

A Latin American Evangelical Perspective on the Cape Town Congress¹

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Two Stories as a Parable

Early in 1976 a pioneer missionary congress gathered university students and young professionals from all over Brazil, in the southern city of Curitiba. The event was organized by the Aliança Bíblica Universitária do Brasil,² under the theme “Jesus Cristo, Senhorio, Propósito e Missão” (Jesus Christ: Lordship, Purpose, and

1. Originally published in Lars Dahle, Margunn Serigstad Dahle, and Knud Jørgensen, eds., *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 304–318; available at www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum. Reprinted here by permission, with slight modifications.

2. A movement associated with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES).

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Mission).³ The International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne I) had just occurred in 1974. Its news had barely arrived in Brazil, yet the so-called “spirit of Lausanne” was there among those of us organizing the 1976 Missionary Congress. Though few of us knew much about the Lausanne Movement, Lausanne was there. Two Latin American leaders who had significantly influenced Lausanne 74 and its covenant were there, and the young leaders present at Curitiba 76 would gladly submit to the teachings and life inspiration of Samuel Escobar and René Padilla. The agenda of integral mission was also present, in a foundational way, as well as the call for a mission experience that would completely mark our lives and challenge young professionals to look at their professions as mission. There was even an attempt to create a covenant (O Pacto de Curitiba, The Curitiba Covenant),⁴ and together with Escobar and Padilla I had the privilege to not only write it but also produce an explanation of it, as John Stott had done with the Lausanne Covenant. In fact, and most of all, it was the spirit of Lausanne that helped shape that Brazilian congress, a significant event inspired by an earlier and ground-breaking event and movement called Lausanne. Lausanne represented an evangelical zeitgeist (spirit of the time), and we were in it, participating, as I have said elsewhere, in what became “one of the most representative points of reference of contemporary evangelicalism” and a key evangelical expression of the worldwide church of Christ.⁵

Years later, in 1983, the first Congresso Brasileiro de Evangelização (Brazilian Congress of Evangelization) took place, and the spirit of Lausanne was again present. While this event was

3. The main addresses of the congress were published in *Jesus Cristo: Senhorio, Propósito e Missão. Compêndio do Congresso Missionário* (São Paulo: ABU Editora, 1978).

4. The Pacto de Curitiba was published in *Ibid.*

5. See Valdir Steuernagel, in *The Theology of Mission in its Relation to Social Responsibility within the Lausanne Movement. A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the LSTC* (Chicago, IL: 1988), 132.