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**INTERSECTION** (*The integration of theological studies with ethics, academic disciplines, and ecclesiastical institutions.*)

**WAGNER AND COSTAS ON COWE**

Editor's note: On June 16-27, 1980, the Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) sponsored by the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization (LCWE) met in Pattaya, Thailand. Over 800 participants, consultants, observers and guests attended plenary meetings and participated in the various working groups. C. Peter Wagner, a missions professor at Fuller's School of World Missions, presented the strategy in an early address. Orlando Costas, also a professor of missions, from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been active in Lausanne concerns. Here he reports on COWE's less public yet possibly more crucial events--those happening on the "fringes" of the meeting. These men represent very different viewpoints, both with the Lausanne Covenant framework of concerns. TSF is grateful for their reports.

**LAUSANNE'S CONSULTATION ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION:  
A PERSONAL ASSESSMENT (Part of the report)**

by C. Peter Wagner

I have called this report "a personal assessment." The details and deliberations of COWE will be published widely in the Christian media and do not need to be rehearsed here. I would, however, like to make some subjective observations from my own perspective as a charter member of the LCWE and chairperson of its Strategy Working Group (SWG).

The Strategy Working Group was commissioned in 1976 to develop a standardized research methodology and strategy planning procedure for world evangelization in the framework of the Lausanne Covenant. It worked at this in partnership with the MARC division of World Vision International, for four years and reported its results on the first morning of the COWE plenary session.

The Renewed Mandate

Undoubtedly the most significant point of the Consultation was its endorsement of the Lausanne Committee and a renewal of the mandate to continue its work. A broadly-representative Commission on Cooperation in World Evangelization, under the leadership of Thomas Zimmerman (Chairman) and Jack Dain (Coordinator), worked long, intensive hours through the entire consultation in an attempt to capture the consensus of the assembly as to the future of LCWE. The preliminary report was presented to a plenary session on the eighth day, it was revised in light of the feedback, and the final document was distributed on the eleventh and final day of COWE. In a dramatic standing vote the report was accepted almost unanimously by the participants, observers and consultants present. Only one person stood to register a "nay" vote. The assembly made its vote tangible with personal pledges of over \$60,000 in contributions toward LCWE during the next 12 months.

WEF Overture

One of the most hotly-debated issues was the overture made by the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) suggesting that the LCWE become the Evangelism Commission of the WEF. Although I do not believe the idea was ever supported by more than a very small minority at COWE I was nevertheless relieved when the Commission on Cooperation recommended that LCWE remain autonomous. I personally held some

strong opinions on the issue and expressed them in a public hearing.

As my friends in WEF know, I support the existence of a world scale organization designed to unite evangelicals in fellowship. Many churches, denominations, councils of churches, parachurch organizations, and Christian individuals desire to establish an international identity with each other distinct from the World Council of Churches, and the WEF provides this. It is an organization that has a well-defined constituency and operates on the basis of the consensus of its members.

The LCWE is quite distinct both in its purpose and its structure. It is a task-oriented, not member-oriented organization. It is free-wheeling, not responsible to a defined constituency. Its purpose is singular--world evangelization--not multifaceted with equal interest in theology and world relief and Christian fellowship and other good things. It has a narrow vision for the task, but a broad vision for its personnel since it includes evangelicals both from WEF and WCC churches. It is self-perpetuating with the options to continue or to disband as the world religious situation dictates. The Commission on Cooperation recognized these things, but at the same time expressed a sincere desire for continuing close relationships with WEF, recommending the appointment of a special commission to investigate the matter further.

The Primacy of Evangelism

As long as the LCWE is to continue, its position on the nature of evangelism assumes crucial significance. It is one thing to assert that the singular task of LCWE is world evangelization, but quite another to define with precision just what evangelism means. Such a definition involves deep theological questions. In my opinion, COWE answered two of these questions in ways that will furnish a basis for more effective evangelism in the years to come.

The first question relates to the primacy of evangelism in the total mission of the church. During the hundred years between the time the modern missionary movement began with William Carey at the threshold of the last century and the beginnings of our own century, the term "mission" meant saving souls, winning converts, persuading people to become Christians and responsible members of His church. Gradually, however, around the turn of the century, the social implications of the biblical mandate began to become more prominent in the thinking of mission leaders. The influential "layman's inquiry" of 1932 (entitled *Re-Thinking Missions*), for example, recommended that the social ministry "work free" from direct evangelism and suggested that "We must... be willing to give largely without preaching, to cooperate wholeheartedly with non-Christian agencies for social improvement."

By 1932 more liberally-inclined church leaders had agreed that Christian mission was not just soul-winning, but that it included the cultural mandate as well. Most evangelicals, however, resisted this until the revolutionary era of the 1960s when the social implications of Christianity received such high media visibility. By 1974, when the Lausanne Covenant was written, evangelicals were prepared to allow the change in the concept of mission. The Covenant recognizes that both the evangelistic mandate and the cultural mandate are legitimate aspects of mission. This is now called "holistic mission."

Unfortunately for world evangelization, the cultural mandate has now become primary in World Council of Churches circles. Reports of the

meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism held in Melbourne, Australia in May indicate that very little, if any, time was given by the WCC to promote preaching the Gospel and saving souls. In a paper widely circulated at Pattaya, "Theological Reflections on Melbourne 1980," Bruce Nicholls said, "Many at Melbourne thought of world evangelization as a triumphalistic idea of a past Western missionary era... One of the Asian leaders became angry at the mention of the three billion unreached."

From beginning to end, COWE took a clear and distinct stand on this issue. The Lausanne Covenant affirms that "In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary" (Art. 6). While recognizing that the cultural mandate is indeed part of holistic mission, COWE refused to go the route of the WCC and make it either primary or equal to evangelism.

This stand did not come without opposition. A very vocal minority at Pattaya attempted to dislodge evangelism as primary in the mission of the church. They circulated a "Statement of Concerns" and solicited signatures of participants who would support them. In private consultation one of them said, "If evangelism is primary, then social service is secondary and I object to that." This tendency seems to me to be a historical repeat of the change of the meaning of "mission" now refocused on the word "evangelism." There is a significant group of evangelicals who are advocating not only "holistic mission" but also "holistic evangelism." This is the second of the two theological questions that was addressed.

COWE not only said "No" to the WCC position of the primacy of social service but also to those evangelical brethren who are attempting to load the word evangelism with meanings it never has had. If they prevailed, a new word would have to be invented, but COWE held the line at that point. The functional definition of evangelism agreed upon by the LCWE Theology and Education Working Group and Strategy Working Group was:

The *nature* of world evangelization is the communication of the Good News.  
The *purpose* of world evangelization is to give individuals and groups a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ.  
The *goal* of world evangelization is the persuading of men and women to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and serve Him in the fellowship of His Church.

Many leaders at COWE feel that the subtle shift suggested by advocates of "holistic evangelism" is a dangerous tendency. They will agree (some rather reluctantly) to "holistic mission," but desire to follow the Lausanne Covenant and keep evangelism primary.

The final "Thailand Statement" affirms the primacy of evangelism and adds, "This is not to deny that evangelism and social action are integrally related, but rather to acknowledge that of all the tragic needs of human beings, none is greater than their alienation from their Creator and the terrible reality of eternal death for those who refuse to repent and believe." I myself applaud this position.

The People Approach to World Evangelization  
Traditionally mission strategy has focused on evangelizing geographical regions (e.g., North Africa Mission or China Inland Mission) or sometimes world religions (e.g., "God has called me to reach Muslims"). The approach in many of these cases was to attempt to win individual men and women to

Christ, often with little regard for the network of interpersonal relationships dictated by the culture of the group to which the individuals belonged.

The Strategy Working Group, in line with strong currents in modern missiology, has questioned the traditional approaches and suggests the "people approach" to world evangelization. It argues that the most effective way to plan evangelistic strategies is to focus on one *people* at a time. A *people* is technically defined as "a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another."

The general feedback was positive. For example, Dr. George Peters, one of today's foremost missiologists, came up to me afterwards and said, "Just in case you're wondering, what you presented is exactly what I have been teaching in my classes for 15 years." We, somewhat naively, thought that enough preparation had been done so that each mini-consultation would work within the people approach.

For two reasons this did not happen nearly to the degree we had hoped. The major reason, I think, was that a relatively small percentage of participants had actually been active in regional pre-COWE study groups. They had not read *That Everyone May Hear* or the *Unreached Peoples* annuals or seen the audio-visual. The presentation they heard on the first morning caught them by surprise. It was to them something new. They, quite understandably, could not be expected to change their thinking on the approach to strategy for evangelization in two or three hours. Most of the mini-consultations, therefore, took the more traditional approaches of countries, geographical regions, religions or individuals as the target of evangelistic strategy planning.

A secondary reason why the consultation did not wholeheartedly adopt the people approach was that it aroused some rather vocal opposition. Some from South Africa, for example, feared that it would encourage racism and apartheid. They argued that churches should not be allowed to grow in the midst of each people group but that individuals should leave their groups and join churches which mixed them together. Some workers among Muslims also felt that individual converts should not remain in their Muslim culture but should join churches with Europeans.

All in all, however, COWE gave significant international exposure to the people approach. Through this experience, many world leaders have gained a new perspective of the remaining task. A chief element in this new perspective was that there are yet an estimated 16,750 of the world's people groups as yet "hidden." This means that they are beyond the reach of any existing church and that they will only be evangelized if cross-cultural missionaries leave their own people group to evangelize another. A full 80% of the non-Christians in the world today fall into this category, emphasizing the fact that the age of missions is far from over.

It is my prayer that God will stir up His people in a new way now that COWE is history. I pray for a revival in the hearts of Christians. I pray for a powerful filling of the Holy Spirit. I pray for a throbbing passion for the salvation of souls. I pray for the start of a new era of missionary outreach both from Western and Third World churches. I pray for the unleashing of an evangelistic force the world has never known. I pray that before our present generation passes on into eternity that some 20,000 unreached people

groups of our planet will be reached with the Gospel message and will be part of that "great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues" standing before the throne and praising God in the last days.

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#### REPORT ON THAILAND 80 (CONSULTATION ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION)

By Orlando E. Costas

As a member of the LCWE working group on Theology and Education, I was aware of the process and the issues at stake in the recent COWE meeting. Thailand's theme was taken from the Epistle to the Romans (10:14): "How Shall They Hear?" Contary to Melbourne, the theme of which ("Your Kingdom Come") was expressed in "Jesus language," Thailand's theme represented "Pauline language," which is expository and deductive rather than narrative and inductive, conceptual and argumentative instead of symbolic and descriptive. The Consultation did not study the theme in inductive Bible studies but in deductive theological expositions on the implications of the theme. It began with a keynote address and was followed by a series of plenary addresses on the God who speaks, the Word God has spoken and the People to whom God speaks.

Thailand 80 was pricked by the awareness of a tragic reality: an explosive world population of over 4 billion people, with almost 80% who lie beyond the frontiers of the gospel and the actual reach of any church or individual Christians. Its theme reflected a passionate concern for the salvation of billions who have not had the opportunity to hear the gospel and consider it as a personal option for their lives. It not only underscored the fact that God speaks (Heb. 1:1) but also that Jesus Christ is God's saving word for humankind (Rom. 10:9). Without him, women and men are lost in sin (Rom. 3:10ff). Hence Thailand's theological focus was on Christ and salvation.

The Consultation was structured around 17 mini-consultations dealing with different "people-groups." Among the 17 people groups were marxists, secularists, Hindus, Muslims, traditional religionists, large city dwellers, urban poor and refugees. The mini-consultations worked under the premise that since the majority of the people of the world are not within the reach of local churches, specialized agents (cross-cultural) are needed for their evangelization. Each consultation produced an elaborate report outlining the characteristics of its respective people group, and the opportunities, problems and resources to reach its members with the gospel.

Alongside the mini-consultations, there was a special commission selected from rank and file evangelical leaders around the world that worked on the problem of evangelical cooperation. The situation was especially provoked by the growing tensions, on the one hand, between some established evangelicals from North America and Europe and progressive evangelicals from the same part of the world, like John Stott and Waldron Scott (General Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship), and Third World evangelical leaders. This had been dramatically expressed in Arthur Johnson's controversial book, *The Battle for World Evangelization* (Tyndale, 1978) and John Stott's response in *Christianity Today*. But the problem had also been intensified by the WEF's invitation

to the LCWE to become the former's arm for evangelization, and the resistance of some North American leaders of the Church Growth Movement and para-church faith missions as well as evangelicals in denominations that do not belong to the WEF. The Church Growth leaders, especially, were afraid that history would be repeated over again by the absorption of a missionary-evangelistic movement like Lausanne into a church-oriented organization like the WEF, as was the case with the integration of the old International Missionary Council into the WCC in 1961.

Ultimately the participants, which we learned at Pattaya were serving as a consultive assembly, gave the LCWE a continuing mandate. It also approved a document on evangelical cooperation, which responds to the invitation of the WEF by stating that it's best for the time being that the two continue to work cooperatively since it is too premature for an integration to take place.

There were four episodes that took place on the fringes of the Consultation which deserve to be mentioned because they had an indirect impact on the outcome and raised some questions on the future of the Lausanne Movement.

#### A Report on WCC

One of them was a non-scheduled and non-official meeting that was called one evening for those interested in getting a report on the Melbourne Conference. Since the meeting was called for 9:00 p.m., the leaders of the Consultation didn't expect that so many would turn out. Over 300 people came. Allen Cole, from the Church Missionary Society of Australia, and Waldron Scott were asked to give their own impressions of Melbourne. Cole was acridly critical to the delight of some. Scott was also critical but reflected a very positive attitude and empathetic spirit, something that pleased the small pro-Melbourne group and enraged many rank and file "established evangelicals." Arthur Glasser, who had gone to Melbourne as the reporter for *Christianity Today*, was critical yet positive (like Stott) and Bruce Nichols, from the WEF's Theological Commission, was close to Cole. Neither Glasser nor Nichols, however, were asked to speak formally. Emilio Castro, Director of the CWME, who was there as an observer from the WCC, was then asked to respond to the presentations of Scott and Cole. His response was eloquent and evangelistically passionate.

When the meeting was open for discussion, an avalanche of opinions, questions and critical remarks followed. Toward the end of the session John Stott, in an unusual and untypical way, went to the podium and challenged Emilio Castro directly on the grounds that Melbourne had not listened to the challenge that he had given the WCC at Nairobi when he accused the former of not being passionately concerned for the lost. Because the audience was split between those who were sympathetic toward Castro and Melbourne and those who were acridly critical of what went on there, Coordinating Committee became worried and sought to get a formal response from the Lausanne Theology and Education Group (LTEG). Finally, a brief representative statement by Stott was released in the daily communique. Basically non-committal, Stott affirmed concern for the oppressed while calling the WCC to be explicit about world evangelization.

#### A Statement of Concerns

The second striking happening was the Statement of Concerns on the future of the LCWE that John Gitari, Anglican Bishop from Embu, Kenya, Vinay Samuel, a pastor/theologian from the Church of South India, Andrew Kirk, an Anglican theologian