

LCWE & LCJE – Bonding in the midst of Controversy

By Susan Perlman, Jews for Jesus

In order to look at the relationship of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism to the larger Lausanne Movement, it's important to step back in time and see the genesis of the two groups.

The First International Congress on World Evangelization was held from July 16-25 in Lausanne, Switzerland. The conference brought together 2,700 evangelical Christian leaders to discuss the progress, resources and methods being used to evangelize the world. Billy Graham and John Stott were the key influencers in bringing that to happen. Coming out of that congress, the LCWE was established, the Lausanne Covenant was produced and the missiological paradigm of unreached people groups was articulated. Jewish evangelism was a blip on the screen at that time, however Victor Smadja did chair a workshop on Jewish evangelism at that event. Also present as participants in the congress were Tuvya Zaretsky, Baruch Maoz, Lyle Murphy and a few others from our movement.

While the Lausanne Covenant did not explicitly address reaching Jews for the gospel (nor did it single out Muslims or any other group of unbelievers) it was implicit in its embrace of the need for Jews to be saved when it emphasized the fact that “World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”

Following this historic gathering, a number of smaller conferences, sponsored by LCWE followed, such as the Willowbank Consultation on Gospel and Culture in 1978. However the pivotal event for us, the one that brought in a viable relationship between those involved in Jewish evangelism and the larger Lausanne Movement, was the Consultation on World Evangelism held June 16-27, 1980 in Pattaya, Thailand. It was not called a congress but a consultation and the focus was on holding 17 mini-consultations concurrently —all devoted to theological issues and strategies for reaching particular people groups or segments of society, (eg reaching the cities, reaching nominal Catholics, reaching Muslims). There were 900 participants but the smallest group by number was the one on Reaching Jews (17 participants). Yet the work done by this group also reflected the contributions of dozens more who worked as part of an international study group headed up by David Harley. Coming out of the Pattaya meetings we (the Jewish group) produced a Lausanne Occasional Paper on Reaching Jews as well as forming a task force on Jewish Evangelism, shortly to become the LCJE. This group found a way of cooperating under the larger banner of LCWE with its emphasis on evangelism and we embraced the Lausanne Covenant as our basis for fellowship. It is interesting to note that while

the Lausanne Movement has convened nearly thirty global working consultations since its inception, the LCJE is the longest standing group among them and the only one with a membership structure that has us to be self-funding.

We have met for almost 36 years under the Lausanne name to discuss and reflect on missiological and theological issues important to our movement as well as to share practical case studies, and provide a place where informal discussions could occur between those in our field for the purpose of furthering the cause of Yeshua among our Jewish people.

It is important to further note that we have met internationally every three to four years, this summer being our tenth international conference. And we have also met regionally around the globe and our annual North America meeting here in Vancouver is our 32nd.

Like the larger Lausanne movement, we meet as a cooperative network. We represent different organizations and denominations. Our methodologies are diverse. Our theological traditions are diverse as well. We have learned to agree to disagree for the sake of cooperation on those things we hold in common.

It is in this light, that I want to use the majority of my time to outline where there had been problems and how we have sought to meet those challenges for the sake of getting the gospel heard by our people.

In 1989, the Second International Congress on World Evangelization was held in Manila, the Philippines. This congress brought together 4,300 Christian leaders and a major document was produced that built on the Lausanne Covenant—the Manila Manifesto.

In the course of drafting the document, a problem arose. A proposed statement on the Jewish people was put forth to be included in Article 3 (the section on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ). Some of the pro-Arab participants felt it was offensive to the Arab believers present inasmuch as it used the terminology “anti-Semitism” and Arabs are Semites as well. Things got quite heated and a delegation of the Jewish participants and the Arab participants met with John Stott. We pointed out that those taking the most offense were neither Jewish nor Arab and we would appreciate the opportunity to just meet among ourselves and see if we could work things out. We did. We discussed. We prayed and the statement I read to you now is what was agreed upon and what is in the final document:

“It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it

would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to 'the Jews first'... Therefore we reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary. (Article 3 The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ)”

After the 1989 meetings, the Lausanne movement took a back seat to a lot of other initiatives, including the AD2000 movement, Doug Birdsall, who chaired Lausanne from 2004-2013, reflected on that period:

“The Lausanne Movement entered into a less visible and dynamic state following Manila. Much of the energy at the end of the second millennium was captured by enthusiasm for completing the task by the year 2000. However, the ambitious goals were not realized. The preoccupation with pragmatism and quantifiable results provided awareness of the need for more comprehensive theological reflection.”

Yet during this same time as Lausanne faded from view, our LCJE network continued to meet and grow. Then the larger Lausanne movement decided to reassert itself back on the scene with the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, held September 29-October 4th in Pattaya, Thailand. After enlisting input on what issues needed to be addressed, they came up with around 20 issue groups— Jewish evangelism wasn't one of them. LCJE leaders pushed back, but were told that there just wasn't enough interest and there weren't enough meeting rooms at the venue. The issue group number grew to 28 and we still weren't included. Kai Kjaer Hansen, then the international coordinator for LCJE, told the leadership of LCWE that it was paramount that we are included and if there weren't a defined place for us to meet, we'd work that out ourselves. This was a critical moment in our history with LCWE, because there was pressure from within our network to break away from the LCWE, but our tenacity to not be ignored won out and the relationship was strengthened. Finally, the number of issue groups grew to 31 and we were the 31st group. Etc.

There have been any number of bumps along the journey, but I would be remiss to leave out some of the ways our relationship has been built up as well. One of the greatest bonds that were strengthened after that was the involvement of Doug Birdsall, (who became the chair of Lausanne in 2004) in our international meetings at Lake Balaton, Hungary, August 19-24, 2007. Doug's presence sent a signal to our constituency and to the greater Lausanne movement that we were joined at the hip. Other developments that were significant included Tuvia Zaretsky being appointed as the first Lausanne senior associate for Jewish evangelism. In that role, he has contributed to some of the Lausanne publications and represented us at various gatherings. There are 29 senior associates and

they are listed as part of the leadership structure of the Lausanne Movement along with 12 deputy directors and 12 board members.

LCJE's presence at the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape town, South Africa from October 17-24, 2010 was significant as well. Of the 4,000 Christian leaders from around world, we had a disproportionately high number of participants. We also had a presence on the plenary platform with Dan Sered and Shadia Qubti speaking on the day that reconciliation was being addressed. We were also given a track of workshops to plan. And again, the conference document, the Cape Town Commitment, had a significant section on Jewish evangelism concerns. I will speak to certain aspects later, but when it comes to the need of Jewish people to be saved, the Cape Town Commitment says:

We affirm that whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, in the way that Paul describes the Gentiles, they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus. There is no difference, said Paul, between Jew and Gentile in sin; neither is there any difference in salvation. Only in and through the cross can both have access to God the Father through the one Spirit.⁶¹ a. We continue, therefore, strongly to affirm the need for the whole Church to share the good news of Jesus as Messiah, Lord and Saviour with Jewish people. And in the spirit of Romans 14-15, we urge Gentile believers to accept, encourage and pray for Messianic Jewish believers, in their witness among their own people.

Finally, by way of strengthening the bond of Lausanne and LCJE, I am excited to report that Michael Oh, the current chair of the Lausanne Movement, as well as Grace Matthews, Vice-Chair of their Board of Directors will be at our Jerusalem meetings in August.

This brings me to the events of late January of this year. An article that was written by World Vision vice-president, Steve Haas appeared in the January edition of Lausanne Global Analysis, the organ online magazine of the movement. It was actually a chapel message that Haas gave at Gordon College on behalf of World Vision that was reformatted for LGA. Entitled, "*All of Me: Engaging the World of Poverty and Injustice*", the piece deals with Christian engagement on issues of injustice and poverty and in addition to citing examples from Rwanda and HIV/Aids, he points a finger at Israel. For example, in referencing Christian Zionism, Haas says, "This theological position has backed the largest and longest occupation of another people group in modern history, an oppressive Israeli legal system which Tutu and many other church leaders have called 'apartheid on steroids.'"

On January 26th, *Israel Today* (both an online and print publication that is written for evangelical Christians who have a strong interest in Israel) had as its top story “Leading Evangelism Movement Slams Christian Zionism.” In their article they sharply criticized the Lausanne Movement quoting from the Haas piece and also taking some statements from the Cape Town Commitment out of context as well drawing conclusions from others. They also borrowed some of their criticism from a blog that was published the same day by Dror of Rosh Pina Project in England.

In addition to the criticism from *Israel Today* and Rosh Pina Project, *Israel Breaking News* put out a critical online piece entitled, *Leading Evangelical Organization Calls on Christian Zionists to Repent for Supporting Israel* on February 1st. IBN presents itself as a giving a biblical perspective on the latest Israel news and caters to an evangelical Christian audience as well, however their writers are not believers.

All the above documents are available online, and I will include links to them in my paper so that you can read them in their entirety, however here are some salient points from the critiques:

1. In his article, Steve Haas assessed the plight of Palestinians as one in which he sees their political and economic disparity with Israel as a peace and justice issue. He uses inflammatory language like “apartheid on steroids” and casts Zionism as part of the problem. He cites faulty statistics like a 2009 Amnesty International report which purports that Palestinians get on the average 70 liters a day of water while Israelis get 300 liters per day. While he says that challenge of injustices is not one-sided, he doesn’t cite any examples perpetrated against Israel.
2. The Lausanne movement is accused of having “an unhealthy negative obsession with Israel in recent years.”
3. The Lausanne Movement is accused of having “taken aim at what it believes to be the sinful practice of Christian support for the State of Israel, or Christian Zionism.”
4. The Cape Town Commitment is alleged to urge Christians to repent of their role “in Palestinian suffering” as a by-product of support for Israel.
5. The Cape Town Commitment allegedly equates Palestinian suffering with the Holocaust.

What followed was an email I sent to Michael Oh, chair of Lausanne, the same day as the *Israel Today* article came out. I might add that at this same time, Lausanne was quietly facilitating a reconciliation meeting of Palestinian and Israeli believers in Cypress. My letter reads as follows:

Dear Michael,

I trust this note finds you well. I continue to pray for you as you lead our vital Lausanne Movement with its many joys and challenges. Unfortunately, I have a challenge to bring to you right now.

I read with great interest, the January 2015 Lausanne Global Analysis lead article by Steve Haas. “All of Me — Engaging a world of poverty and injustice.” However, as I read, I was saddened to see how the article overgeneralizes, makes accusations without citing names and shows little acknowledgement of redemptive efforts on the ground by local Christians, whether in Rwanda or Israel or the Palestinian territories. I’m sure Steve Haas did not intend to invalidate the good work that nationals are doing in these places, but it disturbs me that no positive examples are cited other than World Vision’s efforts.

Even more disturbing is his characterization of evangelicals when it comes to Israel. He displays an apparent bias that has been demonstrated by representatives of his organization on Israel in the past— a bias that is not in the spirit of Lausanne. I’d be glad to supply details but it goes beyond the purpose of this email.

In short, this article does not represent the Lausanne Movement that I know and love— a place where believers of different persuasions can come together and engage in meaningful dialogue for the ultimate purpose: “The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.” I don’t see how this article helps the cause of evangelism, and I fear it could be harmful to the efforts at reconciliation that Lausanne is spearheading between Palestinians and Israelis. The Cypress reconciliation meetings are going on right now.

I wish the editors of Lausanne Global Analysis had taken the reconciliation event into consideration in timing and editing this article, and/or in seeking input from the Lausanne Senior Associate on Jewish Evangelism, Tuvia Zaretsky. (If I’m wrong in assuming they didn’t, please accept my apologies.)

As a recipient of the Lifetime Service Award from Lausanne and as a charter member of the longest standing Lausanne network (the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism), Michael, I urge you to do what you can to minimize the damage done by this article. Certainly any conciliatory words from you to the Cypress conference participants now would greatly help. And, if I’m not being presumptuous, another article in Lausanne Global Analysis with a different perspective, filling in

much of the information overlooked in the Haas article would provide a welcome and much needed perspective. For example a look at the damage that some forms of Christian Zionism do to the cause of Jewish Evangelism without playing on the political sympathies that work against reconciliation efforts would be a healthy addition. I would recommend Tuvia Zaretsky or Richard Harvey for such an assignment.

I hope my letter is received as coming from someone who has an unwavering commitment to Lausanne and that includes a heart to see Arabs and Jews come to know our Savior.

I am confident that you are looking to the Lord, and I have every confidence you will do what you see is right in the bigger scope of things.

Yours in our Messiah,

Susan Perlman

An exchange of many emails followed over the next few days. Advice was sought and given by many including the former chair of Lausanne, the current chair of Lausanne, members of their board, the editors of their organ publication, their communications experts, and a number of us in LCJE. Our international coordinator was kept apprised of the situation as it was in play. Advice was also sought from those at the reconciliation meeting going on in Cypress. Suggestions on what kind of response Lausanne should take was bandied back and forth and then Michael Oh framed their response to Israel Today and Israel Breaking News as follows:

Lausanne Movement calls for the whole gospel for both Jews and Palestinians

I'm concerned by your recent article 'Leading Evangelism Movement Slams Christian Zionism' on 26 January 2015 and would like to correct any misrepresentation of the Lausanne Movement that your readers will have received. I am writing to request your publication of this letter in full as a corrective to your article.

The Lausanne Movement is a global network of individuals and ministries from a wide range of denominations, nationalities, theologies, and strategic perspectives that shares an evangelical faith and commitment to work together to bring the whole gospel to the whole world, which includes both Jews and Palestinians.

Our publication Lausanne Global Analysis represents a diversity of evangelical viewpoints within the bounds of our foundational documents (The Lausanne Covenant, The Manila Manifesto, The Cape Town Commitment). Our priority is to encourage partnerships among evangelicals of all nationalities for global mission, not to define singular positions on each of the issues covered in our foundational documents. The views and opinions expressed in Lausanne Global Analysis articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the personal viewpoints of Lausanne Movement leaders or networks. In some cases, such as the article you refer to, the viewpoints of some of our constituency are quite far apart. We have now added a disclaimer to the Lausanne Global Analysis so as to avoid future misrepresentation of the Lausanne Movement by outside sources.

I am particularly concerned about the inaccurate portrayal of [The Cape Town Commitment](#) found in your article, namely related to section IIB-2 in which 'Palestinian suffering' is mentioned. It is mentioned in a section on 'Christ's peace in ethnic conflict', which reads as follows:

We acknowledge with grief and shame the complicity of Christians in some of the most destructive contexts of ethnic violence and oppression, and the lamentable silence of large parts of the Church when such conflicts take place. Such contexts include the history and legacy of racism and black slavery; the holocaust against Jews; apartheid; 'ethnic cleansing'; inter-Christian sectarian violence; decimation of indigenous populations; interreligious, political and ethnic violence; Palestinian suffering; caste oppression; and tribal genocide. Christians who, by their action or inaction, add to the brokenness of the world, seriously undermine our witness to the gospel of peace.

Palestinian suffering is cited as one example in a list of many other contexts of ethnic conflict. In no way does The Cape Town Commitment call Christians to repent for supporting Israel nor does it link Palestinian suffering as a result of Christian support for Israel. Furthermore, there is no rank of importance to the different contexts of ethnic conflict that we mention.

In addition, the Lausanne Movement does not and cannot prescribe how the nation of Israel should deal with the many sensitive internal challenges it lives with daily. However, we do have a commitment to ongoing, healthy discussion on Israeli/Palestinian reconciliation and to be bearers of Christ's peace in ethnic conflict.

The longest standing network in the Lausanne Movement is the

Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), which was started in 1980 to share the good news of Messiah Jesus with Jews. We stand in unity with the LCJE in their ministry around the world among the Jewish people. Future articles from the LCJE have been commissioned for the Lausanne Global Analysis.

In the name of fairness and in demonstration of your commitment to high journalistic standards, I ask that you would make the necessary corrections to your article as well as publish this letter in full for your readers as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Michael Oh
Executive Director/CEO
Lausanne Movement

Both Israel Today and Israel Breaking News printed Michael's response or a link to it.

Both the international and North American LCJE websites carried the Michael Oh letter.

Also of note, World Vision distanced itself from the Steve Haas article saying "it does not adequately reflect World Vision's position and views toward the State of Israel and the Palestinian people and was published without proper World Vision approvals." World Vision went on to say, "broad statements such as those in the Lausanne piece oversimplify issues at hand, limit meaningful dialogue, and harden staunch perspectives toward the conflict." World Vision also went on record as saying they don't support campaigns around boycotts, divestments and sanctions. They also said that they no longer endorse the film "With God on Our Side" because it does not present the Israeli perspective at all.

What lessons can we learn from this experience?

1. Those of us in LCJE need to be clear in our understanding of the nature of the Lausanne Movement. Michael Oh stated it well when he said, "The Lausanne Movement is a global network of individuals and ministries from a wide range of denominations, nationalities, theologies, and strategic perspectives that shares an evangelical faith and commitment to work together to bring the whole gospel to the whole world, which includes both Jews and Palestinians." That wide range includes those who might hold to theology that doesn't resonate with ours. I can recall times when we have had some very spirited discussion at our LCJE meetings with regard to where some in the larger Evangelical Church place Israel in God's

economy. Well we need to get over it. We need to be willing to graciously agree to disagree. We also need to remember that being part of a larger network like Lausanne gives us the ability to speak into a broader network that can also graciously agree to disagree. Most importantly Lausanne gives us a platform to be a voice for Jewish evangelism in the wider church. The only non-negotiable in being part of this larger network is if Jewish evangelism is itself marginalized or thought to be unnecessary.

2. Having history is important. We have a long history with the Lausanne Movement. When there have been areas of tension, we have seen success in working through them. We also have seen many examples over the years where our participation has been not only welcomed but also affirmed. Such history dictates that when a problem arises, we must withhold judgment and not succumb to a heat of the moment knee jerk reaction. I'd even go so far as to say, we need to believe the best of those who are our long-standing partners. The Scripture tells us that love "bears up under everything, believes the best in all, there is no limit to her hope, and never will she fail." (1Cor.13:7). Our LCJE network needs to be the kind of network that believes the best of others who are our partners in the gospel.
3. Taking a proper course of action is paramount.
 - a. Public attacks need a public response—quickly yet with proper reflection. We need to keep engaged as a network so that when instances like this occur; we can work to have them addressed with dispatch. If we're not reading the publications, watching the media reports, etc., it may be too late to make a difference.
 - b. We need to reach out those who are in a position to respond. That means having a relationship with those in a position to fix it. That takes cultivation and intentionality when it comes to our relationships with those in the larger Lausanne Movement.
 - c. We need to pull together the best strategic advice possible in such situations. In this instance, many wise minds were in the mix. Proverbs 15:22 says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." The time and work of many went into this process— leaders in our movement, leaders in the Lausanne movement, experts in communications dynamics, etc. There was a lot of back and forth and things were refined, improved upon and something that we all could embrace was the final result.
4. Reflecting on the future and how we can help avoid such situations.

The article by Steve Haas got into the Lausanne Global Analysis without proper reflection by its editors. This means that they didn't see it as an issue for them. We need to keep engaged with Lausanne so that they are sensitized to such things in the future. We have begun that process with LGA and they have acknowledged that it would have been wise to have had the Haas article vetted by the Lausanne Senior Associate for Jewish Evangelism given the subject matter. They have also agreed to have a disclaimer on future articles in LGA that acknowledges the articles are the views of the authors and not necessarily those of Lausanne. Thirdly, LGA is happy to give coverage to our conference in Jerusalem this summer as well as have multiple articles on Jewish evangelism related subjects from our LCJE network writers.

5. We need to be encouraged that the Lausanne Movement does believe that the issue of Israeli/Palestinian reconciliation is important. It has given weight to this by facilitating an ongoing dialogue between the two groups.

All that I've wanted to say in this paper can be reduced to this question. Do we want to walk away from the Lausanne Movement and forfeit all the influence it affords us to speak into the wider church? Or are we willing to do the hard work of continuing to build on the partnership that was established back in 1980?

I personally think its a no brainer. What other respected world wide evangelical body is committed to the whole church taking the whole to the whole world, including our Jewish people?