

The Long Road to Cape Town 2010 and an Evangelical Response to Global Environmental Crisis

Peter Houston

ABSTRACT

The Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010 brought together four thousand Christian leaders, representing 198 countries, and resulted in the issuing of the *Cape Town Commitment*. The *Cape Town Commitment* stands in the historic line of the *Lausanne Covenant* from the first Lausanne Congress (on World Evangelization) in 1974 and the *Manila Manifesto* from the second Lausanne Congress in 1989. The *Cape Town Commitment* expresses an evangelical theology that is no longer dualistic and sees the breadth of the redemptive work of Christ applying to all of the *cosmos*. There is a commitment to God's world, not because of its value to humanity, but because of its intrinsic worth, a departure from the anthropocentric view of previous centuries. This marks a significant milestone within evangelicalism, a stream of Christianity long associated with a form of dualism and a focus on pietistic holiness, which has inhibited a timely evangelical theological response to the global environmental crisis, or more accurately, multiple interrelated crises, and the development of a praxis of 'creation care'.¹ This paper charts and examines the socio-political and environmental events that were formative in the early Lausanne Congresses and the fruition of these dynamics in Cape Town 2010.

Introduction

William (Billy) Franklin Graham Jr died on 21 February 2018, aged 99. Graham was an American evangelist and a prominent evangelical Christian. When news of his death broke, two quotes attributed to Graham went viral: "My home is in Heaven. I'm just travelling through this world" as well as "Someday you will

1 'Creation care' is a bit of a cliché. It falls into the discourse trap of using 'creation' for what goes on in the natural world of our local planet, and that is far from what is attributed to the full scope of the *cosmos*. 'Care' is also disingenuous because certain aspects of creation are the valid focus of destruction, think schemes to eradicate small pox and polio viruses or mosquitoes where malaria is a problem. However, the term 'creation care' will be used hereafter in its simplistic application found in Christian literature.