

PRECURSORS AND TENSIONS IN HOLISTIC MISSION: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Al Tizon

‘Holistic mission’ has become a household phrase of sorts among evangelical missiologists and missionaries. In the words of Rene Padilla, “It is now widely accepted that the church’s mission is intrinsically holistic....”¹ But how did it get there? This is an important question, especially in light of the evangelism-only theology of mission that pervaded evangelicalism for the greater part of the twentieth century.

Few would argue that the International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 held in Lausanne, Switzerland, marks the first serious attempt to correct this shortsightedness. To begin, however, with Lausanne ’74 to understand the historical development of evangelical holistic mission would overlook some key precursors that led to the social vision articulated at the Congress. The first part of this chapter identifies these precursors or roots.

Major tensions emerged at Lausanne ’74 and shortly thereafter concerning the place that social concern should occupy in the mission of the church. As uncomfortable and painful as these tensions were, they proved to be, in the hands of God, the impetus for a fuller development of evangelical holistic mission. The second part of this chapter analyzes each of these tensions.

Roots of Evangelical Holistic Mission: Pre-Lausanne 1974

Lausanne ’74 championed the practice of evangelism; how could it not, being an international congress on world evangelization? However, many were confounded at the prominence given to social responsibility at the same congress. But should they have been, given certain developments within the evangelical communion that pointed toward a more favorable spirit toward social concern? What were these developments? Such a question begs a preliminary one: What occurred in the history of Protestant mission that led to the marginalization of evangelical social concern in the first place?

¹ C. Rene Padilla, ‘Holistic Mission’, in John Corrie (ed.), *Dictionary of Mission Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 162.

Evangelism vs. social concern

The historical development of the relationship between evangelism and social concern constitutes the first root of evangelical holistic mission. Most mission historians agree that the battle between evangelism and social concern is a twentieth century phenomenon. Before it erupted in the 1920s, evangelicals engaged society as part and parcel of their practice of faith. William Carey, ‘the father of modern missions’, exemplifies the historic seamlessness between evangelistic aspirations and social reform.² In addition to preaching and planting churches in India, Carey spoke out against the caste system, protested slavery in Britain, organized a boycott against sugar imports from West Indian plantations cultivated by slaves, taught agriculture, and built systems of higher education. He conducted these activities in concert with his evangelistic efforts.

At least two undeniable factors led to what sociologist David Moberg has identified as the ‘Great Reversal’,³ referring to the move of evangelicals from spearheading social reform in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to retreating almost totally from mainstream society. A strong reaction to the increasing sway of liberal theological developments, which included an emphasis on social concern, constitutes the first factor. Evangelicals, primarily in North America, began to steer away from social concern when they perceived the social gospel movement as eclipsing personal evangelism.⁴

The second undeniable culprit was the shift from a predominantly post-millennial to a pre-millennial eschatology. This shift had a devastating effect upon the social involvement of evangelicals, as dispensational pre-millennialists preached the irredeemable depravity of society. Men and women trapped on board the sinking ship of society described human existence, and offering the lifeboat of Christ to the doomed (evangelism) defined the mission of the church. By the late 1920s, to be evangelical meant, for most, identification with pre-millennial fundamentalism that reactively erased social responsibility from the missionary agenda. By then, writes David J. Bosch, “All forms of progressive social involvement had disappeared. The ‘Great Reversal’ had been completed.”⁵

The polarization between fundamentalists and modernists occurred primarily in North America but diffused throughout the world by means of the west-to-east, north-to-south missionary movement during the first half of the twentieth

² David J. Bosch, ‘In Search of New Evangelical Understanding’, in Bruce J. Nicholls (ed), *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 68.

³ David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia, PA and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1972), 30-34. Credit for the term should ultimately go to historian Timothy L. Smith, as Moberg himself acknowledges (11, 30). Moberg, however, expands upon the phenomenon from a sociological perspective and deserves the credit for popularizing it.

⁴ For relatively recent treatments on the social gospel movement, see Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001).

⁵ Bosch, ‘In Search’, 70-71.

century. Bong Rin Ro says it succinctly when he writes, “The establishment of the Protestant church in the Third World was basically the fruit of Protestant mission from the west ... [And] both the western model of the liberal social gospel and the model of ... evangelical soul saving ... have been copied in the Third World.”⁶ This divide within Protestantism did not intensify as heatedly in the non-western world as it did in North America. However, we cannot deny the influence of the Great Reversal upon evangelical churches worldwide.

The evangelism-social concern debate expressed itself in Protestant missions amidst a larger debate over the ultimate meaning of mission between evangelicals and ecumenical Protestants (or ‘ecumenicals’). The publication of *Re-Thinking Missions* by William Hocking in 1932 ignited the debate. The ‘shocking Hocking Report’, as it came to be called, summarized a two year project carried out by the Layman’s Foreign Missions Inquiry in the early 1930s. The report challenged what were then basic Protestant tenets, such as the uniqueness of Christianity among the religions of the world and the necessity of preaching personal conversion to Christ. The report declared that the purpose of mission was not to convert people, but to seek religious cooperation toward a better world. Needless to say, evangelicals strongly opposed the findings of the report, thus widening the polarization between evangelicals and ecumenicals around the world.

If the Hocking Report deepened the missionary evangelical-ecumenical polarity in the 1930s up through the 1950s, then disconcerting developments within the WCC took the rift to unprecedented heights in the early 1960s through to the mid-1970s. Beginning with the official merger of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the WCC in 1961 at New Delhi, evangelicals began to give strong expression to their growing sense of alienation from the WCC.

By the mid-1960s, evangelicals poised themselves to launch their own international missionary conferences. In 1966, they met together not once, but twice – in Wheaton, Illinois USA and Berlin, Germany respectively – as a ‘counter-World Council of Churches movement’.⁸ Many identify the fourth WCC Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968 as the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back. ‘The great debate’, as Roger Hedlund terms it, over the meaning of mission finally came to a head in Uppsala. Hedlund writes, “Two basic theologies – two ideologies – were in conflict.... On the one side were the

⁶ Bong Rin Ro, ‘The Perspectives of Church History from New Testament Times to 1960’, in Bruce J. Nicholls (ed.), *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1986), 34.

⁷ William E. Hocking, *Rethinking Missions* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 3-78.

⁸ Efiog S. Utuk, ‘From Wheaton to Lausanne’, in James A Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (eds.), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 101.

advocates of mission as humanization, on the other side... [those concerned] with... the evangelization of the lost...."⁹

Although evangelicals demonstrated amazing unity in the two world gatherings in 1966, largely held together by a common distrust of the WCC, the differences regarding how they viewed the relationship between evangelism and social concern eventually came to the surface. The voices of the 'new evangelicals' increased in volume and intensity, the most influential belonging to a young theologian named Carl F.H. Henry, challenging the fundamentalist monopoly on mission. In 1947, Henry jolted the evangelical world with the classic publication, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, wherein he tactfully accused fundamentalists of not proclaiming the whole gospel. He wrote, "Fundamentalism in revolting against the Social Gospel... also... revolt[ed] against the Christian social imperative."¹⁰ Such a statement may seem benign now, but in 1947 it had enough potency to have started a re-awakening of the evangelical social conscience in America and beyond. Henry continued to lead the charge to call God's people to re-engage society for the sake of the gospel. In a later publication, he labeled the evangelism-only posture as part of an unbiblical 'fundamentalist reduction'.¹¹ Henry led the way in propagating this new kind of evangelicalism (which was not so much 'new' as it was a harking back to the pre-Great Reversal days). The reaffirmation of Christian social responsibility, which held a prominent place in the new evangelicalism, made its presence felt in the 1966 gatherings primarily by the likes of Henry, Horace Fenton (then director of the Latin American Mission) and an itinerant evangelist named Billy Graham. These and other speakers at the two congresses made it clear, however, while reaffirming social responsibility, that evangelism must continue to hold a primary place in authentic biblical mission. They assured the evangelical constituency that their understanding of social concern did not and must not eclipse the primary task of world evangelization.

Such prioritizing made many evangelicals from the two thirds world feel increasingly uneasy, and they gradually began to voice their discomfort at different gatherings. Padilla notes that the new concern for social problems shown at the 1966 Wheaton Congress "was by no means unrelated to the presence of a good number of participants from the two thirds world."¹² While gratified that their brothers and sisters from the west increasingly challenged

⁹ Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), 229. Hedlund's perspective is decidedly evangelical. For balance, see T.V. Philip, *Edinburgh to Salvador: Twentieth Century Ecumenical Missiology* (Delhi, India: ISPCK; Tiruvalla, India: CSS, 1999), 97-131.

¹⁰ Carl F.H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1947), 32.

¹¹ Carl F.H. Henry, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 33.

¹² C. Rene Padilla, 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility: From Wheaton '66 to Wheaton '83', *Transformation* 2:3 (April/June 1985), 28.

the ‘fundamentalist reduction’, two thirds world evangelicals continued to press the international missionary community to investigate further the integral place of social concern in the mission of the church.

A group of ‘young evangelicals’ from North America joined their brothers and sisters in the two thirds world and began expressing a similar kind of discomfort with what they interpreted as weak token affirmations of Christian social concern in the context of the volatile 1960s.¹³ They called the nation to self-critique in general and the church to a rediscovery of its prophetic ministry in particular. Their historic meeting in Chicago in 1973 produced the Chicago Declaration, which articulated a gospel-inspired commitment to compassion and justice, alongside the crucial, non-negotiable work of evangelism.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the fundamentalist spirit remained strong as did the Henry-ian version of the new evangelicalism. These persuasions continued to exert themselves at all of the aforementioned conferences, promoting their respective views. So during the period between 1966 and 1973, we can identify three broad groupings that outlined the diversity of missionary social ethics among evangelicals: (1) the fundamentalists, who maintained the primacy of evangelism largely at the expense of social concern as a continued reaction against the ‘apostate ecumenical movement’, (2) the new or moderate evangelicals, who, while maintaining the primacy of evangelism, called for a return to an historic, socially-engaged evangelicalism, and (3) the younger, radical evangelicals who called for an uncompromising socio-political commitment to biblical compassion and justice as integral to the gospel. Viewing it in one-two-three terms like this might give the impression of progressive development, as if the ‘young radicals’ phased out the ‘moderates’ who phased out the ‘fundamentalists’. But missionary convictions die hard; these three strands not only continue to exist today, they also each have spawned variations of themselves, making evangelical missionary social ethics a very diverse and complex phenomenon.

Evangelical relief and development ministries after World War Two

Alongside the historical root of the evangelism-social concern debate grew a lesser root that also significantly determined the nature of holistic mission. Calling it ‘lesser’ simply means that it originated from, and therefore depended upon, the larger root of the evangelism-social concern debate. This particular tension – created by the inconsistency between practice and theology among evangelicals – warrants special attention because it was precisely the attempted efforts to address this inconsistency that led to the affirmation of social concern at Lausanne ’74.

¹³ Richard Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 99-134.

¹⁴ Ronald J. Sider, ‘An Historic Moment for Biblical Social Concern’, in Ronald J. Sider (ed.), *The Chicago Declaration* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1974), 29-31.

Despite the North American ‘fundamentalist reduction’ that dominated the global evangelical missionary community, evangelicals continued to practice works of social uplift in the service of the gospel around the world. David M. Howard, who has chronicled the history of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), states confidently that WEF leaders “have always understood the obligation of Christians to reach out in love to those in need and give a cup of cold water.”¹⁵ The disappearance of a social ethic during ‘the dark ages of evangelicalism’ failed to eliminate missionary social action.¹⁶ It did, however, greatly diminish in the 1920s and ’30s due to the pressures generated by the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.¹⁷

The inconsistency between missionary social practice and the lack of a social ethic increasingly distressed the more evangelical thoughtful. Did not continued social involvement betray the stand against the theology of the social gospel? If the social gospel was to be rejected, how could evangelicals justify their ongoing humanitarian work? This became an increasingly important question as the post-World War Two period marked a significant increase in evangelical humanitarian ministries.

However, the consequences of the fundamentalist-modernist debacle lingered on, as a cloud of suspicion loomed over evangelicals who were involved in social ministries. The suspicion led to accusations that ranged from accommodating the Social Gospel to sympathizing with dangerous leftist groups. Even many of the evangelicals, who were engaged in social ministries, saw their work as secondary to the ‘real’ work of the gospel of evangelism and church planting.

The frustration caused by the inconsistency between maturing social practice and a lack of a social ethic to warrant it came to bursting point; something had to give. Amid this frustration, evangelical mission scholars and development practitioners finally woke up to their inevitable need for one another, and Lausanne ’74 proved timely for such collaboration.¹⁸

This root of evangelical growth in a practical theology of development grew out of, and alongside, the larger root of the evangelism-social concern debate. If the working out of the evangelism-social concern debate constituted the theological root, then the theologically-groundless growth of relief and development ministries among evangelicals constituted the practical root.

¹⁵ David M. Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die: The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 1846-1986* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1986), 189.

¹⁶ Athol Gill, ‘Christian Social Responsibility’, in C. Rene Padilla (ed.), *The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 93.

¹⁷ Linda Smith, ‘Recent Historical Perspectives of the Evangelical Tradition’, in Edgar J. Elliston (ed.), *Christian Relief and Development: Developing Workers for Effective Ministry* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 25-26.

¹⁸ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, ‘Introduction’, in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Oxford: Regnum; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), ix.

Together these two roots eventually sprouted a type of mission theology that demanded both proclamation and demonstration, i.e. a holistic approach.

Internal Tensions: Lausanne 1974 to Wheaton 1983

What was the social vision forged at Lausanne '74 and articulated in the Lausanne Covenant? Billy Graham, the inspirational figurehead and catalyst of Lausanne '74, listed four hopes in his opening address at the Congress, the third of which pertains directly to the social question.¹⁹ He announced at the outset, "I trust we can state... the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility... [which] disturbs many believers. Perhaps Lausanne can help to clarify it".²⁰ This opening statement demonstrates that by the time of Lausanne '74, thanks to the factors discussed earlier, Graham and many others came prepared to settle this issue.

Lausanne '74 clearly recognized and affirmed social concern as essential to the task of world evangelization by making it an integral part of the Covenant. It was primarily Article 5 entitled 'Christian Social Responsibility', which basically synthesized the papers presented at the Congress by Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar and Carl Henry, that articulates Lausanne's social vision most clearly.²¹ Klaus Bockmuehl's detailed interpretation of the nine 'verbs of action' contained in the Article further developed its missionary implications.²² At least two overall themes emerge from his analysis: (1) To act prophetically in society, denouncing injustices and calling governments to repentance, and (2) To demonstrate and promote the righteousness of the kingdom of God for and among the oppressed.

The Covenant's clear affirmation of social concern did not go unchallenged at the Congress. Many conservatives saw it as a distraction from the original Lausanne vision of 'cross-cultural evangelism'. Others to the right of the conservatives went even further and accused Lausanne's stated social vision as being the old Social Gospel in evangelical clothing.²³ For those left of centre,

¹⁹ Billy Graham, 'Why Lausanne?' in James D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 34.

²⁰ Graham, 'Why Lausanne?', 34.

²¹ Klaus Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals and Social Ethics*, trans. David T. Priestly (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 8-12. These papers to which Bockmuehl refers are available in James D. Douglas (ed), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1976), the official reference volume of Lausanne I. Padilla's address entitled 'Evangelism and the World' (116-146) and Escobar's 'Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment' (303-326) were both plenary papers, while Henry's address 'Christian Personal and Social Ethics in Relation to Racism, Poverty, War, and Other Problems' (1163-1182) provided a foundation for the sessions of a special committee on ethics.

²² Bockmuehl, *Evangelicals and Social Ethics*, 17ff.

²³ See Valdir R. Steuernagel, 'The Theology of Mission in Its Relation to Social Responsibility within the Lausanne Movement' (ThD thesis, Lutheran School of

however, the affirmation of socio-political involvement in the Covenant did not go far enough. They claimed that even though Article 5 repented of past negligence and affirmed the inseparable relationship of social responsibility to evangelism, it did not define that relationship. Moreover, social concern still felt like an appendage to the ‘real work’ of the gospel.²⁴

So a group of about two hundred people at the Congress formed an ad hoc committee to discuss the shortcomings of the Covenant’s social affirmation in light of the implications of radical discipleship. They drafted an official response to Lausanne aptly titled “Theology [and] Implications of Radical Discipleship”.²⁵ Divided into four main parts, the document challenged the Congress to declare more overtly the place of social concern in the mission of the church by affirming the comprehensive scope of the gospel of the kingdom of God.²⁶ “[The gospel],” the paper read, “is Good News of liberation, of restoration, of wholeness, and of salvation that is personal, social, global and cosmic.”²⁷ The Statement on Radical Discipleship repudiated the dichotomy between evangelism and social concern, challenged the language of the primacy of evangelism, and broadened the scope of God’s salvific work in the world, all the while remaining wholly committed to biblical authority and world evangelization.

Although the Statement did not end up as part of the Covenant, convener John Stott presented it at the end of the Congress along with the final draft of the Covenant, thus giving it prominence.²⁸ Moreover, almost 500 people, approximately a quarter of the number of official delegates, signed it before leaving the Congress. So between the Covenant’s affirmation of socio-political involvement and the inclusion of the Statement on Radical Discipleship among the official papers of the Congress, the status of social concern enjoyed a new level of validation that it had not experienced since the days before the fundamentalist-modernist debacle.

The broadness of the Lausanne social vision allowed for diversity in interpretation, and at the outset, this broadness served as a valuable point of evangelical unity. Valdir Steuernagel sees it “as a sign of strength and of a rare

Theology at Chicago, 1988), 151-156; Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate*, 294-299; and Padilla ‘Evangelism and Social Responsibility’, 29, to know who had problems with the Covenant’s social affirmation. The list included Peter Wagner, Ralph Winter, Donald McGavran, Arthur Johnston, and Peter Beyerhaus. Hedlund mentions these individuals sympathetically from a ‘church growth’ perspective, which he shares, while Padilla discusses them from a radical evangelical perspective. Steuernagel attempts a more objective discussion, although he falls decidedly on the radical evangelical side.

²⁴ Chris Sugden, ‘Evangelicals and Wholistic Evangelism’, in Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ in Christ’s Way: Studies in Integral Evangelism* (Oxford, UK: Regnum, 1989), 33.

²⁵ ‘Theology [and] Implications of Radical Discipleship’, in James D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the Earth His Voice* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 1294-1296.

²⁶ ‘Theology and Implications of Radical Discipleship’, 1294-1296.

²⁷ ‘Theology and Implications of Radical Discipleship’, 1294.

²⁸ Sugden, ‘Wholistic Evangelism’, 34.

and delicate moment of consensus. One step backwards”, he posits, “and Lausanne would have lost the radical discipleship group; one step forward and it would have lost the conservative evangelicals.”²⁹

But as much as its broadness proved valuable in the beginning, it eventually needed sharpening if socio-ethical thinking and practice had a future on the evangelical missionary agenda. Predictably, evangelicals went about interpreting and developing the Lausanne social vision according to their respective schools of thought. And as proponents of these various schools encountered one another at conferences, as well as on the mission field, an unprecedented level of tension intensified within the post-Lausanne evangelical missionary community.

Indeed an understanding of holistic mission emerged out of very real tensions between 1974 and 1983. The Covenant’s affirmation of social concern, as well as the prominence of the Statement on Radical Discipleship, led some to believe that what we now call holistic mission would find its way into the evangelical mainstream sooner rather than later. But its acceptance today was by no means instant. In the decade that followed Lausanne ’74 a theological battle ensued as to who would dictate the course of evangelical mission; it brought to the fore the different agendas of evangelicals corresponding to the various schools of thought. At least three overlapping tensions related to socio-political involvement define the contours of the battle.

Narrow view vs. broad view

Narrow and broad views of the nature of mission characterized the first tension, which intensified as early as the first meeting in 1975 of the Lausanne Continuation Committee in Mexico City.³⁰ Meeting with the purpose of clarifying its role in continuing the efforts begun at Lausanne, conservative evangelicals fought for singling out and focusing on evangelism, while others pleaded that all facets of the agreed-upon Covenant be taken seriously, especially the church’s social responsibility. After a week of intense deliberations, the committee tried to take into account both the narrow and the broad by concluding that its purpose was to further the total biblical mission of the church, recognizing that “in this mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary,” and that our particular concern must be the evangelization of the 2.7 billion unreached people of our world.³¹

A year later, the committee convened again in Atlanta, henceforth calling itself the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE). There it formed four working groups, one which the LCWE named the Lausanne Theology and Education Group (LTEG).³² Mandated “to promote theological

²⁹ Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 156.

³⁰ Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 173-179.

³¹ Leighton Ford cited in Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 174.

³² ‘Historical Background of the Lausanne Committee’, in Billy Graham Center Archives, www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/046.HTM#3 (accessed 2 April

reflection on issues related to world evangelization and, in particular, to explore the implications of the Lausanne Covenant”, the LTEG sponsored or co-sponsored four consultations between 1977 and 1982.³³ As social responsibility continued to be a ‘hot potato’, two out of the four consultations dealt with various aspects of evangelical social concern: the 1980 International Consultation on Simple Lifestyle in London (SLC) and the 1982 Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, MI (CRESR).

The SLC in London sought to grasp both the theological and practical meaning of a conviction expressed in Article 9 of the Lausanne Covenant. After expressing shock by world poverty, Article 9 reads, “Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute to both relief and evangelism.”³⁴ In an attempt to take this conviction seriously, participants of the SLC synthesized their findings in a statement they simply called ‘The Commitment’, which made the necessary and unavoidable connection between personal lifestyle and a world of dire poverty.³⁵

Some of the leaders of the LCWE expressed grave concern over the consultation’s findings.³⁶ They accused it of being imbalanced in the selection of participants and therefore imbalanced in theological orientation, leaning on the side of the radical. Moreover, drafters of ‘The Commitment’ did not adequately connect the theme of simple lifestyle to the singular focus of world evangelization. These concerns aggravated the conservative constituency, which interpreted the SLC’s findings as the continued and deliberate ‘torpedoing’ of the specific task of world evangelization, a ‘torpedoing’ that began at Lausanne ’74.³⁷

Undoubtedly, this dissatisfaction strengthened the resolve of the LCWE to reassert its narrower agenda at the 1980 Consultation on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand (COWE) – just three months after the SLC in London. The facilitators of COWE towed the hard line of single-focus evangelism and structured the consultation accordingly around the church growth concept of unreached people groups. Church growth strategist Peter Wagner applauded the fact that COWE upheld ‘the functional definition of evangelism agreed upon by the LCWE’, which read:

2003).

³³ Ford cited in Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 179-180.

³⁴ ‘The Lausanne Covenant’, in John R.W. Stott (ed.), *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996), 34. The drafting committee of the Covenant consisted of five members: John Stott, Samuel Escobar, James Douglas, Leighton Ford, and Hudson Armerding.

³⁵ ‘The Commitment’, in Ronald J. Sider (ed.), *Lifestyle in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1982), 13-19.

³⁶ Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 185-186.

³⁷ C. Peter Wagner, ‘Lausanne Twelve Months Later’, *Christianity Today*, 4 July 1975, 961-963.

The *nature* of world evangelization is the communication of the Good News. The *purpose* is to give individuals and groups a valid opportunity to [hear]. The *goal* is the persuading of men and women to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.³⁸

Wagner praised COWE's steadfast maintenance of this kind of evangelization over and against the "dangerous tendency" espoused by "advocates of holistic evangelism."³⁹ These 'advocates of holistic evangelism' considered this limited vision at COWE as a deplorable step backward. They criticized the LCWE of not being true to the broad, holistic vision of the Covenant and of reducing evangelization once again to the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Samuel and Sugden lament that COWE "seemed... painfully unaware of all the developments in the Lausanne movement in seeking to communicate the whole gospel to the whole world. The years of slow growth in sensitivity to the social dimensions of the gospel and to the contexts in which it was proclaimed, seemed to be wiped out."⁴⁰

Those who concurred with such sentiments joined forces and drafted a Statement of Concerns that nearly one third of COWE delegates signed at the end of the consultation. This statement basically challenged the LCWE to look at the world in terms of social, economic, and political institutions in addition to the category of unreached people groups and to provide guidance for justice to Christians living in oppressed lands and for abetting oppressive regimes. The plea not to isolate verbal proclamation from the total demands of the gospel drove the signers of the Statement of Concerns to challenge the LCWE to take more seriously the social dimensions of the missionary task. The statement demanded that the LCWE reaffirm its commitment to all aspects of the Covenant, encourage study and action in fulfillment of Lausanne's commitment to socio-political involvement, convene a world congress on social responsibility, and give guidelines for evangelicals living in oppressive situations.⁴¹

The chairman of the LCWE, Leighton Ford, took their concerns seriously enough to call a meeting between the LCWE and representatives of the 'concerned group' – namely, Orlando Costas, Vinay Samuel, and Ron Sider.⁴² Tension no doubt filled the meeting. But as a result, claims Costas, the official final version of the Thailand Statement, drafted by Stott, "did address... some of the issues that we were raising."⁴³

³⁸ C. Peter Wagner, 'Lausanne's Consultation on World Evangelization: A Personal Assessment', *TSF Bulletin* 4:1 (October 1980), 3.

³⁹ Wagner, 'Lausanne's Consultation', 3.

⁴⁰ Samuel and Sugden cited in Steuernagel, 'The Theology of Mission', 196-197.

⁴¹ 'Statement of Concerns', in Rene Padilla and Chris Sugden (eds.), *Texts on Evangelical Social Ethics, 1974-1983* (Nottingham, UK: Grove Books, 1985), 24-25.

⁴² Orlando Costas, 'Report on Thailand '80', *TSF Bulletin* 4:1 (October 1980), 5.

⁴³ Costas, 'Report on Thailand '80', 5.

Costas, however, describes the subsequent formal response of the LCWE to the Statement of Concerns as “cool and disappointing.”⁴⁴ Its overall response consisted, first of all, of denying the charge that the LCWE undermined the comprehensive scope of the Covenant; second, that plans were already underway for a consultation on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility; and third, that it was not the place of the LCWE to give guidelines for evangelicals in oppressed and discriminatory lands. The disappointment of the signers of the Statement of Concerns was palpable. Costas wrote, “[The response] made us wonder how committed indeed was the LCWE to the whole of the Lausanne Covenant.”⁴⁵

The tension between the narrow and broad views of evangelization came to a head at Pattaya, and the narrow view won the official battle. By the end of 1980, Steuernagel rightly observes that “the evangelical family was more divided than [ever]. While the SLC was interpreted as speaking too much the language of the ‘radical evangelicals’, COWE was being criticized not only because it had excluded ‘social responsibility’... but also because it was embracing [too narrow] a definition and strategy of evangelization.”⁴⁶

Prioritization vs. holism

The narrowness or broadness of mission characterized the first tension; the relationship between social concern and evangelism in that mission described the second tension. These obviously interrelate, but whereas different answers to the question, ‘Is social responsibility included at all in the task of world evangelization?’ created the first tension, struggling with, ‘If social responsibility, then where does it fit into the overall scheme of that task?’ created the second tension. Few missiologists at that point would have disputed that social responsibility has some role to play (in light of Article 5 of the Covenant), but how important a role with reference to evangelism? While conservatives maintained the primacy of evangelism, radicals questioned the very language of prioritization.

If any hope existed to find some level of consensus on the social question, it hinged upon the 1982 Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, MI (CRESR). Steuernagel’s description of the CRESR as “the most carefully planned, sensitive, feared, and threatening consultation ever held by the LCWE” underscores what was at stake – namely, unity or another tragic split of the worldwide evangelical family.⁴⁷ The CRESR gathered fifty evangelicals from around the world to

⁴⁴ Orlando Costas, ‘Proclaiming Christ in the Two Thirds World’, in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds), *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 3.

⁴⁵ Costas, ‘Proclaiming Christ’, 3.

⁴⁶ Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 18.

⁴⁷ Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 199.

understand better the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in biblical, historical, and missiological perspectives.

For a full week, the delegates presented papers and responded to each other with openness and respect as well as with honesty and intensity, in what turned out to be, according to the CRESR chairpersons Bong Rin Ro and Gottfried Osei-Mensah, “a model of how Christians should approach a... divisive issue”.⁴⁸ The CRESR produced a seven-chapter, sixty-four-page document entitled ‘The Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility: an Evangelical Commitment’.⁴⁹

The strength of the report relied on the fact that it did not arrive at any one conclusion concerning the relationship; instead it offered a range of possibilities that it considered faithful to biblical and historic Christianity. According to the report, social action can be understood as: (1) a *consequence of evangelism* – one of the principle aims of a changed life is to serve others; (2) a *bridge to evangelism* – with no need of manipulation, good deeds naturally create opportunities to share the gospel; and (3) a *partner with evangelism* – the church must witness Christ in the world by both word and deed.⁵⁰ Due to this range of valid views, delegates for the most part reached an important level of consensus on the subject.

As important a level of consensus as the CRESR reached, however, it still operated under a false North American-nurtured dualism between body and soul and between social and spiritual, thus separating two vital realities from each other and then falsely asking which one has priority over the other.⁵¹ Many evangelicals desired to do away completely with the falsity of this unbiblical dualism, to begin to train their thinking and therefore their doing in more non-dualistic, i.e. holistic, terms. For the most part, at least early on, those who adhered to these holistic notions remained somewhat marginalized from the mainstream of the Lausanne movement.

First world theology vs. two thirds world theology

The third notable tension between evangelicals in the decade after Lausanne had to do with power shifts in theology and mission. Lausanne opened the door for two thirds world evangelicals to take seriously their respective contexts for informing their view of God, worship, church, and mission. As evangelicals in these parts of the world began to assert themselves, tension emerged between western and non-western mission theologians.

⁴⁸ Bong Rin Ro and Gottfried Osei-Mensah, ‘Preface’, in Bruce J. Nicholls (ed.), *Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 7.

⁴⁹ ‘The Grand Rapids Report’, in John R.W. Stott (ed.), *Making Christ Known*, 167-210.

⁵⁰ ‘The Grand Rapids Report’, *Making Christ Known*, 181-182. Italics mine.

⁵¹ Mark Lau Branson, ‘Striving for Obedience, Haunted by Dualism’, *TSF Bulletin* 6:1 (September/October 1982), 11.

Two thirds world evangelicals did not wait for the LCWE to ‘see the light’ of holism. In spite of the hesitancy of institutional evangelicalism, evangelicals who were profoundly touched by Lausanne’s broader vision began to initiate local movements. Indeed some of the most significant fruit of the post-Lausanne period resulted not so much from activities emanating from LCWE headquarters but from “local, national or regional initiatives.”⁵²

Consistent with these local initiatives, a second movement began with a discussion among many of the same people who signed the Statement of Concerns at Pattaya. In their disappointment for the way COWE went, they “resolved to meet again as a two thirds world consultation.”⁵³ Making good on their promise, the first consultation – framed and organized for the first time by theologians of evangelical conviction from the two thirds world – convened in 1982 at Bangkok to discuss Christology. This gathering led to the formation of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians in 1987 (INFEMIT).

A third movement among many of these same evangelicals began as they considered the implications of the gospel to the growing practice of development. A significant meeting occurred in September 1978 between five concerned evangelicals who proposed a long-term biblical and theological reflection process on development.⁵⁴ From that brainstorming and planning session, another meeting convened with theologians and practitioners in April 1979 where the participants determined the need for a consultation on a theology of development. Hence in March 1980, a consultation of that title, sponsored by WEF’s Theological Commission, convened (just a week before and in the same location as the SLC). The Consultation on a Theology of Development (CTD) not only forged ahead with exploring the meaning of evangelical socio-political involvement, it also steered evangelical thinking in the decisive direction of holistic community development.

The CTD appointed a steering committee to continue reflecting upon the theme of development since the consultation only scratched the surface of this vital practice. This steering committee committed itself to a three year study process that culminated at the Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need in 1983 held in Wheaton, Illinois, USA. More than culminating the particular study process on development, however, Wheaton ’83 served as a significant marker for the theological maturation of holistic mission thinking among many evangelicals after Lausanne.

At this consultation, the word ‘transformation’ was adopted to convey the large vision of God’s redemption, which includes socio-political structures and the human heart and everything in between. Samuel and Sugden offered the

⁵² Steuernagel, ‘The Theology of Mission’, 170-171.

⁵³ Sugden, ‘Wholistic Evangelism’, 38.

⁵⁴ Ronald J. Sider, ‘Introduction’, in Ronald J. Sider (ed.), *Evangelicals and Development: Toward a Theology of Social Change* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1981), 107. The ‘five concerned evangelicals’ were Wayne Bragg, Bruce Nicholls, John Robinson, Vinay Samuel and Ronald Sider.

following definition of transformation in 1999: “Transformation is to enable God’s vision of society to be actualized in all relationships, social, economic and spiritual, so that God’s will be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor”.⁵⁵

Ever since the holistic missionary movement took on the name ‘transformation,’ its proponents have steadily advanced their agenda throughout the world, urging churches and mission agencies to refuse to understand evangelization without liberation, a change of heart without a change of social structures, vertical reconciliation (between God and people) without horizontal reconciliation (between people and people), and church planting without community building. Although the degree of integration between these dimensions of mission continues to vary, holistic mission has found its way in the mainstream consciousness and practice of evangelicals around the world.

⁵⁵ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden in Chris Sugden, ‘Transformational Development: Current State of Understanding and Practice’, *Transformation* 20.2 (April 2003), 71.