

(Provisional Translation)

Embargo: 22 July 2003, 11:00 a.m. (local time)

Address of the President of the Lutheran World Federation

Bishop emeritus Dr. Christian Krause

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sisters and Brothers,

- (1) This Assembly is meeting in between taking leave and making a new start. Those who were entrusted six years ago at Hong Kong with the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and with accompanying and advising on its various programs, will come to the end of their term of office here at Winnipeg. Some will be setting out again on that common path. Others will stay behind when the caravan moves on. The president is one of the latter.
- (2) At the end of our meeting I shall undoubtedly still have plenty of opportunity to say the farewells. Nevertheless, I do not wish to begin my last “President’s Address” without expressing what moves me personally most at this moment between taking leave and making a new start, namely a deep sense of gratitude to God for the gift of communion in Christ which transcends all borders and divisions. And also my heart-felt thanks to the many people who have given me – and, when we traveled together, my wife and me – their trust, overwhelming hospitality and reaching out to us in a brotherly/sisterly way because of this communion. I then had the strength to persevere even when the strain was great. That gave me the resolve to stand up for our cause also before the governments and the powerful of this world. In short, right at the beginning, my cordial thanks!
- (3) Another word of thanks which I absolutely must express at the start is addressed to all those who have prepared this Assembly and made it possible. I thank our host church, its national bishop, Raymond Schultz, the church leadership, the congregations and the many preparatory groups of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; I thank the staff in Geneva with the General Secretary, Ishmael Noko; I thank our member churches and the many individuals who have contributed to preparing the content and, not least, also to financing this enterprise which is so important for us.
- (4) When the LWF and, shortly afterwards, the World Council of Churches (WCC) were founded in the middle of the 20th century following the inferno of the Second World War, there was a great yearning for a new beginning in an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation. Even the enemies of yesterday were included in the new ecumenical fellowship that was evolving, when they opened their hearts, confessed their abysmal sin and asked their sisters and brothers for forgiveness. In the words of the Stuttgart confession of guilt, at the end of the Second World War the German Protestant churches faced up to their share of responsibility for dictatorship, war and the holocaust: “We accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more

faithfully, for not believing more joyously and for not loving more ardently". That was the start of a new ecumenical thrust in the middle of the 20th century.

- (5) I was five years old at that time and experienced the consequences of capitulation in a refugee family, as did hundreds of thousands of other German, Russian, Polish, Czech and Jewish children. We received the famous "Care" parcels from North America. The Lutheran World Federation, which was just coming into existence, saw it as one of its most important tasks to alleviate the suffering of refugees in Europe. At the time, one in seven members of the Lutheran community was a refugee.
- (6) That is an indelible part of our founding history and for many of us it became the stimulus and leitmotif for an international church commitment to refugees and the poor – everywhere, in our member churches and beyond, in the crisis, hunger and regions that are rife with conflict worldwide. I have the impression that in all these decades the real concern has always been to be able, out of fervent concern and desire, to make a tangible contribution to the *healing of the world*. And a lot has been achieved. Year in, year out, thousands of our sisters and brothers work in the crisis regions of the world, often at the risk of their own lives, building huts and digging wells, caring for the starving and the sick, and demonstrating that they are mediators and peace makers: help where help is needed irrespective of the victims background. Thus, today, the LWF has become one of the major partners of the United Nations' refugee agency, UNHCR.
- (7) There are so many stories I could tell about my visits to our member churches: stories of healing, stories of reconciliation, stories of people who had reached rock bottom but have been helped back onto their feet by the solidarity of sisters and brothers. There are so many signs of hope among us, lesser and greater miracles resulting from trust in God's mercy. And I am profoundly grateful to be able to pass on the stories, to be an ambassador of the reconciliation that we experience in Christ. At this point, I am happy to express my respect and appreciation to our more than 5,000 field staff of the LWF World Service.
- (8) And yet here we are today, bewildered, helpless, shocked, and we cannot believe our eyes: the world is falling apart. In the aftermath of the revolution of 1989/90, we have been incapable of taking advantage of the new freedoms that accompanied the liberation from the all-pervasive East-West conflict, so as to enable justice, peace and the integrity of creation to become the global criteria for action in a global community. On the contrary, from the very beginning of the new millennium there has been evidence that humankind is afraid of itself, is not sure of itself and is prepared to inflict violence upon itself at any moment.
- (9) "Are not all our conferences perhaps, after all, basically the outcome of a profound fear that it may in fact already be too late to be motivated now by despair to restore that which can no longer be restored? Does not each one of us who has seriously attended this conference experience times when he/she is simply overcome by, and cannot escape from, the sense that it is too late, that the Church of Christ has no future? ... On your honor, my friends; who among you is not familiar with the fear that all the church activity we are undertaking here may come too late, be irrelevant and nothing more than a game?"

- (10) On 29 August 1932, Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked these self-critical, penetrating questions as youth secretary at a conference of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches gathered at Gland near Lake Geneva.
- (11) I believe we cannot avoid asking the same questions; we cannot and must not just get on with our agenda without first facing up to our own real situation in an equally self-critical way. It is impossible to ignore that we, as part of worldwide Christianity, are caught up in profound contradictions: military and economic power, affluence and civil liberties, have accumulated to an unprecedented degree in the one third of humankind which has been marked by the Christian tradition. Hunger, poverty, disease, under-development, political dependency and refugee movements are primarily characteristics of the part of the world in which other religions and cultures predominate or where Christian inculturation has been experienced relatively late and not infrequently only as a consequence of an imperialist policy of expansion. However well meaning we may be, as Christians we have no solutions and are first and foremost part of the problem.
- (12) In 1932, Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave an answer which I wish to recall today because it points us to the heart of our being church and to the place where conversion begins. He said, “What is the significance of every so-called attempt at international reconciliation, every effort at mutual understanding, every so-called international friendship – however necessary they may be in themselves – in view of this reality? Such organizations are nothing, absolutely nothing, which are being blown away in confusion like a house of cards...
- (13) “Christ must become present among us in preaching and sacrament in the way he, the crucified one, made peace with God and with human beings. The crucified Christ is our peace. He alone has power over the idols and the demons. The world trembles before the cross alone, not before us.
- (14) “And now set up the cross in this world which is falling apart. Christ is not far removed from the world... his cross is in the midst of the world. And now this cross proclaims anger and judgment on a world of hatred and it announces peace. There must be no more war today – the cross does not want war”¹.
- (15) Set up the cross in a world that is falling apart? If we take that seriously, it means that we ourselves will be standing beneath the cross with our own lives that are falling apart, with our own unwillingness to be reconciled, and all the petty disputes which rob us of the energy for common witness and action. The cross is the place of transformation from which we go through death to life and see life through death. This glimpse which hope has of life, this glimpse of the “light dawning from above”, opens our eyes for reality as it really is. “Believers see reality not in a particular light but as it really is and, despite and beyond everything that they see, they believe in God alone and his power”².

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Address in Gland, 29.8.1932, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, Vol.1, Munich 1958, p.168.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *ibid.*, p.163.

- (16) What has that to do with our Assembly? We are not here as individuals interested in this or that problem, nor to represent the interests of our churches and countries; not to promote what we believe to be best for the world and also not as a church organization with an international purpose. Rather we have gathered as the worldwide church of Jesus Christ responding to his call. We come together to hear Christ. And we have gathered in the confidence that in the voices of brothers and sisters we can hear the voice of Christ himself, that we shall not escape this voice but take it most seriously, listen to it and love others precisely in their otherness. *Solus christus*, Christ alone, as we confessed together with the Roman Catholic Church in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, is the only reliable source from which healing flows to us, and which first enables us to experience salvation ourselves in the midst of our contradictions.
- (17) In light of these fundamental reflections, I shall again review some of my experiences during the six years of our time together. In so doing, I shall limit myself above all to the main themes of our annual Council meetings.
- (18) In 1997 in Hong Kong – immediately following the return of the former crown colony to the People’s Republic of China – when we set out on a new stage as a Federation, we did so in the relatively certain conviction that the revolution of 1989/90 with the collapse of the vast Soviet empire had substantially changed the international system of coordinates and would continue to do so. In the accelerating processes of economic interchange with the related crises and crashes in South East Asia and Argentina, we recognized new threats to political stability. Our member churches in the southern hemisphere spoke very critically about neo-liberalism.
- (19) Against that background, my first address to the Council as President in 1998 at Geneva was entitled “Life is more – Concerning God’s Justice amidst Humankind”. My concern was to identify the social and political implications of the doctrine of justification as they had become clear to me especially during my first continental journey visiting our Lutheran churches in Central and Latin America. There can be no peace without justice. And there can be no justice as long as human life is reduced to food and clothing, the market, business, achievement and success. Therefore, “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt. 6:33).
- (20) In order for this “added value”, to which the Gospel points, to go on influencing the shaping of human life, we shall have to continue the battle resolutely in the future as well. We have been pursuing this theological and – inseparably from it – this socio-ethical line in the past years, and the Joint Declaration was also able to demonstrate its relevance precisely in this connection.
- (21) After nearly 500 years of a bitter conflict which divided Europe and caused wars, persecution and displacement, Lutherans and Catholics have been able to state together that the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith is the central Christian message also for the 21st century. It is a great joy for me that we were able to reach this understanding; it is also the most significant theological outcome of the years during which I was allowed to lead the Lutheran World Federation.
- (22) The doctrine of justification is certainly not some distant theological dispute, far removed from the reality of our lives; it concerns the decisive experience of faith. Whatever we do as Christians

and churches, and wherever we may do it in this shrinking world, the salvation of the world, like the salvation of our own lives, does not depend on us. It is the result of God's grace alone. Without God's grace there can be no justice. That is true for all of us: for the affluent societies of the North as well as for the poor in the South.

- (23) At the meeting of the LWF Council in 1999 at Bratislava, we discussed the right to cultural identity and integrity. For me, the starting point for the question of culture was the experience following 1989/90 that, even for the post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe in which, with the exception of Poland, Christians had normally become minorities, the bible had nevertheless remained or was again to become the key to understanding their own culture and values. So I was able to observe on many visits to our churches in Central and Eastern Europe how strongly the churches have been involved in the process of European re-cultivation and that they serve as pillars on which bridges could be laid to a new, united Europe.
- (24) As Europe comes closer together after all the years of profound political and ideological division, it remains a key question how, in view of the challenges we face in our time, a community of values and action can develop which has roots in the Christian tradition and is open at the same time for other religious cultures. In this context, the statement of a leading representative of the Hungarian government during a conversation when I was visiting Budapest is of relevance: "One cannot be a European without knowing the Bible."
- (25) We welcomed the new millennium in January 2000 in Rome with an ecumenical worship service to which the Pope had invited leading representatives of the Orthodox churches, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and many Christian world communions including the Anglicans and the Lutherans. That was a hopeful ecumenical beginning.
- (26) A few months later, at the 2000 meeting of the Council in Turku, we analyzed and acknowledged the new quality of relations between Lutherans and Catholics. Even the appearance of the declaration *Dominus Iesus* did not change that. *Dominus Iesus* was not intended as a document against the Lutheran churches but, rather, defines for the Catholic Church internally the Roman Catholic understanding of the Church which it feels must essentially be maintained. Indeed, we have all become somewhat more sensitive when core areas of our faith are concerned.
- (27) So, at what point do we say, "That is something we cannot give up"? For us as Lutherans it is the "four-fold *solus*": Christ alone, the Holy Scriptures alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. That alone is what we cannot renounce because it is the foundation of our church. Concentrating on this core gives us the freedom to believe that unity is still possible even where others close the doors for the sake of traditions. That is the reason why we can talk with everyone. Therefore we know we are called to the table of the Lord with all the baptized in the worldwide "community of communities", to celebrate Holy Communion where he is the host for us all. He alone! We also wish that our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers will be able to keep this invitation open ecumenically and we go on repeating this wish for the sake of communion in Christ.
- (28) It is important for us to preserve this openness and commitment which has a theological basis – and to do so both internally and outwardly. Confessional ignorance or relativization leads to arbitrariness. Ecumenism is not a question of shades of grey. On the other hand, confessionalistic

exclusiveness, which is primarily interested in drawing moral or other kinds of lines against others, leads us into an anti-ecumenical ghetto. In fact, openness **and** binding commitment are equally constitutive for the ecumenical dimension of the Lutheran confession and the clear stand of the *communio lutherana*.

- (29) The next two meetings of the Council (2001 and 2002) had each been planned for Jerusalem but were held in Geneva, the city of Calvin, and in Wittenberg, the city of Luther, because the unending spiral of violence made it inadvisable to hold an international meeting in the Holy Land. But we took up the theme of our Palestinian sister church and it became one of our central concerns: “The Church – Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation”. We have invested much time and effort and money in the ministry in the Holy Land. For this I should like to thank all those who have been prepared to postpone their requests for support so that, e.g. the Augusta Victoria Hospital, the schools, educational institutions and, above all, the congregations have been able to continue their vitally important ministry. I shall be coming back to this later, but at this juncture I wish to express my great respect for our church there under the committed leadership of our brother, Bishop Munib Younan, and to assure him and his church of our unfailing solidarity.
- (30) These few comments on the Council meetings during our period in office must suffice as “spotlights” for now. The whole breadth of the programs and plans will be spelled out further in the General Secretary’s report later on.
- (31) In order to get an impression of where we stand today and of the decisive prospects for tomorrow, allow me now to broaden our discussion still further and take a look at the condition and development processes of Christianity on a global scale.
- (32) If I start by looking at our Lutheran communion, there have been major, far reaching changes. When the LWF was established in 1947, it had 47 member churches almost exclusively from countries of the North Atlantic region. Today, the figure has almost tripled with 136 member churches from 76 countries. And we can observe that this considerable extension of the global network of the LWF essentially comprises churches and countries in the southern hemisphere. This tendency is growing year by year. Behind these bare figures, there is a shift in emphasis from the North to the South which has considerable consequences theologically, ecclesiologically and substantially that go far beyond size as such.
- (33) I should like to try and illustrate that briefly on two levels.
- (34) In the North Atlantic region, there is a growing interest in strengthening the Christian world communions and in developing forms of ecumenical cooperation and community between them. With the exception of the Joint Declaration between the worldwide Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, the most important agreements along these lines have been based exclusively in the North Atlantic area and their validity is limited to that region – be it Leuenberg, Porvoo or Meissen for Europe, or the developments in Canada and the USA. Naturally, we must welcome the fact that the churches of the Reformation have found the way to new forms of communion among themselves and with the Anglican Church and others. But all of that seems only marginally to affect the reality and life of the churches in the South. It rather seems to mean dealing with the European history of theology and the church in order to improve

and extend the ecumenical capacity of the North. The same applies to the often painstaking struggle to find forms of spiritual communion with the Orthodox churches. It is hard to tell at present what consequences these ecumenical processes will have at the North Atlantic level for the historical churches and confessional families. Will there be a missionary upsurge? The massive effects of secularization and of the religious and ideological vacuums left after the political changes of 1989/90 call urgently for a reshaping of the church at all levels. But some of the old churches have become tired and are revolving around their shrinking size.

- (35) The developments at present in our member churches and among Christians in general in the southern part of the world are totally different. Instead of shrinking membership like in many parts of the North, here we can often observe considerable growth. The explosion of numbers relates first and foremost to charismatic, spirit-filled congregations and communities. In the place of a parochial focus with its institutions and organizational structures, they comprise very diverse expressions of spiritual movements. Whether it be in the *favelas* of Latin America or the townships of South Africa, among the nearly 200 million Dalits, those without caste or rights throughout India, or among the so-called shepherds in the impoverished urban and rural areas of Madagascar – everywhere, and usually in situations of abject poverty, people are celebrating their communion in Christ, allowing themselves to be carried by the power of God’s spirit into dimensions of hope and salvation in places where otherwise hopelessness and brokenness set the tone.
- (36) Expressions of spirituality lived out in this way have long since also reached the historical churches in the regions of the South. That also applies to the Lutherans. The tremendous growth of the Lutheran church in Madagascar would be unthinkable without its considerable success in integrating the “shepherds”, the popular charismatic movement.
- (37) My last visit abroad before this Assembly was to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). I have had close contacts with this church since the early seventies. At that time, it had about 700,000 members and was thus approximately as big as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick where I was bishop until recently. Whereas the latter now has close to 420,000 members, meaning it has shrunk by about 40 per cent since that time, the EECMY has just topped four million. When I emphasized that full of admiration and praised the church leadership for their great missionary success, I found myself also looking into worried faces among my Ethiopian brothers and sisters. “We are growing beyond control.” Things are getting out of hand. Normal administrative structures are not sufficient to manage, and the funds are running out on all fronts, while they are badly needed to create an organizational structure that reaches everyone and to have enough theologically trained workers.
- (38) One thing seems clear to me: the future of the Christian community in the world and its effect on the destiny of humankind will mainly depend on whether and how the historical confessional churches can be successfully integrated with the diverse charismatic congregations and movements, or if it is at least possible to hold them together in an ecumenical alliance. In this, the World Council of Churches, above all, will have a key role. Do we already know how and whether we are able to pray and work together at all? Shall we stand up together for common concerns? And who will integrate whom? Finally, what does charismatic expression here and well ordered establishment there imply for the cohesion of a Christian world communion which

believes itself on the way to a *communio*, to a committed global communion? Will the theological heart in the proclamation of the gospel dry up here in the face of indifference and individual arbitrariness or a non-committal discourse about general values, and will it be swept away there by speaking in tongues, spirit-filled healing worship and ecstasy?

- (39) These questions are still absolutely open. They are extremely serious because, at the same time, they raise the question of how the Christians in the world, and with them the international Lutheran community, will be able to meet the special challenges of the 21st century. In what follows, I should like in all brevity to try and take this up in order, as I hope, also to contribute a few ideas to the discussions of the next few days on the future shape of the LWF and its programs.
- (40) At the beginning of the 21st century, the world's appearance has changed dramatically. For almost half a century it was divided into two major power blocs: the West and the East, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Each had an enormous arsenal of nuclear armaments at its disposal. This mutual, mortal deterrent safeguarded a peace for decades which was in fact always threatened. Under the surface, innumerable so-called "surrogate wars" were taking place.
- (41) Beneath this East-West conflict there was a new, constantly growing conflict, namely that between the North and the South, between the rich and the poor parts of the world. Anyone who did not only know the North (as was always the case in the Lutheran World Federation) was aware that the North-South conflict was certainly less dangerous in the military sense (simply because the South never was capable of posing a military threat to the North) but, seen in the long term, knew that politically it was more important for the survival of humankind.
- (42) And that is exactly how it turned out. The East-West conflict is now history. The Soviet Union has disappeared, Europe has surmounted its division; the USA and Russia are no longer enemies but partners.
- (43) But the North-South conflict is still going on or, rather, it is becoming more acute each year. The gap between the rich and the poor countries is getting wider and wider. In the poor parts of the world, the population is growing more quickly than the economy; environmental resources are becoming scarcer. In many countries, political instability predominates and can even lead to anarchy and civil war, and sometimes – like at present in the Northeast of the Congo – even to genocide.
- (44) And then, in addition to all this suffering, there is also AIDS, the modern scourge of humanity. More than 40 million people worldwide have been infected with HIV and more than 20 million have already died of AIDS – most of them in the poor countries of the world. In those countries – according to United Nations predictions – half of today's 15 year-olds will finally die of this disease, even if the rate of infection decreases in the next few years. If it does not, then two thirds of young people will die of AIDS.
- (45) Those are unbelievable, shocking figures. We can hardly imagine the human catastrophes hidden behind the figures. At the same time, this disease implies a terrible economic disaster for these

countries. Indeed, very often the developmental successes achieved with great difficulty will be destroyed again by the consequences of AIDS.

- (46) Poverty and AIDS: that is the first great challenge for the international community in the 21st century. The second is peace. When the Soviet Union vanished from the face of the earth, and with it the East-West conflict, many political prophets thought this was the start of an age of eternal peace. They were mistaken.
- (47) I do not know how many wars are being fought in the world at present. Each one is one too many. We all remember one war which has only just come to an end – the war in Iraq. It has taught us three things:
- The only remaining world power, the USA, is now militarily so superior that it does not need to fear any military opponent in the world. And it has resolved to use war as a political means when that serves its own interests.
 - The United Nations did reject this war by a majority in the Security Council but they were too weak to prevent it. And the protests by millions of people right around the globe had no effect.
 - International law cannot safeguard peace if the USA do not respect this international law and prefer to replace it by the right of the mighty one.
- (48) But in the 21st century peace is not only threatened by wars which states wage against one another. That danger, in my view, will probably decline. Instead, there is a new threat to world peace. Namely, private violence unrelated to the state. It occurs in two forms: where the national order disintegrates it takes the form of anarchy and “warlords” take control (and often engage child soldiers to fight for them, like at present in Liberia). The other form of privatized violence is terrorism. As a rule it is not the product of mere delight in violence. It rather is used as the last weapon by people who feel humiliated and express their hopeless inferiority by hatred and destruction.
- (49) That does not make this violence more attractive. Because its victims are almost always innocent civilians, whether on Bali or in Jerusalem, in Nairobi or Dar es Salaam, in Washington or New York. For the 21st century, it is no longer sufficient for states to commit themselves to resolve their mutual conflicts by peaceful means. They need to form global alliances in order to combat terrorism together and to guarantee their citizens civilized life in society. But it has also become clear that the fight against terrorism cannot be separated from the struggle for justice and human dignity.
- (50) In the process, a major new challenge has arisen, namely the question of how the world community deals with religious communities and their radical fringes. Unfortunately, this question is closely related to the fight against terrorism. There is no doubt that the most dangerous expressions of international terrorism in recent times have had a primarily Islamic background. The assassins of September 11th were all fanatical Muslims. Osama bin Laden’s al-

Qaida proclaims its “Holy War” in the name of Allah. That was behind the terror attacks in various parts of the world.

- (51) But, precisely because this is the case, what really matters is that we should not equate Islam or any other religion per se with terrorism. Some 1.2 billion people in the world are Muslims. Only a minute number of them sympathize with terrorism. Fundamentalism can be found equally in other religions, including Christianity and Judaism. All three Abrahamic religions have the potential, on the one hand for violent fanaticism and, on the other, for enlightenment and tolerance or, politically speaking, for the rule of law and separation between church and state. The struggle against terrorism must embrace all the countries of the world as far as possible, also and especially those with a predominantly Muslim population. But it must never become a clash of civilizations or even of religions. What is imperative for the 21st century is not a crusade against Islam but peace between the religions and a common struggle of the religions against terrorism and its contempt for human beings.
- (52) In these major challenges of the 21st century, what is the role of Christians and especially of Lutherans? Are we still needed at all? Did the Christian voice play an important part in the major disagreements which preceded the Iraq war? Of course, Pope John Paul II spoke out with unusual intensity. That was also registered worldwide. And the LWF took a clear stand in statements by the Council and the Executive Committee. In this connection, I want to express my respect and thanks especially to the representatives of our member church in the USA which emphatically supported our appeals. But at the same time we must ask self-critically: what were we really able to achieve?
- (53) Or we can look at the Palestinian conflict where there is a life-threatening confrontation between Judaism and Islam. Are there any expectations toward Christians in view of this conflict? Does anyone believe they can work convincingly for a de-escalation of violence and to restarting the peace process, or are they perceived like the rival confessions in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem: noisy, divided, incapable of peace among themselves and therefore completely incapable of serving as peacemakers between Jews and Palestinians?
- (54) I believe we Christians have grounds for modesty when we reflect on our role in the conflicts of this world. But we should also not exaggerate this modesty. In certain areas we, the Christian churches, have genuine, long established competence. Probably first and foremost in relation to the issue of poverty. This competence comes from the center of our faith. The gospel is a gospel of the poor and for the poor. God’s justice does not capitulate when faced with the injustice of the world.
- (55) And we stand on firm ground not only in the theological context. We also have a lot of experience from five decades of church cooperation in development. However, we also often have had to correct our views. Today we recognize that, behind all the idealism with which we initially entered into this cooperation, there was quite an amount of false superiority on the European side. We did say at the time that we did not want to prescribe things for the churches in the South but rather to listen when they said what they needed. But behind this there was the hidden assumption: you will tell us the problem and we shall tell you the solution. Today we are aware, not only that we frequently did not know the solution, but also that we ourselves have

been part of the problem which needs solving. Indeed, our wealth would be unthinkable without the poverty of the poor.

- (56) And we Christians also have experience with peace. In the course of decades of ecumenical community, we have learnt to stand up for peace on a global scale. We have ostracized war as a means for states to deal with their conflicts. We do not believe that security can be guaranteed by military threats.
- (57) But we also have to admit two things. Firstly, we do not agree among ourselves. And the US government which engaged in the war against Iraq was also supported in that by millions of pious US Christians. Secondly, in our theology of peace one big problem still remains unsolved: the conceptions of a “just war” are just as ineffective today as those of radical pacifism. This becomes particularly obvious when we look at the threats to the world from privatized violence unrelated to the state. Naturally, on the part of the church there can be nothing other than a resolute “No” to terrorism with its horrifying toll of civilian lives. But are we prepared, on the other hand, where terrorism is the despairing though misguided response to humiliation and poverty, to join actively in working to change the situation?
- (58) And, finally, the encounter between Christianity and Islam. This problem is especially dear to my heart because it is so new for most of us. There has been an intensive dialogue between Christians and Jews at many levels in the past decades – also within the framework of the LWF. Both sides have benefited from that. But the massive, unavoidable compulsion to dialogue has often only become so intense as a result of the experience of the Holocaust. Must there first be a similar catastrophe before Christians and Muslims begin a dialogue with one another?
- (59) As present, we know far too little about one another. The world of Islam with its strong religiosity, fidelity to tradition and its apportionment of roles for women which we find unacceptable, is unknown to most of us and uncanny for many. Foreignness and fear give rise to prejudices and prejudices between religions can become dangerous – church history is full of examples.
- (60) So we have to begin to get to know one another, to become curious about one another and to invite one another. That is easier said than done. But how would it be if the leadership of Christian churches tried to enter into dialogue with leading representatives of Islam, if theological faculties were to start a dialogue with Islamic scholars (which would presuppose that the former begin to read the Koran), and, above all, if structures could be set up so that young people from both sides could meet and learn from one another?
- (61) Here we must be clear about one thing: in Islam as a whole, and not just on its terrorist fringes, a tremendous amount of anger and often also of hatred has accumulated against the West and its way of life. In the eyes of most Muslims, we Christians are part of the West – and therefore part of the problem. The fact that the President of the USA expressly cited Christian faith convictions in favor of the Iraq war was the best confirmation of such Muslim prejudices. As long as we go on deceiving ourselves about this, the dialogue cannot succeed.

- (62) Thus, there must be no crusade against Islam. What we need instead is dialogue with a will for peace and which hence tries to strengthen the potential within Islam which is geared to non-violence, tolerance and human rights. So it is a matter of attempting to find common ground, very much as we have done in the internal Christian ecumenical dialogue. For the relations between the Christian churches, after many years of effort we have adopted the formula “reconciled diversity”. Should we not work for the same goal of “reconciled diversity” in relations between Christianity and Islam?
- (63) At Beit Jala in the Holy Land, our Lutheran member church there is working on a beautiful project, “Abraham’s House”, in which many churches and congregations from all over the world are involved. This is a place, where the children of Abraham, namely Jews, Muslims and Christians, are to enter into conversation with one another in the quest for the peace which we wish for, invoking the one God. We need to build many such “Abraham’s Houses” in this world. I would wish that Lutherans and Lutheran churches devote plenty of energy and enthusiasm to this construction work for peace!
- (64) Where is the LWF going?
- (65) The motto or slogan to guide this Assembly has been taken from a visionary text of the bible. In the imagery of the Book of Revelation, two women are contrasted: the whore, Babylon, (Rev. 17:1) and the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9). On the one hand, the threat to the world, the one world power, Rome, dominating everything and trampling everything under its feet, a real and painful experience for all those who crossed its path. On the other hand, the Heavenly Jerusalem visible only to the Seer, the great vision of the new heaven and the new earth, of a new creation: living water and the tree of life with leaves that serve as therapy for the nations (Rev. 22:1-2), in other words, “for the healing of the world”.
- (66) The heavenly Jerusalem is not built by human beings. The forces for healing the broken and wounded come “from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1), not from the weapons manufacturers and power centers of this world and also not from our own ability and action. *Sola gratia* still applies; we can hope for healing only from the fullness of God’s gifts of grace; *sola fide*, on that alone can we set our trust.
- (67) That is the last and perhaps the only hope of the poor. This is where you can understand the power of the cross. This is where God’s closeness is celebrated which promises healing in the midst of the slums of this world. This is where frontiers are transcended and bridges come into existence spanning the yawning gaps between North and South, poor and rich; and this is where we can dare to speak hopefully about a *communio*, a new communion in Christ. Can we really do so?
- (68) Would it be possible, at least within the limited framework of a confessional but nonetheless also worldwide communion, to commit to each other in this way? The call for *communio*, which has been discussed among us with growing intensity in recent years, is not primarily a call for humanitarian aid in view of poverty and AIDS – however important that may still be, but a call to a worldwide community of trust and hope in discipleship of Jesus Christ. Are we ready for this – the rich with the poor?

- (69) For the future work of the LWF, I consider it more important to link and coordinate the relevant local or regional initiatives and information on a global scale, rather than devoting much effort to distributing the constantly decreasing funds for individual inter-church projects after appropriate examination by the Geneva staff. The *communio* does not need administrative centralism! The special character of the LWF structure must be used better in view of the new challenges: namely, so that the regional or national member churches, which commit themselves to a binding *communio*, are brought out of their provincialism or individualism into a global dimension of prayer and action, into a community of sharing: the gospel – the good news of the Savior for the poor.
- (70) The Christians in the South, and thus especially among the poor and those who are in so many ways under-privileged and deprived of their rights, are growing in numbers with a great wealth of forms of spirituality and their charismatic movements are increasingly changing the historical churches and their Christian world communions as well. Here, too, high priority must be given to using the global instrument of the LWF so that we do not witness new splits, breaks and alienations instead of a consolidation of the *communio*. Years ago I proposed a conference on the subject of the charismatic movements which was then held in Arusha. But that is not sufficient because there are hardly any tangible results available. There is also an essential issue for theology. Can we formulate a common conception of the church – and even of a confessional church - and live it out? However much progress may have been made by the ecumenical dialogue between the historical churches themselves in many places, the challenge to dialogue and to common witness to the faith is still just as real between these churches and the charismatic movements. It is a major concern of mine in this context to mention a third group of Christian churches and communities which must also be included in the common search for a common path of discipleship of Jesus Christ. I am referring to the more conservative evangelical churches and congregational groups, especially in North America, which, at present at least, have a lasting and – as I have tried to show – extremely problematic influence on US American foreign policy and thus on prevailing world politics. We need to talk about this together and must not just go our separate ways.
- (71) Anyone who wants to contribute to overcoming religious fundamentalism with all its dangers including terrorism and, at the same time, to preventing neo-liberal arbitrariness and lack of commitment, must start by putting their own worldwide Christian house in order. We need new ecumenical models in order to meet one another also across our internal barriers, to deal constructively with the existing controversies and to be able to celebrate worship together. I suspect that models of this kind will take the form more of movements of faith than of institutional church structures. We shall need to try things out with plenty of imagination and commitment.
- (72) Once again, I wish to emphasize for the LWF that theological work is also required here. I remember in 1970, when I was a staff member of the LWF, how the decision was taken to change the “Theology” department into a department of “Studies”. Whether because of a bad conscience or general uncertainty, theology was later added to studies again in the name of the corresponding LWF department. The LWF General Secretariat has had a separate office for ecumenical relations. The Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research often only has a loose

link with all of this. That is not a convincing approach and does not promise the necessary drive required for our contribution to the ecumenical theology and ecclesiology which is so urgently needed.

- (73) Let us expand our view even further to include inter-religious dialogue, in this case above all between the children of Abraham. There, too, both things are needed: openness and respect for others, inquisitiveness to learn something new and the wish and will to find and to follow common paths to peace. That again requires a major involvement of the LWF as an international coordinating and supporting instrument in the ecumenical concert. Otherwise the distortion and perversion of the struggle for oil and water into a religious war can scarcely be excluded.
- (74) The demand for dialogue with the world religions and especially with Islam includes the demand that we clarify our own position and express it distinctly. If you do not show your colors, your color cannot be recognized. At this point the LWF has wavered uncertainly in recent decades, changing its "Department of World Mission" into one of "Church Cooperation" with much feeling at the Assembly in 1970, and finally adopting the usual addition process to call it "Mission and Development". One can debate the name but the mandate must have a clear content. The basic stand of faith in the Savior Jesus Christ and the core message of Holy Scripture must be distinct, constantly brought up to date, audible and acceptable to others. If one has nothing more than arbitrariness to offer or a retreat into the private sphere, one is not fit for dialogue beyond one's own realm, nor for proclamation in the congregation. "A city built on a hill cannot be hid" (Mt. 5:14). The clear, public confession of Jesus Christ remains the mission of all Christians in the 21st century as well.
- (75) There are enormous tasks ahead of us. Under the cloak of poverty and AIDS lies a seemingly boundless amount of injustice, hunger, sickness, refugee movement, oppression and humiliation at all levels of human existence. In the next few days that will be spelled out further in the Village Groups. The task will be to mark out paths to justice and to preserving the dignity of God's creation and to identify such paths for the future work of the LWF. The same applies to drawing up models of unity, global understanding and reconciliation to bridge the painful rifts which threaten peace in this world of ours.
- (76) Under such a heavy burden of unavoidable tasks, we could only break down or at least become resigned if there were no hopeful perspectives and no clear indications of the goal. However true it may be that we cannot build the heavenly Jerusalem in our own strength, it is equally true that, when we trust in the grace and mercy of God, whose power grows within us like within the leaves on the tree of life – so that we can serve for the healing of the world.
- (77) And so we take up the call to plant the cross of Jesus Christ in the midst of this world which is falling apart: God with humankind in the very depths of poverty, suffering and fear. "... he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new' " (Rev. 21:4-5). May this dimension of faith which emanates from the theme of the Assembly inform our work here and in the years ahead of us in an encouraging way.

- (78) May God bless you and all of us – that we may discuss with commitment, joyfully celebrate our communion in Christ, take wise decisions and in everything follow Jesus as true disciples. God be with you!