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Citation for published version:

Stanley, B 2013, "Lausanne 1974": The Challenge of the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 64, no. 3, pp. 533-551.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S002204691200067X>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S002204691200067X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S002204691200067X)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Stanley, B. (2013). "Lausanne 1974": The Challenge of the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 64(3), 533-551. 10.1017/S002204691200067X

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The Journal of Ecclesiastical History / Volume 64 / Issue 03 / July 2013, pp 533 - 551
DOI: 10.1017/S002204691200067X, Published online: 06 June 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S002204691200067X

How to cite this article:

BRIAN STANLEY (2013). ‘Lausanne 1974’: The Challenge from the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 64, pp 533-551 doi:10.1017/S002204691200067X

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‘Lausanne 1974’: The Challenge from the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism

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The International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974 was a seminal event in the history of Evangelicalism. This article considers the significance of the congress as an arena for the emergence of challenges from Latin America and Africa to the social and political conservatism that characterised much of the Evangelical movement in the northern hemisphere. These challenges demanded that Christian mission should be defined as a broader process than evangelism alone, and made their mark on the ‘Lausanne Covenant’, a document adopted by the congress which has had normative status among Evangelicals ever since.

In the course of the last century, Evangelicalism has been progressively transformed from a tradition shaped by the perspectives and assumptions of Anglo-American conservative Protestantism into a multi-cultural global Christian family, the larger part of whose members are located in, or originate from, the ‘majority world’ of Africa, Asia and Latin

BGCA 46 = Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Illinois, Collection 46, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization; *CEN* = *Church of England Newspaper*; *CT* = *Christianity Today*; IFES = International Fellowship of Evangelical Students; *IRM* = *International Review of Mission*; WCC = World Council of Churches

For insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article I am indebted to David Bebbington, Alister Chapman, Leighton Ford and Mark Noll. I am also greatly indebted to Bob Shuster and the other archival staff of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, Illinois, for their ready co-operation in my research. A longer version of this article forms part of my book, *The global diffusion of Evangelicalism: the age of Billy Graham and John Stott*, Nottingham 2013.

America. The consequences of this transition for the theological, social and cultural complexion of the Evangelical movement are immense, and are still being played out. This article is concerned with only one, albeit weighty, implication of the southward reorientation of Evangelicalism, namely its consequences for Evangelical attitudes to questions of social and economic justice, and their place within the mission of the Church. On both sides of the Atlantic, 'conservative' Evangelicalism was by the 1970s manifesting signs of an awakened social conscience, leading in some instances to confessedly radical expressions of Christian witness and obedience.¹ These new forms of Evangelical spirituality were inspired partly by a rediscovery of the Anabaptist tradition of radical discipleship, and partly, in the United States, by the involvement of some black Evangelicals in the civil rights movement. Nevertheless, for many Evangelicals issues of social and economic justice remained marginal to their understanding of the mission of the Church. That situation only began to change once it became clear that Evangelicalism was now a multi-cultural global community which included a large and growing sector that was neither white nor affluent. The point at which that realisation dawned on some Evangelicals in the North can be identified quite precisely: it was at the International Congress on World Evangelization held at Lausanne in July 1974. This article interprets the particular significance of the congress – an event of much wider importance for the Evangelical movement – as the occasion when some cherished assumptions held by Evangelicals in the North were first publicly challenged by Evangelical voices from the southern hemisphere.

The Lausanne Congress was convened by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association as a sequel to the World Congress on Evangelism held in Berlin in 1966. In January 1970 the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association convened a small international group of advisors to consider whether a sequel to Berlin would be desirable; the unanimous view was that it would not. However, when Graham invited a similar group of sixteen to a meeting in November 1971 to reconsider the question, he found a more favourable response. Although there was no desire simply to repeat the Berlin experience, 'a fairly clear consensus of opinion' was now evident that 'we ought to be looking again at the whole mission of the Church, bearing in mind that this involves making disciples, baptising and teaching'.² It was agreed to consider planning a second world congress to take place in the summer of 1974 with the aim 'To unite all evangelicals in the common task of total Evangelization of the world.' The proposed congress would have

¹ See the Chicago Declaration on Evangelical Social Concern (1973), *IRM* lxiii (1974), 274–5.

² Billy Graham, *Just as I am: the autobiography of Billy Graham*, London 1997, 568; A.J. Dain to Charles Troutman, 17 Feb. 1972, BGCA 46, box 30/1.

a more pronounced emphasis on the Church than did Berlin: it would involve 'the entire mission of the church'.³ Exactly what that phrase meant would turn out to be a central issue at Lausanne.

A major influence on Evangelical thinking at the time was the radical turn taken by mainline ecumenism in the wake of the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1968. The WCC appeared increasingly to be defining the mission of the Church in terms of humanisation and political liberation; Evangelical leaders felt that a restatement of a more orthodox yet properly comprehensive view of Christian mission was imperative. Graham was convinced that 'There is a vacuum developing in the world church. Radical theology has had its heyday.' His vision was for a congress in which 'every participant must be totally and thoroughly evangelical' and at least half should be under the age of forty.⁴ Although the final decision to hold the congress was not taken until March 1972, it was clear from December 1971 that Graham and his organisation were committed to bringing this vision to reality.⁵

One participant in the meetings in 1970 and 1971 was A. J. ('Jack') Dain, assistant bishop in Sydney diocese, the stronghold of Australian Evangelical Anglicanism. Jack Dain was English, and as a lay missionary in north India had first come to Graham's notice as the organiser of his tour of India in January 1956. After training for the Anglican ministry, he became federal secretary of the Australian Church Missionary Society until 1965, when he was consecrated as assistant bishop.⁶ At the December 1971 meeting Graham asked him to be chairman of a ten-man planning committee.⁷ Dain then wrote letters to contacts in different continents, inviting nominations of suitable 'younger' national leaders to serve on the planning committee: Graham was emphatic in his view that the committee should not be dominated by Americans, and that 'national representatives of the younger Churches' should share in the planning 'right from the outset'.⁸ Although Dain's name is rarely mentioned today, he, alongside Graham's brother-in-law, Leighton Ford, and Paul Little of the American

³ Minutes, World Evangelization Strategy Consultation, 27 Nov., 2 Dec. 1971, BGCA 46, box 30/27.

⁴ Meeting of the consultative conference, International Congress on World Evangelization, Vero Beach, Florida, 23-4 Mar. 1972, *ibid.*

⁵ William Martin, *A prophet with honor: the Billy Graham story*, New York 1991, 441.

⁶ Graham, *Just as I am*, 264; J. C. Pollock, *Shadows fall apart: the story of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission*, London 1958, 186, 200; *Crockford's clerical directory*, 1973-4, BGCA 46, box 30/27.

⁷ Minutes, World Evangelization Strategy Consultation, 2 Dec. 1971, BGCA 46, box 30/27.

⁸ Dain to Troutman, 17 Feb. 1972, *ibid.* box 30/1. See also Dain to S. H. Iggulden, 23 Feb. 1972; Dain to S. Escobar, 12 Apr. 1972, and similar letters in the same file to David Stewart, Michael Griffiths, David McLagan and Ben Wati.

Inter-Varsity movement (parallel to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in Britain), was to be one of the three key figures in shaping the congress agenda.

One of those to whom Dain wrote seeking nominations for membership of the planning committee was Charles Troutman, a senior staff member of the Latin America Mission, and a leading figure in American Inter-Varsity. He was involved in transforming the Latin America Mission from an American-led foreign mission to an indigenous Christian movement led by nationals, under the new Spanish name of the *Comunidad Latinoamericana de Ministerios Evangélicos* (CLAME). As director of Latin America Mission/CLAME's Ministry to the Student World from 1967, Troutman forged close links with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). In its expanding work among university students in Latin America, IFES had encountered the predominant influence of Marxist ideology to a greater extent than in any other continent. The emerging leaders of the Evangelical student movement in Latin America accordingly placed a high priority on the construction of a thoughtful biblical response to the Marxist analysis of structural injustice in society. Sensitive to the dangers of identifying the Evangelical cause in the continent with the influence of the United States, they emphasised the importance of following 'the missionary principles found in the New Testament ... the respect for local initiative, the search for local leadership, the decision not to impose prefabricated patterns of action and witness'.⁹ IFES in Latin America pioneered a new style of being Evangelical which was penetrating in its social criticism and unusually conscious of the dangers of religious imperialism.¹⁰

Troutman's response to Dain urged that the forthcoming congress must take seriously the perspectives of younger Christian leaders. It must also, he insisted, take a strong stand on the question of race and take full cognisance of 'the environment of the third world', where 'the element of revolution is the natural habitat for the proclamation of the Gospel'.¹¹ Troutman's nominations for membership of the planning committee included the name of a young Peruvian Baptist, Samuel Escobar, as well as those of three of the other leaders of the new Latin American Evangelicals: Dr C. René Padilla, an Ecuadorean member of the Baptist movement, now based in Argentina, who was associate general secretary of IFES for Latin America; Orlando Costas (1942–87), a young Puerto Rican Baptist teaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica under the auspices of the Latin America Mission, who would soon attract global attention for his 'radical Evangelical' brand of missiology; and Sergio García of Mexico, the Latin American Director of Campus Crusade for

⁹ Samuel Escobar, cited in Pete Lowman, *The day of his power: a history of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*, Leicester 1983, 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 202–3.

¹¹ Troutman to Dain, 28 Feb. 1972, BGCA 46, box 30/1.

Christ. Escobar had been a leader of the Peruvian Evangelical student movement, the *Circulo Biblico Universitario*, and was the author of a study in apologetics written for students, *Dialogo entre Cristo y Marx*. In 1972 he was appointed as general director of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Canada, a bold appointment which brought one of the leading voices of the new Latin American Evangelicalism into an influential position in the North. Escobar readily agreed to serve on the congress planning committee as one of the two Latin American representatives. With Padilla, Escobar would be one of the two speakers at Lausanne who proved most challenging to northern ears; he was the only representative of the majority world to be appointed to the subcommittee of five given the task of drafting what became the Lausanne Covenant.

The thirty-one members of the planning committee also included a Puerto Rican (not Costas), two Africans and six Asians. Eleven of the thirty-one were thus from the majority world. Although the United States alone had twelve members on the planning committee, the eleven formed a significant presence which was destined to leave its mark on the congress itself. All thirty-one were men.¹²

In addition to recruiting suitable members of the planning committee, there was a need to attract broad international support for the proposed congress. By mid-July 1972 Graham and Dain had sent a total of eighty-five letters to Evangelical leaders around the world, inviting them to serve as convenors of the congress. Seventy-two affirmative replies had immediately been received, a total which in time would grow to 150. One of those so invited by Graham was the leading Evangelical Anglican, John R. W. Stott (1921–2011), but Stott's initial reply to Graham, which he copied to Dain, was hesitant. Stott wanted to see the purpose of the congress defined in terms of the formulation of a carefully considered strategy for world evangelisation (rather than simply rousing exhortations to finish the task), and expressed grave concern at reports that the congress would have between 3,000 and 5,000 delegates – a sure recipe for ineffectiveness in his view.¹³ Graham's reply assured Stott that his point concerning the size of the congress was 'well taken', but reiterated his vision that it would 'make an impact on the world', a goal which required a larger event that Stott had in mind.¹⁴ Dain also wrote a personal letter urging Stott to lend his unequivocal backing; he noted that in contrast to the enthusiastic letters which had flooded in from those involved in 'real missionary outreach

¹² CT, 16 Aug. 1974, 35, lists twenty-nine members. The Lausanne movement's website, <http://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/historical-background.html> [accessed 25 May 2011], describes the committee as being made up of thirty-one members, but does not list them.

¹³ J. R. W. Stott to B. Graham, 30 May 1972, BGCA 46, box 29/35.

¹⁴ Graham to Stott, 28 June 1972, *ibid.*

throughout the world', Europe had been the source of some theological criticism of the idea; he evidently feared that Stott was about to join the ranks of the critics, which would have been fatal to the standing of the congress.¹⁵

Dain's alarm was increased by the receipt of a long letter from the general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance in Britain, Gordon Landreth, which was 'full of criticisms and misgivings'. He received a similar letter of concern from Dr John Laird, former general secretary of Scripture Union in Britain, who served as president of the Evangelical Alliance in Britain from 1970 to 1972. Dain therefore wrote again to Stott, asking for his advice on whether he should make a special visit to London, given that the relationship between the congress and the British Evangelical Alliance seemed to be 'running into extremely heavy water'.¹⁶ Stott did not reply immediately to either of Dain's letters, but consulted the Alliance leadership and telephoned Dain on 23 August. Stott informed Dain in a letter written the next day that he had sufficiently reassured him that the congress was to be a properly prepared study conference, though his anxieties about size remained. Nevertheless, he indicated that he would, contrary to rumour, be willing to join the planning committee;¹⁷ in the event, he was not to do so, though he became the most influential member of the preparatory committee charged with drafting the Lausanne Covenant.

The misgivings held by British Evangelical leaders about the planned congress were deep-rooted and symptomatic of fundamental differences between British and American Evangelical culture. Dain confessed to Stott that as 'one who is still in many ways an Englishman', he found the swelling chorus of British disapproval, viewed against the favourable reactions of the rest of the world, 'particularly distressing'. However, he was able to report a number of changes to the plans which ought to give British critics some encouragement—all staff members of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, except Leighton Ford, had been removed from the planning committee, and seven majority world leaders had been added in their place.¹⁸ Nevertheless, British concerns over the congress continued to be voiced openly in the Christian press: it was feared that it would be on a grand scale, would prove inappropriately expensive in view of the current scale of global poverty, and that a venue would be chosen in which

¹⁵ Dain to Stott, 18 July 1972, *ibid.* box 30/1.

¹⁶ Dain to Stott, 26 July, 11 Sept. 1972, *ibid.* Landreth attended Lausanne and defended the congress in the *CEN* against more strident critics, such as David Winter: *CEN*, 14 June 1974, 9. For Laird see his autobiography, *No mere chance*, London 1981.

¹⁷ Stott to Dain, 24 Aug. 1972, BGCA 46, box 30/1.

¹⁸ Dain to Stott, 11 Sept. 1972, *ibid.* box 30/12 In June 1972 there were only four members from the majority world out of seventeen on the planning committee (box 30/3).

delegates would be accommodated in plush hotels, thus making attendance impossible for many from the majority world. The Council of the British Evangelical Alliance urged that the event should instead be located in a Pontins-style holiday camp with simple chalet accommodation.¹⁹ Jack Dain shared many of his compatriots' concerns, and would have preferred an event limited to 1,250 participants, but was unable to persuade the Americans of his case.²⁰ The latter gave the holiday camp suggestion short shrift. Possible venues considered included Rome (though this was soon discarded 'in view of possible difficulties'),²¹ Amsterdam, Brussels, Stockholm and Lausanne. In September 1972 a decision was made to hold the congress at the prestigious Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, with delegates accommodated in a variety of hotels according to their various tastes and budgets.²²

British criticism of the forthcoming congress showed no sign of abating during 1973. The former editor of *Crusade* magazine,²³ David Winter, had a pungent letter published in the *Christian Record* lambasting 'the Evangelical jet-set, for ever flying from one "vital, strategic" talking-shop to another, usually at our expense'.²⁴ Michael Harper of the Fountain Trust, spokesman for charismatic Evangelicals in Britain, joined the fray with a letter to the *Church Times* attacking Lausanne as both extravagant and exclusive in the narrow theological range of its proponents.²⁵ Harper saw Lausanne as an 'American dominated and financed' endeavour that presented 'an "establishment" image of evangelism that we are all too familiar with'.²⁶ *The Church of England Newspaper* agreed, dismissing the congress as 'an expensive, imposed, pretentious talk-in'.²⁷ *Crusade* made no mention of the Lausanne Congress until January 1974, when a brief report noted that increasing costs had forced a 10 per cent reduction in the planned number of delegates from 3,000 to 2,700, and that prices for United Kingdom participants had been 'considerably lowered'.²⁸ The magazine pointedly made no further reference to the congress until its July 1974 issue.

¹⁹ G. Landreth to G. Kirby, 7 Sept. 1972, *ibid.* box 30/12.

²⁰ Dain to Kirby, 7 July 1972, *ibid.*

²¹ Minutes of planning committee, 24–5 Aug. 1972, *ibid.* box 30/28.

²² Report on congress sites and recommendation concerning congress location, *ibid.* box 30/23.

²³ The Evangelical Alliance began publication of *Crusade* magazine in 1955 following Billy Graham's London Crusade at Haringay arena in 1954.

²⁴ *Christian Record*, 2 Nov. 1973, cutting in BGCA 46, Box 29/40.

²⁵ *Church Times*, 16 Nov. 1973, 14.

²⁶ *Crusade* (Apr. 1973), 11; (July 1973), 13–16; Michael Harper to Kirby, 20 Nov. 1973, and Harper to Dain, 26 Nov. 1973, BGCA 46, Box 29/40.

²⁷ *CEN*, 4 Jan. 1974, 5.

²⁸ *Crusade* (Jan. 1974), 16.

Participation in Lausanne was on an invitation-only basis according to national quotas agreed by the planning committee: each country was allowed seven participants for every million Protestants in the population, and a further two participants for every ten million unevangelised people in the country. 1,500 scholarships of £208 each were awarded to participants from the majority world.²⁹ The lukewarm attitude of many British Evangelicals towards the congress was reflected in low levels of enrolment from England, notably from the Church of England; enrolments from Scotland were lower still. It was striking that rates of acceptance from Europe as a whole were well below those of other continents, principally owing to the poor response from Britain and Germany.³⁰

Registrations came in a late rush: amounting by 11 June 1974 to 2,440, plus convenors, spouses, observers, visitors, special guests, press and stewards, amounting to 3,725 in all. By the opening of the congress on 16 July the final total of official participants was 2,473, from 150 different countries and 135 Protestant denominations. Over 1,000 were from the non-western world, but only three African Independent Churches (all from South Africa) were represented. By 11 June 199 women participants had registered, just 8 per cent of the total. Women accounted for only 7.13 per cent of all attendees; Billy Graham had modestly hoped for 10 per cent.³¹ Less than 10 per cent of attendees were lay, whereas Graham had hoped for one-third: for an Evangelical gathering, the preponderance of professional ministers was staggering. More encouraging was the fact that half of all those attending were under the age of forty-four.³² Graham's original vision of a congress in which half of the participants would be from the non-western world and under the age of forty, and one-third would be lay people, was not fulfilled, but the composition of the delegate body at Lausanne came close to meeting two of these three targets.³³

Four of the contributions made by majority world participants at Lausanne merit particular analysis. Two took the form of plenary congress addresses; one was an 'evangelistic strategy paper and report' submitted to one of the optional study groups; and one was a contribution made behind the scenes, yet with signal effect. Eleven of the plenary papers were pre-circulated to participants, and in these cases a separate address under the same title was given in the congress itself, responding to comments received on the pre-circulated paper.

²⁹ Ibid. (Sept. 1974), 25.

³⁰ *CEN*, 5 Apr. 1974, 12; 24 May 1974, 9; 14 June 1974, 9; Director's monthly reports from Donald E. Hoke, 26 Feb., 23 April 1974, BGCA 46, box 30/1.

³¹ Martin, *Prophet with honor*, 442.

³² Ibid; minutes of planning committee, 15 July 1974, BGCA 46, box 122/1. C. René Padilla (ed.), *The new face of Evangelicalism: an international symposium on the Lausanne Covenant*, London 1976, 9.

³³ Martin, *Prophet with honor*, 442-3.

Probably the most controversial of the eleven pre-circulated papers was by René Padilla on the topic 'Evangelism and the world'. His paper insisted that the Gospel has cosmic as well as personal dimensions, and openly attacked American forms of 'culture Christianity' which reduced the Christian message to a form of cheap grace, a marketed product which guaranteed to the consumer 'the highest values—*success* in life and personal *happiness* now and forever'. The paper also criticised the strategists of the church growth movement (his unmentioned target was Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission) for treating the task of world evangelisation as a mere mathematical calculation of how to 'produce the greatest number of Christians at the least possible cost in the shortest possible time', employing the new technological wizardry of computers to solve the problem.³⁴ According to John Capon, editor of *Crusade*, Padilla's paper caused 'a minor sensation' and was attacked as a 'caricature'. The address which followed, pointedly delivered in Spanish rather than English (and simultaneously translated), continued on the same theme, and 'really set the congress alight', attracting the warmest applause of any speaker so far.³⁵ In response to those who had questioned why he had attacked the identification of the Gospel with the American way of life but not with other cultures, Padilla replied that because of the predominant role of the United States both in world affairs and in missionary endeavour, 'this particular form of Christianity, as no other today, has a powerful influence far beyond the borders of that nation'. Still more fundamentally, Padilla answered the charge that he was confusing evangelism with political action by insisting that 'the imperative of the evangelical ethic forms an indissoluble whole with the indicative of the Gospel'.³⁶

The second majority world contribution which attracted particular comment was Samuel Escobar's circulated paper and ensuing address on 'Evangelism and man's search for freedom, justice and fulfilment'. Escobar warned against the danger of making Christianity the official ideology of the west in the same way that Communism had become the official ideology of the eastern bloc. Like Padilla, Escobar also identified the temptation currently facing Evangelicalism as one of withdrawal from the ethical demands of a discipleship lived out in active engagement with a social context in which injustice was rife.³⁷ In his congress address, Escobar

³⁴ C. René Padilla, 'Evangelism and the world', in J. D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the earth hear his voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland: official reference volume: papers and responses*, Minneapolis 1975, 116–33 at p. 126.

³⁵ *Crusade* (Sept. 1974), 26; *CEN*, 26 July 1974, 3.

³⁶ Padilla, 'Evangelism and the world', 134–6, quotations at pp. 136, 144.

³⁷ Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelism and man's search for freedom, justice and fulfilment', in Douglas, *Let the earth hear his voice*, 303–18.

took the text dear to liberation theologians, the 'Nazareth manifesto' of Luke iv.18–19, and insisted that it could not be spiritualised in a world where millions were poor, broken-hearted, captive, blind and bruised. He argued that 'the heart which has been made free with the freedom of Christ cannot be indifferent to the human longings for deliverance from economic, political, or social oppression', and suggested that many of the countries which had succumbed to a violent revolution conducted on Marxist principles were those where Christianity had allowed itself to be identified with the interests of the ruling class.³⁸ Harold Lindsell, in an editorial in *Christianity Today*, gave considerable space to Escobar's address, interpreting it with obvious disapproval as saying that 'socialism is preferable to capitalism'.³⁹ Stott later described it as having 'put the cat among the pigeons'.⁴⁰

The third radical voice from Latin America audible at Lausanne was that of Orlando Costas, then only thirty-two years of age. Costas wrote two papers for the congress, both on the theme of 'Evangelism-in-depth', a programme of contextual evangelism developed by the Latin America Mission from 1959; he was the theological secretary of the Institute of In-Depth Evangelism, in which capacity he travelled extensively throughout the continent.⁴¹ In his longer paper at Lausanne, entitled 'Depth in evangelism – an interpretation of "in-depth" evangelism around the world' – Costas rendered the message of Padilla and Escobar still more explicit by arguing that the Great Commission had an inescapably structural dimension: to evangelise 'in-depth' meant bringing the Gospel to bear, not simply on individuals, but on the socio-economic structures of the present age. In language whose radical connotations may have escaped many of his readers, Costas applied Paulo Freire's term, 'conscientisation', to the need for Christians to be mobilised to apply the Gospel to all areas of their lives.⁴² Not being a platform speaker, Costas was less visible at Lausanne than Padilla or Escobar, yet it is significant that the American Evangelical theologian Carl Henry identified him as the leader of the most radical group among the Latin American Evangelicals at the congress, distinguished by his accusation that 'American evangelical missionary support is tainted by links to imperialistic culture and vested economic interests'.⁴³

³⁸ Idem, 'Evangelization and man's search for freedom, justice and fulfillment', *ibid.* 319–26 at pp. 322, 326.

³⁹ *CT*, 13 Sept. 1974, 24–5.

⁴⁰ John Stott, 'The significance of Lausanne', *IRM* lxiv (1975), 288–94 at p. 289.

⁴¹ Allen Yeh, '*Se hace camino al andar*: periphery and center in the missiology of Orlando Costas', unpubl. DPhil. diss. Oxford 2008, 42–4.

⁴² Orlando Costas, 'Depth in evangelism – an interpretation of "in-depth evangelism" around the world', in Douglas, *Let the earth hear his voice*, 675–94 at p. 682.

⁴³ *CT*, 13 Sept. 1974, 66.

The fourth contribution from a ‘Third World’ participant was of a different kind. John Gatu, the Kenyan general secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, had been converted in 1950 under the influence of the East African Revival. As a result, he had turned his back on his involvement in anti-colonial politics as an administrator of loyalty oaths during the early stages of the Mau Mau movement, and, following theological training at St Paul’s United Theological College in Limuru, was ordained in 1955. Gatu was one of the Revival’s most notable Kenyan supporters, and his unashamed indebtedness to the Revival’s focus on the Cross is evident on the cover and title page of his own book, *Joyfully Christian † Truly African*, in which the title and subtitle are connected, not by a colon, but by the symbol of the Cross.⁴⁴ At the same time, Gatu became a well-known figure in ecumenical circles, especially after his call at the Milwaukee Mission Festival in 1971 for a moratorium on the sending of western missionaries, in order to promote the responsible selfhood of the non-western (and particularly African) Churches, many of which remained heavily dependent on external aid.⁴⁵ Gatu raised the moratorium issue again at the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism conference in Bangkok in January 1973.⁴⁶ The question was also taken up by the All Africa Conference of Churches at its Assembly in Lusaka in May 1974. Perhaps because of his role in originating the call for a moratorium, Gatu found himself, by the time the Lausanne Congress opened, a member of the central committee of the WCC, a vice-chairman of its Commission on Faith and Order, and chairman of the general committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches – bodies which most of those present at Lausanne regarded with suspicion, if not hostility. As a vice-chairman, he was expected to attend the Commission on Faith and Order meeting at Accra from 23 July to 5 August 1974, but chose instead to accept an invitation to be one of the 150 international ‘convenors’ of the Lausanne Congress. His decision was influenced by reports that an attempt would be made at Lausanne to form a global council of Evangelical Churches in direct competition with the WCC, a potential outcome that Gatu regarded as disastrous.⁴⁷

The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation thus gathered with the originator of the call for a missionary moratorium present as one of the official convenors, a paradox which many conservative participants regarded as anomalous in the extreme. Gatu accordingly found that his

⁴⁴ J. E. Church, *Quest for the highest: an autobiographical account of the East African Revival*, Exeter 1981, 248; John G. Gatu, *Joyfully Christian † Truly African*, Nairobi 2006.

⁴⁵ Gatu, *Joyfully Christian*, 169–76; Elliott Kendall, *The end of an era: Africa and the missionary*, London 1978, 86–107.

⁴⁶ Kendall, *End of an era*, 92; *Christian Century*, 25 Sept. 1974, 871.

⁴⁷ Personal conversation with John Gatu, 22 Apr. 2008.

credentials as an Evangelical were widely questioned. Billy Graham, in his opening evening address, received 'roaring' applause when he urged the rejection of limitation of evangelism to near-neighbours on the grounds that this would 'shut out at least a billion from any possibility of knowing the Savior'.⁴⁸ Gatu was asked privately what he thought of Graham's remark, and said that he was entitled to his view, but was in danger of speaking on an issue which he did not understand. A private meeting was convened involving Gatu, Graham, John Stott and Michael Green, principal of St John's College, Nottingham, and a firm supporter of the 'new Evangelicalism'. The issue was then taken up in a 'spirited debate' among the sixty members of the East Africa strategy group (national or regional strategy groups met for daily sessions). Some leading members, such as Erica Sabiti, former archbishop of Uganda, and Henry Okullu, Anglican bishop of Maseno South, both of whom were also deeply influenced by the East African Revival, took a different view from Gatu. The group's official statement declined to endorse the idea of a general moratorium, but highlighted the issue of unhealthy dependence on foreign resources, and recommended 'the concept behind moratorium' for consideration in specific contexts.⁴⁹

Gatu had enough support from the East Africa strategy group to be given the opportunity to address the full congress on the issue as a spokesman for the group: he told delegates that the African Church was over-dependent on the west, and that a temporary cessation of western assistance 'would force Africans to assume new responsibilities'.⁵⁰ As a result, a significant insertion was made in the draft text of the section of the Lausanne Covenant dealing with 'the urgency of the evangelistic task': 'A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all continents in a spirit of humble service.'⁵¹ Stott's subsequent exposition and commentary on the Covenant referred to the currency given to the call for a missionary moratorium by the Bangkok conference, noted that the call was 'emotive' and 'not altogether understood', and explained that the Covenant had therefore avoided the term 'moratorium' and clarified the concept.⁵² Gatu himself felt that, despite the substantial amendment of the original

⁴⁸ *CT*, 13 Sept. 1974, 90; Billy Graham, 'Why Lausanne?', in Douglas, *Let the earth hear his voice*, 33; *Crusade* (Sept. 1974), 24. ⁴⁹ *CT*, 16 Aug. 1974, 36–7.

⁵⁰ *Crusade*, Sept. 1974, 30; *Christian Century*, 21–8 Aug. 1974, 790.

⁵¹ Compare paragraph 8 of 'the first draft' of the Covenant in BGCA 46, box 27/4, with paragraph 9 of the final version in Douglas, *Let the earth hear his voice*, 6.

⁵² <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-3.html#9>, section 9D [accessed 25 May 2011].

concept of a missionary 'withdrawal' to a mere 'reduction', the fact that the Congress had faced the issue 'showed a promising change in attitude on the part of the evangelicals' which he had not anticipated.⁵³ Most northern Evangelicals of conservative inclination remained un-persuaded of Gatu's case.⁵⁴ Among the 'new Evangelicals' who saw Lausanne as an endorsement of their position, Gatu's credentials as an Evangelical remained secure. He was selected to present the paper on 'the urgency of the evangelistic task' in a subsequent symposium convened by Padilla and Escobar to discuss the fifteen sections of the Covenant, which was published in 1976 as *The new face of Evangelicalism* with a foreword by Stott.⁵⁵

The insertion which Gatu secured in the section of the Covenant dealing with the urgency of the evangelistic task was only one, and not even the most important, of a series of changes made to the Covenant in the course of the congress. The Covenant originated in a fifteen-paragraph statement drafted on the basis of the pre-circulated papers in March 1974 by Dr J. D. Douglas from Scotland, former editor of *The Christian* newspaper.⁵⁶ Although later described by John Stott as bearing 'no resemblance' to the final Covenant,⁵⁷ Douglas's fifteen-point structure appears to have survived substantially intact right through to the final version, apart from some minor surgery and re-ordering. His statement was submitted to an administrative committee which met in Lausanne at the end of March, was there modified, and then considered at the congress itself by a drafting committee comprising Stott as chairman, Hudson Armerding (president of Wheaton College), Samuel Escobar, J. D. Douglas and Leighton Ford.⁵⁸ The drafting committee made further revisions before circulating the third draft of the document (now known as the Covenant) to all participants, with a request that individuals or groups submit proposals for amendment.

⁵³ Padilla, *New face of Evangelicalism*, 165. See also Gatu, *Joyfully Christian*, 136. Personal communication with John Gatu, 22 Apr. 2008.

⁵⁴ See, for example, *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1974), 25.

⁵⁵ Padilla, *New face of Evangelicalism*, 163–76.

⁵⁶ Accounts of the origins of the Covenant vary in the respective roles given to Douglas and Stott. Compare minutes of administrative committee, 26 Mar. 1974, BGCA 46, box 27/4 (to which is appended what is termed 'the first draft' of the Covenant, but is in fact the third draft submitted to all participants mid-way through the Congress); Stott's own preface to the Covenant at <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-3.html#P> [accessed 25 May 2011]; *Crusade* (Sept. 1974), 31; Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: a global ministry*, Leicester 2001, 212–13; and Padilla, *New face of Evangelicalism*, 10. The definitive scholarly biography of John Stott by Alister Chapman, *Godly ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical movement*, New York, 2012, appeared too late to be fully referenced in this article, although I am indebted to Dr Chapman for his comments on an earlier draft.

⁵⁷ Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 212.

⁵⁸ Minutes of planning committee, 19 July 1974, BGCA 46, Box 122/1. Douglas's fifteen points were reduced to fourteen by the third draft, but the final version reverted to fifteen through the addition of a section on freedom and persecution.

Several hundred such were submitted. The largest group to do so was the 'Theology and Radical Discipleship' group, whose fringe meetings attracted over 500 participants, mainly of the younger generation. It represented both the new Latin American Evangelicals and some more radical Evangelicals in the North, such as the American Mennonite, John Howard Yoder. Before the final version of the Covenant appeared, the group circulated an alternative statement of its own, 'A response to Lausanne' which affirmed the cosmic scope of redemption and repudiated any attempt 'to drive a wedge between evangelism and social action' as 'demonic'.⁵⁹ Although Stott, who had held a series of cordial meetings with the group's leaders, privately regretted the undermining of Evangelical unity represented by their unilateral action, he borrowed some key phrases from the 'Response' in the Covenant, notably its emphasis that 'those who proclaim the cross must be continually marked by the cross'. He also took some of the wind out of the radicals' sails by publicly announcing that he would sign the 'Response' in addition to the Covenant itself.⁶⁰

The final version of the Covenant was prepared by Stott during two long nights of editorial work. Comparison of the third draft with the final version reveals the skill with which he amended the text in ways calculated to bridge the gap between the more radical Evangelicals and conservatives such as the American philosopher, Francis Schaeffer, or the Tübingen theologian, Peter Beyerhaus. Crucially, the section on Christian social responsibility was promoted from paragraph 7 to paragraph 5, and was significantly strengthened in its phrasing. Paragraph 8 on churches in evangelistic partnership now began with a bold declaration: 'We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing'. Paragraph 9, on the urgency of the evangelistic task, gained both the section already discussed on possible national reductions in expatriate missionary numbers and funding, and a hard-hitting conclusion on the duty incumbent on the more affluent to develop a simple life-style. In paragraph 10, on evangelism and culture, the initial statement that 'missions have *sometimes* exported with the gospel an alien culture' became 'missions have *all too frequently* exported with the gospel an alien culture' [my italics]. In paragraph 12, on 'spiritual conflict', an undue preoccupation by the Church with statistics or their dishonest use (a point raised by both Padilla and Escobar) was now

⁵⁹ *IRM* lxiii (1974), 574-6. For the youthful composition of the Theology and Radical Discipleship see *CEN*, 9 Aug. 1974, 2.

⁶⁰ *Crusade* (Sept. 1974), 29; *CT*, 13 Sept. 1974, 66-7; Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 215. Paragraph 6 of the Covenant urged that 'a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross'.

more roundly castigated as an example of worldliness infiltrating the Church.⁶¹

On day nine of the congress Stott presented the final text of the Covenant to participants, not for official 'adoption', but with the invitation that those who so wished should sign it. Some 2,000 of the 2,473 participants did so. John Capon commented in *Crusade* that it was Stott's masterly performance in this presentation, even more than his opening address on the biblical basis of evangelism, which clearly established him as 'the key figure in contemporary world evangelicalism'.⁶² More than any other leading figure at Lausanne, Stott had taken up the concerns of those who spoke for Evangelicals in the majority world and interpreted them sympathetically to those, in the United States in particular, who were fearful that the new radical Evangelicalism was simply a reincarnation of the old 'social gospel' which they believed had led inexorably to spiritual bankruptcy in the WCC. There is little doubt that Stott's own capacity to endorse the concerns of the southern Evangelicals was enhanced by the fact that the two leading spokesmen – Padilla and Escobar – were trusted leaders in the Evangelical student movements so close to his own heart.

Especially in Britain, Lausanne tends to be remembered for Stott's remarkable skills of conciliation and diplomacy, and that reputation is well merited, though he was in no sense the architect of the congress itself. Stott's achievement enabled British Evangelicals quietly to forget the suspicion with which so many of them (including, in some measure, Stott himself) had initially viewed the plans for the congress. Anglicans in particular may have been tempted to present the event as a triumph for the Anglican *via media* between the two poles of American fundamentalism and the new Evangelical radicalism from the South. Among some of the British Evangelicals most intimately involved, it was the role of Jack Dain as chairman which elicited the warmest admiration in the immediate aftermath of the congress. Gilbert Kirby, principal of London Bible College, wrote to Dain both before and after the congress expressing his admiration for his 'truly magnificent leadership'.⁶³ Dain himself remained deeply grateful to Stott for the hours of work which he had devoted to the drafting of the Covenant and to consultations with the Radical Discipleship group, which he correctly regarded as 'tremendously important . . . for the whole integrity of the Congress'.⁶⁴ He was also encouraged at the tone of the reports in the British Christian press, and observed in a letter to Kirby that 'quite a number of people who went almost cynical realized that their

⁶¹ Compare the third draft in BGCA 46, Box 27/4, with the Covenant in its final form in Douglas, *Let the earth hear his voice*, 3–9.

⁶² *Crusade* (Sept. 1974), 31, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 215.

⁶³ Kirby to Dain, 13, 30 July 1974, BGCA 46, box 30/12.

⁶⁴ Dain to Stott, 20 Aug. 1974, *ibid.* box 29/35.

cynicism was not well founded and have been honest enough to admit to a change of mind'.⁶⁵ Dain's comment may well have been applicable to the journalist who exercised the greatest influence over Evangelical opinion in Britain, John Capon, the editor of *Crusade*, who in July 1974 was still lambasting the event for being 'too big, much too big' and conceited in its sense of self-importance, but whose detailed account of the congress in the September issue was, while not uncritical, broadly sympathetic.⁶⁶

If much British Evangelical opinion on the Congress moved from initial scepticism to retrospective enthusiasm for the Covenant and all that it stood for, some American Evangelicals appear to have moved in the opposite direction, from initial enthusiasm for the congress as a rallying cry for world evangelisation to a more guarded attitude towards the broadening of the Evangelical concept of mission which the Covenant undoubtedly represented. An alternative American response was to suggest that the radical voices were quite unrepresentative of the views of participants, even of those from the southern hemisphere. Thus Harold Lindsell, editor of *Christianity Today*, took a broadly favourable but not uncritical view of the congress. A report by Edward Plowman in the 16 August issue claimed that Padilla and Escobar had received more support from Anglo-Saxons than they did from their Latin American peers, citing one meeting of Latin American participants at which Escobar had been 'promptly rebuked by a dozen leaders' for supporting the concept of a missionary moratorium. Escobar had a letter published in reply pointing out that no such rebuke had been issued, and that he personally supported, not a moratorium, but the development of missions 'on a more biblical basis'.⁶⁷ Lindsell's first reaction to the congress, published on 30 August, commented that it was a sign of growing maturity in the worldwide Evangelical constituency that 'there was nothing resembling a party-line at the congress except the common allegiance to the Word of God', a comment which was later echoed by Stott in an article in the *International Review of Mission*.⁶⁸ However, Lindsell criticised both 'the data-oriented church-growth school' and 'the discipleship-demanding compassion and justice group' for insufficient sensitivity to 'the kind of evangelism that permeates society across a broad spectrum embracing the arts and, in fact, all vocational pursuits'.⁶⁹ A major appraisal followed in the 13 September 1974 issue which again applauded the congress for 'reaching a new high in evangelical co-operation'. Nevertheless, Lindsell's article placed a distinctively conservative interpretation on the congress: Lausanne had made

⁶⁵ Dain to Kirby, 1 Oct. 1974, *ibid.* box 30/12. For one such example see Malcolm MacRae in *CT*, 25 Oct. 1974, 21.

⁶⁶ *Crusade* (July 1974), 7; (Sept. 1974), 23-32.

⁶⁷ *CT*, 16 Aug. 1974, 36; 27 Sept. 1974, 21-2.

⁶⁸ Stott, 'The significance of Lausanne', 288.

⁶⁹ *CT*, 30 Aug. 1974, 27.

clear that the ecumenical and Evangelical movements preached two wholly antithetical gospels, so that 'whoever accepts one must repudiate the other'; it had defined mission as 'the evangelization of the world'; and it had commendably refused to put social action 'on the same plane with the proclamation of the Gospel'. Lindsell also implicitly criticised Escobar for his attack on 'American imperialism' and castigated him for omitting from his catalogue of social evils the more traditional Evangelical targets of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and pornography; Padilla's similar attack on American 'culture Christianity' was summarised without comment.⁷⁰

Escobar was dismayed at the coverage of the congress in *Christianity Today* and wrote to Dain to express his frustration at what he regarded as the 'totally biased report' in *Christianity Today*. To him it was symptomatic of the fact that

segments of Evangelicalism particularly in the USA were not happy with the way God let the Congress go, are unable to dialogue with Evangelicals from a different perspective. The WCC has registered our message; some large denominations are open to the impact. It would be a pity if the impact of the Congress is manipulated by the more closed and triumphalistic sectors of Evangelicalism.⁷¹

On receipt of Escobar's letter Dain promptly wrote a full and sympathetic reply. In his view Escobar's 'was one of the prophetic voices in the Congress and I think the prophet must always be prepared for a measure of misunderstanding. The prophet is always a little ahead of the people of God and I think that this may have well been the case at Lausanne'. He sought to reassure Escobar by informing him that 'All the reports that I have received from the English speaking world throughout Great Britain, Canada, and in certain cases the United States, certainly Australia, New Zealand and South Africa' were supportive of 'the new emphasis ... in which you particularly were involved'.⁷²

Dain could not, however, speak for the American Evangelical constituency, where the narrower interpretation of Lausanne expounded by Lindsell in the pages of *Christianity Today* continued to command widespread assent. The perspective of the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission was emphatically presented by an article by Peter Wagner, 'Lausanne twelve months later', published in *Christianity Today* in July 1975. Wagner described three 'torpedoes' which in his view had been launched in an attempt to divert the congress from its proper goal of promoting world evangelisation. The first was 'an attempt to confuse evangelism with social action'; the second 'an attempt to confuse evangelism with Christian co-operation'; and the third an 'attempt to

⁷⁰ *CT*, 13 Sept. 1974, 21–6.

⁷¹ Escobar to Dain, 10 Oct. 1974, BGCA 46, Box 30/5.

⁷² Dain to Escobar, 17 Oct. 1974, *ibid.*

confuse evangelism with Christian nurture'. According to Wagner, the objective of the Theology and Radical Discipleship Group had been to turn Lausanne into a congress on social concern. He declared it a fallacy to suggest that Christian unity necessarily promotes evangelism, and deplored an over-emphasis on discipleship as a threat to the priority of 'winning lost men and women to the Christian faith'. The congress itself had in Wagner's view rejected all three fallacies, but not decisively: the Lausanne Continuation Committee meeting in Mexico City in January 1975 had witnessed 'a last-ditch attempt to reverse the course of events' and constitute the committee as 'an agency designed not just for evangelism but for all aspects of the total mission of the Church'. The compromise formula reached in Mexico City, with its insistence that 'our particular concern must be the evangelization of the 2,700 million unreached peoples of the world', was for Wagner a welcome sign that, in the end, all three torpedoes had missed their target.⁷³

Lausanne did not settle the arguments over identity and missiological emphasis which were emerging in world Evangelicalism. Rather it brought them into the open and raised them to a new level of intensity. As Carl Henry observed, 'the gathering postponed rather than resolved the conflicts and ambiguities in contemporary evangelicalism over the Church's socio-political involvement'.⁷⁴ Just as the documents of the Second Vatican Council of 1962–5 have continued to be the subject of conflicting interpretations between progressive and traditionalist Roman Catholics, so has the Lausanne Covenant been a contested text which has continued to yield diverse interpretations within the ongoing Lausanne movement.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, just as Vatican II must be judged to have made an irreversible difference to the worship, theology and cultural stance of the Roman Catholic Church, so it can fairly be concluded that after Lausanne world Evangelicalism would never quite be the same again. No longer could Evangelicals in the North define what it meant to be Evangelical on the basis of unspoken assumptions about their differentiation from the liberal and ecumenical mainstream of the historic European and North American denominations. Nor could it any longer be taken for granted that 'social action' or a Gospel whose contours were actively shaped by the concerns of the poor could be left to the liberals, or that mission and evangelism were essentially synonymous terms. Perhaps most fundamental of all, Lausanne revealed the first clear signs of a radical

⁷³ C. Peter Wagner, 'Lausanne twelve months later', *CT*, 4 July 1975, 7–9.

⁷⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a theologian: an autobiography*, Waco 1986, 350.

⁷⁵ Two further congresses have been held, at Manila in 1989 and Cape Town in 2010. The analogy between Lausanne and Vatican II is drawn by Paul Freston, *Evangelicals and politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America*, Cambridge 2001, 36, 150, 242.

de-centring of the geographical and cultural identity of Evangelicalism which has since become unmistakable: Evangelicals on either side of the North Atlantic can no longer assume that they can in isolation either define the content of the Gospel or determine appropriate strategies for Christian mission.