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Signature:

Letitia M. Campbell

Date

Short-Term Mission in a Shifting Global Landscape:
Genealogies of Hope and Ambivalence

By

Letitia M. Campbell
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Ethics and Society

Elizabeth M. Bounds
Advisor

Arun W. Jones
Committee Member

Steven M. Tipton
Committee Member

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

Date

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By

Letitia M. Campbell
B.A., Davidson College, 1996
B.A., Oxford University, 1998
M.Div. Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 2003

Advisor: Elizabeth M. Bounds, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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In this dissertation, I argue that Christian short-term mission has been an important practice through which American Protestants have wrestled with changing understandings of the world and their place within it during a period in which both the US and the world were radically reshaped, first by processes of decolonization, and subsequently by intensified processes of globalization and neoliberalism. These global shifts, reflected in structural and institutional changes both within the US and internationally, reflect corresponding subjective and social shifts in culture, worldview, and self-understanding.

In following this theme, I sketch broadly the development of Christian short-term mission practices over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, describing the emergence and innovations in the form and understanding of the practice, and situating these practical innovations in the context of broader political, economic, and cultural shifts.

I begin by examining Operation Crossroads Africa (Chapter 2) and the Frontier Internship in Mission (Chapter 3), two short-term mission programs that emerged within the ecumenical Protestant left during the late 1950s and early 1960s. I argue that these programs drew on inherited missionary and ecumenical ideas, networks, and practices to pioneer new forms of short-term, transnational engagement responsive to the challenges of a new era. I then trace the development of short-term mission practices in the Evangelical world, first discussing their emergence from Pentecostal networks beginning in the late 1950s (Chapter 4), and then following the diffusion and diversification of the practice through evangelical networks over the next several decades (Chapter 5). Finally, I explore the diffusion of short-term mission practices within ecumenical and mainline Protestant networks and institutions, and the emergence of a broad range of short-term practices of travel, education, and service in both religious and now secular contexts at the end of the century (Chapter 6).

By tracing key themes across a range of Evangelical, ecumenical, and mainline Protestant institutions, I provide historical perspectives that can illuminate and inform contemporary debates about short-term Christian mission practice.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When this project was in its earliest stages, I joined a small group of Americans on a short trip to Haiti. It had been less than six months since a catastrophic magnitude 7.0 earthquake had hit the island in January 2010, just southwest of the capital of Port-au-Prince, leaving the city in ruins, displacing hundreds of thousands of Haitians, overwhelming the nation's medical and humanitarian infrastructure, and inaugurating a sustained period of disorder and crisis that stretched far beyond the immediate relief and reconstruction period.¹ On a sweltering June day, I joined a small group at the Miami airport. Most in our group had connections stretching back more than a decade to the church-based development NGO we would be visiting in Haiti's Central Plateau. These were deeply personal as well as organizational relationships, and my companions were as eager to reconnect with Haitian friends, whose reports of the earthquake and its aftermath they had followed from afar, as they were to assess the disaster's impact on a rural community that was familiar to them.

Although commercial flights to Port-au-Prince had resumed months before in mid-February, the airport was still under reconstruction, with a makeshift arrivals hall being managed by military personnel. An eyeball survey of the people on our plane suggested that travel to Haiti was still primarily the domain of humanitarian workers, academics, and government officials. I was seated next to a middle-aged NGO executive,

¹ Paul Farmer, *Haiti after the Earthquake* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012).

several rows back from the rest of the group. He asked about the purpose of my trip, and I talked a bit about my interest in Christian short-term missions, emphasizing somewhat defensively my awareness of the controversies surrounding the practice and my association with the development studies program in which I was then a doctoral fellow. He was immediately engaged, and over the course of our short flight had anecdotes to offer, concerns to raise, and questions to press. He encountered church groups everywhere he traveled in the course of his work in development. In fact, he told me somewhat confessionally, his church sponsored these kinds of trips. They were a well-established and generally lauded part of the youth program. As development professional, he had doubts about whether they really “made a difference,” but he had never felt comfortable raising these questions with others in the congregation, or with the pastor.

As we landed, he gave me his email address, took my card, and asked me to follow up. He told me he was interested in what I learned, and his questions were both probing and practical: What was my assessment, as a researcher, of these groups and their role in development processes? What conclusions would I be able to draw from my research? Were mission teams and mission trips “worth it” for churches, for development organizations, for host communities? Did they really “make a difference”?

This was the first of many similar conversations that followed as this research unfolded. Clergy friends confessed misgivings about the way their congregations engaged in short-term mission, yet noted that such trips were a prized part of congregational life, effectively insulated from critique. Parents of teenagers both celebrated the impact of such trips on their children and acknowledged discomfort with the broader dynamics of the trips, or with the images that the phrase “short-term mission”

evoked. Friends and colleagues in the development sector, like my seatmate, were both intrigued and skeptical; they were interested in what data might illuminate the situation. Strangers I met in airports, at conferences, and at cocktail parties had stories to share, criticism to levy, questions to ask. This was a phenomenon, I soon learned, about which everyone felt some degree of familiarity — and one about which almost everyone felt some degree of ambivalence. Other researchers who focus on short-term mission report similar dynamics. Like Brian Howell, the most common responses I received from interlocutors were, at root, a version of this question: “Are you for short-term mission trips or against them?”

While this is a natural question, my own research has not been motivated by such a drive for assessment. I did not set out to provide a technical evaluation of short-term mission or to formulate recommendations for improving the “effectiveness” of mission trips. These approaches are well represented in the existing literature on short-term missions, both academic and popular. Nor did I set out to expose the hidden or unconscious motives or political and theological shortcomings of those involved in planning and carrying out short-term mission trips. The question of whether people involved in short-term mission are hypocritical or selfless, naïve or self-serving, is implicit in much of the popular and journalistic critique of the practice — from personal essays to virally circulating memes. Whatever mixture of motives, intentions, expectations, and reservations participants bring to these experiences, the practice is widely assumed to carry moral meaning and to confer benefits to participants. I believe that most people who engage in short-term mission practices undertake them with good

intentions and in good faith, and often, as I suggest below, with a degree of self-awareness about the problematic dynamics and pitfalls inherent in the practice.

As recurrent debates about short-term mission make clear, the moral and political meanings of this practice are anything but settled. For that reason, I will argue, the practice is a useful lens through which to observe and evaluate the changing global imaginary of American Protestantism over the last half-century. The central argument of this dissertation is that debates about short-term mission reflect changes taking place in American Christianity's global imaginary. The variations in and tensions surrounding short-term mission practices over the course of their development reveal something about the way such an imagined social world – that is, the world of imagined others to whom American Christians understand themselves to be related and obligated – comes to change over time, through a combination of ideas, practices, and encounters with history and difference.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide background to this story in the following way: First, I introduce the phenomenon of short-term mission in more detail, describing how my understanding of the practice and key debates about it shape what follows. I then introduce the idea of a global imaginary, drawing on Charles Taylor's notion of the social imaginary. Taylor's understanding of the social imaginary provides a helpful framework for thinking about the relationship between ideas, institutions, and practices. His understanding of how social imaginaries change, and how such a process of change relates to both ideas and practices provides a useful framework through which to understand recurrent debates about short-term mission. As I hope to show, however, a more sustained examination of this practice and the contested meanings about it provides

some additional insights that elaborate on Taylor's discussion of broad changes in the shared social imaginary, and in particular of how practices function in such a process of change. That is followed by a brief overview of the background history of Christian mission against which this story unfolds. The chapter concludes with some notes about methodology and my use of history in exploring this process of change in the moral landscape.

Short-Term Mission and its Critics

Short-term mission trips have become a commonplace feature of middle-class congregational life in the United States in recent decades. Although reliable statistics are hard to come by, scholars estimate that each year between 1.5 and 3 million Americans travel internationally with church groups to participate in some kind of service project or religious outreach. In droves and with enthusiasm Americans devote summer holidays, spring breaks, and prized vacation days to repairing homes, building churches, painting schools, and staffing medical clinics in places plagued by poverty and defined by need. And they return after a few weeks, or even a few days, with vivid stories of suffering, perseverance, and transformation — including tales of their own deeply felt conversions to more profound spiritual insights and more concrete sympathies for the people and places they have come to know.² In his recent book on the global reach of American

² Robert J. Priest et al., “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement,” *Missiology: An International Review* 34, no. 4 (2006): 432; Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 164–70; Don C. Richter, *Mission Trips That Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World* (Upper Room Books, 2008).

Christianity, sociologist Robert Wuthnow argues that although congregations have been understood as “quintessentially local” institutions, they increasingly reflect and facilitate “transcultural” and “translocal” connections that are global in scope. Short-term mission trips, he argues, are one tangible way congregations forge connections across global chasms of poverty and privilege.³

Debates over short-term mission circulate widely. They are discussed in religious and secular publications, narrated in countless personal and institutional blogs, and given pithy visual expression in rapidly proliferating memes. Indeed, the practice raises a number of ethical questions and attracts a variety of critiques. There are critiques of motive: some critics speak derisively of the “mission trip industry” or speak of short-term mission trips as a form of “mission tourism” driven by voyeurism and a desire for adventure, personal transformation, and an “authentic” encounter with exotic places and peoples, rather than by a desire to bear witness to the gospel or practice relationships of mutuality and solidarity with Christians in resource-poor communities. There are economic and ecological critiques, as well: many people worry that these brief, international trips are a waste of financial resources, that the main financial beneficiaries are the airlines, that the practice diverts money that otherwise might be devoted to supporting long-term missionaries or indigenous development and relief projects, that gratuitous international travel is ecologically irresponsible, and that the benefits to the host community are minimal. Finally, although the scholarly literature on short-term

³ Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2010), 6, 19.

missions is not extensive, much of the research suggests that there is little or no positive long-term impact on the lives of traveler-participants.

My early explorations of short-term mission practices involved fieldwork at a large church with a substantial mission program, including a full calendar of mission trips each year to destinations all over the world, each designed for a different group within the congregation — young people, adults, families, men. In both formal interviews and informal conversations, I had the chance to talk to many people about their experiences on these trips. While I expected that many people would have encountered at least some of the critiques of short-term mission, the extent to which participants themselves anticipated and articulated debates about the value and virtue of short-term mission surprised me, and ultimately changed the course of my research.

In the course of my interviews, both clergy and laypeople involved in short-term mission regularly rehearsed many of the standard critiques of short-term mission: that they are self-serving, self-congratulatory, paternalistic, financially wasteful, and environmentally harmful. While they sometimes suggested that these critiques applied to “other” short-term trips, to the approaches of other churches, or to “older” ways of doing mission, quite often they framed these critiques as legitimate and unresolved concerns, described them as matters for ongoing discussion and disagreement among church members, or named them as problems in their own programs. Indeed, I came to see these critiques, debates, and hesitations as a defining feature of the practice of short-term mission itself, part of what it means to “do” short-term mission.

If these critiques suggest a widespread ambivalence about or discomfort with short-term mission, they cannot be said to have substantially blunted the popularity of the

practice itself. The most forceful proposals made in the face of such critiques — calls for a “moratorium on mission trips,” for instance — are so uniformly recognized as “draconian” and “unrealistic” that they serve primarily as a rhetorical device intended to communicate urgency and provoke deeper reflection.⁴ This is not to suggest that critiques of short-term mission are insincere or lack substance, but simply to point out that even as they are articulated in conversation and in print, they are often self-consciously ineffectual. They are made explicit to be set aside or left lingering, but rarely as part of a serious agenda for reforming underlying paradigms or material practices. This invulnerability to critique underscores the significant role that short-term mission and related practices have come to play in contemporary American culture, and suggests a complex entanglement with broader social identities and institutions.⁵

The contradiction is stark: this is a practice about which there is at the same time fierce debate and a kind of irrefutable consensus. When I began my research, I thought that clarifying the tensions and elaborating the critiques and contradictions embedded in a widely taken-for-granted practice of American religious life could contribute to a more

⁴ See Troy Jackson’s suggestion of a “mission trip moratorium” and responses from various places, most notably Seth Barnes of *Adventures in Mission*: Troy Jackson, “Time to Declare a Mission Trip Moratorium,” *Sojourners*, June 2, 2010, <https://sojo.net/articles/time-declare-mission-trip-moratorium>; Seth Barnes, “Is It Time to Declare a Mission Trip Moratorium?,” *Radical Living Blog*, June 15, 2010, <http://www.sethbarnes.com/post/is-it-time-to-declare-a-mission-trip-moratorium>.

⁵ As I have noted above, these critiques should not be understood as emerging from outside of the discourse of short-term mission, but rather as part of the discourse itself. In a study of the identities of aid workers, Maria Erikson Baaz (citing Steven Gikandi) makes a similar point about the way that their self-understandings are laced with contradictions. These reflect “the ways in which ‘decolonized situations are marked by the imperial pasts they try to disavow’ or ... ‘the state of undecideability’ of the postcolonial condition.” Maria Erikson Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership: A Postcolonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid* (London: Zed Books, 2008), 9; Simon E. Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 15.

sophisticated and reflective understanding of the practice. But in relation to short-term mission, I soon realized that the posture of critique was quite common — and to a large extent, predictable. What good could it possibly do to reiterate such well-known and widely rehearsed debates? And more importantly: What resources could help to make sense of the way debates about short-term mission functioned in relation to the practice itself? Here was an established and popular element of US Christian culture, commanding enthusiasm, attention, and no small amount of capital. And yet, over and over, it was a practice that seemed to fall short of its own aspirations. If not a “failure,” then short-term mission was perhaps at least a bit of a disappointment — for many, a practice in need of reform or improvement, and for some, a cringe-inducing embarrassment.

In reflecting on this broad narrative of disappointment and ambivalence, James Ferguson’s analysis of the discourse of “failure” in a completely different context comes to mind. Ferguson, an anthropologist of development, studied several large-scale development projects in Lesotho in the 1980s, all of which were “failures” if measured by their own stated goals. “In a situation where ‘failure’ is the norm,” he writes, “it may be that what is most important about the ‘development’ project is not so much what it fails to do but what it does do; it may be that the real importance lies in the ‘side effects,’” of the processes under examination.⁶ Ferguson argued that the “development” projects and discourses he studied de-politicized responses to poverty while simultaneously expanding the reach of the bureaucratic state. These were not the

⁶ James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “development,” depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

projects' stated aims, of course; but they were nonetheless the projects' concrete effects. When important political effects are realized alongside the "failure" of a process or project, in other words, one must search for logic and outcomes that transcend, or even contradict, the intentions of individual architects, actors, and institutions.⁷

It is not necessary to see short-term mission as a failure to find this insight suggestive. As I have noted above, short-term mission is a practice that is widely seen as a practice perpetually in need or reform. This might lead us to ask: What functions are served by the popular embrace of short-term mission in American churches? How does it operate to shape the institutions within which it is undertaken, and the individuals and communities it touches? To what larger processes and trends are these practices tied? What kinds of subjectivities and cultures do they help to shape? What social configurations are produced or sustained by them? In short, what are the social effects of this phenomenon, which is both celebrated and critiqued?

Social Imaginaries, Social Practice, and Social Change

In *Modern Social Imaginaries* and several shorter articles, Charles Taylor introduces the idea of the "social imaginary," and explores the modern social imaginary of the West, describing the process by which this broadly shared understanding of social

⁷ Ferguson's analysis draws on Foucault's understanding of power, and the way that it operates in and through subjects, institutions, and discourses. In *Discipline and Punish*, his classic study of the development of the modern prison, Foucault suggested that to focus on "failure" was to ask the wrong question. Rather, "one should reverse the question and ask oneself what is served by the failure of the prison; what is the use of these different phenomena that are continually being criticized; the maintenance of delinquency, the encouragement of recidivism, the transformation of the occasional offender into a habitual delinquent, the organization of a closed milieu of delinquency." I do not draw on Foucault's wider analysis of anthropology and social structure here. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 272.

and moral order came to be the common-sense background of life in the West.⁸ In Taylor's telling, beginning with seventeenth-century theories of natural law and the idea that political legitimacy was grounded in consent, a particular idea of moral order gradually came to be the dominant view of society in the West, displacing other social understandings and exerting far-reaching claims on social and political life. This modern idea of moral order was characterized in particular by notions of equality and by the idea of "society as existing for the mutual benefit of individuals and in defense of their rights."⁹

Taylor is interested not primarily in the intellectual history of these ideas, but in the way they came to shape the social imaginary. With this, Taylor has in mind something both more fundamental and more pervasive than simply an idea or theory of society. He writes:

By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.¹⁰

The way in which normal people "imagine" their social surroundings, moreover, is not generally expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in stories, symbols, legends, and

⁸ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2007); Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 91–124; Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," *The Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 2 (1995): 24–33, doi:10.2307/3562863. In this section and the pages that follow, I draw primarily on these accounts of the social imaginary.

⁹ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2007, 1–5; Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," January 1, 2002.

¹⁰ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2007, 23.

images. A small minority of people may hold on to a social theory that articulates explicitly assumption of a particular social theory. A social imaginary, on the other hand, reflects shared assumptions that shape common practices and provides a widely shared sense of legitimacy.¹¹ It is the “most foundational conceptual conditions of possibility for a society’s operation.”¹²

Like his definition of social imaginaries, Taylor’s description of how social imaginaries change and evolve is more suggestive than precise, and is articulated mostly through his explanation of how the modern social imaginary, with its commitment to a modern moral order founded on equal regard and mutual service, came to dominate in the West. The history Taylor invokes is sweeping, beginning in the fifteenth century and covering at least four hundred years. Over this time, he argues, the modern idea of moral order has undergone a “double expansion.” It has expanded by extension; that is, more people have come to live by it. And it has expanded in intensity; that is, the “demands” it makes are heavier and more pervasive, applying in more domains of our social life.¹³ How has this come to happen?

For the most part, the process Taylor describes is slow and gradual, sometimes even a “drift” toward the new idea.¹⁴ The modern theory of moral order “gradually infiltrates and transforms our social imaginary” as something that is originally “just an idealization,” but which is then taken up and associated with social practices — including

¹¹ Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” January 1, 2002, 106.

¹² Mary Poovey, “The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 130.

¹³ Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” January 1, 2002, 93.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

existing social practices, “which are often transformed by the contact.”¹⁵ Sometimes change is set in motion by a new social theory. Sometimes, a cataclysmic rupture in social or political structures or institutions forces a particular understanding of society to be reckoned with in a way that may seem sudden (the French Revolution comes up several times). But even when changes in ideas or institutions seem to happen decisively, the more thoroughgoing transformation of the social imaginary is more protracted.¹⁶

Below, I discuss in more detail three features of Taylor’s understanding of the way social imaginaries change. I then turn to two related points about how this idea of the modern social imaginary is a resource for understanding the global practices, understandings, and imaginaries that are the focus of this dissertation.

1. Practices

“Because human practices are the kind of thing that make sense,” writes Taylor, “certain ideas are internal to them.”¹⁷ Some understanding of the wider social predicament is always implied as part of the background sense-making of a collaborative practice. “The background that makes sense of any given act is thus wide and deep.... Sense giving always draws on our whole world.” This is especially true of our shared sense of moral order, a notion of how the world should operate, as well as a sense of how such norms can be realized – a sense of the relationship between the “is” and the “ought.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–27; Poovey, “The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy,” 133.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2007, 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., 28.

The process of change which Charles Taylor sketches for social imaginaries fundamentally turns on the relationship between theory and practice –on the relationship, that is, between social theory (in both its elite and popular manifestations), on the one hand, and social practices on the other. The line of influence, however, is circular, not causative. A social imaginary carries within it some notion of moral order which gives embodied practice both meaning and legitimacy.¹⁹ But practice comes to shape theory, as well. As people draw on theory to make sense of specific practices, embedded in particular historical and social contexts, they draw on social theories in idiosyncratic ways. Thus a particular social theory will begin to accommodate variations and undergo modifications as it is pressed into the service of sense-making by people who are engaged in practices in the real world, the embodied expressions of the theory itself.²⁰ In this way, the process is a circular one: “The new practice, with the implicit understanding it generates, can be the basis for modifications of theory, which in turn can inflect practice, and so on.”²¹

Another key process by which a particular social theory or understanding penetrates and transforms the social imaginary is through the establishment and

¹⁹ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, “Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 11.

²⁰ Charles Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 106. Taylor gives this process a Kantian gloss, observing that “theory is “schematized” in the dense sphere of common practice.” But other theorists of practice have made similar observations about the relationship between slight modifications in practice and resulting changes in categorical or conceptual structures. Judith Butler, for example, discusses the “materialization of norms” through reiteration of those norms. This process of reiteration will necessarily introduce slight variations that may then become resources for processes that change of the norm itself. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of “sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1–4. See also Poovey, “The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy,” 133.

²¹ Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” January 1, 2002, 111.

modification of embodied practices. People “take up, improvise, or are inducted into new practices” that make sense in light of the “new outlook,” which was first articulated in the new social theory and now provides context for these practices. Through such practices, a new understanding of the world comes to be accessible to participants in a more immediate way. Practices confer legitimacy on worldviews, in part by giving them a sense of immediacy. Alternately, people may ascribe new meaning to existing practices, stories, and symbols, so that familiar, embodied elements of already existing social life come to reinforce new understandings and worldviews.²²

2. The modern moral order and the heterogeneity of actually existing society

Another important dimension of Taylor’s understanding of broad social change is evident in his description of the tensions and inconsistencies present throughout the long expansion and intensification of the modern moral order. For most of history, he says, humans have lived in societies marked by complementarity and hierarchy, not equality. Where the theoretical affirmation of equal regard flew in the face of “common sense” hierarchies and oppressions in ways that may seem obvious to us today, these inconsistencies may not even have been perceived.²³ “It wasn’t very long ago that whole

²² For example, Taylor cites the “contemporary world’s great founding revolutions,” the American and the French, as a key example of the extension of the modern social imaginary. He suggests that this process was smoother in the American case than in the French because the idealization of “popular sovereignty” which animated the revolution could be more unproblematically connected to existing social practices – such as the practice of electing popular assemblies.

²³ Taylor mentions gender relations within the family, and the late nineteenth-century consolidation of the nation by incorporation of French peasants as citizens. We might also include the incorporation of African Americans into the American polity, and a whole variety of processes by which subaltern communities were incorporated into nation-states as citizens in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gyanendra Pandey, *Subaltern Citizens and Their Histories: Investigations from India and the USA* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

segments of our supposedly modern society remained outside this social imaginary,” writes Taylor. He does not linger too much on these moments of inconsistency, except to note that the “long march” toward equality is “perhaps ending” soon.

But how such inconsistencies and limitations are identified and overcome, it seems to me, is central to understanding the kind of sweeping social change in which Taylor is interested. It also introduces a dimension of conflict and contention that differs in emphasis from Taylor’s account – and it involves claims-making by those who fall “outside” the social imaginary, or who are rendered illegitimate or dependent, outside the circle of address, or of citizenship, or of the human itself.

Social imaginaries, then, are coherent enough to form the background understanding that makes daily social life comprehensible, that legitimates certain formations, and renders even “illegitimate” identities and forms of life legible. But they are nevertheless the background against which heterogeneous and competing ways of life unfold and social interaction unfold:

What I’m calling the “long march” is a process whereby new practices, or modifications of old ones, either developed through improvisation among certain groups and strata of the population (e.g., the public sphere among educated elites in the eighteenth century, trade unions among workers in the nineteenth century) or were launched by elites in such a way as to recruit a larger base (e.g. the Jacobin organization of the “sections” in Paris). Or alternatively, a set of practices in the course of their slow development and ramification gradually acquired a new meaning for people and hence helped to constitute a new social imaginary (e.g., the economy). The result in all these cases was a profound transformation of the social imaginary in Western societies and of the world in which we live.²⁴

²⁴ Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” January 1, 2002, 111.

What else can be said about the terrain of such an internally shifting landscape? Cultural historian and literary scholar Mary Poovey proposes an extension of Taylor's theoretical apparatus at this point, drawing on an insight Raymond Williams offers about the way ideology functions in relation to social change. Rather than viewing ideology as homogeneous and totalizing, Williams argues that at any point in time, a society may be shaped by emergent, dominant, and residual ideologies: "At any given moment the dominant ideology must compete with new collective understandings that are just beginning to gain credibility as well as with lingering traces of old ideological formations."²⁵ Similarly, at any given point, a society's social imaginary is an "ensemble of ideas and practices, including the germs of ideas that will eventually assume greater definition, as well as understandings that belong to older conceptualizations of social relations."²⁶ A social imaginary constitutes the broadly shared background assumptions against which social life unfolds, the necessary shared framework that makes social life possible. Put differently, however, we might say that the social imaginary defines the framework within which the complicated contestations of social life happen — not just persuasive arguments for extension and intensification of the existing social imaginary, but angry demands and raucous political claims-making; not just declarations of independence, but declarations of war; and the many minor revolutions and transgressions of everyday life through which new and challenging ideas circulate, are materialized, and confront the status quo.

²⁵ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121–27.

²⁶ Poovey, "The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy," 133. Poovey notes the similarities of function between Taylor's notion of the social imaginary and the concept of ideology in the work of others.

3. New forms of sociality must be created

One final point of emphasis will be helpful in unpacking Taylor's understanding of the ways in which change takes place in the social imaginary: new forms of sociality must be created. Taylor suggests that it is easy to entertain a distorted view of this "long and conflictual march" because our secure installment in the modern social imaginary makes it difficult to imagine anything else. This limitation of vision can lead to two related distortions: first, we are tempted to see the emergence of this new principle of order primarily in terms of a rise of "individualism" at the expense of "community," failing to recognize the fact that "modernity is also the rise of new principles of sociality." Second, we are tempted to fall into what he calls the "subtraction account of the rise of modernity," that is, the belief that once we are liberated from older forms of hierarchy and tradition, the modern ideas of individualism and mutual benefit will remain as "residual" ideas.²⁷

On the contrary, Taylor argues that the new forms of sociality inaugurated as part of the modern social order must be made concrete in new symbols, practices, and structures, in order for a social imaginary to be "viable."²⁸ These new forms of sociality will require new pedagogies, new practices of formation, and the like. Civility, after all, requires "working on yourself, not just leaving things as they are but making things over." For elites, this led to new forms of humanist education and cultivation of courtesy.

²⁷ Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," January 1, 2002, 99–100.

²⁸ This is a point Taylor makes by negative example: "As we can see with the case of the French Revolution, breakdown occurs when people are expelled from their old forms, through war, revolution, or rapid economic change, before they can find their way into new structures, that is, connect some transformed practices to the new principles to form a viable social imaginary." *Ibid.*, 99.

A broader swath of society felt these efforts in the proliferation of disciplinary institutions (poor houses, asylums, schools, and so on).²⁹

Let me anticipate slightly two important points of emphasis in my larger story. If it is the case that new forms of sociality must be constructed as social imaginaries shift and change – and surely it is – then the remaking of the global order in the wake of decolonization was not simply a matter of creating new institutions and mechanisms of governance, however. The process involved construction of a new social imaginary by which this new world could be inhabited – a world not just of ideas, but of images, stories, legends, and shared practices. Second, if it is the case that the modern social imaginary has been extended and intensified in part by clashes between competing ideas and tensions that exist within society and who help to bring into focus the points of incoherence or incompleteness within the existing system, then it is also the case that such conflicts and tensions have not happened only within the European context on which Modern Social Imaginaries is focused. Modernity is a global project in both of these senses.

4. Modernity as a global project

Taylor's notion of multiple modernities is an attempt to recognize the modern moral order as a global project that will have a variety of forms and impulses. His account, however, generally depends on a notion of cultural authenticity and parallel cultures, "authentic and isolated."³⁰ It fails to account fully for social and political

²⁹ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2007, 33–34.

³⁰ Tobias Berger, "Mind the Gap! Political Ethnography and Translations of Western Concepts in non-Western Contexts," in *Nichtwestliches politisches Denken: Zwischen kultureller Differenz und Hybridisierung*, ed. Holger Zapf, Trans- und interkulturelle Politische Theorie und

interactions across cultures and the plurality of social and political practices this produces. As Enrique Dussel points out:

[Taylor's] interpretation of modern identity in the Eurocentric, regionalistic manner, without regard for the global meaning of modernity, and by excluding Europe's own periphery as an additional relevant "source" for the constitution of the modern self as such, renders him incapable of discovering "certain" innovative aspects of "modern identity" and "sources of the self."³¹

A more complex understanding of the multiple, global routes by which modernity emerged and developed avoids the cultural essentialism of Taylor's notion of authenticity while preserving his insights into the transformations of modernity across the globe.³²

Such an account would have to begin with a narrative of European history that brought into focus the global entanglements and imagination that shaped Western self-understanding in the early modern period, and how those global realities shaped the emergence of the modern moral order Taylor describes. A number of scholars have made the case forcefully that European modernity can only be understood in relation to projects of colonial expansion, which shaped European culture and constituted European identities to a large degree.³³ Scholars of colonialism and postcolonial intellectuals have also shown how colonized people had already been conscripted into the projects of

Ideengeschichte (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2012), 34, doi:10.1007/978-3-658-00555-9_2.

³¹ Enrique D. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion, Latin America Otherwise* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 42. Dussel makes the comment in reference to the historical narrative in Taylor's earlier work, *Sources of the Self*, but I think it applies equally well to his work on modern social imaginaries.

³² Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," January 1, 2002; Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2007; Berger, "Mind the Gap! Political Ethnography and Translations of Western Concepts in non-Western Contexts," 35.

³³ Most notably, of course, Edward Said, but also Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and others; see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

modernity, shaped by its disciplinary strategies, and persuaded to adopt its ideas and ideals, at times recasting them in new varieties of their own.³⁴ In this sense, the extension of the modern social imaginary and its moral norms was underway well before the dawn of what Chela Sandoval has called “the season of de-coloniality” in the twentieth century.³⁵

As Enrique Dussel points out, modernity is a fundamentally global phenomenon. In particular, he makes the case that the self-critical impulse within modernity, and the related emergence of critical reason, was substantially a product of the critiques of modernity that emerged in the colonial encounter. Even when these critical counter-discourses emerged as part of the intellectual production of Europe, he argues, they also reflect the influence of the “dominated periphery.” Batholome de Las Casas was only able to formulate his critique of the Spanish conquest of the Americas because he had “lived in the periphery and heard the cries and witnessed the tortures to which indigenous people were being submitted.”³⁶ This counterhegemonic intellectual impulse, even when it took root in Europe or the United States, was not American European in its origins or significance. It is, rather, a dialectical result of the critical dialogue between margin and center, a co-constitutive dialogue that helps to demonstrate the contradictions of the West to itself.

³⁴ See, among others, David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Adda: A History of Sociality,” in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 180–213; Frederick Cooper, “States, Empires, and Political Imagination,” in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 153–203.

³⁵ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 7.

³⁶ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, 45.

To be fair, expanding the account of modernity in the way I suggest above is not Taylor's project, and his work on Modern Social Imaginaries is a small foray into what he acknowledges as a much wider ensemble undertaking that very much had a sense of the divergent forms of modernity.³⁷ It is, however, the starting point for my own project, and a critical precondition for any effort to develop a truly global theological or ethical conversation. Dussel argues that taking up the critiques of modernity that emerge from the colonial encounter is the next step in a process of critical labor upon which the periphery has already left its stamp. To do so is a commitment to creating a truly global theological and ethical practice that acknowledges the historical and material roots of its critical insights in the complicated, messy, painful histories of colonial and neocolonial encounters, both past and present.

5. Imagining the global

In the "long march" Taylor describes, by which the modern moral order has undergone processes of both extension and intensification, the late twentieth century saw the modern social imaginary outlined by Taylor intensified and extended in important ways. Anti-colonial movements appealed to norms of equal regard and mutual concern in making claims for recognition in the community of nations, combining claims for sovereignty and independence with those for universal enfranchisement.

³⁷ Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," *The Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 2 (1995): 24–33, doi:10.2307/3562863. For more background on the institutions and scholarly communities out of which emerged the initial conversations about "imaginaries" as a way of conceptualizing global transformations, see Gaonkar, "Toward New Imaginaries"; Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Benjamin Lee, "Editor's Note," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): ix–xi. I see Taylor's reference to "multiple modernities" in the initial pages of the book as a signal that he is trying to carve out a zone of conceptual work within the project to which he feels he can make a contribution.

So, too, the new standing and understanding of the former colonial world in the era of decolonization had as its flip side a new understanding of the particular nature of American identity in relation to a broader sense of global citizenship. This understanding was not just a theory, though it certainly came to be worked out in theoretically explicit ways. It was also a shift in what I have called the American global imagination, a shift which took place, as we would expect, through new and reconfigured social practices that embodied new ideals and that over time shaped the background understandings that Americans held about the world. We might call this the globalization of the American social imaginary, or the emergence of a global imaginary. Whatever the precise formulation, I mean to point to the process I describe above that in broad terms is adapted from Taylor.

The practices I discuss throughout this dissertation illustrate in a small way the encounter between Americans committed to the modern moral norms of equality, democracy, and common service, and the realities of a broader, rapidly changing world. Through these encounters, those shaped by the modern social imaginary are confronted by its histories, limitations, hypocrisies, and inconsistencies. These critical insights shaped the way Americans engaged the broader world in practice, and way they thought about it, and the stories, images, and feelings that formed the background sensibility through which they made sense of the global.

As I argue below, the changes in the global imaginary that shaped American engagement with the world in this period, and in particular Americans' engagement with the natures of the "third world" or "two-thirds world," were powerfully shaped by voices "from the periphery" and by the ability of the discourses of those peripheries to make

themselves heard by Americans. This process is demonstrated in the changes in the programs described here which, even through rejection, drew upon an older form of expansion (mission) to develop new practices of engagement. New forms of sociality and of social agency and collectivity were created through practices, pedagogies, disciplines, common stories, and images.

Short-Term Mission: A Working Definition

In the face of such variation, any working definition of short-term mission of short-term mission will necessarily be driven by the purpose to which it will be turned. Because I have been interested in exploring the development of the practice over time, it is important to me to work with a definition broad enough to apply to a variety of practices as they have changed over several decades. I have not, therefore, worked from a definition of short-term mission that defines the practice sharply according to either its duration, or its attachment to the term “mission.” Let me say a bit more about each of these elements of the term.

While most contemporary understandings of “short-term mission” frame the practice as no more than two to three months – that is, the length of a summer vacation for most high school or university students – and as short as a weekend, some of the earliest advocates of short-term missionary programs included commitments of up to a year or two. They were defining their programs in contrast to the dominant understanding of missionary practice at the time – that is, to the image of a lifelong commitment to missionary service in which missionaries might have served for three or four years at minimum, before returning home for a “furlough.” Thus while all of the programs I

discuss here are understood to involve something besides a lifelong vocational commitment, how that is understood in terms of length varies a great deal.

The understanding of mission, too, varies considerably across the practices and programs I explore in this dissertation, as does the relationship that individuals and communities have to the term “mission” itself. For the evangelical young people who Howell describes, a theological and cultural understanding of their short-term travel as “real mission” is essential, a defining and delimiting feature of the practice itself. Embracing this descriptor has material implications, as well, since it allows participants to tap into a long tradition of raising funds from a wider community to support the work of an individual.³⁸ Some of the programs I profile below, however, self-consciously distance themselves from the term “mission” because they have reservations about the theological and political associated with the term or because they are self-consciously attempting to locate their work in the realm of the “secular” rather than the “religious.” This was particularly true as theological debates about mission in the 1960s came to shape liberal ecclesiologies and understandings of mission.

In its formal features, short-term mission stands in sharp contrast to the ideas and ideals which shaped mission institutions and images of missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the whole, the institutions and structures of the Protestant missionary movement aimed to mobilize broad, geographically dispersed communities in the U.S. and Europe to provide financial support for long-term and career missionaries

³⁸ Brian M Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2012).

who were expected to spend many years in the same community, working under the auspices of national or regional mission boards or agencies.³⁹

This distinction is something it shares, on the other hand, with a number of other modes of contemporary travel and service which are identified by various terms: volunteer vacations or “voluntourism,” poverty and disaster tourism (“dark tourism”), disaster relief efforts, secular service trips organized by colleges and secondary schools, journeys of political solidarity, religious pilgrimage, study abroad programs, and government-funded programs like the Peace Corps, City Year, and VISTA. Any attempt to understand the moral meanings and global imaginaries embedded in short-term mission will need to situate the practice in relation to both the history of missions and contemporary trends in international service and the so-called “moralization of tourism.”⁴⁰ Indeed, many of these coincident forms of travel and service are arguably better understood as secularized forms of Christian mission, shaped by twentieth-century projects of progressive reform, modernization, and development.

Scholarly Literature on Short-Term Missions

By the late 1980s, both the secular and religious press had taken note of the rising interest in short-term international mission trips,⁴¹ and by the early 1990s, resources for

³⁹ Note: I make no claims about whether this image corresponded to the actual structure of mission work in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

⁴⁰ Jim Butcher, *The Moralisation of Tourism: Sun, Sand -- and Saving the World?*, Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism, and Mobility (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁴¹ While the overwhelming majority of these pieces are positive, even effusive, in their evaluation of short-term mission, some authors wrestle with more complex theological and ethical issues. See, for example Miriam Adeney, “McMissions,” *Christianity Today*, accessed August 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1996/november11/6td014.html>; Marshall Allen, “Mission Tourism?,” *FaithWorks*, August 2001; Jo Ann Heydron, “A River of Crocodiles:

clergy and laypeople involved in planning these trips had begun to appear steadily.⁴² A growing body of scholarly work on short-term mission, has emerged, as well.^{43,44} In fact, these different genres of writing about short-term mission are not entirely distinct. Many of the scholars who study and publish on the topic of short-term mission write and teach with a sense of accountability to ecclesial as well as academic audiences, and from the beginning, this practice has attracted the interest of laypeople and the broader public, as well as clergy and religious leaders.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a body of

What's the Real Purpose of 'Mission Trips'?,” *Sojourners Magazine*, 2002; Jo Ann Van Engen, “The Cost of Short-Term Missions,” *The Other Side* 36, no. 1 (January 2000): 20–23.

⁴² Early examples of work in this genre include Association of International Mission Services, *Short-Term Missions Training: The Ticket to Successful Ministry* (Virginia Beach, VA: Association of International Mission Services, 1992); Michael J. Anthony, ed., *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994); Chris Eaton and Kim Hurst, *Vacations with a Purpose: A Handbook for Your Short-Term Missions Experience* (Colorado Springs, Colo: Singles Ministry Resources, NavPress, 1991); Deon Loots, *Short-Term Outreach in the African Context: A Practical Guide* (Pretoria: Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, University of Pretoria, 1996). The literature continues to develop and diversify: Richter, *Mission Trips That Matter*; J. Mack Stiles and Leeann Stiles, *Mack & Leeann's Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000); H. Leon Greene, *A Guide to Short Term Missions: A Comprehensive Manual for Planning an Effective Mission Trip* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006); David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, Updated (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Pub. Group, 2013); Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis, Minn.: STEMPress, 2003).

⁴³ For an introduction to this literature, see especially Robert Priest, ed., “Special Issue: Short Term Missions,” *Missiology: An International Review* 36, no. 4 (October 2006).

⁴⁴ It is important to note that a significant body of research and reflection on short-term mission exists from the early 1980s on, in the form of thesis and dissertation research, undergraduate research and grey literature, much of it published online. Kurt Ver Beek maintains a bibliography of this literature. See Kurt Ver Beek, “Research on Short-Term Missions,” n.d., <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/sociology/staff/kurt/Short-term-Mission-Page.html>.

⁴⁵ Robert Priest's recently published anthology, *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right!*, might be considered a hybrid which straddles these genres. It includes chapters that are clearly practical in orientation (“Legal”), and is designed to attract the attention of practitioners, yet it also contains chapters by researchers who are simultaneously publishing in more popular venues. Robert J. Priest, *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008).

scholarly literature exploring the practice of short-term mission that forms a background to the dissertation research I propose to undertake, and it is this literature that I attempt to describe below.

Short-term mission trips are widely thought to be transformative for participants, especially young people.⁴⁶ Some who write about short-term mission suggest that such trips foster cultural sensitivity, spiritual growth, and a greater awareness about social conditions in impoverished parts of the world. Others have linked participation in short-term mission trips to an increased interest in long-term or career missionary service, and an increase in financial support for missions. Likewise, there is evidence that U.S. congregations desire and are strengthened by more direct engagement with missions. Advocates of the practice argue, moreover, that such experiences can help U.S. Christians to develop a more realistic understanding of social and economic conditions in the two-thirds world, and can lead them to more informed political stances, and more advocacy and political activism.⁴⁷

Yet recent research casts doubt on many of these claims, claims that have long provided the key arguments for short-term mission trips. Much of this recent wave of research sets out to test the positive claims about short-term mission using more rigorous quantitative techniques, and it generally makes far more modest claims about the spiritual

⁴⁶ See, for example, Laurie Occhipinti, "Religious Idealism: Serving Others in the Name of Faith," *Practical Matters*, no. 2 (October 2009), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2009/10/01/religious-idealism>; Paul Borthwick, "Short Term Youth Teams: Are They Worth It?," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, no. 32 (1996): 403–8.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Kersten Bayt Priest, "Women as Resource Brokers: STM Trips, Social and Organizational Ties, and Mutual Resource Benefits," in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!*, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008).

and social benefits of the practice. In fact, in a review of quantitative research on short-term mission, Kurt Alan Ver Beek reported that eleven of the thirteen strongest studies found that participation in short-term mission trips resulted in “little or no change” in participants.⁴⁸ Studies suggest that short-term mission trips may not help to reduce ethnocentric attitudes or increase the likelihood of interethnic friendships (and may even reinforce ethnocentrism); that participation in such trips does not lead to increased awareness of international events or a decrease in materialism; and that mission trips may not contribute to “faith maturity” or “spiritual well-being” in measurable ways. At the congregational level, according to some researchers, long-term participation in such trips does not necessarily lead to greater church growth or to increased support for overseas missionaries.⁴⁹⁵⁰

Not only does this quantitative research raise questions about earlier claims regarding the benefits of short-term mission; it also stands in stark contrast to most qualitative scholarship on short-term mission. As Terence Linhart notes,

Despite the diversity of perspectives, opinions, anecdotal observations, and theories regarding short-term mission trips, there remains little that we know about the effects (both on those who go and those who host/receive) from these trips and experiences. Participants continue to report them as significant experiences... yet researchers have been unable to clearly describe the nature of that significance.

⁴⁸ Kurt Ver Beek, “Lessons of the Sapling: Review of Quantitative Research on Short-Term Missions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!*, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008). For another broad argument for this conclusion, which takes into account much of the existing literature on short-term missions, see Priest et al., “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement.”

⁴⁹ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, 25–29; Priest et al., “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement.”

⁵⁰ Priest et al., “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement,” 444.

Ver Beek argues, somewhat more pessimistically, that the gap between qualitative and quantitative research reflects the fact that participants’ “self-perception of the change [is] much greater than the actual change in their lives.”⁵¹

The voices of “host” or “receiving” communities — most of them relatively impoverished, and almost universally located in the two-thirds world — are rare in this body of scholarship, but their presence nonetheless adds significantly to our understanding of the phenomenon of short-term mission. Although these perspectives vary considerably, there are nonetheless some critiques of short-term mission which appear with regularity. Host communities are critical of the cultural arrogance they see in short-term mission groups, and concerned about the “culturally imperialist” assumptions underlying many short-term projects. They complain that short-term mission trips tend to be overly goal-focused, overly confident about their approach to solving problems in the places they visit, and “unrealistically” optimistic about the effectiveness of their contributions. This model of mission repeats patterns of “paternalism and humiliation” that have long shaped relationships between sending and receiving churches, they insist.⁵²

Newer literature on short-term mission also illustrates the increasing complexity of transnational relationships between individuals and institutions. Short-term international mission trips are not simply a U.S. phenomenon, but is common in South

⁵¹ Ver Beek, “Lessons of the Sapling: Review of Quantitative Research on Short-Term Missions.”

⁵² Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*; Van Engen, “The Cost of Short-Term Missions”; Edwin Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model,” *Missiology* 34, no. 4 (October 2006): 509–23; Corrie L Baar, “Short-Term Student Missions and the Needs of Nationals” 2003.

Korea, the UK, Canada, and Australia.⁵³ As Steve Offutt points out, host communities are not passive recipients of short-term mission groups, but actively shape the enterprise; and there is an emerging short-term mission movement in the global South, as well. Kersten Bayt Priest's research with American women engaged in mission trips shows how short-term mission mobilizes many kinds of networks — personal, professional, civic, and kinship networks, as well as church and parachurch networks — and thus that the patterns of transnational relationship which emerge are highly varied and particular. Thus, while much writing about short-term mission invokes framing paradigms of “globalization” and the “next Christendom” (Philip Jenkins' term for a Christianity whose energy is centered in the global South), it also illustrates the complexity, nuance, and even contradiction that exists alongside such sweeping frames.

I have approached these questions by situating the practice of short-term mission in its broader historical context, and tracing the political and economic landscapes and the religious debates and institutions from which the practice emerged. These contexts have shaped the various and sometimes contradictory moral, theological, and political meanings associated with short-term mission, and in some key ways they provide a framework for understanding both short-term mission and the debates about the practice, without falling back into the grooves of well-worn critique.

⁵³ Robert J. Priest, “Opening Address” (Being There: Short-Term Missions and Human Need conference, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., 2009); Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt, “Transnational Religious Connections,” *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 209–32; Stephen Offutt, “Quick Stops on the Global Circuit: How El Salvadoran and South African Churches Participate in the STM Movement” (Being There: Short-Term Missions and Human Need conference, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., 2009); Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model.”

Short-Term Mission and its Histories

I

A 1968 volume called *Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission: The Ecumenical-Conservative Encounter* opens with an observation that would have seemed like a profound understatement to many readers familiar with the Protestant missionary landscape of the late 1960s: “There has been an apparently widening gulf in recent years between the ecumenical and the conservative evangelical philosophies of world mission.” The volume was intended as a symposium on the matter, convened by Norman A. Horner, an editor who saw “valid and important emphases” in both traditions. “The Protestant missionary enterprise has undergone more radical change in the last fifteen years than in the previous century,” he wrote, and the broader context of “unprecedented social, political and theological revolution” had rendered theological and practical consensus probably impossible, and perhaps undesirable. Nevertheless, Horner, a former Presbyterian missionary and seminary professor turned denominational mission executive, had assembled two “teams” (his term) of mission agency leaders and seminary professors to trace this “widening gulf . . . between the ecumenical and conservative evangelical philosophies of world mission.”⁵⁴

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, liberal theology, biblical higher criticism, and skepticism about the supernatural swept through America’s Protestant landscape. The Social Gospel, which turned the attention of churches to a range of social problems vexing American cities, on the mission field appeared as the notion that

⁵⁴ Norman A Horner, ed., *Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission: The Ecumenical-Conservative Encounter* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1968), 9–10.

Christian service and example were primary modes of modern evangelism, with medical and educational missions being a prime example.⁵⁵ For many traditional evangelicals, this amounted to wholesale neglect of the Great Commission, with its plain-sense directive to “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.” The interdenominational mission agencies founded in this period — among them, the China Inland Mission (f. 1865, later renamed the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, OMF), the Christian & Missionary Alliance (f. 1887), The Evangelical Alliance Mission (f. 1890), and others — thus came to complement the work of denominational mission boards. These “faith missions” differed from the older mission boards not only in their emphasis on eschatological expectations and “urgent proclamation” as the primary motive for missionary work, but in their attitude toward raising money through prayer and not (at least in principle) through explicit public appeals for financial support.

Despite these differences of emphasis, at the turn of the twentieth century and through World War I, American liberals and conservatives coexisted within a shared network of Protestant missionary institutions, most notably those of the International Missionary Council.⁵⁶ More than institutions, however, they shared a broad sense that Christian missions rightly pursued involved both evangelism and a “civilizing” function that was given form in mission schools, hospitals, and social service. The term “evangelization” itself came to encompass this full range of activities, efforts aimed at conversion as well as social improvement. As William Hutchison notes, this “gospel of Christian civilization, in its American phrasings,” flourished across the theological

⁵⁵ Christian Stephen Smith and Michael Emerson, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.

⁵⁶ Horner, *Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission*, 10–11.

spectrum, from liberals and Social Gospellers, who applied their energies to foreign missions, to premillennialists whose rejection of liberal theology was emphatic:⁵⁷

“Opposing forces could collaborate because the principal common enterprise, converting the world to Christ, seemed more compelling than any differences; but also because they shared a vision of the essential rightness of Western civilization and the near-inevitability of its triumph.”⁵⁸

In the background of this enthusiasm was the spasm of Western military, political, commercial, and cultural expansion into the non-Western world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the so-called “new imperialism.”⁵⁹ Missionary attitudes toward imperialism were diverse, and varied, as Hutchison notes, according to imperialism’s particular localized embodiments. The most common response, however, reflected two principle assessments: “that imperialism was an inexorable force, and that this force must somehow be tamed.”⁶⁰ Whether with enthusiasm, reluctance, or earnest resolve, American missionaries came to terms with the imperial context within which their endeavors – evangelistic as well as meliorative – were largely pursued. As “chaplains and tamers” of Western expansion, they came to see themselves as purveyors

⁵⁷ William R Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 91–95.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁹ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet, 1902); Michael W Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell Univ.Press, 1996), 141–61. For a discussion of Hobson, his critics, and ongoing debates about the causes, concepts, and periodization of European imperial expansion, see Doyle.

⁶⁰ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 92.

of a “fine spiritual imperialism” that could spiritualize the unfolding secular processes reshaping the globe.⁶¹

World War I was a pivotal moment for this broad alliance among American missionary institutions. The war “shattered hopes and complacencies on which the missionary movement had been founded” and set in motion a process that pried open theological fissures, both within the mission institutions and in the Protestant establishment more broadly. The carnage of the war prompted a crisis for the optimism that underwrote much of theological liberalism. At the same time, Fundamentalist activism surged after the war, fed by a wartime interest in premillennialism and the development of a transdenominational anti-modernist movement. By the mid-1920s, acrimonious debates between fundamentalists and modernists were a central feature of Protestant institutional life, and circulated broadly in public forums, as well. Because most missionaries at the time were supported by denominations, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy played out on mission fields as well; calls for assessing the theological fitness and orthodoxy of missionaries was a recurrent feature of fundamentalist-modernist conflicts. It also shaped debates about mission in ways that would fundamentally reshape the language and structure of American missionary institutions.⁶²

During the 1920s, a groundswell of criticism directed at the missionary enterprise drew its nature and very existence into question. On one hand were liberal-modernists for

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 125; Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 199–208; Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 97.

whom the evangelical beliefs that underwrote traditional mission impulses — in particular the exclusivist belief in salvation through Christ — were no longer tenable. The Layman’s Foreign Missions Inquiry, funded by John D. Rockefeller and shaped by the leadership of Harvard professor William Hocking, represented this outpost of thinking. When it was published in condensed form in 1932, the report’s unequivocally liberal conclusion that social and educational efforts were “legitimate functions of Christian missions apart from any explicit evangelism” provoked intense debate. What the world needed, Hocking concluded after years of data collection and a seven-volume report, was “world understanding on a spiritual level.”⁶³

On the other hand, fundamentalists worried that mission boards had been corrupted by theological liberalism and its corollary commitments to social service. This was “a mission impulse drained of true biblical belief and of all concern for the work of personal conversion.”⁶⁴ The Layman’s Inquiry, wrote conservative stalwart J. Gresham Machen, was “a public attack against the very heart of the Christian religion.”⁶⁵ In the wake of these debates, fundamentalists began shifting their support to the independent “faith” missions, which reflected their evangelistic priorities and skepticism about modernist trends in theology. These were bolstered by the work of a growing network of Bible institutes, including the Moody Bible Institute, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), and dozens of other Bible colleges, all of which trained a steady stream of missionaries and provided networks that helped them to raise funds. The “fundamentalist-

⁶³ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 158–60; Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War*, The United States in the World (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 17.

⁶⁴ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 138–39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

backed missions grew stronger, better financed, more evangelistically aggressive and more successful in recruiting volunteers than ever before.”⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the Layman’s Inquiry, it was clear that a liberal modernist, or at the very least a centrist, understanding of missions had come to dominate the denominational Protestant mission establishment. At virtually the same moment, however, student enthusiasm for missions began to wane. Recruitment was down on campuses, and the Student Volunteer Movement saw fewer students attending its convention, signing pledge cards, and entering missionary service.⁶⁷ By the 1930s, the liberal missionary enterprise was beginning to weaken for a number of reasons, including the general liberal distaste for evangelism as well as financial strains brought on by the Depression. The decline in support for liberally-minded mission initiatives within mainline churches also reflected persistent disagreements about the nature and theology of mission, part of broader theological fissures that remained a defining feature of mainline Protestant denominations through the rest of the twentieth century. This decline in support squeezed the budgets of denominational mission agencies, which led to shrinking staff and fewer placement opportunities for enthusiastic young volunteers.⁶⁸

At least one other development that emerged within the Protestant missionary movement of this period is important for the development of short-term mission in the decades that follow. As leaders within the missionary movement sought to carve out a

⁶⁶ Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 72; Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry Commission of Appraisal, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen’s Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932).

⁶⁷ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 147.

⁶⁸ Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 72, doi:10.2307/3164640.

“middle ground” in response to the critiques of the 1920s, they argued that the missionary enterprise was valid but could only be sustained if it were disentangled from its association with Western imperialism. This process of “defending missions while seeking to reconstitute them” led to a more robust engagement with the cultures and political situations of those in the non-Western world, and in particular to the demands of churches in the missionary “receiving” countries for relationships of equality and mutuality. In the missionary movement, this process led to a new ethos of “ecumenical sharing.”⁶⁹

As Michael Thompson argues in *For God and Globe*, this process also shaped a particular form of Christian internationalism that emerged in the interwar period as a number of prominent leaders of the Protestant missionary movement turned their attention toward the development of internationalist movements and institutions.⁷⁰ In contrast to liberal internationalism, with its legalist and institutionalist emphases and Eurocentric focus, the Christian internationalists were distinguished by their concern for the Asian Pacific and Africa and by their substantial networks in those regions. Two additional features of this movement are notable. First, this movement was marked by a commitment to racial equality, and a strong sense that white supremacy represented both

⁶⁹ Charles W. Forman, “A History of Foreign Mission Theory in America,” in *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective: Papers Presented at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the American Society of Missiology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, June 18-20, 1976*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977), 69–137; Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 18–20.

⁷⁰ Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*, 202–3; Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Thompson, *For God and Globe*. These networks are an important part of the background to the development of the ecumenical short-term exchange programs that I explore in Chapters 2 and 3, and I address Christian internationalism there, as well.

a rejection of the Gospel and a root cause of global unrest and injustice. Second, both the persistent failures of the West in areas such as race relations and the cataclysmic failures represented by World War I led these Christian internationalists to insist that the West could no longer be seen as “Christian.”⁷¹ Liberal mission theorist Daniel Johnson Fleming captured something of this shift in his critique of the way the rhetoric of conquest and occupation still shaped missionary rhetoric. In an interdependent world, the “continents” requiring conquest are not geographical ones, but rather “the great transverse areas of human activity” such as industrialization, nationalism, materialism, racial injustice, ignorance, war and poverty.⁷²

In other words, when acrimonious debate over the theology and practice of mission re-emerged in the aftermath of World War II, they were “familiar debates in an unfamiliar world” — the context was new but many of the themes and players were already well established.⁷³ Among other things, the context was made new by dramatic theological, institutional, and cultural shifts taking place within the evangelical world in this period. Between roughly the late 1940s and the mid-1970s a “new evangelicalism” emerged that distinguished itself in a number of ways from the older conservative and fundamentalist streams from which it developed. Most notably, the new evangelicals rejected cultural separatism and the anti-intellectualism that had come to be closely identified with fundamentalism in the course of the fundamentalist-modernist

⁷¹ Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 18.

⁷² Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions* (Association Press, 1925); Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 152. Fleming’s redefinition of geographical metaphors foreshadows the way the student ecumenical movement at mid-century would begin to use the term “frontiers.”

⁷³ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 176.

controversy. They forged a new style and network of institutions marked by willingness, even eagerness, to engage with the wider culture, political institutions, and notably, with the youth culture.⁷⁴ The founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), and the explosion of Billy Graham's crusades onto a broad public stage during the 1950s were important symbols of the institutionalization of this "neo-evangelical" strand. In a conscious effort to counterbalance agencies and structures affiliated with the National Council of Churches and the ecumenical world, evangelicals worked together through the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), which had been founded in 1917, and created two new umbrella organizations: the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA), founded in 1945, and the World Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1951.⁷⁵

By the late 1950s, while mainline Protestants were experiencing a hand-wringing reformulation of their approach to missions, evangelicals were experiencing a post-World War II mission revival. The growth and development of short-term mission has been seen as one element of this revival, reflecting not only the new energies evangelicals were devoting to the task of overseas evangelism, but the new institutions and networks through which their concerns for both mission and youth could be effectively channeled.⁷⁶ Protestant denominations began experimenting with shorter-term models of

⁷⁴ Thomas E. Bergler, *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014). See chapter 6 in particular.

⁷⁵ Smith and Emerson, *American Evangelicalism*, 9–15.

⁷⁶ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*; Brian Howell, "Roots of the Short-Term Missionary, 1960-1985: A Brief History of Short-Term Mission in America (Part 1)," *Building Church Leaders*, February 5, 2006, <http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/articles/2006/rootsmissionary.html>.

missionary service in the 1940s and 1950s as well, for reasons that both echoed and differed sharply from those of evangelicals.

Despite the “widening gulf” between ecumenical and evangelical approaches to mission, in other words, Christians across the diverse Protestant missionary landscape were experimenting in the 1950s and 1960s with new forms and practices of mission that emphasized shorter terms of commitment and new styles of engagement. They shared a broad cultural context, of course, and to some extent these new experiments responded to the same shifts and opportunities: a greater awareness of the world and America’s new role within it, new transportation and communication technologies, the growing affluence and leisure time for America’s expanding middle class, and the restless idealism and self-confidence of a new generation of young people. Yet these new short-term models of mission were informed by different ideas about mission and different traditions of missionary practice; were embedded in different religious and social networks; were understood differently by participants and broader church institutions; and were oriented around different aims and ends.

II

While much of the literature on short-term mission focuses on the emergence of the practice within evangelical institutions and networks in the 1960s and 1970s, I trace the development of short-term mission within evangelical, ecumenical, and mainline Protestant institutions and networks beginning in the decade after World War II, when theologies and practices of missions were undergoing broad reinterpretation in the face of significant shifts, most notably anti-colonial independence movements and the process of

decolonization.⁷⁷ These debates over mission and over the proper role of the church in a world undergoing dramatic change are matters to which I will return throughout the chapters that follow.

Some broad sense of this wider historical context is necessary, however, to grasp the impulses that shaped short-term mission practice. Politically, an older colonial order was being replaced by a new regime of global power articulated through modernization theory and its imperatives for democratization and economic development. These discourses promised newly independent nations that they could achieve true sovereignty only through integration into the global economy, a process mediated by U.S. and global institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These new international institutions reflected a new “liberal” understanding of the relationship between government and market, and generated a new constellation of governmental technologies and mechanisms on both a national and international scale. These new processes and institutions required new types of subjects to shape, sustain, and manage them.⁷⁸

Whether evangelical or ecumenical, whether conservative, liberal, or theologically radical, North American Christians in this period were all coming to terms with their new places in this shifting global landscape. The rise of short-term mission and related practices reflected the efforts of both individuals and institutions to remake older

⁷⁷ For existing accounts of the history of short-term mission, see Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, especially chaps. 3-5; Priest, *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions*, i–ix. While there have been some calls for a more comprehensive history of short-term mission, incorporating ecumenical, catholic, orthodox, and Mormon histories, these ‘streams’ of Christian tradition remain largely overlooked.

⁷⁸ Molly Geidel, *Peace Corps Fantasies How Development Shaped the Global Sixties*, Critical American Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

religious practices and relationships for a new historical moment. As the following chapters make clear, exploring the forces that gave rise to and subsequently shaped the practice of short-term mission can shed light on the variety of ways American Protestants have responded to these shifts.

Accounts tracing development of short-term mission often describe the phenomenon as a “grassroots movement” that emerged “outside” of the denominational and mission agency structures through which Protestant mission had been officially sanctioned. In fact, in the evangelical world, short-term missions first gained broad visibility and momentum among groups with roots were in the Pentecostal world. By the mid-1970s, Hutchison notes, almost all of the dramatic growth in missionary personnel was among what he calls “unaffiliated” evangelicals, that is, groups like Pentecostals who were not affiliated with one or both of the evangelical mission associations, the IFMA or EFMA. By the mid-1970s, there was not only a growing divide between how ecumenical Protestants and conservative evangelicals understood mission, but between the approaches of “affiliated” and “unaffiliated” evangelicals, as well.⁷⁹ As we will see, the practices of these groups derived not from the broad heritage of the Protestant missionary movement, but from domestic practices of revivalism and evangelism.

I argue that the various forms of short-term mission that emerge, evolve, and develop in the latter half of the twentieth century respond variously to changing political and economic conditions, and to a shifting religious landscape, by helping Americans to develop new forms of political and religious subjectivity that attuned them to the

⁷⁹ Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 193. The “unaffiliated” groups tended to be small, but collectively they represented the largest net growth in missionary personnel between 1960 and 1980, some 10,000 people.

changing demands of global citizenship. I suggest, moreover, that the popularity of short-term mission today, particularly as a practice recommended for and embraced by young adults, can only be understood when it is seen as part of a wider field of practices, both religious and secular, that bring together elements of tourism, service, religious devotion, and personal development — including volunteer vacations, gap year programs, alternative spring breaks, and educational exchange programs. In our own context, short-term mission and related practices are among the ways that young adults are formed for citizenship and productivity in the context of a globalized neoliberal economy. That such a cultivation of virtues and sensibilities for global citizenship is both celebrated and cautiously critiqued reflects not simply an uneasy assessment of short-term mission in all of its varieties, but a mixed assessment of our contemporary political and economic situation more broadly.

Definitions: Evangelicals, Ecumenical Protestants

Evangelicals

As should be evident from the historical overview I sketch above, the emergence and development of short-term mission took place during a time when the landscape of American religious life was undergoing substantial change, and with it, the theological categories and denominators of religious identity by which people named and themselves and understood their associates. For that reason, among others, defining “evangelicals” and “ecumenical Protestants” presents a challenge.

Evangelicals have been notoriously difficult to define. Because the historical scope of what follows is focused on the United States after 1945, I use the term

“evangelical” to refer to people and institutions affiliated with the self-identified evangelical movement that I describe above as the “new evangelicalism.” This movement emerged from the separatist fundamentalist subculture in the 1940s and grew in size, cultural strength, and complexity over the next three decades. Historian George Marsden has argued that this transdenominational network of leaders, institutions, and publications shared a common history, culture, and behavioral norms and functioned in much the same way denominations had functioned.⁸⁰

To be sure, this evangelical network was diverse from the start, and as it grew, that diversity multiplied as well; boundaries were redrawn and renegotiated. Of particular relevance for the emergence of short-term mission is the growth of the charismatic and Pentecostal movements in the period after the 1960s. In the discussion on Youth With a Mission (YWAM) below, for instance, I touch on some Pentecostal debates about interdenominational collaboration. If it is generally accepted today that Pentecostals and charismatics are part of a broad evangelical culture, that was not altogether clear in the late 1950s. Para-church organizations such as those I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5 were part of the larger process through which a diffuse and ultimately diverse evangelical culture came into being. In discussing particular people, institutions, networks, and developments, I try to be as clear as possible about how they stood in relationship to one another and the emerging identities which they were helping to constitute.

Ecumenical Protestants

⁸⁰ George Marsden, “Introduction: The Evangelical Denomination,” in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), vii–xix.

In a narrow sense, I use the term “ecumenical Protestantism” to describe individuals, institutions, and networks that were part of the World Council of Churches and related institutions. This included, importantly, the networks of the Student Christian Movement and the World Student Christian Federation, which feature prominently in Chapters 2 and 3. In a somewhat broader sense, however, I have at times used this term almost interchangeably with the term “mainline Protestants.” The term “mainline” has often been used as a short-hand for the theological liberalism associated with the older Protestant denominations, such as Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. While these denominations were dominated by theological liberals in the mid-twentieth century, that dominance came to be complicated by evangelicalism’s growing influence. By the 1970s, evangelical organizations and networks often extended their influence to “denominational” churches, and more theologically conservative networks within mainline denominations actively sought out resources, ideas, and fellowship among evangelicals. This was true, for instance, of the Association of Church Mission Committees, an organization I discuss in Chapter 5.

By the 1980s and 1990s, all of the mainline denominations were themselves rent by theological debates that reproduced broader cultural divisions. At this point, it was inaccurate (if sometimes still tempting) to speak of “mainline Protestant” theology or culture as if it stood in contradistinction to “evangelical” theologies or cultures. As I sometimes suggest by the phrase “ecumenical Protestant left,” individuals and networks associated with and shaped by the ecumenical movement, including many denominational staff, often represented more theologically liberal and even radical networks within their own denominations.

If the term “ecumenical Protestants” is helpfully specific in one sense, it introduces other complications. By the 1980s and 1990s, many of the institutions of the ecumenical movement in the United States were undergoing sharp reductions in budget, staff, and influence, a fate shared to different degrees by mainline denominations more generally. During this period, people and organizations shaped by the legacies of the ecumenical Protestant networks that had flourished earlier in the century continued to be connected to one another, to organize in groups, and to participate in common projects and practices, including, as I show in Chapter 6, practices of short-term travel, solidarity, and exchange that were shaped by the traditions of short-term mission that had emerged in the ecumenical movement decades before. These practices were not necessarily identified as “missions,” however, and they engaged social movement and advocacy networks that often were not *formally* Christian, or even religious, even if the culture and social networks that constituted them were deeply marked by religious networks, culture, and practices.⁸¹ These organizations and networks could not in any straightforward sense be identified as “ecumenical” organizations, much less “ecumenical Protestant” ones. Yet they had been shaped by traditions of thought and practice, and by worldviews, that flowed through ecumenical Protestant institutions. In some sense ecumenical Protestantism survived in the ideas and practices that had been formed within its institutions and networks, even if some of these ideas and practices later lost or severed their ties to the ecumenical movement, Protestantism, or Christianity as a whole.⁸²

⁸¹ Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁸² Here I draw on Patricia Appelbaum’s history of Protestant pacifist culture. Appelbaum suggests that Protestantism shaped pacifist culture in the period after World War I, and that even after the pacifist movement became culturally and institutionally distinct from Protestant churches, Protestantism survived in pacifism in a number of ways. Patricia Faith Appelbaum,

Despite these definitional challenges, I have organized the material that follows around what I call the two broad “streams” of evangelical and ecumenical Protestant practices of short-term mission, tracing lines of influence and development through individuals, organizations, ideas, and practices.

Missionary History and the Subject of Colonialism

Perhaps nothing haunts mission history more pervasively than the legacies of colonialism. Joerg Rieger suggests that even though scholars of Christian mission have focused substantial attention on the problems of colonial mission, they have been slow to recognize the potential pitfalls of postcolonial, or “neocolonial,” mission: “Even though direct patronizing structures at the political level have been discontinued with the end of colonialism, patronizing structures continue at other levels, including the economic and the political.” In the wake of formal colonial structures, “mission is thus seen as having found new freedom (and new innocence). Without having to worry about colonialism and the associated (mis)use of power and authority any more, mission and missionary enterprises now seem to be free to reinvent themselves.”⁸³

Yet the moral and theological investment in differentiating contemporary ideas about and practices of mission from “colonial missions” often turns on a caricature of colonialism that substitutes overly simplistic and uniformly unsympathetic characters and motivations for the complexities and negotiations that were inherent in the widely varied

Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

⁸³ Joerg Rieger, “Theology and Mission Between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism,” *Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004): 207.

histories and experiences of formal and informal empire, from conquest and expansion to colonial rule and anticolonial resistance to decolonization and its post- and neo-colonial aftermath. Indeed, the complex and disparate histories of colonialism and the enormous range of ways in which Christian mission is part of those histories should make us hesitate at an easy embrace of the kind of post-colonial innocence Rieger describes. As he notes, the end of formal colonial structures does not signify the end of colonial intellectual attitudes, reflected now in the belief that it is the sacred duty of missionaries and their nations, led by the U.S., to shape the globe in their own image. Neither does the dismantling of formal colonial structures (partial though that dismantling may be) signify the end of economic dependencies, reflected now in growing capitalist networks that distribute benefits and suffering unevenly across the planet.⁸⁴

The relationship between missionary reformers and the expansion of American empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is an instructive case in point for several reasons. First, it represents a moment when missionary and reformist endeavors spread, at least initially, in the context of an expanding *informal* empire, rather than in connection to a formal, territorial empire. Beyond this, however, it helped to establish a mode of distinctively American missionary expansion that was defined by humanitarian impulses and a progressive, reforming spirit. This history forms the backdrop to many of the developments I trace below, and thus constitutes something like a pre-history of the practices, networks, and sensibilities that I discuss in more detail in chapters 2 and 3, below, and from which short-term mission was forged.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 209.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American missionary efforts, many of them thoroughly shaped by the Social Gospel and the moral idealism of the Progressive Era, were part of a broad array of voluntary moral reform efforts that constituted what historian Ian Tyrell has called “America’s moral empire.”⁸⁵ He argues that these reformers, and the networks they created, played a key role in the extension of American power in the period before the U.S. established a formal empire overseas. “Cultural expansion in the form of missionaries and social reform enlarged what could be termed the external “footprint” of the United States in the 1880s and 1890s, creating conditions wherein a more vigorous economic and political expansion could be seriously considered.”⁸⁶ In the process, American reformers articulated a global vision that championed humanitarian relief efforts and, ultimately, humanitarian interventions that allowed them to see the United States as a fundamentally anti-imperial force — even as it acquired a formal empire in 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American war.

This is not to suggest that such reformers shared a common vision with later colonial and corporate interests. Tyrell resists the argument that these reform-minded networks were simply an extension of America’s “soft power,” a term favored by international relations scholars, or that they can be easily glossed as a case of “cultural imperialism.” Though there were clearly connections between these networks and the power of colonialism and imperialism, he judges the term “too blunt” to capture fully the

⁸⁵ Ian R. Tyrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America’s Moral Empire*, America in the World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

complexity of these interactions.⁸⁷ While most reformers “compromised with empire enough to seek improvement in the institutions of the American colonial enterprise,” some challenged these alliances and championed the interests of colonial peoples, and developed networks to support anticolonial movements and indigenous nationalist reform efforts.⁸⁸ As this case, and others like it, suggests, even where the perspectives of missionaries and reformers was counter to that of colonial administrators, where missionaries offered a voice of dissent and help to the space for transnational moral debate about important issues this should not be seen as separate from the expansion of empire but rather as part of its production.⁸⁹

Later generations of social activists, social ethicists, and ecclesial leaders have criticized the underlying attitudes and beliefs that shaped this sort of moral reform activity. But the far-flung institutional legacies of this period remain. And the echo of this approach to engaging the world remains deeply embedded in the American psyche. This sensibility combines a humanitarian impulse and desire to “save” — whether by way of

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5; for a discussion of the complexities of missionary interactions with colonial administrators and other expatriates, see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁸⁸ Tyrrell, *Reforming the World*, 13–27, 166–87, 227–45.

⁸⁹ Similar arguments about the anti-colonial and dissident networks that involved colonized and indigenous as well as metropolitan actors can be found in Elizabeth Elbourne and Leela Gandhi’s work. Elbourne describes the religious, political and kinship ties that knit indigenous peoples into imperial networks in the nineteenth century. And Leela Gandhi describes the “minor narratives” of cross-cultural collaboration between metropolitan radicals and anti-colonial activists in the Victorian era — and the “affective communities” that enabled this collaboration. Elizabeth Elbourne, “Indigenous Peoples and Imperial Networks in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Politics of Knowledge,” in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 59–86; Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006).

conversion or through technology and modernization — with a sense of righteousness and a conviction that progress is possible and can be conferred.

There is another key way in which colonial histories of mission and travel must inform contemporary assessments of short-term mission. Historians have long argued that the context of colonialism and experience in the colonies shaped metropolitan as well as colonial subjectivities. Influenced by Talal Asad’s *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973) and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), scholars in this tradition show how colonialism profoundly shaped European culture and intellectual traditions, and the ways in which Europe and Europe’s “others” were mutually constituted in the political and popular imagination. For example, Susan Thorne argues that congregationalist missionaries were instrumental in shaping the ways that the “middling classes” of England imagined the British Empire throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A number of scholars in history and cultural studies have extended this line of thinking to the American context as well.⁹⁰

Various scholars have taken up this line of argument, focusing on contemporary practices of transnational travel, service, and engagement and the continuities between colonial and postcolonial contexts. Barbara Heron’s research with Canadian women with experience as development workers in the global south shows how these experiences contribute to forming subjects with the tastes, experiences, sensibilities, competencies, and values that are the hallmarks of a particular form of “enlightened” white, bourgeois

⁹⁰ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford (Calif.): Stanford University Press, 1999); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

identity. The “dance of resistance” that she traces in the narratives of the women she interviewed, and in her own narrative, do little to unsettle the colonial continuities that shape the postcolonial situations they explore.⁹¹ Similarly, Maria Erikson Baaz’s study shows how European “donors” and development workers come to understand themselves in contrast and opposition to their Tanzanian NGO “partners.” She traces the contradictions between the development discourse of “partnership” and the images of Self and partners articulated by development practitioners themselves — “which portray a superior, active, reliable Self in contrast to an inferior, passive, unreliable partner.”⁹² These identities can only be understood when situated in the context of more general images, identities, and discourses shaped by colonial history. Yet she argues that there are both breaks and continuities with the colonial past, the legacy of which is reflected in the critiques of Eurocentrism and paternalism woven into her research subjects’ ideas about development practice, partnership, and themselves.⁹³ “Decolonized situations are marked by the imperial pasts they disavow,” Baaz notes, quoting postcolonial scholar of nineteenth-century English literature Simon Gikandi.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Barbara Heron, *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 29; see also Nancy Cook, “Development Workers, Transcultural Interactions, and Imperial Relations in Northern Pakistan,” in *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, ed. William Coleman and Diana Brydon (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 216–34; Nancy Cook, *Gender, Identity, and Imperialism: Women Development Workers in Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Nancy Cook, “What To Wear, What To Wear?: Western Women and Imperialism in Gilgit, Pakistan,” *Qualitative Sociology* 28, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 351–69, doi:10.1007/s11133-005-8363-4.

⁹² Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership*, 9.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 166–76.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9; Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 15.

Scholars have found similar dynamics at work among volunteer tourists. Despite the rhetoric of service and idealism, volunteer tourism is shaped most prominently not by a desire to contribute to development processes, but rather by a desire to cultivate a “professional, self-governing, careerist persona.” The process draws on and reproduces already circulating stereotypes of the mobile, flexible, worldly tourist and poor-but-happy locals.⁹⁵ Wanda Vastri examines volunteer tourism programs in Guatemala and Ghana and argues that volunteer tourism functions in two key ways: first, as a form of virtuous consumption, which “allowed volunteers to affirm their flexibility, mobility, and worldliness over less sophisticated consumers”; and second, as a new type of moral and technical education, which prepared young adults to enter an increasingly competitive Western job market.⁹⁶

Disciplinary Transgressions: Christian Social Ethics and the Study of Mission

Practices of short-term international travel are present in the writings of contemporary Christian social ethicists in two primary ways. First, they form part of the institutional and material background against which conversations about globalization and Christian responsibility unfold. Many Christian ethicists who study these issues have been influenced profoundly by their own participation in the ecumenical movement, international educational exchanges, and other kinds of transnational social movements and institutions. References to these experiences show up in prefaces, acknowledgments,

⁹⁵ Kate Simpson, “Dropping Out or Signing Up? The Professionalisation of Youth Travel,” *Antipode* 37, no. 3 (June 1, 2005): 447, doi:10.1111/j.0066-4812.2005.00506.x, quoted in Wanda Vastri, *Volunteer Tourism in the Global South: Giving Back in Neoliberal Times* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10.

⁹⁶ Vastri, *Volunteer Tourism in the Global South*, 26.

and introductions, especially as these authors describe the passions that motivate their research.⁹⁷ It is not hard to imagine that these concrete experiences of encounter and exchange inform Christian ethicists' arguments for norms of solidarity and understanding of practices that will help to build a more robust global civil society. Indeed, another way that the notion of international travel for education, service, and exchange appears in the writings of Christian social ethicists is as one of the concrete suggestions for ways that North American communities might learn about and respond to global injustice.⁹⁸

Yet on the whole, references to short-term mission are brief and relatively rare; the role of short-term international travel and exchange in shaping both academic and popular ethical reflection on globalization remains largely unexplored in the work of Christian social ethicists. This absence reflects a number of dynamics within the academic field of Christian social ethics, including a persistent sense, shared with liberal mainline denominations, that "mission" and "missionaries" remain suspect in the postcolonial context.⁹⁹ Feminist theologian Susan Thistlethwaite and ethicist Heidi Hadsell capture some of this ambiguity: "Often, especially for liberal Protestant denominations, eschewing old-style colonialist missions has meant retreating from

⁹⁷ See, for example, Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (New York: Continuum, 2004), ix; and Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), xiii. This has been a pattern for the better part of a century. In the early 1920s, Reinhold Niebuhr traveled twice to Britain and Germany with a study group organized by YMCA President Sherwood Eddy, and in 1935-36, Howard Thurman led a "Negro Friendship Delegation" to India under the auspices of the World Student Christian Federation.

⁹⁸ Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World*, 142-43.

⁹⁹ For a background to the move away from discussions of mission in Christian social ethics, see Kevin York-Simmons, "A Critique of Christian Development as Resolution to the Crisis in U.S. Protestant Foreign Missions" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2009), <http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/available/etd-11162009-214430>.

contact with peoples around the world, except in approved ‘ecumenical’ settings.” At the same time, they note, the emergence during the 1970s of vibrant liberation theologies in Latin America, South Africa, Central Africa, and Asia, and the engagement of Christians in social and political struggles around the world, fed a “contemporary desire to relate to [the peoples outside of Europe and America] in new ways.”¹⁰⁰

In response to these shifting conversations, Christian social ethicists influenced by liberal and liberationist theologies increasingly emphasized decolonization and liberation, economic globalization and social justice, in their engagement with global issues and communities. Discussion and debate about “development” gradually claimed much of the attention and space once devoted to “missions” in the ecclesial and academic publications most closely associated with the liberal wing of Christian social thought.¹⁰¹ Thus while Christian ethicists have addressed many of the wider social and structural trends that shape the context and practice of short-term mission — globalization, global disparities in wealth and power, debates about the nature and role of the U.S. power and influence — they have tended to emphasize national and international policies, institutions, and structures.

In the same period, evangelical Christians in the U.S. set out to make a place for themselves in the academic field of mission studies. They created their own degree

¹⁰⁰ Susan Thistlethwaite and Heidi Hadsell, “Globalization in the Hyde Park Seminaries: A History in Process,” in *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education*, ed. Susan Thistlethwaite and George F. Cairns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 40–41. This book comes out of the globalizing theological education movement discussed in chapter 5.

¹⁰¹ In addition to York-Simmons, see also Mark Hulsether’s discussion of the debates over development and dependency theory in the pages of *Christianity and Crisis*: Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 140–44.

programs, journals, and scholarly organizations, all associated with evangelical institutions and networks. As academic conversations about mission began to migrate to new spaces, and professional training focused on Christian mission became more squarely situated within evangelical institutions, debates about theologies and practices of mission disappeared from the academic guild of Christian Ethics. I discuss some of the institutional changes critical to this history in more detail in the chapters that follow, but for now it is enough to point out that this marked a significant shift from previous decades.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, by contrast, key proponents of the Social Gospel extended their concerns and concrete prescriptions for “regeneration of the social order” to “home” and “foreign” mission fields alike. Gary Dorrien notes that social gospelers “called for a Christian movement that took literally the gospel command to save the world.” In its pre-World War I heyday, “the social gospel routinely called for the Christianization of American and the world”; “[t]he social gospel was nothing if not a missionary faith.”¹⁰² In January 1917, Methodist Social Gospeler Harry F. Ward, who had drafted the Social Creed of the Churches and would soon take up a post teaching Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, published an article in *Men and Missions*, the magazine of the Layman’s Missionary Movement, calling for a thorough integration of social gospel principles in the missionary enterprise. “The modern program of missions,” he wrote, “proposes to drive the Gospel clear to the heart

¹⁰² Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*, 199.

of the world life,” so that it shapes every aspect of social existence and thereby addresses every social need.

What are the world-wide social needs? ... Poverty and pain, hunger and disease. The human race suffers from them the whole world over, and on every side of the seven seas Christian compassion organizes its ministry of mercy. We not only have bread lines in our American cities, but we have our famine-relief funds for China and India, for Serbia and Belgium and Armenia.

Ward saw the missionary movement and “the world-wide movement of the working class” as partners in eradicating the three great evils that plague humanity: “war, and vice, and greed — organized strife, organized lust, and organized economic injustice.”¹⁰³

Just as Social Gospel reformers believed that addressing these social ills was a critical responsibility of the church in the industrializing cities of Europe and North America, so too they saw it as fundamental to the Christian missionary enterprise elsewhere in the world. As another Union professor of the period, missiologist Daniel Johnson Fleming, put it,

If there is any challenge that comes like a clarion call to us today as missionaries, it is the challenge to come to grips with the existing industrial and economic order, and revolutionize it, humanize it, Christianize it. ... Christ came to Christianize and humanize the whole social and world order.¹⁰⁴

Fleming, who had been a missionary and professor at Forman College in India¹⁰⁵ prior to taking up his post at Union, cited several factors to justify this understanding of social reform as a missionary endeavor. World War I had badly damaged respect for

¹⁰³ Harry F. Ward, “A World Wide Social Program,” *Men and Missions*, January 1917, 138.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Ethical Issues Confronting World Christians* (Concord, New Hampshire: Rumbord Press, 1935), 58.

¹⁰⁵ Forman Christian College is in a region that is now part of Pakistan. See “About,” *Forman Christian College*, accessed August 7, 2017, <http://www.fccollege.edu.pk/about/>.

Christianity and other aspects of Western culture, he noted, particularly in Asia; a more socially conscientious Christianity might help to remedy this. But perhaps more important, all over the world, from Indian cities to the copper belt of Africa, he saw that the coming of the industrial order was trailing suffering and dehumanization in its wake.¹⁰⁶ For both Ward and Fleming, the conviction that social critique and social reform were a necessary part of Christian missionary responsibility reflected not only their theological convictions but also their understanding of the economic shifts taking place on a global scale, and what the emerging era of capitalist expansion and widespread industrialization meant for the poor and workers the world over.

I do not outline these perspectives on mission to romanticize or rehabilitate them. Indeed, many Social Gospelers who embraced “foreign missions” as a means of Christianizing the global social order shared the paternalistic, chauvinistic, and frankly racist attitudes of their contemporaries. They assumed the superiority of the West, and American greatness in particular, and held fast to a hubristic faith in progress and modernization that coexisted uneasily, and sometimes overshadowed, their concerns about industrialization, capitalism, and imperialism, and the dehumanization and suffering that these processes entailed. “The greatest problem which faces the world at the present time is not as to whether the Western civilization will conquer the world,” wrote Shailer Mathews in 1914, assuming that Western triumph was in any case a foregone conclusion. “The real problem is whether Christianity will conquer Western

¹⁰⁶ Fleming, *Ethical Issues Confronting World Christians*, 59.

civilization.”¹⁰⁷ This combination of triumphalism and critique was representative of many social gospel reformers. Like the theological justifications that traveled under the sign of “Manifest Destiny” and the “civilizing mission,” a mandate to “Christianize the social order” by remaking the world in terms of Protestant cultural values could and often did work hand-in-glove with other dimensions of imperialist expansion, a point to which I will return below.

A full review of the way that Christian social ethicists engaged questions of colonialism over the course of the twentieth century is beyond the scope of this project, but critiques of the Protestant missionary enterprise articulated by Christian ethicists and theologians from the 1930s on were attentive to the relationship between missionary movements and colonialism. With the rise of anticolonial independence movements across Africa, Asia, and Latin American in the 1950s and 1960s, social ethicists joined third world liberation theologians and missionaries radicalized by their experiences in the colonial world in articulating a more resolute critique of colonialism. This critique shaped their attitudes about mission, as well.

In the 1960s and 1970s, these intellectual shifts and changing sensibilities with respect to “foreign mission” played out not only in the theological academy, of course, but in denominational and ecumenical bodies, mission agencies, para-church organizations, and U.S. popular culture, as well.¹⁰⁸ Increasingly stark disagreements

¹⁰⁷ Shailer Mathews, *The Individual and the Social Gospel* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1914), 66–67, quoted in Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*, 199.

¹⁰⁸ For a history of how missionaries were seen in popular culture, see Sarah E. Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Images in American Culture After World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). For shifts in mainline churches, see

related to mission — over theologies of mission, how to fund and organize mission, what to make of mission legacies, even the very meaning of the term “mission” itself — came both to reflect and signify the deepening divisions within and among Protestant institutions. Global and cross-cultural mission enterprises became sites of theological and political contention both across and within Protestant institutions in the U.S.

A handful of theologians have commented on this pattern. Joerg Rieger notes that progressive Christians, disappointed by inherited patterns of mission, often turn away completely from global engagement, claiming that “instead of trying to help people we should simply get off their backs.” Rieger rejects this response as an “overreaction.” We are already connected; the question is not whether to be in relationship, but what kinds of relationships to pursue, given the space we occupy “between neocolonialism and postcolonialism.”¹⁰⁹ In *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, Marion Grau begins with a similar assessment:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many progressive and mainline Christians, haunted by the shame and white guilt regarding the dismal history of colonial missions, seem doubtful about a sense of mission that goes beyond the relief and development agencies they fund and support. As they turn away in shame and disgust from what they associate with mission – colonial exploitation, the export of Western mores and capitalism, conservative proselytizing, divisive hate speech against sexual minorities, and the preaching of prosperity – there seem only a few spaces in which to articulate a resolute progressive Christian witness in praxis.¹¹⁰

James A. Cogswell, *No Turning Back: A History of American Presbyterian Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1833-2000* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Rieger, “Theology and Mission Between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism,” 215.

¹¹⁰ Marion Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society and Subversion* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 15.

Such an approach, Grau argues, must be able to take into account the complexity of “the laments and losses, the hybridities and tensions” that the colonial legacies of mission have wrought, while also articulating the hopes and aspirations that remain at the heart of Christian witness today. Her assessment may seem overstated, with its talk of shame, guilt, and disgust, but it helpfully points to the affective as well as intellectual dimension of the liberal resistance to engaging “missions.”

This history of the ways that the discipline of Christian ethics has engaged and disengaged with the study of missions has several implications for this dissertation. First, I argue in what follows that mainline and progressive Christians did not simply withdraw from the world in the wake of debates about mission. They did, however, develop new language and paradigms for describing this engagement, first redefining mission and then resisting the term altogether, for both theological as well as political and pragmatic reasons. For this reason, some of the people and programs that I explore in the chapters that follow do not use the term “mission” at all. Indeed, mainline and progressive Christians may reject the association of their activities with “missions” and “missionaries,” or they may use this language only when hedged with qualifications. Yet I hope to show that the practices through which they continued to engage with global networks and the political and theological sense they made of those practices are essential to understanding the practices that today cluster around the term short-term mission.

In this, my approach differs significantly from that of Brian Howell, who discusses the history of the narrative of short-term mission, tracing the emergence of the phrase “short-term mission” in the evangelical world, and the corresponding

consolidation of a coherent narrative defining the practice.¹¹¹ As I hope to show, narrowing the field of inquiry in this way would have been premature, and effectively would have excluded, almost by definition, some of the very streams of the tradition in which I am most interested.

Second, in tracing this history, I devote more attention to the mainline and ecumenical development of short-term mission for several reasons. First, as I note above, the existing literature on short-term mission focuses on its evangelical roots and iterations. While this history has undoubtedly done more to shape the popular rhetoric and understanding of short-term mission, for reasons that I will explore more fully in below in Chapters 4 and 5, I hope to begin to remedy some of the gaps in the history of mainline and liberal innovations in mission in the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the lack of engagement with this history reflects the liberal ambivalence about “mission” which I discuss above.

By considering a wide range of practices as part of this genealogy, I show how short-term mission is part of a broader field of practices, both religious and secular, that combine elements of tourism, service, idealism, religious devotion, and personal development, that grew to flourish in the second half of the twentieth century. Of course, like liberal and progressive Christians, volunteers engaged in service and development work through secular organizations and agencies often vehemently reject the suggestion that their work has anything in common with that of religious missionaries. Yet making these connections allows me to go beyond description of short-term mission and its

¹¹¹ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, 29–32, 69–117.

development over time, to connect it with other practices and processes, and show how it operates as part of larger socio-economic and cultural circuits.¹¹²

The academic “guild” of Christian Ethics grew out of the same theological and institutional networks as the ecumenical left which I describe here and discuss more fully in Chapters 2, 3 and 6, below. This is especially the case of the substream of that field that clusters around the term, “social ethics.” With this in mind, the failure to engage “mission” explicitly can hardly be a surprise. It is rather one more dimension of the changing political, ecclesial, and intellectual landscape that this project explores. This is also the context that has shaped my own trajectory – personal, ecclesial, intellectual. In some ways this project has been an attempt to assemble a better understanding of what happened to ecumenical understandings of mission, and especially practices of mission, in the years after World War II, in order to better understand the ecclesial and social world by which I have been formed.

Chapter Overview

I begin by examining two early short-term mission programs that emerged within the ecumenical Protestant left during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the process, I show how the institutions and networks of the ecumenical Protestant left contributed to the development of practices that would come to be known under the umbrella of short-term mission. This is in part an effort to recover and make visible this history as a resource for ongoing reflection on short-term mission practices. In discussing Operation Crossroads Africa (Chapter 2) and the Frontier Internship in Mission program (Chapter

¹¹² Vrastı, *Volunteer Tourism in the Global South*, 16.

3), I argue that these programs drew on inherited missionary and ecumenical ideas, networks and practices to pioneer new forms of short-term, transnational engagement responsive to the challenges of the postwar period.

In developing Operation Crossroads Africa, James H. Robinson drew on practices associated with the Social Gospel and progressive era reform movements — in particular student volunteering, interracial collaboration, intercultural tours, and the residential work camp — to develop a program that connected young Americans to the democratic and anti-colonial ideals on the African continent. Robinson extended these practices, applying them to broader global purposes and contexts and making explicit the ways in which he saw kinship between democratic movements and practices of social solidarity within the United States and beyond. Americans, he understood, had an important role to play as “witnesses to democracy” overseas, just as the democratic aspirations of Africans had something to teach Americans about their “unfinished” democratic project at home.

The Frontier Internship in Mission program, which I explore more fully in Chapter 3, similarly built on missionary and ecumenical practices of the interwar period — practices of hospitality, traveling seminars and study abroad programs — to develop a new model of mission that responded to debates within the ecumenical student movement about the nature of mission and the role of the church in a world of revolutionary change. Flory drew on these established practices and networks to develop new forms of global engagement responsive to the dramatic political and economic changes happening throughout the world — the “world struggle,” as it was called in ecumenical circles. If the story of Operation Crossroads Africa sheds light on how these new practices were related to changes in the world of international politics and foreign policy, the Frontier

Internship in Mission program shows how they also reflected changes taking place in the church and in social movements over the course of the 1950s and 1960s.

In Chapter 4, I trace the development of short-term mission practices in the evangelical world. Drawing on the histories of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), Youth With a Mission (YWAM), and Operation Mobilization (OM), I argue that the forms of short-term mission that these organizations popularized in the 1960s and 1970s grew out of existing institutional networks established by denominational and independent mission boards, practices of itinerant evangelism, and urban crusades, all of which were well-established features of the North American evangelical world at mid-century. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) played an important role in reframing Christian missions and the Christian global imaginary for evangelical young people during the 1970s and 1980s, as well, introducing students to critical voices from the two-thirds world and adapting to student interests in shorter-term mission opportunities.

While the development of short-term mission practices was understood by mission leaders in the evangelical world as a challenge or alternative to the traditional model of lifelong, career, missionary service, I suggest that the practice is better understood as an internationalizing of revival practices such as itinerant preaching and urban crusades. At the same time, the broadly evangelical, youth-centered, international travel that these parachurch organizations pioneered and facilitated refashioned the practices they had inherited, remaking them in response to the changing nature of American evangelicalism, the increasingly mainstream place of evangelicalism in American life, and the youth culture to which they appealed.

I then turn to more recent decades to explore several of the routes by which the practice of short-term mission was popularized within North American Christianity. I argue that between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, short-term mission trips became a familiar social practice, part of the shared repertory religious institutions and movements, and thus came to be employed in a wide variety of institutional settings, and for a range of purposes and meanings. In Chapter 5, I examine several key evangelical contexts within which short-term mission is transformed from a practice for young adults to a popular practice for congregations and high school aged youth: evangelical colleges, organizations interested in mobilizing congregations to support overseas mission, and youth ministry organizations.

Then, in Chapter 6, I turn to the development of short-term mission practices within ecumenical and mainline Protestant networks and institutions in the same period, exploring the development of this practice in relation to ecumenical advocacy networks, the Central American peace movement, and theological education. This chapter points to the way that short-term mission practices of travel, education, service, and evangelism are part of a broad range of practices taken up today by ecclesial and non-ecclesial groups for many aims and ends.

Chapter 2

Operation Crossroads Africa:

Christian Internationalism in an Age of Independence

In the Spring of 1961, the Kennedy administration set out to sell the Peace Corps to the American public. The scale of the Peace Corps was new; some 15,000 American volunteers would be working around the world within five years. In its design, however, the program followed in the footsteps of earlier volunteer and service programs, and the experiences and reputations of these programs helped to shape public perceptions of the Peace Corp as a symbol of optimism, idealism, and self-sacrifice. In an hour-long episode of a “CBS Reports” episode called “Crossroads Africa: Pilot for a Peace Corps,” Edward R. Murrow made these connections explicit.¹¹³ Operation Crossroads Africa, founded by Presbyterian clergyman James H. Robinson in 1959, was a pioneering organization that sent groups of American students to Africa each summer to work alongside young Africans on a variety of projects, from digging ditches to teaching English. The program included cultural exchange alongside manual labor, and gave students a chance to live and work as part of interracial teams, serving as “witnesses for democracy” in the countries where they served. The Peace Corps wasn’t meant to displace these programs, the program noted, but rather to supplement them and build on the models they had developed. There would be an ongoing role alongside the Peace Corps, for the likes of

¹¹³ “Crossroads Africa: Pilot for a Peace Corps,” *CBS Reports* (USA, March 16, 1961), <http://operationcrossroadsafrica.org/crossroaders-photos-and-videos/cbs-reports-video-operation-crossroads-africa-and-peace-corps-1961>.

Operation Crossroads Africa, the American Friends Service Committee, the International Voluntary Service and other student efforts that had contributed so much in the past.¹¹⁴

Both the Peace Corps and these earlier voluntary service programs were part of a broad post-World War II response to the political and economic transformations taking place around the world — the end of colonialism, a wave of newly independent states, the ascendance of the US to a new role of global leadership, and the emergence of the Cold War. The US was not alone in calling on young volunteers to help navigate these tensions, or in using such programs to help young people cultivate the ideas, sensibilities, and deep understandings that would prepare them for this new era. Between 1960 and 1965, nearly every nation with a desire to exert international influence sent young volunteers to the third world.¹¹⁵ In addition to global changes, these programs also responded to the idealism and optimism of a post-war generation of American young people who were globally aware and socially engaged.¹¹⁶ In addressing these global tensions and generational shifts, political leaders looked to Protestant institutions and global networks as resources.

In the years after World War II, Protestant denominations and ecumenical networks had begun expanding programs that exposed young people to postwar

¹¹⁴ Ruth T. Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 98; Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 138–39; C. J. Wetzel, “The Peace Corps in Our Past,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 365, no. 1 (1966): 1–11; Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*, 2000; Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK’s Peace Corps* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); “Peace Corps Milestones” (U.S. Peace Corps, 2011).

¹¹⁵ Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love*, 13.

¹¹⁶ Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love*.

conditions and international issues through study, travel, and service. A variety of aims and concerns animated these programs: preparing Americans to participate in a newly globalizing world, articulating American good will in the context of Cold War ideological competition, and providing an outlet for the spirit of optimism and unrest among American students. The programs built on both a longer tradition of transnational ecumenical student work that stretched back to the late nineteenth century, and on the Protestant missionary movement. In the postwar period, however, the ideas, networks, and practices of these movements were reshaped by a new set of needs and ideas to address a new historical moment. The emergence and popularity of these programs in the 1950s helped to lay the groundwork for the Peace Corps and other programs that the US foreign policy establishment came to endorse during the Cold War. They also shaped denominational and ecumenical conversations about the changing nature of “mission” in an era of decolonization and nationalism.

In this chapter and the next, I focus on two such programs — Operation Crossroads Africa (OCA, or Crossroads), founded by James H. Robinson in 1957, and the Frontier Internship in Mission (FIM), launched by Margaret Flory in 1959. Both of these programs had their roots in the ecumenical Protestant left.¹¹⁷ These programs were distinctive, but they were not alone. A host of international travel and voluntary service programs grew out of the ecumenical student movement in the period immediately after World War II and spread across mainline Protestant denominations over the following decades, spawning travel seminars, work camps, study tours, friendship exchanges,

¹¹⁷ Mark Thomas Edwards, “‘God’s Totalitarianism’: Ecumenical Protestant Discourse during the Good War, 1941–45,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2009): 285–302, doi:10.1080/14690760903396369.

ecumenical student conferences, and other forms of episodic international programming.¹¹⁸ Taken as a whole, this phenomenon reflected a broad post-war stirring as Americans began to engage in new ways with the world in which they suddenly found themselves both as world citizens and as citizens of an emerging world power. Not only did they allow young people to gain knowledge about the world, and the political struggles that seemed to be engulfing it, they also helped young people develop a new kind of political, moral, and social subjectivity that reflected the emerging normative liberal ideal of the post-war, and later the Cold War, period — that of a global citizen, whose global sympathies and solidarities were a resource for transnational collaboration. Their focus on a relatively small, elite pool of student participants and their hope that program alumni would go on to influence structures of power through roles in the church, state, academia, and business reflected the assumptions of the Protestant establishment institutions from which they emerged.

In discussing Operation Crossroads Africa and the Frontier Internship in Mission program, I argue that these programs drew on existing inherited missionary and ecumenical ideas, networks, and practices to pioneer new forms of short-term, transnational engagement responsive to the challenges of the postwar period. In developing Crossroads, Robinson drew on practices associated with the Social Gospel and Progressive Era reform movements, including especially the pacifist movement — student volunteering, intercultural tours, and the residential work camp — to develop a

¹¹⁸ Sara M. Evans, *Journeys That Opened up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 7. To some extent formally secular and more explicitly ideological networks and institutions echoed these forms of engagement as well.

program that connected American young people to the democratic and anti-colonial movements of the African continent, and later the Third World more broadly. Both the philosophy and form of Operation Crossroads Africa reflected shifting ideas about mission in mainline church circles, the influence of the ecumenical student movement, and debates in post-war Christian social ethics. Robinson's early work in Harlem and with interracial student work camps, and his engagement with mainline, ecumenical, and anticolonial networks influenced the structure and aims of the program, as well. The Frontiers in Mission program, which I will explore more fully in Chapter 3, similarly built on missionary and ecumenical practices of the interwar period – practices of hospitality, traveling seminars, and study abroad programs – to propose a new model of mission that was responsive to debates within the ecumenical student movement about the nature of mission and the role of the church in a world of revolutionary change.

As I have suggested, these programs to some extent reflected concerns that overlapped with those of the US foreign policy elite, which was itself deeply intertwined with the mainline establishment. At the same time, they often retained and incubated a seed of critique that stood at odds with US foreign policy aims, particularly as the 1960s went on. The same was true with respect to critiques of the church. As I discuss in more detail below, these programs were shaped by debates taking place across the Protestant world about colonialism, mission, evangelism, democracy, revolution, and economic development. Post-World War II voluntary service programs were shaped by these debates, as they were by encounters with the youth and protest movements of the 1960s, both within and outside of the United States. These programs inevitably and quite intentionally exposed participants to ideas and social facts that could, and sometimes did,

contribute to a process of radicalization. In fact, for some participants, participation in these programs was a key part of intensely remembered journeys further leftward into the student, feminist, and anti-war movements of the 1960s and 1970s — and in some cases, out of the institutional church, as well.¹¹⁹

Operation Crossroads Africa, the Social Gospel, and Black Internationalism

In 1951, when the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions deployed the Rev. James H. Robinson on a 42,000-mile journey through Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, Robinson was already widely known in ecumenical circles as an enterprising pastor and electrifying preacher. While still a student at Union Theological Seminary, Union president Henry Sloane Coffin and Harry Emerson Fosdick, the pastor of Riverside Church, had hand-picked Robinson to establish a new Presbyterian congregation in Harlem that would serve the neighborhood's growing African American population. At the time, Harlem was a "restless border community," in Robinson's words, where the displacement of lower-middle-class white Protestants and poor Irish Catholics by African Americans created tensions of race, class, and religion that made it "perhaps the most difficult, yet interesting, community in America."¹²⁰

From the moment in 1938 when Robinson agreed to take up this challenge he saw it as an opportunity to develop a church that embodied his ideas about what the church should be: focused on young people, committed to ending discrimination, and concerned with finding solutions to the concrete problems of the neighborhood. "It would be a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 13. Women involved in the ecumenical movement of the 1950s and '60s often found that their international experiences drew them into social and political organizing within the US as well.

¹²⁰ James Herman Robinson, *Road without Turning: The Story of Reverend James H. Robinson; an Autobiography* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1992), 220.

seven-day-a-week church, open from early morning til late at night,” wrote Robinson, recalling his vision. Over the next decade, Church of the Master became a hub of activity. By 1950, it was home to a community center, a credit union, a cooperative grocery, a mental health clinic, a child care center, and range of social activities. It was, as Robinson himself put it, “an institution not of charity, but of cooperative self-help.”¹²¹ Robinson’s approach reflected the socially and politically engaged Christianity he had encountered at Union under the tutelage of Harry F. Ward, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others. It also reflected his experiences at Lincoln University, where he had gained fluency in the contours of black nationalism and anti-colonial thought through his engagement with a network of black intellectuals and anticolonial activists from across the black Atlantic world.¹²²

Robinson’s experience in Harlem, and with projects that grew out of his work at Church of the Master, would strongly shape his work with Operation Crossroads Africa decades later. I explore three dimensions of this work in more detail below: interracial student volunteering, intercultural educational tours, and workcamping. These practices,

¹²¹ Ibid., 250–51. Quotation at 224.

¹²² For more on Lincoln University as an important crossroads of black intellectual life in the 1930s, see Jason C. Parker, “‘Made-in-America Revolutions’? The ‘Black University’ and the American Role in the Decolonization of the Black Atlantic,” *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (2009): 727–750; L. L. Bethel, “The Role of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) in the Education of African Leadership: 1854-1970.,” 1976. Parker argues that the early 1930s saw a shift from the “missionary” phase of black Atlantic intellectual exchange to a more “political” phase. Robinson’s experience at Lincoln was shaped by his encounter with Benjamin Nnamde Azikwe, a Lincoln graduate who went on to become the most important nationalist leader in west Africa in the 1930s and ’40s, and the first president of Nigeria. He taught at Lincoln while Robinson was a student, and together with Robinson led a campaign to introduce the school’s first “Negro history” course. He was also responsible for recruiting a wave of African students to attend Lincoln in the late 1930s and early 1940s. See Robinson, *Road without Turning*, 167–69, 187. Thurgood Marshall and Langston Hughes had graduated shortly before Robinson arrived on campus; Kwame Nkrumah arrived soon after he graduated. In short, Lincoln was known for its role as a hub in the transatlantic network of African and African diaspora leadership.

rooted in the progressive religious institutions and social movements of the interwar period, particularly the pacifist movement, would influence the forms taken by international exchange and volunteer initiatives in the decades after World War II and the moral meanings given to these practices. The idea that voluntary labor and participation in interracial and cross-cultural teams could be formative and transformative for young people and at the same time advance broader political and social movements now seems self-evident. Yet I argue that these practices have historical roots that reflect and embody particular ethical and political positions. James Robinson and Operation Crossroads Africa pioneered the translation of these practices from domestic to international arenas.

Student Volunteering

From the start, Robinson was committed to developing the Harlem church as a model of interracial leadership and fellowship, and he found enthusiasm for this among his white peers and Union classmates. When the doors of the church opened, Robinson's "staff" included Stephen Crary, a white fieldwork student from Union Seminary, and Elizabeth Wright, a Barnard College student "of solid Scotch Presbyterian background" who had worked with Robinson at the Union Neighborhood Center. Robinson's work attracted hundreds of volunteers and fieldwork students from the academic institutions of the neighborhood — Columbia University, Barnard College, Union Seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the International House — most of them white.¹²³

¹²³ This sort of student volunteering had its roots in the Settlement House movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By the 1930s, as social work was becoming professionalized, many settlement houses were in transition, becoming or handing off some of their social welfare functions to neighborhood centers and other styles of community organizations. For more on this transition, see Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present*, Columbia History of Urban Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). For a broader exploration of the role of race in the American Settlement House Movement, see Elisabeth Lasch-

The culture of interracial cooperation at Church of the Master won Robinson both supporters and critics. He found himself defending the presence of white volunteers to black church members who were suspicious of their motives, and to white liberals who thought it would be healthier to have more blacks among the church's leadership. His interracial work, and in particular his willingness to officiate at the weddings of interracial couples, brought him into open conflict with both whites and blacks, including other clergy. Eventually, Robinson attracted the attention of the FBI, who considered his support for interracial marriage a clear sign of Communist sympathies and so revoked his passport for a time.¹²⁴ Despite criticism, Robinson believed that focusing on common problems would lead people to "lose consciousness of their differences and divisions." Church of the Master was a "laboratory" for this interracial experiment.¹²⁵

Intercultural Educational Tours

Church of the Master also became something of an attraction. For years, it was a regular stop on tours of Harlem led by the radical Methodist minister Clarence V. Howell. Howell's carefully planned "Reconciliation Trips," which operated from 1921 until at least 1948, were designed to give teachers, students, and clergy a "first-hand study" of the most pressing social, political and economic issues of the day. The broader goal, Howell said, was "to reconcile group to group, as well as person to person — not to

Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

¹²⁴ Robinson, *Road without Turning*, 235.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 232–38.

convert those we visit, nor to be converted. Friendship, fellowship, love between groups have their intrinsic worth, regardless of ideas either group holds.”¹²⁶

The tours were shaped by Howell’s pacifist and leftist politics, something both his collaborators and his critics recognized. Howell maintained a broad network of relationships in labor, pacifist, and civil rights circles, particularly in New York City, and he drew on these contacts in developing his tours. In his correspondence with cooperating organizations and speakers, Howell was explicit about his hope that the tours would introduce students to radical social, political, and economic groups and facilitate contacts with potential sympathizers and generate support for various social movements.¹²⁷ Anti-Communist crusader Elizabeth Dilling proclaimed them “propaganda tours” disguised as

¹²⁶ Ibid., 238–40. The quotation about goals is found in P. Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 210, fn124. During the 1933-34 academic year, 32 different trips attracted more than 300 participants. A 1946 profile of Howell reported that he had led more than 92,000 people on Reconciliation Trips over the preceding 25 years. The tours, organized thematically around an issue (such as housing, public health, companionate marriage, atheism, or radical labor), or on a particular ethnic or religious community (Chinatown, Negro Harlem, Jewish), might include visits to homes, houses of worship, and social, political, or labor organizations. Edward R. Olsen, “New York City as Laboratory,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1934, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9E02E6DB113CE23ABC4051DFB667838F629EDE>.

¹²⁷ Although no secondary literature on Clarence C. Howell exists, he is a fascinating figure whose life and work illustrate the kinds of overlapping religious and political networks out of which the events of this chapter emerged. Born in Michigan, he entered the Methodist ministry in 1912, and after several years on the circuit, moved to Boston to study with Harry F. Ward at Boston University School of Theology; he followed Ward to Union Theological Seminary in 1919. While in seminary, he worked as the leader of a local labor forum at a Boston church known for its leadership on industrial issues. In the 1920s, Howell moved to New York City when he was appointed to the Department of Evangelism of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extensions. In that role, he focused on outreach to those who were involved in political and social movements. He was included in *American Labor Who’s Who* in 1918. William Watkins Reid, “New York City Methodism and the Centenary,” *The Christian Advocate* 96:41 (New York: Methodist Book Concern, October 13, 1921): 1287; *The World Tomorrow* 3:9, September 1920 (New York: The Fellowship Press): 288; Union Theological Seminary Catalogue, 1922-23 (New York): 35-36; “Clarence V. Howell, C.C.H.S. ’06, Conducts One-Man War Against Racial Prejudice,” *Cass City Chronicle*, February 23, 1951; Eugene P. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward* (Westview Press, 1984), 108, 293.

“educational larks.”¹²⁸ On the other hand, Howell’s tours were popular and well regarded in East Coast educational and liberal political circles, where faculty and student publications recommended them as both educational and leisure activities. Edward G. Olsen, director of education for the National Conference of Christians and Jews in the 1960s, hailed Reconciliation Trips as “the pioneer intercultural public tour service in the United States,” and declared they had been a model for similar educational programs developed by groups seeking to address prejudice, racism, and discrimination. “Neither ‘sightseeing’ trips nor ‘slumming expeditions,’” he wrote, such tours, were effective because they worked simultaneously at both an intellectual and emotional level: “Intercultural Tours help bridge chasms of ignorance, widen personal concerns, deepen sensitivity to basic human values. Thus the psychological foundation is laid for effective programs of realistic democracy and practical brotherhood.”¹²⁹

At the same time, the popularity of Howell’s tours reflected a more pervasive and more problematic cultural appetite for “foreignness” and the “exotic,” particularly among the middle and upper strata of the working classes.¹³⁰ This practice drew on a long trans-

¹²⁸ In *The Red Network*, a 1934 compilation of organizations with Communist and Socialist sympathies, Elizabeth Dilling fingered Howell and noted that the organization was at the time offering tours in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Syracuse, and Boston. Howell was in good company. Also included in her roll-call of dangerous radicals were: Harry Ward, Reinhold Niebuhr, Union Theological Seminary, the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Federal Council of Churches. Elizabeth Kirkpatrick Dilling, *The Red Network: A “Who’s Who” and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Kenilworth, Ill, Chicago: The author, 1935), 221–23. A brief discussion of Reconciliation Trips in Chicago appears in Franklin Rosemont, *The Rise & Fall of the Dil Pickle: Jazz-Age Chicago’s Wildest & Most Outrageously Creative Hobohemian Nighspot* (Charles H. Kerr Pub., 2004), 131–32.

¹²⁹ Edward G. Olsen, “Intercultural Tours in Chicago,” *Journal of Intergroup Relations*, 2, no. 3 (n.d.): 238–39.

¹³⁰ Wulf D. Hund, Michael Pickering, and Anandi Ramamurthy, eds., *Colonial Advertising & Commodity Racism*, Racism Analysis. Series B, Yearbook; v. 4 (Zürich, Münster, North America: LIT Verlag, International Specialized Book Services, 2013).

Atlantic history of “slumming,” in which people of wealth, social standing, or education made visits to or took up residence in urban social spaces inhabited by the poor — for purposes of Christian charity, sociological research, social work, curiosity, pleasure, or some combination of these.¹³¹ A re-energized American imperialism and an emergent consumer culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped to make ethnological exhibitions and ethnic shows — including those associated with World’s Fairs, colonial and commercial exhibitions, and missionary exhibitions — among the most popular forms of entertainment in the Anglo-American world.¹³² By the 1930s,

¹³¹ Seth Koven, *Slumming* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1–22; Robert M Dowling and Peter Conolly-Smith, “Slumming in New York: From the Waterfront to Mythic Harlem,” *The American Historical Review*. 113, no. 3 (2008): 846; Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850 - 1915* (Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.: Univ. of California Press, 2007), 174–203.

¹³² The literature on racism, imperialism, and the representation of cultural “otherness” in exhibitionary and commercial culture during this period is developed in several places, including particularly the work of Robert Rydell. Human showcases were a central feature of world and empire exhibitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these settings, cultural showcases were set up to compare the “natural” world and “primitive” cultures with a particular vision of industrial modernity, situating the human race and a diversity of human cultures along an evolutionary scale, with the wildness of the natural world and the order of Western civilization at opposing ends. In these staged settings, the immediacy of the visitor’s gaze confirmed knowledge and reaffirmed imperial projects as vehicles for benevolent cultural and material development. Human exhibitions had mostly disappeared from World’s Fairs by the late 1930s, though they continued in various forms in subsequent decades. Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Robert W. Rydell, Nancy E. Gwinn, and James Gilbert, *Fair Representations: World’s Fairs and the Modern World* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, “South Africa: A World in One Country. Moments in International Tourist Encounters with Wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern” (*Afrique Du Sud: Le Monde En Un Pays. Instants de Rencontres Du Touriste International Avec Le Monde Sauvage, Le Primitif et La Modernité*), *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 36, no. 143 (1996): 354–61; Luis A. Sánchez-Gómez, “Human Zoos or Ethnic Shows? Essence and Contingency in Living Ethnological Exhibitions,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 2, no. 2 (December 30, 2013): 22, doi:10.3989/chdj.2013.022.

On missionary exhibitions in particular, see Sanchez-Gomez (above); Christopher J. Anderson, ed., *The World Is Our Parish: Displaying Home and Foreign Missions at the 1919 Methodist World’s Fair*, 2006, 196–200; Christopher J Anderson, *The Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions: The 1919 World’s Fair of Evangelical Americanism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012).

America's largest cities were enormously diverse and, to a large degree, spatially segregated. Despite recurrent waves of xenophobia and anxiety about immigrant assimilation, distinct enclaves of "ethnic" city dwellers were marketed to tourists as colorful attractions that exemplified the internal heterogeneity of the cosmopolitan metropolis.¹³³

Robinson described his own role in Howell's tours in blunt terms: "It was my job to help him turn a slumming tour into a sociological study." The tours often visited popular Harlem preacher Father Divine, the Black Jews, or other African American religious communities in Harlem. Robinson himself was critical of the religious culture in Harlem, listing among the problems ailing the neighborhood "religious charlatans" whose storefront churches swindled the poor, and popular black preachers like Daddy Grace and Father Divine, who "removed [the people's] worries, and their meager worldly goods as

In fact, Howell wrote to a local committee planning for the 1938 New York World's Fair, offering his "Group Visits to Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Italians, Russians, Syrians, Jews, Spanish Americans, and Negroes in New York City" to Fair attendees interested in touring New York City during their stay, but seems to have been rejected. This exchange is recounted by P Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives*. (S.I.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 109, 210 n124. Schechter identifies Howell as an "ethnic entrepreneur" representative of the larger phenomenon. In interwar Europe, anti-exhibitionary protests organized by labor and anti-colonial groups to coincide with such events also drew on exhibitionary techniques and appeal to broadcast their critiques of imperialism. Though there is no evidence that Howell was familiar with these protests, it is possible that he or others in his network had similar intentions. Sarah Britton, "'Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!': Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 69 (2010): 68–69.

¹³³ Malte Steinbrink, "'We Did the Slum!' – Urban Poverty Tourism in Historical Perspective," *Tourism Geographies* 14, no. 2 (May 1, 2012): 225, doi:10.1080/14616688.2012.633216; Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 188. Steinbrink argues that this tourism-oriented emphasis on cosmopolitan heterogeneity was a distinctive feature of slumming practices in the US, and marked both the touristification and the ethnicization of the slum tour. Slum touring practices in London, on the other hand, had emphasized slums as spaces of moral difference — vagrancy, licentiousness, and so on. Cocks argues that the commercialization of "ethnic slumming tours" in the US both created social distance and also opened up greater space for the cosmopolitan appreciation of cultural difference.

well.”¹³⁴ Robinson shared these biases with many educated African Americans, and of course with many whites. Nonetheless, he felt that interpreting these movements in light of the economic, religious, and political conditions in Harlem was a crucial contribution to interracial understanding.

In short, Robinson knew that tourists might undertake day trips to Harlem as an amusement, or out of prurient curiosity, just as he understood that white volunteers might approach their work at Church of the Master not only as genuine service but out of a sense of guilt or as an opportunity for self-congratulation or performance of virtue. He nonetheless saw possibility in such encounters.¹³⁵ These early experiences working with volunteers and visitors in Harlem helped to shape Robinson’s thinking about the role of service and travel in relation to broader social and political movements.

Work Camping

In the 1940s, Robinson began experimenting with an additional form of cross-cultural engagement: the volunteer workcamp, a model that would have a far-reaching impact as the template for his work with Operation Crossroads Africa. By 1942, Robinson was traveling to college campuses throughout New England, recruiting students to work with him at Rabbit Hollow and Forest Lake, two interracial summer camps located on 467 acres in New Hampshire that had been donated for the purpose. The response was overwhelming, not just from young campers eager to escape Harlem’s

¹³⁴ James Herman Robinson, *Road without Turning: The Story of Reverend James H. Robinson; an Autobiography*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1992), 230–31.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 239. Church of the Master’s “work with white people is one of the most useful services we have performed.” Robinson praised Howell’s complete dedication to his work, noting his frugal salary and the fact that he was widely known and trusted in Harlem and on the Lower East Side.

sweltering summer heat, but from college student volunteers, who paid their own expenses to spend weekends building cabins, recreational facilities, and dining halls; raised scholarship funds for campers; and volunteered as counselors. By 1950, nearly 3,000 college students had participated in Robinson's camp-related work — and those were only a fraction of those who wanted to serve. As Robinson recalled,

To my utter amazement, hundreds of American college students were eager to demonstrate their interest and friendship. Within three years of our beginning, we were swamped with requests by white students anxious to help. Colleges could fill their work camp quotas within the hour by merely posting a notice on the bulletin board; and there were so many volunteers that we were obliged to turn down by far the greater number.¹³⁶

While students had long served as counselors for camps run by church groups, this model of volunteer workcamping with a focus on manual labor reflected more recent innovations. In the 1920s and 1930s, volunteer workcamping was closely associated with the internationalist and pacifist movements in both Europe and the United States. In Europe, workcamping had emerged in the aftermath of World War I, when European pacifist organizations began bringing together volunteers of different ages, nationalities, and occupations to work on manual labor projects, including postwar reconstruction and disaster relief. In the United States, volunteer workcamping was also shaped by projects and programs that had been operated by the historic peace churches (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren) to support the needs of Conscientious Objectors for alternative service.¹³⁷ Several student organizations in Europe helped to institutionalize

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 283–86.

¹³⁷ For example, as the Civilian Public Service (CPS) began to wind down in 1946, the Mennonite Central Committee developed a new peacetime program of Voluntary Service designed to continue projects that addressed human need while providing Mennonite young people with opportunities to demonstrate the gospel values of love and nonresistance. The development of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program, was a response in part the harsh treatment faced by Conscientious Objectors during World War I, when there had been virtually

and popularize this idea in the 1920s and 1930s, both across the voluntary sector in Europe and transnationally through youth, pacifist, and ecumenical networks. In 1938, the Second World Youth Congress, held at Vassar College, endorsed the voluntary workcamp as an ideal model for peace education and education for international understanding.¹³⁸

One of the chief aims of these volunteer workcamps was to facilitate “the free mixing of people from different social, cultural and class backgrounds.” With this aim in mind, workcamps tended to emphasize the importance of a strong social life among volunteers. Recreational activities, local excursions, folk dancing, sing-alongs, and political discussions were all regular means to this end. In the 1930s, European workcamp proponents encouraged models that combined aspects of both social service and self-help, with workcampers laboring alongside local people, particularly unemployed or seasonal workers, to do things like repairing dilapidated houses, undertaking improvements to civic infrastructure, or converting buildings into youth

no administrative structure in place for dealing with COs who refused to take up “noncombatant” status within the military, which some peace church members did as a matter of principle. Albert Keim, *The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2013), 7–12; Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune*; David A. Haury, *The Quiet Demonstration: The Mennonite Mission in Gulfport, Mississippi* (Newton, Kan: Faith and Life Press, 1979), 13–14; Albert N Keim and Grant M Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War, 1917-1955* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000). For a first-hand account of life in the CPS during World War II, see Hobart Mitchell, *We Would Not Kill* (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1983).

¹³⁸ Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 97–109; John Field, “Service Learning in Britain between the Wars: University Students and Unemployed Camps,” *History of Education* 41, no. 2 (2012): 195–212; Ethelwyn Best and Bernard Pike, *International Voluntary Service for Peace, 1920-1946: A History of Work in Many Countries for the Benefit of Distressed Communities and for the Reconciliation of the Peoples* (International Voluntary Service for Peace, 1948), 6–34; *Youth Demand a Peaceful World: Report of the Second World Youth Congress* (New York, 1938), 29.

hostels.¹³⁹ Some experiments of this sort in Great Britain raised concerns that while the cultivation of social bonds through common living and labor could advance cross-class and cross-cultural understanding when workcamps were diverse and activities well-integrated, the inverse was also true. If workcamps were structured such that “volunteers” or “participants” were all students, or all from privileged backgrounds, the social solidarity cultivated through workcamping could reinforce a shared sense of “student identity” or a bond that fell along shared lines of class, education level, and so on.¹⁴⁰

Robinson built on the work camp model, first at Rabbit Hollow, where student volunteers first helped build camp infrastructure and later served as camp staff, and eventually with Operation Crossroads Africa. For student volunteers, the experience of working as part of an interracial team was novel and often transformative. Dorothy Hampton Marcus, then a student at Meredith College in North Carolina, recalled her work at Camp Rabbit Hollow in the summer of 1953 as a major turning point in her life. “I found myself reveling in the liberation this summer had brought me. ‘The shackles of my Southern culture have been broken,’ I thought... I made a commitment that day that

¹³⁹ This arrangement was frequently a source of tension. An American visiting a 1933 International Voluntary Service (IVS) Oldensgate workcamp in Britain reported that the local community had been suspicious of the motives of the outside volunteers and had raised particular concerns about bringing a free labor force into an area with high unemployment. Student workcampers were converting piles of slag into a new public square, work that otherwise, presumably, could have been done by paid local laborers. When the same organization was negotiating a workcamp in the town two years later, they offered assurances that they would leave Oldensgate as soon as there was “any likelihood of the work being done by paid labor at Trade Union rates.” In this same period, student volunteers in Britain helped to facilitate camps for the unemployed that combined work, education, and leisure. These camps paralleled some functions of New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and work relief camps for the unemployed, homeless, and migrant laborers in the depression-era US, though I have found no evidence of student volunteering in U.S. relief camps in the US. Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 101–2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

would shape my future.”¹⁴¹ Robinson took great satisfaction in the impact these experiences had on young volunteers, many of whom kept in touch with him for years afterwards, writing with requests for advice, or to share milestones in their lives with him.¹⁴²

One additional aspect of the workcamp tradition merits attention: the focus on manual labor. Robinson’s own life experience of growing up in the segregated South and especially of working his way through Lincoln University, gave him a profound respect for manual labor and the dignity of work. As he said on multiple occasions, “No man ever soiled his heart by soiling his hands.” Performing manual labor had also been an important part of pacifist workcamps, where it was an embodiment of service to the community as well as substitute or even a “moral alternative to war,” particularly in the context of workcamps for Conscientious Objectors. It also reflected a desire to identify with the unemployed and undereducated. In recommending manual labor and other handwork, such as knitting or crafts, American pacifists often cited Gandhi’s endorsement of spinning. Such work invoked virtues of self-reliance, accessibility, and practicality; it valorized the “small,” and symbolized a freedom from enslavement to the industrial economy. The symbolism of manual labor actually had another dimension as well. At a moment when the rise of the managerial class and changing gender roles generated anxiety about whether white-collar work, affluence, and suburbanization was

¹⁴¹ Dorothy Hampton Marcus, “Southern Hospitality,” *Crossroads: A Southern Culture Annual 2004*, no. 195–213 (June 2004); Dorothy Hampton Marcus, Hettie Jones, and Kaypri, *I Didn’t Know What I Didn’t Know: A Southern White Woman’s Story About Race*, 1 edition (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014). Marcus was involved in civil rights and racial justice work for the next fifty years.

¹⁴² Robinson, *Road without Turning*, 285.

making white men (and thus the country they represented) “physically, mentally, and spiritually soft,” manual labor was an expression of American virility and power as much as American optimism.¹⁴³

Cooperative manual labor would become a central element of early Crossroads trips, which were often referred to as “work camps.” And like the European work camps on which they were modeled, they saw manual labor as a means to more abstract aims, like friendship and international solidarity. Underlying this attention to manual labor was a sense of solidarity with workers, and an ascription of dignity to work that was often seen as degraded. In an increasingly industrializing world, the focus on manual labor and simple living, without the comforts of a consumer society, also functioned as and reflected a critique of modernity.

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Each of these practices — student volunteering, intercultural educational touring, and workcamping — contributed to the initiative that would become Operation Crossroads Africa. More broadly, these practices, rooted in the progressive religious institutions and social movements of the interwar period, influenced the forms that international exchange and volunteer initiatives took in the decades after World War II and the moral meanings given to these practices. The idea that voluntary labor and participation in interracial and cross-cultural teams could be formative and transformative

¹⁴³ Ruth T Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 9; Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune*, 138–39; Molly Geidel, *Peace Corps Fantasies How Development Shaped the Global Sixties*, Critical American Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 7–11. For a broader discussion of the way that localism, decentralization, and an emphasis on the small were part of a tradition of resistance to the massive scale and rationalization that modernization projects often implied, see Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015).

for young people and at the same time advance broader political and social movements was critical. James Robinson and Operation Crossroads Africa helped to translate these practices from domestic to international frames.

Christian Internationalism at Home and Abroad

By the Fall of 1951, the enthusiasm generated by Robinson and his work had attracted the attention of the Presbyterian Church's Board of Foreign Missions, which had launched an Office of Student Work earlier that year. Interested in establishing a youth movement and exchange programs abroad, the church sent Robinson on a six-month tour of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East to address students and young people and to assess the potential impact of revolutionary nationalisms on the church and its work around the world.¹⁴⁴ Robinson's first international trip took him to sixteen countries, where he met with political and religious leaders (including Jawarharlal Nehru), gave nearly five hundred public addresses, and spoke to thousands of individuals and hundreds of groups. He was dispatched again in 1954 for a three-month trip through West, Central, and East Africa with similar aims.

Although the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission was eager for Robinson to gather information that would help it chart a future for missions, it was the shifting geopolitical realities that defined the trip's key aims. Robinson described his tasks against the backdrop of social and political upheaval, the "real world of trouble" of a world in which political alignments, social customs, and religious ideas were all being profoundly reshaped: "First, I was asked to find out who was winning the allegiance of young

¹⁴⁴ A trip chronicled in James H. Robinson, *Tomorrow Is Today*, 1954. Margaret Flory set up his agenda for Asia. She had been a member of Church of the Master for some time and knew him as a colleague.

people. Whoever wins the allegiance of the rising student and youth generations of Africa and Asia will to a large extent determine the future course of world history.” Second, he was to deliver a message that the young people of America desired to work alongside young people around the world to advance common hopes and dreams. And finally, he was to determine “how we could help them and in what ways they wanted [the] help” of Christian Churches.¹⁴⁵

Questions about the proper response of missions in an age of revolutionary change were being debated throughout the Protestant world. As Sarah Ruble points out in *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Missionaries in American Culture after World War II*, the expulsion of Western missionaries from China following the formation of the People’s Republic in 1949 had stunned the Protestant mission establishment. China had been “the major mission field of the early twentieth century — the crown jewel of the movement with symbolic significance both inside and outside the church.”¹⁴⁶ In 1947, Protestant missionaries in China numbered just over 4,000; almost all of them had been expatriated by 1952. In the pages of the *Christian Century*, as in the American press more broadly, debates about who was to “blame” for the “loss of China” raged — and the charge that mission was too closely identified with colonialism was central to this debate. As one editorial put it, rather pointedly: “What happened to bring about this situation? Was there a touch of imperialism in our mission organization? Did the mission boards

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁶ Sarah E. Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Images in American Culture After World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 26–29. For accounts of the shifts in Protestant missions in China during this period based on both missionary and Chinese sources, see Lawrence D. Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895-1951* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), especially chapters 5 and 7.

regard¹⁴⁷ the Chinese churches and leaders as first-class citizens in the Kingdom of God or as colonial subjects of the sending denominations?”¹⁴⁸ While some writers exonerated or even praised missionaries, a broad consensus among *Century* writers held missionaries and “missionary methods” responsible for the “debacle.” If mainline Protestants hoped to maintain their global reach and influence in this new era of social and political upheaval — and this was a major underlying concern — the church would have to shed imperialist visions of superiority, share power, and align itself with the nationalist aspirations breaking forth across Asia and Africa.¹⁴⁹

In the pages of *Christianity & Crisis*, John C. Bennett and Henry Pitney van Dusen, two looming figures of mainline Protestantism’s activist liberal wing, saw things differently. Bennett, who in 1950 had just returned from a speaking tour of Asia, saw the region’s grinding poverty as the real cause of revolution in Asia. “Social revolution is overdue,” he wrote, “and it is natural that people in Asia would turn to any social movement that had a program for dealing with their poverty and a political strategy for

¹⁴⁷ Robinson, *Tomorrow Is Today*, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in “What Have We Learned From China? (Editorial),” *Christian Century*, June 27, 1951; quoted in Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power*, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power*, 28. To be sure, the debate in the early 1950s over who was responsible for the fall of the Chinese Nationalist regime to the Communists was not waged solely in the pages of church publications. In 1949, Henry Luce’s *Time* posed the provocative question, “Who lost China?” — and then bitterly led the charge against the State Department employees, diplomats, and academic experts on whom it pinned responsibility, especially Johns Hopkins professor Owen Lattimore. Two highly publicized US Senate hearings on the matter were held in 1950 and 1952, and are remembered as some of the most vitriolic and partisan of the McCarthy era. The fierce debate about “subversive” influence within the China foreign policy establishment both reflected and inflamed Cold War anti-communism and played a role in Joseph McCarthy’s rise to prominence as well as Eisenhower’s election in 1952. For more on the “loss of China” debates, see Robert Edwin Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce, Time, and the American Crusade in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *The China Threat: Memories, Myths, and Realities in the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

putting this program into effect.”¹⁵⁰ Communism’s appeal could be understood only with this fact in mind. Van Dusen, for his part, was closely connected to both the China missions community and *Life* publisher Henry Luce (himself the child of missionaries to China) through his work with the United Board for Christian Colleges in China, which he chaired for a time. He compared nationalist motivations in Asia to the founding ideals of the American Republic. Debate in the pages of *Christianity and Crisis* tended to focus on foreign policy rather than missionary techniques, but as regards policy Bennett and Van Dusen each offered prescriptions consonant with their individual analysis. Though they shared a strongly anticommunist perspective consistent with the Christian realism that increasingly dominated the pages of *C&C* and its editorial board, both Bennett and Van Dusen rejected calls for military intervention in Asia. Bennett suggested that a plan modeled on the New Deal, or perhaps something along the lines of the Marshall Plan, might offer an “economic way out.” Van Dusen, while opposed to US military intervention in Asia (as were almost all commentators in both the *Christian Century* and *Christianity & Crisis*), argued that as a matter of principle the US ought to be a “champion and sustainer of independence, self-determination and self-realization for every yearning Asian people.”¹⁵¹

Back in the United States, Robinson spoke and wrote widely about what he had learned from his travels, striking a note of urgency while cautioning Americans to “avoid

¹⁵⁰ John C. (John Coleman) Bennett, “Problem of Asiatic Communism,” *Christianity and Crisis* 10, no. 14 (August 7, 1950): 109–10.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 109–11; Henry Pitney Van Dusen, “Positive Policy for Asia,” *Christianity and Crisis* 9, no. 19 (November 14, 1949): 145–46. See also John C. (John Coleman) Bennett, “Those Who Decide to Stay,” *Christianity and Crisis* 8, no. 23 (January 10, 1949): 177–78; Henry Pitney Van Dusen, “Struggle for China,” *Christianity and Crisis* 9, no. 12 (July 11, 1949): 89–90.

hysteria” and “hasty generalizations” about Communism.¹⁵² “The people of Africa and Asia” are motivated by the same social, economic, and political aspirations that have shaped the United States, said Robinson:

They want our friendship and our help. They also want security, freedom, and the right to determine their own destiny in their own way... They are willing to listen to what both we and the Communists have to say. Asians and Africans are in a precarious suspension... The pendulum can swing either way. The hour is late and there is not much time.¹⁵³

In many ways, Robinson’s analysis echoed those of other figures on the Protestant left. But unlike some of his white colleagues, Robinson consistently emphasized the connections between the political and social movements taking place in Africa and Asia and the freedom struggle of African Americans in the United States.¹⁵⁴ As John David Cato put it, Robinson “understood with prophetic clarity the aspirations of insurgent people ... in the Third World, in part because he first understood the aspirations of the people in Harlem.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Sandra J. Sarkela and Patrick Mazzeo, “Rev. James H. Robinson and American Support for African Democracy and Nation-Building, 1950s-1970s,” in *Freedom’s Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2006), 39.

¹⁵³ Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, 15; Robinson, *Tomorrow Is Today*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Mark Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives on Africa in Mainline Protestant Social Thought: The Case of Christianity and Crisis Magazine,” in *Freedom’s Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2006), 11–36. The difficulty Hulsether notes in classifying Robinson as either a “social gospel” idealist or a “Christian realist” in the Niebuhrian vein reflects the whiteness of the historiography of social Christianity as well. On this matter, see Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Gary Dorrien, “Recovering the Black Social Gospel,” *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 43, no. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 2015): 7.

¹⁵⁵ John David Cato, “James Herman Robinson: Crossroads Africa and American Idealism, 1958-1972,” *American Presbyterians*, 1990, 102.

In speeches and sermons throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Robinson articulated a vision for a democratic Africa that was optimistic while showing a profound awareness of America's racism and imperial ambitions. This vision consisted of several major components: (1) a goal of democratic "freedom" as practiced in the West for all nations, especially those newly independent states in Africa; (2) democracy built on Christian faith; (3) a warning against Communist attacks on and corruptions of this vision of freedom, but an acknowledgment of the power of the Communist message and vision; and (4) the articulation of connections between the African American struggle for equality and justice in the US and broader struggles for justice, democracy, and the development of strong Christian communities in Africa.¹⁵⁶

More than policy-minded Christian thinkers like Bennett and Van Dusen, Robinson emphasized the role of individuals and private organizations in the work of reconciliation, democracy-building, and economic development. When he advocated approaches that would enable Americans to become "responsible citizens" of a world in which formerly colonized peoples were taking their rightful places, he had individuals and small groups in mind as much as the nation as a whole. Communism would be defeated not by military might, he argued, but through demonstrations of idealism and personal sacrifice. Private agencies, foundations, and individuals rather than government-led interventions, military or otherwise, should be at the forefront of advancing democracy. He emphasized the important role that genuine friendship and "personal witness" could play in these efforts. And so what was needed now, he suggested, were

¹⁵⁶ Sarkela and Mazzeo, "Rev. James H. Robinson and American Support for African Democracy and Nation-Building, 1950s-1970s," 38.

committed individuals who could be “witnesses for democracy” and freedom.¹⁵⁷

Robinson’s approach, deeply influenced by his proximity to the ecumenical movement, was closer to the Christian Internationalism of the interwar ecumenical movement than to either Christian realism or the liberation theology that would soon begin to fill the pages of *Christianity & Crisis*.

What was needed now, Robinson told a group of Atlanta University students at their 1957 Baccalaureate service, was *not* a new generation of missionaries, but a cadre of social technicians “who will identify themselves with Africans in their reach for security, peace, equality, freedom, and self-determination.”¹⁵⁸ In 1954, just after his return from travel in Africa, Robinson had insisted that “some foundation ought to set up a plan to train at least 20,000 young Americans in all the languages of Africa and Asia in order to furnish a great corps of young men and women who can communicate directly with the people.”¹⁵⁹ The Point Four program, established in 1949 by the Truman administration

¹⁵⁷ Robinson, *Tomorrow Is Today*, 114, 118.

¹⁵⁸ Sarkela and Mazzeo, “Rev. James H. Robinson and American Support for African Democracy and Nation-Building, 1950s-1970s,” 48.

¹⁵⁹ Robinson, *Tomorrow Is Today*, 117. In fact, in the wake of World War II, several major philanthropic foundations, including the Rockefeller, Ford, Luce, and Carnegie Foundations, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and others, were spending an enormous amount of money on the formation and institutionalization of “area studies” at major universities in the US and (to a lesser extent) abroad. This project was a response to the wartime discovery that the US military and foreign policy establishment had very little reliable information about the world outside of Europe — areas of the world, that is, that the US was suddenly very interested in reconfiguring. While area studies was multidisciplinary by design, and emphasized language instruction, it was broadly understood to be tied to policymaking, business, and national interests. Its purposes, in other words, were not what Robinson had in mind. Nevertheless, one of Robinson’s hopes for OCA, which he repeated frequently, was that experience in Africa would interest highly capable students in African studies, and in long-term careers focused on Africa, whether with mission organizations, the State Department, foreign aid and development programs, as academic researchers, or in business. In some sense, then, OCA contributed to the broader post-war project of which area studies was also a part: the development of new infrastructures and systems of knowledge production necessary to exert influence and control in formerly colonized regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. For one account of the

and often seen as a forerunner to the Peace Corps, provided technical assistance and training to “underdeveloped” areas of the world. Yet leadership and communication skills would be just as critical to the work of democracy and development. With Operation Crossroad Africa, Robinson began to shape a response of his own.

Anti-Colonial Nationalism and US Foreign Policy

When Robinson returned to the US from Africa in 1954, fired up about his plans for Crossroads, American leaders were generally uninterested in the idea. Americans tended to see Africa as a primitive and uncivilized, and thought it unlikely that students would want to travel there.¹⁶⁰ By 1957, however, the winds had clearly shifted as the foreign policy establishment came to see Africa as a critical front in the Cold War. The initial 1958 Crossroads summer trip got high-profile support from both Republican Vice President Richard Nixon and two-time Democratic presidential nominee Adlai E. Stevenson. In 1962, Stevenson, who was by this time the Ambassador to the United Nations under President John F. Kennedy, penned a glowing introduction to *Operation*

development of area studies, see Harry Harootonian, “Tracking the Dinosaur: Area Studies in a Time of ‘Globalism,’” in *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 25–58. For a discussion about the role of private foundations in shaping the production of social scientific knowledge about Africa, Asia, and Latin America that extends further back to the turn of the twentieth century, see David Nugent, *Locating Capitalism in Time and Space: Global Restructurings, Politics, and Identity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also Edward H Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy: The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983). For a discussion of how area studies developed at Columbia University, see Robert A McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2003), 319, 367-72. McCaughey notes that nineteenth-century missionary connections shaped interest in Asia and the Middle East for most of the American universities that became centers of area studies, though this was not the case for Columbia.

¹⁶⁰ Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, 16–17. On American views of Africa in the early 1950s, see also George M. Houser, “What Americans Know about Africa,” *Africa Today* 2, no. 3 (1955): 13–14.

Crossroads Africa, a book profiling the program: “Like the Peace Corps, Operation Crossroads Africa has demonstrated, by deeds not words...[p]ractical evidence that the affluent North American society cares about African society.”¹⁶¹ Emphasizing Crossroads’ independence of US government control, he noted that the Crossroads mission “nevertheless is directly relevant to our foreign policy aims.” It was “a shining example of a people-to-people relationship that works.”¹⁶²

In the space of just a few years, the US approach to foreign policy in African had shifted dramatically as the foreign policy establishment scrambled to respond to changing political realities. The way this shift took place reveals the extent to which the anti-colonial independence movements of the period transformed not only foreign policy positions, but the production of knowledge on which that policy depended. The government’s newly urgent need for relationships and understanding drove the establishment of new organizations and initiatives, but also efforts to expand and tap into existing networks and institutions with knowledge about the region.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, US pronouncements against colonialism had diminished, overshadowed by the need for a strong Cold War alliance with European colonial powers. Eisenhower’s administration paid lip service to anti-colonial aspirations, for instance, but did not support resolutions criticizing European colonial powers in the UN. In the State Department, which handled African affairs as colonial concerns and thus as a subset of the European desk, officials frequently praised

¹⁶¹ Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, xii. Adlai Stevenson had visited Africa in 1955, though ostensibly on business; he became Kennedy’s ambassador to the UN in 1961, one of several appointees in key positions who were known supporters of anti-colonial/independence movements in Africa.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, xiii.

colonial administrators and expressed concern about the consequences of “premature independence.” The number of US diplomats in Africa actually declined in this years following World War II, to just 123 throughout the continent in 1953, because African affairs were considered colonial matters to be handled by European allies.¹⁶³ Through most of the 1950s, moreover, US policy-makers assumed that colonial rule would continue “for some time,” and therefore made few preparations for the coming of independence. As sub-Saharan Africa began to unshackle itself from colonial rule — Sudan in 1956, Ghana in 1957, Guinea in 1958, and 17 other states in 1960 — one US official acknowledged: “we have, today, relatively little direct association with Africans, or knowledge of what they are thinking, which is a serious and unnecessary handicap.”¹⁶⁴

There were, of course, personal and organizational networks linking African leaders to individuals and institutions in the United States, including the political and ecclesial networks of which Robinson was a part. The American Committee on Africa, which Robinson led for a time, was founded in 1953 to support liberation struggles in Africa, and served as an important network for people and movements concerned with labor, religious, and civil rights interests on the continent. The organization continued to be an important network through the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s.¹⁶⁵ There were business interests, as well. United States’ investment in Africa tripled between 1950 and 1960, as US firms eyed the continent as a potential market for US exports, as well as

¹⁶³ David N. Gibbs, “Political Parties and International Relations: The United States and the Decolonization of Sub-Saharan Africa,” *The International History Review* 17, no. 2 (1995): 313.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 314.

¹⁶⁵ David Hostetter, “‘An Internationalist Alliance of People of All Nations Against Racism’: Nonviolence and Solidarity in the Antiapartheid Activism of the American Committee on Africa, 1952-1965,” *Peace and Change* 32, no. 3 (April 2007): 134–52.

an opportunity for direct investment.¹⁶⁶ These political, economic, cultural, and social networks continued to expand as independence movements gave way to newly sovereign states. Diplomatic ties, however, were weak.

In 1957, Vice President Richard Nixon spent three weeks in Africa, attending Ghana's independence celebrations in March and then meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Accra.¹⁶⁷ He returned convinced that Africa was a critical Cold War battlefield, reporting that "[t]he course of [Africa's] development, as its people continue to emerge from a colonial status and assume the responsibilities for self-government could well prove to be the decisive factor in the conflict between forces of freedom and international communism." Nixon advocated that more resources be devoted to Africa, and emphasized the importance of deploying better-trained personnel to the continent, making it clear that US support for newly independent countries was essential in order to "alleviate the conditions of want and instability on which Communism breeds."¹⁶⁸ The impact of Nixon's report, and similar urging from others within the Eisenhower

¹⁶⁶ Gibbs, "Political Parties and International Relations," 318–19. Gibbs notes that US investment in Africa (including North Africa) tripled between 1950 and 1960, though he points out that this overstates the matter somewhat, since these figures do not take inflation into account. The more general point is that US firms were interested in Africa as both a potential market for US exports and an opportunity for direct investment.

¹⁶⁷ Upon being introduced to Nixon, King remarked, "I'm very glad to meet you here, but I want you to come visit us down in Alabama where we are seeking the same kind of freedom the Gold Coast is celebrating." Nixon responded with an invitation to meet in Washington. Martin Luther King and Etta Moten Barnett, [6 March 1957] Interview with Etta Moten Barnett Accra, Ghana, March 6, 1957, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/interview_with_etta_moten_barnett.1.html.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Nixon, "The Emergence of Africa: Report to President Eisenhower," *State Department Bulletin*, April 22, 1957, 635, 638; "Report to the President on the Vice President's Visit to Africa," April 5, 1957, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-57* (27 Volumes, Washington, 1985-1993), XVIII, 65-66; quoted in James H. Meriwether, "'Worth a Lot of Negro Votes': Black Voters, Africa, and the 1960 Presidential Campaign," *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (2008): 742–43, doi:10.2307/27694378.

administration, was almost immediate. The Bureau of African Affairs was established in the State Department in 1958, removing African affairs from the European desk. The National Security Council suddenly devoted more attention to the continent.¹⁶⁹

Kennedy's election in 1960 brought a dramatic shift in the substance, style, and rhetoric of America's engagement with Africa. Kennedy had developed a reputation for his anti-colonial position as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subcommittee on Africa, and also on the campaign trail, where he cautioned that America had "lost ground" in Africa because it had not taken seriously the aspirations of its people. Once elected, he devoted more resources and autonomy to the State Department's Africa Bureau, appointed prominent supporters of African nationalism to key positions (including Adlai Stevenson at the UN), and moved quickly to expand American influence on the continent, building relationships with nationalist leaders, increasing the diplomatic presence, and offering incentives for investments there (and elsewhere in the developing world).¹⁷⁰

Together at a Crossroads: Friendship, Democracy, Pan-Africanism

In the midst of this shifting foreign policy landscape, the enthusiasm of young people provided the energy to move Crossroads from a good idea to a lived reality. In 1957, Robinson spoke at a religious conference at Occidental College, in California. Although he mentioned Africa only briefly, a small group of students, electrified by his ideas, took matters into their own hands. After engaging Robinson in an all-night

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 743. Robert Cutler, President Eisenhower's special assistant for national security affairs, called Nixon the "father" of a new Africa policy.

¹⁷⁰ Gibbs, "Political Parties and International Relations," 320–23; Meriwether, "Worth a Lot of Negro Votes," 744–45.

planning session, they committed to raising \$15,000 to send ten students to Africa the following summer — and Operation Crossroads Africa was born. In the summer of 1958, 59 Americans and one Canadian traveled to Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone on the first Crossroads trip.

Following a year of planning in 1959, the program grew rapidly, both in numbers and in reputation. In 1960, Operation Crossroads Africa sent 183 young people to 10 countries; the following summer, 220 students went to 14 countries.¹⁷¹ Robinson had clearly tapped into a broader cultural interest. During its peak years between 1963 and 1968, OCA sent 350 American students each summer to between 15 and 20 African nations. Initially, participants hailed from many of the same elite campuses from which Robinson had recruited workcamp volunteers in the 1940s, but in time Crossroads was recruiting from a network of more than 100 colleges, universities, and preparatory schools across the country.¹⁷² Students traveled in teams, and spent ten weeks working together on a project that could be largely completed in the course of a summer.¹⁷³ John Kinard, coordinator of projects in East Africa in the early and mid 1960s, recalled projects such as building dispensaries and hospitals, cutting roads, brick work, building a

¹⁷¹ Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, 17–18. Three hundred students pledged part of their summer pay, and they recruited donors widely – including Richard Nixon and Adlai Stevenson, who each pledged \$500. They offered an African Studies Course at UCLA to paying adults to raise funds for the trip.

¹⁷² The significant number of students from elite schools and military academies was frequently noted in reports about Crossroads. Ruth Plimpton notes that for the summer of 1961, participants included students from Smith, Pomona, and Wesleyan; from Protestant seminaries; and a small group from Canada. A full third of a class at West Point applied to participate, though only three cadets could be accommodated. Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*.

¹⁷³ Joy Gabriella Kinard, “Far Exceeding Expectations: John R. Kinard and the Legacy of African-American Leadership, 1956–1989” (Ph.D., Howard University, 2009), 113.

dormitory and a cafeteria, running athletic programs, and providing nursing care. The work in which Crossroaders were engaged “ran the gamut from A to Z.”¹⁷⁴

Robinson described the program’s goals in terms of learning and friendship. “Cross roaders [sic] come to Africa not as missionaries or adventurers, but as students who want to share ideas, expand intellectual vistas, examine cultures. . . . Each group builds something, which the Cross roaders leave behind as a symbol of friendship, but the work project is really only a vehicle.”¹⁷⁵ Crossroads volunteers devoted significant time to preparation before their summer trips, and agreed upon returning to make presentations on their experience, provide hospitality to visiting African students, and consider the possibility of “full-time work in relation to Africa.”¹⁷⁶

Operation Crossroad Africa represented a modestly scaled, people-to-people approach to democracy building in Africa that made the full participation of African Americans one of its hallmarks. He “articulated a democratic project for Africa that was linked to the success of the democratic project for African Americans and for all disenfranchised peoples in the United States.” This link was an essential component of his vision for Africa.¹⁷⁷ The idea was to provide “a group of high leadership potential” with a basic educational experience in Africa, to encourage young people to go into African studies or otherwise prepare to be part of the US engagement with Africa, and to “begin building the bridges of friendship and understanding” with the people of emerging

¹⁷⁴ John Kinard, quoted in *ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Operation Crossroads Africa, *A Decade of Achievement* (New York, 1968).

¹⁷⁶ Cato, “James Herman Robinson,” 104.

¹⁷⁷ Sarkela and Mazzeo, “Rev. James H. Robinson and American Support for African Democracy and Nation-Building, 1950s-1970s,” 37.

African nations.¹⁷⁸ Emphasizing Crossroads' independence of US government control, he noted that the Crossroads mission "nevertheless is directly relevant to our foreign policy aims." It was "a shining example of a people-to-people relationship that works."¹⁷⁹

Robinson often framed his work, and the aims of OCA, in terms of defense against Communism. The pressure to adopt such a frame in public writing and speaking should not be underestimated, of course. Robinson's interracial activities had attracted the attention of the FBI in the 1940s and led to revocation of his passport in the 1950s; years later he would be called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. The theme of Communism's challenge to both democracy and to Christians appeared consistently throughout his work, and in his defense of "democracy" and "freedom," Robinson's rhetoric echoed that of Christian Realists and other Cold War intellectuals.¹⁸⁰

However these ideas shaped his thinking, Robinson's ideas about "democracy" and "freedom" had been shaped by a transnational discourse on freedom, as well, and in particular by his engagement with anti-colonial intellectuals and political leaders at least as far back his time at Lincoln University. Nationalism, as he well knew, could reflect emancipatory longings, just as demands for of self-determination and policies of self-reliance grew out of impulses toward dignity and sovereignty.¹⁸¹ In order to defeat the

¹⁷⁸ Harold R. Isaacs, *Emergent Americans; a Report on "Crossroads Africa"* (New York: John Day Co., 1961), 7.

¹⁷⁹ Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, xiii.

¹⁸⁰ Sarkela and Mazzeo, "Rev. James H. Robinson and American Support for African Democracy and Nation-Building, 1950s-1970s," 37.

¹⁸¹ Jason C. Parker, "'Made-in-America Revolutions'? The 'Black University' and the American Role in the Decolonization of the Black Atlantic," *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (2009): 740. See also fn 9, above.

Communist threat, Americans needed to have a clearer understanding of the challenges facing the world, and that meant understanding the appeal of Communism in the face of these challenges. Only then would it be possible to articulate a compelling, emancipatory democratic vision. “Everyone who goes out of this country is a witness for democracy,” he told Crossroaders during their pre-trip orientation. At the same time, the decolonized nations and proud new leaders of an independent Africa were witnesses to Americans, whose own business with democracy remained “unfinished.”¹⁸²

There can be no doubt that a strain of pan-Africanism or Afrocentricity ran through the work of Crossroads Africa, and that it constituted part of the appeal of the program for some leaders and participants, particularly by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Christian ethicist Katie Geneva Cannon met Robinson in 1970, and traveled to Ghana, Liberia, and Cote D’Ivoire with Crossroads in 1971. “James H. Robinson was in the vanguard of progressive, contemporary thinkers on Afrocentricity before it was fashionable,” she writes. “My Afrocentric consciousness was forever changed,” she wrote 45 years later, describing the way that her own pedagogy and scholarship had been shaped by the experience.¹⁸³

In Africa, OCA staff and participants met and interacted with African nationalists and with the leaders of newly independent African nations — Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, Julius Nyerere, and others.¹⁸⁴ John Kinard, an early colleague of Robinson’s,

¹⁸² Alain Locke, “The Unfinished Business of Democracy,” *Survey Graphic*, November 1942, 749; Parker, “‘Made-in-America Revolutions’?,” 734.

¹⁸³ Katie Geneva Cannon, “Teaching Afrocentric Ethics: ‘The Hinges Upon Which the Future Swings,’” *Daughters of the African Atlantic Fund Blog*, November 13, 2016, <http://www.africanatlanticdaughters.com/2016/04/26/the-hinges-upon-which-the-future-swings/>.

¹⁸⁴ Kinard, “Far Exceeding Expectations,” 95, 97-98; Plimpton, *Operation Crossroads Africa*, 37, 39. Plimpton describes Robinson’s visit with Jomo Kenyatta, who was “in

coordinated programs in East and Southern Africa. Leonard Jeffries, a regional organizer who worked with OCA projects in West and Central Africa, remembers pan-Africanism as “the spirit that moved” him, as well as Kinard, Robinson, and others.¹⁸⁵ Being in Africa as new nations were being born was a profound experience: “The experience in Africa in 1961 was so extraordinary because your eyes were opened up to this wonderful world of people trying to change their live through the new nations from scratch, and there you were on the ground floor with them participating and observing”¹⁸⁶ The OCA promoted a version of what one historian has called “integrated pan Africanism.”¹⁸⁷

In addition to introducing American students to African students, and to the dramatic changes happening across the African continent, Crossroads gave black and white student from the US an opportunity to live and work side by side in an era when social segregation was overwhelmingly the norm in all parts of the United States. As had been the case with Robinson’s interracial summer camp program decades before, this was a program designed to pierce the customs and assumptions of segregation which were dominant in even the best universities, opening students to new ways of thinking about themselves and about American society. Training in multicultural understanding was a hallmark of the OCA pre-departure program, and the curriculum was designed to prepare

confinement,” though she is conscious enough of American anxieties careful to note: “This does not make Robinson a Mau Mau! What it does mean is that an American has reached this great controversial figure of Kenyatta, whom the British blame for the Mau Mau uprisings, and to whom the Kenyans look as their one great hope in uniting the people for independence.”

¹⁸⁵ Leonard Jeffries, quoted in Kinard, “Far Exceeding Expectations,” 89.

¹⁸⁶ Leonard Jeffries, quoted in *ibid.*, 107–8.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

students for the challenge of living and working with one another, as well as for their interactions with Africans.¹⁸⁸

Unsurprisingly, black and white students responded quite differently to the experience of arriving in Africa. Dr. Samuel Varner, a Livingstone college student who led an OCA team to Kenya in 1963,¹⁸⁹ describes the experience of arriving in Kenya and realizing that from the airport customs agents and police officers to the bus drivers, hotel staff and hosts, all of the people they encountered were Kenyans.

We came back to the lobby for lunch and the white kids couldn't eat, they couldn't talk, they were shell shocked for the first time they were in a minority world, a non-white world. Everything was black and it dawned on me what was going on. And that it was my job to help them with the culture shock. Me and the two other African American girls were beside ourselves. We were so thrilled, so happy, so excited to be in Africa... I thought we were all that excited and happy, but they were not so what I had to do was to tone down my excitement and help them to adjust. It was not easy. It was difficult because I had lived in a white world where I was the minority and coming from Alabama where I had been surrounded by the Ku Klux Klan and lived in terror. I wanted to laugh at them really, but I couldn't do it because I was the leader of the group and they were my responsibility.

The OCA developed unique training materials for intercultural understanding, including materials that prepared African American student leaders to understand the experiences of culture shock that white students were likely to experience in moving for the first time into a non-dominant/non-white majority culture, and materials that acknowledged and addressed conventional American views of Africa as “backward” and a “dark” continent.¹⁹⁰

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¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 108.

¹⁸⁹ Varner quoted in *ibid.*, 99.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92, 108.

The Kennedy era in general, and the Peace Corps in particular, represented the kind of idealism that Robinson had helped to fuel. Operation Crossroads Africa drew on practices associated with the Social Gospel and Progressive Era reform movements – student volunteering, intercultural tours, and the residential work camp – to develop a new model of travel, education, and service that connected young Americans to their peers on African continent, introducing them to the democratic and anti-colonial struggles that were reshaping the former colonial world. Not only did these experiences allow young people to gain knowledge about the world, and the political struggles that seemed to be engulfing it. They also helped young people to cultivate political, moral, and social subjectivities that reflected the emerging normative liberal ideal of the post-war, and later the Cold War, period — that of a global citizen, whose global sympathies and solidarities were a resource for transnational collaboration. This new self-understanding was part of a broader shift in the global imaginary.

Operation Crossroads Africa contributed to the development of this new global imaginary by modifying existing practices and introducing new ones. The program drew on collective practices of social solidarity and that were already well established as formational practices for elites, such as student volunteering and international travel. It also drew on practices that were part of the subculture of pacifist and anti-colonial political networks, such as workcamping and intercultural educational tours. In each case, the extension and expansion of these practices — from domestic to international modes, from European and American contexts into African contexts, from elite and mostly white practices to intentionally interracial ones — brought a set of meanings to the work of Operation Crossroads Africa, not just by way of explicitly held ideas, but through images,

symbols, and stories, and associations. These meanings were, in turn, shaped by the ways they were brought into contact with new kinds of relationships, communities, and global networks that were being forged by Crossroads trips.

The global imaginary that these encounters helped to create reflected a commitment to democratic ideals that had animated pacifist, anti-colonial, and internationalist and networks for some time. This was an understanding of democracy that could not be reduced to the formations of new states, or the relationship between states, though the independence and flourishing of African states was central to this vision. These understandings of the global emphasized relationships of service and obligation, but sought to replace the paternalistic associations of philanthropy with language of “brotherhood” and partnership, underscored by shared experiences of labor and common living. No one expected Crossroads trips themselves to usher in a new global reality, but in a particularly intense experience they could prefigure the new world they were striving to bring into being.¹⁹¹

Robinson’s work influenced individuals as well as institutions, and thereby resonated far beyond the organizations that he had the most direct hand in shaping. Among other things, his experience, advice, and relationships were critical resources as the mission agencies of the Presbyterian Church negotiated the transformations of the 1960s. Donald Black, former Associate General Secretary for the Presbyterian Church’s Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR) — the successor organization to the Board of Foreign Missions — credited Robinson with helping to frame changes in ecclesial structures and approaches to mission in relation to larger

¹⁹¹ Operation Crossroads Africa continues to offer some trips. See <http://operationcrossroadsafrica.org>.

political and historical shifts. “Nationalism was destroying the colonial empires that had provided the political framework for the missionary enterprise,” wrote Black, describing Robinson’s analysis, and just as “pith helmet Christianity” died, so new structures and forms of relationships would need to be born.

This restructuring of denominational institutions was not just a response to practical challenges or technical needs, but reflected a massive shift in the ideas and understandings of the missionary enterprise. In the final chapter of his small book, *Africa at a Crossroads*, written for the Christian Perspectives on Social Problems Series edited by Gayraud Wilmore, James Robinson addressed the responsibility of American Christians:

The church and its missions are also at the crossroads in Africa. Neither the church nor its missions exist in an immortal, holy vacuum but within the context of our human and sinful society. They do not stand apart from the world. In the light of the revolutionary crisis that has overtaken the missionary movement, we may well ask what are the churches to do? How are they to recover the motivation and the initiative for the redemption of Africa that led the early missionaries to venture into the spiritual and geographical jungles of that long-slumbering continent? What will be their role in the new African nations? How must they redeploy their resources, reorganize their tactics, and give life to plans that have been on paper for a long time? And above all, what adjustments can they make to the new centers of power and how must they relate to the new governments?¹⁹²

Robinson was asking these questions in relation to Africa in particular, but questions about the proper structures and functions of Christian mission in a revolutionary moment were being raised broadly across American Protestant denominations, and indeed, in ecumenical conversations around the world. It is to these conversations that we now turn.

¹⁹² James H Robinson, *Africa at the Crossroads*, Christian Perspectives on Social Problems (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 65.

Chapter 3

Frontier Internships in Mission: Christian Presence in the World Struggle

If James Robinson drew on existing practices and networks to pioneer new forms of international service and exchange, it was in relation to the Frontier Internship in Mission program and the ecumenical student movement that a more explicitly theological understanding of these practices *as mission* was articulated. The Frontier Internship in Mission Program (FIM) was established in 1959 to model a new form of overseas mission. Although Margaret Flory, who conceived the program, was the founding director of the Office of Student World Relations for the Foreign Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA), and her office administered the FIM, the program is better understood as an ecumenical one. It grew out of ecumenical movement institutions, relied on a global web of ecumenical and missionary relationships for student recruiting and placements, and drew formal and financial support and participants from across several mainline denominations.

Each year beginning in 1961, the Frontiers Internship in Mission program sent several dozen young Americans to destinations all over the world for two-year mission assignments. Between 1960 and 1974, when the FIM program was “internationalized” and its administration was relocated to the Geneva offices of the World Student Christian Federation, 139 new college or seminary graduates spent two years in one of 48 countries, usually either in the developing world or “behind the Iron Curtain.”¹⁹³ The

¹⁹³ Ada J. Focer, “Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974: Young Christians Abroad in a Post-Colonial and Cold War World” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 2016), <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/1767228348/abstract/D85B0F9A9B424F34PQ/1>; Ada J. Focer, “Frontier Internship in Mission Project,” *Boston*

program aimed to embody new understandings of mission that had begun to develop in the networks of the ecumenical and student Christian movement in the decades before and immediately after World War II. While these networks were broad and theologically varied, and of course contained a range of perspectives on mission, several key features marked the discussions that emerged in these circles. They shared a consciousness of the revolutionary struggles taking place around the world and a commitment to conversation and discernment about the theological meaning of these struggles. Over a long decade of debate, from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, they came to believe that the primary responsibility of the church in the context of revolutionary situations was to discern what God was doing in the world, both within and beyond the boundaries of the institutional church, and then join in that work. As the decades went on, this understanding of mission grew increasingly distant from the institutional church and increasingly committed to social action for justice within the powerful social movements of the 1960s.

The ecumenical networks that gave rise to the Frontier Internship in Mission program overlapped substantially with the web of institutions and relationships that gave rise to Operation Crossroads Africa during these same years. James H. Robinson and Margaret Flory were colleagues and moved in many of the same ecumenical and denominational circles. She was not only a member of Church of the Master, but became the church's first white Elder. She identified the church as a key source of inspiration for her work, a "living laboratory... providing the kinds of lessons I needed for life and work

in a world that gradually was being transformed into a global community.¹⁹⁴ Flory was instrumental in organizing the Asian portion of Robinson's first international tour, in 1951, which he made on behalf of the Presbyterians' newly established Office of Student Work, which she ran.

Like Robinson, Flory drew on established practices and networks in the Protestant world to develop new forms of global engagement responsive to the dramatic political and economic changes happening throughout the world — the “world struggle,” as it was called in ecumenical circles. In particular, the FIM built on practices of hospitality and kinship that were a hallmark of existing ecumenical and missionary networks, on a tradition of traveling seminars that stretched back to the interwar period, and on Protestant traditions of higher education, devoting new attention to internationalization of higher education. These practices and institutions were rooted in the Protestant mainline establishment world, and defined its global networks and connections to elites.

Margaret Flory and the Student Christian Movement

Like so many of her generation, Margaret Flory had frustrated hopes of becoming a missionary to China. Flory was thirty years old and director of a Presbyterian campus ministry program at Ohio University when she began to sense a call to missionary service in the fall of 1943. The Japanese were at war with China, and more than a hundred Protestant missionaries had been detained in internment camps in occupied China and the Philippines. Some might have been deterred by this turn of events, but not Flory. She was

¹⁹⁴ “Margaret Flory: Biographical Sketch,” *Guide to the Margaret Flory Papers, Record Group No. 86, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library*, n.d., <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.086>; Margaret Flory, *Moments in Time: One Woman's Ecumenical Journey* (New York: Friendship Press, 1995), 18.

particularly stirred by the stories of hardship faced by Chinese university students and professors, many of whom had been made refugees by the war. In 1944, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission commissioned Flory for missionary service, and she left for the University of California in Berkeley, where she began studying Chinese. Yet before she could depart for China, deteriorating war conditions in the Pacific disrupted her plans; it soon became clear that this situation would continue for some time.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, she persisted. When Flory's initial vocation proved impossible to pursue, she reinterpreted her call to serve Chinese university students as "a call to the world's students."¹⁹⁶ As she wrote in her autobiography, *Moments in Time*, "I was commissioned a missionary, and that sense of vocation has never left me: 'Here I am, Lord, send me.'"¹⁹⁷ This change of plans led Flory to New York, where she worked as a regional secretary for women's work in the national office of the Mission Board. The office and its staff of seventy-five were responsible for communication and coordination with more than a thousand of the denomination's missionaries in the field. Flory found herself at a hub of international activity, immersed in an extensive network of

¹⁹⁵ Barbara Anne Roche, "Initiating and Sustaining Ecumenical Ministries: A Study of the Ministry of Margaret Flory, 1951-1980" 1984, 24; Focer, "Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974," 15-17; Sarah E Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Images in American Culture After World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 27-28. When Mao Tse-tung came into power in 1949, the Communist government expelled all foreign missionaries. The Sino-Japanese war, which had been raging since 1937, was grafted onto the broader international conflict after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.

¹⁹⁶ Focer, "Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974," 17. Interestingly, Ruth Rouse, who served as the traveling secretary for the World Student Christian Federation from 1905 to 1924 described an almost identical story. Unable to serve the students of India, as she had originally hoped, her vocation was turned to the service of students around the world. Johanna M. Selles, *The World Student Christian Federation, 1895-1925: Motives, Methods, and Influential Women* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 92.

¹⁹⁷ Flory, *Moments in Time*, 13.

missionaries and ecumenical leaders. She was surrounded by well-educated, well-traveled colleagues and mentors, whose work was animated by an optimistic and resolute Christian internationalism.¹⁹⁸ Flory's experience with the student Christian movement during her time in campus ministry and her early years of work in the New York Office of the Board of Foreign Missions exposed Flory to ecumenical and missionary networks that would be fundamental in shaping the Frontier Internship in Mission program a decade later. She also gained familiarity with some of the practices central to these networks which would shape her vision for and theological understanding of the program. I explore three of these below.

Missionary Networks

For both missionaries and mission executives, international travel and conferencing was a significant aspect of how the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board operated. In this respect, it reflected a pattern of activity so pervasive as to seem unremarkable. The circulation of national secretaries and ecclesial administrators and the orchestration of national, regional, and international conferences had of been a hallmark of the missionary movement since the late nineteenth century.

These conferences were not simply one-time events, but elaborate organizational technologies that stretched out over time and space into a web of processes, committees, and publications. They often involved multiple gatherings and extensive correspondence, at the very least for those closely involved with planning and leadership. There were planning gatherings in advance, continuation committees to follow up, and sometimes national or regional meetings designed to correspond to the major gathering. For the

¹⁹⁸ Roche, "Initiating and Sustaining Ecumenical Ministries," 25.

ecumenical movement, whose roots were in this institutional matrix, international conferences were central to organizational culture. Major assemblies, which were held every few years, drew together prominent church leaders to debate the theological grounds for positions on particular issues, to prescribe actions, and to finesse the language of formal statements that were issued. As Jill Gill notes in her history of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement, “one cannot overstate the importance of such meetings to furthering church work. For religious leaders who operated in an oral and idea-based culture, these gatherings helped hone their thinking about issues and create effective coalitions.”¹⁹⁹ For Margaret Flory, this was certainly the case.

In 1948, Flory traveled to Asia and experienced another dimension of this ecumenical and missionary network: its generosity and hospitality. On her way to visit colleges in Japan, China, Korea, and the Philippines, Flory got appendicitis and ended up in a hospital in Hawaii, where she had emergency surgery. She knew no one, but soon found herself surrounded by a support team of people drawn from a “dense and highly functional global ecumenical network.” This network reflected a web of personal and institutional relationships, organic connections that grew out of nearly a century of ecumenical institution-building, not just through missionary networks, but through organizations like the Student Volunteer Movement, the YMCA and YWCA, denominational student organizations, the World Student Christian Federation, and the

¹⁹⁹ Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 26; Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 31–32. As Appelbaum notes, regional and national conferences were a well-established part of a whole range of networks — student movement, youth groups, churches, peace organizations — many of which had their roots in mainline Protestantism. Peace organizations relied on these conferences for strengthening organizational ties and reaching new audiences.

Student Christian Movement. The organizational charts for these groups could be dizzying, with organizational names and structures shifting along with personal histories and geopolitical changes. For Margaret Flory, however, these networks came to represent true friendships, the “living links” that gave substance to the abstract idea of a global ecumenical community.

In 1951, Flory drew on these networks to help plan the itinerary for the Asian portion of James Robinson’s trip to Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.²⁰⁰ From 1952 to 1953, she traveled around the world for the Youth Emphasis Year of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and attended the World Student Christian Federation General Assembly in Nasrapur, India. This missionary and ecumenical network — the web of relationships between and among people, churches, schools, hospitals, and other institutions — would become foundational for Flory’s work in the Office of Student work, including the travel seminars and study abroad programs she incubated there, and for the Frontier Internship in Mission program.²⁰¹

Traveling Seminars

Another aspect of Flory’s early work at the Board of Foreign Mission was coordinating travel seminars. In 1946, she led a two-week travel seminar to Guatemala for business and professional women. They spent time with Presbyterian missionaries, enjoyed Christmas festivities in indigenous churches, and “came back convinced that lay

²⁰⁰ “Margaret Flory: Biographical Sketch.”

²⁰¹ Roche, “Initiating and Sustaining Ecumenical Ministries,” 34–40; Focer, “Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974,” 20–23. See also Sara M. Evans, *Journeys That Opened up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 1–14.

Christians must be rallied to the support of the missionary enterprise.”²⁰² The trip was festive, but it was also meaningful. The relationships enabled even by such a short trip she described in familial terms, echoing the descriptions of missionary networks themselves: Flory (her boss noted) was able to “establish kinship with overseas people.” These “overseas people,” she noted, included very poor Guatemalan women. Flory brought together people across cultural, economic, and generational differences.²⁰³ This was one of many study and travel seminars in which Flory engaged on a wide range of topics. Others included seminars in Brazil (1959), Ghana (1961), Kenya (1962), Latin America (1964), South Africa (1966), the Middle East (1962, 1965, 1967), and Southeast Asia (1967). There were study seminars on “Christian Responsibility in the World of Nations” in New York City, and later seminars focused on South Africa (1965) at the United Nations in New York City.²⁰⁴

While Flory herself was extraordinary and played an important role in cultivating this sort of ecumenical programming, the travel seminars in which she was involved reflected a wider pattern of engagement across mainline Protestant denominations and in the ecumenical world. As Sara Evans notes, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, denominational programs, campus ministries, and local “Y’s” offered hundreds of travel seminars to major cities in the United States, and though in smaller numbers, travel

²⁰² Roche, “Initiating and Sustaining Ecumenical Ministries,” 29.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 30. Roche is quoting Margaret Shannon, Margaret Flory’s senior colleague and mentor.

²⁰⁴ “Margaret Flory: Biographical Sketch.”

seminars to other parts of the world.²⁰⁵ Internationally-oriented seminars brought students together at the United Nations or in Washington, DC to focus on issues in a particular country or region of the world, and to learn about international institutions, or domestic policy.²⁰⁶

These seminars were designed to “open the world to young Americans,” and in particular to introduce them to the struggles for justice and social transformation that were shaping life and the church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For example, Jill Foreman Hultin describes a 1964 Methodist Student Movement “study/travel seminar” to Latin America designed to help participants “learn more about the social, economic, and political revolutions occurring on that continent, and to see how liberation theology, the Church, and student Christian movements throughout the countries were responding to and supporting those changes.” She continues,

In each of the countries we visited, we met with a broad spectrum of leaders – including bishops, priests, politicians, students, peasants, writers, artists, government officials, and generals in military juntas. We listened to their various perspectives regarding how Latin Americans could manage the crises facing their countries, and heard them describe widely differing methods by which they felt those challenges could best be addressed. Some of the people we talked with felt there was no realistic hope for social justice until the repressive regimes controlling their countries had been defeated in elections – or overturned by revolutions.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Evans, *Journeys That Opened up the World*, 7. This edited volume contained reflections by a number of student participants in denominational and ecumenical travel seminars of this sort.

²⁰⁶ The Methodist Student Movement, for instance, sponsored annual Christian Citizenship Seminars that brought students first to the United Nations to learn about issues like apartheid, and then on to Washington, DC, to lobby legislators. See *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Jill Foreman Hultin, “Jill Foreman Hultin,” in *Journeys That Opened up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975*, ed. Sara M. Evans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 109.

Students returned inspired, energized, and often full of new insights about the way that Americans and American foreign policy was perceived around the world. “We were told repeatedly,” Hultin recalls, “that the foreign policy of the United States had a more direct impact on Latin Americans’ lives than their own leaders and the economic and political policies of their own governments did.”²⁰⁸ Recounting years later her experience as part of a study/travel seminar to Africa organized by Margaret Flory in the summer of 1966, Tamela Hultman recalled this clearly: “people around the world did not see us Americans as we liked to see ourselves.”²⁰⁹ Importantly, and by design, these trips gave participants not only new perspectives on the world, but new perspectives on the United States and on themselves.

The broad structure and intentions of these travel seminars hearkened back to Sherwood Eddy’s popular “traveling seminars” of the interwar period. Beginning in 1921 and continuing through the 1930s, Eddy, a prominent ecumenist and former YMCA secretary, organized an annual study tour through Europe. These seminars were influential; one historian calls them “an iconic interwar Christian internationalist institution.” Eddy led the tours himself, with major British and European political and church leaders as guest lecturers. The first tour began with just a dozen participants, but the tours grew quickly in both size — by 1927, the cumulative total of alumni was close to a thousand — and reputation. Eddy designed the seminars to expose a selective group of influential American leaders to world conditions, thereby creating “an avenue to

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Tamela Hultman, “Tamela Hultman,” in *Journeys That Opened up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975*, ed. Sara M. Evans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 148–49.

international understanding and peace.”²¹⁰ By most accounts, they were highly effective at this goal. Over time, they involved a virtual “who’s who” of progressive leaders and shapers of Protestant thought. “No other single factor has been more potent in securing recognition in America of an international viewpoint,” wrote F. Ernest Johnson, director of the Department of Research for the U.S. Federal Council of Churches, who participated in Eddy’s 1927 seminar. It was on such a trip that Reinhold Niebuhr, horrified by an encounter with the effects of war, declared himself a pacifist (a position he famously later abandoned.)²¹¹

²¹⁰ Sherwood Eddy, *Eighty Adventurous Years: An Autobiography*, 1st edition. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 128; Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War*, The United States in the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 2. My discussion of Eddy’s traveling seminars in the paragraphs that follow draws largely on Thompson’s account.

²¹¹ Eddy’s traveling seminar inspired others in his internationalist circles to organize similar programs. In the mid-1920s, pioneering Latin American historian Hubert Herring, who shared some of Eddy’s pacifist and reformist networks, initiated an annual “Seminar in Mexico” with the stated aim of improving international understanding. Howard Thurman participated in the Mexico Seminar in 1940. The Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America that grew out of these efforts, with the support of John Dewey, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Daniel J. Fleming and others, added an annual “Seminar in the Caribbean” in the 1930s, and programs focused on Central America and South America in subsequent years. Herring was a graduate of Oberlin College, Columbia University, and Union Theological Seminary (1913), so he might have known Eddy and others through pacifist and reformist circles. “Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America Collected Records, 1927-1940, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (Catalogue Description),” *Archive Grid*, accessed August 4, 2017, beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/844956278; John V. Lombardi, “Hubert Herring (1889-1967),” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 48, no. 4 (1968): 654–654. On Thurman’s participation, see “Howard Thurman Chronology,” Boston University School of Theology, *The Howard Thurman Papers Project*, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.bu.edu/http/howard-thurman-chronology/>.

Historian Alan Knight suggests that travel to post-revolutionary Mexico in the 1920s had particular appeal for American radicals, who were drawn by the country’s political and cultural experimentation. He suggests that it represented the “first major Third World destination of radical-chic political tourists,” prefiguring Cuba in the 1960s and Nicaragua in the 1980s. Alan Knight, “5. U.S. Anti-Imperialism and the Mexican Revolution,” 2017, 99. On the appeal to American radicals, see also John A. Britton, *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992).

Eddy's travel seminars both critiqued and transformed traditional approaches to missionary engagement. They grew out of missionary networks and institutions, and at the same time, they represented a self-conscious rejection of the ideas and attitudes that had animated the missionary enterprise in preceding decades. This dynamic was made more explicit by Eddy's own vocational arc, which reflected a corresponding transformation.

Eddy's illustrious YMCA missionary career stretched back to the late nineteenth century; by the 1920s, his status as a "celebrity evangelist to a generation of mainline, ecumenical Protestants" was secure. Yet Eddy was one of a number of prominent ecumenists and missionaries who rejected in the 1920s and 1930s many of the ideas which had formed the "self-evident" framework for Western missionary endeavors not long before — ideas about "the Christian West" and its superiority, the "backwardness" of other nations and races, and the "white man's burden." As historian Michael Thompson observes,

something striking had happened to the grammar of the typical missionary sentence. New qualifiers, quotation marks, and distancing devices pervaded articles, reports and deliberations of missionaries like Eddy, all with the function of conveying missionaries' self-conscious eschewal of a notion most of them had until recently taken for granted: namely, the idea that America and other Western countries were "Christian" nations.²¹²

Along with influential ecumenists like John R. Mott, Quaker Rufus Jones, and Dutch theologian Willem Visser 't Hooft, Eddy tirelessly criticized nationalism and its associated evils, including traditional formulations of the missionary enterprise. At the same time, he turned his substantial energies — as well as his family fortune and his

²¹² Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 2.

missionary credentials – to the task of building a Christian internationalist movement that fused antiracist, anti-imperialist, and antimilitarist commitments. His annual “traveling seminar” was a key innovation through which he put to use his enormous network of contacts and substantial travel experience.²¹³

While the travel seminars that emerged in the ecumenical movement of the 1950s and '60s differed from Eddy's seminars in their focus on students and young adults, and especially the prominence of women's leadership and participation, they shared with these earlier seminars a strong commitment to travel and internationally minded study as part of a new posture of Christian internationalism and solidarity. They also shared a sense that these forms of study and formation were especially important for an elite cadre of church and ecumenical leaders, and others who had or might come to have “influence” in a broader public sphere. This model of Christian global engagement was influential for Flory's work in the ecumenical student movement, including her work establishing the Frontier Internship in Mission program. The legacy of this emphasis on internationalist study through travel is evident in the ways that mainline and liberal Protestants practice short-term mission today.

International Education

Margaret Flory's 1948 trip through Asia took her to Christian colleges and universities in Japan, Korea, China, and the Philippines. She returned from this trip with a strong sense of the challenges facing the “student generation” in each of these countries –

²¹³ Ibid. Mott helped to establish the SVM for FM, and presided over the World Missionary Conference in 1910. He served as YMCA General Secretary, chairman of the IMC, and General Secretary of the WSCF. He was general secretary of the National War Work Council during WWI, and was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1946. Rufus Jones was one of the founders of the American Friends Service Committee. Visser 't Hooft would go on to become the first General Secretary of the WCC.

the aftermath of war, economic privation, and refugee crises. She proposed the creation of a department of student work within the Board of Foreign Mission, and in 1951, became its first director. To the new Office of Student Work she brought a deep knowledge of ecumenical movements, and the sense of possibility that the new institutions of the post-war period inspired. She was particularly aware of the far-flung networks of university students whose energy and idealism she had experienced first hand, and she wanted to make such experiences available to more American students through travel.

Study and travel overseas had been available to students at a handful of elite American colleges and universities for some time. In the tradition of the “Grand Tour,” those in such elite circles regarded spending a year in Europe as an important educational rite of passage, and a way to perfect language skills, make connections, and generally establish cultural capital. In the 1940s, international exchange and study abroad programs had begun to gain in popularity among American students. This reflected an expansion of international awareness on campuses, shaped both by the experience of World War II and by the dawning sense of America’s status as a world power. Many students who came to college on the GI Bill brought wartime international experiences to the college and university campuses, and universities were expanding and diversifying on this account as well.

Higher education was expanding elsewhere in the world, too. In Europe, as in the United States, higher education was being democratized as part of the expansion of the social welfare state. In many parts of Africa and Asia, expanding access to university education was seen as a critical part of nation-building and a signal of modernizing

intent. While these students were part of emerging national elites, campuses and student organizations became important (and often risky) sites of political organizing both before and after independence. The culture and leadership of student Christian movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America reflected this political reality. For Margaret Flory and other Americans involved in the ecumenical student movement, the university was a critical institution for Christian witness and engagement.²¹⁴

This reflected a strong sense of the place of students in the world *qua students*, that is, as a class or order within society and with transnational bonds. As far back as the nineteenth century, the Student Volunteer Movement had seen the special role of students in the missionary movement as a whole. A broader sense of student solidarity had intensified in the years following World War I, however, when student-focused relief efforts were a substantial part of the broader postwar relief efforts. These transnational efforts were a source of both a new international consciousness among students, particularly in Europe, but they had also promoted a sense of student identity, institutionalized in part through the establishment of “students’ unions” during this period.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ This point was not lost on the U.S. government either. Note the Smith-Mundt Act of 1949 (the 1948 Information and Educational Exchange Act), which directed the Secretary of State to “utilize, to the maximum extent practicable, the services and facilities of private agencies” to expand the strategic exchange programs that were by that time seen as an important arm of US “soft power” foreign policy. As the 1950s went on, educational exchanges were increasingly encouraged as part of Cold War efforts to promote a positive image of America abroad. See Giles Scott-Smith, *Networks of Empire: The US State Department’s Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France, and Britain 1950-1970* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 49–102; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *World Service; a History of the Foreign Work and World Service of the Young Men’s Christian Association of the United States and Canada*. (New York: Association Press, 1967), 96.

²¹⁵ In 1920, the World Student Christian Federation, under the direction of traveling secretary Ruth Rouse, put out an urgent call for postwar aid for students in Central Europe. Funds poured in from student groups across Europe, the US, South Africa, and India, and ultimately a separate organization, European Student Relief (ESR) was set up to handle this work. Georgina

While the sense of a student class consciousness was never as strong in the US as it was in the UK, where the political language of class was more widespread and integrated into social identities, Flory and others in the ecumenical student world had a sense that students constituted a particular social group, with shared interests and sensibilities, who could be addressed as a collectivity, and who could address one another as peers. Flory's own sense of vocational calling to serve "the students of the world" reflected this imagined community. She and her colleagues saw university exchange programs as a reflection of this sense of solidarity.

In 1950, the options for university students who wished to study abroad were limited. Outside of the established "Junior Year Abroad" programs in Europe sponsored by a handful of elite colleges, there had been several small, mostly experimental exchanges with universities in Latin America, some as far back as the 1930s. These were generally supported by the State Department and funded by large, philanthropic interests.²¹⁶ There were no established programs that regularly made it possible for American students to study at colleges and universities outside of Europe. Flory understood that the extensive network of church-related colleges, both in the United States and around the world, was an institutional network that could help to make that possible. These institutions were very much a part of the missionary networks with which Flory was familiar.²¹⁷

Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 51–65.

²¹⁶ L. S. Rowe, "Cooperation with Latin American Universities: Report of Committee L," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (1915-1955)* 21, no. 4 (1935): 308–10, doi:10.2307/40219587.

²¹⁷ On the ties between Protestant missions and higher education, see Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism*, 1995, 69–84;

In 1953, Flory's Office of Student World Relations launched the first Junior Year Abroad program to place American students in Asia and the Middle East. Initially, the program recruited from church-related colleges and student centers across the country, and placed students at church-related schools and institutions abroad. The program expanded in the 1960s to include Latin America and Africa. By 1973, when the program ended, more than a thousand students had spent a year at colleges and universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East. The Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations voted in 1972 to end the program, noting that other similar programs were by this time available to students.

In the early 1950s, though, the program had been groundbreaking. Some fifteen years later Flory recalled that at the time, "the idea of undergraduate students studying in Asia, Africa, or Latin America was a shocking one to both parents and administrators."²¹⁸ The Junior Year Abroad Council, composed of the handful of colleges already operating study abroad programs, was incredulous; they knew virtually nothing about the network of church-related colleges outside of Europe with whom Flory was proposing to collaborate. "It is an impossible plan," said the head of the council, "but if you do it, it will be a miracle."²¹⁹ The Foreign Mission Board was, of course, far more familiar with the institutions and networks with which Margaret proposed to collaborate, but they were

William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1–2.

²¹⁸ Margaret Flory, "Preface," in *The University, the Church, and Internationalization*, ed. Margaret Flory and Alice Hageman (St. Louis: UMHE Publications Office, 1968).

²¹⁹ Roche, "Initiating and Sustaining Ecumenical Ministries," 80.

also familiar with the challenges involved in travel and living abroad, and had some concerns, even as they approved the experiment.²²⁰

For students who participated in the exchange program, it was often a mixture of the “miraculous” and the challenging, euphoric but also disorienting. “It was just such an amazingly open, complicating experience,” Gail Hovey recalled of her JYA experience in Lebanon decades later. Said Jerry Dusenbury, who had spent a year at the International Christian University in Tokyo in 1959-1960, “It heightened my sense of the complexity of the world. I came back here really confused.”²²¹

The educational value and impact of these exchanges could be and were evaluated and articulated in terms that were not explicitly theological, but were part of a broader conversation about the internationalization of the university in the 1950s and ’60s.²²² Flory understood this type of international education as an opportunity for students to create “invisible bridges” of friendship and understanding, but also as essential preparation for leadership in a new and rapidly changing world. She understood that “nothing would hold back the tide of internationalization that began sweeping the world in the early postwar years, when travel in all directions was possible once more and the

²²⁰ At the committee meeting where Flory presented the proposal, one committee member (the wife of a college president) broke the stunned silence with a question: “Margaret, do you know what you’re letting yourself in for? They’ll get sick. They’ll fall in love. Their parents will call you long distance!” Flory herself acknowledged that “All those things happened in the first year. They happened every year. She was absolutely right!” *Ibid.*, 81.

²²¹ Focer, “Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974,” 37.

²²² James A. Gittings, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, *10 JYA: The Tenth Anniversary Volume of the Junior Year Abroad* (New York: Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1964); Margaret Flory and Alice Hageman, *The University, the Church, and Internationalization* (St. Louis: UMHE Publications Office, 1968).

‘one world’ dream was being pursued.’²²³ It was necessary now to prepare students who would be able to embrace this change, and work critically on the frontiers that emerged from it.

But it was clear that Flory also understood the exchanges organized through the JYA program, like those that would come later as part of the FIM program, in explicitly theological terms. During JYA orientation sessions in New York or San Francisco, Flory reminded participants of “their freedom as Christian students in a setting of responsibility,” echoing language of “responsible society” that was then circulating widely in ecumenical circles. She closed each session with a circle of prayer, and gave each student a WSCF cross, a sign of their affiliation with the World Student Christian Federation and its traditions.²²⁴

Among other things, the model of international education and exchange on which Flory drew, and which she helped to expand in the 1950s and 1960s, was an antidote and an alternative to the paradigms of the “missionary period.” Recalling her own experiences in Africa and Asia, Flory described

seeing the missionary period merge into the ecumenical era, revealing baggage which must be left behind in the six-continent approach to mission; watching amazing and multiple ecumenical opportunities develop in the modern diaspora of students and faculty as they move in every direction across the world ... in summary I have observed the emerging of the new international community where God’s people come from different nations, races and confessions, and together they are bearers of ministry to one another.²²⁵

²²³ Flory, *Moments in Time*, 47.

²²⁴ In contrast, CBS went out of its way to note that James Robinson closed the Crossroads Orientation “not with a prayer, but with a poem.” “Crossroads Africa: Pilot for a Peace Corps,” *CBS Reports* (USA, March 16, 1961), <http://operationcrossroadsafrica.org/crossroaders-photos-and-videos/cbs-reports-video-operation-crossroads-africa-and-peace-corps-1961>.

²²⁵ Flory, “Preface.”

In describing this “new” way of being in ministry, Flory drew on language that reflected the new theologies of mission emerging in ecumenical student networks in this period. The critical participation of Christians in the broader internationalization process represented “a sign of the church’s presence on one of the world’s frontiers.” Such a presence necessarily involved solidarity and efforts to change the status quo, as well as theological reflection and discernment that helped to reveal “God’s action as a ferment for change in the world.”²²⁶

Mission in the Ecumenical Student Movement

As I have suggested above, the foundational practices, institutions, and networks that made the Frontier Internship in Mission (FIM) program possible had roots in the Protestant missionary movement, but by the 1950s were already associated with efforts to transform and reinterpret missionary theology and practice. The theological ideas that shaped the Frontier Internships had their roots in a much broader ongoing conversation within the ecumenical student movement about the nature of Christian mission and its relationship to the rapidly changing world.

Beginning in the 1920s, when ecumenical and missionary leaders like Sherwood Eddy and John Mott were engaged in debate about the nature and meaning of missionary work, and through the 1930s, when the Rockefeller-funded *Layman’s Report on Foreign Missions* helped to bring these debates to a very public crescendo, the ecumenical student movement had provided an important forum for debate as well as an organizational

²²⁶ Flory and Hageman, *The University, the Church, and Internationalization*, 3.

apparatus for transmitting new ideas about mission to a broader audience, both within church institutions and beyond. The wide array of publications, study groups, and regional, national, and international conferences that were sponsored by various organizations affiliated with the student movement in the 1940s and '50s is truly staggering. In fact, referring to this network as a “student” movement can be misleading; in the early twentieth century, and especially prior to 1947-48 when the World Council of Churches came into being, these networks functioned as means of gathering theologians and ecumenical professionals from a range of organizations — denominations, theological schools, YMCA and YWCA movements, mission boards, and so on. They were, as Robin Boyd has put it, a kind of “church ahead of the church,” initiating and leading conversations that were too challenging for more risk-averse denominational institutions — or, as the World Student Christian Federation’s own general committee put it, a “pioneering and revolutionary force for and within the universal Church of Christ upon the earth.”²²⁷

Christians in the World Struggle (1951)

By the 1940s, the ecumenical student movement had already established itself as a location of debate about missions. So it was no surprise when debates about mission re-emerged on the agenda of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in the period after World War II, this time with an emphasis on the rapidly decolonizing world.²²⁸ For nearly two decades, the meaning of mission was a matter of nearly constant discussion

²²⁷ Robin H. S. Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement: “Church Ahead of the Church”* (London: SPCK, 2007), 57.

²²⁸ Risto Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm: The Ecumenical Student Movement in the Turmoil of Revolution, 1968 to 1973* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 19.

within the ecumenical student movement, and likewise an ongoing focus of conferences, committee deliberations, and consultations. While there was a great deal of internal debate, two broad themes marked all these conversations. First, there was a decisive shift away from a geographical frame of reference for thinking about mission “fields” and “frontiers.” Frontiers of mission were not defined by specific territories, but were diffuse and distributed. Second, engagement with social relationships and social issues was increasingly seen as a fundamental aspect of “mission” and “evangelism,” central rather than peripheral, necessary rather than exceptional.

In 1948, Hans Hoekendijk, a Dutch theologian and SCM leader, addressed a student conference on “The Growing Church,” laying out an approach to mission that emphasized just such an embodiment of the gospel over proclamation of the gospel:

The first task of the church is not to speak but to be the church, a community... It should not be a factory for statements and pronouncements, but a laboratory, where Christians experiment in vital forms of evangelism, i.e., where they translate the message into service. This is a concern for the whole church. The task of evangelism is wrought not so much by a simple proclamation of the gospel... The effective way of evangelism is to be the church and to pioneer in the field of social relationships and community service. The gospel is not good advice, but good news.²²⁹

This understanding of mission was echoed in words proclaimed at the opening assembly of the World Council of Churches days later: “the whole church with the whole gospel to the whole world.”

The costly political witness of the European movements during World War II, both in Germany and elsewhere in the resistance, had made political witness a central

²²⁹ Hans Hoekendijk, “Our Task in the Growing Church,” *Student World*, n.d., 372; Philip Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 161.

concern for the Federation.²³⁰ This concern was reinforced as anti-colonial nationalist movements around the world gained strength and momentum. In 1948 and 1949, M. M. Thomas and Davis McCaughey drafted a statement on “The SCM in the World Struggle,” the first ecumenical response to the “revolutionary changes” taking place in the political upheaval following World War II, including the independence movements sweeping Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Discussion of this statement dominated the work of the Federation for two years, until its publication as *The Christian in the World Struggle* in 1951. This statement proposed even more expansive understandings of proclamation and evangelism, suggesting that

all political conversation of the Christian is, explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, a proclamation of God’s judgement and mercy. In this sense political discussion is evangelistic; it is a telling forth of the good news of the kingdom of God announced in Christ and to be made and manifest in the second coming.”²³¹

These points of departure set the tone for much of the discussion about and innovation in mission that came in the following decades.

The Life and Mission of the Church Initiative, 1956-1964

Nowhere was the attention to mission more evident, influential, energizing, and sometimes controversial than in relation to the Life and Mission of the Church (LMC)

²³⁰ Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement*, 73. For more on the role of the student Christian movement in the resistance during World War II, see Philippe Maury, *Christian Witness in the Resistance: Experiences of Some Members of European Student Christian Movements, 1939-1945* (Geneva: The World’s Student Christian Federation, 1947). In addition to WSCF general secretary Philippe Maury, who had been active in the French resistance, the WSCF staff in this period included M.M. Thomas, who had been involved in political dialogues between Indian and British SCMs in the years leading up to Indian independence in 1947. Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 171.

²³¹ Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 171; M. M. Thomas, *The Christian in the World Struggle* (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1952).

Initiative, which shaped a great deal of the WSCF activity from 1956 to 1964. Under this umbrella, the Federation organized a series of regional and international conferences about social and political issues facing the global community. This intensive study and reflection on Christian mission was the focus of the Foundation's work for seven years, and included the publication of books, Bible studies, study guides, and other materials; lectures and seminars; and international conference and regional consultations. The study took direction from renowned evangelist and ecumenist D.T. Niles, then General Secretary of the Federation, and Philippe Maury of France, a historian who had been part of the French resistance movement during the war. The impact on countries throughout the Federation was substantial.

In a broad sense, the LMC Initiative responded to the crisis over the meaning of "mission" in a postcolonial world, and reflected a desire on the part of leaders to stimulate a new conversation on mission and to transmit to a new generation of Christian students what they saw as an emerging ecumenical consensus about mission. In the context of the International Missionary Council, traditional missionary vocations were being questioned widely, and the nature of so-called "comity arrangements" (which designated particular territories the province of particular European and American mission agencies as a means of structuring "cooperation" in the missionary enterprise) that had organized the institution's work, no longer made sense.²³² Indeed, the traditional structures of and approaches to mission seemed to be in crisis, and the conversations initiated within the WSCF were echoes of and resources for similar conversations happening across the ecumenical and missionary movements, and within denominations.

²³² Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 22.

In a more immediate sense, the LMC Initiative spoke to “a widespread disquiet in the Federation” that had emerged in the mid-1950s about whether SCM members were sufficiently engaged in the evangelistic tasks of preaching and witnessing to the gospel. Why were students neglecting these obligations? And was it still necessary, after all, to preach the gospel with the aim of converting others? A remarkable quadrennial conference on “Revolution and Reconciliation,” held in 1955-56, illustrates how the WSCF understood the global and historical context within which these discussions of mission were taking place. At that conference, students from all over the world were challenged to discover together the meaning of the “missionary message of reconciliation” in the context of the “revolution of rising expectations,” particularly in the newly independent nations.²³³

With these concerns in mind, the Federation committed to a sustained program of teaching, study, meetings, and prayer, leading up to a major “teaching conference” in 1960. The goals of the Life and Mission of the Church Initiative were:

To rethink the responsibility of the church in the present world situation on the basis of the biblical revelation and of the lessons of the church’s history.

To recover and communicate to this student generation a new and more adequate understanding of the basic motivation for the mission of the church and commitment to it; to analyze and understand the new methods and new structures of the church required by radical changes in the world.

To train students and young leaders for the new tasks in the mission of the church today.

To help them find their place of service within the total life and mission of the church.²³⁴

²³³ Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement*, 92.

²³⁴ Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 193–94.

If the goals for this initiative were ambitious, the combination of committees, publications, study groups, and conferences proposed for pursuing these conversations was equally impressive.

An overview of the process by which the WSCF approached this task provides a sense of the elaborate and cerebral organizational culture of the Federation and its “member movements.” It also illustrates the material mechanisms by which practices of friendship, travel, conferencing, publication, study, and debate both depended on and reproduced extensive webs of personal and organizational ties. The first stage was the production of reading and study materials which were to be studied by all of the Student Christian Movements. In some cases, these national movements might host conferences related to these themes (as the British movement did with its 1958 Edinburgh conference on “Life for the World,” which drew 2000 student representatives from 42 countries.) This would be followed by a major conference in Rangoon, Burma, in 1958-1959, that would bring together speakers and participants from all over the world to discuss “God’s People in God’s World.” The third stage would involve production of an immense amount of material, including a book of essays, *History’s Lessons for Tomorrow’s Mission*; over fifteen Bible studies; and outlines, bibliographies and study booklets for use by member movements. These would be recommended for study in small groups and made available as resources for ecumenical colleagues in other organizations. The process would culminate in 1960 with a “world teaching conference” in Strasbourg, France, on “Christ’s Ministry to the World and Our Calling.”

This first half of the initiative would be followed over the subsequent four years by a series of regional Life and Mission of the Church conferences in Bangalore, India

(1961), Graz, Austria (1962), Nairobi, Kenya (1963), Montreal, Canada (1963), Broumana, Lebanon (1964), Embalse Rio Tercero, Argentina (1964), and Athens, Ohio (1964).²³⁵ These gatherings were designed to focus attention on leadership and the main challenges confronting students within a particular region. The fact that many of the participants in these conferences also would have been involved in national or denominational gatherings, and that many of the organizations that constituted the ecumenical student movement, like the YMCA and YWCA, had their own cycles of national, regional and international conference, just underscores the levels of commitment and engagement that these networks and processes inspired.

The 1960 conference in Strasbourg, France was conceived as a “teaching conference” that would bring together experts on different aspects of mission who could “awaken” the interest of younger SCM leaders and provide them with the expertise and training necessary for the “new type of missionary service” needed in the 1960s. It brought together some seven hundred participants and a roster of prominent lecturers and resource — including Karl Barth, Hans Hoekendijk, Jose Miguel Bonino, Lesslie Newbigin, D. T. Niles, Richard Shaull, M.M. Thomas, and W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, among others. These luminaries delivered an astonishing number of keynote addresses — accounts note that there were more than thirty addresses over 16 days.

The Strasbourg conference is remembered as the centerpiece of this effort, not only because it was designed to occupy such a position, or because the quality of the thought and exchange had a lasting impact in the ecumenical — but also because the

²³⁵ Ibid., 203. The US mission quadrennial in Athens, Ohio was in intention and content part of this series, but not formally part of the LMC initiative.

conference revealed a great generational divide and a strong current of student unrest coursing through the ecumenical world.

Things did not go as expected. Many of the most prominent speakers, including senior intellectuals of the ecumenical movement, were received critically, or with indifference, by younger participants. Some of the students present had little theological training, and would not have known who these speakers were, but observers sensed a more fundamental shift as well. They felt a mood of unrest among students, a general skepticism about authorities and institutions, and a desire to take a more active leadership role at all levels. “Many participants felt that the inherited institutions were unable to give an authentic witness to the gospel,” Risto Lehtonen recalled. “Too deep a gulf separated the churches from the world in which the young generation found itself.”²³⁶ If the Strasbourg gathering remains a moment of conflict, then it is perhaps unsurprising that the assessment of the conference is a matter of dispute. Published accounts, nearly all of them written by participants in the conference whose involvement in the WSCF stretched over decades, share a common narrative but diverge in their interpretations of events.

In their own assessment after the conference, the World Student Christian Federation’s general committee drew two conclusions, both of which found in the critiques of participants a deeper affirmation for the new understandings of mission they were helping to incubate. First, they were sympathetic to the insight that the rigidity and institutionalism of organizations, including churches, mission agencies, and even the student movement itself, was an obstacle to the missionary task. Second, they held fast to

²³⁶ Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 26; Boyd, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement*, 98; Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 194–96. One of the most popular parts of the conference was a staging of Jean Paul Sartre’s play *No Exit*. Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 24.

the insight expressed both at the conference and earlier in the LMC process, that “the life of the church is life for the world.” This emphasis on a turning to the world ran through many reflections on the event. In an editorial about the event for the WSCF magazine *Student World*, Charles Long echoed this sense of a worldly turn: “Strasbourg was for a great many participants an experience of liberation, though sometimes painful like a traumatic new birth, being tumbled out of a narrow piety into the full stream of the world’s life.”²³⁷ The minutes of the general committee record one “senior friend” (a non-student engaged in the life of the organization) suggesting that the whole LMC process represented a challenge to the church, an invitation to “step away from high biblicism or high churchmanship into a high view of God’s dealings with the world – high worldsmanship.”²³⁸

In an assessment of the conference, Philippe Maury again appealed to the concept of presence:

The church must leave its ghetto and become once again the church truly ‘present’ and involved in the world of its time and place, a human community to which non-Christians can speak and to which they can listen, as to fellow men and women and not alien and uprooted relics of another age and culture.²³⁹

Over the next four years, a series of regional Life and Mission of the Church conferences followed the Strasbourg conference. The themes of these gatherings reflect the intense engagement with political and social issues and their theological significance:

“Secularization,” “Modernization,” “Freedom Under the Cross,” “Mission in

²³⁷ Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 196.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

Revolutionary Latin America,” and “Relevance to the University.” These set the tone for the reflections on mission in the ecumenical world that flowed out of the Strasbourg conversations and shaped the Frontier Internship program. These follow-up conferences generally further radicalized and challenged participants along the lines of what had happened at the world conference in Strasbourg.

A Missiology of Christian Presence (1964)

In the spring and summer of 1964, the WSCF produced and adopted a document intended to frame its approach to its work for the next quadrennium, titled, “The Christian Community in the Academic World.”²⁴⁰ Its key concepts of “presence” and “participation” led to the document becoming known as the “Christian Presence” document. Lehtonen notes that “it quickly became a bestseller within the Federation,” was translated into many languages, and was read and studied widely with the Federation, affiliated movements, and related organizations and agencies. It became, in his words, a “planning catechism.”

In this context, the term “presence” was used as a contemporary interpretation of “evangelism,” “witness,” and “mission.” It alluded to God’s own presence and self-revelation in the Incarnation, in the life and ministry of Jesus, and in the life of the world.

The General Committee of the WSCF elaborated on this concept:

‘Presence’ for us means ‘engagement,’ involvement in the concrete structures of our society. It indicates a priority. First, we have to be there before we can see our task clearly. In one sense of the world, presence precedes witness. In another sense, the very presence is witness. For us, to be present in the name of Christ spells death to the status quo, both in society and in the Christian community: we will not tire of pleading and working for the restoration of normal humanhood as we see it in Jesus.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

This emphasis focused attention on God’s sovereign action in the world, and thus the responsibility of the church to discern God’s presence in secular activities, political struggles, and social movements, and to follow their lead when God was perceived in their work. In this understanding, “perceiving and following Christ in the midst of peoples’ struggles and movements was primary” and the Church as an institution or gathering of those who acknowledge Christ was often secondary.²⁴²

Throughout the 1950s, and particularly as the LMC process unfolded, there were calls for new forms of missionary involvement that would reflect these new ideas about the meaning of Christian engagement with the world. The Frontier Internship in Mission program was one of the ways this theology began to take shape.

Frontier Internship in Mission: Study, Presence, Struggle

The Frontier Internship in Mission (FIM) program was a practical and programmatic response to these debates. The 1959 Student Volunteer Movement Quadrennial Conference in Athens, Ohio had been organized around the theme of “Inquiry and Involvement on Strategic Frontiers,” and one of the conference subthemes had been “Frontiers in Mission.” Flory proposed the FIM program as an official follow-up to the conference, and the committee responsible for follow-up approved. The first Frontier Intern was appointed the following summer, and twelve were appointed in 1961.

²⁴² The main theological inspirations were the thinking of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the experiences of worker-priests during World War II France. It also reflected conversations about secularization and the “desacralization” of the church. Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 30.

Within a few years, the program was jointly sponsored by the Presbyterians, Methodists, and the United Church of Christ.

The program sent Frontier Interns to work, study, and share the in social and political struggles alongside people on “strategic frontiers.” Perhaps ironically, the use of the term “frontiers” reflected a shift away from geographical framework for thinking about mission, and a simultaneous embrace of the frontier as metaphor. Shortly after the Strasbourg conference, the World Student Christian Federation General Committee issued a statement describing some of the frontiers on which it felt the church ought to be:

In the present world situation, the frontiers are seen no longer as primarily geographic, but grow out of the cultural, economic, political and other developments in all parts of the world. The question has been raised by students as to how the church may be present in a more relevant way on frontiers of our time such as those created by racial tensions, technological developments, uprooted peoples, new nationalisms, modern secularism, the university world, the appeal of communism, and the need for responsible statesmanship.²⁴³

This was an echo, using another geographical metaphor, of Daniel Johnson Fleming’s suggestion that the “continents” requiring missionary “conquest” were those of industrialization, nationalism, materialism, racial injustice, war, and poverty.²⁴⁴ The FIM program aimed to send students to work with communities and organizations through which they could develop a more intimate understanding of the issues that defined these

²⁴³ Potter, *Seeking and Serving the Truth*, 215. On frontiers language, see also Tomas Shivute, Suomen Lähetysseura, and Missiologian ja Ekumeniikan Seura R.Y, eds., *The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi* (Helsinki: Missiologian ja Ekumeniikan Seura R.Y. : Suomen Lähetysseura, 1980), 189.

²⁴⁴ Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions* (New York: Association Press, 1925). See discussion in Chapter 1, above.

new “frontiers” — including race relations, new nationalisms, militant non-Christian faiths, and technological change.

The program was meant to model an experimental new form of overseas mission. Typically, assignments lasted for two years, which was a significant departure from the practices of mainline mission boards. It also meant that the program was frequently and easily compared to the Peace Corps, especially in later years. Unlike the Peace Corps, however, which was seen at least in part as a way for Americans to provide assistance, the primary task for Frontier Interns was to learn from their experiences abroad and “bring the world back home” to the U.S.²⁴⁵

The program aimed to take seriously the critiques of mission that by the mid-1950s were increasingly foundational to conversations within the ecumenical student movement. The program had three major tenets, each of which institutionalized a response to critiques of the dominant models of mission in the Protestant world. First, students were to “study for involvement,” and to focus on listening and learning from the contexts in which they were assigned, before initiating activity. This reflected ideas of “Christian presence,” and a sense that one had to be present first in order to discern how God was at work in a given situation. Second, students were to live at a subsistence level, a provision sometimes characterized as an “economic discipline.” Although this proved difficult to sustain for a number of reasons (not least the expectations of the host communities), the rule was intended to respond to concerns about the way that visible displays of wealth by visitors to the Third World reinforced hierarchies. Finally, FIM participants were to participate with one another and with their hosts in a “community of

²⁴⁵ Hultman, “Tamela Hultman,” 153.

mission,” reporting to one another rather than to mission boards.²⁴⁶ There were other innovations, as well. The FIM program stressed that each person, whether single or married, would have a complete assignment; wives were not just sent as additional workers to accompany their husbands. For women who were involved in this program this was often an early opportunity to adjust to new ways of thinking about partnership with their husbands.

Most participants in the program were recent college graduates, and many of them came to the program keen to engage the political and economic issues that were at the center of the social movements of the day. Tamela Hultman recalls the orientation for her year as a Frontier Intern: “Fresh from campuses around the country, most of us were eager to continue the search for effective strategies to address the issues of poverty, war, and racial and gender equity that has preoccupied us.” Hultman and her husband, Reed Kramer, were sent to South Africa, where they worked in a multiracial youth program, got to know student anti-apartheid activists, and quietly traveled the country collecting information on U.S. corporate and government ties to the white regime, research which would later be published and provide a foundation for the church shareholder resolutions that began the divestment campaign of the 1970s and 80s.²⁴⁷ Alice Hageman, who was sent to work at UNESCO in Paris, describes the way that her experiences challenged her “middle American” beliefs about communism and geopolitics as she got to know diplomats and ecumenical leaders from Eastern Europe.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Alice Hageman, “Alice Hageman,” in *Journeys That Opened up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975*, ed. Sara M Evans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 179.

²⁴⁷ Hultman, “Tamela Hultman,” 154.

²⁴⁸ Hageman, “Alice Hageman,” 181.

As the decade wore on, students brought a sense of shaken optimism with them to their assignments, as they were often veterans of other political and social movements and not naïve about the way US power was extended globally. Elmira Kendricks Nazombe describes her decision to apply for the Frontier Internship, along with her husband, in 1969. She had been active in the Methodist Student Movement since her undergraduate years at Kent State, and had participated in the Christian Citizenship Seminar sponsored by the Methodist Student Movement;²⁴⁹ had served on the national council of the MSM in the years when students challenged the segregation of Lake Junaluska following the political assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the conflicts of the 1968 Democratic National Convention. These events, she recalled,

had seriously shaken the optimism we felt earlier in the decade, when everything seemed possible and we were all so certain that the revolution was just around the corner. Like so many others, my husband and I felt a need to get away from the United States. We wanted to see how it looked from outside, to try and understand what people elsewhere thought of the United States, perhaps to get some distance on the anger and shame that we felt about the actions of our country in other parts of the world.²⁵⁰

The Frontier Internship in Mission (FIM) allowed young people to pursue the overseas experience they hoped for “without the stigma we felt would be attached to being associated with the U.S. government” through the Peace Corps. It also made the experience possible for students whose work in the civil rights and anti-war movement

²⁴⁹ The theme was African nationalism and the keynote address was by Dr. Edouardo Mondlane, the founder of FRELIMO, a liberation movement in Mozambique. Elmira Kendricks Nazombe, “Elmira Kendricks Nazombe,” in *Journeys That Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975*, ed. Sara M. Evans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 91.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

prevented their participation in the Peace Corps. M. Sheila McCurdy, a Frontier Intern who applied for the program in 1968, after years of work in the Methodist Student Movement and ecumenical student organizations on civil rights, community organizing and anti-war efforts, was turned down for the Peace Corps for failure to pass government clearance, but was accepted to the Frontier Intern program.

Learning to Speak Frankly: Mission and Movements in the Late Sixties

Through the late 1960s, the FIM program was still based in the US, and was jointly administered by the Methodists, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterians. By the time the FIM program was “internationalized” and moved to Geneva in 1974, the student ecumenical structures that had given birth to both the FIM and Operation Crossroads Africa were beginning to come apart at the seams. In the face of internal tensions over race, ideology, and the control of resources, the General Committee of the University Christian Movement (UCM) — the US student Christian movement affiliate of the WSCF — voted in March 1969 to disband the national structure. Similar political tensions plagued the WSCF, whose leadership voted in 1972 to continue activity only at the regional level. The organization had been steadily losing support from mainline denominations, in part because those denominations were alarmed by the group’s engagement with feminism, opposition to the Vietnam War, support of the civil rights movement’s increasingly strident tone, and openness to the early stirrings of the gay and lesbian liberation movement. Organizationally, the ecumenical student movement relied for support on denominational mission agencies, and “the tolerance level of those institutions for challenge from within was limited.”²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Ibid., 97.

While both Operation Crossroads Africa and the Frontier Internship in Mission continued in various forms into the 1970s and 1980s, the thriving ecumenical networks in which they had been formed and nurtured, including especially the University Christian Movement and the World Student Christian Federation, were suffering by the late 1960s, “torn from within by competing radicalisms and from without by diminishing institutional support.”²⁵² The dissolution of the student Christian movement mirrored the challenges to activist and student movements more generally in this period. The UCM disbanded itself at about the same time the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were also beginning to fray. For those committed to international solidarity, there were new questions stirring, as well. Critiques of US military involvement around the world were deepening into questions about governance, economic development, and dependence more generally.

The practices of travel and volunteering that had become so popular in the 1960s, in part as an expression of idealism and goodwill and in conjunction with programs like Operation Crossroads Africa and the Frontier Internship in Mission Program, now faced challenges for the ways that they were increasingly understood as an articulation of US power. These critiques emerged from within the very North American student networks that had championed exchange and engagement, as well as from their networks and friends in the developing world. The Committee of Returned Volunteers, founded in 1966 by FIM alumna Alice Hageman and Aubrey Brown, a returned Peace Corps volunteer with deep ties to the SCM, grew most directly out of concerns about the Vietnam War,

²⁵² Evans, *Journeys That Opened up the World*, 7. On the reduction in support for youth programs in mainline churches, see also Flory, *Moments in Time*, 32.

but also as a structure through which broader concerns about the role and impact of the US in the world could be articulated. The organization became a hub of activism, particularly in the anti-Vietnam war movement, as well as support for African liberation struggles.²⁵³

Margaret Flory was well aware of these tensions, which rippled through ecumenical networks as the 1960s went on. In a little booklet entitled *The University, the Church and Internationalization* written with Alice Hageman in 1968, Flory acknowledged that internationalization of higher education had become “big business,” not least because the federal government was using the university for military and intelligence research. Too often, an emphasis on the international “seems only to serve the interests of imperial America and its *Pax Americana*.” They nonetheless advised hope. “For while the international element offers extended possibilities for American domination in the world, it also offers new opportunities for reconciliation. A new international community may come into being.”²⁵⁴

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the critique of colonial patterns of mission was extended to the types of short-term mission and volunteer engagement that Crossroads and the Frontier Internship in Mission program had helped to pioneer. Cameroonian Aaron Tolon who was the WSCF Secretary for Africa, reflected on his experiences at the Church and Society Conference for the USA, in Detroit in 1968, noting that

[m]any of those who I met approved certain actions of their political leaders because they believed these ‘would be helpful’ to, let us say, the under-developed countries. Nothing is more painful than to say to one of these ‘believers’: ‘What you call kindness and service, is for me a danger

²⁵³ “Committee of Returned Volunteers,” *African Activist Archive*, n.d., <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=Committee+of+Returned+Volunteers>.

²⁵⁴ Flory and Hageman, *The University, the Church, and Internationalization*, 3.

which must be resisted: it is depersonalization, the denial of my rights as a responsible person.’

Nevertheless, it is useless to allow these people who are so full of good will to continue to waste both their energy and money. It is better perhaps to tell them that their efforts and intentions are good, but that, alas, they are not being applied at the strategic points. Would you let a doctor continue to treat an abscess with quinine simply because it is a medicine and the doctor has good intentions? If in the Federation at least we could learn to speak frankly, we could help one another more.²⁵⁵

Other leaders well known in the ecumenical world echoed these sentiments, in a gathering chorus of conviction. In the summer of 1968, Ivan Illich spoke to a group of students at the Conference on InterAmerican Service Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. His words have been widely anthologized in the decades since, under the title, “To Hell with Good Intentions.” In his characteristically ascerbic, provocative style, Illich carefully made the case for his opposition to the “benevolent invasion” of Latin America by armies of “North American do-gooders,” and encouraged students to reconsider their commitment to such an undertaking. Instead, he urged them: stay home.

If you have any sense of responsibility at all, stay with your riots here at home. Work for the coming elections: You will know what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how to communicate with those to whom you speak. And you will know when you fail. If you insist on working with the poor, if this is your vocation, then at least work among the poor who can tell you to go to hell.

It was not travel to Latin America itself which Illich rejected, but the paternalism of the insistence on “helping” with little understanding of the broader historical or political context. “I am here to entreat you to use your money, your status and your education to travel in Latin America,” he told students, perhaps as a bit of a concession at the end of a

²⁵⁵ Aaron Tolon and Elizabeth Adler, “Exciting, Disturbing America: 1968 — Black Power in the View of an African,” in *World Student Christian Federation Memoirs and Diaries, 1895-1990* (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1994), 192.

highly critical speech. “Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help.”²⁵⁶ In 1971, John Gatu, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, famously called for a moratorium on foreign missionaries and foreign funds for no less than five years, so that “the churches of the Third World” could find their own identity. This proposal provoked intense response and debate in the 1970s, both across the mainline missionary establishment and in churches throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

These convictions, strongly and provocatively stated, were not universally shared, either in North America or in the global south. Even those who were concerned about issues of dependency and paternalism had diverse views on the proper prescription for these maladies. Nevertheless, they marked a symbolic shift away from the idealism and optimism that had animated short-term exchange programs from through the early 1960s. Such programs could no longer be seen simply as alternatives to the older patterns of missionary endeavor that they aspired to reform. Rather, they would have to be understood in the context of the emerging neocolonial patterns of global governance and control, and assessed with a full accounting of the actually existing political and economic landscapes within which they operated.

This was echoed by a growing insistence among students, particularly but not exclusively those involved in the activist left, that “service” must give way to political and social agitation if the ills of the world were to be addressed with integrity. The ecumenical student movement, inspired in part by conversations like the ones described above, taking place at conferences and committee meetings at the national and

²⁵⁶ Ivan Illich, “To Hell with Good Intentions,” *Risk* 6, no. 2 (1970): 18–26.

international level, had begun to encourage denominational mission boards to move from social service to social change projects. Organizationally, the WSCF itself was gradually moving away from a focus on denominational relationships to a focus on social action, often with a geographical or issue-area focus. This move corresponded to shifting understandings of the church and mission that had emerged in the organization over the course of the 1960s, in particular the idea that the secular world was the stage of God's activity, and that signs of God's action therefore could be found in revolutionary political movements and struggles.²⁵⁷

These conversations also focused attention on the need to make education, conscientization, and transformation of North Americans increasingly central to the student missionary project, an emphasis that is more explicit in programs discussed in Chapter 6.

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The Frontier Internship in Mission program drew on established practices and networks in the ecumenical Protestant world to develop new forms of global engagement that enabled young people to engage and learn from the revolutionary struggles reshaping the world during the 1960s and 1970s. Building on practices of hospitality, friendship, and kinship that were a hallmark of existing ecumenical and missionary networks, on the established practice of theologically and politically engaged travel seminars, and on Protestant traditions of higher education, the Frontier Internship in Mission and Junior Year Abroad programs that Margaret Flory had a hand in creating each reframed the global imaginary, emphasizing that not only Europe, but the nations and churches of

²⁵⁷ Lehtonen, *Story of a Storm*, 25; Nazombe, "Elmira Kendricks Nazombe," 92–93, 97.

Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East were formative spaces for friendship, learning, and exchange. In a very practical way, these programs were part of a much longer process of decentering or “provincializing” Europe and North America, as the testimonies of student participants suggest.²⁵⁸

Two specific features of the global imaginary that shaped these programs are worth noting. First, Margaret Flory and the ecumenical student world in which she was so deeply rooted had a strong sense of the place of students *qua students*, that is, as a class or order within society and with transnational bonds. This framing of participants in these programs as students underscored an important theological understanding that shaped the practices, as well — namely, the importance of making oneself a student of and in the world. Along with this, the Frontier Internship in Mission Program emphasized the critical importance of learning about issues of social and political struggles from those directly affected, as a first step in discerning how best to engage in these struggles.

If this background understanding of a clearly constituted student world — even a student Christian world — was part of what Flory and the Office of Student World Relations had inherited, it was a background assumption that would be under pressure by the mid-1960s. Mainline denominations, concerned about the radicalism that they sensed from young people, began to trim budgets devoted to campus ministry and ecumenical student programs. On campuses, student Christian organizations associated with emerging evangelical networks were gaining prominence as well. These shifts would have far-reaching implications for the religious networks and communities into which

²⁵⁸ Ada Focer has conducted a remarkable series of interviews with participants in the Frontier Internship in Mission program. These are a treasure in their own right, and her analysis of the interviews adds an important dimension to research on this period. Focer, “Frontier Internship in Mission, 1961-1974.”

young people were formed in the decades ahead, including the international networks and imaginaries of the global church.

A second important feature of the global imaginary that shaped the Frontier Internship in Mission program was the strong sense of the Church as a global community. The Frontier Internship reflected changing theologies of mission then circulating in the ecumenical world as well. The “frontiers” of mission on which students were engaged were not defined geographically, but rather by their entanglement with the cultural, political, and economic developments of the era — racism, nationalism, new technologies, communism, and secularism among them. On these frontiers, moreover, the heart of mission was understood to be Christian presence, social solidarity, and learning, as well as engagement in struggle alongside friends and colleagues. These were fundamental acts of mission, even of “evangelism” (though the word was used less often), central to the enterprise rather than peripheral to it. In the way, the practices embedded in the FIM program were embodied practices of formation for a new way in which American Protestants were coming to understand their place in the world. As the decades went on, this understanding of mission grew increasingly distant from the institutional church and increasingly committed to social action for justice with the powerful social movements of the 1960s. The legacy of this emphasis on internationalist study through travel is evident in the ways that mainline and liberal Protestants practice short-term mission today, but also in the way that a proliferation of study abroad programs and travel seminars now shape the global sensibilities of American young people.²⁵⁹ These shifts in thinking about mission²⁵⁹ also moved the programs of the

²⁵⁹ Although the Frontier Internship in Mission program no longer exists, it’s legacy can be seen in such denominational programs as the Young Adult Volunteers in the Presbyterian

ecumenical student world further and further away from the ideas, theologies, and practice of mission that shaped conservative evangelicals in the same decades. It is to these ideas and practices that we now turn.

Church (USA) (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/yav/>) and the Mission Volunteers/Global Mission Fellows in the United Methodist Church (<http://www.umcmision.org/Get-Involved/Generation-Transformation/GMF>) and in internship programs sponsored by the World Council of Churches (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/youth/internships>).

Chapter 4

Evangelical Currents in Short-Term Mission, 1950s-1970s

In this chapter, I use InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), Youth With a Mission (YWAM), and Operation Mobilization (OM), to trace the emergence of short-term mission practices in the evangelical world. The short-term international travel that these organizations popularized in the 1960s and '70s was one aspect of a broader post-World War II evangelical missions revival. These practices grew out of existing circuits established by denominational and independent mission boards, practices of itinerant evangelism and religious musical touring, and urban crusades, all of which were well-established in the North American evangelical world at mid-century. At the same time, they took up these practices and developed something new. The broadly evangelical, youth-centered, international travel that these parachurch organizations championed and facilitated remade the practices they had inherited from fundamentalist and conservative evangelical traditions in ways that reflected the changing nature of American evangelicalism, the increasingly mainstream place of evangelicalism in American life, and the central themes of the youth culture to which they appealed.

I begin below with a discussion of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. While IVCF was not a pioneer of this new model of short-term mission, it helped to shape important changes in the evangelical student world in the years before and after World War II. These changes, and the enormous growth of evangelical influence on college and university campuses, contributed to the formation of a broad evangelical youth culture which was receptive to the kinds of practices pioneered by Youth With a Mission and

Operation Mobilization in the late 1950s and early 1960s. After discussing IVCF and evangelical life on campuses, I turn to a more extended discussion of Youth With a Mission and Operation Mobilization. These two organizations were instrumental in developing and popularizing short-term international mission opportunities in the evangelical world. The practices and ideas on which they drew in this process differed sharply from the ecumenical programs pioneered by Margaret Flory and James Robinson, as did the world they imagined themselves engaging.

With each of these three organizations, I combine a narrative discussion of the organization's work with illustrations of my central argument, showing how earlier networks and practices that were part of fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and evangelical worlds gave shape to the emerging practice of short-term mission in this period, and how these new developments reflected and contributed a changing global imaginary among American evangelicals. The developments I describe here took place in substantially the same time period as the processes and programs discussed in the previous two chapters, and against the same broad background of political and economic changes. Yet they take place in substantially different networks and institutions. The history of InterVarsity helps to explain how that came to be the case.

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship

In a 1958 handbook for campus IVCF chapters, the organization's National Secretary Charles E. Hummel described the importance of recruiting students for missionary service. Through the Student Foreign Mission Fellowship (SFMF), which had operated since 1945 as the "missionary arm" of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, the group worked "to raise up volunteers for the foreign mission field," and to provide

fellowship for those preparing for missionary service. This handbook explained the process matter-of-factly:

The national office provides suggestions, missionary materials, and as much staff help as possible. *Missionary Mandate* is published monthly to provide missionary news for students. The use of decision cards has continued. An extensive system of personal follow-up is carried on with each student who signs a card, providing encouragement and helpful suggestions.²⁶⁰

These recommendations reflected an established model of missionary recruitment, developed during the height of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) in the late nineteenth century and characterized by student commitments, “decision cards,” and follow-up communication with those interested in missionary service, such as the production of magazines and study materials focused on mission. The IVCF’s 1958 process would have been familiar to SVM founders like John R. Mott and Robert E. Speer, and to the generations of students who signaled their intention to prepare for missionary service by “signing a pledge.”²⁶¹

Just over twenty-five years later, the scene at Urbana 1984, InterVarsity’s popular student missions conference, illustrated just how fully a new model of missionary

²⁶⁰ Charles E Hummel, *Campus Christian Witness: An Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Manual* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 195.

²⁶¹ This seems to have been a successful strategy for some decades. Before 1925, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) provided a pool of volunteers from which came half to three-quarters of the North American missionaries sent overseas by mission boards. The SVM, founded in 1888 to recruit students for foreign missionary service and “the evangelization of the world in this generation,” was itself an outgrowth of the missionary enthusiasm within the YMCA in the 1880s. A key practice in this movement was the signing of a pledge card by students who felt a call from God to missionary service, a card that said, “It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary.” Keith Hunt and Gladys M Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship-USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 43; Nathan D. Showalter, *The End of a Crusade: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and the Great War*, ATLA Monograph Series; No. 44. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 1–8.

recruitment — and indeed, a new model of mission — had been established. Standing before an auditorium of more than 18,000 conference attendees, Inter-Varsity’s mission director John Kyle urged students to consider short-term mission placements.²⁶² Kyle was interested in people “getting to the mission field, not just signing a card indicating the intent” to become a missionary, and short-term mission was one of the ways he pursued this goal. He expanded Inter-Varsity’s summer training programs, which gave students the chance to spend a few months working alongside missionaries overseas. He urged mission agencies to list short-term openings, and helped them make connections on campus.²⁶³ And he made his pitch for short-term missionary service at the largest, most well-known student missions gathering in the country.

Despite this enthusiasm, short-term mission service was not without its detractors in the evangelical world. This had been the case for some time, and even though the practice was well-established, even celebrated as an opportunity to reach young people and expand missionary capacity, a hint of this critique was evident. During a morning plenary at Urbana 1984, Church of Scotland minister Eric Alexander also spoke about the limitations of short-term service, and situated such service in relation to the more traditional goal of a comprehensive lifetime commitment to an overseas missionary career:

²⁶² Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 354–57. InterVarsity’s own chroniclers imply a connection between this pronouncement and the 21,200 people who participated in some kind of short-term mission assignment during the following year, thereby illustrating their enthusiasm for the undertaking. The connection between cause and effect is questionable, however, and the statistics are challenging to gather. For a discussion of statistics on short-term mission in the mid-1980s, see Douglas Erwin Millham, “Short-Term Mission: A Model for Mobilizing the Church” (D.Min. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1988), 21–27.

²⁶³ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 355.

Short-term service is a great thing. I want to say to you this morning that my experience of visiting mission situations is that for the first five years, you're spending all your time battling with language and with getting orientated [sic] to a new culture, and the really important thing is that you have got this vision *for Him, for them, for life*.

And that's what I pray may happen here at Urbana, that so many of us may find this clarity about our lives. If you plan to serve God, this is how you need to plan to live, because that's what really matters to God.²⁶⁴

The really important thing: getting a vision *for life*. Implicit in Alexander's comment was a question about whether short-term service was "real" mission work, and whether it would help to recruit young people into commitments to full time, life-long missionary. As Brian Howell demonstrates, this was the key debate about short-term mission in the evangelical mission establishment throughout the 1970s, as the practice became more visible to established mission agencies and began to gain in popularity.²⁶⁵

The enthusiasm for short-term mission that was on display at Urbana 1984, along with the organization's eagerness to expand its own short-term summer programming in the 1970s and 1980s, are evidence that by the mid-1980s, short-term mission practices were well established, and were being adopted by mainstream evangelical organizations, even organizations that had fairly traditional missionary recruitment strategies as late as 1958.

IVCF and the Evangelical Student Movement

The story of IVCF's growth and expansion on American college campuses in the 1920s and 1930s provides important background to the emergence of the broad,

²⁶⁴ Eric Alexander, "The Privilege of Christian Ministry," in *Faithful Witness: The Urbana 84 Compendium*, ed. James McLeish (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 67.

²⁶⁵ Brian M. Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 69–86.

evangelical student and youth culture within which short-term mission would eventually take hold. It also provides a lens through which to observe a network of student, missionary, and para-church organizations that were developing in this period, alongside the ecumenical and missionary institutions and networks discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. InterVarsity has been broadly identified with the new evangelicalism which emerged in the US in the 1950s, and which distinguished itself from more separatist strands of fundamentalism. In his excellent history of the evangelical left, *Moral Majority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*, David Swartz argues that IVCF was an integral part of the evangelical left that flourished during the 1970s.²⁶⁶ He shows how InterVarsity's international networks, especially the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and the Latin American Mission (LAM) were especially significant for the ways that they brought the voices of evangelical leaders from the two-thirds world into conversation with American evangelicals beginning in the 1960s and '70s.²⁶⁷

In the English-speaking world, the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship traces its roots to the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union, founded in 1877 to bring together a number of smaller evangelical groups, Bible study groups, and missionary societies under a common organizational umbrella.²⁶⁸ The true international expansion of the

²⁶⁶ David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*, 1st edition, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 4, 7, 115–16, 121–22.

²⁶⁷ C. Stacey Woods, "Foreword," in *Campus Christian Witness: An Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Manual*, by Charles Hummel (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 3–4, 10. In 1947, evangelical student movements around the world formed the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), a worldwide fellowship of autonomous, national, evangelical student movements.

²⁶⁸ Woods, "Foreword"; Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 28–32.

movement, however, was prompted by the Cambridge group's decision after World War I to remain independent of the British Student Christian Movement (SCM), which it judged to have an insufficiently orthodox theology of atonement and a dangerous commitment to "inclusiveness" and "interfaith ecumenicity."²⁶⁹ This represented a resistance to the growing influence of the Social Gospel, as well. In the years before World War I, the British SCM had begun to deepen its emphasis on "social study" and "social service," and in the years immediately following the war the British SCM, like the WSCF as a whole, was heavily involved in postwar reconstruction and student relief.²⁷⁰

Over the next quarter century, IVCF's influence and organizational apparatus expanded steadily. By the mid-1920s, IVCF was deploying missionaries to establish and encourage evangelical student movements at other universities in Britain, and in other parts of the British Commonwealth. In 1928, evangelical Christian Unions throughout Britain were organized as the InterVaristy Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (IVFEU). Five years later, Stacey Woods was appointed General Secretary of the fellowship in Canada, and in 1939, he invited his good friend from Wheaton College, Charles H. Troutman, to join the staff and help expand their work in the US.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 57; Woods, "Foreword," 2. Hunt recounts the conversation that confirmed the split with the British Student Christian Movement in the summer of 1919 as turning on theology of atonement. Several evangelical students representing the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) met with the president of the SCM to discuss a possible merger. "After an hour's talk we appeared to be getting nowhere, so I asked their president point-blank — 'Does the SCM put the atoning blood of Jesus Christ as *central* in its beliefs?' He hesitated and then answered, 'Well, we acknowledge it, but not necessarily as central.' The decision to remain independent was then "perfectly clear" to the CICCU representatives. Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 57.

²⁷⁰ Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and beyond, 1880-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 44–48, 51–66.

²⁷¹ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 59–73.

On American campuses, Troutman found a receptive audience. By the mid-1920s, many evangelical and theologically conservative student organizations on US campuses were growing wary of the Student Christian Movement and the SVM, which had increasingly aligned themselves with the Social Gospel and historical critical approaches to scripture, and were beginning to embrace debates about mission in ways that evangelicals found alarming.²⁷² When IVCF began expanding in the US in the late 1920s and 1930s, the decline of the YMCA and the SVM on US campuses had “created an opening for a new evangelical campus ministry.”²⁷³ That process of disassociation between evangelical students and the structures of the ecumenical student Christian movement was almost complete by 1940; a new set of evangelical Christian organizations had come to dominate campus life.

Both Woods and Troutman had grown up and were educated in family and religious networks that were central to the emerging institutional world of the “new evangelicalism.”²⁷⁴ They were both Wheaton College graduates, and brought to their work with IVCF collegiate experiences of student evangelism — like the time a team of students worked with the Scripture Distribution Society to hand out 5,000 copies of John’s Gospel at a University of Chicago football game; and their experimentation with the cutting edge technology of direct mail evangelism. Both men went on to Dallas Theological Seminary. While a student at Dallas Theological Seminary in the early

²⁷² Ibid., 45–54.

²⁷³ John G. Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 70.

²⁷⁴ Mark Hutchinson, “Troutman, Charles Henry Jr. (1914-1991),” *Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, 2004, <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADEB/article/view/782/779>.

1930s, Woods had spent summers at Victoria Beach, on Lake Winnipeg, doing evangelism with children and young people through the Children’s Special Service Mission (CSSM) and the Inter-school Christian Fellowship of Canada.²⁷⁵ These biographical details reflect religious networks that situated IVCF in the emerging neo-evangelical landscape, as well.

Although InterVarsity was not a pioneer of short-term mission in the evangelical world, a number of elements of IVCF’s work would come to shape the theology and practice of short-term mission in subsequent decades and provide networks through which the practice expanded. I describe three of these practices below in more detail below — campus evangelistic missions; the Urbana mission convention; and summer training programs.

University Missions

The IVCF senior staff designated the academic year 1950-1951 the “Year of Evangelism,” in part because they were frustrated by students who wanted a “safe” Christian club, where theological homogeneity would give them a reason to avoid forthright evangelism on campus. The concept of a “University Mission” developed over the course of that year, as students on one campus after another undertook planning for these events with the support of the organization’s staff. University missions typically “involved a series of campus-wide lectures presenting the gospel in a way that would engage the university community to consider the claims of Christ,” and involved guest

²⁷⁵ A. Donald MacLeod, *C. Stacey Woods and the Evangelical Rediscovery of the University* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007), 49–51; Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2013), 54.

“missioners” who lectured night after night. In some cases, these speakers traveled from campus to campus conducting missions for weeks or months at a time. Occasionally they were famous; on one campus, students invited and successfully hosted Billy Graham. More often they were lesser luminaries of the evangelical world.²⁷⁶

Organizing and managing these events presented a new challenge to students and staff alike. InterVarsity’s *HIS* magazine featured an article on “Preparing a University Mission,” and an editorial about “Spiritual Preparation for Evangelism.”²⁷⁷ In reporting on this taxing and exciting season in the life of the organization, IVCF historians note that participation in the planning and implementation of these missions had a significant impact. They mention not the impact felt on the campus as a whole, nor on those who were “reached” by the missions, but rather the impact on “the lives of the students who extended themselves in planning, praying, trusting, inviting.”²⁷⁸

Students who felt helpless in the milieu of the university dared to believe God wanted them to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ. They met together and petitioned the living God with an earnestness new to them, and he answered. The unity and purpose they experienced brought a new maturity. Missions produced more than new converts.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 141–46.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 142–43; Paul Bramadat, *The Church on the World’s Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University*, Religion in America Series (Oxford University Press) (Uri) [Http://Id.Loc.Gov/Authorities/Names/N86725429](http://Id.Loc.Gov/Authorities/Names/N86725429) (Uri) [Http://Viaf.Org/Viaf/SourceID/LC|n86725429](http://Viaf.Org/Viaf/SourceID/LC|n86725429) (Uri) /Resolver/Wikidata/Lc/N86725429 (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124, 128. For an ethnographic description of how “friendship evangelism” is cultivated as a practice in a local IVCF chapter in the 1990s, see Bramadat.

The act of evangelistic outreach, in other words, leaders recognized as a practice of formation as much as of discipleship. This focus on the transformation of the student organizers and leaders of the mission would continue to shape attitudes toward new models of mission as well.

The understanding of the campus as a place for evangelistic outreach is revealing as well. This reflected a growing sense within the evangelical world that the secular university was hostile territory for committed Christian students. This notion shaped the discourse of “mission” as well as the practices of evangelism encouraged by IVCF over subsequent decades. Both IVCF leaders and publications emphasized again and again that the university itself was a “mission field,” and that evangelism on campus would be a prime training ground for students who expected to enter secular professions in the wider culture, since these domains would also be “mission fields.” At the same time, the campus was a different kind of “mission field,” where students were witnessing to and persuading their peers. This context shaped the model of “friendship evangelism” that evolved within IVCF circles and expanded to other evangelical networks.²⁸⁰

Throughout the 1950s, campus-wide missions continued to be a regular feature of local IVCF chapters’ efforts, many of them reported as news briefs in HIS, the organization’s magazine. Chapters initiated evangelistic efforts beyond their campuses, in surrounding communities, or in institutional settings like schools or prisons. While InterVarsity maintained a fairly traditional notion of missionary service, and continued to understand its role as one avenue for recruiting students for service through established mission agencies, practices such as the time-limited campus mission prepared a kind of

²⁸⁰ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 139–40.

template for student participation in short, localized evangelistic undertakings.²⁸¹ Short-term mission practices would build on these traditions.

Urbana and the Youth Mission Revival

The Urbana Student Mission Conference reflected a substantial shift in the culture of youth missions in the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout the 1970s, Student Foreign Missions Fellowship (SFMF) groups on campus had grown significantly, as had the regional mission conferences and workshops to which students flocked. But nothing captured this shift more clearly than the growth of Urbana itself. Beginning in 1948, IVCF began to host student missionary conventions, known as Urbana, on a three-year cycle. Although the conference started with about 1,300 attendees and scant coverage in the Christian press, it grew steadily. By 1961, there were 5,000 in attendance; and in 1979, with more than 16,500 in attendance, the convention's organizers had to turn students away for lack of space. The growth in Urbana's attendance and visibility reflected both growing student interest in mission and the expanding evangelical youth culture.²⁸²

By the end of the 1970s, Urbana had become a five-million-dollar operation that “serve[d] the church and the world, not just InterVarsity.” InterVarsity faced pressure from outside the organization to bring in more musical groups and create a conference that would have broader appeal to the “average young person,” a clear sign of both the conference's iconic status and the power – including the commercial power — that evangelical youth culture had come to represent. There was some discussion about

²⁸¹ Ibid., 143–44.

²⁸² Ibid., 128–30.

“spinning off” Urbana from IVCF, but John Kyle and other retained a strong sense of Urbana as a missionary convention, not an “event,” but a “training experience.” While Urbana remained part of IVCF, the conference’s popularity and reach was one of the ways that mission became and remained central to Christian youth culture.²⁸³

William Hutchinson points out that in the period between 1968 and 1974 the mission theologies and practices of “affiliated” evangelicals were affected by their increasingly robust engagement with church leaders from the Third World. The evangelical commitment to indigenization, and the diversity that followed tended to “operate as a leading wedge for changes in priorities,” as Third World church leaders made eloquent pleas for social change.²⁸⁴ Urbana is one of the forums where this sort of conversation happened. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the conference was a gathering where debate about domestic and international social issues flourished alongside discussions of evangelism. As debates about mission strategy and the role of colonialism in mission became more forcefully articulated in the evangelical world, they found a place on the Urbana stage as well.²⁸⁵

At the Urbana conferences in 1961 and 1964, speakers spoke quite frankly about the problems in mission and the mistakes of the past, pushing conversations about missions “into the changing world of the 1960s.” This created tensions within the organization, and at times rifts between national staff and local chapters.²⁸⁶ At the 1967

²⁸³ Ibid., 356.

²⁸⁴ William R Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 194.

²⁸⁵ Swartz, *Moral Minority*, 34.

²⁸⁶ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 251–52.

Urbana conference, students raised questions about civil rights, civil disobedience, and the Vietnam War. Their passion created a sense of energy, but controversy and anxiety as well.²⁸⁷ For the first time, IVCF staff members guarded the steps to the platform to prevent students from capturing the microphone.²⁸⁸ An article from *HIS* magazine described the mood at the event:

Little escaped student criticism at the convention. They criticized making a distinction between nationals and missionaries, Christians and pentecostals.... Anything that seemed to show intolerance came under their indictment, with impatience toward racism leading the list... Many of them focused their most scathing indictment on their home churches.²⁸⁹

By the late 1960s, mission leaders within IVCF had identified a paradox: students were flocking to missionary conferences, but they were not applying to mission boards for long-term service. In surveying students, they found that if mission agencies wanted to appeal to students, they had to relate missions and the gospel to “the more radical sense of mission of the sixties.”²⁹⁰

Evan Adams, a member of the IVCF mission staff, addressed this generational dynamic in a 1967 presentation at the Executive Retreat of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association. His goal was to interpret the thinking of young people to the group. Even students at Christian colleges, he noted, “are showing increasing resistance to the missionary image,” and did not ascribe a heightened status to missionary personnel as that age cohort might have done in the past. Like their contemporaries, they were idealists who valued authenticity, harbored suspicion of traditionalism and institutions,

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 252–54.

²⁸⁸ Swartz, *Moral Minority*, 34.

²⁸⁹ Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 253.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

and longed to be immersed fully in the breadth of experience. “No longer does the young adult want to know what’s happening, he wants to be what’s happening.” While some church leaders saw young people as “uncommitted,” Adams regarded the young people of the 1960s as entirely capable of deep and abiding commitments:

Idealism is reflected in student attitudes toward the major human dilemma man is facing. A resurgence of involvement in these great social concerns by young Americans indicates a potential for costly commitment. But today’s youth make *short-term commitments*. Or they will hold commitment in reserve until they are sure of the institutions and agencies that call for life commitment.

Students respond readily to that which appears as genuine movement of God in their time... Missions need to speak of that which demands solution now and the challenges that lie ahead.²⁹¹

Overseas Training Programs

From the beginning, camping and summer student training programs were a key feature of Inter-Varsity’s work. In the early 1970s, two other programs emerged which reflected IVCF’s focus on mission, the Overseas Training Camps (OTC) and the Student Training in Missions (STIM). In the summer of 1970, when IVCF’s summer training programs were at an all-time high, mission director David Howard moved the program to Costa Rica, creating the Overseas Training Camp program. This was designed to “give students a combination of missionary education and real-life mission field experience.” After an initial phase of the program in the camp setting, where faculty introduced students to the history and theology of missions and to cross-cultural issues in mission, students were paired with missionaries for hands-on experience. In developing this

²⁹¹ Evan Adams, “Contemporary Christian Student Thinking as Related to the Missionary Enterprise,” 1967. Presentation to the Executive Retreat of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association. Folder 12-60, Box 14, Collection 179. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Ill.

program, Howard also hoped to influence the thinking of IVCF staff, especially younger staff who were skeptical about missions.²⁹²

The IVCF initiated a similar though more ambitious initiative, the Student Training in Mission Program, as a regional program in 1971, and expanded to a national program by 1976 to accommodate broader interest. In developing this program, Inter-Varsity regional/area director Keith Hunt and Richard Crespo worked with education faculty at Michigan State University to devise a curriculum that would prepare students for intercultural work overseas.²⁹³ After a series of weekend training sessions, students were assigned to work with a particular mission agency overseas for eight to ten weeks. These programs proved wildly successful, and helped to fuel a new enthusiasm for mission. At the local campus level, prayer meetings focused on missions flourished. Chapters often raised money to send students to Overseas Training Camps and Student

²⁹² Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 287–91.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 289. That Howard worked with Michigan State faculty to develop this project should not imply that he was working with “secular” academics. Indeed, the networks of connection that made this collaboration possible reflect the increasing prominence of evangelicals and evangelical institutions in the 1970s. One of the faculty members involved in planning this project, Ted Warren Ward, was a Wheaton graduate who taught in the College of Education at Michigan State for thirty years (1956-1986) before taking a position at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School as a professor of missions, education, and international studies. His influence in evangelical seminaries and colleges is substantial; two-thirds of the students who completed PhDs under Ward’s direction were doing work in Christian Education, including more than one hundred evangelical missions professors, missionary executives, and Christian education leaders. During this time, Ward was also part of the Institute for International Studies in Education. Beginning in 1963, this program within the Michigan State College of Education worked through USAID and UNESCO to provide technical assistance to governments in the newly independent nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America on matters of education in emerging nations, education in the development process, and in particular “non-formal education” (a concept Ward himself helped to develop to describe participatory, relevant, and non-school based forms of education.) In the course of this travel with the U.S. government, he was also able to provide assistance to Christian organizations, missions, and schools throughout the developing world. In the late 1960s and 1970s, he was influential in the Theological Education by Extension movement. Steven Hoke and Linda Cannell, “Ted W. Ward,” *Talbot School of Theology, Biola University*, n.d., http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/ted_ward/.

Training in Mission Programs (STiM) as representatives of the local chapter. Mission agencies similarly applauded these training programs, referring to STiM as the “Cadillac of training programs” for short-term missions.

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If Inter-Varsity provides a broad overview of campus-based evangelical youth culture in the decades after World War II, and the ways that short-term mission practices became a part of this organizational culture, we must turn elsewhere to trace the emergence and broad popularization of short-term mission.

Youth with a Mission, Operation Mobilization, and the Rise of Evangelical Short-Term Mission²⁹⁴

Almost all histories of short-term missions identify as significant the emergence during the 1950s and 1960s of organizations that made short-term mission their focus. Youth With a Mission (YWAM) and Operation Mobilization (OM) are almost always mentioned, and rightfully so. Both of these organizations were established in the late 1950s, and developed programs in the early 1960s that facilitated the participation of

²⁹⁴ There is not a substantial secondary literature on either of the organizations that I profile in the following pages. That is not to say that there is no published material that describes their work. On the contrary, both organizations have generated a substantial body of printed material in the service of their work, published both within and outside the U.S. This material is now supplemented by an array of online material as well as organizational websites that reflect the extensive and complex family of organizations and affiliated ministries that constitute YWAM and OM today. These websites often include some historical information, as well. Both time and logistical constraints have made it impracticable to supplement these materials with interviews or archival research. I have tried where possible to locate published materials that help to provide outside perspectives on the work of these organizations, but this has been a challenge. More scholarly histories of these organizations, both in the US and abroad, remain to be written. Such work would be a promising way of providing additional historical perspectives on a number of issues, including the globalization of evangelical networks in the late twentieth century and the dramatic growth of Pentecostalism in the global south.

large numbers of young people in short-term evangelistic missions, dramatically expanding the accessibility and popularity of this practice among high school graduates, and college students in particular. Brian Howell notes that to the extent that these organizations were focused on engaging young people, “short-term practices appeared more as consequences of life-stage than as an explicit embrace” of changing definitions of what “missionaries” and “missions” looked like. In this way, he seems to suggest, they avoided some of the debates going on in the evangelical mission establishment about the virtue, necessity, or pitfalls of the new models of shorter-term missionary deployment that emerged in the 1960s and ’70s.²⁹⁵

My interpretation is somewhat different. I argue that YWAM and OM were expanding and extending practices that were already an established part of domestic evangelism characterized by episodic travel and brief, intense periods of engagement, such as revivals, itinerant preaching, and door-to-door evangelistic crusades. These practices were well established in the Pentecostal and broader evangelical worlds from which YWAM and OM emerged, and were familiar to the early leaders of these organizations. Both YWAM and OM drew on these inherited practices and on existing evangelical missionary networks, making them available and appealing to a new generation of young people, and remaking them for the new conditions of a rapidly changing religious landscape in which a less insular “new evangelicalism” was replacing the more narrow, defensive Pentecostal and fundamentalist cultures from which it sprang.

²⁹⁵ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, 90; Robert J Priest, *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), i–iii; Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-Professional Missionaries* (StemPress, 2003), 241–46; Millham, “Short-Term Mission,” 37–49, 49n2.

Loren Cunningham and Youth With a Mission

“Good morning. We’re with a group of young people called Youth With a Mission. It is an international movement of youth from various denominations. We’re spending our vacation this summer talking to people about Jesus Christ and we’d like to share our story with you.”

— from *Journey with the Followers*
(1969)²⁹⁶

The vision for Youth With a Mission (YWAM) came to Loren Cunningham in 1956 while he was still a student at Central Bible Institute, the Assemblies of God Bible college school in Springfield, Missouri. Cunningham had traveled as part of a gospel quartet to the Bahamas, and it was here, in the guestroom of a missionary’s home, that he had a global vision that he would describe many times in the years ahead:

Suddenly I was looking at a map of the world, only the map was alive and moving! I could see all the continents, and waves were crashing onto their shores... The waves became young people – kids my age and even younger – covering all the continents of the globe.²⁹⁷

Cunningham established YWAM four years later in 1960 with the goal of getting young people involved in missions, and in 1964, YWAM’s inaugural Summer of Service program sent the first “waves” of young people to conduct door-to-door evangelistic campaigns throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Although YWAM had its roots in the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal denomination in which Cunningham was raised and ordained, Cunningham’s aspirations far exceeded denominational boundaries, and YWAM’s impact reflected this as well.

²⁹⁶ Noel Wilson and Ruth Wilson, *Journey with the Followers: A Story of Youth with a Mission* (Anaheim, Calif.: Youth with a Mission, 1969), 7.

²⁹⁷ Loren Cunningham and Janice Rogers, *Is That Really You, God?: Hearing the Voice of God* (Seattle, Wash.: YWAM Pub., 1984), 32.

The organization grew rapidly throughout the 1960s and 1970s, pioneering programs that engaged tens of thousands of high school graduates and college students in evangelistic campaigns and missionary outreach. By the late 1980s, when evangelical researchers were just beginning to quantify the scale of the short-term missions phenomenon, YWAM reported that 15,000 to 20,000 short-term volunteers were associated with its programs each year, roughly a quarter to a third of the North Americans involved in short-term mission.²⁹⁸ In 1995, YWAM claimed that more than three million students, volunteers, and staff had served with the organization since its inception. Today, the organization's official publications note that through its "family of ministries," which encompass evangelism, training, and mercy ministries, YWAM has reached every nation of the world and works in more than 1,100 locations through a staff of over 18,000. Even allowing for a bit of hyperbole, it is a remarkable record.²⁹⁹

Loren Cunningham (b. 1935) described his own call to ministry by referring to his "family inheritance." His parents and both sets of his grandparents had been itinerant Assemblies of God preachers who traveled the Southwest, holding revivals and planting churches. His paternal grandfather, James H. "Jim" Cunningham, a widower known as the "Walking Bible" for his ability to quote whole chapters of scripture from memory, sent his five children to live with relatives so that he could pursue a life preaching on the road. One of those children, Loren's father Tom (later, "T.C."), eventually joined him in these revival circuits, singing and playing the guitar at evangelistic meetings in small,

²⁹⁸ Millham, "Short-Term Mission," 24, 40, 49. Yet note Millham's reservations about the precision of these numbers.

²⁹⁹ "Youth With A Mission – About Us," *Youth With a Mission*, accessed August 6, 2017, <https://www.ywam.org/wp/about-us/>.

struggling communities in Texas and Oklahoma where crowds paid the father-son duo what they could afford, sometimes little more than fresh produce and the occasional chicken.³⁰⁰ Cunningham's mother, Jewell, was the daughter of Rufus Chalmers Nicholson, a traveling revivalist preacher, and part of an extended family of pioneering, musical evangelists who preached at camp meetings, revivals, and brush arbor services throughout Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas beginning in the mid-1910s.³⁰¹ Jewell Nicholson experienced her own call to preach at the age of twelve, and was an established preacher in the family's revival routine by her late teens.³⁰² Loren Cunningham first received a call to preach at the age of thirteen in the midst of a revival being held by his mother and uncle; he was standing in the pulpit the following week.³⁰³ It is worth noting what this narrative makes clear: that in the subculture of American

³⁰⁰ James Henry "Jim" Cunningham (1879-1953) was known as "The Walking Bible" both for his travels and for his ability to quote scripture from memory. Thomas Cecil (T.C.) Cunningham (1910-2003) was his third child and oldest son. While Loren Cunningham recounts, and available records confirm, that he sent his five children to live with relatives after the death of his first wife, Lucy Miles Cunningham, and took up life as a traveling evangelists, vital records suggest that he soon remarried, this time a preacher, and subsequently divorced and remarried again, fathering a total of twelve children. These are not details Loren Cunningham typically included in his retelling of the family tale in YWAM official literature. Cher Cunningham, "Rev James Henry 'The Walking Bible' Cunningham," *Find a Grave*, May 12, 2016, <https://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi/%253C/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=162494786>.

³⁰¹ Jewell Nicholson Cunningham, "Evangelizing and Pioneering throughout the Southwest: The Nicholson Family, from Brush Arbors to Street Corners, by Covered Wagon and Model T," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 3-4; "Two Books Available with New Titles," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 24; Jewell Nicholson Cunningham, *Look at Your Hand* (Miami, Fla.: publisher not identified, 1984). During the school months, Rufus Nicholson took pastorates in small Pentecostal churches, "pioneering" some seventeen churches over forty-four years.

³⁰² Jewell Nicholson (b. 1907) was part of a wave of "girl evangelists" who were a popular part of crusades and revivalist platforms in the 1920s, particularly within Pentecostal traditions. The best known of these revivalists was Aimee Semple McPherson, who was a household name in the 1920s. See Thomas A. Robinson, "'Out of the Mouths of Babes': Pentecostalism and Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 33 (2013): 36-45.

³⁰³ Cunningham and Rogers, *Is That Really You, God?*, 13-22.

Pentecostalism most formative for Loren Cunningham, vocations of itineracy, preaching, and evangelism were callings in which young people, as well as women, were full (if not always equal) participants. As Cunningham said of the church's adults, "they included us in their work."³⁰⁴

Cunningham's grandparents were part of the "founding generation" of white Pentecostals that Grant Wacker describes in *Heaven Below*, men and women of action as much as piety.³⁰⁵ "Independence of spirit, a willingness to pick up and leave the old behind, marched hand in hand with boldness of mind, an eagerness to fashion something new in its place," he writes. The family narrative captures something of the pioneering spirit of early Pentecostal church planters, who set out in the years after the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909) and the establishment of the Assemblies of God Fellowship (1914) with little if anything in the way of institutional support. They were sustained by a trust in divine providence and a powerful missionary ethos, as well as canny and a "go-for-broke" frame of mind. From the very earliest days of this Pentecostal culture, historian William Menzies notes, "evangelism and missionary passion were important in the hierarchy of values."³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 17.

³⁰⁵ The trajectories of early Black Pentecostal evangelism and missionary work diverge significantly. Weaving this narrative into the narrative of short-term mission's emergence would be an important additional avenue of research. Ogbu U. Kalu, "Black Joseph: Early African American Charismatic Missions and Pentecostal-Char," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity Series (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 209–32; Dale T. Irvin, "Meeting Beyond These Shores: Black Pentecostalism, Black Theology, and the Global Context," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity Series (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 233–47.

³⁰⁶ Grant Wacker, *Heaven below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8, 30–23; William W Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Pub. House, 1971), 58;

These values were clearly woven through Loren Cunningham's childhood. In recounting the lives of his parents, he invoked many of the themes that would shape his own work decades later: transience, frugality, faithfulness, adventure, evangelism, and a sense of divine provision. He recounted, "My parents went wherever they believed God told them to go. They drove to meetings in snowstorms and freezing rain and lived out of the back of automobiles. They lived off whatever the congregation felt like giving them or the coins folks would throw at their feet if they spoke on the street."³⁰⁷ Such early memories of tent-living and pioneering churches in California and Arizona gave way to teenage years in Los Angeles, where his father pastored a church in Long Beach.

This was a period of intensive church planting by Assemblies of God evangelists in the U.S. as well as overseas. In 1949, sensing the post-war boom in church attendance (the so-called "Eisenhower revival"), the Assemblies of God initiated an ambitious plan of church planting, and started thousands of new churches between 1949 and 1955.³⁰⁸ It also reflected a period of increasing social respectability for Pentecostalism. While the movement had expanded rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among what Grant Wacker calls the "stable working class" of "old-stock whites – hard working, plain folk," by the 1950s it had begun to capture the attention of the mainstream press and mainline theologians.³⁰⁹

Joshua R. Ziefle, "Missionary Church Planters and Developers: An Entrepreneurial Heritage," *Assemblies of God Heritage* 33 (2013): 27.

³⁰⁷ Cunningham and Rogers, *Is That Really You, God?*, 17.

³⁰⁸ Ziefle, "Missionary Church Planters and Developers: An Entrepreneurial Heritage," 30.

³⁰⁹ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 4–7; Carl Mydans and Henry P. Van Dusen, "The Third Force in Christendom," *Life* 44, no. 23 (June 9, 1958): 113–24; Jewell Nicholson Cunningham and Florence Kilgore Biros, *Fifty Years of Conflict and Triumph: In the Ministry with the Man*

It was also a period in which the denomination was expanding its investment in “foreign missions” work, including greater attention to centralized coordination, missionary education, and strategic planning. In 1950, T.C. Cunningham made his first trip overseas. Traveling on the Ambassador II, a decommissioned military aircraft that had been bought by the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, he visited Assemblies of God mission stations around the world.³¹⁰ The trip made a powerful impression, and the senior Cunningham immediately shifted his focus to world missions, first by earmarking a larger share of the church budget to support Assemblies of God missionaries around the world, later as a denominational leader.

Loren Cunningham’s first outreach experiences were in the 1950s as well. As a high school student, he traveled with a group of teenagers to Mexico. In the telling of this story in various forums over the years, Cunningham frequently acknowledged that the group was ill-equipped, with a limited grasp of Spanish and little understanding of how to work cross-culturally, and that he was hospitalized with dysentery. But they were “amazed” to be used by God nonetheless. Just a few years later in 1956, Cunningham’s gospel quartet flew to Nassau. They were not the first young people to come to the Bahamas with missionary fervor, it seemed. Between musical acts, the missionaries told

called “Mr. Missions” (Tyler, TX; New Wilmington, PA: Son-Rise Publications & Distribution Co., 1988).

³¹⁰ Janet Bengé and Geoff Bengé, *Loren Cunningham: Into All the World* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Pub., 2005), 51–52; William V. Taylor, “Ambassador II: Tales of Missionary Flights Around the World Aboard a Converted B-17 Bomber,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 19, no. 3–4 (Fall-Winter 1999-2000): 12–23; Wayne Warner, “The Ambassador Has Been Found,” *Assemblies of God Heritage* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 3–4, 28. Immediately after World War II, the army had surplus planes in Arkansas that it was selling for a fraction of their cost. The Assemblies of God Department of Foreign Missions bought two C-46 cargo planes for \$5,000. In 1949, they replaced the C-46 with this modified B-17 bomber.

them (perhaps as a cautionary tale) the story of some teenage missionaries on an outlying island who had casually dated local girls, giving rise to damaging rumors.

None of these difficulties or warnings cast a shadow over Cunningham's grand vision of the whole world, consumed by wave upon wave of youthful missionaries. In some ways, aspirations of global expansion had been a part of Pentecostalism from the beginning. As Wacker puts it, "in their heart of hearts Pentecostals knew that the Lord had chosen them and them alone to lead a vast movement of global spiritual conquest." Periodicals regularly carried reports from missionaries around the globe, emphasizing the progress of their work. The kind of global consciousness this vision reflected, both ambitious and triumphalist, was not new, in other words, even if the ability to imagine young people traveling so far and so freely reflected the profound cultural and technological shifts of a mid-twentieth century American worldview. If Pentecostals had long "distinguished themselves on the American evangelical landscape not so much by doing new things as by doing old things in a strikingly dynamic way," then Cunningham's vision was squarely within the tradition.³¹¹

Initially, Cunningham pursued his vision within the institutional structures and networks of the Assemblies of God. In the spring of 1960, while serving as a youth minister at an Assemblies of God church in Los Angeles, he led 106 teenagers on an evangelistic trip to Hawaii. He was, as he put it, "learning as he went along."³¹² Soon after this, he bought a plane ticket and set off on an exploratory trip around the world, meeting with his parents' missionary contacts, identifying needs on the mission field, and

³¹¹ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 8.

³¹² Loren Cunningham, *Daring to Live on the Edge: The Adventure of Faith and Finances* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Pub., 1991), 61.

looking for ways to give other young people a chance to do something meaningful and see what he had seen — a “primitive, not so clean and comfortable world that was out there teeming with opportunities to do something important.”³¹³

As Cunningham’s own travels indicate, enthusiastic young people were already traveling to mission fields for a variety of reasons, and in a variety of configurations. The concerns of missionary and denominational leaders reflected this fact, as well. Inexperienced volunteers might be unable to navigate differences of language or culture. There were health risks. And the presence of “thrill-seeking” young people could be “an explosive element overseas,” particularly in the context of rising nationalism and political unrest in the 1950s. Instead, the denomination’s leaders preferred that young people be deployed as “vocational volunteers” who would work with and be supervised by established missionaries.³¹⁴ From 1960 to 1964, Youth With a Mission sent twenty young people to mission fields in this capacity, as volunteers with specific skills that were needed by long-term missionaries in various settings.³¹⁵ But Cunningham had something more in mind.

Summers of Service

“Rugged evangelism, not sightseeing. And no dating.” — Loren Cunningham³¹⁶

In 1964, Cunningham and his wife Darlene coordinated the first Summers of Service outreach, which took 146 young people to the Caribbean. This two-part summer program

³¹³ Ibid., 42.

³¹⁴ Cunningham, *Daring to Live on the Edge*, 42.

³¹⁵ John A. Holzmann, “Youth With A Mission: ‘Just Beginning’ at 25,” *Mission Frontiers*, December 1985, 9; Cunningham, *Daring to Live on the Edge*, 54.

³¹⁶ Cunningham, *Daring to Live on the Edge*, 47.

began with a period of hands-on training in the context of a domestic crusade, followed by two months or more doing evangelistic work in small teams. In the 1960s, teams were deployed to a gradually expanding range of destinations, first across North and Central American and the Caribbean — Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Quebec — but soon also to Fiji, Europe, and elsewhere. A “Trans/USA” team criss-crossed the United States, focusing on evangelistic outreach to American teenagers. This broad structure, a period of spiritual preparation and training followed by a subsequent experience of team-based travel and hands-on work, remains a feature of many of YWAM’s programs today.

Early materials describing the Summer of Service program clearly situate it in the tradition of the evangelistic crusade. The training component, in which domestic crusades served as a training ground and requirement for overseas service, makes this especially clear. The use of the term “service” here might suggest that some kind of social service or manual labor activity was involved in these early programs, but that does not seem to have been the case. Yet YWAM did take up refugee and relief work in the late 1970s with more resolve, and contemporary accounts of YWAM’s history emphasize that response to social need had always been part of the YWAM vision, including historical anecdotes to make that point.

In the photo-rich *Journal of a Summer* (1964) and *Journey with the Followers* (1969), Ruth Wilson describes the YWAM’s Summer of Service program in an intimate, invitational, second-person voice, following students through the process of application, spiritual preparation, fund-raising, training in evangelism during the domestic crusade, and work with outreach teams. In short quotations interspersed throughout the text,

students describe door-to-door evangelism, visits to hospitals and prisons, appearances on radio and television shows, and sharing Jesus, or their testimonies, or gospel literature, with almost everyone they encounter:

We had a street meeting in front of the market place and there were several hundred people there. What a uproaring meeting; with guitars, accordions, tambourines and the people singing! We also gave our testimonies.

— Al Akimoff

As we went witnessing today, we passed a house where we had won four of the family to Christ. They talked to us and as they did, we discovered that the littlest girl had won one of her little friends to Christ.

— Sue Williamson

The people of the church say we are the answer to a long awaited prayer, that someone would help them in door to door witnessing.

— Dennis Walther

For the first time in my life I talked with a girl who had never heard the gospel, or read the Bible. The expression on her face was more than I can express, she just sat there with her eyes wide open and her mouth open, too! She bought a Bible and wants to read it and learn all she can about Jesus.

— Carolyn Shook³¹⁷

Wilson's narrative and the photographs together depict the summer experience in terms that are both rustic and romantic, emphasizing the simplicity of the outreach destinations, the receptiveness of the people with whom students visited, and above all the joy and adventure of sharing the gospel. The conservative dress of the young people — men in dark slacks, neatly pressed white shirts, and ties, and women in dresses or skirts, sometimes carrying pocketbooks along with their Bibles — stands in sharp contrast to the dirt roads, open-air markets, and simple homes of their settings. There

³¹⁷ Noel Wilson, Ruth Wilson, and Youth with a Mission, *Youth With a Mission's Journal of a Summer* (Pasadena, Calif.: Youth With a Mission, 1966), 50, 48, 60.

were challenges and hardships: communal living in spartan conditions, cooking cheap meals in makeshift kitchens, traveling in aging vehicles on nearly unpassable roads. But “life’s daily problems” are described in a light-hearted way: “We will bypass the temptation to describe the scenes of boys learning how to press clothes and cook stew,” writes Wilson. These function as signifiers of both spiritual vigor and a particular kind of anti-modern authenticity. The overtones of nostalgia and exoticism are clear:

The sights, sounds, and colors of each exciting day blend together in your memory as the summer comes to an end. There were the dusty roads, dark jails, sunlit schoolrooms, quiet leper colony, noisy children, hot television studios, cold showers and, in the center of it all, the faces of those you have seen find new life in Jesus Christ.³¹⁸

Pentecostal Tensions and Transformations

Youth with a Mission’s development both reflected significant shifts that were taking place in the Pentecostal world during the post-World War II period and put the organization within the developing culture of the new evangelicalism. Grant Wacker argues that in the second part of the twentieth century, Pentecostalism’s influence spread in two ways, both of which are reflected in YWAM’s emergence and development. First, Pentecostal and “pentecostal-like” teachings and practices spread beyond the radical evangelical tradition, both through charismatic movements within the Roman Catholic Church and older Protestant denominations, and also through a wave of independent megachurches and para-church organizations of all sorts. While these developments expanded the influence of Pentecostalism, they also softened the boundaries of the tradition, and made some of its teachings more flexible. Newer adherents were more casual about what they called themselves, for instance — charismatic, Pentecostal, spirit-

³¹⁸ Wilson and Wilson, *Journey with the Followers*, 45.

filled. And new iterations of Pentecostal and charismatic traditions brought variations in doctrine as well as practice. In particular, they had different understandings of what was meant by speaking in tongues and its role in relation to membership in the community.³¹⁹

From the start, Loren Cunningham imagined YWAM as an organization that would welcome volunteers from all denominations. While the organization had a Pentecostal character, expanded on practices of Pentecostal itineracy and revivalism, and emerged from Assemblies of God networks, YWAM welcomed a broad range of conservative evangelicals as participants in its programs. Over time the breadth of its recruiting and networking strategy insured an even wider pool of participants.³²⁰ In this sense, YWAM was similar to many organizations in the emerging world of the “new evangelicalism” – which defined itself in part as a departure from the rigidity of the separatist fundamentalism out of which it emerged.

This kind of interdenominational openness was not uncontroversial at the time, as reaction of Assemblies of God authorities suggests. In 1964, shortly after he had returned from the first “Summer of Service” campaign, Cunningham was given an ultimatum. Unwilling to situate YWAM’s work fully within the Assemblies of God denominational structure — and also unhappy with a request to scale back his ambitious plans — he lost his credentials with the denomination. Even absent the denomination’s formal sponsorship, YWAM continued to develop in ways that subtly and explicitly reflected the Pentecostal milieu in which it had been born. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was, after

³¹⁹ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 8.

³²⁰ Peter Hocken, “Youth With a Mission,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 265.

all, a warrant for sharing the gospel by all means and in all places possible. Persistence without certification by authorities had its own place in Pentecostal mythology.

Finally, for almost all groups of Americans, the period after World War II marked a dramatic expansion in access to higher education. This was especially true for Pentecostals and for conservative evangelicals more broadly, who were experiencing a shift in class. It is telling that recruitment for YWAM was not initially directed toward students on college or university campuses, but to students in church settings who were just completing, or had recently finished, high school. As Cunningham saw it, young people, full of youthful energy, were eager to do something important and to commit their lives to Jesus, but they lacked channels for immediate action. The present system required years of schooling before young people were able to fulfill their calling, and “by that time most would have forgotten their fiery zeal.” Cunningham wanted to recruit young people right after high school and send them out for short periods of missionary service, from several months to a year. In addition to harnessing the unused resource of all this youthful energy, Cunningham believed this would influence the commitments of young people, so that they arrived at college with a strong sense of purpose. (45)

Indeed, a number of evangelical missions advocates expressed similar concern that a call to missionary work would be difficult for students to sustain during the delay imposed by higher education — particularly higher education in a “secular” college or university. This concern underwrote one of the arguments for engaging young people in short-term mission that would gain even more prominence in the coming decades. Thus YWAM and other organizations experimented with several formats that would allow them to reach students before or during their college years, provide a hands-on

missionary experience, and typically some additional component of academic teaching and spiritual formation, with an aim of encouraging students to consider a career in missions. In 1969, YWAM added a more extended, fourteen-month program, called the “School of Evangelism,” which began with a several-month training phase in Lausanne, Switzerland, followed by a year-long, “around-the-world” team program, in which students traveled throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe, training young people to evangelize in their home countries.³²¹

A 1980 issue of *Mission Frontiers* included a brief notice about the work of YWAM, which had by this time established a Discipleship Training School at the US Center for World Missions in Pasadena. I address the DTS program in more detail below, but this notice illustrates the concerns about how higher education was changing the understanding of life-stage and vocation within evangelical communities:

Is it possible for a young man or woman with a sketchy knowledge of a language to make a difference for Jesus while in a foreign country for just a few months?

Duff Rowden, of Youth With a Mission’s DTS at the USCWM, thinks it is.

For example, it doesn’t take much linguistic skill to pass out Spanish Bibles in Mexico or Russian Bibles in the Soviet Union, just enough to say a few encouraging words to believers and be able to carry on a polite, if limited conversation with others.

As Christians, Rowden said, we often make it too difficult to become involved in missionary work.³²²

As this brief notice shows, the Discipleship Training School and similar programs – including the “semester-abroad” version of Ralph Winter’s Perspectives Course, as well

³²¹ Wilson and Wilson, *Journey with the Followers*. Around-the-world mission programs are a subject worthy of study in their own right since they pick up on a motif (circumambulating the globe) with a much longer history and imply a comprehensiveness of vision, commitment, and conquest that has clear imperial undertones.

³²² “YWAM — Training Youth for Missions,” *Mission Frontiers*, July 1980.

as some of the university and degree programs evangelical mission institutions initiated in the 1960s and '70s – many of them unaccredited – served several functions.³²³ They addressed concerns about the limited preparation of young people involved in short-term missions that were often articulated by more established missionaries or mission agencies, and at the same time provided an alternative or supplemental formation designed to address limitations and consequences of a deeper immersion in the world of secular colleges and universities. The institutionalization of Discipleship Schools within YWAM responded to another dynamic that emerged in the early 1970s, as well: the influx into YWAM's orbit of young people who came with little Christian formation, understanding of doctrine, or familiarity with church culture. The organization's outreach at the 1972 Munich Olympics was a turning point in this respect, bringing YWAM into contact with young people who had been involved in the youth counterculture in both Europe and the US.

Olympic Outreach and the Jesus People Movement

Beginning in 1970, Youth With A Mission began to prepare for a large campaign of evangelistic outreach at the 1972 Munich Olympics, establishing a new area of emphasis for the organization – outreach at major sporting events. Much could be said

³²³ In 1974, for example, Ralph Winter launched a Summer Institute of International Studies at Wheaton College as a follow-up to the Urbana 1973. More than a quarter of the students at the conference had signed commitment cards, and Winter was worried that their zeal would flag if they simply returned to their campuses. This program would offer hands-on and classroom education for mission. The Perspectives course grew out of this experiment. Winter's U.S. Center for World Mission also developed semester-long and summer programs and pitched them to college students who could do a "semester away" at the USCWM campus in Pasadena. Rick Wood, "Reviving the Church's Vision for the Final Frontiers: A Look Back at How the Perspectives Course Got Started," *Mission Frontiers* 38, no. 6 (December 2016), <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/reviving-the-churchs-vision-for-the-final-frontiers1>.

about the way that this project built on the legacy and techniques of evangelistic crusades, with their extensive logistical demands, assembly and training of volunteers, and production of literature for dissemination. Preparations for Munich involved purchase of a giant Heidelberg printing press, and a castle outside of Munich that would house an army of volunteers, many of them sleeping in tents on the grounds. When the Olympics concluded, evangelistic teams fanned out to destinations all over Europe, continuing their evangelistic work in local communities.

With this Olympic outreach, YWAM tapped more fully into a phenomenon that had been taking shape within the U.S. counterculture in the late 1960s: the Jesus People Movement. The organization had already experienced students coming into its orbit from the counterculture, but the Munich Olympics saw that influx concentrated. While it is difficult to confirm the routes by which young people made their way into YWAM, it is clear that the style of outreach that YWAM undertook at the Munich Olympics at least shared a common set of counterculture influences with the Jesus People Movement. The campaign featured coffeehouses, tent meetings, testimonies, Jesus Music, and a Jesus newspaper – many of the defining features of the Jesus People Movement.³²⁴

In some ways, the culture of the Jesus People Movement could not have been more different than that of YWAM. In the early YWAM summer missions, after all,

³²⁴ The Jesus People Movement, which blossomed in Southern California in the late 1960s, brought together elements of evangelical religion and countercultural style and culture, and proved attractive to young people, especially but not exclusively to hippies and ex-drug addicts who had been immersed in the broader counterculture of the period. As Larry Eskridge and others have argued, this hybrid popular culture set the stage for the growth of a widespread evangelical youth culture – a culture which would facilitate the spread in popularity of short-term mission in the coming decades. Richard A. Bustraan, *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies*, 2014, 52–53; Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chaps. 3, 6.

young people dressed conservatively and had to agree to a relatively strict code of behavior, designed both to allow them to focus on “spiritual preparation” and to avoid upsetting more traditional local cultural mores where they were conducting evangelistic outreach. This was hardly the image of countercultural young people. But there were points of commonality, as well: YWAM’s programs emphasized communal living, for instance, a rejection of the comforts of middle-class life, and even a rebellion against the expectations of parents and peers. These features appealed to the same cultural currents reflected in the Jesus People Movement, and became a part of YWAM’s attraction and self-understanding.³²⁵

In *God’s Guerrillas*, a 1971 collection of YWAMer profiles almost certainly written with an audience of prospective recruits in mind, Ruth Wilson characterized the young people involved in YWAM with reference to anti-bourgeois and counterculture qualities:

There are two things that have impressed me about the young people on YWAM. One, they are ordinary young people, not superholy. And two, they are determined to get the message out, no matter what it costs them in personal discipline.... They are a new breed of revolutionists, a movement of youth who believe the world can be changed without the sound of guns

³²⁵ In my interpretation of the Jesus People Movement, I broadly follow that advanced by Larry Eskridge. For more on the Jesus Movement, see David F. Gordon, “The Role of the Local Social Context in Social Movement Accommodation: A Case Study of Two Jesus People Groups,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23, no. 4 (1984): 381–95, doi:10.2307/1385726; James T. Richardson and Rex Davis, “Experiential Fundamentalism: Revisions of Orthodoxy in the Jesus Movement,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LI, no. 3 (September 1, 1983): 397–426, doi:10.1093/jaarel/LI.3.397; Natalie E. Phillips, “The Radiant (Christ) Child: Keith Haring and the Jesus Movement,” *American Art* 21, no. 3 (2007): 54–73, doi:10.1086/526480. On the influence of the Jesus Movement on Southern Baptist evangelism, see Alvin Lee Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism among Southern Baptists” 1992. For accounts of the Jesus People Movement published in the early 1970s, contemporaneous with the movement, see Hiley H Ward, *The Far-out Saints of the Jesus Communes.*, 1972; Billy Graham, *The Jesus Generation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972); Lowell D Streiker, *The Jesus Trip: Advent of the Jesus Freaks* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972); Roger C Palms, *The Jesus Kids* (London, 1972).

or bullets. I like to think of them as God’s guerillas, a valiant mobile band of strong youth.

Her profiles echo this assessment. She describes a former drug-addict named “Don” who had spent time at the Morning Star Commune in Sonoma County, California. Just two months after he’d found Christ through a couple on the commune who seemed to be engaged in a perpetual Bible study, a pastor recommended that he participate in a summer of service in Trinidad. The regimented schedule and the communal living were just what Don needed to regain discipline his life, according to Wilson’s account.³²⁶ The effort to tap into countercultural trends could be self-conscious and strategic, as another profile shows. A young Summer of Service alumni who went on to lead YWAM outreach at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor describes sitting in on the meetings of student radicals, studying their language and concerns, and developing evangelistic materials accordingly. His mimeographed leaflets with single provocations splashed across the cover — first “TREASON,” and then others: “REVOLUTIONIST,” “ABSOLUTE,” “HYPOCRITE” — and then positioned himself in the middle of campus, along with the other “campus radicals and militants,” to distribute his handbills. In this way, Wilson writes, he began to initiate an evangelistic group on campus that reached out to student connected to campus radicalism and the counterculture.³²⁷

³²⁶ R. Marshall Wilson, *God’s Guerrillas: The True Story of Youth with a Mission* (New Jersey: Logos International, 1971), 7–24; Steven Jude Sofranko, *Where the Jesus People Went : A Study of Santa Rosa Christian Church and an Intersection of Religious Movements*, 2000, 18, <http://archive.org/details/wherejesuspeople00sofrich>; Ramón Sender Barayón, ed., *Home Free Home: A History of Two Open-Door California Communes, Morning Star Ranch and Wheeler’s (Ahimsa) Ranch* (Manuscript, 1986), http://www.diggers.org/home_free.htm; Pam Hanna, “Infinite Points of Time: Morningstar Chronicles, Part I (California),” *Digger Archives*, n.d., http://www.diggers.org/most/mstar_chron1.htm; “Morningstar, Wheeler’s and the Free Land Movement Archive,” n.d., *Digger Archives*, <http://www.diggers.org/most/morningstar.htm>; “Friends of Morningstar,” n.d., <http://www.badabamama.com/enter.html>.

³²⁷ Wilson, *God’s Guerrillas*, 109–24, 121.

By 1974, the YWAM School of Evangelism was operating “bases” in New Jersey as well as Switzerland. The director of the New Jersey program, Leland Paris, began to notice a wave of students coming to the school by way of the Jesus Movement. A story is told about a conversation between Paris and one of these young people about his religious background. “Drugs,” the young man replied. This need to integrate such young people with little religious background into YWAM’s culture and organization led to the establishment of the Discipleship Training School.³²⁸

In some ways, the School’s pedagogical practices were a more robust version of earlier training models. Discipleship Training Schools build on the practice of having young people involved in domestic missions before they worked together on evangelical campaigns as part of a Summer of Service. The DTS combines a period of classroom teaching that focuses on principles of Christian discipleship with local evangelism, small group reflection, and communal living, followed by a period of hands-on evangelism and outreach. Today, the DTS is a five- to six-month commitment, involving eleven weeks of classroom teaching and a two-month period working with an “outreach team” in another country. One current website lists projects for such outreach as construction, English teaching, and running children’s programs – clearly all activities that are within the mainstream of contemporary short-term mission.³²⁹

Larry Eskridge and others have argued that the Jesus People Movement was a key factor in shaping the evangelical youth culture that would emerge more fully in the 1980s

³²⁸ Youth With a Mission, “YWAM History,” *Youth With a Mission*, n.d., <https://www.ywam.org/wp/about-us/history>.

³²⁹ Youth With a Mission Lausanne, “Discipleship Training School,” *YWAM Lausanne*, n.d., <https://www.ywamlausanne.com/ywam-dts-overview>.

– not only styles of youth ministry, but the Christian music industry and the aesthetic and worship practices of “seeker-friendly” congregations, particularly in Southern California. Eskridge traces the spread of Jesus People culture from Calvary Chapel and West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, which by the late 1960s had become hubs for ministry with hippies, to a wider spectrum of Orange County youth: “In addition to the hard-core hippie element, the church was proving an even greater attraction for rank-and-file Orange County teenagers for whom the informal style, music and acceptance of hippie fashion nicely dovetailed with the currents of contemporary youth culture.” Likewise, Calvary Chapel’s Bible studies at nearby high schools helped to transmit a “new, hip version of evangelical Christianity” that would later, he suggests, become a hallmark of evangelical youth culture more broadly.³³⁰

However closely YWAM was intertwined with the networks that constituted the Jesus People Movement (and this is nearly impossible to tell based on existing written accounts), by the early 1970s, Youth With a Mission was clearly willing to engage more deeply with the emerging evangelical youth culture, a fact that would substantially shape the reach of their work –and the popularization of short-term evangelistic and missionary engagement – in the decades ahead.

George Verwer and Operation Mobilization

Along with YWAM, Operation Mobilization (OM) played a key role in pioneering and popularizing the practice of short-term mission.³³¹ In some ways, the organization’s story echoes that of YWAM: a small group of young men who make trips

³³⁰ Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, 75.

³³¹ Ian M. Randall, *Spiritual Revolution: The Story of OM* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic, 2008).

to Mexico to distribute Bibles return newly committed to making the opportunity available to others, and draw on existing evangelical networks and resources as they develop entrepreneurial mission institutions. There are several elements of the OM story that highlight important dimensions of the way that short-term mission practices fit into wider religious and evangelical landscapes in this period, however. Although I do not narrate the story of Operation Mobilization in as much depth below as I have the story of Youth With a Mission, I do provide a basic overview of the organization's emergence, and then turn to a discussion of these details.

George Verwer began the initiatives that would become Operation Mobilization as a college student in 1957. Verwer and two friends became “burdened by the spiritual needs of Mexico” — particularly by the fact that many people in Mexico did not (in their estimation) have access to Bibles and other forms of Christian literature. In 1957, these three young men sold some of their possessions to raise money, loaded up their car, and drove from Chicago to Mexico City, where they spent part of the summer doing door-to-door evangelism, selling Christian books and talking to people about Christ. Less than a decade later, Verwer and OM were orchestrating massive campaigns of evangelism and literature distribution on several continents, drawing on the enthusiasm and labor of thousands of young people in ways that helped to pioneer the emergence of short-term mission as a recognizable model of missionary engagement.

Billy Graham and the Evangelical Movement

George Verwer was raised in a Reformed Presbyterian home, but like thousands of Americans in the mid-twentieth century, he experienced a conversion experience at a crusade. In 1955, at a Madison Square Garden crusade featuring Billy Graham, Verwer

committed his life to Christ. Almost immediately he began organizing his high school as what he called a “sending base,” with students meeting regularly for prayer and to discuss evangelism. While a student at Maryville College, a small Presbyterian school in Tennessee, Verwer became deeply influenced by Billy Graham and the work of Youth for Christ, and through this engagement, committed himself to the work of global missions.

In the post-World War II period, Billy Graham and Youth for Christ represented descendants of “a continuing revival tradition preserved and transformed by the fundamentalist movement.”³³² Beginning in the 1940s, Graham was also one of a group of moderate fundamentalists who led the way in transforming American fundamentalism into the new style of evangelicalism that would come to prominence in the latter half of the twentieth century. He was, as Christian Smith puts it, an “archetypal neo-evangelical,” and led several initiatives that helped to define the emerging evangelical movement. His crusades were notable for the way they encouraged local church cooperation across denominations, without regard for strict standards of doctrinal purity. He was instrumental in launching *Christianity Today*, which would through its circulation help to cultivate a broad, multid denominational evangelical public.

Like YWAM, Operation Mobilization’s nondenominational identity reflected this new style of modern evangelicalism. Verwer emphasized OM’s commitment to “Christian unity” and actively cultivated an organization open to diverse denominational perspectives. He recommended a wide range of theological literature to the leaders and

³³² Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 67–68, 74.

volunteers associated with OM, endorsing and introducing doctrinally diverse perspectives. The organization's bookstores and literature crusades distributed literature representing the theological range of the evangelical tradition, as well. The OM "Discipleship Manual" emphasized that where young people were "riding a particular denominational hobby-horse," and seeking to convince others of their doctrinal convictions, they would be asked to stop. In short,

OM did not have a place for extreme Calvinists who saw no need for evangelism, nor Exclusive Brethren who had degenerated into a sect, nor ultra-Pentecostals who pushed their own teachings on the baptism of the Spirit, casting out demons and healing.³³³

On this last point, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, OM faced internal debate and dissent in the 1960s, as did much of the evangelical movement. On the whole, however, the broad organizational commitment to unity and diversity allowed it to continue growing while sidestepping some of the conflicts between different factions throughout the decades.

These broad sympathies did not mean that OM functioned wholly apart from denominational ties. Verwer himself had been baptized into a Brethren assembly during his college years, and maintained an active connection to the Brethren for decades, both in the US and later in the UK. Brethren networks around the world were an important resource for the organization when it planned crusades or ports of call and needed to tap into local church networks to arrange for volunteers and follow-up. And by some accounts, Brethren constituted the largest denominational representation within the organization as late as the 1970s, which suggests that the organization's recruitment networks drew upon denominational networks, as well, whether formally or

³³³ Randall, *Spiritual Revolution*, 40–41.

informally.³³⁴

The Brethren heritage shaped OM's culture and organization in some key ways, most notably in the OM approach to finances. The emphasis on "living by faith" and "believing God" for the provision of resources, ideas closely associated with nineteenth-century Brethren leaders, shaped OM's understanding of economic discipleship. In the early period, especially, the call was for volunteers to "abandon all securities, especially guaranteed income, and to rely on God." Practically speaking, this meant adopting a radically simple lifestyle. The Discipleship Manual insisted that coffee had to be eliminated from the diet, since tea was cheaper; a second-hand clothing store (code name: "Charlie") was part of every OM base; and "unlikely and unpromising vehicles" were a central theme in OM's history. Compared to the Iron Curtain, OM'ers sometimes quipped, the "luxury curtain" of the USA was an even larger barrier to mission. The Brethren tradition of "living by faith" also underwrote the organizational commitment, required of individual OM volunteers that they would not publicly discuss the financial needs of their ministries, but would wait for God to move supporters to give.³³⁵

Moody Bible Institute and the Literature Crusade

Whereas YWAM emanated from the Southern California hub of the emerging evangelical scene, George Verwer effectively tapped into the evangelical networks of a set of powerful Chicago-area institutions. In 1958, Verwer transferred to Moody Bible Institute; Dan Rhoton and Walter Borchard, the Maryville classmates who had accompanied him to Mexico in the summer of 1957, both transferred to Wheaton

³³⁴ Ibid., 16, 105.

³³⁵ Ibid., 12–14, 17, 42, 104–5.

College. At Moody, as at Wheaton College and the Emmaus Bible School, also in Chicago, students were drawn to Verwer's vision. William MacDonald, Plymouth Brethren theologian and respected Emmaus president, described "a most welcome movement of the Holy Spirit among students mostly at Moody, Wheaton and Emmaus." The students, he noted, perhaps with a bit of hyperbole, had "blanketed vast areas of Mexico with the gospel." He considered the movement a kind of modern-day Pentecost, and praised it to the Emmaus Board of Trustees in glowing terms. "I must say that their reckless abandonment of everything for Christ is the most refreshing exhibition of New Testament Christianity I have ever seen."³³⁶

These institutions were anchors of American fundamentalism as it had been institutionalized in the 1930s and '40s. Moody was the "national giant of institutional fundamentalism, a conglomerate of educational and outreach programs, ministries, and businesses. Wheaton was the liberal arts gem of the movement, the "Harvard of the Bible Belt." The upstart of the three, Emmaus Bible School (later Emmaus Bible College) had been established in the 1940s to offer intensive Bible study, first in a church basement and then through a pioneering correspondence course. Each of these institutions was navigating the emergence of the new evangelical movement and its institutional centers during this period.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of the Moody Bible Institute (MBI) in this emergence. As Joel Carpenter has argued, Moody was an important institutional "relay" between the older fundamentalist movement and the emerging "new

³³⁶ Ibid., 7, 102, 14–16.

evangelicals” of the post-World War II period.³³⁷ One of the key ways it made its mark was through its expansive publishing arm, Moody Press, which by 1959 was producing 18 million pieces of literature per year and reached well beyond the evangelical market. Perhaps it is not surprising then that Verwer decided to make the distribution of Christian literature, and eventually the production and sale of Christian literature, one of the defining features of the organization’s evangelism. Indeed, it might not be too much to say that OM is one of the many institutions that borrowed from Moody’s methods.³³⁸ In the summer of 1958, student teams in Mexico initiated a free Bible correspondence course modeled on the Emmaus Bible School method, and a radio venture.

When Verwer graduated in 1960, the organization was formalized as a literature crusade. In the 1960s, OM leaders convened annually in Belgium or France and then dispersed teams all over the world. In each new location, they distributed literature and conducted evangelistic campaigns, selling books and even opening bookstores to support their work. Initially, OM leaders thought that short-term student engagement in evangelistic teams might help students explore a career in missionary service, but before long, they had begun to embrace the idea of large-scale evangelistic campaigns that would harness the energy of young people in more time-limited ways.

The first OM European Summer Outreach took place in 1962, but the summer of 1963 was a turning point, and illustrated the remarkable level of organization such a

³³⁷ Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 227–28; Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 144–45; George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995).

³³⁸ Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 231.

scheme required. The plan was to visit one hundred thousand small villages and towns in South-Western Europe to distribute Bibles and evangelistic literature. For close to three months, nearly two thousand young people from thirty countries Christians had joined summer outreach teams all over Europe. At the same time, the first-year teams moved on to Israel and India (1963). While OM recruited widely in the US, and drew more than a hundred US participants, most of the volunteers that summer had been European youth. One notable American participant was Loren Cunningham, who had met Verwer at a small meeting in southern California (where they had also met Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade).³³⁹

This focus on distribution of literature, which changed form over the decades but remained an important part of OM's identity, had two important implications for the organization. First, it meant that OM could operate on what would now be called a "social enterprise" model; that is, at least in some cases, the sale of books or operation of bookstores supported the modest living expenses of the mission teams. This gave them a measure of financial security, and at the same time made them vulnerable to broader economic trends, like recessions and currency inflation. The focus on the sale of literature also made it possible for OM to operate in some countries that were "closed," or partially closed, to Protestant missionaries. They simply announced themselves as booksellers, or opened a bookshop; and where necessary, they could modify what they were offering for sale to take into account local sensitivities or laws.

God's Smugglers: OM and Evangelical Anti-Communism

There is one final point to be made about George Verwer and Operation

³³⁹ Randall, *Spiritual Revolution*, 33.

Mobilization. Verwer was also a staunch anti-Communist, and his concern for the fate of Christian evangelism in the Communist world shaped Operation Mobilization's work in dramatic ways. With respect to this general political orientation, of course, OM was hardly unique; many evangelicals of the Cold War period shared a broad anti-Communist sensibility.

Operation Mobilization claims to have conducted “one of the largest smuggling operations of Bibles and Christian literature behind the Iron Curtain” during the Communist era. Stories circulated of gospels printed in hotel rooms, literature sealed in plastic bags to be thrown in the river and fished out downstream, mailed in plain paper to names selected at random from telephone books, dropped into mailboxes in the dead of night, even of literature distributed by weather balloon.³⁴⁰

The name Operation Mobilization came about in 1961, in fact just after Verwer had been kicked out of the USSR for trying to print and distribute Bibles from a hotel room. Verwer was quite aware of the value of publicity, and the name had a kind of militant undertone that resonated with Cold War sensibilities and highlighted OM's commitment to evangelism. “No risk too great, no idea too crazy.”³⁴¹

The organizations and networks discussed in this chapter came to this period with global visions and practices already in place. InterVarsity had defined itself in part by its

³⁴⁰ Kris Johnstone, “No Risk Too Great, No Idea Too Crazy,” *Operation Mobilization*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.omusa.org/go/story/?id=R52284>; Randall, *Spiritual Revolution*, 8, 27, 29.

³⁴¹ Johnstone, “No Risk Too Great.”

transnational networks within the British Commonwealth as early as the 1920s. The Pentecostal networks that shaped Loren Cunningham and George Verwer had been networks of support since the early 1900s for Pentecostal missionaries spread all over the world. If these global practices and visions reflected an understanding of the world as a space to be conquered for Christ, or overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, and thus shaped by colonial geographies, they also carried an implicit challenge to the binary vision of “us” versus “them.” Because the whole world was a mission field, every space and locality, from a student’s own campus to the most distant land known only on a map, was potentially a space within which the global Christian community could be engaged, supported, and grown.

For InterVarsity, expansion through student evangelical networks meant the extension of the organization as and through a global Christian community. This sense of connection was reinforced through common practices, gatherings, and the circulation of publications and other materials. Both YWAM and Operation Mobilization drew on the practices of itinerant evangelism and domestic crusades that had been hallmarks of Pentecostalism’s expansion in the US and globally. These were practices that relied on relationships with local congregations to carry on the work initiated during episodic evangelistic efforts. They were also practices that could set in motion the development of local Christian communities by pioneering local congregations or inflaming the passion of individuals or small groups who would continue to develop congregations in that place. By the 1970s, all three of these organizations were multinational in both operation and leadership, with offices, training programs, staff, and leadership spread around the world.

At one level, these global Christian networks were bound together by organizational practices. Negotiating administrative, financial, and legal matters, organizational priorities, and personnel issues in a transnational organization involves complex conversations that touch on the deepest issues of worldview and meaning-making, and the global imaginary sustained in these processes, particularly for the organization's leadership, should not be underestimated. They were also affective networks bound together by what Melanie McAlister calls "feeling-practices," intense experiences of emotionally charged and sometimes "spirit-filled" worship, common living, experiences of confronting suffering.³⁴² The global imaginary forged through these practices was reflected in and shaped by the short-term evangelistic travel that each of these organizations helped to popularize, and in this way it came to shape a much broader network of American evangelicals, particularly students and young people.

Echoing the earlier evangelistic traditions out of which they grew, the style of short-term evangelistic travel that emerged in these groups was articulated as countercultural, a "radical" decision marked by the ways that it involved forsaking middle-class consumer comforts and security, and enduring the hardship of travel and intensive communal living. These practices encouraged a framework within which letting go of existing attachments to family, community, and nation — when these came into conflict with the demands of the gospel — had a powerful draw. In promotional materials and reports, however, these short-term evangelistic endeavors are framed not only as heroic and challenging, but as adventurous opportunities for authenticity and personal growth.

³⁴² Melanie McAlister, "What Is Your Heart for?: Affect and Internationalism in the Evangelical Public Sphere," *American Literary History* 20, no. 4 (2008): 870–95.

I do not mean to suggest that this global vision simply replaced other widely held American evangelical self-understandings, including those shaped by Cold War nationalism and anti-Communism, and a strong sense of American preeminence. The sense of a shared global Christian community, rather, existed uneasily and unevenly alongside a more fervent Christian nationalism. Melanie McAlister's observations about global evangelical networks in the early twenty-first century make sense for this earlier period as well in part because they are the seeds from which these later networks would grow: "To the extent that evangelicals are a truly international and sometimes postnationalist community, they are not generally liberals or part of the radical project... Nor are they necessarily interested in challenging US hegemony."³⁴³ As people and institutions across the evangelical world with a broad range of purposes and intentions took up the practices pioneered by Operation Mobilization and Youth With A Mission, the global imaginaries that animated them both intensified and multiplied. It is this process to which I turn in the following chapter.

³⁴³ McAlister, "What Is Your Heart For?," 889.

Chapter 5

Evangelical Short-term Mission in the 1980s and 1990s

In the last decades of the twentieth century, short-term mission moved from youth-focused programs, para-church organizations, and college campuses into the mainstream of US congregational life. At a time when evangelical missiology was becoming more institutionalized as an academic discipline and mission agencies were becoming more invested in technologies of management, measurement, and planning, to the missionary establishment short-term mission seemed to have emerged without the oversight of denominations, mission agencies, or academic missiologists — and frequently despite their reservations. For this reason, the relatively rapid embrace of short-term mission across the evangelical landscape was often described as a counter-trend, “a grassroots and populist phenomenon.” This observation is only partially true, a matter to which I will return below. But short-term mission *was* a growing and popular practice. By the 1990s, short-term mission trips had become an important part of Christian youth culture in the U.S., not only among evangelical and mainline Protestants, but for Catholic and Orthodox Christians, as well.³⁴⁴ By the turn of the century, nearly every religious group in the United States reported increasing the number of “direct

³⁴⁴ Brian M. Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2012), 23; Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Tara Hefferan, Julie Adkins, and Laurie A. Occhipinti, *Bridging the Gaps: Faith-Based Organizations, Neoliberalism, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Lexington, 2010); Don C. Richter, *Mission Trips That Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2008).

connections” with missionaries through short-term mission trips.³⁴⁵ The popularization of this practice and its integration into the routines and expectations of American church life reflected a dramatic shift in how Christians in the US understood and participated in “missions” and engaged the wider world. This chapter explores some of those changes.

Large-scale shifts in technology and political economy during the 1980s and 1990s facilitated U.S. Christians’ participation in short-term mission. The end of the Cold War eased the way for a travel to the “third world,” and to some extent depoliticized such travel. At the same time, international economic institutions promoted the development of tourism infrastructure as a tool of economic growth. In the 1990s, economic liberalization fueled a globalization of trade in goods, services, and financial capital, a trend which had widespread implications for cultural and religious exchange. At the same time, neoliberal policy approaches to international aid and development expanded the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing relief, development, and social welfare services around the world, and spurred a corresponding growth in faith-based development organizations. Advances in transportation and communications technology made international travel and exchange more accessible to a greater number of Americans. Against this backdrop, new forms of transnational sociality and collective social action emerged, reshaping religious identities and institutions, social movements, and international politics. Short-term mission both depended on and responded to these structural shifts.

³⁴⁵ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 143.

In the late twentieth century, short-term travel for education, service, and solidarity became a part of repertoires of contention and solidarity across a wide range of religious networks, institutions, and movements.³⁴⁶ This made the practice visible and “available” to a much wider range of actors, both within church networks and beyond church networks. By the early 2000s, practices of travel, collaboration, and exchange were being sponsored not only by congregations and parachurch organizations, but also by political organizations, educational institutions, and alternative tourism firms. How did this come to be?

In this chapter and the next, I explore several of the routes by which the practice of short-term mission was popularized within North American Christianity, and the ways in which these histories shaped the moral meanings associated with the practice. I argue that during the 1980s and 1990s, short-term mission trips became a familiar and widely recognized form of collective action; that is, they became a part of the repertoire of religious institutions and movements, something that might easily come to mind as a programmatic component or activity to pursue. As an identifiable practice, mission trips thus came to be employed in a wide variety of institutional settings for a range of purposes and meanings. In the context of evangelical youth culture, such trips became an opportunity for personal growth and spiritual formation. In congregations, they became a means of cultivating – and signaling – a global consciousness, framed variably as a matter of social justice or a quality of World Christian identity. In the context of social movements such as the anti-Apartheid movement and the Central American peace

³⁴⁶ Sidney G. Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22–23, 99–102; Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

movement, in which the ecumenical left was engaged during the 1980s, they became a form of political protest and consciousness-raising. And in the context of theological education, they became a method for developing globally aware religious leaders and transnational religious networks.

In the rest of this chapter, I discuss the popularization of short-term mission trips in the evangelical world from the mid-1970s through the 1990s. I discuss their development and promotion, and the attendant debates about their value and virtue in evangelical colleges and universities, within organizations promoting congregational engagement in global evangelism, and in the context of evangelical youth ministry. Then, in Chapter 6, I turn to the development of short-term mission practices within ecumenical and mainline Protestant networks and institutions in the same period, exploring the development of this practice in relation to ecumenical advocacy networks, the Central American peace movement and the anti-Apartheid movement, and theological education.

Evangelical Short-Term Mission in the 1980s and 1990s

By the 1980s, short-term mission trips had begun to inspire a range of publications that circulated in the evangelical world – including comprehensive directories of opportunities for young people, manuals for trip planning, advice guides for youth ministers, and devotional materials for participants. These resources and the understandings of short-term mission they promoted circulated through evangelical networks that included periodicals and publishing houses, organizations devoted to evangelistic mission work and youth ministry, and influential pastors and megachurches. These networks and the discourses of short-term mission that they generated helped to expand the popularity of short-term mission among American evangelicals. In the

process, the meanings of the practice expanded and diversified. Youth With a Mission and Operation Mobilization had pioneered short-term missions as a largely evangelistic undertaking, bringing together groups of young adults to participate in intensive outreach through door-to-door evangelism, personal conversation, distribution and sale of the Bible and other Christian literature, crusade-style worship services, and more innovative evangelistic strategies such as Christian music concerts, coffee houses, and bookshops. InterVarsity and other more established evangelical organizations had promoted short-term mission as a way to expose college students to the possibilities of a missionary career, to recruit career missionaries, or to supplement the work of established mission agencies. In the 1980s and 1990s, evangelicals began to engage in short-term mission practices with a broader range of aims in mind. Sponsored by evangelical colleges and universities, “mission-minded” congregations, evangelical relief and development organizations, and youth ministry organizations, short-term mission trips suddenly seemed to be everywhere. Contrary to the suggestion that short-term mission was a spontaneously emerging practice, however, these variations had been recommended and actively cultivated by a number of different organizations and networks, a point developed in the previous chapter and expanded upon in the next section.

Evangelical Colleges

Evangelical Bible schools, colleges, and seminaries had always constituted an important network for the emergence of short-term mission, as well as for the circulation of ideas about these practices. Independent organizations like the ones discussed in the previous chapter often emerged out of campus social and organizational networks and turned to those same networks to recruit students. Scores of smaller, more episodic short-

term mission efforts were initiated by students themselves.³⁴⁷ As early as the 1950s and 1960s, many evangelical colleges sponsored and encouraged evangelistic work over vacation periods, and worked with mission agencies to develop programs for missionary recruitment and education that involved short-term and cross-cultural travel. In 1974, for example, the first iteration of the Summer Institute of International Studies (SIIS), a two-week seminar for students with an interest in missions, had been held on the campus of Wheaton College.³⁴⁸

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of rapid growth for evangelical colleges, as well. This expansion reflected a new willingness on the part of evangelicals to engage with the broader culture and politics. Reflecting both the shifting socioeconomic ambitions of evangelicalism and the infusion of federal dollars into higher education through the GI Bill and other federal programs, the proportion of evangelicals who went to college tripled between 1960 and 1972. Many of those students attended public colleges and universities, or private non-Evangelical institutions, as the anxiety about the influence of secular higher education attests. Evangelical colleges and universities benefitted from growing prosperity in the post-World War II period — Wheaton College in Illinois, Gordon College near Boston, Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Seattle Pacific

³⁴⁷ See, for example, David M Howard, *From Wheaton to the Nations* (Wheaton, Ill.: Wheaton College, 2001), 65–70; Kevin G. Dyer, “An Analysis of the Development of Literature Crusades: A Short-Term Missionary Agency” (PhD diss., New York University, 1977).

³⁴⁸ The SIIS was a predecessor to the *Perspectives* course. On SIIS, see Steve Hoke, “An Interview with Dr. David Howard: Looking Back at 66 Years of Urbana,” *Mission Frontiers*, April 2013; Frontier Educational Services, “History of [the] Perspectives Course,” *Perspectives Program Website*, n.d., http://perspectives.in/?page_id=63.

University, Asbury College in Kentucky, Westmont College in Santa Barbara, and dozens more.³⁴⁹

By the mid-1970s, students and faculty at these institutions were beginning to study and reflect on short-term mission practices, and were developing training manuals, devotional materials, and opportunity guides. They were writing about their experiences in articles and memoirs. A team associated with Gordon-Conwell Seminary developed a mimeographed manual based on their own experiences in Kenya in the summer of 1972.³⁵⁰ Janet Alton produced a training manual for short-term missionaries, for use in the local church, as part of a 1976 master's degree in Christian Education at Biola's Talbot School of Theology.³⁵¹ The Student Missionary Union at Biola College published a summer missions handbook, "Lifetime Memories," and a 1976 summer opportunity guide, "Going Unto the Harvest."³⁵² Dale Gray developed a preparatory journal for short-term medical missionaries as a thesis for his 1982 Master of Church Leadership at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (now Western Seminary). Dan Crawford developed a program of private worship for students engaged as short-term missionaries

³⁴⁹ David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*, 1st edition, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 16.

³⁵⁰ Robert C Anderson et al., *Short Term Mission Manual Based on the Kenya Team, Summer 1972* (S. Hamilton, Mass.: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Kenya Team, 1973). It is unclear how broadly this resource was distributed beyond the seminary. In 2017, only Gordon-Conwell's theological library seems to have a copy in its collection.

³⁵¹ Janet Aletha Alton, "A Training Manual for Short-Term Missionaries (For Use in the Local Church)" (M.A.C.E. (Master of Arts in Christian Education), Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 1976).

³⁵² Biola College Student Missionary Union, *Lifetime Memories: Summer Missions Handbook* (La Mirada, Calif.: Biola College, 1976); Biola College Student Missionary Union, *Going unto the Harvest: Summer Opportunities, 1976* (La Mirada, Calif.: Biola College, 1976).

as part of a D.Min. course at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.³⁵³ These resources may have had limited circulation within personal and institutional networks, but they reflect both a broad interest in this developing model of mission engagement and a desire to see it spread more widely.

A steady stream of applied research on short-term missions emerged from these institutions as well in the form of masters' theses and, eventually, doctoral dissertations. For the most part, these research projects aimed to describe the phenomenon of short-term mission, define and evaluate its "effectiveness," understand its impact on participants and on ecclesial and mission institutions, and identify best practices or recommend improvements. They had titles such as "The Impact and Effectiveness of Short-Term Missionaries" (Kitchen 1976); "An Analysis of the Development of Literature Crusades: A Short-Term Missionary Agency" (Dyer, 1977); "A Descriptive Study of the Personality, Attitudes, and Overseas Experience of Seventh-Day Adventist College Students Who Served as Short-Term Volunteer Missionaries" (Habenicht, 1977); "An Evaluation of the Repetition of Short-Term Mission Ministries in the Same Location in Successive Years" (Mears, 1978); "An Evaluation of Selected Summer Missions programs in France" (Shickley, 1978); "A Study of Short Term Missionaries with an Emphasis on Their Use in Independent Foreign Missions" (Brunsman, 1980); "A Critical Analysis of the Foreign Mission Board's Procedures for the Involvement of Short Term

³⁵³ Dale R. Gray, "A Personal Preparation Journal for Short-Term Paramedical Personnel Engaging in Cross-Cultural Missions" (Master's thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1982); Dan R. Crawford, "Developing a Program of Private Worship for Student Short-Term Missionaries" (D.Min. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); Carl Laney, "Western Seminary," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, April 4, 2016, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/western_seminary.

Volunteers in Personal Presence Overseas Ministries” (Cecil, 1981); “A Short-Term Interpersonal Skills Training Program with College Undergraduates” (Allen, 1985); and “An Evaluation of Youth With A Mission’s North American Discipleship Training Schools” (Mueller, 1990).³⁵⁴

It is difficult to know what kind of circulation or impact these unpublished studies might have had; their readership and application may have been quite limited.

Nevertheless, taken together they provide a snapshot of the conversations about short-term mission taking place on evangelical campuses, including concerns about the practice. They reflect familiarity with and affection for short-term mission; awareness that the phenomenon was potentially significant for individuals, churches, and mission agencies; and a curiosity about how the “impact” and “effectiveness” of short-term mission could be defined, measured, and improved. In contrast to the invisibility of the topic of mission in the liberal protestant wing of Christian social ethics scholarship, emerging evangelical academics often focused on mission, drawing on multiple practices

³⁵⁴ Donald Kitchen, “The Impact and Effectiveness of Short-Term Missionaries” (master’s thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976); Dyer, “An Analysis of the Development of Literature Crusades: A Short-Term Missionary Agency”; Donna Habenicht, “A Descriptive Study of the Personality, Attitudes, and Overseas Experience of Seventh-Day Adventist College Students Who Served as Short-Term Volunteer Missionaries” (EdD diss., Andrews University, 1977); Ted Mears, “An Evaluation of the Repetition of Short-Term Mission Ministries in the Same Location in Successive Years” (DMin thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978); Janet L Shickley, “An Evaluation of Selected Summer Missions Programs in France: Their Goals, Strategy and Effectiveness in Achieving These Goals” (master’s thesis, Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions, 1978); Deborah Sue Brunsman, “A Study of Short Term Missionaries with an Emphasis on Their Use in Independent Foreign Missions” (master’s thesis, Lincoln Christian Seminary, 1980); James W Cecil, “A Critical Analysis of the Foreign Mission Board’s Procedures for the Involvement of Short Term Volunteers in Personal Presence Overseas Ministries” (EdD thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); Bonnie Ruth Allen, “A Short-Term Interpersonal Skills Training Program with College Undergraduates” (EdD thesis, Mississippi State University, 1985); Karl Heinz Mueller, “An Evaluation of Youth With A Mission’s North American Discipleship Training Schools” (master’s thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990).

to evaluate and strengthen activities important to their denominations and related institutions.

This research also shows that as early as the late 1970s and early 1980s, careful observers understood that short-term mission trips might be undertaken with a variety of aims in mind, and might be valuable in ways that exceeded the particular evangelistic aims of evangelicals. In addition to recruiting career missionaries and encouraging mission-mindedness in congregations — both outcomes that mission leaders frequently cited as justification for short-term mission — these student researchers were interested in the role that that short-term mission trips might play in helping participants develop spiritual maturity, theological understanding, interpersonal skills, cross-cultural sensitivity, self-esteem, and the ability to work as part of a team. They were curious about how mission trips might enliven youth ministry programs, strengthen families, and revitalize congregational life. And they explored the ways that more traditional mission agencies were integrating short-term missionaries into their structures and systems with broader goals of outreach and evangelism in mind.

Mobilizing Congregations for “Frontier Missions” and Global Evangelism

This period also saw a concerted effort to harness the popularity of short-term mission to help focus the attention of local congregations on the task of global evangelism. Evangelical mission strategists and institution-builders like Ralph Winter, C. Peter Wagner, and Arthur F. Glasser saw congregations as “both the primary agents and a ‘weak link’” in the missionary movement for world evangelization. These men, associated with a cluster of Pasadena institutions, including Fuller Seminary’s School of World Mission, the U.S. Center for World Mission, and William Carey Press, were

influential in promoting a new approach to the traditional tasks of evangelism.

Profoundly influenced by Donald McGavaran and the church growth movement, they championed missionary efforts that focused on “unreached people groups,” rather than simply individuals, and aimed to establish “viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movements” in some 17,000 distinct linguistic and cultural contexts that they identified as “unreached people groups.”³⁵⁵

In pursuing this task, they relied not only on the insights of linguistics, anthropology and sociology, connections which had been made in overseas missionary work since the nineteenth century, but on computing, surveys, statistical analysis, and an array of management and planning techniques emerging from the world of business and technology. This reflected both a long-term evangelical interest in applying business and marketing practices to the task of domestic evangelism, and also the technology-rich context of Southern California in the late 1970s. A number of engineers came to work with evangelical mission organizations, or founded organizations themselves, putting computers to work crunching data about missionary personnel, mapping information related to the progress of evangelization, assembling and refining databases of “unreached people groups,” and even matching short-term mission volunteers with agencies and programs who could host them.³⁵⁶ They also quantified (and then lamented)

³⁵⁵ For example, see Edward R Dayton and C. Peter Wagner, *Unreached Peoples '79*, 1979. For a brief overview of the “homogeneous unit principle,” debates surrounding it, and the relationship of the idea to broader conversations within the evangelical mission establishment, see Klas Lundström, “Gospel and Culture in the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Movement: With Particular Focus on the Period 1973-1996” (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2006), 230–36.

³⁵⁶ Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015);

the small percentage of North American congregations that were actively involved in global missions, and insisted that “reaching unreached people” was an urgent and achievable goal — if only more congregations would engage the task.³⁵⁷

The Association of Church Mission Committees

In 1974, Fuller Seminary and the William Carey Institute hosted a national gathering for church mission leaders with this challenge in mind.³⁵⁸ The Association of Church Missions Committees (ACMC) was organized out of this gathering, and former Xerox executive Donald A. Hamilton, then at the helm of the William Carey Institute, was appointed as its head. The ACMC had as its mandate the multiplication of “mission-

Michael Jaffarian, “The Computer Revolution and Its Impact on Evangelical Mission Research and Strategy,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 1 (January 2009): 33–37.

³⁵⁷ Ralph Winter, “Mission ‘2000’: A Detailed Explanation,” *Mission Frontiers* 7, no. 4–6 (April 1985): 20–26.

³⁵⁸ Fuller Theological Seminary and the William Carey Institute (later William Carey International University) were two anchoring institutions among a cluster of missions-focused institutions located in Pasadena, along with the US Center for World Missions (USCWM). The USCWM was established in 1976 on a 35-acre campus that once belonged to Pasadena Nazarene College, and was intended by its promoters to be a new kind of “nerve center” for the evangelical missions movement, with a particular focus on “frontier” missions. In 1985, the USCWM reported that it hosted nearly 300 full-time workers on its 35-acre campus, including 120 of its own staff as well as staff and representatives of at least 70 other mission agencies, working in “research institute, educational campaigns, training programs, and a wide array of auxiliary services from printing to video production.” Ralph D. Winter, “The US Center for World Mission: An Introduction,” *Frontier Missions* 8, no. 10–12 (December 1985): 4; Darrell Dorr, John Holzmann, and Jim Stewart, “Four North American Centers for World Mission Spread Frontier Mission Vision Throughout Continent,” accessed June 9, 2017, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/four-north-american-centers-for-world-mission-spread-frontier-mission-visio>; Don Hamilton, “Reflections on My Early Years with John Bennett,” *Mission Frontiers* 7, no. 4–6 (n.d.): 10.

mindeds” congregations in North America, and it pursued this aim steadily over the subsequent decades, publishing newsletters and resource guides, producing video courses, deploying regional staff to consult with congregations, developing regional networks, and hosting regional conferences and a national gathering that was billed as an “Adult Urbana.” In all of these efforts, the focus of the ACMC was on multiplying the energy devoted to overseas missionary activity, and in particular, to “frontier missions” to people in areas or social groupings with few indigenous churches and little or no exposure to the gospel.³⁵⁹

The ACMC reached a broad range of churches, both non-denominational evangelical churches and congregations associated with mainline denominations, like the Presbyterians and Methodists, where approaches to mission were growing more liberal. The organization resisted the perception that they were developing resources exclusively or primarily for independent churches who had no access to denominational mission programs, noting that “ACMC offers help to churches that denominational headquarters may be unable to give” while providing a mechanism for churches to network across

³⁵⁹ “ACMC Spearheads Growing Missions Movement in North American Churches,” *Mission Frontiers* 7, no. 4–6, accessed June 7, 2017, https://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/07-4_5_6.pdf. The “Adult Urbana” reference is from Ralph D. Winter, “Never a Dull Moment,” *Mission Frontiers* 8, no. 4–6 (n.d.): 5. By 1995, ACMC had changed its name to “Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment,” and in 1999, it merged with the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (EFMA), an association of mission agencies that include both independent and denominationally affiliated groups. From 2007-2011, ACMC was a ministry of Pioneers, another para-church mission organization, at which point the ACMC was “retired,” and its staff moved on other ministries. The ACMC publications and resources are still hosted on the Pioneers website, and appear on church and personal websites of former ACMC staff and others. On these more recent developments, see “News: Merger: ACMC Joins Forces with EFMA,” *Mission Frontiers*, February 2000, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/news32>; “ACMC,” *Pioneers USA*, accessed August 6, 2017, <https://www.pioneers.org/acmc>. For other examples of ACMC influence, see, for example, Dawn Kruger, “Ready Set... Go Team!,” December 2001, 33–34.

lines of denomination and background.³⁶⁰ At the end of the 1980s, fifteen years after its establishment, 65 percent of ACOMC churches were what the organization called “denominational churches.” In some ways, the ACOMC was self-consciously stepping into a void left by the anxieties about “global mission” with which mainline churches were wrestling in the 1970s.

To be sure, the ACOMC was not the only evangelical organization working to strengthen the ties between local congregations and missions at the time. The publications of the ACOMC and of other organizations make it clear that these groups saw their work as part of a broad effort shared across a burgeoning, if sometimes competitive, network of evangelical organizations.³⁶¹ They shared a vision for transforming the local church into a “seedbed for missions.”³⁶² As Gordon MacDonald told a crowd at the 1981 ACOMC North American Conference,

³⁶⁰ Mike Pollard, “ACMC Prepares to Mobilize 6000 Churches by AD 2000,” *Mission Frontiers*, February 1989, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/acmc-prepares-to-mobilize-6000-churches-by-ad-2000>.

³⁶¹ George Miley, “The Awesome Potential for Mission Found in Local Churches,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1999), 729–32; E. L. Frizen, *75 Years of IFMA, 1917-1992: The Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1992).

³⁶² Association of Church Missions Committees and John C. Bennett, *The Local Church, Seedbed for Missions: Selected Addresses and Workshops Presented to the 1981 ACOMC North American Conference* (Wheaton, Ill.: Association of Church Missions Committees, 1984); *The Local Church--Seedbed for Missions* (Monrovia, Calif.: Association of Church Missions Committees, 1981). MacDonald was at the time the pastor at Grace Chapel, a large evangelical church just outside of Boston in Lexington, Massachusetts, at the front of the megachurch trend. He was a best-selling author and popular lecturer who left the church in 1984 to serve as a minister-at-large for World Vision, where he had also served as chair of the board, and then as President of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He resigned from IVCF after an affair came to light; he later gained prominence beyond the evangelical world when he was tapped to counsel President Bill Clinton during the aftermath of Clinton’s affair. He subsequently served as chair of the board of World Relief and as chancellor of Denver Seminary (2011-present). “Evangelical Group Leader Quits after Admitting Adultery,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1987, sec. 2; Marc Fisher, “Clinton’s Pastor With A Past: Gordon MacDonald, Back Up After a Fall From Grace,”

If the local church is to be the seedbed of missions, missions committees must get very excited about the fact that they are the “personnel committee” of the church... The first and foremost concern of any missions committee, it seems to me, ought to be the recruiting and mobilizing of people for service.

Kenneth Strachan, the founder of the Latin American Mission, once said, “The successful expansion of any movement is in direct proportion to its ability to mobilize and involve its total membership in constant propagation of its beliefs, its purposes and its philosophy.” What is Strachan saying? He is saying the obvious: Mobilize people and you have a movement. Work with programs and you have an organization. I do not want to be part of an organization. I want to be part of a movement of mobilized, recruited people who know what their role is in the achievement of the dream.

If the local church is to become a seedbed for missions, we must start dreaming again. We must pick up the dream of Jesus and those who followed him and believe that in our generation the power of sin and the boil that has been caused in civilization can be lanced, for at least a time, until Jesus comes. We must believe that in our congregation are goers and growers, young people and young adults and older ones, who can dream and go as they are supported by excited people. Whatever we do, we must once again mobilize our own imaginations to hold before people the meaning, the significance and the process of the dream: the great commission.³⁶³

While being a “sending body” could and often did mean raising financial support for a congregation’s “own” long-term missions personnel, or nurturing the calling of church members for long-term service, it now also came to mean the sending of short-

Washington Post, September 28, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/daily/clinpastor0928.htm>.

³⁶³ Gordon MacDonald, “The Local Church: Seedbed for Missions,” in *The Local Church, Seedbed for Missions: Selected Addresses and Workshops Presented to the 1981 ACMC North American Conference* (Wheaton, Ill.: Association of Church Missions Committees, 1984), 7–8, 12. An even more remarkable feature of this address is the way that MacDonald compares Jesus’ entry into the world with the dropping of the atomic bombs in Japan. The address was given on the 36th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, and he notes that newspaper and television coverage of the anniversary is circulating widely. “I cannot help but remember that [the bombing] was not the first light to enter the world and change history,” he notes in opening the lecture. *Ibid.*, 4.

term mission teams. The APMC actively encouraged and equipped churches for this undertaking, for example by publishing a “short term missionary services” manual in 1976. By the early 1980s, the organization was distributing policy handbooks, planning templates, and ready-to-mimeograph checklists for trip leaders, eventually moving on to CD-ROMs and early websites. National conferences featured workshops on short-term mission opportunities, with titles like “Missions Education that Sticks!” (1985).³⁶⁴ The organization’s publications addressed both broad questions of mission strategy and the nuts-and-bolts practicalities of trip planning.³⁶⁵

The Antioch Network

The desire to see congregations engage more fully in the work of global evangelism was also emerging from within the organizations that had pioneered short-term mission in the preceding decades. In 1987, George Miley, who had worked with Operation Mobilization (OM) India and OM’s ship ministry for more than two decades, founded the Antioch Network, a group that helped local churches “initiate church planting among an unreached people group” and send more people into mission. This reflected Miley’s “high view of the local church,” but also a sense that missions had become “a spectator sport.” The task of “completing world evangelization,” he wrote, echoing Ralph Winter’s observations, “will require a mobilization in both ‘going’ and

³⁶⁴ “ACMC: This Year’s National Conference (Don’t Miss It!),” *Mission Frontiers*, June 1985, 13.

³⁶⁵ Vicki Tanin et al., *Sending out Servants: A Church-Based Short-Term Missions Strategy* (Wheaton, IL: APMC, 1995); David Mays and Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment, “Trip Stuff: Stuff You Need to Know about Doing Mission Trips in Your Church : A Handbook of Forms, Procedures, and Policies” (David Mays & APMC, 2006). The latter publication seems to have been updated frequently, and went through several formats as technology changed. In its final iteration, most of the material was available for downloading directly from the Internet.

‘sending’ of cross-cultural church planters on a scale broader than anything we have yet seen.” Mission, moreover, was a calling for the whole church, not a task to be left to specialists and experts.³⁶⁶

The Antioch Network encouraged churches to select an “unreached people group” and commit to a long-term process of evangelism and church-planting among a population with very little Christian presence. The network’s leaders soon realized that sending a church-planting team to take on such a long-term task was more than the average local congregation was equipped to do, or at least more than they were willing to sign up for. Antioch then articulated a more modest goal, urging churches to “engage” with specific people groups over time. For churches considering such a commitment, Antioch recommended short-term mission trips as a way of giving a church’s pastors and lay leadership first-hand exposure as they discerned what God was calling them to do.

Northside Community Church in Atlanta, an Antioch Network member, was frequently held up as a model for the way short-term trips could fit into a longer-term strategy and relationship. In 1989, this Evangelical Free Church congregation “made a decision to fall in love with Bosnia.” The church identified Bosnian Muslims as an “unreached people group,” based on data compiled by AD2000 and the Joshua Project,

³⁶⁶ Ian M. Randall, *Spiritual Revolution: The Story of OM* (Milton Keynes [UK: Authentic, 2008), 125; George Miley, “Mobilizing Churches for Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 11, no. 3 (August 1994): 157; George Miley, *Loving the Church ... Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of Local Churches in Global Mission*. (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012); George Miley, “As I Remember It: Antioch Network History: 1987-2014,” August 6, 2015, <http://antioch-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Antioch-Network-History.pdf>.

and “adopted” Bosnian Muslims as “their unreached people missions focus.”³⁶⁷ The congregation was relatively small, between 200 and 450 members, but over the next decade, 60% of the church's teens and 40% of the church's adults participated in short-term teams serving Bosnian refugees.³⁶⁸ These teams varied in structure and focus, as a 1997 report on the initiative noted.

They trained and sent three types of teams: prayer, short term and long term [6 months]. A two-week on-site prayer team "prepared the ground" for others who would follow. Now there are 5 Americans and 3 nationals on the church planting team. Working with national leaders from Croatia, they have helped to plant four churches with others in the process of organizing. There are hundreds of new believers in Bosnia today.

Northside Community Church’s story was told in a range of publications to illustrate two themes: the important roles that short-term trips could play in a congregation’s process of discerning commitment to a long-term mission venture such as “adopting” a particular group, or partnering with others for church planting; and the impact that such trips could have on a church’s identity and commitment to mission. Over Northside’s decade of involvement, the congregation grew from 250 to 400, and the annual mission budget expanded from \$89,000 in 1990, to \$635,000 in 1995. Accounts of Northside’s work almost always emphasized the latent capacity of local churches to take on major

³⁶⁷ The language reflected concepts that had been established by the cluster of Pasadena-based mission institutions influenced by Donald McGavran. To say that a population was an “unreached people group” suggested that they were a recognizable group (defined by ethnicity, language, or some other sociological feature) “among whom there is no viable indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people without outside (cross-cultural) assistance. This was the language in use by the Joshua Project and AD2000. Other groups used the terms "hidden people" or "frontier people group" in a similar way. See “Vocabulary,” *Adoption Guidance Program, AD2000.org*, accessed August 6, 2017, www.ad2000.org/adoption/agpvoc.htm.

³⁶⁸ Miley, “Mobilizing Churches for Frontier Missions”; Miley, *Loving the Church ... Blessing the Nations*, 209. This was Northside Community Church in Atlanta.

challenges. As Northside pastor John Rowell said at the end of a presentation to the Joshua Project Consultation in 1997, “NEVER underestimate the power of a small church.”³⁶⁹

The example of Northside Community Church illustrates another dimension of evangelical mission networks in the 1980s and 1990s: their density. The congregation was a member of the Antioch Network, but the story of its growing mission engagement mentioned the influence of a number of other organizations, including: Partners and Ambassadors for Christ, OC (“One Challenge”) Ministries, APMC, the Joshua Project, AD2000, the Jesus Film Project, and the Gideons. In the Croatian refugee camp where the church’s primary ministries took place, they engaged a number of relief agencies: World Relief, AGAPE, the Red Cross. Northside’s story was held up as a model by a range of organizations and publications, not only those of the Antioch Network because it was a small congregation that engaged in long-term work, raised an enormous amount of money, and considered mission work one of the key sources of its congregational vitality.³⁷⁰ Ultimately, the church formed its own church-based mission agency, Ministry Resource Network, Inc., through which support the work in Bosnia could be structured.

³⁶⁹ John Rowell, “Adoption Experience: Northside Community Church” (Mission America Joshua Project Consultation, Colorado Springs, CO, May 1997), <http://www.ad2000.org/adoption/northstr.htm>.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.; Debbie Wood, “Northside Community: Never Underestimate a Small Church,” n.d., online http://www.natewilsonfamily.net/dbindex/dh_cstdy.html; Tom Telford and Lois Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get Into the Game*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2001), 164; Patrick O Cate, *Through God’s Eyes: A Bible Study of God’s Motivations for Missions* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2012), 142. See also John Rowell, *To Give Or Not to Give: Rethinking Dependency, Restoring Generosity, and Redefining Sustainability* (InterVarsity Press, 2007); John Rowell, *Magnify Your Vision for the Small Church* (Atlanta, GA: Northside Community Church, 1998).

Today, the organization continues to support work in Bosnia, as well as additional church-planting work in Siberia and Atlanta, and medical outreach in Africa and Haiti.³⁷¹

In an increasingly globally interconnected world, even small churches had the capacity to become “sending bodies.” Nevertheless, one tension that persisted throughout this period related to power, control, and decision-making in missions — and whether these ought to reside in the local church or in the mission agency. This was not a new tension. A 1970 cover of *Africa Now*, the Sudan Interior Mission publication, featured a (presumably new) missionary, wearing a tie and carrying a camera, plane in the background, carrying suitcases with stickers from several different mission agencies, along with the headline, “Who sends him: the church or the mission board?”³⁷² As congregations responded to encouragement to send missionaries or short-term mission teams, however, the issue resurfaced. Churches sometimes found that they were not equipped to handle the bureaucratic, legal, and financial complexities of having staff and operations overseas, particularly in politically sensitive areas; and that they needed the expertise of larger and more established mission agencies to successfully “send” missionaries.³⁷³ Two trends mitigated this concern. First, the emergence of megachurches resulted in a group of large, highly institutionalized congregations who could afford to devote more substantial staff and funding to overseas missions programs, programs that often included short-term mission trips that involved members of the congregation.

³⁷¹ “About Ministry Resource Network,” *Ministry Resource Network, Inc.*, accessed August 6, 2017, www.mrni.org.

³⁷² “Cover Image,” *Africa Now: The Sudan Interior Mission in Action*, December 1970.

³⁷³ Stan Guthrie, “New Paradigms for Churches and Mission Agencies,” *Mission Frontiers* 24, no. 1 (February 2002): 7–8; Porter Speakman, “We Found That We Needed Agencies,” *Mission Frontiers* 24, no. 1 (February 2002): 11.

Second, a variety of organizations and businesses emerged whose primary function was to support congregations in undertaking short-term mission. Increasingly, a congregation didn't have to organize its own short-term mission trip, but rather could contract with an organization that helped to plan such a trip, connected them to the work of local organizations, and took care of all the details. This created a new class of organizations invested in the model of congregationally based short-term mission.

For the APMC, the Antioch Network, and other organizations actively focused on expanding the number of local churches engaged in evangelistic mission activities, short-term mission was, in the words of Douglas Millham, “a model for mobilizing the church.”³⁷⁴

Short-Term Mission and Youth Ministry

For both mission traditionalists and evangelicals focused on more “holistic” or “integral” models of mission, reaching young evangelicals was an important part of these larger strategies. Following a declining interest in missions among young evangelicals in the 1960s, both groups regarded reaching young people as a particularly crucial for the task of recruiting a new generation of Christians committed to the missionary task. During the 1970s, evangelical mission leaders noted a renewed interest in mission among college and university students, as evidenced by surging participation at the Urbana conference, expansion of campus-based groups focused on mission, and gradually, a

³⁷⁴ John Holzmann, “Short Terms: Factors Not Often Considered,” *Mission Frontiers*, March 1988, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/oldsite/1988/03/m882.htm>; Douglas Erwin Millham, “Short-Term Mission : A Model for Mobilizing the Church” (D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1988). Millham’s ideas about the value of short-term mission as part of training and mobilizing congregations for cross-cultural missions took shape as part of World Vision’s Cross-cultural Exchange Program, which Millham developed in the late 1980s.

growth in in campus-based short-term mission programs, as already noted.³⁷⁵ During the 1980s and 1990s, the practice took off among high school students, as well.

The attention to younger participants in part reflected the ongoing anxiety, already noted, about the ways that expanding evangelical participation in “secular” higher education might affect evangelical formation, in this case with particular attention to missionary recruitment. The cover story of the April/May 1979 issue of *Frontier Missions* took up this issue and described some of the underlying causes of what it called “The Pre-Candidate Crisis in American Missions Today.” The article suggested that because evangelical young people were attending secular colleges and universities in growing numbers, they were being shaped by a secular, skeptical culture, and making vocational decisions with little exposure to the possibilities of a missionary career.³⁷⁶ Mission agencies also worried that growing levels of student debt would “devastate mission (or other Christian) service” by making it necessary for young people to go into secular professions in order to pay back loans, essentially undercutting the freedom to pursue vocational paths that had traditionally required the kind of “economic discipline” and “simple living” that both evangelical and ecumenical organizations valorized and cultivated as part of their short-term programs throughout the 1960s and 1970s.³⁷⁷ This

³⁷⁵ Urbana is the triennial student missionary conference of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. In the 1970s and 1980s, it attracted between 12,000 and nearly 19,000 participants. For more on Urbana, see the discussion in Chapter 4, above. Keith Hunt and Gladys M. Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of Interservice Christian Fellowship-USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 413–14.

³⁷⁶ Ralph D. Winter, “The Great Roadblock: The Pre-Candidate Crisis in American Missions Today,” *Mission Frontiers* 1, no. 4 (May 1979), <https://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/01-4.pdf>.

³⁷⁷ “Massive student debts devastate mission (or other Christian) service” [report on the Wheaton Conference on Christian Higher Education, May 27-31, 1985. This insight about the implications of student debt, and the ways that evangelical mission institutions responded to the

understanding of the “pre-candidate” crisis compelled those committed to evangelical missions to develop strategies that could reach students even before they reached college, with its secular and financial temptations.

As Brian Howell points out, retreats, camps, service projects, and work camps were already popular activities for high school youth groups in evangelical churches in the 1980s, but most of these were domestic or even local in focus; foreign travel for such activities was relatively rare. When advertisements for international work camps began to appear in evangelical youth publications like *Group* magazine in the late 1980s, they had a similar structure to some of their domestic antecedents — travel to “a rural, impoverished area for service and ministry,” manual labor beneficial to others, personal and spiritual growth — but those work camps were now identified as “mission” and not simply as service. In the evangelical world, this shift was significant, not only because it associated the activity with a cherished institution — that of missionary service — but also because it suggested a time-honored means of raising financial support.³⁷⁸

The idea of short-term mission for high school aged youth gained popularity as it circulated through a growing and steadily professionalizing network of evangelical youth workers, organizations, and publications. The rising popularity also reflected the greater economic and educational resources of the youth’s parents. For the workers, Paul

concern, are interesting matters in themselves, particularly in light of ongoing concerns about student debt in American higher education in general, and in theological education in particular. In the 1980s, a number of evangelical educational institutions resisted the move toward degree-granting status and/or accreditation for a range of reasons, including a desire to remain financially accessible to a broad range of students. This represents a counter-trend to the advancing status of evangelical institutions like Wheaton and Fuller. Ralph D. Winter, “Massive Student Debts Devastate Mission (or Other Christian) Service [Report on the Wheaton Conference on Christian Higher Education, May 27-31, 1985],” *Frontier Missions*, June 1985.

³⁷⁸ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, 102–4.

Borthwick's guide, *Super Summer Mission Teams: Following the Example of Jesus the Servant of Others*, promised to be a one-stop training shop. In the words of one review and advertisement for the guide,

If you're thinking of starting a short-term mission program in your church where you'll train and prepare your own people, Paul Borthwick's *Super Summer Mission Teams* is essential reading. You'll find templates and masters for virtually every topic you'll want to cover in a short-term preparation program. Among photocopies of almost a dozen articles and clippings, and the entire collection of forms, documents, and other materials Borthwick uses in preparing his own short-term teams, the two-inch binder also contains a 35-page booklet, "How to Plan, Develop, and Lead a Youth Missionary Team".... From a one-page photography guide to an article on how to beat jet-lag, it's all here.³⁷⁹

Super Summer Mission Teams was first published as a large blue ring binder and advertised in missions and youth ministry publications. It was available by mail order from Grace Chapel, the megachurch outside of Boston where Borthwick served (and one of the founding congregations of the ACMC network.)³⁸⁰ The guide went through four editions in the 1980s, each one adding new readings, articles, and increasingly sophisticated tips on planning and leading young people on mission trips. By 1987, Borthwick had led dozens of youth mission trips and was one of a handful of influential youth pastors whose writing and speaking about short-term mission in evangelical publications and at gatherings like the National Youth Workers Convention, sponsored by the organization Youth Specialties, helped to popularize international travel for young people.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ "Four Useful Short-Term Mission Resources [Review]," *Mission Frontiers*, 1988, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/oldsite/1988/03/m886.htm>.

³⁸⁰ Fisher, "Clinton's Pastor With A Past."

³⁸¹ Howell, *Short-Term Mission*, 103.

Borthwick explained his rationale for tailoring these short-term missionary trips to high school youth groups: “modeling,” “memories,” and “missionaries.” In doing so, he perpetuated the notion of missionary recruitment alongside the goals of spiritual growth (modeling) and personal development (memories). As Brian Howell shows, the materials that emerged in this period in the context of evangelical youth ministry networks are characterized by a tension in describing the motivation and aims of short-term mission — namely, the juxtaposition and tension between “the good done for others and the benefits to ourselves.”³⁸²

Borthwick’s publications were not alone. Don Moore’s *Youth Try the Impossible!* appeared in 1982. In 1983, the *Youth Leaders Sourcebook*, edited by a former Youth For Christ trainer and published by major evangelical publishing house Zondervan, included a section on “Short-term Mission Projects,” noting that opportunities for high-school students to undertake summer ministries had expanded rapidly, and that local churches, denominations, mission agencies, and parachurch organizations were all involved in this form of mission outreach.³⁸³ In 1987, Short-Term Mission Advocates published *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short-Term Missions*, a collection of articles and resources, including a directory of over 85 agencies.³⁸⁴ Student Mission Advance’s *Short Term Missions Handbook*, published in several editions throughout the 1980s, aimed to be “the definitive

³⁸² Ibid., 105.

³⁸³ Robert Bland, “Short-Term Missions Projects,” in *The Youth Leaders Sourcebook*, ed. Gary Dausey (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1983), 259–64.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 260.

handbook for Canadian short-term missions.”³⁸⁵ There were several stand-alone directories of short-term opportunities that had been published on an annual or semi-annual basis since the late 1960s. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, these guides increasingly included organizations offering to host or arrange travel for church youth groups, rather than missionary opportunities for individual young people.

The popularity of short-term mission in the world of evangelical youth ministry was particularly crucial for its diffusion. As evangelical culture became more influential during the 1970s and ’80s, and as evangelical ministries came to dominate college and university campuses, networks of evangelical youth ministry workers — organizations, publications, resources, and so on — exercised an outsized influence on both Christian youth ministry practices broadly, and on the evangelical church as a whole.³⁸⁶ The evangelical youth culture that Bergler describes is defined by two features: a willingness to engage popular culture and the wider world; and a commitment to a relaxed, informal, and intimate style that prioritized personal emotional experiences as a mark of vibrancy.

Tensions, Debates, and Questions

³⁸⁵ Brett Johnson, Jackie MacDonald, and Artaj Singh, *Short-Term Missions Handbook, 1984* (Hamilton, Ont.: Student Mission Advance, 1984).

³⁸⁶ Thomas E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 210. Thomas Bergler has argued, for instance, that models of evangelical youth ministry that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s profoundly shaped the white evangelical churches in the 1970s and 1980s. The youth culture that he describes combined a willingness to engage popular culture with a commitment to a relaxed, informal, and intimate style that prioritized personal emotional experiences as a mark of vibrancy. The influence of these styles in the wider evangelical church led to a “juvenilization” of Christianity which both revitalized the church and could at times be superficial. According to Bergler argues that the embrace of this style was one of the key factors influencing church growth, and its rejection was part of what led to mainline decline. Ibid.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, large-scale shifts in technology, politics, economy, and culture had facilitated the expansion of short-term mission as a practice of church life. International economic institutions promoted the development of tourism infrastructure as a tool of economic growth. The end of the Cold War eased the way for travel to the “third world,” and to some extent depoliticized such travel. And economic liberalization fueled a globalization of trade in goods, services, and financial capital, that brought many people into much more constant touch with a sense of the global. This made the barriers to this sort of travel more modest, and more imaginable as a routine part of institutional programming.

By the mid-1990s, evangelical churches of all sizes were organizing short-term mission trips. While these may have been coordinated without input from mission agencies and before evangelical scholars of mission had made significant study of the practice – both common charges in the literature on short-term missions – the trips had clearly been nurtured by a network of evangelical institutions. A host of new agencies emerged with an exclusive focus on short-term missions, and existing mission agencies and denominational mission structures facilitated short-term mission with an increasingly varied set of goals in mind. This meant that participants in short-term mission brought a much broader range of understandings to the practice.

Within the evangelical world, for instance, short-term mission trips were encouraged by groups like the APMC as a way of promoting more “mission-minded” congregations. When this promotion was generated by organizations and networks that understood the central thrust of all missionary activity to be reaching the “unreached” people of the world, emphasis on proclamation of the gospel, church-planting, and

conversion were paramount. The metaphors that dominated this conversation about mission tended to reinforce a starkly binary view of the world; the world was divided into two types of “peoples,” those who had been reached by the Gospel and those who had not been reached. The emphasis on technique and efficiency, the application of statistical methods and a scientific application of the social sciences in delineating between different “people groups” communicated a sense that the world could be comprehensively and precisely known, and thereby could be made subject to the desired interventions of American missionaries.

The worldview shaping a practice of short-term mission in this broader conversation would be quite different from a practice focused on youth formation, which might reinforce notions of an affectively bound global Christian community, or a sense of the world as a place of formation, learning, and becoming. So, too, with trips originating from the network of evangelical colleges and universities, for whom short-term mission had resonances with other forms of international education, with parallel opportunities for personal growth and service.

Not everyone in the evangelical world was enthusiastic about this trend toward short term mission, and most established evangelical mission organizations considered it with at least some skepticism, as they had in the decades before. They often saw it as a generational malady, or a symptom of some unfortunate (often “secular”) cultural trend. By the 1980s, however, increasingly they raised these objections with a spirit of resignation. As one publication wryly put it in 1982, “There also may be a way of purging the evil and harnessing some of the energy of the self-starters and rugged

individualists for the final push into the last frontiers. We have adapted to the contemporary mood by reluctantly opening up to short-termers.³⁸⁷

While there were still sometimes forceful arguments made against short-term mission in evangelical publications, they were more often cast in muted tones. In 1983, *Mission Frontiers* ran a cover story with the title, “Can people give more to the mission cause by staying home?” This concern is also apparent in the nascent academic literature that had begun to emerge. Much of this literature, including studies focused on “effectiveness” and “impact,” reflected long-standing concerns, and even pessimism, about the limitations and problems of short-term mission trips. The findings were often out of sync with the popular perception of the practice as transformative for individuals and mutually beneficial for communities.³⁸⁸

By the end of the century, it was possible for an article to take for granted that controversy was one of the defining features of short-term mission. An issue of *Mission Frontiers* devoted to “Rethinking Short-Term Missions,” began by noting, “There are few subjects in the mission world as controversial as short-term missions and their impact on field mission work.” Yet despite these concerns, there were few if any self-identified evangelicals who called for a halt to mission trips in any but the most rhetorical ways.

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Within ecumenical institutions, short-term mission practices were evolving as well. In the following chapter, I turn to the development of short-term mission practices within ecumenical and mainline Protestant networks and institutions during the same

³⁸⁷ Wade T. Coggins et al., eds., *Reaching Our Generation* (Pasadena, Calif.: W. Carey Library, 1982), 22.

³⁸⁸ For a summary of some of this literature, see Chapter 1, above.

period, exploring the development of such practices in relation to ecumenical advocacy networks; the Central American peace movement; and theological education. In contrast to the trends I have discussed in this chapter, the practice of short-term mission in the ecumenical world was developing not primarily in relation to congregations or denominational schools, but in more diffuse networks that were a blend of ecclesial and secular.

Chapter 6

Short-Term Travel as Development, Solidarity, and Transformation:

The Shifting Focus of Mission on the Ecumenical Protestant Left

When viewed alongside the evangelical projects discussed in the last chapter, the practices of short-term travel, service, and exchange that developed within mainline Protestant and liberal ecumenical networks during the 1980s and 1990s reflect strikingly different responses to the broad political, economic, and technological transformations that were taking place both nationally and globally. Ecumenical and evangelical Protestants were responding to the same macro-social forces, but at a medial level, within their institutions, and with respect to their shifting relationships to the broader American polity, they were experiencing quite different institutional trends and processes. Among other things, those on the ecumenical Protestant left were networked with a different set of networks and institutions, including activist and advocacy networks that overlapped with the church, but extended beyond it as well. Several of these groups feature in this chapter: advocacy groups that encouraged alternative models of “responsible” tourism (Tourism Watch, the Center for Responsible Tourism), the Central American peace movement (Witness for Peace), and organizations with an educational mission (the Plowshares Institute). This was in keeping with a theology that saw the work of the church in the struggles of the world, and the secular as the stage of God’s activity in the world. In the 1980s and ’90s, mainline Protestants worked transnationally alongside non-ecclesial social movement actors to address a number of pressing concerns, giving embodied expression to this theological claim.

International tourism itself was becoming a point of contention because of the way that global tourism was coming to reflect a new kind of global economic order and because of the way that global economic inequalities were being spatially configured through the policies of wealthy nations and the intergovernmental organizations they controlled. Particularly in Asia and the Caribbean, church leaders and ecumenical organizations played an important role in articulating critiques of tourism and pressing for more just forms of development.

Despite ambivalence about both mission and tourism, mainline Protestants turned to practices of short-term travel and exchange in the pursuit of education, solidarity, and service. The Central American peace movement, which was a powerful influence within the religious left during the 1980s, incorporated short-term transnational travel into movement strategy and practices in crucial ways, giving expression to a distinctive practice of short-term travel. The work of Witness for Peace illustrates the way in which a transnational advocacy network that overlapped and extended beyond the church came to shape the way ecumenical Protestants practiced and understood short-term mission practices, including those undertaken within the church. These same networks helped to popularize and extend short-term travel and solidarity practices into non-religious institutions as well.

I conclude this chapter by returning to the theme of higher education, which has run throughout the dissertation, this time looking at theological education in particular. As we began to see in the previous chapter, while college and university settings have been a particularly fertile ground for the development of short-term mission practices, seminaries in particular have also been affected by this trend. Although theological

students represent a relatively small total number of students as a portion of the whole landscape of US higher education, they have a distinctive role in shaping mission practices of congregations, denominational agencies, and para-church organizations. In the early 1990s, an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) initiative on globalization made international educational exchanges a programmatic centerpiece of their work with member institutions. As the accrediting body for theological schools, the ATS sets broad curricular guidelines for seminaries, reviews and approves requests for degree-granting status, and is dominated culturally by mainline Protestant seminaries.

By the mid-1990s, short-term mission was gaining popularity in mainline congregations, in youth ministry circles, and on college campuses. Because evangelical networks, publications, and resources dominated the discourses of youth ministry at the high school level, and evangelical organizations had become dominant on college and university campuses, many of the same images, rhetoric, narratives, and debates about youth-focused short-term mission circulated in ecumenical, denominational, and evangelical contexts.³⁸⁹ The discourses and practices I discuss in this chapter came into existence alongside these other practices. If they emerged from and circulated most persuasively in a different set of networks — in advocacy and activist networks, for instance; among denominational and ecumenical staff; and in theological schools — they also came into contact with one another, both in the culture more broadly and in congregations in particular.

³⁸⁹ Mainline denominations had reduced funding for campus ministries during this period, as well, in part as a response to their alarm over student radicalism during the 1960s.

“Tourist, Go Home!”: Tourism as Development and Dependency

In 1978, an article in the *Christian Century* reported on simmering critiques of tourism emerging from ecumenical consultations in Asia and the Caribbean under the headline — “Tourist, Go Home!”³⁹⁰ For readers of the *Christian Century*, this headline almost certainly would have called to mind John Gatu’s widely debated address, delivered at a mission gathering in 1971 and reprinted widely in the years following, entitled “Missionary, Go Home!” Gatu, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, famously called for a “moratorium on missions” for “not less than five years” so that churches in the former colonial world could break the stranglehold of dependency. Only then, together with denominations and mission boards in Europe and North America, would they be able to discern the way forward to which God and not Westerners was calling them in this new era, he said.³⁹¹

As noted earlier, by the late 1970s, increased leisure time and disposable income in the US, combined with the advent of jet air travel, had made vacations abroad accessible to more Americans than ever before. While this might lead to expanded horizons for travelers, and even to much-needed economic development in impoverished regions of the world, the massive increase in commercial tourism in the third world was creating problems that were only just beginning to be recognized. In the Caribbean and in Asia, two regions that had been a particular focus for investments that promised to

³⁹⁰ Kenneth D MacHarg, “Tourist, Go Home: The Church Has a Role to Play in Helping to Develop a Responsible Tourism,” *The Christian Century* 95, no. 23 (July 5, 1978): 679–81.

³⁹¹ John Gatu, “Missionary, Go Home,” in *In Search of Mission: An Interconfessional and Intercultural Quest*, IDOC/International Documentation 63 (New York, N.Y.: IDOC/North America, 1974), 70–72.

cultivate “tourism as development,” church leaders were working through ecumenical structures to raise concerns about the impact of tourism on their communities.³⁹²

The Ecumenical Coalition of Third World Tourism

In the Caribbean, a radical critique of institutionalized mass tourism was emerging by the early 1970s among academics, churches, labor unions, and even some government officials. These critics argued that tourism in the third world amounted to a new version of colonialism and imperialism, continuing a pattern of metropolitan intrusion by the white, developed world into the non-white, developing world, a type of intrusion that had economic, cultural, and political implications. The display of tourists’ affluence in poor countries, one of the most visible forms this intrusion took, highlighted both racial and economic inequalities. In the words of Neville Linton, a political scientist and one of the speakers at the Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation on Tourism:

One cannot overlook the problem of white tourists always being served by black or brown servants, of tourism being seen as an opportunity to be superior, of tourism exacerbating inferiority and superiority complexes. The descent of hundreds of rich white upon the new tourist havens is fraught with problems in a black world which is now politically alive.³⁹³

Moreover, most of the profits derived from tourism flowed back into the coffers of international investors and corporations, with little benefit to “host” communities.

Because third world destinations were so often packaged and sold as a fantasy to

³⁹² MacHarg, “Tourist, Go Home”; Peter Holden and Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, *Tourism, an Ecumenical Concern: The Story of the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism* (Bangkok, Thailand: The Coalition, 1988); Somerset R. Waters, “The American Tourist,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (1966): 109–18.

³⁹³ MacHarg, “Tourist, Go Home,” 679; Sue Onslow, Neville Linton, and Ruth Craggs, “Interview with Neville Linton: Commonwealth Oral History Project,” Transcribed text, *Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, (December 30, 2014), <http://www.commonwealthoralhistories.org/>.

consumers in the West, critics charged, these nations had become “playgrounds for the affluent,” part of a global “pleasure periphery, a sun-drenched strip of globe... stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, through the Pacific to the Caribbean.” Tourists came to the Caribbean in search of an uninhibited space of “sun, sea, sex, and servility,” upsetting the local culture, local economy, and local moral codes.³⁹⁴

In 1971, the Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation on Tourism brought together clergy and others to discuss these issues. The group affirmed two basic goals for tourism in the region — economic development and intercultural experience — but insisted that the pursuit of these goals must be guided by “the host culture, its needs, its hopes, and its unique qualities,” rather than by international investors or corporations. In the early 1970s, this was a moderate position, not a radical one. By the end of the decade, however, most of the more radical condemnations of the tourism industry had softened. The entire Caribbean region was suffering from a general economic decline and a lingering recession, and many of the region’s island nations were struggling to maintain foreign currency reserves, which were especially critical for small states that relied heavily on imports to meet their basic needs. Tourism was a regional growth industry, and was seen as an easy way to bring in foreign currency. As Allan Kirton, then the Secretary General of the Caribbean Conference of Churches, put it, “We cannot afford to take a negative position on tourism. We have to recognize that it is with us, and whatever we in the churches say, it is going to be exploited by the people.”³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Harry G. Matthews, “Radicals and Third World Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 5 (October 1, 1977): 24–25, doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(77)80006-6.

³⁹⁵ Allan Kirton and Linda M. Rupert, “The Caribbean Challenge: Promoting Responsible Tourism in an Era of Decline, from an Interview with Allan F. Kirton,” in *Tourism: An Ecumenical Concern* (Bangkok: The Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, 1988), 94.

Indeed, the tourist industry was not just a site of exploitation by foreign visitors and corporate interests; it was an opportunity that local communities “exploited” for their own economic well-being, too. Tourism was an essential feature of the local economy, something on which communities had come to depend. In this context, clergy and activists didn’t need to agree with intergovernmental lenders who promoted tourism as a “panacea” for the economic problems of the Caribbean in order to admit to its ongoing importance in the region. This directed their attention to ameliorative measures that could constrain tourism’s worst harms.³⁹⁶

The Christian Conference of Asia held a consultation on tourism in 1975, addressing many of these same themes. The consultation group produced a small report outlining the theological and practical insights of the consultation’s participants, including notes about the “theology of tourism” and a brief code of ethics for tourists. This code was a practice in norm-setting rather than regulation. The Christian Conference of Asia had no formal powers of enforcement. In making such a statement, however, they added the social capital of the church to broader political debates at both the national and international level, and to conversations happening within the tourism industry itself.

This report, published as *Tourism: The Asian Dilemma*, focused on the impact of mass tourism, and in particular the new wave of affluent Western tourists whose presence they noted in Asia. They also discussed the implications of this trend for Asian churches. As Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia Ron O’Grady noted, “We live in the third world where the majority of people are too poor to afford the luxury of travel to another country. We are therefore usually the hosts, or possibly the victims, of

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 94–96.

the tourist trade.”³⁹⁷ Outlining both the beneficial and the harmful effects of tourism in economic, cultural, social, environmental, and religious terms, the report suggested several strategies for the church’s ongoing engagement. While O’Grady acknowledged that the tourist industry was driven by economic and political considerations, he insisted that “the social and human factors” had to be considered as well. Ultimately, these were the chief concern of churches: “The church is interested in tourism because it is interested in people, and in the development of a fully human life.”³⁹⁸

By the end of the decade, these two regional streams of conversation were converging. In 1980, in the days just prior to the World Tourism Organization’s global gathering in Manila, a workshop brought together church leaders from eighteen countries, and out of this meeting the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (ECTWT) was born.³⁹⁹ This organization rejected the assumption, widely touted in the 1970s by the World Bank and others, that “tourism equals development.” The ECTWT made a sustained effort to “uncover and warn against the effects of tourism from a Christian perspective and from the perspective of the Third World” and to give voice to the people in the countries where tourism was concentrated.⁴⁰⁰ In the words of Peter Holden, the organization’s first Executive Secretary,

³⁹⁷ Ron O’Grady and Christian Conference of Asia, eds., *Tourism, the Asian Dilemma: The Report of a Study of Asian Tourism Conducted by the Christian Conference of Asia, Jan.-Jun. 1975* (Singapore: The Conference, 1975), 7.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹⁹ The organization was later renamed the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT). It continues its work under this name today.

⁴⁰⁰ Heinz Fuchs, “25th Anniversary - Just a Stopover,” in *Transforming, Re-Forming Tourism: Perspectives on Justice and Humanity in Tourism* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, 2008), 77.

Tourism is proving to have severe social costs in the developing world and elsewhere. The entire enterprise is top heavy, and ignores the need and protection of host communities. It violates their dignity and their rights. It disregards and “commodifies” their culture. It abuses their women and children and upsets the balance of their natural surroundings. It exploits workers and its based on patterns of global relationships and transactions that are unjust and inequitable.⁴⁰¹

Other conferences, publications, and newsletters followed. National and regional councils of churches convened these conferences, but they frequently involved academics, economists, and other civic leaders. The gatherings and publications were sometimes covered or reviewed in tourism industry journals, as well as ecumenical Christian publications. In this way, in other words, regional ecumenical leaders were both participating in and helping to cultivate broader networks that linked church-based and other activists concerned about common causes at multiple scales — locally, nationally, regionally (eg, Asia, Caribbean), and internationally.

Toward Responsible Tourism

This broad network was important because critiques of tourism were emerging from a number of different networks in the 1970s and 1980s. Intergovernmental bodies, for example, were beginning to convene conversations about tourism’s purposes, potential, and harms. In 1980, the Manila Declaration on World Tourism, released at the conclusion of the World Tourism Organization’s conference, reiterated a conviction that

⁴⁰¹ Peter Holden and Caesar D’Mello, “Maintaining the Rage: Roots of ECOT,” in *Transforming Re-Forming Tourism: Perspectives on Justice and Humanity in Tourism, a Publication Marking the 25th Anniversary of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, 2008), 20–29; T.T. Sreekumar, “Practicing the Rage: Perspectives from 25 Years of Civil Society Engagement in Tourism [Review of the Book *Transforming, Re-Forming Tourism: Perspectives on Justice and Humanity in Tourism*, ed. by C. D’Mello,” *Rolling Rains Report: Precipitating Dialogue on Travel, Disability, and Universal Design*, July 8, 2008, http://www.rollingrains.com/archives/cat_career_continuing_education.html.

modern tourism could contribute to international peace and security, a spirit of world friendship, respect for human rights, and mutual understanding between states; and to an economic order that would accelerate the social and economic development and progress among “developing countries” in particular.⁴⁰² This notion of tourism as a moral and strategic undertaking had roots in early waves of travel for peace within Europe (including the work camps and friendship exchanges of the peace movement discussed in Chapter 2). This vision was echoed in the statutes of the World Tourism Organization and established officially by the United Nations in 1970. It affirmed the organization’s commitment to promote and develop tourism “with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.”⁴⁰³

But the 1980s were a new historical moment, and shifts in these ideals reflected that fact. The 1980 Manila Declaration emphasized the importance of non-economic aims as a rationale for government investment in tourism, particularly in the developing world, and encouraged the integration of tourism into youth education as a way of promoting lasting peace.⁴⁰⁴ Subsequent documents in the 1980s and 1990s focused on concerns about unequal distribution of wealth and “situations of anachronistic colonialism” that were sustained in part by tourist industries, and thereby detracted from the moral

⁴⁰² C. A. B. International, “Manila declaration on world tourism.,” *World Travel*, no. 156/157 (1980): 19–32; “Manila Declaration on World Tourism” (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1980), <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/unwtodeclarations.1980.6.4.1>.

⁴⁰³ “Statutes of the World Tourism Organization” (United Nations World Tourism Organization, June 2009), <http://unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtostatuteseng.pdf>.

⁴⁰⁴ Cordula Wohlmuther and Werner Wintersteiner, *International Handbook on Tourism and Peace*, Centre for Peace Research and Peace Education of the Klagenfurt University, Austria, in Cooperation with the World Tourism Organization (Klagenfurt; = Celovec: Drava, 2014), <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9783854357131>.

possibilities inherent in travel (1982); the rights and responsibilities of tourists and host states (1985); sustainable tourism (1995); and a “Code of Global Ethics for Tourism” (1999). A variety of tourism industry and research organizations grew up in this period, focused on tourism and peace, tourism and sustainable development, tourism and poverty reduction, and other concerns shared broadly across the tourism industry.⁴⁰⁵ The fact that these ideals merited reiteration in this way of course reflects the intensification of the problems with tourism as much as a consensus about the ideals that should drive it.

In the face of these challenges, concerns about the impact of tourism were spreading through a number of networks, and the institutions and structures of the ecumenical movement were part of this development. Regional and international ecumenical meetings that focused on tourism were often covered in travel industry publications devoted to “alternative” tourism, and the publications that came out of these consultations were sometimes reviewed. In 1981, Ron O’Grady published *Third World Stopover*, and began introducing concerns about tourism to the public. The book appeared in English and German, and a slide show with script based on the text was developed by ECTWT and distributed by Christian Aid in the UK and the Center for Responsible Tourism (CRT) in the US.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ See, for example, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Ron O’Grady, *Third World Stopover: The Tourism Debate*. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981); Ron O’Grady, *Tourism in the Third World: Christian Reflections* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982). O’Grady, who served as Associate General Secretary for the Christian Conference of Asia for a time, was ecumenically well-connected and at the forefront of activism around tourism, sex trafficking, and human rights. See Olav Fykse Tveit, “WCC Expresses Condolences on the Death of Ron O’Grady — World Council of Churches,” March 3, 2014, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-expresses-condolences-on-the-death-of-ron-o2019grady>; Ron O’Grady and International Campaign to End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, *The ECPAT Story: A Personal Account of the First Six Years in the Life of ECPAT* (Bangkok, Thailand: E.C.P.A.T., 1996).

Ecumenical networks also supported the development of advocacy groups focused on “responsible tourism” in the 1980s. These groups participated in broader, and largely secular, networks emerging at the time both within and outside of the tourism industry, networks that were concerned about the development of “responsible” and “alternative” tourism.⁴⁰⁷ The Church Development Service of the Protestant Churches in Germany established a special desk focused on tourism, which came to be known as Tourism Watch. The program engaged in training programs and solidarity initiatives around the impact of “third world tourism,” and promoted socially and environmentally responsible tourism initiatives.⁴⁰⁸ In the U.S., San Francisco Theological Seminary hosted a consultation on “the human dimensions” of tourism in 1984, and the Center for Responsible Tourism (CRT) grew out of this event. Interestingly, the organization described itself both as a “para-church” group and a “tourism-activist organization” and operated in both ecclesial and secular networks to “confront North Americans with the impact we have as tourists on our sisters and brothers in the Third World, on their cultures, economy, and environment.” Like the wider international networks to which the Center for Responsible Tourism was connected, its work focused on a range of issues that related to tourism, including sex tourism, the prostitution and trafficking of women and children, the economic and cultural harms of tourism, and environmental destruction.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ A 1988 book about ECTWT listed twenty-eight partner or donor organizations, mostly in Europe and the US, including religious organizations and advocacy groups. Holden and Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, *Tourism, an Ecumenical Concern*, 167.

⁴⁰⁸ Fuchs, “25th Anniversary - Just a Stopover,” 78; “About Us,” *Tourism Watch*, accessed August 6, 2017, <https://www.tourism-watch.de/en/node/1024>.

⁴⁰⁹ Lucinda Glenn, “Inventory of the Center for Responsible Tourism Collection,” 2011, GTU Collection No. 92-2-02, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, Calif., http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt1w1035t6/entire_text/.

These organizations were part of an emerging network of groups focused on responsible tourism in the late 1970s, a network that played a significant role in the development of the alternative tourism sector, which today represents a significant portion of the commercial tourism industry as a whole.

While there were early calls for a “moratorium” on tourism, the Coalition and its associated organizations gradually came to focus on preventing the negative impacts of tourism and curbing excesses rather than denouncing tourism outright. On the whole, this was true for other “alternative” and “responsible” tourism advocacy networks, as well. They lobbied for fair trade in tourism; for greater protections for children and women, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation and harmful labor practices; for culturally respectful engagement; for environmental protections; and for efforts that would allow communities in tourist areas to participate in and materially benefit from tourism. As the environmental movement became more established, the framework of sustainable development took a place of prominence in these conversations, and new concerns emerged — the environmental cost of air travel, the carbon footprint of tourism, and so on.⁴¹⁰

While there is no evidence that these movements criticizing tourism dampened enthusiasm for international travel at the level of the laity, they did help to shape the tourism industry and opened up broad ethical conversations about the structures of the tourist economy, and about who stands to gain and lose from the pursuit of mass tourism in the two-thirds world. They also helped to shape the “alternative travel” movement of

⁴¹⁰ Triarchi Ei and Karamanis K, “The Evolution of Alternative Forms of Tourism: A Theoretical Background,” *Business & Entrepreneurship Journal* 6, no. 1 (2017): 39–59.

the 1990s and beyond. In 2008, Heinz Fuchs noted that ECOT's⁴¹¹ focus was to encourage "travel with greater intent." With this aim in mind, the organization began to focus on the unique benefits that could come from the direct encounters that tourism entailed, in particular opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange and interfaith learning. He concluded hopefully: International tourism might yet come to be what early proponents of the World Tourism Organization had proclaimed more than two decades before — a "tool for building a world community."⁴¹²

The New "Christian" Tour

The ecumenical conversations that focused on the problems of mass tourism in the third world were not primarily focused on debates about church-related travel, much less on the still-emerging practice of short-term mission. Nevertheless, ecumenical organizations were aware of the ways that a range of travel programs sponsored by churches, mission agencies, and development organizations were part of a common trend, a trend that was often harmful when viewed from the perspective of host communities in the third world.

In *Third World Stopover*, Ron O'Grady devotes a chapter to what he calls the "other" tourists, those, like church organizations, whose motivations to travel go beyond the pursuit of pleasure, which he takes to be the central organizing feature of third world tourism. He discusses several categories of travel that have grown in popularity in the

⁴¹¹ The Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism was renamed the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, but in all other respects continued as the same organization and network. Caesar D'Mello and Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, *Transforming Re-Forming Tourism: Perspectives on Justice and Humanity in Tourism* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, 2008).

⁴¹² Fuchs, "25th Anniversary - Just a Stopover," 78–79.

third world: educational tours for students and specialized groups; religious pilgrimage; and, most important for our purposes here, the “new phenomenon” that he calls “The ‘Christian’ Tour.” His commentary on this trend is telling, and I will quote it at some length:

A small but thriving new industry has grown up to cater for wealthy Christians of Western countries who shun the self-indulgence of tourism for pleasure, and would rather undertake a ‘Christian’ tour, preferably with a minister of religion or a priest to lead the way.

Several church-related agencies have begun to adopt this kind of programme. Sometimes it is done in a patronizing way. Participants are invited to travel overseas to see ‘their’ mission field, ‘their’ aid project or, with some sponsorship or adoption agencies, ‘their’ child. While identification with people across national boundaries has its value, such travel under the pretence of extending an understanding of Christian mission has little to commend it.⁴¹³

Many such tours were often bound up with relationships of “aid,” as well, but these, too, could be problematic visits:

A good many Western aid and mission agencies are organizing church tours to third world countries to look at aid programmes, and the hospitality of the host communities is wearing thin. These people have their own work to do, and the presence of numerous visitors poking around, often asking elementary questions, is a distraction.⁴¹⁴

What made a difference? A key question, O’Grady notes, is the “source of the initiative.” If the church or organization in the third world specifically asks for a group of foreigners, the possibility should be explored. Visitors may be able to bring a critical level of encouragement, or a particular skill that is greatly needed. But this is a rare instance, in his estimation. More often, the idea emerges in the wealthy country and is pursued as a matter of self-interest – free or cheap travel for the trip leader, great publicity for the

⁴¹³ O’Grady, *Third World Stopover*, 59. Published in the United States as O’Grady, *Tourism in the Third World*.

⁴¹⁴ Ron O’Grady et al., *Third World Stopover* (London; San Anselmo, Calif.: Christian Aid; Responsible Tourism [distributor, 1983], 60.

church or organization, and if all goes well, increased financial support from wealthy donors who are more emotionally engaged with the projects they have seen first hand.

I turn next to the final “other” category of travel that O’Grady discusses in *Third World Stopover*: solidarity tourism. Citing specifically the case of Latin America, he notes that this new type of tour reflects the fact that many Christian communities in the third world understand that they desperately need allies in the powerful nations of the Western world who can “plead their cause” for justice with distant governments whose political, military, and economic decisions affect them directly and often perniciously and fatally.⁴¹⁵

The Central American Peace Movement: Peace Delegations and Solidarity Tourism

If the explosion of US travelers in the third world raised concerns for ecumenical leaders in some contexts, it was actively adopted as a strategy in others. For clergy and laypeople involved in the Central American peace movement, brief educational and exchange trips became important strategies for building advocacy networks, educating allies, and mobilizing global public opinion. In this section, I discuss the work of an organization that developed innovative models of such exchange practices that have had a profound impact on subsequent modes of travel, particularly to Latin America: Witness for Peace, an organization founded in 1983 that sponsored hundreds of short-term American peace delegations to Nicaragua during the 1980s.

Witness for Peace

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 60–61.

In April 1983, a delegation of thirty people from the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America (CITCA) traveled to Nicaragua for a one-week “fact-finding” trip under the leadership of an ex-Maryknoll nun named Gail Phares. Phares had worked with the poor in Nicaragua and Guatemala in the 1960s, but at the urging of her friends and colleagues in Central America, she had decided to return to the US to work for change in the US Central American policy. With this in the background, Phares had set off for Nicaragua with a group of “middle-aged, middle-class religious leaders, pastors, college teachers, and assorted housewives and retirees.”⁴¹⁶

The group spent time in Managua meeting with political and religious leaders, and learning about the political context in detail. But it was their experience in El Porvenir, a village on the Honduran border, that was most riveting. When the group arrived, the village was still reeling from an attack the night before by the US-backed Contra forces. As they stood surveying the ruins of homes and burned crops, a local man explained that at that very moment, only their presence was protecting the village from attack. Jeff Boyer, a former Peace Corps member and participant in the delegation, was struck by an idea that was at once remarkably simple and profoundly complex: “Look, if the United States is funding this, then let’s up [sic] fifteen hundred volunteers here to stop this fighting! If all it takes to prevent the killing is a bunch of US citizens in town, then let’s do it, let’s hold a big vigil in the war zone!” Over the next week, the group developed more fully the idea of “a massive, US citizen’s peace vigil in the war zone.”⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 71.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 72; “30+ Years of Work!,” *Witness for Peace Southeast*, accessed August 6, 2017, <http://www.wfpse.org/30-plus-years/>.

In less than three months, they had organized a second, larger delegation with this vision in mind. The July trip involved more than 150 delegates, including prominent religious leaders, like Henri Nouwen and William Sloan Coffin, who had been involved in the anti-war movement during Vietnam and were widely recognized figures of the religious left. Setting a pattern that future delegations would follow, the trip combined education about the Nicaraguan situation, meetings with religious and political leaders from a range of factions, visits to local projects and churches, and even a meeting with the US ambassador. After several days in Managua, they traveled to the town of Jalapa, where they slept on the floor of a local high school and ate with local residents. They participated in a prayer vigil in which Nicaraguans testified about their experiences in the war, remembering the deaths, kidnappings, and dismemberment of loved ones by the Contras. And the delegation joined with Jalapans in a “peace march” in the small town, planting US, Nicaraguan, and UN flags within sight of Contra forces. The impact of the trip was, by all accounts, extraordinary. Out of the experience grew a commitment to “establish a permanent North American presence in the war zone” – which they termed “Project Witness” and later, “Witness for Peace.”⁴¹⁸

Throughout the 1980s, Witness for Peace sponsored a total of four thousand short-term and two hundred long-term delegates to Nicaragua. In *Resisting Reagan*, Christian Smith argues that these trips were effective because they helped people to cultivate relationships across borders, created opportunities for trust and geographical proximity, and nurtured a network through which Americans had access to alternative

⁴¹⁸ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 70–75.

sources of credible information about what the US government was doing in Nicaragua.⁴¹⁹

In this undertaking, short-term delegations were a key part of a longer-term, transnational social movement strategy. Three permanent “vigilers” would be stationed near the border areas where Contras were attacking. They and their Nicaraguan colleagues would host short-term US delegations of ten to twelve people who would travel to Nicaragua to learn about the Nicaraguan situation for themselves, observe first-hand the impact of the conflict, and return to the US prepared to share what they had learned with their church networks and US media. Delegates were expected to “live with Nicaraguans, share the risks of Contra violence, ‘face death if need be,’ and become first-hand sources of information on Nicaragua,” providing an alternative to the pro-Contra, anti-Communist narrative being shaped by the US government.⁴²⁰ Witness for Peace describes its delegations as “the longest known non-violent presence in an active war zone in history.”⁴²¹

In part because they were able to tap into existing ecumenical networks, this effort soon had financial and organizational support of national denominational and ecumenical groups, including Clergy and Laity Concerned, the American Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the InterReligious Task Force, the Quakers, the Presbyterian Church USA, The United Methodist Church, the Catholic Worker newspaper and Sojourners magazine, and many other denominations and organizations.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 187.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 77–78.

⁴²¹ “30+ Years of Work!”

Within six weeks of the July delegation, a full year's worth of delegations had been filled, with participants from the large July delegation as the primary recruiters.⁴²² Christian Smith has argued that religious organizations were particularly important “feeder organizations” for the Central American peace movement. The constitution of Witness for Peace’s delegations is one illustration of that. Even after this initial wave of delegations, recruitment often happened through churches and church-affiliated communication networks, which were still very strong at the time. And recruitment was strategic as well, targeting specific preexisting political and religious organizations which were part of the peace movement.

The first of these short-term delegations in December 1983 was covered widely in major news outlets in the US, who described it as a “shield of love” for the Nicaraguan people, “ordinary people doing a radical thing.” Soon, delegations were going to Nicaragua at a rate of four per month, from all over the US. These trips became central to the Witness for Peace strategy and to the Central American peace movement as a whole.

As Christian Smith put it,

Witness for Peace had hit upon a tactic, it seemed, that transformed people, that disturbed and electrified US citizens into fervent political action against their own government. Soon, wave after wave of delegates began returning home on fire with a mission to tell their troubling stories to anyone who would listen and organize to end the US-backed Contra war.⁴²³

Witness for Peace was not an organization that had the development of short-term mission as its ultimate goal, but short-term delegations were a central programmatic undertaking of the organization, tied to a broader social movement strategy of

⁴²² Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 76–77, 115.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

fundamentally shifting the way the US public saw the political events unfolding in Central America.

“Tourists of Revolution”: the Politics of Solidarity Tourism

Travel to Nicaragua in this period was not limited to church groups. As one *New York Times* reporter noted in 1982, “Managua today is being occupied by a fresh-faced army of backpacking youth in shorts and hiking boots. They are left-wing students on holiday in Europe, here to see the revolution first-hand.”⁴²⁴ Poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti called these travelers “tourists of revolution” in a book he published chronicling his own visit to Nicaragua as a guest of the Minister of Culture, Father Ernesto Cardenal.⁴²⁵ Such a moniker wasn’t wholly dismissive, but it was at least passingly self-critical. Conservative sociologist Paul Hollander described American intellectuals engaged in such travel as “Political Pilgrims,” and argued that they were pawns of the Soviet propaganda apparatus.

Following the establishment of the Sandinista government in 1979, the government actively enlisted the support of an international network of writers and

⁴²⁴ Warren Hoge, “Nicaraguan Scene: Fiery Slogans, Designer Jeans,” *The New York Times*, January 6, 1982; Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1983), xv.

⁴²⁵ Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Chris Felver, *Seven Days in Nicaragua Libre* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1984). Quoted in Florence E. Babb, “Recycled Sandalistas: From Revolution to Resorts in the New Nicaragua,” *American Anthropologist*; *Oxford* 106, no. 3 (September 2004): 541. Ferlinghetti, who described himself as a “civil libertarian tourist of revolution,” visited Nicaragua in 1984 at the invitation of the then Minister of Culture (and poet), Father Ernesto Cardenal. In addition to publishing his reflections, he was interviewed on Berkeley radio station KPFA from Nicaragua, spoke publicly about his experiences upon his return, and urged other artists and poets to travel to Nicaragua as well. See David Volpendesta, “Nicaragua Libre”: A conversation with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, March 18, 1984, http://www.chrisfelver.com/books/nicaragua_interview.pdf; Michele Hardesty, “‘If the Writers of the World Get Together’: Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Literary Solidarity in Sandinista Nicaragua,” in *The Transnational Beat Generation*, ed. Nancy M. Grace and Jennie Skerl, 2012.

intellectuals. Organized tours of the country were a key part of this strategy.⁴²⁶ A flurry of travel guides aimed at *internationalistas*, many of them published under sponsorship of the government, provided resources for journalists, artists, writers, and other activists interested in traveling to Nicaragua to see the revolution for themselves. As one right-leaning sociologist put it, in the 1980s “Nicaragua [had] become an especially strong contender in the marketplace of revolutionary promise and purity.”⁴²⁷

In a 1988 interview, Ferlinghetti explained his attraction to revolutionary tourism in remarkably frank terms: “It seems that in most revolutions there’s a stage of euphoria. I was in Cuba during that period of euphoria... and it was an astounding spirit that makes me feel like we’re leading such dull lives over here.”⁴²⁸ Ferlinghetti recognized that this euphoria was temporary, and would almost certainly be followed by expansion of police control and the bureaucratization of the state. Thus, while he could see that “Nicaragua is now the focus of passions of the Left,” he saw the disappointments of Republican Spain and revolutionary Cuba as bellwethers. “Everyone dreams their ideal of a perfect society – and we are disappointed or disillusioned.”

This sort of revolutionary romanticism had a genealogy on the American left. As Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) President Todd Gitlin wrote of his trip to Cuba in 1968:

⁴²⁶ US Beat poets and Nicaraguan poets, including Cardenal himself, had been collaborating on translation and publishing projects since the 1960s, united by a vision of literature, and especially poetry, as a force for transnational understanding. For more, see Hardesty. Hollander describes this pattern more forthrightly as a method of government propaganda. Hardesty, “If the Writers of the World Get Together.”

⁴²⁷ Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, xxiv.

⁴²⁸ Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Alexis Lykiard, *The Cool Eye: Lawrence Ferlinghetti Talks to Alexis Lykiard* (Exeter: Stride, 1993); Hardesty, “If the Writers of the World Get Together,” 119.

We look to Cuba not only because of what we sense Cuba to be but because of what the United States is not. For generations the American Left has externalized good: we needed to tie our fates to someone, somewhere in the world who was seizing the chances for a humane society; or we needed an easy diversion from the hard business of cracking America.⁴²⁹

Locating Witness For Peace delegations in relation to this broad trend was, in the 1980s, an inherently political move. In *Public Opinion*, the magazine of the American Enterprise Institute, Mark Falcoff argued that political tourism was “a form, in effect, of political warfare – a product of the Russian Revolution” practiced by all totalitarian states within the Soviet orbit. Particularly vulnerable to the propaganda of the Sandinistas were people who felt undervalued at home, and whose egos could therefore be massaged – among them, writers, clergy, women, social workers, and women religious. The very next article in the Summer 1986 issue of *Public Opinion* was a piece about the “political thicket” of the mainline Protestant church, whose liberal clergy were out of sync with its laity. Action and statements on Central America were just one example of this trend. The domestic political response to the church’s engagement with the Central American peace movement revealed the increasingly deep political divisions in the American religious landscape, divisions that became more and more rigidly drawn over the course of the 1980s.

Political (Heritage) Tourism in Neoliberal Times

In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas lost the 1990 elections to the opposition candidate Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. While some travelers continued to arrive in the country

⁴²⁹ Todd Gitlin, “Cuba and the New American Movement,” *The Movement*, April 1968; Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 231.

looking for traces of the revolution, their numbers declined. By the mid-1990s, though, facing flagging foreign aid, falling prices for the country's largest export crop, coffee, and demands for economic privatization from international lenders, the Nicaraguan government turned to tourism as a promising growth industry. As Nicaragua's Minister of Tourism, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, told the *New York Times* in 1997, "We want to make tourism the main product of Nicaragua, and we plan to do that by promoting our country as an exotic destination at a reasonable price."⁴³⁰ Investments in tourist infrastructure followed, along with training for tourism industry workers, and an intensive marketing campaign that included virtually no mention of recent political history.⁴³¹

How have the types of political and religious travel and exchange that were so vitally part of liberationist national projects and transnational social movements been reshaped by these changes? To some extent, they have been incorporated into broader state-led projects to develop tourist industries that can help to bring in foreign currency and more fully integrate the nation into the global economy.⁴³² Yet at least one anthropologist studying Nicaragua's tourism industry suggests that revolutionary nostalgia is still present on the tourist circuit. Florence Babb notes that Nicaragua serves a disproportionate number of tourists who are backpackers or "adventure tourists," and some are attracted to the cachet of the destination as a place of "danger" and "revolution." Tourist items bearing revolutionary images are widely available, and follow

⁴³⁰ Larry Rohter, "Nicaragua on the Mend," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1997, sec. 5.

⁴³¹ Babb, "Recycled Sandalistas," 547–48.

⁴³² On Nicaragua, see Babb, "Recycled Sandalistas."

in some senses the circulation of revolutionary images like those of Ernesto “Che” Guevara — though, as Babb notes, this image sometimes appears as “kitsch symbol of cultural opposition” rather than a revolutionary icon representative of a particular political orientation. She notes the thematic tours organized around Sandinista revolutionary history in and around Managua.

Babb further notes that some humanitarian groups, such as Global Exchange, continue to sponsor tours to the country, and combine an awareness of the revolutionary past with a “forward-thinking” focus on entrepreneurialism and development.⁴³³

Although the Central American peace movement withered relatively quickly in the wake of the Sandinistas’ surprising electoral defeat in 1990, Witness for Peace has survived in a much more modest form, and today focuses on “supporting peace, justice, and sustainable economies in the Americas.”⁴³⁴ Both Witness for Peace, and Witness for Peace Southeast, list past and future delegations to Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Columbia on their websites.⁴³⁵ Of these contexts, only Columbia has a level of political violence that merits additional mention of risk on the organization’s website. Other delegations focus on themes like art, gender, healing, food sovereignty, education, public health, youth, immigration, sustainability, the drug war, and peace building.

Scholars of tourism today describe two forms of tourism that have emerged out of the practices outlined here — political tourism and poverty tourism. These forms of travel

⁴³³ Ibid., 550.

⁴³⁴ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 348–61.

⁴³⁵ “Witness for Peace | Supporting Peace, Justice, and Sustainable Economies in the Americas,” accessed August 7, 2017, <http://witnessforpeace.org/>; “Witness for Peace Southeast: Transforming People, Transforming Policy,” *Witness for Peace Southeast*, accessed August 7, 2017, <http://www.wfpse.org/>.

have two moral challenges, with both of which the programs in this section wrestled directly and indirectly: the question of the voyeuristic gaze, and the question of the appropriate response. For participants who have traveled to sites of injustice, violence, or structural harm, the question is not only how they will intervene, or what immediate impact they will have on the conditions that confront them, but how will they integrate the information they encounter into some broader normative moral and political context in which they are also agentively situated, so that they could understand themselves in relationship to the situation – not primarily as spectators, but as actors.⁴³⁶ These challenges were central to the patterns of travel and study that the Plowshares Institute developed in collaboration with theological educators in the 1980s and 1990s. It is to these initiatives that I now turn.

Traveling for Transformation

Theological seminaries were another key site for the development of ecumenical short-term travel practices in the 1980s and 1990s. Even as liberals were shying away from “mission” and “evangelism,” they were taking up issues of globalization and diversity in both ecumenical and seminary settings. In many cases, these experiences were not framed as “short-term mission” or even as “mission” at all. Nevertheless, they drew on some of the key themes of earlier short-term travel practices that were part of the ecumenical Protestant left — such as friendship, presence, learning, and struggle. They took up these themes and used them to frame global engagement in a new era, and to

⁴³⁶ Fabian Frenzel outlines these two main challenges in his work on slum tourism. See Fabian Frenzel, Ko Koens, and Malte Steinbrink, *Slum Tourism: Poverty, Power and Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

rethink practices of travel in light of both the ongoing critiques of tourism in the context of neoliberalism, and their own experiences of travel as a strategy for advancing projects of global democracy and liberation. In their focus on the education of seminary students, and on the “deprovincialization” of North American theological education itself, the programs I discuss in this section shift theological frames of liberation as well as conversion so that they focus on the American practitioners. The question, in other words, is no longer how mission and encounter transform “the other,” but how such encounters transform, convert, liberate, and awaken the American practitioner. These impulses have been present in many of the iterations of short-term mission practices that I explore earlier in the dissertation. But here they find their most explicit theological consideration.

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In the late 1970s, the Association for Theological Schools (ATS) established a task force on globalization. This task force led to a number of initiatives, including a major conference on “Internationalizing Theological Education” (1980) and a variety of subsequent international exchanges for students, faculty, and seminary administrators.⁴³⁷ Following this experience, the ATS decided to make globalization one of its major areas of emphasis for the 1990s, supporting both programmatic initiatives and the development

⁴³⁷ The conference on “Internationalizing Theological Education” was held in Atlanta in 1980. Funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, it brought together 45 participants, primarily from the Caribbean and the Atlanta Theological Association, and resulted in a variety of exchanges – a course in Jamaica for students from Atlanta, a sabbatical exchange by President William Watty of the United Theological College of the West Indies, summer ministry placements for three Atlanta students in Jamaica, a visit to Caribbean theological institutions by the ATA presidents, and a conference that brought together faculty from the ATA schools and church leaders and theologians from around the Caribbean. Erskine Clarke, “Globalization in the Rising Sunbelt,” *Theological Education, Patterns of Globalization: Six Studies*, 27, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 92–96.

of literature on the theme.⁴³⁸ This area of emphasis reflected the changing domestic and international contexts within which theological education was taking place. The presence of international students and racial-ethnic minority students in historically white seminary classrooms, in particular, was raising new questions for these schools, challenging seminaries both to diversify the curriculum and to engage global Christianity more explicitly. As demographers and historians began to confirm and discuss Christianity's shifting center of gravity, seminaries were further pressed to come to terms with these changing dynamics. As Susan Thistlethwaite put it, recalling the context within which these initiatives unfolded, the new historical moment and shifting global understanding required "the uncentering of Euro-Atlantic culture and theology" if theological education was to proceed with integrity.⁴³⁹

The Plowshares Institute: Pedagogies for the Non-Poor

To support seminaries in addressing this issue, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Luce Foundation turned to the Plowshares Institute. In 1987, the Luce Foundation funded a five-year initiative through which the Plowshares Institute would promote globalization in theological education through a series of conferences, seminars, and exchanges involving seminary faculty and students.

Plowshares itself was a "carrier" of the traditions of short-term exchange and travel in the networks of the Protestant left. The organization was founded in 1982 when

⁴³⁸ David A. Roozen, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pilot Immersion Project : Globalization and Theological Education* (Hartford Conn. : Simsbury, Conn.: Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research ; Plowshares Institute, 1996), 8–13.

⁴³⁹ Jerry K. Robbins, "Beyond Theological Tourism : Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 2 (March 1, 1997): 41. See, for example, Philip Jenkins, *The next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd edition.. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Robert Evans left his faculty post at Hartford Seminary to focus full time on projects that advanced international understanding and dialogue “in the service of a biblically inspired vision for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world community.” Through Plowshares, Robert and Alice Evans developed expertise in leading short-term, international immersion experiences. These “immersions” built on the Evans’s extensive networks of contacts throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific, developed over years of teaching and consulting. Plowshares’ leadership and supporters had been shaped by the ecumenical exchange programs and philosophies we have already discussed, including ongoing work in support of the peace movement in Nicaragua, the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, and other transnational social movements of the 1980s. They were “liberal to liberationist” in orientation, and their relationships and networks globally reflected these theological commitments.⁴⁴⁰

The Pilot Immersion Project for the Globalization of Theological Education that they developed for this initiative was inspired by the Plowshares International Traveling Seminar model, which they had been developing throughout the 1980s as part of a project called “Pedagogies for the Non-Poor.” This earlier project had been initiated at the behest of the organization’s International Advisory Council, made up of theological educators from the US and abroad, all of whom had substantial experience in the global south. It reflected the broader critique which had been resonating in liberationist communities for at least two decades – namely, that Christians and other allies in North America could do more good by working to transform the economic and political projects of the US and global institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund than they could

⁴⁴⁰ Roozen, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach*, 109.

by engaging in direct-action projects in Latin America, Africa, or Asia. At its heart, this was the same argument Ivan Illich had made in Cuernavaca in 1968, and it echoed the insights from colleagues that compelled Gail Phares to leave Central America and begin the work that became *Witness for Peace*.

In a similar vein, Plowshares Board member Philip J. Scharper, who was then the editor-in-chief at Orbis Press, became convinced that developing “transformative education” for the “non-poor” — a term that was parsed and debated extensively over the course of the project — was an essential component of the liberationist project that had emerged over the preceding decades. Developing “pedagogies on peace and justice for the non-poor was an issue of liberation.”⁴⁴¹ The goal of this project, then, was to identify, develop, and test models of education which would not only help to raise the consciousness of participants, but also help to cultivate communities of action working to transform oppressive structures.⁴⁴²

A number of consultations in the 1980s explored this theme. In 1982, an institute on “Pedagogy for the Non-Poor” was held at Emmanuel College in Boston, sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, whose members around the world had been drawing on Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of conscientization since the late 1970s. Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching and liberation theologies, and in direct response to the affirmation of Freire’s methodology by the bishops of Latin America, they had been

⁴⁴¹ Alice F. Evans, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), xiii.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, xi.

applying this approach to their work with the poor.⁴⁴³ In 1980, the order decided to focus its attention on “teaching the *non-poor* from the perspective of the poor,” but they found tremendous resistance. Determined to develop better tools and resources for this task, they convened this institute to explore what they needed, and what they knew.⁴⁴⁴ In 1983, a consultation on “Pedagogies for the Non-Poor” was held at the Claremont School of Theology just prior to the Religious Education Association conference where Freire himself was to be awarded the William Rainey Harper Award for his influence on the field.⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, as the framing phase suggests, it would be difficult to overstate Freire’s influence on these conversations, or on the approach to the immersive experiential education that Plowshares encouraged seminaries to undertake.

In the context of their work with seminaries, the Plowshares Institute was concerned to address what it saw as the provincialization of North American theological education. The project assumed that the globalization of theological education was essential for the faithful witness of the church, and that North American theological education was lacking in this regard to the extent that it remained isolated from the resources and insights of the “third world” church. This isolation, moreover, revealed a failure to affirm “the integrity and credibility of the third world’s indigenous resources of faith.”⁴⁴⁶ This was not simply a pedagogical concern, but a deeply theological one. In addition, the project reflected a conviction that the “qualities of third world spirituality,”

⁴⁴³ The Conference of Latin American Bishops endorsed the method at their assembly in Medellin in 1968, which was dedicated to Paulo Freire, and again in 1979 in Puebla, Mexico. Ibid., 187.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 189–203.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 219.

⁴⁴⁶ Roozen, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach*, 15.

both in relation to liturgical expression and social witness, would be an inspiration and a critical resource to theological education in North America. It thus reflected both a critique of the current situation in North American theological education and an optimism about what a more robust engagement with the global might offer.

For the dozen seminaries that participated in the program, Plowshares proposed a series of immersive international travel seminars, and made a connection between global and local immersions a cornerstone of the program.⁴⁴⁷ While the internationalization of theological education curriculum was a core goal, the program required that seminaries develop “local immersions” on the model of the international seminars that focused on the experiences and issues of marginalized and disadvantaged constituencies closer to home.⁴⁴⁸ A cluster of Chicago seminaries called this attention to “the third world at home” an effort to “connect the global perspective on the responsibilities of theological education to local situations of poverty and discrimination in North America.”⁴⁴⁹

Beyond Theological Tourism

Published in 1994, *Beyond Theological Tourism* records theological reflections growing out of participation in this ATS project. As the title makes clear, the contributors reject a consumer- or spectator-oriented approach to travel abroad that is associated with “tourism,” and at the same time they recognize that there are overlapping dynamics that

⁴⁴⁷ This had been a feature of their earlier work. In the mid-1980s, for example, they launched the “Citizens of the World” project, which worked with 21 leaders from the Hartford area for a three-year period, providing three immersion experiences over the course of three years, plus a series of seminars focused on common readings. The goal of the project was to strengthen networks among the participants and to equip them to “think globally and act locally” to better address problems of poverty and racism at home in Connecticut. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

shape educational travel and “tourism.” The book is both a report on the work of a cluster of Chicago-area seminaries participating in the Luce-ATS Plowshares Initiative, and an exploration of the factors necessary to make short-term travel a transformative experience, particularly for the “non-poor.”

The process Thistlethwaite describes in *Beyond Theological Tourism* is both affective and cognitive. “Human beings become human together.” The first step in “cooperation without exploitation” is a willingness to enter into different social structures “in respectful ways.” Intellectual awareness of difference alone does not equip us to engage with mutuality in the work of social transformation; an existential awareness is required. “It is not possible to think yourself into other people’s social conditions,” Thistlethwaite writes, “you have to *go there* and you have to *be there*.”⁴⁵⁰

But there is yet another stage in this process: recognition of how one’s social location is systemically related to the oppressive conditions against which marginalized communities are struggling. When this process involves a recognition of the way that privileged social locations have made us complicit in conditions of oppression (as Thistlethwaite assumes will be the case for her readers), these insights “both wound us and set us free” (12-13). This is not simply an embrace of mutuality for Thistlethwaite, but involves intellectual awareness and structural analysis, as well. As she puts it: “To come to a complex understanding of what it means to be human together, we must come

⁴⁵⁰ Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and George F. Cairns, eds., *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 12.

to understand and to act against the systemic structures which divide and set human beings over against each other and which destroy the possibility of community.”⁴⁵¹

Drawing on Freire, this approach to “travel for transformation” held together the ideal of personal, subjective transformation and the demands of transforming the objective reality, which was a question of politics. As Freire put it,

The transformation... about which we talk, constantly, has to go beyond the understanding we have sometimes of transformation as something which happens inside us. ... The individual dimension of transformation has to be completed by the objective transformation, or the transformation of the objectivity, of reality, and it is a question again of politics.⁴⁵²

Nonetheless, this conversion had to happen first on an individual level, in part because people who are “non-poor” have been shaped by ideological commitments of the dominant class. And in part because it was only possible to defect from these positions “as an individual, not as a class.” The best that could be hoped for was making it possible for some members of the dominating classes to be converted to the poor and the oppressed.⁴⁵³

The ideological formation of the middle class, moreover, poses a severe hurdle to this type of transformation. Ideology creates a situation in which it is tempting to see transformation, liberation, and freedom as strictly subjective, rather than objective and concrete.⁴⁵⁴ Middle-class people have the ability to move back and forth between the dominant class and the oppressed, “to make journeys back and forth, like tourists” – and this makes them feel that they are free and without guilt. In response to this challenge,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁵² Evans, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor*, 223.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 227.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 231.

educators had to find ways of making the ideological obstacles or blocks to both understanding and transformative action — that is, for subjective and objective transformation, individual and political transformation — into “objects to be known,” to make ideology, for instance, explicit, and an object of discussion and understanding.

Ultimately, Freire claims, this is a theological transformation, as well — a conversion. In his conversation with Robert Evans, Freire points to the profound sense in which conversion and mysticism are the proper frames for understanding this transformation:

How to go beyond our position of class? How to deny it, how to make it our Easter, how to die in order to be born again, differently? This is Easter. For me one of the central questions of us as Christians is that we speak about Easter but we never *do* Easter.... We write a lot about Easter. But it is so difficult to make it. Precisely because making Easter is to become committed, completely committed, in history... not to the preservation of the status quo but to the creation of the world, and in favor of the poor people, not of the rich people.

Such a conversion, moreover, contains “an extra-pedagogical element that is not controllable, researchable, or measurable.” This commitment to transformation stood in contrast to the “consultation mentality of the non-poor,” Freire noted. Programs could never be a substitute for true conversation. And devoting endless programmatic attention to matters of analysis, rather than action, could relieve guilt without resulting in objective transformation.

The ideological formation of the middle class that Freire speaks of here is not simply a matter of ideas and conceptual understandings of the world and how it works. Rather, the formation to which he refers is one that shapes sentiments and sensibilities, stories told and symbols condensed, affective and aesthetic practices. This is where Taylor’s notion of a social imaginary is profoundly helpful, because it suggests both the

comprehensiveness and the messiness of the social worlds into which we are formed. The comprehensiveness of this formation — that is, the fact that it is bound up with so many different elements of our social identities and practices — are a reminder that such worldviews are slow and challenging to change. They are not external forces from which we must break free; they are internal and internalized, and make us “who we are.”

If social imaginaries are comprehensive, they are not generally coherent. That is, they are always a heterogeneous mixture of ideas, symbols, stories, and hunches, some of which will be inconsistent or incompatible with one another. This heterogeneity, the multiplicity of ideas and practices that constitutes the global imaginary, makes it possible to imagine the kind of profound subjective and social shifts that Freire, the Plowshares Institute, and participants in these immersion experiences, hoped to achieve.

The models of international short-term travel proposed in the context of these consultations varied, but drawing heavily on the work of popular education theorists, and of Freire in particular, they saw periods of intense immersion in the developing world spent listening to and getting to know “the poor” as a particularly powerful opportunity for learning, and subsequently for radical change. Many of the contributions to the volumes that emerged from these initiatives echoed such themes.⁴⁵⁵ They also emphasized a kind of pedagogical modesty. Reflecting on the model of “traveling for transformation,” Carman St. J. Hunter notes that

the model is based on a firm belief in the efficacy of experiential education. Participants experienced the world of the poor firsthand. But is this experience sufficiently powerful to enable them to embrace the option

⁴⁵⁵ Evans, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor*; Alice Frazer Evans, Robert Allen Evans, and David A. Roozen, *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education* (Eugene, Ore: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

for the poor? I believe not. . . . No design can do more than provide the environment that perhaps will enable fundamental change, conversion, to happen.⁴⁵⁶

For the non-poor, who benefit from the status quo, the cost of living differently can be overcome only when the promise of the gospel, and of transformation, is experienced in the deepest part of our beings.⁴⁵⁷

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Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ecumenical Protestant institutions and networks cultivated new practices of short-term travel and exchange that were responsive to critiques of both mission and tourism that emerged from the global south in the 1970s. Indeed, clergy, theologians, and denominational and ecumenical leaders received and wrestled with these critiques in part through the types of gatherings that were well-established in the ecumenical world – commissions, consultations, conferences, seminaries, *encuentros*, travel seminars, and organizational meetings. The networks that nurtured these conversations, and which were reproduced through them, remained a vital source of communication between ecumenical church leaders in the global south and their colleagues – and friends – in North America and Europe.

Leaders and institutions on the ecumenical left continued to develop broad networks beyond the church in this period as well. Although they did not use the language of the mid-century ecumenical movement, they took from those earlier conversations a sense of what it meant to be “the Church in the world’s struggle,” seeking to understand God’s mission made known through the most vital political and social

⁴⁵⁶ Evans, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor*, 177.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

movements of the day. By the 1980s and 1990s, this brought the networks of the ecumenical left more thoroughly into relationship with secular and interreligious political and advocacy networks. Not only was it impossible to advocate for responsible tourism apart from those within the tourism industry, but the theology and ecclesiology which had emerged from ecumenical debates in the 1960s made this distinction a soft one, as did the social networks themselves. Like the Center for Responsible Tourism, which described itself equally as a “para-church organization” (borrowing language much more often associated with conservative evangelicals) and a “tourism activist organization,” porous and overlapping networks were made possible by the fluid identities that organizations and individuals were able to inhabit. This was true not despite their theologies of mission, however explicit or implicitly held, but because of them.

Another significant shift is evident in the practices of short-term travel and engagement that I have described in this chapter: they are increasingly resolute and explicit in their focus on these practices as a means for the formation, transformation, and conversion of “us” – that is, of American selves, churches, institutions, foreign policy, culture. If nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mission paradigms, which saw the conversion and “salvation” of the distant and different other as a primary aim, an aim to be pursued through some combination of preaching the gospel of Christ or modernizing, reformist activity, then the Protestants of the ecumenical left at the century’s end saw peace delegations, fact-finding tours, and educational immersion programs as a means of pursuing reform and conversions — of themselves and their own.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Decolonizing the Modern Social Imaginary

The processes of political decolonization that swept the globe in the mid-twentieth century thrust onto a new stage a set of ideas, practices, and understandings that had long circulated in anti-colonial networks. The structural and institutional changes effected by independence movements during that “season of decoloniality” were at once decisive and aspirational; they announced a new logic that would govern relationships between nations and peoples in the here and now, and at the same time they reaffirmed an aspirational commitment to a world that was not yet, a world coming into being in which an egalitarian, emancipatory, decolonized global imaginary would form the commonsense background against which global relationships would be made meaningful.

This project of decolonizing the global imaginary is the slow, demanding, creative work of cultivating the new and innovating within inherited structures, institutions, networks, and embodied practices — as well as new and inherited stories, symbols, songs, and habits. I say “work” here to emphasize the productive, generative process by which new forms of sociality come into being, but in our context the term “work” risks a kind of narrowing that misses the point. Decolonizing the global imaginary is not merely a matter of work, but also of worship, play, dreaming, kinship, learning, storytelling, spirit, passion, embodiment, and encounter. Messy and exhilarating, difficult and hopeful,

this process of living into and calling into being a new, decolonized global imaginary has been, and remains, an irreducibly global process.⁴⁵⁸

In these pages, I have sought to explore one small part of this story. Because practices of short-term mission bring together embodied practice, cross-cultural encounter, and discourse about these experiences in the form of speech, writing, images, and debates, the practice has served as a particularly dense node through which to view the tensions and contradictions in American Protestant understandings of the global and their place within it. In particular, I have sought to show that the affectively charged encounters with cultural difference, and in particular encounters with the counterhegemonic insights that emerge from the “dominated periphery” of Euro-American colonial histories, played a critical role in bringing to awareness the historically constructed limits by which the global imaginaries of the West have been constrained.⁴⁵⁹

I have explored short-term mission as a practice of Christian mission, both when practitioners enthusiastically insist on the term and when practitioners struggle to create distance from it. Short-term mission is a practice around which debates and uneasiness about mission remain visible and alive our culture. These debates, of course, are not the debates of historians whose painstaking reading of the archives open up more nuanced and sophisticated understandings of the ways that religious institutions and practices were

⁴⁵⁸ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

⁴⁵⁹ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 6; Enrique D. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, Latin America Otherwise (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 45.

interwoven with histories of imperial expansion; nor are they the debates of theologians about the nature of ecclesiology and the *missio dei* in the world. Though they may reflect an implicit understanding of both mission histories and mission theologies, popular debates about short-term mission, both in the church and beyond, are most fundamentally debates about changes in the most basic understandings that shape American Protestant engagement with the global that have taken place over the last half-century: Who are “we”? What is our place in the world? What histories have brought us to this place and time? How are we related to distant others? How shall we interact with one another? What obligations do these relationships entail? What is the emotional texture of these relationships: fear? desire? unease? embrace? These questions are rarely articulated explicitly. Rather, they tend to sit below the surface, animating the kinds of hope and ambivalence that I have described in these pages. They remain live questions because in a deep sense they remain unresolved.

Short-term mission provides an occasion for reflection on such questions because mission is a widely recognized social practice. I have made the case here for a broad understanding of short-term mission, arguing that it is part of a wider field of social practices that bring together elements of tourism, service, idealism, and personal development — volunteer vacations, educational travel seminars, alternative spring breaks, and so on. These varied forms of travel and encounter, including both ecclesial, non-ecclesial, and explicitly secular forms of short-term service, share roots with and contemporary Protestant practices of short term mission, mirror contemporary short-term mission practices, and figure in some of the same debates. The longer history of interaction between “religious” and “secular” forms of this practice are evident in the

case of Operation Crossroads Africa and Witness for Peace, both of which had roots in the ecumenical Protestant world, and were shaped by religious networks and cultures, but were not formally religious.⁴⁶⁰

Short-term mission provides a provocation for such reflections because while such practices announce themselves as embodiments of an emancipatory global imaginary defined by egalitarian relationships, and interactions of mutual service and equal regard, they often feature precisely the kinds of encounters and interactions that bring practitioners face to face with the histories, contradictions, hypocrisies and inconsistencies of this global imaginary — the distance between the actually existing world, and the decolonized global imaginary they proclaim. To the extent that they bear the mark of the earlier practices, institutions, and networks out of which they emerge, moreover, they carry the echo of histories of colonial expansion, as well, even if only in the way they come to have those pasts projected upon them. As literary scholar Simon Gikandi notes: “Decolonized situations are marked by imperial pasts they disavow.” For practitioners, these contradictions sometimes generate what we might call a “dance of resistance,” a simultaneous engaging in the practice and marking ambivalence.

Short-Term Mission and the Transformation of the American Protestant Global Imaginary

In the preceding chapters, I have sketched broadly the development of Christian short-term mission practices over the course of the second half of the twentieth century by describing moments of innovation in the form and understanding of the practice, and

⁴⁶⁰ See Chapters 2 and 6, above.

situating these practices in the context of broader historical, political, and economic shifts. I have argued that short-term mission has been an important practice through which American Protestants wrestled with changing understandings of the world and their place within it — that is, with a changing global imaginary — during a period in which both the US and the world were radically reshaped, first by processes of decolonization, and subsequently by intensified processes of globalization and neoliberalism. These global shifts, reflected in structural and institutional changes at the international level, were bound up with corresponding shifts in subjective and social shifts in culture, worldview, and self-understanding.

As these processes unfolded, individuals found critical resources for refashioning ideas and practices in both long-standing inherited practices, institutions, and networks, and in the wisdom that emerged from their encounters with those in the global south.

Operation Crossroads Africa (Chapter 2) and the Frontier Internship in Mission program (Chapter 3) were self-conscious efforts to reshape and reinterpret older missionary, associational, and educational practices to reflect new ideas about global relationships and solidarities. Both James H. Robinson and Margaret Flory had been influenced by decades of engagement with international networks — pan-Africanist and anti-colonial networks in Robinson's case, and in missionary and ecumenical networks in Flory's case. The global imaginaries that they brought to their work in these programs reflected worldviews and self-understandings that had been nurtured by transnational networks and practices. Operation Crossroads Africa and the Frontier Internship in Mission program built on these existing networks to pioneer new forms of short-term, transnational engagement that sought explicitly to embody and extend these ideals.

In developing Operation Crossroads Africa, James H. Robinson drew on practices associated with the Social Gospel and progressive era reform movements — in particular student volunteering, interracial collaboration, intercultural tours, and the residential work camp — to develop a program that connected young Americans to the democratic and anti-colonial ideals on the African continent. Robinson extended these practices, applying them to broader global purposes and contexts and making explicit the ways in which he saw kinship between democratic movements and practices of social solidarity within the United States and beyond. Americans, he understood, had an important role to play as “witnesses to democracy” overseas, just as the democratic aspirations of Africans had something to teach Americans about their “unfinished” democratic project at home.

Margaret Flory drew on established practices and missionary networks of the ecumenical Protestant world to develop the Frontier Internship in Mission. The program built on existing ecumenical and missionary networks, on a tradition of theologically and politically engaged travel seminars that stretched back to the interwar period, and on Protestant traditions of higher education. In each case, she transformed existing transnational practices, bringing to them a new commitment to engaging the “third world” and the missionary and ecumenical networks that made such an expanded vision possible. The Frontier Internships drew on these practices, refashioning them in response to ongoing theological debates about mission then circulating in the ecumenical world. In this way, the program pioneered and modeled a kind of Christian formation for a more globally conscious moment.

Not only did experiences like these allow young people to gain knowledge about the world, and the political struggles that were transforming it. They also modeled a new

type of training and formation for a new global social order, designed to help young people cultivate political, moral, and social subjectivities that reflected the emerging normative liberal ideal of the post-war period — that of a global citizen, whose broad sympathies and transnational solidarities were a resource for collaboration beyond national borders. This was, to borrow Taylor's terms, a new form of civility. The new sociability that processes of decolonization both enabled and required necessitated new forms of training, education, and formation, not just of the mind but also of the heart.

While these two programs made such experiences available to a relatively small number of young people, and drew largely elite college and university networks, the dramatic expansion of evangelical practices of short-term mission and exchange that emerged in the same period both reflected and enabled a much broader Protestant engagement with this global practice. In Chapters 4 and 5, I traced the development of short-term mission practices in the evangelical world, first discussing their emergence from Pentecostal networks beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Chapter 4), and then following the diffusion and diversification of the practice through evangelical networks over the next several decades (Chapter 5).

I drew on the histories of two organizations that are widely credited with popularizing evangelical short term mission practices, Youth With a Mission (YWAM) and Operation Mobilization (OM), to show that evangelical forms of short-term mission popularized in the 1960s and 1970s emerged largely at the initiative of young people themselves, and grew out of existing institutional networks and practices, particularly practices of itinerant evangelism and urban evangelistic crusades. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) played an important role in reframing Christian missions and the

Christian global imaginary for evangelical young people during the 1970s and 1980s as well, introducing students to critical voices from the two-thirds world and adapting to student interests in shorter-term mission opportunities.

Evangelistic short-term mission programs imagined the whole world as a mission field. While they initially focused their attention on Mexico and the Caribbean, they fairly quickly expanded their evangelistic efforts in Europe and even in the United States. The missionary endeavor was “from everywhere, to everywhere,” a significant global reframing in itself. While these organizations and the short-term practices they developed were animated by different theological and political understandings than those of their ecumenical counterparts, and by different ecclesial networks and practices, they similarly helped to open space for new and innovative practices, images, and stories that would help to shape the emerging evangelical global imaginary.

Here, too, were new forms of training, formation, and discipline that would help to prepare young people for new forms of global sociability. Echoing the earlier evangelistic traditions out of which they grew, the evangelistic travel these groups modeled was understood as countercultural and rustic; participation was a “radical” decision marked by renunciation of middle-class consumer comforts and an embrace of risk; intensive communal living as much as emotional worship served as a source of group bonding. At the same time, the broadly evangelical, youth-centered, international travel that YWAM and OM championed, facilitated the practices they had inherited in response to the emerging class aspirations of American evangelicalism and the increasingly mainstream place of evangelicalism in American life. The dramatic

expansion of these programs, and others like them, helped to shape a new global imaginary across a broad swath of American Christianity.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the practice of short-term mission was popularized within American Protestantism through a number of different routes. Between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, short-term mission trips became a familiar part of the repertoire of religious institutions and movements, and thus came to be employed in a wide variety of institutional settings, for a range of purposes, and with an ever-expanding set of meanings. In Chapter 5, I examined several key evangelical contexts within which short-term mission is transformed from a practice for young adults to a popular practice for congregations and a programmatic staple of high school youth groups. Evangelical colleges, organizations focused on mobilizing congregations to support “frontier” mission, and youth ministry organizations all saw short-term mission practices as a resource for their ends.

In Chapter 6, I returned to the development of short-term mission within the institutions and networks of the ecumenical Protestant left. Here the language of “mission” was often set aside, and even practices of short-term travel, education, exchange, and solidarity that grew out of these same ecumenical networks discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 (much attenuated by this point) were often formally situated outside of the institutional church. Nevertheless, I argued that these practices inherited their form and self-understanding from earlier practices such as those pioneered by Operation Crossroads Africa and the Frontier Internships program. I discussed two examples of practices in this vein: peace delegations organized as part of the Central American peace movement, and educational exchange programs that emerged in the context of theological

education institutions. I also discussed critiques of tourism circulating in ecumenical networks during this period and their implications for short-term travel practices. During the 1980s and 1990s, the networks of the Protestant left cultivated new practices of short-term travel and exchange that were responsive to critiques of both mission and tourism that had emerged from the global south in the 1970s.

If these practices were of the church but not fully within it, as I have suggested above, they were at the same time emerging within broad advocacy and social movement networks that included increasing religious diversity, as well as secular actors and institutions. In this way, forms and practices that had been incubated and first practiced within religious communities began to become part of the repertory of collective social practices in a broader set of institutions and groups, including secular networks, as well. While this engagement with secular social movements and advocacy networks clearly reflected the strategic necessities of particular social movements, it also reflected the theological understanding of mission that had emerged on the ecumenical left in the late 1960s — participation in the *missio dei*, God’s mission in the world, was defined as engagement with the “world’s struggles.” Wherever those struggles were unfolding, God’s people should be present and engaged in struggle, too. Thus both a missiological and an ecclesiological insight framed this engagement beyond ecclesial boundaries, however implicitly.

Going Home: a “reverse civilizing mission”

There is a theme woven throughout these pages to which I turn in closing. Throughout these pages, an injunction issues forth for Americans to “Go Home” and set about the work of reform and conversion — not reform and conversion of some distant

culture or people, as an older missionary paradigm might imply, but the reform and conversion of American society itself, and of the institutions, culture, and self-understanding that shaped America's engagement with the wider world.

We can hear this in Aaron Tolon's critique of his American colleagues in the World Student Christian Federation for their naïve and unstrategic support of American foreign policy: "What you call kindness and service is for me a danger to be resisted."

⁴⁶¹Ivan Illich makes the case clearly in his speech to North American "do-gooders": "If you have any sense of responsibility at all, stay with your riots here at home."⁴⁶² It was present, too, in the demands of evangelical students at Urbana '67, especially African Americans and delegates from the "third world," who condemned equally the church's failure to engage racism at home and its failure to let go of colonialist missionary practices overseas.⁴⁶³ When Gail Phares' Central American colleagues urged her to return to the US to work for changes in US policies toward Central America, and when the Plowshares' International Advisors insisted that "transformative education for the non-poor" was essential to the work of liberation, they were both insisting on this shift in perspective.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ Aaron Tolon, "Exciting, Disturbing America: 1968 - Black Power in the View of an African," in *World Student Christian Federation Memoirs and Diaries, 1895-1990*, ed. Elizabeth Adler (Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, 1994), 192-98.

⁴⁶² Ivan Illich, *To Hell with Good Intentions* (New York, 1968).

⁴⁶³ Keith Hunt and Gladys M Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of Interservice Christian Fellowship-USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 253.

⁴⁶⁴ Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 71.

In a different way, this shift is visible among Evangelicals as well. Both youth ministers and young people increasingly began to reframe the participation of young people in short-term missions; the emphasis on discipleship, formation, and spiritual growth for participants was a new point of significance. This stood in contrast to the early vision of YWAM and OM, for instance, which saw young people as crucial laborers in the urgent task of evangelism, washing up on the shores of the world. Congregations, too, began to explain their engagement with short-term mission practices as a means for improving congregational vitality, and not simply because they were the “weak link” in reaching the world’s “unreached people.” These shifts in focus are distinct from those I mention above, in relation to the practices of the ecumenical Protestant left, but they share a common sense that the proper object of reform is the self, and beyond this, the institutions and structures of American society.

These are calls to both social reform and to a reformation of subjective self-understanding, a process of moral perfection. They are an invitation to personal conversion and to the conversation of the shared system of global social relationships in which we are all embedded. In both its ecumenical and evangelical varieties, then, strands of conversion and reformist ethics remain, but have been redirected.

The idea that Americans missionaries, volunteers, and reformers could do more good at home, and that their efforts ought to be concentrated “on their own” people or communities, at times reflected a strategic intervention that emerged forcefully around particular issues or situations. For instance, when the root of violence in Nicaragua was judged to be policies made in Washington, DC, efforts to address the suffering of Nicaraguan peasants seemed futile as long as those policies remained in place. Thus

American politicians, and by extension, American voters, were the proper object of reform efforts. In one sense, then, the insistence that the proper object of reform in the decolonizing and postcolonial era, was America itself — both its self-understanding and its policies — often reflected a particular social and political analysis of oppression, poverty, and suffering in the developing world, and identification of strategic points of leverage.

In another sense, though, this insistence that America and Americans themselves were in need of conversion and reform reflects what Leela Gandhi has called a “reverse civilizing mission.”⁴⁶⁵ Gandhi traces a longer genealogy of practices in the anticolonial world, simultaneously pedagogical and critical, that reflected an insight into the profound moral costs of empire, for its perpetrators and beneficiaries as well as its victims.⁴⁶⁶ The Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, for example, framed the colonial demand for independence from Europe as an intervention undertaken on behalf of the colonizers themselves and with their moral flourishing in mind. Colonialism, he insisted, “works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the world, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism.”⁴⁶⁷ The notion that “transformative education” could be vitally liberating for middle-class North Americans, trapped as they were by their own ideological formation, is rooted in just such an insight.

⁴⁶⁵ Leela Gandhi, *The Common Cause: Postcolonial Ethics and the Practice of Democracy, 1900 - 1955* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

⁴⁶⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 35; Gandhi, *The Common Cause*, 4.

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