with these few lines about Jewish evangelism in the Cape Town Commitment – not least in the light of the omission of this matter at Edinburgh 2010.

Statement from LCWE's Theological Working Group

While, as mentioned, there was no controversy whatsoever between the drafters of the Commitment and the LCJE group in Cape Town, there was some internal disagreement in the LCJE group about how to relate to a paragraph in a document issued by the Lausanne Movement's Theological Working Group, based on three consultations in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (see <http://www.lausanne.org/participant-information/twg-paper.html>).

David Brickner, Jews for Jesus, drew my attention to the document in a mail of October 2 – two weeks before the opening of Lausanne III.

The paragraph in the document from LCWE's Theological Working Group reads:

The one Church that God has called into being in Christ is drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language, with the result that no single ethnic identity can claim to be "God's chosen people". God's election of Old Testament Israel was for the sake of the eventual creation of this multi-national community of God's people, and the Old Testament itself envisages and anticipates it. We strongly affirm, therefore, that while there are multiple ethnicities within the one church by God's clear intention, no single ethnic group holds privileged place in God's economy of salvation or God's eschatological purpose. Thus, we strongly believe that the separate and privileged place given to the modern Israeli state, in certain forms of dispensationalism or Christian Zionism, should be challenged, inasmuch as they deny the essential oneness of the people of God in Christ.

The days following October 2 saw a lot of mails sent back and forth among the individuals involved. There was *no* disagreement that from an LCJE point of view the statement was not ideal, to put it mildly. Even if, for example, that statement that "no single ethnic identity can claim to be 'God's chosen people'" might first of all refer to groups around the world who claim that they, and they alone, are "God's chosen people", we found the choice of words misleading since it may be read as if it is no longer legitimate to speak about Israel as "God's chosen people". We also agreed that the concluding words about the State of Israel, certain forms of dispensationalism and Christian Zionism are out of place in a mission document and rather served to obscure than clarify the matter.

But we did not agree how to react. Most of us believed that the paragraph from the Theological Working Group was a draft, which the drafters of the Cape Town Commitment were going to use. We were wrong.

On October 8, I sent the following mail to those involved in the mail correspondence. I wrote, among other things:

I called Tormod Engelsviken in Norway. He is a member of the small CT10 Commitment / Statement group. He was also involved in creating the Willowbank Declaration and played an important role in getting the paragraph on Jewish evangelism into the Manila Manifesto. He stepped down from the LCWE Theological Working Group a few years ago.

Even though he is right now working with the CT10-statement, he was nor familiar with the paper which we are now reacting against. And he understood fully our concern and the arguments I made and would support them.

Therefore, in my opinion we should not spend time and effort on the paper/statement which has been posted online by the Theological Working Group.

In Cape Town there were some in the LCJE group who were of the opposite opinion, namely that we should not care so much about the wording in the Cape Town Commitment but rather concentrate on the paragraph from the Theological Working Group and demand a public rejection of it in the plenary session. As International LCJE Coordinator I had been commissioned by the ICC to work for the inclusion in the Cape Town Commitment of a clear call to Jewish evangelism, and as I did not believe that this would be achieved through confrontation, LCJE secretary Bodil F. Skjøtt and I went on to cultivate relations with Chris Wright and Tormod Engelsviken during the conference. We were never met with rejection, always with understanding. A number of drafts had already been sent to them before the conference. During the conference I asked a small group from

LCJE group to prepare another draft. Due to commitments elsewhere only three of the invitees participated in this group, namely David Brickner, Mitch Glaser and Lawrence Hirsch. Their draft was received with appreciation and was expanded by the drafters so that it, as already mentioned, became even better! In fact it became so good that it can bear repeating:

We continue, therefore, strongly to affirm the need for the whole Church to share the good news of Jesus as Messiah, Lord and Saviour with Jewish people. And in the spirit of Romans 14-15, we urge Gentile believers to accept, encourage and pray for Messianic Jewish believers, in their witness among their own people.

I am happy and grateful for the support hereby expressed for continued Jewish evangelism and support for Messianic Jewish believers. But I am not so naïve as to believe that the whole Lausanne Movement and all evangelical Christians from now on will support Jewish mission. But we have now, again, got an official and unambiguous affirmation of Jewish evangelism. There are not many similar movements with the same unambiguous attitude to this today.

Therefore I am also happy that LCJE is still a member of the Lausanne family!

But what about the words from LCWE's Theological Working Group? It is up to each of us to challenge them in speech and writing. I am not so sure if we need an official LCJE statement about it. If it will benefit our cause within the Lausanne Movement, then we should respond. If it does not, then we should not. Which, as I said, does not imply that we cannot criticize it as individuals.

The Lausanne Movement's Executive Chair, Doug Birdsall, has a great love for our work. As in 2007 he will again this year participate in our international LCJE conference. A session has been set aside for discussion of the relationship between the Lausanne Movement and LCJE. I am hardly mistaken if I think that the paragraph from the Theological Working Group will be brought up as an issue.

That there are different theological views of Israel and Israel's future within the Lausanne Movement cannot be denied. By way of self-criticism we also have to admit that this is the case within LCJE. But as long as both parties, LCWE and LCJE, clearly affirm that Jews need Jesus for salvation, we belong to the same family.

As in all well-functioning families we do not avoid discussing themes that are important for some members of the family even if others do not find them so important. We take the discussion and do it in a respectful way and on the clear assumption that we are part of the same family.

May we in LCJE continue the discussion and conversation and state our critique in such a way that it may benefit our cause in the Lausanne Movement as such.

My personal opinion is that the Lausanne Movement needs LCJE and that LCJE needs the Lausanne Movement – also in the future.