

**THE GLOBAL REFLEX: DAVID M. STOWE AND AMERICAN ECUMENICAL
MISSION IN A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD**

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With implications for historians of American culture and politics, human rights, Christianity, and transnationalism, this dissertation examines the role of global influences – especially “Third World” voices, theologies, movements, and postcolonial discourses – on American Protestant missionaries in the late twentieth century. To expose these influences, this dissertation examines the missiological and theological work of Protestant missionary, humanitarian, and mission executive David M. Stowe (1919-2000). Stowe’s experience makes clear the ways in which international experiences and dialogues placed missionaries in a unique position to serve as conduits for global influences to circulate back into American theology, humanitarian concern, and human rights advocacy. In particular, Stowe’s decades-long career provides a window into the Protestant rearticulation of “mission” to include humanitarian causes and human rights advocacy in the late 20th century, as manifested in the theological language he and his cohort used to describe and defend human rights as well as in their activism for justice-related causes both in America and abroad. I hope to demonstrate that human rights conventions were given significant impetus and support from the concern for socio-economic justice, ecology, and other “Third World” issues shown by American religionists like Stowe. And rather than relegate this historical (and ongoing) engagement with human rights concepts by religious actors to a privatized sphere, I argue that contemporary human rights discourse would benefit from a better understanding of the effects of missionary experience on the historical development

of humanitarianism. Beyond discursive value, moreover, the implementation of humanitarian and human rights concepts would also enjoy practical benefits from a familiarity with American Protestantism's struggle to address twentieth-century anti-colonial critiques. In demonstrating these benefits by drawing connections between missionary experience and the emergence of American humanitarianism and human rights discourse, this research is ultimately aimed at bridging gaps between national and global, the West and the "rest," and religious and secular histories.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ASM	American Society of Missiology
CALCAV	Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam
CCIA	Churches' Commission on International Affairs (WCC)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPD	Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (WCC)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CMA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC)
CWS	Church World Service (NCC)
DFM	Division of Foreign Missions (NCC)
DOM	Division of Overseas Mission (NCC)
EVP	Executive Vice President (UCBWM)
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
GNP	Gross National Product
HEW	Health, Education, and Welfare
HRAG	Human Rights Advisory Group (WCC/CCIA)
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IMC	International Missionary Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JAM	Joint Action for Mission
KMT	Kuomintang (Guomindang)
NCC	National Council of Churches
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PCR	Programme to Combat Racism (WCC)
PLA	People's Liberation Army (CCP)
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
SRI	Socially Responsible Investment
SVM	Student Volunteer Movement
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement (China)
UCBWM	United Church Board for World Ministries
UCC	United Church of Christ
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN)
UN	United Nations
WCC	World Council of Churches

1.0 INTRODUCTION: DAVID M. STOWE, THE GLOBAL REFLEX, AND PROTESTANT MISSION IN A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD

“Each missionary is a personal bridge between continents, between countries and cultures and classes in a fragmented world desperately in need of such bridges.”

– David M. Stowe, “Mission and the United Church” (1958)

From his first days as an undergraduate at the University of California Los Angeles and well into an industrious retirement some forty years later, David M. Stowe (1919-2000) saved nearly every piece of paper that came across his desk. These thousands of pages of correspondence, research material, magazine clippings, meeting minutes, organizational reports, sermons, and public talks – a body of physical testimony to a long and prolific career in the American missionary movement – were deposited into an impressive 244 archival boxes at the Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections. The sheer quantity and breadth of these materials (and the apparent compulsivity with which they were saved) certainly lends credence to the historian’s adage that ‘the archive is part of the story,’ and indeed no small part of that story is Stowe’s sense of recording his place “at the heart of ecumenical history.” Another part of that story, however, is that historical archives are often subject to many of the same political and social forces as the figures whose lives they document – forces which determine whose stories are included (or omitted), where and how they are kept, and which researchers are granted access to them. No matter the wealth of primary source material available in an archive like Stowe’s, then, historians perhaps have a responsibility to engage with alternative evidence which can tell

the stories of those marginalized, overlooked, or otherwise excluded from the historical record, rather than reinforce the disproportionate focus on certain figures in history simply because their stories are the most well-documented.¹

Why, then, tell the story of David Stowe – another white, male, American Protestant born and reared in the Midwest, educated in California, and employed in Boston and New York City? Despite his own recognition of the profundity of “immortalizing” his life’s work in archival storage,² have not the histories of urban religious elites and bureaucrats, of mainline American Protestants and missionaries, of well-off white churchmen been “done”? However self-evident the answers to these questions seem, there is in fact an enormous amount of work to be done to map the landscape of American Protestant mission in the 20th century, and especially of the ways that the global networks it produced in turn had an influence on politics and priorities at home. As this introduction will review, this project seeks to study Stowe as a means of filling in the gaps in the extant literature on missionary work in this period – gaps that are the result of a disproportionate emphasis on evangelical missions, a tendency to uncritically portray missionaries as cultural imperialists, and, most significantly, a neglect of the ways in which missionary experience and discourse was just as fundamental to the construction of American national and religious identity as it was to making native converts.

¹Antoinette M. Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); David M. Stowe, “The Division of Overseas Ministries: From Then till Now,” David M. Stowe Papers, Yale Divinity School Library Special Collections, Record Group 156, (hereafter DMS Papers) Box 17, Folder 141.

²David Stowe to extended family, 3 February 1985, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 17.

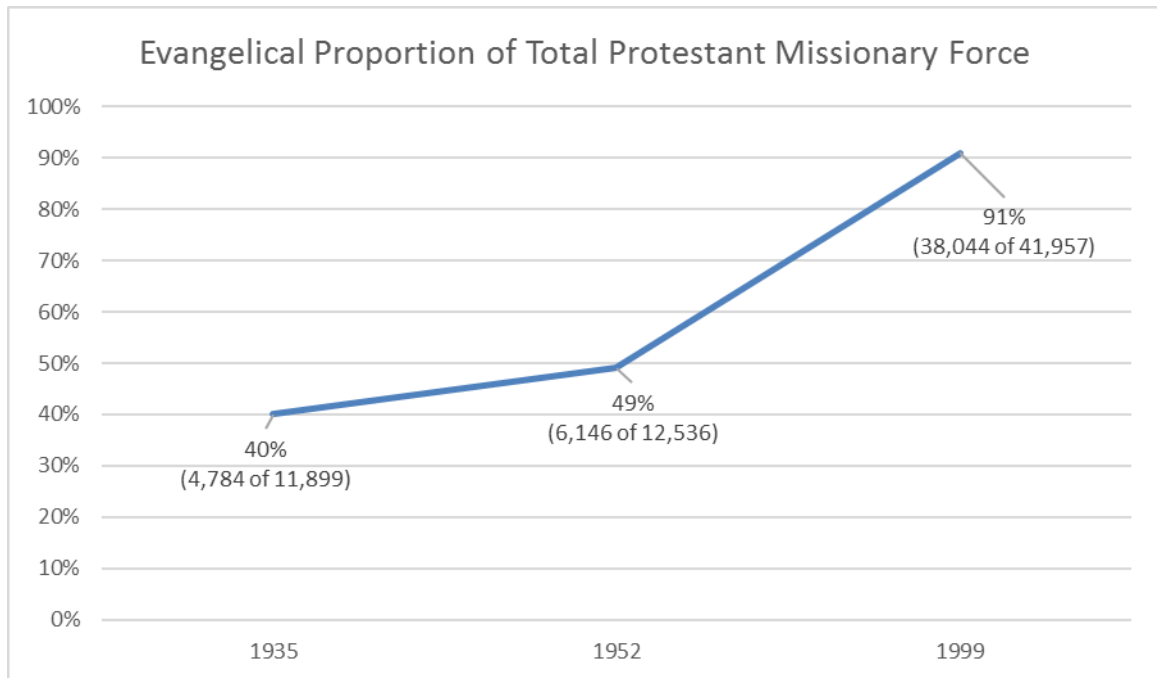


Figure 1. Evangelical Proportion of Total US Protestant Missionary Force
(Source: Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 84)

The fact that a preponderance of academic and theological studies focus on missionaries of the evangelical or nondenominational variety is likely due to the fact that by 1990, they constituted roughly 90% of all American career missionaries (See Figure 1).³ While a concentration on these missionaries is thus proportional from a statistical perspective, and fits neatly into established historiographical narratives of mainline “decline” and evangelical “growth,” it obscures shifts in the scope and meaning of mission over the course of the 20th century, particularly among a core group of progressive American Protestants, hailing from

³Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, “Preface,” in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), xii; William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 14.

mainline denominations, who identified themselves as “ecumenicals.”⁴ These changes, somewhat ironically, have contributed to the very perceptions of decline in ecumenical career missionaries which are the cause of their scholarly neglect. Put another way, the shrinking

⁴Although evangelicals and ecumenical organizations have a troubled, often contentious history (as the chapters in this project will discuss), it should be noted that a sizable number of self-identified evangelicals and theological conservatives also participated in the ecumenical movement. Stowe’s dual emphasis on mission and social concerns in an international context, however, was characteristic of the majority of those Americans within the ecumenical movement, in the perceived indivisibility of its missionary, church unity, and social justice work. Because Stowe identified primarily as an “ecumenical” and not as a “mainline” or “liberal” Protestant, I will hereafter refer to him as such. Despite the fact that Stowe shared certain features with “liberals”— an emphasis on historical and scientific inquiry and the redemption of the social order, for example – the term “liberal” Protestant is somewhat misleading. In the first place, as some historians have pointed out, the equation of “mainline” Protestantism with liberalism was a rhetorical tendency on the part of many conservatives, and does not reflect the “moderate middle” positionality of many within the Protestant establishment. Indeed, by Stowe’s own account, “liberal Protestant” was used as a “derisive label” against him. In his view, liberal-conservative doctrinal “squabbles” were of little relevance or aid to the Protestant missionary effort, the chief concern of his life’s work. And it is this concern for mission above all else that justified his association with the ecumenical movement, tied as it was from its very foundation with the missionary effort. In other words, the primary context for his socio-political views was an international ecumenical one, and so the referent for his work in this analysis will reflect that. See David Stowe to Avery Post and Martha Baumer, 10 December 1981, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 188; Paul Abrecht, “Amsterdam to Vancouver - Where are we Today in Ecumenical Social Thought?” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 4 (1984): 139.

For a discussion of the meanings and uses of these terms (liberal, ecumenical, mainline), see Leonard I. Sweet, “The 1960s: The Crises of Liberal Christianity and the Public Emergence of Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 21; David Hollinger, “Religious Liberalism and Ecumenical Self-Interrogation” in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds. Leigh E. Schmidt and Sally M. Promey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 379; Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 67; William R. Hutchison, “From Protestant to Pluralist America,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), x; William R. Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission: Revision and Realignment,” in *Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America, 1935-1985*, eds. David W. Lotz, Donald W. Shriver, John Frederick Wilson, and Robert T. Handy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 156; William R. Hutchison, “Protestantism as Establishment,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14-15; Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans, “Introduction,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5-6; Dennis N. Voskuil, “Reaching Out: Mainline Protestantism and the Media,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 90; Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898, and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 73; Elisha Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6; Richard V. Pierard, “Evangelical and Ecumenical: Missionary Leaders in Mainline Protestantism, 1900-1950,” in *Re-Forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present*, eds. Douglas G. Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 151; Sarah E. Ruble, *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Missionaries in American Culture after World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 53; Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 9, 20-2; Heidi Rolland Unruh and Ronald J. Sider, *Saving Souls, Serving Society: Understanding the Faith Factor in Church-Based Social Ministry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

number of “strictly proselytizing” missionaries employed by ecumenical agencies was a deliberate, globally-minded trend, a fact which is belied by an emphasis on statistical data like church attendance to chart the declension of certain “mainline” denominations within American society.⁵

As Stowe’s story will demonstrate, many ecumenicals over the course of the 20th century began to redefine their understanding of mission and conversion, grapple with postcolonial and anti-imperial discourses, and increasingly devote themselves to humanitarian relief, structural change, and social justice – projects which did not necessarily require ordained career missionaries or prioritize the numerical strength of home congregations. Numerous historians, observers, and ecumenical leaders themselves have indeed pointed to the indivisibility of missionary work and social action within the ecumenical movement. As historian William Hutchison notes, the “sharp decline” in the number of foreign missionaries sent by mainline and ecumenical boards seems “telling” until one considers the number of “church people – many times more than in the past – whose forms of overseas service in the 1980s would be hard to distinguish from those undertaken by mainline missionaries of the 1930s.” Because their mission was increasingly aimed at something more (or different) than individual conversion, the relative

⁵Allowing quantitative data to direct the thrust of historical inquiry, especially in the case of the American “mainline” denominations, is in fact problematic for a number of other reasons. As Gary Dorrien argues, perceptions of certain churches as “mainstream” were derived not from the size of their constituencies but from their collective “cultural capital” – their influence on American policy and public opinion, their material presence in public space, and their self-ascribed role as America’s moral guardians. In short, the term “mainline” does not so much describe a statistical reality as what Elisha Coffman calls a “self-conception as the center,” or an argument about how the church should engage with the world. See Coffman, 4; Gary Dorrien, “America's Mainline: The History of Charles Clayton Morrison and the Christian Century.” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 237 (2013): 27.

strength of the ecumenical missionary force – and the scholarly attention devoted to it as a result – perhaps ought not be determined by the quantity of professional missionaries it involved.⁶

In addition to this imbalance of academic attention, histories of mission and missionaries within both ecclesiastical and “secular” historiography have tended to hew to certain well-worn tropes. The first of these, more prominent in early church histories, was the tendency to lionize missionaries as martyrs, heroes, or “exemplars of ideal piety in a sea of persistent savagery.” This literary elevation of missionary individuals, however academically unreliable, served distinct hagiographic, devotional, educational, and promotional purposes for Christian writers and readers. But by the mid-twentieth century, the heroes had become the “villains” and the “dinosaurs.” Influenced by the theories of Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and Edward Said, among others, many scholars began to demonstrate a second tendency: to portray missionaries as unapologetically imperialist, orientalist, or oppressive, oftentimes neatly conflating the growth of political and economic empire with the missionary spread of Christianity. A number of other contexts – the “Enlightenment heritage” and liberal aversion to proselytization of the academy, the rise of identity politics, anti-imperialist and postcolonial discourses, and other socio-cultural trends toward “secularization” also encouraged this view of missionaries as atavistic survivals of a bygone age.⁷

⁶On the continued relevance of telling liberal, mainline, or ecumenical Protestant stories generally, see Hutchison, “Protestant to Pluralist,” ix; Hollinger, “Religious Liberalism and Ecumenical Self-Interrogation,” 378; Malcolm D. Magee, *What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith-Based Foreign Policy* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 7; Jason S. Lantzer, *Mainline Christianity: The Past and Future Shape of America’s Majority Faith* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 3-4. On ecumenical Protestant mission and its imbrication with social thought and action, see Unruh and Sider, 135; Abrecht, 139; William R. Hutchison, “Discovering America,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 308.

⁷Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 2; Philip Yuen-Sang Leung, “Mission History versus Church History,” in *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 59-62; Norman Etherington, “Introduction,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7; Edward E. Andrews, “Christian Missions and Colonial Empires Reconsidered: A Black Evangelist in West Africa, 1766-1816,” *Journal of Church and State* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2009):

The concept of “cultural imperialism,” defined in 1974 by Arthur Schlesinger as “purposeful aggression” on the part of one country towards the values or ideas of another and reiterated by anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (albeit with greater nuance) in the 1990s using the language of the “colonization of consciousness,” remains perhaps the most significant example of this tendency. This model initially challenged the dominant understanding of imperialism as political or economic – in other words, as a process of territorial and capitalist market expansion by an empire or nation in which missionaries were generally cast as accomplices or conspirators. It often recognized, unlike previous scholarship and as many historians have since, that the relationship between missionaries and imperial projects was not systematic and intentional but disorganized, ambiguous, and sometimes even antagonistic; missionaries certainly aided and benefitted from colonialism, but also provided educational, medical, linguistic, and other services that equipped natives to stand up to exploitation, and often fought against it themselves. Despite refusing to reduce missionaries to mere pawns or hirelings of colonial or American expansionism, however, cultural imperialism theories did not absolve them; instead, they posited that in spreading “Western Civilization” as well as Christ, missionaries operated as agents of a separate but parallel kind of expansion: a “moral” or “cultural” imperialism. The connections of the 19th century American missionary endeavor to

663-4; Allen D. Hertzke, *Freeing God's Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 98; Dana L. Robert, “Introduction,” in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 1-2; Dana L. Robert, “Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 2 (April 2000): 53; Dana L. Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology: A Brief Review,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 1 (2014): 3; Dana L. Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission: The Historiography of American Protestant Foreign Missions Since World War II,” in *New Directions in American Religious History*, eds. Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 368; George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 4; Daniel Castro, *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé De Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 183; Robert L. Montgomery “Missions/Missiology,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos Jr. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998), 303.

premillennialism, manifest destiny, and the language of conquest did little to dispute such “missionary-bashing.”⁸

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that mission history did not sit atop the list of priorities for American historians in the latter half of the twentieth century. Their almost categorically negative valuation of missionaries seemed to justify the relegation of mission history to

⁸Arthur Schlesinger, “The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism,” in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Jean Comaroff, and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Volume 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), xi-3.

Many recent works continue to challenge the notion that missionaries were cooperative accomplices or willing agents of imperial goals. See Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Andrew Porter, “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780–1914,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 3 (1997); Andrew Porter, “Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III : The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and William Roger Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1999); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009); Norman Etherington, “Education and Medicine,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire 1800– 1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Emily S. Rosenberg, “Missions to the World: Philanthropy Abroad,” in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, eds. Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark Douglas McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 244; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 66-8, 72-5; David Maxwell, “Decolonization,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 287; Alan Lester, “Humanitarians and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64; Tomila Lankina and Lullit Getachew, “Mission or Empire, Word or Sword? The Human Capital Legacy in Postcolonial Democratic Development,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (2012): 466, 478; Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “Assembling Bodies and Souls: Missionary Practices on the Pacific Frontier,” in *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America*, eds. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh Eric Schmidt, and Mark R. Valeri (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 52, 54; Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 412; Paul Harris, “Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries: Collaboration and Dependency in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China,” *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (1991): 310-13; Nicholas B. Dirks, “Introduction,” in *Colonialism and Culture*, edited by Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 7; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, “Introduction: Gendered Missions at Home and Abroad,” in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, eds. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 6, 11, 23; Owen White and J. P. Daughton, “Introduction: Placing French Missionaries in the Modern World,” in *In God’s Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World*, eds. Owen White and J.P. Daughton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12; Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 9, 11, 209-13; Wilbert R. Shenk, “Introduction,” in *The World is Too Much With Us*, by Charles R. Taber (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), xii; Mark R. Amstutz, *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 51-2; Dana Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 99; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 367-8; Robert, “Shifting Southward,” 50-1.

simultaneity with imperial history or to its “proper” turf in church history. As mission historian Dana Robert reports, “interest was either gone or confined to the negative.”⁹ Since the 1990s, however, mission history has begun to move beyond its “captivity” to secularizing and colonialist paradigms and towards a more accepted place in the contemporary academy through the works of figures like William Hutchison, Brian Stanley, Andrew Porter, and Lamin Sanneh. Dismissive critiques of missionaries have been increasingly critiqued themselves – for being equally ideologically motivated, or for reducing complex histories to what historian James Axtell calls “simplistic morality play[s]” that amount to “little more than the familiar Eurocentric plot turned on its normative head.”¹⁰

The cultural imperialism paradigm has recently come under fire as well, first of all for its lack of nuance and precision; the label can apply to, for example, both the popularity of American products in 1990s Britain but also to the cultural changes that occurred in African societies in the colonial period. Furthermore, its definition as “purposeful aggression” is similarly unspecific: whose purposes are we talking about? What constitutes aggression? Are we referring to intentions or effects? Or do we simply mean racism, condescension, and a superiority complex on the part of the missionary?¹¹ More fundamentally, as historian Ryan Dunch notes, a focus on imperialism (even of the cultural variety) reduces what are in fact highly complex

⁹Fred W. Beuttler, “Evangelical Missions in Modern America,” in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 110; Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 363; R. Pierce Beaver, “Missionary Motivation through Three Centuries,” in *Reinterpretation in American Church History*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 113; Gerald H. Anderson, “Mission Research, Writing, and Publishing,” in *The Future of the Christian World Mission: Studies in Honor of R. Pierce Beaver*, eds. William J. Danker and Wi Jo Kang (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971); Robert, *Christian Mission*, 93.

¹⁰James Axtell, “Review: Invading America: Puritans and Jesuits,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14, no. 3 (Winter 1984): 636, 645.

¹¹Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 142; Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 103; Tinker, 115; Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 368-9; Robert, “Introduction” in *Converting Colonialism*, 2; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 10.

interactions to simple dichotomies between “actor” and “acted upon.” It relies on essentialist discourses of cultural or national authenticity to attribute agency to abstract forces (“American imperialism tried to...”) and peg native populations as passive targets of those forces. Although the cultural imperialism model does have some analytic utility in light of the realities of globalization and orientalism, it often fails to account for the agency or ability of those who had once been understood as “passive recipients” to effect change and dynamism in those who had been their “missionizers” or “colonizers.”¹²

Even as telling Stowe’s story might address the need for an analysis of ecumenical missionaries which does not interpret change as decline¹³ and which widens the interpretive space between hero-worship and missionary-bashing, focusing on a figure like Stowe could still limit the scope of inquiry in ways that ignore those “passive recipients” whose stories are less well-documented. This project works to address this issue by seeking out the voices of the marginalized, oppressed, or excluded *within* the archival material itself. It uses postcolonialism (as method) to assess the effect of postcolonialism (as social movement) on American missionaries, figures historically associated with imperial power. It does so by assuming that the story of an American missionary and mission executive contains within it the effects of numerous points of contact and exchange with Christians and non-Christians around the world, and especially in the global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America).¹⁴ In other words, it operates

¹²Peter Berger, "Globalization and Culture: Religions and Globalization," *European Judaism* 36.1 (2003): 5-6; Heather Curtis, "Depicting Distant Suffering: Evangelicals and the Politics of Pictorial Humanitarianism in the Age of American Empire," *Material Religion* 8, no. 2 (June 2012): 160; Ryan Dunch, "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity," *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (October 2003): 302, 318.

¹³Donald E. Miller, *The Case for Liberal Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 127-8; David A. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 19.

¹⁴I choose to refer to these continents collectively as the “global South” rather than the “Third World,” “developing,” or “undeveloped” world (except where they appear as such in primary source quotations) for several

with the belief that the voices of those Stowe sought to teach, aid, convert, and learn from are very much present in the archive, despite the absence of their names from the archival finding aid.

Stowe's story, then, is not only a story about his own life and the changes in 20th century American Protestant mission, but also about the transnational factors and contexts which shaped them. Stowe's archive contains records of his missionary sojourn in North China, teaching appointment in Lebanon, and attendance at conferences everywhere from Basel and Nairobi to Tokyo and Melbourne. It includes correspondence and reports from his observational trips to Christian communities in Nicaragua, Brazil, Honduras, Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria, Costa Rica, South Korea, and a host of other countries. Taken together, the presence of these materials in the archive brings into view the way in which global experience and exchange informed the content of his public addresses and sermons and directed policy formation and program creation at home in the US.

Viewing the presence of these transnational influences on Americans like Stowe through the lens either of national history or of globalization, however, is problematic. As historian Thomas Bender and others have suggested, the story of an American citizen is by no means "hermetically sealed" or "territorially self-contained," thus rendering a strictly national perspective incomplete.¹⁵ Alternatively, the concept of globalization for some connotes the one-

reasons. First, the First-Second-Third World formulation has clear historical ties to the geopolitics of the Cold War, and for this reason is an outmoded (and politically charged) set of terminology. Secondly, most of these terms imply a hierarchy (economic or otherwise) in the world order, and for this reason read to many as derogatory. Additionally, in the context of academic works in Christian history, the term global South is by far the standard for discussing demographic and theological shifts in world Christianity over the course of the 20th century. In the final analysis, of course, the term "global South" does little to avoid the homogenization and glossing of diversity of terms like "Third World" or "developing world," but it does avoid some of their negative connotations.

¹⁵A transnational frame such as Bender and others have suggested, to be more specific, assumes that United States history cannot be properly and fully understood by looking only at the United States, that non-state actors intervened in American and global history at least as much as did diplomats and generals, and that religious or other

directional spread of American political, cultural, or economic hegemony. Observers in the global South especially tend to read globalization as a “dark force” associated with greed, control, materialism, consumerism, and the destruction of local values or traditions. Given that Christians in the global South today constitute a majority within world Christianity, this is particularly problematic. Furthermore, the term globalization does not appear to sensitively and accurately describe the multi-directional flow of products but also of ideas, people, and theologies around the world. Its perceived binary framework of “the West” imposing upon, expanding into, or running roughshod over “the rest” is simply not an accurate descriptor of the ways in which the missionary enterprise shaped America and its Protestants as well.

Alternatively, a transnational model provides a necessary corrective to the uncritical assumption

identities, not just national allegiance, have been defining characteristics of the constituents of peoples around the world throughout history. See Thomas Bender, “Historians, the Nation, and the Plenitude of Narratives,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), 3, 7-10; Daniel Immerwahr, “The Greater United States: Territory and Empire in U.S. History,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 3 (June 2016): 373-391; Timothy A. Byrnes, *Reverse Mission: Transnational Religious Communities and the Making of US Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 3; Ulrich Beck, “Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Emerging from a Rivalry of Distinctions,” in *Global America? The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*, eds. U. Beck, N. Sznajder, and R. Winter (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 26-7; Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt, “Transnational Religious Connections,” *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 209; Ian R. Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3-4; Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 11; Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society,” in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, eds. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James P. Piscatori (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 10, 12; Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-3; Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5-6; Akira Iriye, “Internationalizing International History,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), 50-1; Jeffrey Haynes, “Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 2001): 145; Kenneth Cmiel, “The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1232, 1240; Wendy S. Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 14; Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie, “Introduction,” in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Unto the Ends of the World*, eds. Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2-3, 8; Huber and Lutkehaus, 21.

that America and its Christians “set the agenda for the rest of the world” or serve as the “source of all developments in Protestantism.”¹⁶

From a transnational perspective beyond the national or the global, then, telling Stowe’s story allows for a concrete analysis of what has been called the “global reflex” – the exertion of influence and agency by Christians of the global South on the “historical heartland” of Christianity, the global North (Europe and North America.) Following historian John K. Fairbank’s identification in 1974 of the “backflow of influences affecting the missionaries’ home constituencies and the American people in general,” the global reflex concept has since been employed, under various names, to articulate the impact of global missionary experience on transformations in American foreign policy, racial attitudes, and public perception of foreign cultures as well as Christian piety, theology, and missionary culture. With reference to the period and nature of Stowe’s work in particular, noted historian of American Protestantism David Hollinger has recently pointed to “the Protestant boomerang” – the phenomenon of missionaries and their children returning to the US to advocate against racism, imperialism, colonialism, and social conservatism. In ways for which “globalization” (as a phenomenon often associated with the late twentieth century) does not account, then, Hollinger’s and other recent research has

¹⁶Paul Kollman, “At the Origins of Mission and Missiology: A Study in the Dynamics of Religious Language,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 2 (June 2011): 445; Jehu Hanciles, “African Christianity, Globalization, and Mission: Marginalizing the Center,” in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, eds. Ogbu Kalu and Elaine M. Low (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 72, 79; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, rev. ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Susan Abraham, “Postcolonial Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, eds. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 134; David Thelen, “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 968; Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 7; Gretchen Boger, “Protestant Pragmatism in China, 1919-1927,” in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds. Leigh E. Schmidt and Sally M. Promey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 317-318; Iriye, “Internationalizing International History,” 51; Wuthnow and Offutt, 209, 214; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 379-80; Robert, “Shifting Southward.”

demonstrated that missionaries have in fact been “bringing the world to America” since the first forays of foreign missions in the 19th century.¹⁷ In fact, even since the earlier missions of European Christians, too, missionary reports, publicity, and observations influenced European

¹⁷See David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World But Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). Other works have referred to the phenomenon as “reverse mission,” “cultural remittances,” “counter-emissions,” “cultural conversions,” “counter-flow,” and the “unintended consequences of empire.” See also Juan Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (New York: Routledge, 2009); David R. Swartz, “Global Reflex: International Evangelicals, Human Rights, and the New Shape of American Social Engagement,” in *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*, eds. Brian Steensland and Philip Goff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 235; John King Fairbank, “Introduction: The Many Faces of Protestant Missions in China and the United States,” in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 6, 19; Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, “Introduction: The Many Faces of the Missionary Enterprise at Home,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 2-4, 8; Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 3, 191; Joel W. Martin, “Indians, Contact, and Colonialism in the Deep South: Themes for a Postcolonial History of American Religion,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 159-160, 171-2; Susan Fitzpatrick-Behrens, *The Maryknoll Catholic Mission in Peru, 1943-1989: Transnational Faith and Transformation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 17; Heather J. Sharkey, “Introduction,” in *Cultural Conversions: Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missionary Encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia*, ed. Heather J. Sharkey (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Charles A. Maxfield, “The ‘Reflex Influence’ of Missions: The Domestic Operations of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1850,” PhD Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1995; Patricia Neils, “Introduction,” in *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China: The Impact of American Missionaries*, eds. Patricia Neils and John C. Brewer (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990); Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills, “A Catholic Atlantic,” in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000*, eds. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik Seeman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 13; Jay Riley Case, *An Unpredictable Gospel: American Evangelicals and World Christianity, 1812-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7; Samuel Escobar, “The Two-Party System and the Missionary Enterprise,” in *Re-Forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present*, eds. Douglas G. Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 360; Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); William H. Brackney, *Human Rights and the World's Major Religions*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 90, 97; J.N. Pieterse, “Hyperpower Exceptionalism: Globalization the American Way,” in *Global America? The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*, eds. U. Beck, N. Sznajder, and R. Winter (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 79; Amanda Porterfield, “Protestant Missionaries: Pioneers of American Philanthropy,” in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, eds. Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark Douglas McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 55; 7; Eric Robert Reinders, *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies: Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 37, 39; Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993); Bays and Wacker, 1; Lian Xi, xii, 16, 20-1, 208; Tyrrell, 5-6; Robert, “Introduction” In *Converting Colonialism*, 6; Dunch, 320; Noll, *The New Shape*, 145; Conroy-Krutz, 2-6; Wuthnow and Offutt, 213, 216; Leung, 70-2; Huber and Lutkehaus, 24; Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 213-4; Dirks, 2-6, 23; Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*; Byrnes; Shenk, “Introduction” in *The World is Too Much With Us*, ix.

ideas about gender, race, religion, and social issues, as well as conceptions about itself and “the other.”¹⁸

This analysis of Stowe’s life as both a missionary and an administrator, rife with concrete instances of the global reflex, thus contributes to discourses which acknowledge the incompleteness of national history as well as globalization and cultural imperialism models, and represents an effort to use an historical-biographical approach to move beyond them. While Hollinger’s recent monograph offers an analysis of how the global reflex contributed to theological development and social activism among a number of prominent American Protestants like Pearl Buck, Edwin Reischauer, and Henry Luce, Stowe’s extensive archival material provides an opportunity to thoroughly assess the nuances of these influences as they emerged over the course of the life and work of one individual – and one whose story has not been told, in whole or in part, elsewhere.¹⁹ In doing so, what constitutes a “missionary

¹⁸For examples of scholarship on the role of missionaries in forging metropolitan European identities, see Charles M. Taber, *The World is Too Much With Us: 'Culture' in Modern Protestant Missions* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 155. See also Cooper and Stoler (1997), Stoler (1995), Thorne (1997, 1999, 2006), Hall (2002), Nielssen, Okkenhaug, and Skeie (2011), Daughton and White (2012), Harries (2005), Wilson (2003), Austin and Scott (2005), Breitenbach (2009), Cox (2008), and Jensz and Acke (2013).

¹⁹With respect to the utility of the biographical approach for demonstrating such processes, there are many benefits. As evident in the recent historical biographies of notable missionary leaders A.T. Pierson and Rufus Anderson, the lens of an individual life has the effect of humanizing and concretizing what might otherwise be overly generic or vague assertions of general “influence” on American religious and political life. Historical biography, in other words, allows for a more intimate, nuanced view of the preconditions that mission organizations (and the wider American culture) dictated for individual missionaries, as well as the specific consequences of the missionaries’ global experience on those “sending” entities. Stowe’s roles as both a missionary and an executive for a number of ecumenical and missionary organizations, in fact, provides perspective from several angles of this dynamic. In other words, we can view the intricate and often contradictory nature of a single life, one whose “immediacy and reality...official documents and statistics do not always impart,” while also keeping an eye on the larger national, transnational, organizational, and ecclesiastical contexts in which it takes place. Furthermore, by examining the imbrication of politics, theology, gender, race, colonialism, mission, culture, and society in that life, biography also functions as an aid to interdisciplinarity, unifying a variety of “sub-histories” and combatting the specialization and insulation of humanities disciplines. See Dana Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology: Retrospect and Prospect,” *Missiology* 42, no. 6 (2013): 15-17; Dana Robert, *Occupy Until I Come: A.T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003); Paul W. Harris, *Nothing but Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Hein, *Noble Powell and the Episcopal Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 1-2; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 370; Shenk, “Introduction” in *The World is Too Much With Us*, ix; E. Andrews, 665; Nielssen et al, 18-9; Lian Xi, 13.

experience” or “reflex influence” will be read broadly, as transnational factors appear to have affected Stowe not only during the discrete term of his own missionary trip but also over the course of a lifetime of international travel, conference attendance, extensive correspondence and reportage, “reverse mission,” and the like.²⁰ The four substantive chapters of this project seek to identify in detail what effect these many influences had, as Stowe described it, “down under the flesh and blood of mission...where the life and death decisions are made which finally determine where we are and where we are not, and in what fashion, and to what end.”²¹ They are intended to tell the story of these transnational influences, of the continual struggle of American ecumenicals to change, adapt, or redefine mission as a result of them, and of the lasting effects of these changes on the American Protestant landscape, through the lens of the life and work of David M. Stowe.

From Stowe’s birth in 1919 to the end of WWII, the period under review in Chapter 2, the infamous theological controversies that threatened American Protestant unity were in no small part stimulated by global trends and experiences, and the ensuing divergence of opinions about the method and ambitions of missionary work. During the “heyday” of American mainline mission from 1880-1920, the general consensus among Protestants had been that a proper mission consisted of both “civilizing” (medical and educational services, moral and social reform, and the like) as well as “Christianizing” (evangelism and preaching) functions. But by the 1920s, nationalist and anti-imperial movements like those in China, Japan, and Indonesia, the rise of social scientific research (and especially early “comparative religion” studies) that documented life and religious practice around the world, and the influence of missionary work

²⁰On “reverse mission,” the phenomenon of Christian communities in the global South sending missionaries to “re-evangelize” the North, see Kim (2015) and Adogame and Shankar (2012).

²¹David M. Stowe, “Mission Policy for Ecumenopolis,” DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 122.

on Social Gospel theologies in the US compelled many ecumenical Protestants to adapt their missionary strategies. Their growing focus on the civilizing (now called “social” or “service”) functions of mission and increasing willingness to soften their stance on the exclusive claim of Christianity to salvation in turn stoked the fires of the domestic fundamentalist-modernist theological disagreements of the period. Although raised in a conservative Midwestern household committed to the primacy of evangelism, Stowe’s eventual study of the Social Gospel and of famed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr’s application of the Christian faith to the issues of the “real world” during this same period stimulated his entry into the milieu of Congregationalism – a transition which reflected the larger liberalizing trend at work in American ecumenical Protestantism.

Chapter 3 picks up the story with Stowe’s missionary sojourn to North China beginning in 1945, and chronicles a period when global affairs and experience began to even more acutely influence Protestant missionary methods and aims. In the context of a rising “postwar internationalism” in America and the decolonization of foreign mission fields in Africa and Asia, the overseas experience of ecumenical missionaries like Stowe, who served in North China from 1947-50, as well as their increasingly open dialogue with global Christians in international forums like the World Council of Churches (WCC), stimulated transformation in their theological and missiological convictions. It exposed them to the socio-economic disparity and (at times hostile) calls for independence from foreign intervention in the “Third World,” and challenged the morality of policies that emphasized isolationism, proselytism, and salvation by “faith alone.” As such, Stowe – now serving as an executive for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) after a brief stint as a Religion professor – and many others began to overtly focus on the socio-economic aspects of mission, sometimes known

as health, education, and welfare (HEW) services, and on advocacy for the nascent United Nations (UN) and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And because the process of decolonization coincided with the beginning of the Cold War, prompting the US government to leverage socio-economic aid as a tool in its “containment” of communism, ecumenicals like Stowe often posited these missionary efforts as a truly humanitarian alternative to potentially disingenuous government-sponsored aid. Many American evangelicals and theological conservatives, on the other hand, were generally supportive of the Cold War containment strategy, and joined with other “right-wing” commentators in accusing ecumenical institutions of communist or socialist leanings. As such, many evangelicals in the 1950s began to reinforce the primacy of proselytism and conversion as a means to both combat these “holistic” missions of the ecumenicals.

Despite their best efforts, by the time Stowe took up the position as the head of the Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM), the missionary and humanitarian outreach arm of the National Council of Churches (NCC), in 1966, the social work of ecumenicals was deeply entangled with an emerging international secular humanitarian network as well as the US government in foreign aid projects. In addition to finding themselves shut out of the increasingly professionalized and avowedly secular workings of a humanitarian regime they had helped to create, further dialogue and experience with Christians from around the world made clear the problematic nature of humanitarianism for missionary-minded American ecumenicals. Chapter 4 details this saga, in which ecumenical cooperation with the American government and bureaucratic transnational organizations to provide aid subjected them to the critiques of more militantly anti-imperial voices from the global South, who had begun to articulate concerns that humanitarian aid actually perpetuated dependency, that “development” strategies represented

another form of paternalistic imposition, and that the foreign assistance of the American government had ulterior Cold War motivations.²²

Compelled by these discourses of dependency, liberation, and American hypocrisy to again think self-critically about their missionary strategy and aims, many ecumenicals further reinforced their prophetic role in evaluating their government's foreign affairs, building on their earlier postwar suspicions about government-sponsored aid. Stowe, for example, often denounced the government's conduct in countries like Vietnam, especially after he became embroiled in scandal when news reports revealed that CIA agents regularly posed as missionaries or Christian youth organizers, solicited information from missionaries and administrators, and provided funding for the NCC's overseas projects. More to the point, perhaps, ecumenicals also aimed to radically refocus their missionary efforts, directing their funds and personnel away from the distribution of simple aid and toward "structural" rather than personal conversion – a kind of conversion which meant socio-economic reform, racial justice, and the implementation of human rights. In this new formulation, human rights advocacy was increasingly differentiated from a kind of humanitarianism that seemed to focus on relief or aid projects; the former, as ecumenicals like Stowe understood it, would instead secure the conditions which alleviated the circumstances contributing to the need for the latter.

²²On the professionalization and bureaucratization of humanitarianism in the twentieth century, and on the role of missionary work in laying the foundation for its universal humanitarian vision and network, see Michael N. Barnett and Janice Gross Stein, "Introduction: The Secularization and Sanctification of Humanitarianism," in *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, eds. Michael N. Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michael Barnett, "Faith in the Machine? Humanitarianism in an Age of Bureaucratization," in *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, eds. Michael N. Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism Transformed," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 4 (December 2005); Michael Barnett, *The International Humanitarian Order* (London: Routledge, 2010); Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 12; Frank J. Lechner, "Religion, Law, and Global Order," in *Religion and Global Order*, eds. Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 265; Nielssen et al, 3-4; Dunch, 320; Coffman, 221; Porterfield, 68; Hedstrom, 10; Unruh and Sider, 18.

By 1970, Stowe had taken over as Executive Vice President of the United Church Board for World Ministries (or UCBWM, the successor to the famed American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), and Chapter 5 evaluates the myriad global influences that shaped his policy decisions during his 15-year tenure there. Through correspondence, observational trips, and ecumenical meetings sponsored by the WCC and its regional counterparts, as well as by input from and visits with the UCBWM's partners in the global South, Stowe and other ecumenicals were exposed to a host of suggestions and critiques from Christians around the world. Chief among them, perhaps, was the resistance to foreign governmental and ecclesiastical interference in the affairs of churches in newly independent nations; in 1973, for example, certain theologians from Africa and Latin America called for a complete "moratorium" on financial and personnel support from foreign churches and missionary boards. As such, and especially in the UCBWM under Stowe's leadership, many ecumenical missionary programs were restructured as "partnerships" with churches in the global South, in which indigeneity, "contextualization," and local leadership were paramount.

Additionally, as both proselytism and humanitarian aid now seemed suspect in a decidedly anti-missionary climate both at home and abroad, many missionary programs were redirected toward advocacy, especially for the rights of their new partners in the global South. And whereas early ecumenical human rights work had focused largely on "first generation" civil and political rights (especially freedom of religion), increasing priority was given to those "second" and "third" generation rights which pertained more directly to the situation of those in the "developing" world: rights to socio-economic security, self-determination, and a healthy environment, for example. Stowe in particular worked to phase out UCBWM programs which simply provided aid, and instead took up the causes of world hunger and care for the

environment as a function of supporting the human rights to basic necessities like food and water. He and the UCBWM also devoted resources to ensuring that American businesses were “socially responsible,” and through this and other programs aimed to dispel continued critiques of the inherent hypocrisy of an American – given their government’s comportment abroad and the continuing racial and social strife at home – promoting human rights around the world. In part as an attempt to unify the ecumenical network with conservative evangelicals, whose resurgence had begun to compromise the cultural and socio-political capital of the mainline denominations by the 1980s, and also because the “civilizing” functions of mission had come under such scrutiny, Stowe also redirected UCBWM programs toward the twin goals of “advocacy” and “evangelism.” In other words, these two objectives were aimed at deploying the Christian message of justice to enact structural change in ways charitable giving or aid programs could not, but also at appeasing evangelicals whose primary concern remained evangelization.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, American ecumenical Protestantism had come “full circle.” It had initially cast off overt proselytization for humanitarian work as a means of compensating for the sins of the imperial past, only to return to the dissemination of ideas (like rights or justice, which to many carried on the “spirit” of Christianity if not the letter) when those social services proved vulnerable to similar critiques of paternalism and to cooptation by secular forces. Some postcolonial states and scholars, however, portray human rights conventions as fundamentally alien to non-Western cultures, claiming that they only work to establish the rights of abstract subjects to consume. These reactions often also include an assertion of national sovereignty as a measure of opposition to the implementation of normative international conventions. In other words, such critics point out, human rights have their origins in Western democratic capitalism, and therefore represent an “imperialist strategy of the West masked as

universalism.” These critiques seem to confirm this “return” to proselytism among ecumenicals, as do some of Stowe’s aforementioned policies after 1970 which deemphasized humanitarian aid and services in favor of the transmission of ideas through evangelism and advocacy.²³

Indeed, as law professor Costas Douzinas suggests, there oftentimes appears to be little difference between evangelizing for Christianity or for human rights. Colonialism and human rights “form[ed] a continuum,” he argues, as they were both “part of the cultural package of the West, aggressive and redemptive at the same time.” Even Stowe, in later reflections, expressed some trepidation about the fact that ecumenicals “proclaim[ed] and persuad[ed] with gusto” the virtues of “human rights and civil rights and free elections” but shied away from proselytizing about “ultimate reality and cosmic direction.” And yet reading the ecumenical turn to human rights as a simple reinscription of an imperialism of ideas neglects other dimensions and conditioning factors of the shift – namely, the fact that it was compelled in part by the growing and increasingly influential presence of the global South in the international ecumenical movement, and in world Christianity at large. Put another way, the missionary awareness of and contact with Christians and non-Christians from around the world was matched not by a desire to conquer and convert them, but by an increasing concern for human rights; Stowe himself explicitly attributed the pattern of “huckstering” for human rights but not for personal conversion to global factors – namely, missionary humility and sensitivity to their new partners in the South.²⁴ Neglecting this dimension commits the same crime of “missionary-bashing” which

²³Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights,” in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 24; Makau Mutua, *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002); S. Sayyid, “Beyond Westphalia: Nations and Diasporas – the Case of the Muslim *Umma*,” in *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions*, ed. Barnor Hesse (London: Zed Books, 2000); David M. Stowe, “Ecumenical Concerns in Evangelism,” DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 189.

²⁴Costas Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 83; Frederick Shepherd, “Introduction: The Political and Theological Evolution of

mission historiography has only recently begun to move beyond, and it fails, as historians like Allan Greer and Andrew Porter have suggested, to approach missionaries with a “sympathetic ethnographic imagination” that does not “dismiss their motives as insignificant.”²⁵

Seen from another light, for example, the success of ecumenical Protestants in furthering concepts of freedom, intellectual inquiry, and human rights constitutes a kind of “cultural victory” that is obscured by a focus either on the imperialism of their missions or their apparent loss of institutional vitality at home. Additionally, the fact that ecumenicals aimed to reorient themselves toward the needs and perspectives of the non-West, contesting the disparity between North and South and working to transform those conditions, arguably places them in a position as “postcolonial subjects” themselves, rather than imperial oppressors.²⁶ In any case, a truly critical analysis of the dramatic shifts within ecumenical Protestantism must recognize, as historian Robert Wuthnow notes, that the discourse in which humanitarian behavior is inscribed “is no less a part of the act than is the behavior itself.” It must acknowledge that missionaries reveal as much by what they do as by how they adapt, interpret, and value that activity. It must take seriously the fact that those changes in American ecumenical Protestantism represented a genuine attempt – however tortured, complicated, or imperfect – to rethink and revise missionary internationalism for a postcolonial age, rather than retreat into isolationism. They were intended

Christianity and Human Rights,” in *Christianity and Human Rights: Christians and the Struggle for Global Justice*, ed. Frederick M. Shepherd (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), xvi; Rosenberg, 242.

²⁵Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), x; Porter 2004, 13; Preston, 13.

²⁶For elaboration upon the “cultural victory” of liberal Protestantism, see Jay Demerath, “Cultural Victory and Organizational Defeat in the Paradoxical Decline of Liberal Protestantism,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34, no. 4 (1995): 460-8; James D. Hunter, “Conservative Protestantism,” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 150; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 249-51; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, xii, 46-7, 160; Hedstrom, 4-6, 11. On seeing missionaries as postcolonial subjects, see R. Drew Smith, “Introduction,” in *Freedom's Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 3; Dunch, 318; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 96; Nielssen et al, 15.

to adapt what Stowe and many like him understood as the essential function of the church – to exist not for itself or its own cultivation but for the world – to the changing conditions of that very world itself.²⁷

²⁷Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion*, 45; Unruh and Sider, 129-30; David M. Stowe, “World Missions: Heritage and Horizons,” DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 104); David M. Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty: An Adult Resource Book* (Boston: United Church Press, 1966), 14-5.

2.0 CIVILIZATION OR CHRISTIANIZATION?: CONSENSUS AND CONTROVERSY IN AMERICAN PROTESTANT MISSIONS (1919-1944)

“The welfare of the individual’s soul...cannot be secured in complete independence of the welfare of his body, his mind, his general social context.”

– William Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions* (1932)

Although the theological disagreements between fundamentalists and modernists in the early 20th century are generally associated with the advent of Darwinian theory and higher biblical criticism, it was also into a climate of intensifying controversy regarding the purposes and methods of foreign missions that David M. Stowe was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa on March 30, 1919. The general consensus held by most Protestants during the heyday of denominational mission work from 1880 to 1920 – that mission ought to address both the spiritual and material needs of its converts – was coming unraveled, in large part due to the influence of global trends and missionary experiences. This chapter recounts the ways in which three of these influences in particular – nationalist and anti-imperial movements around the world, the pragmatic social concerns of missionaries, and the rise of social scientific research into the religious lives of non-Christians – compelled change among ecumenical Protestants and evangelicals alike. Ecumenicals like Stowe, on the one hand, began to exhibit a stronger tendency to push for commitment to the social or service aspects of mission and a more generous attitude towards other religious traditions. In turn, this “liberalization” of ecumenical missionary strategy further stoked the ire of fundamentalists and theological conservatives, who feared that

these new methods and philosophies would weaken foreign missions. Although raised in the strongly evangelical Christian and Missionary Alliance and Nazarene traditions, Stowe too underwent a conversion to more liberal ideas about the role of Christianity in the socio-political sphere during his undergraduate education, as he encountered both Social Gospel theory and the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr. On the eve of his missionary sojourn in 1945, then, Stowe's theological identity reflected both the emphasis on missionary work instilled in him since childhood as well as the effects of a larger liberalizing trend at work in American ecumenical Protestantism.

Indeed, a previously dominant Protestant consensus on mission was under great strain by the 1920s, despite its grounding in more than a century of mission work through extra-ecclesial organizations like the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). That agency had been formed in 1810 during the Second Great Awakening – a period from roughly 1790 to 1840 which saw the staggering profusion of Protestant organizations dedicated to charitable aid, Bible-printing, welfare and education services, mission work, and moral and social reform. This constellation of societies, built on the principle of voluntarism (referring to action independent of either government or ecclesiastical intervention), together formed an informal national infrastructure known as the “Benevolent Empire” in early 19th century America. And the twin goals of this “united front” of voluntary agencies were the “orderly spread” of Christianity and the “moral renovation of society.”²⁸

As one of these voluntary agencies, the ABCFM and other mission boards were not coordinated by the American government or through the “official machinery” of the churches,

²⁸Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 6-7; Unruh and Sider, 162. For data on rise of missionary and benevolent societies from 1900 to the present, see Barrett (1985) and Barrett and Johnson (2000).

but rather were supported by the donations of lay members and often administered by women volunteers. In mutually reinforcing ways, this type of voluntary association became the unifying “backbone” of missionary work in America as well as a fundamental organizational feature within American culture more generally. Later in the twentieth century, for example, humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would be organized around the same model of independent, transnational, and philanthropic voluntary agencies for which missionary organizations were the prototypes.²⁹

In addition to this accepted mode of organization, the foreign missions enterprise during its prime from 1880-1920 was also unified by its ideology. Like the Protestant “home” missions which targeted the frontier zones in the American west, foreign missions were deeply conditioned by expansionism and the notion of manifest destiny – ideas which, when extended to foreign missions, might more accurately be described as imperialism. Historian Timothy Yates, among others, suggests that there were a variety of reasons that American missionaries were inclined to think in these terms of conquest: American traditions of “pioneers in an essentially hostile environment to be subdued,” Protestant ideas about “progressive development towards

²⁹Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 229; Andrew F. Walls, “The American Dimension in the History of the Missionary Movement,” in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 11-12; Lamin O. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 232; Henry Warner Bowden, “An Overview of Cultural Factors in the American Protestant Missionary Enterprise,” in *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 43; Deborah Gaitskell, “Mission by Other Means? Dora Earthy and the Save the Children Fund in the 1930s,” in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Unto the Ends of the World*, eds. Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 233-5; Colette Chabbott, “Development INGOs,” in *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875*, eds. John Boli and George A. Thomas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 228; Carey A. Watt, “The Relevance and Complexity of Civilizing Missions c. 1800-2010,” in *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, eds. Carey Anthony Watt and Michael Mann (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 3; Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 55; Ferris, 608-9; Douzinas, 83; Barnett and Stein, 4; Porterfield, 49-52; Etherington, “Education and Medicine,” 261; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 382; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 51, 98; Nielssen, Okkenhaug, and Skeie, 12; Rosenberg, 242. See also Neem (2010) and Stamatov (2010, 2013).

the kingdom of God,” or the general context of American westward expansion in the 19th century. Given these influences, the foreign missions enterprise of the 19th and early 20th century was often animated by a professedly altruistic desire to spread “Christian civilization” – meaning both the Protestant Christianity and the “divinely approved” institutions, resources, and cultural standards of the American nation – to foreign lands (what they called the “heathen world” or the “dark places of the earth.”) ABCFM supporters were particularly convinced that both Christian religion and Western civilization were required for the practice of “true Christianity,” and saw the introduction of that civilization as a prerequisite for the spread of the gospel.³⁰

Foreign missions were indeed increasingly preoccupied at the turn of the century with these ideas about “progress” and the stimulation of moral and social “improvement” in foreign peoples. Improving sanitation practices, labor conditions, and educational facilities or curbing the traditions of gambling, opium use, or foot binding had not always been a dominant concern of American mission, however. During his famed tenure decades earlier as ABCFM Secretary from 1832 to 1866, for example, Rufus B. Anderson (1796-1880) had stressed preaching over against the social or civilizing aspects of mission. In his view, proper social conditions would naturally develop as a consequence or byproduct of exposure to the gospel, and he worried that those socio-cultural elements had become “mistakenly associated” with the gospel itself.

Furthermore, the wild popularity of evangelical revivals during the Second Great Awakening had

³⁰Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970), 54; Charles W. Forman, “A History of Foreign Mission Theory in America,” in *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 72-3; William R. Hutchison, “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of Christian Civilization, 1880-1910,” in *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, eds. Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison (Aarhus, Denmark: Aros Publishers, 1982), 168; William R. Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications: Protestant Attitudes toward Missions,” in *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World*, eds. Martin E. Marty and Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 82-3; Xi, 4; Bowden, 46, 50-1; Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 227; Walls “The American Dimension,” 9; Conroy-Krutz, 4, 14, 18; Yates, 11.

convinced many that conversion was possible without “elaborate preparatory measures.” During his career with the ABCFM, then, Anderson limited the number of service workers (like farmers and mechanics) sent to foreign posts, closed some mission schools and induced others to cease English-language instruction, and forwarded his renowned “Three-Self” standard, which laid out the characteristics of self-propagation, self-support, and self-governance as the ultimate ideals for Christian communities begun by missionaries.³¹

Some contemporary observers have noted that Anderson was perhaps ahead of his time in aiming to preach “nothing but Christ,” insofar as he seems to have recognized that the conflation of Christianity and Western culture would limit the long-term growth and vitality of Christianity globally. Historian William Hutchison, however, argues that Anderson’s aversion to cultural imposition was instrumental rather than principled: “it was largely the case that restraint about cultural intrusiveness came from fear that it got in the way of religious intrusiveness.” Anderson biographer Paul Harris has similarly pointed out that his changes to mission policy arose more from “condescension” than from “solidarity” or cultural relativism. This is because Anderson’s ABCFM policies mandating instruction in the vernacular or limiting missionary activities to preaching were largely intended to maintain the unity, efficiency, and financial viability of the missionary enterprise, and in fact often had the effect of restricting mission school graduates to work in their own communities. Still others suggest that the Three-Self ideal (which would become known as the Anderson-Venn formula) lacked a certain cultural or theological indigeneity, such that it falls short of “contemporary expectations.” Perhaps most fundamentally, Anderson was always convinced of the superiority of Western “civilization” and the importance

³¹James Alan Patterson, “The Kingdom and the Great Commission: Social Gospel Impulses and American Protestant Missionary Leaders, 1890-1920,” *Fides et Historia* 25 (Winter/Spring 1993): 56; Forman, 78; Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications,” 86; Beaver, 145-6; Conroy-Krutz, 15; Harris, 3.

of its propagation, but simply understood the gospel as a civilizing force rather than as something which required civilization beforehand.³²

Although Anderson's policies "carried the day" for his generation, the Three-Self formula was challenged in its own time as well, albeit for different reasons. Anderson's vernacular education policies, paradoxically, inhibited the process of developing "Three Self" churches, and engendered fierce debate among ABCFM leaders who demonstrated increasingly shallow support for Anderson's ideas. Additionally, most Western missionaries were so "grievously impeded by cultural differences" that civilizing work seemed necessary in order for them to be able to communicate effectively with natives. Moreover, the increasing support of the ABCFM and other voluntary agencies by the rising women's missionary movement (being confined largely to civilizing functions because they were excluded from preaching) had inclined mission toward an emphasis on education and service, and those aspects were typically far more successful than evangelistic ones. Especially after 1890, schools became central features of missionary work, and were devoted not simply to producing educated native Christian leaders as Anderson suggested, but to providing general education to the entire local population. Medical missionaries and physicians in the ABCFM, furthermore, were promoted from "assistant missionaries" to "missionaries" after 1897. By 1911, roughly half of American missionaries no longer engaged in "direct evangelical work." In other words, Anderson's notion that civilization proceeds naturally from proper Christianization had gone "underground."³³

³²Paul W. Harris, "Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries: Collaboration and Dependency in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China," *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (1991): 330-4; Harris, *Nothing But Christ*, 4-8; Yates, 17, 34-5; Schlesinger, 350-2; Robert, "Introduction" in *Converting Colonialism*, 13; Taber, 60-1.

³³Christoffer H. Grundmann, *Sent to Heal!: Emergence and Development of Medical Missions* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 3-4, 217-8; William R. Hutchison, "Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 118-20; Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *Salvation and the*

Indeed, a general consensus among Protestants regarding mission had been reached by the turn of the century: the necessity of civilizing functions within the context of an evangelistic mission. This unity of purpose, however, was still deeply inflected by the “conquest” mentality out of which it came – a mentality built on a long-standing but complex “hierarchy of heathenism” that simultaneously pointed to racial difference or inferiority while also affirming the ability of “heathen” to be converted and civilized. Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, where the very appeals for unity and consensus in mission that gave birth to the 20th century ecumenical movement were offered simultaneously with plans for world “occupation” justified by a hierarchy of societies according to their race and degree of civilization. John R. Mott (1865-1955), for example, who marshaled the resources of his Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) and the World’s Student Christian Federation (WSCF) to prepare and organize the Edinburgh conference, had a vision of a unified mission that would “scale all walls – linguistic, cultural, political – in the name of the Christian cause.” But he also was renowned for his “zealous propaganda” and “military metaphors” – army of God, spiritual campaign, attacking the fortresses of non-Christianity, and the like.³⁴

Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 3-5; Lawrence D. Kessler, *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895-1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 158; James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 41-3; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 12-3; Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications,” 84-6; Harris, *Nothing But Christ*, 156, 162, and Ch. 4; Robert, “Introduction” in *Converting Colonialism*, 14; Yates, 62-4; Forman, 79-81. On the role of women in directing the missionary movement toward service, see Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, 9; Preston, 179; Robert (1997); Hill (1985); Reeves-Ellington, Sklar, and Shemo (2010).

³⁴The issue of race for missionaries would become even more complex later in the 20th century, in the context of the American civil rights movement as well as resistance to global racial injustices like the apartheid system in Africa. These will be discussed in Chapter 3. On the 19th and early 20th century missionary racial conceptions and the conquest mentality of Edinburgh, see Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 4, 72, 254-264, 323; John C. Barrett, “World War I and the Decline of the First Wave of the American Protestant Missions Movement,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 3 (July 2015): 122; Timothy George, “Evangelical Revival and the Missionary Awakening,” in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, eds. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch

This language reveals the degree to which delegates at Edinburgh viewed the world through the “eyes of a Westerner,” but it was also at this conference that global events and non-Western Christians began to assert themselves onto the American missionary agenda. In the first place, it was in large part the global experiences of missionaries which made them acutely aware of the damage done to the missionary effort by American Protestant competition and disunity. Prominent missionary Sherwood Eddy (1871-1963), for example, called for missionary ecumenism at Edinburgh by noting that the “younger churches” were less theologically divided than those in the West, and may in fact “see with a clearer vision and act with a bolder purpose” as a result. Furthermore, although Anglo-Saxons dominated the conference’s attendance rolls (largely because delegation sizes were determined by the size of their missionary budgets), about 20 of the more than 1200 delegates hailed from the global South.³⁵

Although a miniscule proportion by most standards, indigenous Christians from around the world did begin to make their voices heard through questionnaires and several speeches at the conference. The most famous of these, from South Indian Anglican clergyman V.S. Azariah, explicitly and fervently called for “genuinely egalitarian friendships” between Indians and missionaries, while Chinese delegate Cheng Jingyi articulated an early vision of a unified, nondenominational “three-self” Chinese church – a vision which would ultimately be realized during China’s civil war (and Stowe’s missionary trip) decades later. In fact, these early calls for

(Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 57; Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 2, 82; James A. Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 74-6; Patterson, “The Kingdom and the Great Commission,” 51-5; Conroy-Krutz, 16, 46-8; Preston, 184-5; Yates, 29-31; Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 60; Beuttler, 116-8; Case, 45.

³⁵Brian Stanley, “The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910: Sifting History from Myth,” *The Expository Times* 121, no. 7 (2010): 326; Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, 6, 14-5; Yates, 24-5, 32-3, 111; Hollinger, “Religious Liberalism and Ecumenical Self-Interrogation,” 376; Hutchison *Errand to the World*, 135; Hutchison, “Protestantism as Establishment,” 4-6.

intercultural friendship and indigenization were harbingers for many of the dramatic shifts that would occur in the ecumenical movement over the course of the 20th century. As historian Brian Stanley, the resident expert on the Edinburgh meeting, reports, it was these non-western influences at Edinburgh that fired the “first shot” against missionary imperialism and “younger church” dependency.³⁶

Not just at Edinburgh, but in early nationalist and anti-imperial movements around the world, colonized and decolonizing peoples were articulating critiques of foreign rule or intervention and missionary imposition in this period. Chinese anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment, as had been evident in the infamous Boxer Rebellion of 1899, as well as the emergence of nationalist ideologies in Indonesia’s “National Awakening” at the beginning of the 20th century and in various Indian movements for independence beginning in 1858 and in Japan in the Meiji Period (1868-1911), among others, placed missionaries in the tenuous and paradoxical position of having served as catalysts for modernizing movements which were increasingly opposed to their presence. By the 1920s, missionaries faced a “revitalized self-consciousness” and an increasing pride in non-white identity in many of their host countries, as well as hostility for their part in bearing the “white man’s burden” of civilizing non-American peoples. These sentiments joined with the observations of some American critics (Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, Jane Addams, and other members of the Anti-Imperialist League, for example) who had mounted their own critiques of American imperialism at the turn of the century, especially in response to the annexation of the Philippines and the collection of indemnities by missionaries in China.³⁷

³⁶Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, 129, 131; Stanley, “The World Missionary Conference,” 329-30.

³⁷Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley:

In addition to these early anti-imperialist sentiments, the experience of missionary work around the world was contributing to another fracture in the American missionary consensus: the divide between the proponents of liberal “Social Gospel” theology and its detractors. The Social Gospel, a theological movement forged in the Progressive Era that emphasized social activism and reform, was in many ways the result of the experience of domestic and foreign missionaries. In urban missions in America, for example, it had become increasingly obvious that preaching alone could not address the issues (poverty, crime, illiteracy, systemic injustice) that attended industrialization and urbanization in American life. Similarly, many foreign missionaries recognized that the “social” aspects of mission were a necessary complement to the spiritual ones. Now, as historian Janet Fishburn and others have argued, those missionary influences were encoded in a Social Gospel theology which shifted the “locus of salvation” from the redemption of individual souls to the reformation of the whole social order.³⁸

In contrast to the growing social emphasis of ecumenical mission, strains of individualism and premillennialism were fostering a renewed commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy and personal evangelism on the part of many fundamentalists and conservative Protestants, who largely rejected liberal theology and its apparent concessions to the “rationalist optimism” and secular culture of the time.³⁹ Instead, they were generally more inclined to

University of California Press, 2011), 106, 112-3; Michael Leifer, ed. *Asian Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000); Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 15-7; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 111; Dunch, 310, 314; Preston, 193, 278; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 90; Kessler, 159-161; Yates, 58; Bowden, 57; Beuttler, 117; Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*; Preston, 182.

³⁸Janet F. Fishburn, “The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 228-9, 241; Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 6, 10, 45; William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 165; Patterson, “The Kingdom and the Great Commission,” 49-50, 57-60; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 73; Unruh and Sider, 163-5; Beuttler, 118; Harris, “Racial Identity and the Civilizing Mission,” 166; J.C. Barrett, 122; Preston, 177-8.

³⁹Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns

support projects on the “faith missions” model, originally initiated by J. Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission (CIM) in the 1860s. This method was, first and foremost, based largely on prayer and proselytism, as many of its supporters believed the foreign missions issue to be one of precedence; while both social and evangelistic functions may be important, the latter should always be the priority. Henry Frost, for example, Home Director of the CIM from 1893 to 1929 and author of “What Missionary Motives Should Prevail?” in *The Fundamentals*, argued that “while it is always true that Christianity civilizes, it is never true that civilization Christianizes.” Faith missions were also fueled by a premillennial sense of urgency about converting the unreached, and thus did not require that their missionaries be ordained (or funded, as they sent missionaries afield hoping that God would attend to their sustenance – hence the name “faith” missions.) This haste spurred even further distaste for the bureaucracy, modernism, and fund-raising strategies of the traditional mission boards, and gave rise to a plethora of new agencies – the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) among them – on a “non-denominational” model that would characterize evangelical missions for much of the 20th century.⁴⁰

While perhaps the missionary movement might have been able to weather the storm of these disagreements about the order of operations in mission work, the larger domestic theological disagreements during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy provided a pretext

Hopkins University Press, 1991), xv, 2-3; Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 17; T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 23, 32, 304-5; Gary Dorrien, *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 27-30, 39; James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 131; Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 245; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 77; Patterson, “The Kingdom and the Great Commission,” 60-1; Hutchison, “Protestantism as Establishment,” 5; Kessler, 157-8; G.S. Smith, 10-11, 415; Bowden, 52; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 10; Unruh and Sider, 166.

⁴⁰William Lawrence Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 60-4; Henry Frost, “What Missionary Motives Should Prevail?” in *The Fundamentals, Vol. 12*: 85-96 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1910-1915).

for conservatives to dismiss the social aspects of mission work by casting them as a vagary of the “new” modernist theology that “weakened” the missionary impulse. In other words, even the former consensus position that civilization and Christianization were “complementary rather than competing” was recast as a symptom or outgrowth of Social Gospel modernism, and as such, was increasingly unable to hold the two splintering factions together.⁴¹

Amidst these anti-imperial critiques and domestic theological controversies, global influences also affected American mission through the rapid growth of social scientific research, and especially of “comparative religion” studies like those of philosopher and psychologist William James. Although the analytic categories, terminology, and systems of classification in nascent fields like anthropology and comparative religion were informed by data drawn from colonial encounters (including missionary ones), such studies demonstrated the resonance and power of – and sparked a popular interest in – non-Christian religions which had previously been characterized as “heathen” or “pagan.” In addition to applying the insights of this new research to their social mission, some ecumenical missionaries also began to repudiate the conventional wisdom of Christian exclusivity, and show concern for the “disruptive effects” of Christian missions. Notable Union Theological Seminary missions professor Daniel Fleming (1877-1969), for example, insisted that Christians must no longer engage with other cultures as if “their only reason for existing was to receive Christian missions.” Rather, he and others like him (including leading lights like James Barton, E. Stanley Jones, and Frank Laubach) began to assert the

⁴¹Fishburn, 219-222; Beuttler, 119; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 78-82; Preston, 179.

validity of non-Christian religious traditions, the indefensibility of Christian vs. heathen dichotomies, and the necessity of promoting indigenization among Christians in each culture.⁴²

All of these developments – the concern about anti-imperialism, the new emphasis on social service in mission, and the softened stance toward non-Christian religions and nations – were perhaps most powerfully expressed in the now-famous Hocking Report of 1932, which publicized the findings of a “Laymen’s Inquiry” into foreign missions sponsored by John D. Rockefeller. Spurred by the decline in enthusiasm and funding for mission that was the result of anti-imperialist critique and domestic economic depression, a group of 35 laymen representing eight mainline denominational mission boards collected extensive data on Christian “missionary institutions, personnel, and overall impact” in China, Japan, India, and Burma, and produced a report that appraised this data and made suggestions for the future of missions. That report, published as *Re-Thinking Missions* but colloquially referred to as the Hocking Report for its chairman William Hocking of Harvard, called for an appreciative and collaborative attitude toward other religious traditions. It suggested that the real battle was not between rival faiths but between religion and secularism, and that as such, Christians should seek to emphasize points of continuity and commonality between all religious traditions. Offering a robust self-criticism of the tangled legacy of colonialism within the historic missionary enterprise, the Report also

⁴²Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, “Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,” in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, eds. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 1-2; Grant Wacker, “Second Thoughts on the Great Commission: Liberal Protestants and Foreign Missions, 1890-1940,” in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 291-2; Bays and Wacker, 2; Forman, 101; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 157; Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications,” 89-90; Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions,” 116-7; Yates, 19, 63-4; Rosenberg, 243; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 85; Beaver, 116, 130; Wacker, “Second Thoughts,” 284-5; Hedstrom, 6. On the role of missionaries and missionary data in the formation of disciplines like anthropology, see Taber (1991), Harries (2005), Nielssen, Okkenhaug, & Skeie (2011), Chidester (1996, 2014); van der Geest (1990). We might also see Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) or Fabian’s *Time and the Other* (1983) as attempts to expunge the discipline and practice of anthropology of the very tendencies which the location of its data in the colonial encounter precipitated.

strongly suggested that indigenization and social service were the primary forms of a truly “disinterested” and not “self-centered” mission, and that those practices should be unhitched from any requirement for “conscious and direct” evangelism: “Ministry to the secular needs of men in the spirit of Christ *is evangelism*... We must be willing to give largely without any preaching.”⁴³

But the Hocking Report was hardly well-received and its influence was somewhat limited, especially considering the degree to which World War I (among other factors) had caused both the Social Gospel and foreign missions to lose traction among American Protestants. While many ecumenical leaders promoted an internationalist vision through their support of missionary methods like “world friendship” or the formation of institutional mechanisms like the League of Nations, much of the American public demonstrated a spirit of isolationism following the horrors of war between professedly Christian nations. Together with a rising tide of secularism, a devastated economy after 1929, and a rising neo-orthodox theological titan named Reinhold Niebuhr, this interwar “return to normalcy” severely deflated the previous decades’ optimism about social progress and the desirability of Christian nationhood, and contributed to a significant decline in funding and enthusiasm for foreign missions. Some conservative Christians likewise favored a nationalist rather than internationalist approach, and the alienation they felt from the Protestant establishment during this period would only continue to grow – ultimately

⁴³William E. Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions: A Layman’s Inquiry After 100 Years* (New York: Harper, 1932), 68-70; Mark Edwards, “Can Christianity Save Civilisation?: Liberal Protestant Anti-Secularism in Interwar America,” *Journal of Religious History* 39, no. 1 (March 2015): 54-5; Samuel McCrea Cavert, *The American Churches in the Ecumenical Movement, 1900-1968* (New York: Association Press, 1968), 137; John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1900-1996* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 148-9; Grant Wacker, “A Plural World: The Protestant Awakening to World Religions,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 260; Gaitskell, 238; Carpenter and Shenk, xiii-xiv; J.C. Barrett, 124; Pierard, 160-1; Yates, 59, 71, 92-3; Forman, 101-2; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 87; Bowden, 56; Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications,” 89-90; Porterfield, 67; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 158; Wacker, “Second Thoughts,” 294; Hutchison, “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism,” 171; Beuttler, 116, 119.

contributing to the creation decades later of the rival political institutions of the “Religious Right.”⁴⁴

For now, however, only a small cadre of conservatives cried out in full rejection of Hocking’s suggestions. Because of their premillennialist outlook, fundamentalists especially believed that “world unity would be a result of the eschatological establishment of God’s heavenly kingdom, not the outcome of its step-by-step development on earth.” Many also decried the liberals’ willingness to deemphasize the exclusive claims of Christianity to salvation as a dangerous relativism that would have far-reaching effects, not least of which would be to “cut the nerve” of the missionary enterprise.⁴⁵ In other words, they retrenched themselves in the insistence that Christian revelation was entirely unique from and superior to that of all other religious traditions, and condemned the replacement of the true, religious motivation of missions with “secondary” ones. These conservatives – J. Gresham Machen and Hendrik Kraemer most famous among them – declared the Hocking Report weak, dangerous, and even Satanic, and claimed that it was an unrepresentative betrayal of their interests. They were steadfastly

⁴⁴John Flett, “From Jerusalem to Oxford: Mission as the Foundation and Goal of Ecumenical Social Thought,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 1 (January 2003): 17; Tyrrell, 173-5; John Errett Lankford, “Protestant Stewardship and Benevolence, 1900-1941,” PhD Diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1962), 280; Dana L. Robert, “The First Globalization? The Internationalization of the Protestant Missionary Movement Between the World Wars,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 2 (2002): 50-3, 61-3; Dana L. Robert, “Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (April 2011): 101; Gary B. Bullert, “Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Century: World War II and the Eclipse of the Social Gospel,” *Journal of Church and State* 44, no. 2 (2002): 271-90; Benny Kraut, “A Wary Collaboration: Jews, Catholics, and the Protestant Goodwill Movement,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 195-6; John F. Piper, *The American Churches in World War I* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985), 4, 65, 184-6; Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), 2; Matthew McCullough, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 135-8; Louis Gunnemann, *The Shaping of the United Church of Christ: An Essay in the History of American Christianity* (New York: United Church Press, 1977), 201; J.C. Barrett, 122-4; Bowden, 58; Beaver, 115; Dorrien, *Soul in Society*, 61; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 29, 33; Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 1-3, 12-17; Preston, 176-7, 180-1, 278; Pritchard, 148-9; Sanneh, *Disciples*, 273; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 6; Hedstrom, 23-5; S. Curtis, xiii; Nielssen, Okkenhaug, and Skeie, 19; Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*, 16.

⁴⁵Ibid.

unwilling, in historian William Hutchison's assessment, to substitute "collaboration" or "coexistence" for "conquest" in the "lexicon of Christian world relations."⁴⁶

Alternatively, a few more "radical" missionaries and theorists – like famous missionary and novelist Pearl S. Buck – fully endorsed the ideas presented in the Hocking Report, believing that missions aimed primarily at conversion were "culturally imperialistic at best, and morally indefensible at worst." As in Buck's case, however, many of those who supported the Report had already begun to shift their ideas and practices, and so its findings represented for them a "summary of significant transformations already in place" rather than a shocking call to reform.⁴⁷

The most common reaction to the Report, however, was a moderate one that aimed to hold on to the increasingly fractured missionary consensus. Some observers have described this large, middling body as comprised of those "either conservative without being fundamentalists or liberal without being humanists." With respect to the Hocking Report, this meant that most missionaries and their boards acknowledged the value of the Report's "practical" suggestions, but stopped short of abandoning the evangelistic dimensions of mission and wholeheartedly accepting the theology underpinning the Report.⁴⁸

Most of those walking this tightrope supported a fuller and more sympathetic view of non-Christian religions which could indeed offer "genuine knowledge" of God. They stipulated,

⁴⁶Grant Wacker, "The Waning of the Missionary Impulse: The Case of Pearl S. Buck," in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 200-1; Sebastian C. H. Kim, "The Kingdom of God versus the Church: The Debate at the Conference of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, 1938," in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, eds. Ogbu Kalu and Elaine M. Low (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 139; J. Bruce Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance: Religion, Refugee Work, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41; Pritchard, 148-9; Cavert, 138; Wacker, "Second Thoughts," 295; Patterson, "The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus," 89-90; Hutchison, "Modernism and Missions," 129; Yates, 72, 91-2; Hutchison, "Americans in World Mission," 158-9; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 180; Forman, 84, 103; Pierard, 161; Ruble, 12-13; J.C. Barrett, 125.

⁴⁷Ibid. On the global reflex "liberalizing" missionaries even before the Hocking Report, see Rosenberg, 243; Xi, 10-5.

⁴⁸Hocking, 58-9, 82-3; Robert, "The First Globalization," 50, 63-4; Cavert, 137; Wacker, "A Plural World," 260-2, 268.

however, that God was most fully revealed in Christianity, and that therefore it remained the “final” or “absolute” religion and the superior path to salvation. Thus missions remained a primary task, but as the Hocking Report had suggested, the method was increasingly to convey the spirit of Christ through example and indigenization, rather than imparting a set of doctrines about him by preaching the Bible. Aiming to maintain some kind of Protestant missionary consensus, the moderate majority offered a “creative – or tortured, depending on one’s point of view – weaving” of the two disparate positions by redefining the notion of conversion as the “radical remaking of social structures” (or the bringing in of the Kingdom of God) rather than as a personal “change of heart.”⁴⁹

It was into this climate of theological controversy, anti-imperialism, and scientific discovery that David M. Stowe was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa on March 30, 1919, and it was this notion of the conversion of social structures that would eventually go on to animate his work for most of his adult life. He would come to this position after being raised, however, in a “deeply religious” family that identified variously with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) and the Church of the Nazarene, both of which derived from the theologically conservative Pentecostal and Holiness movements. More importantly, perhaps, both groups were distinguished by the urgency and enthusiasm with which they undertook evangelization. Stowe indeed reflected years later that it was his baptism into the CMA “tabernacle” at age 13 and his frequent attendance at Nazarene revivals which “fundamentally affected” his perceptions about what was central to Christian faith – namely, missions. Indeed, he reported that the “heady atmosphere” of missionary spirituality during his upbringing, in which missionaries came to

⁴⁹Ibid.

dinner “telling of souls saved amid hardships and danger,” was the start of his “pilgrimage in mission.”⁵⁰

As Stowe reached adolescence in the 1930s, however, a struggle began between his “loyalty to the family faith” and his ability to reconcile that faith with the “scientific worldview” and intellectual climate of the time. During this period of what he called “teenage agnosticism,” Stowe recounted vacillating between stages of questioning, periodically having his faith renewed during CMA or Nazarene revivals, and then realizing that “the old questions were still there.” In this state, Stowe began his undergraduate work at Midland College in Nebraska, with a scholarship to study journalism. His brother Eugene, alternatively, went to Point Loma Nazarene University and became a pastor (and later General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene from 1968-1993.)⁵¹

When Stowe’s father retired from the postal service in 1938, the family moved to Southern California, as he quipped that “all proper Iowan families did in those days.” Indeed, their relocation came at the tail end of the 1930s “Dust Bowl Migration,” wherein thousands of Midwesterners – both farmers whose narratives (e.g. *The Grapes of Wrath*) have become part of the American cultural mythos but also a great many blue-collar workers – set out for the West Coast in search of fertile land and economic stability. Stowe moved with his family, transferring to the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) for the remaining two years required to earn his Bachelor’s Degree. At age 20, the large university campus and active student environment were “exhilarating and stimulating” to him, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it was here that Stowe’s persistent questioning came to a head. In what he described as a “conversion” moment in the UCLA library, Stowe seemingly found the answer to his desire for a “working faith that could be

⁵⁰Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe, 6 February 1998, DMS Papers, Box 243, Folder 242.

⁵¹Ibid.

effectively communicated in full dialogue with the twentieth century.” Wandering the periodicals section, Stowe discovered “a burning bush, a place where God spoke to me”: the *Christian Century* magazine, with an article by a theologian named Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971).⁵²

Having never heard of the journal or the man, “a whole new world was opened up” for Stowe – one in which a man with “an obviously powerful intellect, fully in tune with the currents of modern life” could also be a committed Christian. Niebuhr’s brand of faith, a neo-orthodox Christian realism that imagined a Christian responsibility to enter the “public struggle” for social justice, seemed to Stowe to be the kind of “living religion” that he felt the CMA or Nazarene traditions were not. Reading Niebuhr convinced him of the “utter importance” of Christianity for the “reconstruction of the social order,” and he reported later being quite taken by the notion that he could think “as critically and as imaginatively” as possible while remaining a full participant in the Christian community. And indeed, this discovery of Niebuhr’s vision of a “prophetic” role for Christianity in relating to the public and the nation – as involved in them, but resistant to and critical of their faults – would influence Stowe (and many other American ecumenicals) for the rest of his life, even when some of the theological conventions of neo-orthodoxy ceased to.⁵³

Stowe quickly dropped his journalism major and switched to history, where he studied the progressive movement and the Social Gospel as a “follow-up to the Niebuhr epiphany.” While busy “devouring” the works of key Social Gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch (1861 -1918), however, he was still leading a “double life” – attending the Church of the Nazarene with his mother but feeding his intellectual desires with his studies, and he was unsure

⁵²David M. Stowe, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20, no. 3 (July 1996): 118. On the Dust Bowl Migration, see Gregory (2004).

⁵³Ibid. See also Michael G. Thompson, “An Exception to Exceptionalism: A Reflection on Reinhold Niebuhr's Vision of ‘Prophetic’ Christianity and the Problem of Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 2007): 834; Dorrien, *Soul in Society*, 6.

of his plans after graduating in 1940. But an incident with one of his neighbors made the decision clear for him, at least in retrospect; the neighbor, a woman whose young son had recently passed away “suddenly and tragically,” turned to Stowe for emotional support, as he had been acquaintances with the boy. Stowe was deeply affected by this pastoral experience – by what he called the ability to “speak the final words of victory over death” and “participate with people in the ultimate depths of their experience.” Together with his discovery of a kind of religious faith which could be connected to everyday life, it prompted him to consider a career in ministry, and he began exploring seminaries and religion programs in the area.⁵⁴

Stowe indeed decided to continue his education at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, in large part because it counted among its faculty notable Christian realist John C. Bennett (1902-1995). During his time there earning his Bachelor’s in Divinity, Stowe worked with Bennett and the other faculty, studying the dialectical Christian realism of the day and working to flesh out the theological contradictions that had troubled him since adolescence. Working with Bennett, who was deeply involved in the nascent ecumenical movement, also exposed Stowe to this growing tradition and its advocates – stirring a global vision in Stowe “just as the C&MA missionaries had done long before.”⁵⁵

In studying under Bennett, however, he discovered the related thinkers Karl Barth and Emil Brunner and, likely due to neo-orthodoxy’s dominance over the chastened Social Gospel by this time, found them more compelling. Barth shared many of Niebuhr’s convictions, especially the applicability of Christian thought to contemporary life (as evidenced in his description of a preacher as “one who stands in the pulpit with the Bible in one hand and the daily paper in the

⁵⁴Ibid. See also David M. Stowe, “Some Reflections on 50 Years of Ministry,” 19 September 1993. DMS Papers, Box 207, Folder 10.

⁵⁵Ibid.

other.”) The primary difference, however, or at least the one which would come to be most significant for Stowe, was that Barth and Brunner rejected the idea that the relationship could be reversed – that, as theological modernism suggested, the insights of Christianity could be contextualized and elaborated upon within the “terms” set by contemporary intellectual currents. Rather, Barth and Brunner insisted on revelation and faith, not experience and reason, and posited a God who was so transcendent as to be “wholly Other.” (Put another way, Niebuhr was in some sense a “middle way” between modernism and Barthian theology.) As Stowe described it, his studies soon transformed him into a “neo-orthodox Brunnerian, a little bit to the right of John Bennett who was classically centrist.” Given this transformation and its nuances, it was clear that he could no longer lead the “double life” that he had as an undergraduate.⁵⁶

Fortunately, his parents were understanding of his decision to search out a new affiliation, and with that blessing, Stowe served as a seminary intern and campus chaplain for several Congregationalist churches in the Berkeley area, and was ordained into the church upon his graduation from PSR in 1943. To him, this decision seemed “perfectly providential,” and he quickly became “plugged in” to the Congregationalist network in which he felt a near-immediate sense of belonging. Perhaps this was indeed no coincidence, given that the “generals” in the Social Gospel movement like Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, and Lyman Abbott whom Stowe had studied at UCLA had been Congregationalists. Even the realist neo-orthodoxy which inspired his move away from evangelicalism drew on the Social Gospel’s notions about the applicability of Christianity to socio-economic and political issues in contemporary life, albeit

⁵⁶Ibid. See also Leonard I. Sweet, “The Modernization of Protestant Religion in America,” in *Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America, 1935-1985*, eds. David W. Lotz, Donald W. Shriver, John Frederick Wilson, and Robert T. Handy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 23; Jason W. Stevens, *God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 5-7; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 17.

while aiming to temper the liberal optimism about the ability to overcome them given the inherent sinfulness of man. Furthermore, the ABCFM – still among the most prominent of missionary associations, and one for which Stowe would soon serve as a missionary and executive – had historically been the purview of Congregationalists, and its leaders (like Hugh Vernon White, who would later serve as Stowe’s theology professor while earning his ThD at PSR) were among the only contingents to receive the Hocking Report altogether favorably.⁵⁷

Altogether, Stowe’s concern for socio-political issues – built on a foundation of the primacy of Christian mission, enhanced by the study of the Social Gospel, tempered by the insights of neo-orthodoxy, and expressed through ordination as a Congregationalist minister – was complex, but it would soon be complicated even further. Although he continued to serve as a campus minister for the local Congregationalist church in Berkeley throughout World War II, the devastation wrought by that conflict, as well as the rapidly increasing sense of global consciousness and his own missionary experience in China after the war, would dramatically redefine and refocus his theological, social, and missionary commitments in the coming decades. And those decades would be characterized by renewed and expanded debates about some of the same fundamental issues which had plagued the missionary movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁵⁷G.S. Smith, 440-442; Pierard, 161; Patterson, “The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus,” 88; J.C. Barrett, 125.

3.0 'INTO ALL THE WORLD TOGETHER': HUMANITARIAN AID AND GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN POSTWAR AMERICA (1945-1965)

"A church content to stay in its own backyard is no church."
– David M. Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World* (1963)

After 1945, the American government feared that the Western European nations that had been devastated by World War II, as well as the decolonized and decolonizing nations in Africa and Asia for whom the war represented an opportunity for independence, were particularly vulnerable to the growing spread of communist ideology worldwide. Seeking to counteract this threat to their democratic principles, the US directed the resources of its booming postwar economy into aid programs intended to "contain" communism by assuaging the socio-economic conditions which contributed to its appeal – and bolstering the reputation of the US internationally in the process. Stowe, through his missionary experience in pre-communist China from 1947-1949 and dialogue with global Christians in ecumenical organizations like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), was directly exposed to this socio-economic need and desire for independence among those in the new "Third World." As such, he and others like him began to redirect their missionary efforts towards health, education, and welfare (HEW) services and advocacy for international peace through the nascent United Nations (UN). In contrast to what they saw as the Cold War motivations of the American government's aid, however, they often posited their work

as a truly disinterested form of benevolence – a “holistic” mission that addressed both spiritual and material needs without political pretext. This chapter tells the story of three ways in which global missionary and ecumenical experience in the larger context of postwar America affected Stowe: first, by altering his personal theological and missiological convictions; second, by encouraging a more prophetic role with relationship to the American government; and third, by stimulating opposition to the views of evangelicals more firmly committed to anti-communism and evangelism.

As WWII drew to a close, the most immediate and obvious task was to reconstruct a war-devastated Europe, especially as communism seemed to be gaining popularity in Eastern Europe, Greece, Iran, and other nearby nations. Fortunately, the postwar American economy was booming, bolstered by the war, automobile, and housing industries as well as the introduction of the GI Bill and other public economic policies. Confidence in the democratic principles of free economic exercise, equality and justice, and self-reliance which had ostensibly produced this affluence contributed to a sense of obligation among many Americans to share both the values themselves and their fruits – the “good Samaritan” sentiment behind Henry Luce’s famous declaration of an “American Century.” Luce, a magazine magnate and the son of Protestant missionaries to China, appeared to be correct; WWII proved to be a special transition point after which American power and responsibility on the world stage became “the new normal.” Americans had been “awakened” to the needs of the global community, and public opinion polls consistently showed support for an active US role overseas.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 11; Andrew S. Finstuen, *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 13, 15-18, 25-6; Edwin S. Gaustad, “The Pulpit and the Pews,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge:

To direct these economic resources towards European aid, then, the short-term “emergency relief” efforts of American private voluntary organizations (PVOs) – which were often religiously based and only conducted during wartime – were transformed into regular peacetime “welfare assistance.” Signaling this shift in 1946, President Harry Truman established the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA) to replace Franklin Roosevelt’s War Relief Board, thereby instituting more permanent patterns of cooperation between religious PVOs and the US government.⁵⁹ Over the next few years, Congress approved legislation which guaranteed that PVOs would be reimbursed for any ocean freight expenses incurred in shipping relief to Europe and set up other arrangements, namely the Marshall Plan, to promote and coordinate its efforts for European reconstruction. Churches and religious organizations developed what Stowe called “new machinery” to facilitate their end of the partnership, but were quickly dismayed by what they saw as troubling objectives of their government’s humanitarian aid. That is, while the “Point Four” program that emerged in January 1949 – named for the fourth foreign policy point in Truman’s inaugural address – represented the official implementation of humanitarian aid as a new staple of American foreign policy, Truman also seemed to be signaling an expanded notion of the uses of that foreign aid. This was because he posited that America had a responsibility not only to rebuild Europe, but also to create overseas

Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40-1; William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2; Mark Silk, “The Rise of the ‘New Evangelicalism’: Shock and Adjustment,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William Robert Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 286; Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Life* (February 17, 1941); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 238; Nicholas Guyatt, *Another American Century?: The United States and the World After 2000* (London: Zed, 2000), xv; Hedstrom, 177-8; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 20-2; Beuttler, 113, 120; Ruble, 23; Pritchard, 253-4.

⁵⁹Rachel M. McCleary, *Global Compassion: Private Voluntary Organizations and U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-4, 40, 49, 59; Scott Eric Flipse, “To Save ‘Free Vietnam’ and Lose Our Souls: The Missionary Impulse, Voluntary Agencies, and Protestant Dissent against the War, 1965-1971,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 209; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 6, 53, 69.

markets for the US and provide technical assistance to any “developing” country struggling to resist totalitarian or authoritarian rule.⁶⁰

In other words, the Point Four program was one outgrowth of a much larger, liberal internationalist framework that had been initiated several years earlier: the Truman Doctrine. This was a comprehensive strategy, offered as a means to ensure the conditions for freedom and democracy in Third World countries, that was ultimately intended to restrain Soviet aggression and inoculate “free peoples” against the global spread of communism. Truman and American diplomat George Kennan had at first offered this “containment” approach in 1947 to a Congress divided about the necessity of economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey, but its “military Keynesianism” quickly became the basis for American involvement around the world.⁶¹ Among other things, this meant that the postwar redefinition of humanitarianism as a “politically neutral” peacetime endeavor was now contradicted by its role in the global struggle against communism. This was especially the case as, prompted in part by WWII’s destabilization of European imperialism, decolonizing countries throughout the global South – Vietnam in 1945, the Philippines in 1946, India in 1947, Burma in 1948, and Indonesia in 1949, for example – provided new opportunities for humanitarian aid beyond the boundaries of Europe, but also for the potential spread of communist ideology. As African colonies also underwent nationalist movements in the 1950s and 1960s, then, the American government continually promoted

⁶⁰Mark Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives on Africa in Mainline Protestant Social Thought,” in *Freedom's Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 20; Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 2, 6-7; Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001), 50; David M. Stowe, *A New Look at an Old Subject* (New York: Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963) DMS Papers, Box 21, Folder 5; McCleary, 60-1, 73; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 76;

⁶¹Gary Jonathan Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 13; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 52-4; Stevens, 2; McCleary, 60; Lucas, 6-7; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 17; Preston, 411; Glendon, 50; Inboden, 2, 17-8, and Chapter 3.

foreign aid as contributing to economic and political stability (and most importantly, not to communism.)⁶²

This use of economic assistance as a means of ensuring national security worried many voluntary agencies guided by avowedly “neutral” humanitarian or moral principles, but the government saw its funneling of aid through these agencies as in fact beneficial for demonstrating its “apolitical nature.” Under Eisenhower a decade later, in fact, the situation had only escalated; foreign assistance (including development projects and even disaster relief) through international organizations was still seen by the government as a means of strengthening indigenous political institutions against communism and arousing popular sentiment for America and its principles. Eisenhower’s renowned Food for Peace (PL-480) program of 1954, later expanded by Lyndon B. Johnson, authorized the overseas distribution of the American agricultural surplus by humanitarian and religious organizations, but required that all such food aid be “clearly identified” as “furnished by the people of the United States of America” by labels on every container or package. In other words, “food held out the hand of potential friendship to the decolonizing world,” serving as a “deterrent” against the lure of communism among hungry, vulnerable peoples.⁶³

With the American government’s support and their own publicity and fund-raising campaigns, then, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the Cooperative for

⁶²Julia F. Irwin, “Raging Rivers and Propaganda Weevils: Transnational Disaster Relief, Cold War Politics, and the 1954 Danube and Elbe Floods,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no 5 (November 2016): 899, 901, 903, 906; Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 180, 192-4; Amy Kaplan, “Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 8; David M. Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World: A Course for Older Young People and Adults* (Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1963), 78; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 11, 84-7; McCleary, 4, 80; Chabbott, 237-8; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 2; Robert, “Shifting Southward,” 50; Beuttler, 120-1; R. Drew Smith, 5; Lucas, 1-3, 281-3; Rosenberg, 250-1.

⁶³Ibid.

American Remittances to Europe (or CARE, later the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) proliferated in the postwar period, as did religious humanitarian agencies – Catholic Relief Services in 1943, World Relief in 1944, and World Vision in 1950, to name just a few. As was obvious in the name-change of groups like CARE, the “professionalization” of global humanitarianism as a politically neutral “science” rather than a wartime relief program had begun, paradoxically as the result of decidedly political developments. Missionaries were no longer the “primary window” into foreign issues or the sole actors in international welfare work, and this “secularization” of humanitarianism would deeply affect the perceptions and practices of religious humanitarianism in the decades to come.⁶⁴

For now, however, as was evident in his emphasis on collaboration between the government and religious PVOs, Truman believed that religious organizations had a special role to play in containment. America had an obligation to oppose communism not just because it threatened democracy and capitalism around the world, but also because its success meant a “world without God.” In other words, because communism represented a militantly irreligious political ideology, both Truman and Eisenhower “summoned the American people to a religious crusade” – one that would unite the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths against a common enemy. Pledge drives, speeches, advertisements, movies, education programs, monuments, and other societal resources were deliberately deployed to stimulate a religious revival in the 1940s, and the message was singular: “the Soviet Union’s greatest fear is not American nuclear attack but American religious revival.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴Ibid. See also Nancy Boyd, *Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YMCA 1895-1970* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1986); Kristin L. Ahlberg, *Transplanting the Great Society: Lyndon Johnson and Food for Peace* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 6-7; Heike Wieters, “Reinventing the Firm: From Post-war Relief to International Humanitarian Agency,” *European Review of History* 23, no. 1-2 (March 2016): 116-135.

⁶⁵Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against*

And where Woodrow Wilson had previously been unsuccessful, now the anxieties of the Great Depression and WWII served as potent conditioning factors for this newfound support of global interdependency. Roused by the calls for revival, many religious Americans indeed supported the creation of international institutions that would safeguard peace through arbitration, establish regulations for international trade, and guarantee the safety and rights of people everywhere. Global news broadcasts, increased attention to “world history,” and the international experiences of millions of Americans in military service, among other factors, contributed to this new “liberal internationalism” that contrasted with the isolationism and xenophobia of the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁶

Support for a more comprehensive “global order” – what was still referred to by some using the 19th century terminology of the “Christianization” of international relations – was also at an all-time high among liberal and ecumenical Protestants in the 1940s and 50s. During this period, for example, Stowe observed that the US was entering an “Age of Internationalism” through its government’s international affairs, its increasingly “cosmopolitan” character, and the global reach of its businesses. Most notably, however, a global consciousness was being stimulated among American Protestants by Christians in the “Third World” themselves –through their contact with missionaries, their participation in the nascent ecumenical movement, and in their own organizational, evangelistic, and theological efforts. American missionaries, in other words, were especially attuned to the needs of people in foreign fields, and aimed to “prod

Communism in the Early Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6-8, 158; Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), Ch. 9; Inboden, 1, 4-5, 19. On “tri-faith America,” see Toulouse (1993), Herberg (1955), Marty (1961), Preston (2012), Inboden (2008), and Schultz (2011).

⁶⁶Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 11, 179; Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Iriye, “Internationalizing International History,” 57-9; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 95; Cmiel, 1235; Tyrrell, 176-7, 180; Ishay, 179, 230; Glendon, 24.

American Christians to action.” Stowe, no exception to this pattern, called the vibrancy and growth in former mission churches the “the great new fact” with which he and other American Protestants should be preoccupied. In such an interdependent world, he argued, concerning oneself only with domestic or national security issues, however pressing, was “lightweight Christianity.”⁶⁷

Riding this wave of secular and religious support, the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, for example, allowed delegates from all 44 Allied nations to generate rules and currency standards for the postwar economy, as well as establish institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ensure and stabilize them through national development loans. In 1949, the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) formed an intergovernmental alliance for peace by guaranteeing that member states would defend the others in the event of an external attack.⁶⁸ Established in 1945 as the successor to the failed League of Nations, the United Nations (UN) attempted to more fully satisfy the desire for an instrument which would eliminate or restrict nuclear weapons, provide humanitarian relief and development assistance, and promote cultural and political internationalism to prevent war. Paralleling the UN model, and after ten years in the “process of formation,” the World Council of Churches (WCC) was also established in 1948, which included a Churches Commission on International Affairs (CCIA) largely focused on international human rights activism. At its inaugural General Assembly in

⁶⁷Gerald Lawson Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism: The American Churches & the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 208; David Mosler and Robert Catley, *Global America: Imposing Liberalism on a Recalcitrant World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), xiii; Inboden, 61; David M. Stowe, “Why Foreign Missions?” *Mission Today* 2, no. 4 (April-May 1958), 1-2; David M. Stowe, “Lightweight Christianity,” 2 March 1958, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 34; David M. Stowe, “What on Earth is the Church Doing?” *High Fellowship Helps* 7 (March 1961): 1-7; David M. Stowe, “Mission in the Ecumenical Church,” 12 November 1963, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 105; David M. Stowe, “Can the Church Make a Difference in the World?” August 1963, DMS Papers, Box 25, Folder 125.

⁶⁸Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 31; Tyrrell, 180; John S. Nurser, “A Human Rights ‘Soul’ for a Secular World of ‘Faiths’: A Contradiction, or Just a Paradox?” *Political Theology* 6, no. 1 (2005): 52-3; Glendon, 4; Inboden, 30.

Amsterdam in 1948, the WCC declared that the churches indeed had a responsibility to educate “world-citizens” able to see beyond a “national outlook,” and to foster the peaceful coexistence of all ideological or economic systems – socialist, capitalist, communist, or otherwise. Both in their official rhetoric advocating for “world order” and in the organization of their own international institution on the same model, then, ecumenical Protestants registered their support for the UN.⁶⁹

The fact that temporary wartime collaboration between the government and religious PVOs had been transformed into permanent cooperation at the same time that strictly humanitarian goals became subordinate to Cold War interests, however, posed serious dilemmas for many Protestants. The first of these was a question about the advisability of non-state actors like themselves cooperating with and accepting subsidies from the American government. The Food for Peace program, as well as President Kennedy’s later Peace Corps and Alliance for Progress programs in 1961, brought criticism from groups like Church World Service (CWS) and Lutheran World Relief: “How could agencies continue to claim that they were serving the wishes of a truly international humanitarianism when their major overseas efforts inevitably appeared to flow toward a select group of nations favored by the Department of State?” Furthermore, any government-sponsored service was mandated to take place without explicit evangelism, as it was often a source of resentment among many recipients – and this brought up concerns for many about the relationship between mission and service. Alternatively, others like Stowe believed that if religious organizations undertook to relieve human need even in a

⁶⁹Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 207; Jerald Dale Gort, “The Christian Ecumenical Reception of Human Rights,” in *Human Rights and Religious Values: An Uneasy Relationship?*, eds. Abdullahi A. An-Na’im, Henry Jansen, Hendrik M. Vroom, and Jerald Dale Gort (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 206; Karsten Lehmann, “Shifting Boundaries Between the Religious and the Secular: Religious Organizations in Global Public Space,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 6, no. 2 (2013): 210-1; John S. Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), Chs. 3 and 8; Iriye, 57; Douzinas, 92; Glendon, xix; Inboden, 38, 41; Brackney, 120.

“disinterested” way, it would be an effective missionary method. In other words, working with refugees, for example, without an eye solely toward “winning souls” would still naturally “evoke curiosity as to the source and secret” of the service: Christianity.⁷⁰

The second, broader dilemma was a more penetrating concern about the apparent contradictions between moral humanitarianism and the national objective of stimulating economic and political stability in the Third World to prevent its submission to communism. On the one hand, many evangelicals and conservative mainline churchmen remained fiercely anti-communist, and deplored the modernism, radical social agenda, and attempts at fellowship with Orthodox churches of the ecumenical movement – so much so that outspoken fundamentalist critic Carl McIntire’s rival body to the WCC, the International Council of Christian Churches, as well as a national equivalent to the NCC, the American Council of Christian Churches, attracted a modicum of support. This conservative Christian critique of the WCC as “Marxist” would not die down anytime soon, and in these heady days of the Cold War even some secular NGOs called for a robust response like containment and overwhelmingly supported the international fight against communist ideology.

Alternatively, many ecumenicals and liberal Protestants took an “independent, prophetic, and frequently critical” stance toward the policies of Truman (and later, of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson), albeit couched within an overall context of support for their social and cultural projects. Among their complaints, some worried that containment’s dogmatism and rigidity “distorted” the realities of decolonization and failed to ground foreign policy in a proper commitment to justice – complaints often driven by the global experience of missionaries. Many

⁷⁰Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 93; Hedstrom, 219; McCleary, 83, 174; Preston, 509-11; David M. Stowe, “Refugee Work and the Missionary Obligation of the Church,” 1 December 1951, DMS Papers, Box 118, Folder 161.

also decried the militarization associated with containment, and advocated instead for nuclear disarmament, peaceful arbitration (even with communists), and the requisite international organizations to ensure them. These tensions between government funding and ecumenical social service, as a function of larger tensions between “selfless” or altruistic American humanitarianism and the pursuit of national interest, would persist well into the late 20th century, and would plague Stowe throughout most of his career.⁷¹

On one issue in particular, however, most ecumenicals like Stowe agreed: human rights. The adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), rooted in the concept of inherent human dignity and the responsibility of nation-states to protect it, was in many ways the inaugural event in this conversation.⁷² As in the case of foreign aid, however, here too the antagonisms between East and West influenced the creation and application of such human rights conventions. Where the liberal democratic Anglo-American tradition focused largely on individual civil and political rights, socialists and Marxists instead tended to emphasize collective and socio-economic ones; as such, both were included in the UDHR. Concerned primarily with issues like national sovereignty and American hypocrisy (given the racial discrimination prevalent in US society), however, the Socialist bloc abstained from voting on the Declaration. Meanwhile, the Western powers conspired through their role on the UN

⁷¹Tony Ladd, “Mission to Capitol Hill: A Study of the Impact of Missionary Idealism on the Congressional Career of Walter H. Judd,” in *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China: The Impact of American Missionaries*, eds. Patricia Niels and John C. Brewer (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 275; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 13, 17; Preston, 391, 398-9, 402, 467, 481-3, 486, 502, 519; McCleary, 92; Inboden, 93. Nicholas Guyatt in particular elaborates on this tension between national interest and altruistic intentions in humanitarianism. The persistent paradox of the “pursuit of American interests and the presentation of those interests as universal...place[s] strains on the credibility of American intentions as well as on US relations with other countries.” The paradox is particularly noticeable in the US’ “formidable rhetorical commitment to universal ideals of peace, justice, and human rights” coupled with a spotty track record (see Somalia and Rwanda) that “lags far behind the promises” and a troubling “antipathy” to the rules and aims of the UN and the global community (57-8).

⁷²H. G. G. Herklots, *Amsterdam 1948: An Account of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 70-2; Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 28; Lauren, 219-226; Douzinas, 93-9; Glendon, 84.

Security Council so that it would have “no immediate legal effect.” Despite the compromise evident in the UDHR, then, the tensions which lay behind it remained an influential factor in its implementation.⁷³

In fact, until the 1970s the US was generally inactive in promoting human rights where it did not serve the purposes of anticommunism and power politics, and some conservatives saw the entire concept as a “communist conspiracy.” It was in this context that liberal Protestants, along with other Jewish and Catholic organizations, became the primary “guardians” of human rights; they were among the few groups that gave human rights an “institutional home” in the postwar period.⁷⁴ The liberal Protestant lobby had in fact been extremely active among the NGOs who aided in drafting the UN Charter and the UDHR. At the UN organizing conference in 1945 in San Francisco, for example, 4 of the 9 amendments suggested by ecumenical leaders were accepted into the UN Charter, including one which called for a declaration of human rights. Among these leaders was Presbyterian layman John Foster Dulles, who headed the Federal Council of Churches’ Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace (the CDJP, an influential organ that directed American foreign policy and public opinion toward international arbitration and human rights) and who would later serve as Secretary of State. Emboldened by this success with the UN Charter, CCIA director, Lutheran professor, and former missionary O. Frederick Nolde also brought up issues like humanitarian aid and religious freedom, among others, as the UDHR was being drafted.⁷⁵

⁷³Max L. Stackhouse, “The Sources of Human Rights Ideas,” in *Christianity and Human Rights: Influences and Issues*, eds. Frances S. Adeney and Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 41; Clapham, 49; Guyatt, 60; Ishay, 226; Glendon, xvii, 43, 99-100, 169-70; 226.

⁷⁴Keys, 28, 31; Douzinas, 29; Ishay, 181, 226-7; Barnett and Stein, 4.

⁷⁵Robert Traer, *Faith in Human Rights: Support in Religious Traditions for a Global Struggle* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 21; Alf Tergel, *Human Rights in Cultural and Religious Traditions* (Uppsala: S. Academiae Ubsaliensis, 1998), 208-9; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, Chs. 2, 3, and 10; Hollinger,

The work of Dulles, Nolde, and the new WCC with diplomatic delegations leading up to the UN and UDHR, as well as their overall support for human rights, was inspired in part by the Protestant mission effort. As eminent missionary leader Robert E. Speer explained, “it was through the missionary enterprise that men had seen the great possibilities of interdenominational, international, and interracial service. Now was the time to further extend cooperation on all fronts.” On a more pragmatic level as well, rights of religious freedom would ensure the ability of missionaries to evangelize, social rights (especially education) would guarantee that individuals were able to properly understand and choose Christianity, and rights to basic necessities ensured that people would be open to religion (and not preoccupied with mere survival). Furthermore, support for the creation of the WCC and its unified socio-political agenda was itself urged by many Christians in the global South, who argued that “while unity may be desirable in the lands of the older churches, it is *imperative* in those of the younger churches.” Deeply influenced by missionary experience and the global Christian network, then, ecumenical leaders and organizations took on the task not just of drafting international charters but of advocacy, publicity, and study in support of the Declaration as well, as evident in the ongoing work of Dulles’ Commission on a Just and Durable Peace.⁷⁶

Thus while evangelicals were dismayed at the lack of references in the UDHR to a “supernatural Creator” and his endowment of humans with certain rights as the basis for the Declaration, the global outlook and missionary experience of ecumenicals allowed them to recognize that a human rights platform built on a strictly Christian foundation would be too

After Cloven Tongues, 33; Keys, 29; Lauren, 215; Brackney, 115; Glendon, 15; Preston, 384-5, 406-409, 484; Ishay, 215; Nurser, “A Human Rights Soul,” 54-5; Beuttler, 122; Inboden, Ch. 6.

⁷⁶Dana Robert, “Introduction,” in *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 17; Traer, 19, 23; Piper, 50-1; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, 2, 20-1; Nurser, “A Human Rights Soul,” 54-6; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 30; Clapham, 49; Brackney, 119; Preston, 408; Yates, 128-9.

narrow and ineffectual. Instead, they sought a universal mandate that would reflect the “deepest impulses of Christian faith” but which would also respect “the integrity of other cultures” and the “increasingly authoritative position of science.” In other words, the UN’s construction of a “global ethos” was seen by some as a secular update to the project of the previous generation of American Christians to “evangelize the world.” As the first chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights (and former first lady) Eleanor Roosevelt suggested, the key was that the UDHR reflected the “spirit” – if not the letter – of Christianity. Missionary leader and WCC architect J. H. Oldham likewise noted that human rights would serve as a “new secular structure for the ‘good society’ that would inherit the fruits of the Christian centuries.” In other words, human rights conventions were often understood (both by theologically liberal Christians and secular critics) as “a variant of Christianity in disguise.”⁷⁷

In other ways, too, missionary reflex influences shaped Protestant advocacy for human rights. Like the UN, which by the 1960s counted developing countries as its largest voting bloc, the WCC and its regional counterparts continually provided further opportunities for the “periphery” to influence the way the ecumenical movement defined and defended human rights. Perhaps the most obvious example is in the ways in which the WCC broadened its human rights agenda over the course of the 20th century. At Amsterdam in 1948, as well as at the second General Assembly in Evanston, Illinois in 1954, the WCC affirmed human rights largely in the context of support for religious liberties, especially in totalitarian states. It is perhaps no coincidence that at Amsterdam, restrictions prevented churches which were not “autonomous” from attending, thereby precluding the attendance of many “younger” churches still dependent on outside churches for funding, training, or mission work. As such, delegates from these

⁷⁷Eleanor Roosevelt quoted in Brackney, 119; Glendon; Herklots, 67-8; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 25; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, 1, 4, 12-3, 16-7, 20-1; Wacker, “Second Thoughts,” 297; Inboden, 58, 86.

churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America filled only two-thirds of the seats provided them, and the Amsterdam statements about religious liberty were pronounced with a decidedly “Anglo-Saxon accent.”⁷⁸ As the next chapters will discuss, however, more of these churches were able to participate over the following decades, which directed attention to the fact that patterns of underdevelopment and dependency in the global South were obstacles to the attainment of human rights. Their increasing presence in the WCC, in other words, would eventually lead to a conversation about human rights that moved beyond the partial approach of emphasizing political rights (and especially religious freedom) that dominated Amsterdam and Evanston, to a more comprehensive one that addressed socio-economic and collective rights as well.⁷⁹

Amidst these global developments, Stowe began to feel personally called to international service as well. After graduating from the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in Berkeley and receiving ordination in 1943, Stowe felt something begin to “work inside” him. Compelled by the lingering effects of his CMA upbringing, Stowe wrote to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) regarding a missionary assignment. Such was his compulsion for the missionary life that when proposing to Virginia Ware, whom he had met while she was serving as an organist at a local church, he asked: “Would you be willing to go as a missionary?” They were married in the fall of 1943, and after serving the next two years as associate minister at First Congregational Church in Berkeley and welcoming an infant daughter, Nancy, they were assigned as ABCFM missionaries to North China.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Ernest W. Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi: The World Council of Churches and the Third World* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center of Georgetown University, 1979), 13; Tergel, 205, 207; Herklots, 11, 62, 71-2.

⁷⁹Edward Duff, *The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches* (New York: Association Press, 1956), 279; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, 6; Tergel, 29; Sanneh, *Disciples*, 272.

⁸⁰Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; Stowe, “Some Reflections on 50 Years of Ministry.”

The trip, however, would not begin immediately; first, the Stowes underwent a year of training in Chinese languages at Yale University's Institute of Far East Languages (IFEL), which would go on to serve as training facility for linguists in the US Air Force. There, between 1945 and 1946, Stowe and his family aimed to "sinocize" themselves, and reportedly developed an affinity for Chinese "language, food, and culture." This preparatory work was also bolstered by decades of American missionary experience in China since 1829 (some of it illustrious, as in the case of Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck), which had informed and educated missionaries – and through them, the American public – about Chinese culture, language, and philosophy. Moreover, this history of mission in China had imparted another important lesson: missionary efforts were most acceptable to the Chinese when they were "service-oriented." Leading Chinese Christians in the 1920s, for example, had suggested that "it is the activities of Christianity rather than its teachings and spiritual experiences that have arrested the attention of our people and have won their respect."⁸¹

Despite being equipped with the collective knowledge afforded by this history of mission experience in China, Stowe's missionary sojourn was complex, challenging, and at times even dangerous. For one thing, he reported that Catholics outnumbered Protestants by at least 2 to 1. And aside from the obvious adjustments – negotiating customs, learning to use chopsticks, weathering "winter dust storms and summer heat," and acclimating to the "alien" sights and sounds – the sensitive situation of reestablishing missions to China after WWII, especially in formerly Japanese-occupied territories, was a complicated project. It required assigning new

⁸¹R. G. Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Mission Societies in China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 114; Kessler, 157-8; Tyrrell, 182-3; Xi, 1-4; Reinders, xiv; Inboden, 157; Boger, 331; David Stowe to parents, 10 March 1946, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; David Stowe to extended family, 3 March 1947, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 3; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe. On "husband-wife duos" in missionary service, see Lantzer, 108.

personnel like Stowe to China where there had been none for at least eight years, reconstructing damaged schools, hospitals, and other buildings, and resupplying Christian libraries and universities. Indeed, Stowe noted upon his arrival that the “scars of bombing and fire” were still visible.⁸² Beyond this, too, the interrelated pressures of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Chinese Christian “Three Self Movement,” and the outbreak of the Korean War over the next three years were the chief sources of difficulty for Stowe and his young family during his missionary assignment in China.

American missionaries in China since at least the 1890s had been confronted by anti-imperialist sentiment among those they aimed to evangelize. Some of these early incidents (the infamous Boxer Rebellion in 1899, for example) had in fact prompted the American government to negotiate with Chinese officials for formal protections for missionaries and, in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion, to flex their military muscle to ensure that no further “transgressions” were committed against the Western presence in China.⁸³ The “New Culture” movement in early twentieth century China, however, embarked on a nationalist project that was iconoclastic toward the legacies of classical Chinese culture, religion, and language, severely opposed to the constraints of Western intervention and foreign ideology, and emphatic about the necessity of technological and intellectual progress in China. Culminating in the famous “May Fourth” Movement in 1919, these sentiments contributed to the subsequent formation of the CCP in 1921. Fueled by the rise of the CCP and its radical Marxism, protests blamed Christianity both as a religion (and thus as an obstacle to scientific progress) and as an “agent of imperialism” for

⁸²Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 147; David Stowe to extended family, 7 March 1947, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 3; David Stowe to extended family, 10 April 1947, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David M. Stowe, “The Imperative of the Risen Christ,” 21 April 1996, DMS Papers, Box 12, Folder 70; Stowe, “My Pilgrimage in Mission.”

⁸³James L. Hevia, “Leaving a Brand on China: Missionary Discourse in the Wake of the Boxer Movement,” *Modern China* 18, no. 3 (1992): 304-5, 325; Kessler, 15-6, 26; Reinders, 18-9; Duara, 122; Preston, 194-5.

keeping the Chinese nation “backward and ignorant.” Ironically, some historians have suggested that it was the missionaries themselves who had fomented the sentiments of freedom and democracy which stimulated this revolution, but they were unwelcome in it nonetheless. Stowe certainly believed in the edifying benefits of Christian mission there; those educated in mission schools, he observed, had “superior advantages and...integrity because of what the church has given them.”⁸⁴

Following WWII, the persistent tensions between the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalist Party, erupted into civil war. It was in this context that Stowe and his family began their work in Peiping (or Beiping), North China in February 1947 (Figure 2). In fact, even the name of the city itself (meaning “Northern Peace”) was an indication of the conflict, being a name used by the Nationalist Party and its supporters because they opposed the CCP and therefore did not recognize the city as the capital of China (Beijing meaning “Northern Capital.”) Amidst the pressure of “Red drives” by the CCP’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) on the city, Stowe taught Bible classes to schoolchildren, gave talks to fellow “religious workers,” underwent further language training, and worked closely with local church leaders on programs and services. He also regularly discussed the tense political situation with his fellow missionaries, with whom he felt a deep and familial sense of camaraderie, and shared these thoughts with American diplomats like William C. Bullitt and Leighton Stuart, the latter of whom was president of the missionary college Yenching University and US Ambassador to China. Although Stowe was to some degree preoccupied by his frenzied schedule of discussion groups, school lectures, diaconal duties, and social activities, Stowe agreed with Stuart that the Nationalists were unlikely to win the war, having heard reports of brutal violence being used to

⁸⁴Kessler, 3; Reinders, 31; Boger, 315-7; Fairbank, 2; Xi, 5-6; David Stowe to extended family, 7 March 1947.

quell Nationalist opposition, frustrated farmers in the countryside “swinging over to Communism,” and hordes of refugees at the city gates who had fled from “Red areas.”⁸⁵

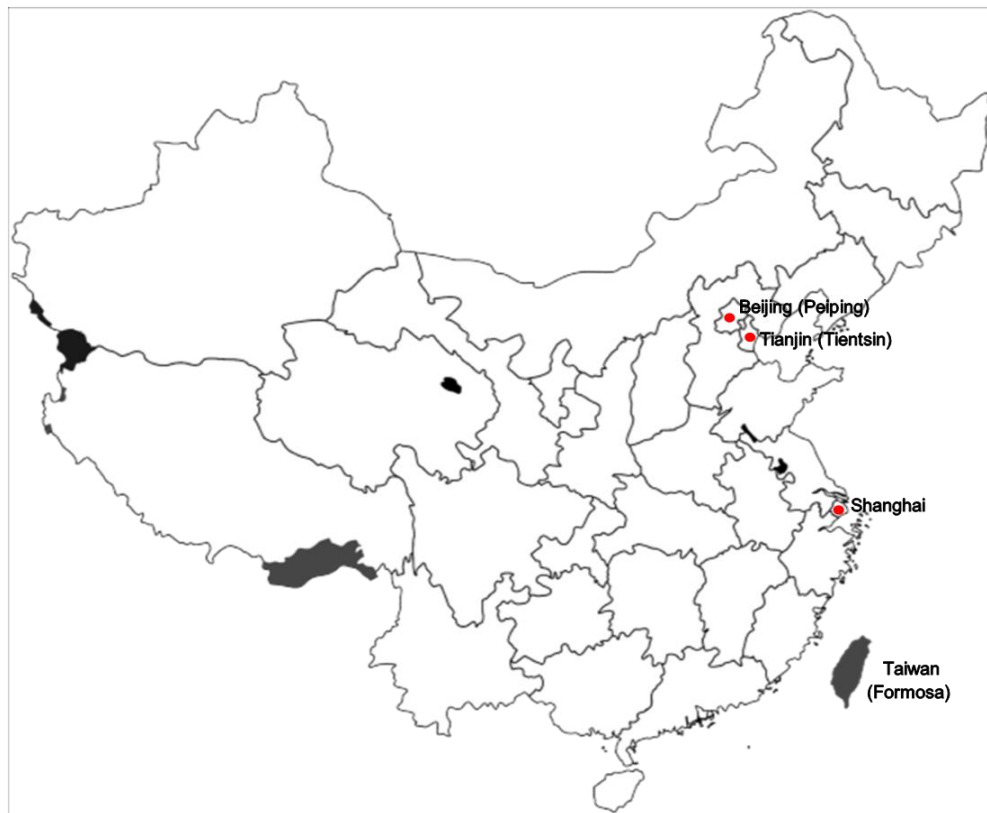


Figure 2. Map of Stowe’s Travels in China

⁸⁵Joseph K. S. Yick, *Making Urban Revolution: The CCP-GMD Struggle for Beiping-Tianjin, 1945-1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), xvi; Diana Lary, *China’s Civil War: A Social History, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 146-9; John C. Brewer and Kenneth W. Rea, “Dr. John Leighton Stuart and U.S. Policy toward China, 1946-1949,” in *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China: The Impact of American Missionaries*, eds. Patricia Niels and John C. Brewer (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 230-1; Kessler, 127; Inboden, 159-60; Bays and Wacker, 3-4; Preston, 478; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; David Stowe to extended family, 10 April 1947; David Stowe to Henry Gray, 19 July 1947, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 3; David Stowe to extended family, 2 September 1947, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 3; David Stowe to extended family, 31 January 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4. For more on Yenching University, see Bays and Wacker, 2-3.

Roughly a year after they had first arrived in China, the situation was much the same as Stowe and his family moved to Tientsin (Tianjin), although Stowe described it as a “slum” – albeit one that afforded more “intimate” relationships – compared to the urban center of Peiping. (Both, however, were among the largest Chinese cities at the time, and have been characterized as KMT “urban islands in a CCP-dominated rural ocean.”) Amidst further concerns of the “Reds holding the whip hand” and the possibility of being forced out of China, as well as rapid inflation, the occasional “food panic,” and news of another child on the way, Stowe continued his work – giving sermons and assisting in local churches and laity training programs, continuing his language study, teaching schoolchildren English and music, delivering lectures at various schools and conferences around the city, and working extensively with local student and mission groups. Reiterating the notion that the most successful missions in China were “service-oriented,” Stowe and the ABCFM redoubled their efforts in schools, clinics, soup kitchens, and other public programs as the situation became increasingly tenuous, believing that those institutions of “concrete service” would have the best chance of survival after a Communist takeover.⁸⁶

Most US troops, however, had already withdrawn by the end of 1947, and the American embassy officially advised all Americans to flee in late 1948. It was at this time, then, that Stowe and his wife considered returning home. The couple met with their Chinese Christian friends to

⁸⁶Yick, xviii-xix, 102, 174; David Stowe to extended family, 23 March 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to extended family, 18 May 1948, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 28 June 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to extended family, 23 July 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to extended family, August/September 1948, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 29 October 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to Allen Hackett, 15 November 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to extended family, Christmas 1948, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 21 March 1949, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 13 August 1949, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 5; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; Stowe, “Some Reflections on 50 Years of Ministry.” For news reports of the Stowes’ decision to stay, see DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 2.

explain their decision to leave, and were encouraged “with lovely Chinese courtesy” to do so as soon as possible. After the meeting, however, Stowe recounted a mutual epiphany: “Me and Ginny looked at each other and said ‘we can’t go.’ This is our community. We’ve been here as a Christian community, mission, and church for way over 100 years and now it’s facing the biggest crisis in its history. How can we leave?”⁸⁷ In recalling this moment, as in much of their joint correspondence from China, the support and partnership of Stowe’s wife Virginia in the rigors of everyday life as a missionary is evident. Her support of the decision to remain in China despite these rigors and in addition to carrying their second child reads as a quietly powerful one, made without much recorded reflection.

Adding to the challenges of immersion in a foreign land, over the course of their time in China the perceived likelihood of a Communist takeover vacillated like a “pendulum” between a guarantee and a seemingly distant possibility. In all cases, from within the gated missionary compound, Stowe insisted that physical danger seemed unlikely. Less than a month after the birth of his second daughter, however, the PLA takeover (“liberation”) of Tientsin in January of 1949 severely disabused him of that notion. The missionary community was forced to take shelter during a “firefight” as the city was overtaken, Stowe huddled in the basement with a newborn child and reciting Psalms 23 and 139. To his friends and family back home, Stowe wrote a detailed 10-page account of the conflict and their weathering of it, but insisted that he was committed to “stick by the ship.” He explained that he saw his decision as a means to “dig in” against communism, show solidarity with Chinese Christians and other missionaries, and influence the direction of China at this pregnant moment in its history. In newspaper reports back home, the Stowes and their colleagues who remained in China were depicted as “defiantly”

⁸⁷Ibid.

standing up to the “red menace.” The bravery of missionary wives – Virginia Stowe among them – was highlighted in particular (although it was her husband David who would be offered a series of prominent bureaucratic positions upon their return to the US.)⁸⁸

Most of this rhetoric was fueled by the fact that CCP policies became increasingly intolerant of the missionary, and Christian, presence after the Communist victory in Tientsin gave way to similar “peaceful liberations” of Peiping, Sichuan, and much of the Chinese mainland in 1949. Many American churches now withdrew their missionaries in advance of a full Communist takeover. Missionaries like Stowe who remained, and Chinese Christians themselves, reported that they were often restricted in their movements, subjected to frequent inquiries (and sometimes imprisonment) by Communist forces, and decried at “denunciation meetings” in public. Although the occupation of Tientsin was characterized by less hostility than in most other places, especially rural areas, Stowe himself was threatened for taking photographs “without permission,” was interviewed and “registered” by armed soldiers and restricted from leaving the city limits, and the local mission schools were increasingly covered in propagandistic material and forced to host communist musical and other programs. Stowe also received numerous reports from evangelists in the countryside who had been subjected to confiscations and other forms of “repression.”⁸⁹

In this context, some Chinese Christians worked to solve the impasse by communicating directly with the new regime and cutting all financial and institutional ties with “imperialist” foreign missionary boards and denominations. “A Message from Chinese Christians to Mission

⁸⁸Ibid. See also David M. Stowe, “Emmanuel – God With Us,” 20 December 1998, DMS Papers, Box 12, Folder 76.

⁸⁹David M. Stowe, “Report on First Term of Service in North China Mission,” 5 October 1950, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 2; David Stowe to extended family, 3 May 1949, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 5; David Stowe to extended family, 16 June 1949, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 5; David Stowe to extended family, 28 June 1948; David Stowe to extended family, 21 March 1949.

Boards Abroad” was issued in December 1949, in which 19 Chinese Christian leaders expressed appreciation for the work of foreign missionaries, but called on them to relinquish control and responsibility for “policy formation and financial administration” to Chinese leadership. By 1951, through similar pledges of anti-imperialism to the CCP like the “Christian Manifesto,” these leaders developed what became known as the “Three Self Patriotic Movement” (TSPM). This was, in effect, a state-sanctioned Protestant church named somewhat ironically for the principles of self-support, self-propagation, and self-governance that Rufus Anderson had promulgated decades earlier, now employed with an anti-imperial, nationalist cast. Echoing the anti-foreignism that had persisted in China since at the least the time of the Boxer Rebellion, the TSPM also served as a precursor to similar anti-missionary claims to church and national sovereignty that would arise in decolonizing nations around the world in the coming decades.⁹⁰

With the Communists on the eve of victory in China in the summer of 1949, Stowe and his family returned to Peiping to serve on the faculty at Yenching University, where Leighton Stuart and other prominent lecturers had recently vacated their positions – a sign of the rising tensions on campus between East and West, Chinese and foreign, and Communist and Christian. Still, Stowe fulfilled numerous faculty duties, accompanied by sermons, administrative meetings, social gatherings, and the like, and the climate at Yenching was that of a “safehouse” from the more repressive, sometimes violent treatment of Christians in rural areas. The invasion of South Korea by the North in 1950, however, supported by China and the Soviets, produced an even greater “flush of zealous patriotism” and provided Stowe with a “signal to pack.” It was clear that they were now considered “enemy aliens” in China, and that there was “nothing

⁹⁰Donald E. MacInnis, *Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China: A Documentary History* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 151-6, 158-60; Kessler, 6, 127-131; Bays, 149, 161-3; Duara, 103-4; Glendon, 102; Inboden, 179, 184-5.

constructive...and a certain amount destructive that could happen both to us and to our Chinese colleagues” were they to remain. Indeed, although they had previously intended to stay through as long as possible, this war in Korea, the risk of internment (especially with two young children), and a recent diagnosis of tuberculosis for Virginia (later determined to be false) compelled them to make the difficult decision to return to the US in early September of 1950. Just days after Stowe and his family boarded the *SS President McKinley* for passage home, Mao Zedong declared the birth of the People’s Republic of China, and the expulsion of imperialist powers from their country. The TSPM was declared the only legal church, and those Protestants unwilling to affiliate with it were forced underground. Although missionaries had constructed a self-identity around being the last to leave “dangerous areas,” nearly all missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, would leave China by 1953.⁹¹

To many American Christians, the Communist victory, the war in Korea, and the Three-Self movement had dealt a “near-fatal blow” to Christianity in China, prompting them to emphasize mission in Africa, India, or Latin American instead. Stowe indeed acknowledged the bleakness of the situation, but did suggest that one point of optimism about the departure of missionaries was that it might present an opportunity for the Chinese church to become more independent and self-supporting. Meanwhile, casting the situation as a part of the global defense against communism, President Truman immediately ordered US forces to stand against the North

⁹¹Margaret B. Denning, “The American Missionary and U.S. China Policy during World War II,” in *United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China: The Impact of American Missionaries*, eds. Patricia Niels and John C. Brewer (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 224 f.2; Bays, 159, 163-5; Kessler, 6; Beuttler, 121; Preston, 477; Lary, 189, 205; Margaret Stovall, “Missionary Tells of Life Inside Communist China,” DMS Papers, Box 207, Folder 10; David Stowe to extended family, 10 November 1948, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 4; David Stowe to extended family, 22 October 1949, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 14 September 1950, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David Stowe to extended family, 12 February 1950, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 6; David Stowe to extended family, 25 June 1950, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 6; David Stowe to Sheridan Friends, 4 July 1950, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 6; David Stowe to extended family, 23 July 1948; David Stowe to extended family, Christmas 1948; Stowe, “Report on First Term of Service in North China Mission”; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe.

Korean invasion and to prevent PLA attacks against the Nationalists after their retreat from the mainland to a provisional base in Taiwan (also known as Formosa, see Figure 1.) In this context, a deep rift – what historian Andrew Preston calls a “domestic cold war within the global Cold War” – opened up between conservative evangelicals and more liberal Protestants. In many ways, the trajectory of Stowe’s thought in this period is paradigmatic of the latter.⁹²

In other words, like many missionaries, Stowe’s experience of the Christian community in China – “its democracy, its indigenous leadership, and its openness and breadth of concern” – admittedly “shaped [his] understanding of missionary action” for the rest of his career. For one thing, Stowe was critical of the communist regime in China for, among other things, its violent and oppressive tactics, especially when marshalled against Christians. More substantively, however, he was also wary of the tendency in Chinese communist doctrine to instill – by propaganda or power – the supposed ideological truth that “labor creates the world.” Given that he “deeply dissented when the Communists proposed that I simply accept their revelation on faith,” he realized, “why should I ask them or anyone else to accept mine in the same way?” In other words, the experience of what he perceived as communism’s major flaw prompted what he described as a “theological crisis,” and upon his return to California in 1950, he began to pursue a doctorate in theology at PSR and returned to his post at First Congregational Church in Berkeley “carrying a huge question mark.”⁹³

The problem was essentially that in the insistence upon the self-evident nature of Communist truth, he discerned something enough like the neo-orthodoxy of Niebuhr, Barth, and Brunner that he had originally embraced to make him “uncomfortable.” Brunner especially held ideas about the inability of human concepts and language to fully describe or understand God,

⁹²Ibid. See also Preston, 498-9.

⁹³Stowe, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 119.

and thus the inability of humans to cooperate with God in the act of revelation – it was simply a matter of God choosing to reveal himself to a human whose sinful nature otherwise prevented knowledge of him. It was these ideas in particular that appeared to undergo “severe strains” in Stowe’s personal theology after returning from China:

“I had found the communists operating on a kind of neoorthodox theology that because Marx and Lenin said it and now Mao says it, it’s true. And you don’t ask why or try to probe into the rationality of it, you either accept it or you’re a class enemy...you just accept it on faith. This was a pure faith matter and I thought, I can’t accept that. I can’t accept that from Lenin and Mao, how can I accept it from Brunner?”⁹⁴

In other words, Brunner’s dialectical theology of revelation, founded on Martin Luther’s principle of “justification by faith alone,” was undermined by its parallels to what Stowe saw as the blind acquiescence of the Chinese to communist ideology. As a result of this “thorough overhauling” of Stowe’s theology, he reported undergoing a second “conversion” – this time to the process theology of Charles Hartshorne, which imagined a radically temporal, non-omnipotent God who changes and suffers with the universe. In this model, built on the philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead, God and human beings both participate in an interdependent process of creative cooperation to chart the course of history, a history which God himself has not predetermined. This affirmation of human agency and responsibility in cooperation with God was, in other words, a notion that avoided both the premillennialism of Stowe’s Nazarene upbringing as well as the “justification” theory of neo-orthodoxy, and thus served as a less “strange and forbidding” theological foundation for missionary work. And so it was this

⁹⁴While giving his thinking a “thorough overhauling” as a result of this missionary experience, Stowe also resumed the post of associate minister at First Congregational Church in Berkeley, turning down several competing offers, not least of which was a position at Yale University with prominent professor of missions Kenneth Latourette. See Kenneth Latourette to David Stowe, 20 December 1951, DMS Papers, Box 206, Folder 6; David Stowe to extended family, Christmas 1950, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; Stowe, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 119. For a review of process theology, see Kane and Phillips (1989), Ford (2000), Rescher (1996, 2000), Suchocki (1982), Cobb & Griffin (1976), McDaniel and Bowman (2006), Mesle (1993, 2008).

transition to process theology that would inspire Stowe's ThD dissertation, much of his work for the next forty years, and his personal missionary theology for the rest of his life.⁹⁵

Paradoxically, given the longevity of its effects, this critical view of communist ideology was tempered by what Stowe and many others saw as an unjustified dehumanization of Chinese communists. Many, for example, decried the American military interventions in Korea and Formosa. Stowe himself lamented the continued American support of the Nationalist haven in Taiwan, and proclaimed that "if I ever vote again for the GOP after getting us into this kind of mess I hope to be switched for it!" This was because he, along with some like-minded missionaries and ecumenicals, understood the problem in China to be the result not of the "evils of communism," but of the political consequences of poverty, corruption, and other social ills which, if rectified, would rob communism of its appeal. Stowe had experienced first-hand both the "soberingly widespread" resentment against American intervention and the vast needs of the Chinese people which he believed had prompted their support of communism.⁹⁶

As such, "neither American money nor American arms" were the solution, Stowe explained in the flagship periodical of mainline Protestantism, the *Christian Century*, especially as America's corruption, hedonism, and other social ills were no better than those which contributed to the Nationalists' downfall in China. In the larger ecumenical movement, too, the WCC throughout the 1940s and 1950s drew attention not only to the flaws of communism but also capitalism: materialism, inequality, and an emphasis on economic gain rather than economic justice. Indeed, unlike many conservatives, evangelicals, and even some ecumenicals who

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid. See also Maxwell, 285; Tyrrell, 183; Preston, 479, 487-8; Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 39; Inboden, 88, 168-70, 173, 175-6, 180-2, 188; David M. Stowe, "Six Lessons from Red China," *Christian Century* (1 August 1951): 891-2; David Stowe to extended family, 12 September 1950, DMS Papers, Box 217, Folder 6; David Stowe to extended family, August/September 1948; David Stowe to extended family, 23 March 1948; David Stowe to extended family, 12 February 1950.

fiercely opposed the communists and maintained “unswerving loyalty” to the KMT (in part as an attempt to keep China open to missionaries), Stowe and many of his colleagues in the ABCFM (and beyond) believed that the solution was to be found in “engagement, dialogue, and forgiveness.” When Stowe and other ecumenicals (including the NCC) advocated for the acceptance of the People’s Republic of China into the UN, the response of the evangelical right wing was “apoplectic.” Above all, however, Stowe insisted upon an unwavering commitment to goals that could stand up to the radical idealism of communism and which the Chinese would “recognize as inevitably their own”: social justice, development, and national self-determination. In this project of using ideas to oppose social ills, Stowe believed Christian missions were already setting the example, and he hoped to return as soon as the international situation and the health of his family allowed.⁹⁷

Although Stowe never did return to China as a missionary (returning later in retirement only as a tour leader), and his theological views were deeply changed in reaction to communism’s flaws, Stowe shared more affinity with those ecumenicals seeking to “humanize and demystify” communism than with the many conservatives who rejected it (and the push for dialogue with its proponents) entirely. Over the next few decades, Stowe’s writings on China continually reflected that ecumenical effort. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, Stowe would acknowledge that while Christianity was unlikely to survive under Mao Zedong and his regime had significant flaws (the lack of space for dissent, for example), he saw a great “spiritual ethical” element in Maoist thought, and declared Mao a “great moralist” for his emphasis on socio-economic issues. Christians, he suggested, could learn from this commitment to the

⁹⁷Ibid. See also David A. Hollinger, “The Realist-Pacifist Summit Meeting of March 1942 and the Political Reorientation of Ecumenical Protestantism in the United States,” *Church History* 79, no. 3 (September 2010): 672; Herklots, 60-4; Cavert, 220.

collective welfare of society, the “selflessness” of which challenged their individualistic Protestant faith but whose fundamental principles – social justice, care for the poor, and the moral virtue of a strenuous work ethic – were much like their own. In fact, when religious restrictions in China were relaxed after 1979, it was these affinities which prompted Stowe to publicly advocate for a renewed commitment to missionary work in China.⁹⁸

Following the award of his doctorate in 1953, and with his personal theology rebuilt, Stowe took over as chaplain of Carleton College in Minnesota, a mainstay of ecumenical internationalism, amid a period of economic prosperity and “mainline stability” in America. (Even in this context, it should be noted, David’s wife Virginia received no such career opportunities, despite her husband’s admission that she was his equal partner in mission work.) As an effect of the disillusionment of two world wars and now as a bulwark against “godless” communism, a “religious revival” in 1950s America was evidenced by explosions in church building, budgets, and membership, increased interest in Bibles (especially the new Revised Standard Edition released in 1952) and movies with religious themes, and the addition of godly language to the Pledge of Allegiance and American currency. While at Carleton, too, a new Department of Religion was established with Stowe as its first chair, and both this and the rise to fame of his departmental colleague there – physicist and theologian Ian Barbour – were indications of what Stowe called a “boom time” for American Protestantism. “Positive thinking,”

⁹⁸Bays, *A New History*, 190-1; Lukas Vischer, “Major Trends in the Life of the Churches,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 23; Preston, 498-9; David M. Stowe, “Perspectives on Development from Mao Tse-Tung,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21: 1 (January 1970): 1-10; Dan Thrapp, “A Missionary Declares Mao One of the Great Moralists,” *Los Angeles Times* (3 May 1970): E3; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 2; David M. Stowe, “China and the Protestant Ethic,” Bartlett Lecture at Yale Divinity School, 13 April 1989, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 141; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 2; David M. Stowe, “The Church in China,” 1 November 1979, DMS Papers, Box 220, Folder 40; David Stowe to John Swaner, 29 November 1979, DMS Papers, Box 3, Folder 41.

exemplified in the writings of Norman Vincent Peale, Fulton Sheen, and Bruce Barton, also proved popular, especially as an alternative to the revivalist, anticommunist messages of repentance coming from another sector that was also on the rise.⁹⁹

That is, inspired by the call to contain communism and opposed to liberal Protestantism's political machinations and seemingly unbounded inclusiveness as well as fundamentalism's self-isolation from society, the 1940s and especially the 1950s also saw the rapid growth of evangelicalism, in the form of organizations like the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), scholars like Carl F.H. Henry and periodicals (namely *Christianity Today*), and colleges, including Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. While not separatist like fundamentalist Carl McIntire's ACCC, which required separation from mainline denominational bodies or ecumenical organizations like the NCC for membership, this united postwar front of "neoevangelicalism" marked a new era in which distinctions between liberal and conservative Protestants increasingly proved more divisive than denominational markers. In particular, this period also saw the explosive growth of evangelical missionary efforts, evident both in the success of charismatic individuals like Billy Graham as well as that of independent "parachurch" organizations like the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (1946), Campus Crusade for Christ (1951), and National Student Christian Federation (1959).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹"Dr. D. Stowe Accepts Post in Minnesota," *Berkeley Daily Gazette* (17 June 1953); H. George Anderson, "Ecumenical Movements," in *Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America, 1935-1985*, eds. David W. Lotz, Donald W. Shriver, John Frederick Wilson, and Robert T. Handy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 99; Randall Herbert Balmer, *Grant Us Courage: Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7; Ralph E. Pyle, *Persistence and Change in the Protestant Establishment* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 47; Mark G. Toulouse, "The Christian Century and American Public Life: The Crucial Years, 1956-1968," in *New Dimensions in American Religious History: Essays in Honor of Martin E. Marty*, eds. Jay P. Dolan and James P. Wind (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 52-5; Preston, 440; Cavert, 189-90; Inboden, 77, 257; Gunneman, 14; Marsden, *The Twilight of the American Enlightenment*, 97-8, 107; Stevens, 13; Sweet, "The Modernization of Protestant Religion in America," 24; Hedstrom, 223; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe.

¹⁰⁰Barry Hankins, *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 35-43; Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 105; Michele Rosenthal,

With an enlarged sense of the world and in the face of the growing strength of what he called these “sometimes destructive...sectarian missions,” Stowe and many other ecumenicals became increasingly critical of a mainline tradition whose domestic stability had perhaps crossed the line into complacency. A church or religion which was “provincial” and “routine,” which existed merely because “there is an endowment of money or habit or bureaucracy to sustain it,” would have no relevance or power in the twentieth century, Stowe argued. Instead, he saw it as part of the church’s as-yet-unrealized task to confront

“white people who are comfortable in a delusion of racial superiority, citizens who feel secure behind their nation’s pile of hydrogen bombs, the strong and clever who enjoy competitions in which others always lose, [and] Christians who imagine that attending church regularly, offering God a kind thought now and then, and maintaining a comfortable status quo have some resemblance to the Christian way of life.”

Much of this critique was inspired by the experiences of his missionary service and, desirous of an opportunity to leverage them, Stowe left Carleton in 1956 to assume the role of Educational Secretary for the ABCFM at its national headquarters in Boston. The same “tug” that had compelled him to missionary service in China, in other words, had transformed into a core belief in the centrality of global mission to the Christian faith. Despite the birth of two more children, the publication of his first monograph *When Faith Meets Faith* in 1963, and the rigor of an adjunct professorship at Andover Newton Theological School (elements which might have encouraged a certain preoccupation for the domestic), Stowe would continue to be globally- and missionary-minded throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, noting frequently the necessity of Christian concern for the “unavoidable man” on the other side of the planet.¹⁰¹

American Protestants and TV in the 1950s: Responses to a New Medium (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 83; Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*; Amstutz, 33; Robert, “The First Globalization,” 52; Beuttler, 123-4; Preston, 382, 473, 480-1; Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 12, 103, 182-5; Carpenter and Shenk, xiii-xiv; Forman, 103; Anderson, “Ecumenical Movements,” 97; Inboden, 56-7, 82-3. For statistics on the growth of evangelical missions, see also Noll (2009) and Coote (1995).

¹⁰¹David M. Stowe, *The Conquest of Inner Space* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1958); David Stowe to parents, 8 February 1956, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

A demanding travel schedule and frequent communication with missionaries and Christians from the global South also likely aided in his maintenance of a global frame, and during his time at the ABCFM, he encouraged his colleagues to deploy the vast financial, social, moral, and human resources of the Christian community to address standards of living, peace, and other social issues in a global context. *When Faith Meets Faith*, for example, was a sympathetic assessment of the world's religions which concluded that a "closed-mind" approach was much less fruitful than one which remained committed to the unique revelation of Christ but also recognized the spirit of Christianity in the "convictions and insights" of other traditions. "Through world missions," Stowe wrote, "faith meets faith to the enrichment of all."¹⁰²

Although he was occasionally discouraged by the mainline's "cast-iron disinterest" in foreign missions, he consistently held that the new challenges of an interconnected world could not be met with a reiteration of the "strangeness" of foreign lands or a "comfortable repetition of traditional lines of thought and activity." Rather, where the American churches might be contentedly irrelevant in their "suburban captivity," global mission was the area where they could be "square on some of the most important targets of current history." In fact, for the rest of his career Stowe would often turn down offers for positions at notable universities and ecumenical organizations, citing his felt responsibility for global missionary work – a task he perceived to be the "least respected" in most seminaries.¹⁰³

¹⁰²David M. Stowe, *When Faith Meets Faith* (New York: Friendship Press, 1963), 170-3, 178.

¹⁰³David M. Stowe, "Square on Target," *United Church Herald* 7, no. 17 (1 October 1964): 7-9; David Stowe to Mother, 5 February 1961, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; David Stowe to Searle Bates, 14 November 1960 DMS Papers, Box 206, Folder 7; David Stowe to Stuart LeRoy Anderson, 23 September 1961, DMS Papers, Box 206, Folder 7; David M. Stowe, "World Looks at the Christian Church," Sermon notes, 1961, DMS Papers, Box 14, Folder 93; David M. Stowe, "The Word of God and the Church's Missionary Obedience," August 1958, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 23; David M. Stowe, "In No Strange Land," 9 June 1959, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 35; Stowe, "What on Earth is the Church Doing?"; Stowe, *A New Look at an Old Subject*; Stowe, "Can the Church Make a Difference in the World?"; Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World*, 35, 37-8.

Given this global concern, the missionary work of Stowe, the ABCFM, and other ecumenical agencies became increasingly divergent in style from that of the emergent evangelical and parachurch ones – a tension which would persist for decades, and which Stowe would frequently chastise as detrimental to the effectiveness and reputation of Christian mission. This was because the ecumenical goal was not (or not only) the containment of communism – what Stowe called the “spinning of a cocoon of security about ourselves” – but support for and solidarity with the same indigenous peoples that conservatives looked to convert. In other words, where Cold War fears about communists exploiting decolonizing areas “blunted the critique of imperialism” as far as many conservative Protestants (and much of the American public) were concerned, ecumenicals actually intensified the criticism of their own entanglements with imperialism and paternalism. As such, many of them “closed ranks together against a similarly interdenominational front of Christian anticommunists,” and began to refashion their missions into more “holistic” enterprises, in ways that have prompted some observers to liken them to early “faith-based NGOs.” (Stowe too, for his part, characterized ecumenical missionaries as “international social servants.”) More and more, missionary work was typified by short-term overseas postings, an emphasis on welfare projects, and support for human rights – all of which were “unhitched” from any specific requirement that they lead to Christian conversion. “Whether the membership of the church is built up or not is beside the point,” ABCFM leaders offered in the late 1950s. What mattered to these missionaries, Stowe among them, was working out how to express their faith through service, beyond “ulterior motives” and “narrow evangelism.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Sanneh, *Disciples*, 274; Preston, 475; Hollinger, “The Realist-Pacifist Summit Meeting,” 672-3; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, 14; Nielssen, Okkenhaug, and Skeie, 21; David M. Stowe, “Overseas Mission Program Reviewed,” *Advance* (18 July 1958): 15, 25; David M. Stowe, “What Faith Is,” Radio Sermon, CBS Church of the Air, 10 May 1959, DMS Papers, Box 6, Folder 12; David M. Stowe, *Into All the World Together* (Boston: United Church of Christ, 1960); David M. Stowe, “Foreign Missions: Decisions in the 60s,” 8 January 1961, DMS Papers, Box 206,

Indeed, as reflected in the work of ecumenical theologians like Johannes Hoekendijk (the son of missionaries and a prominent WCC mission administrator himself), who critiqued evangelism as “propaganda” for “the reconquest of ecclesiastical influence,” the ecumenical movement began to downplay proselytism and “depluralize” missions, casting off the language of “foreign missions” for a new “world mission.” Where proselytism was increasingly in the 1960s seen as “coercion” or a “perversion of witness” by many within the ecumenical movement, the newly singular concept of “mission” was an umbrella term for health and welfare services, youth projects, activities of political and economic interest groups, projects for social development, and human rights action and advocacy.¹⁰⁵

As Stowe explained to his students, there was now a clear distinction between mission (the church’s “total task in the world”) and missions (“particular aspects of that task.”) He further clarified that

“‘witness’ is not synonymous with ‘words’...Something beautiful, tangible, and perhaps costly is often a more eloquent and persuasive expression of our concern than speech can ever be. The Church as a witnessing community must be a *demonstrating* community... Words are not enough. Our message must be demonstrated in action as well.”

Folder 7; David M. Stowe, “The Cause of Christ is My Own,” 17 October 1956, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 32; David M. Stowe, “Criticisms of Missions: By American Christians,” 30 October 1959, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 23; David M. Stowe, “Heritage and Horizons in Mission,” *Christian Century* (9 November 1960); David M. Stowe, “The Greeks Called Them Apostles,” 13 August 1961, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 37; Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World: A Course for Older Young People and Adults*, 40, 44, 73; Stowe, “The Word of God and the Church’s Missionary Obedience.”

¹⁰⁵J.C.Hoekendijk, “The Call to Evangelism,” *International Review of Missions* 39 (1950): 167-75; Norman Goodall (ed.), *The Uppsala Report, 1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 33-4; Michael Kinnamon, “Assessing the Ecumenical Movement,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 61; McCleary, 95-7, 119; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 160-1; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 179, 183-6; Lars Dahle, Margunn Serigstad Dahle, and Knud Jørgensen (eds.), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014); Ruth Compton Brouwer, “When Missions Became Development: Ironies of NGOisation in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s,” in *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Unto the Ends of the World*, eds. Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 264; Richard D.N. Dickinson, “Diakonia in the Ecumenical Movement,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 430; Ans Joachim Van der Bent, *Historical Dictionary of Ecumenical Christianity* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 343; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 157.

In lectures and sermons throughout this period, too, Stowe argued that God’s power and interest extended to all dimensions of human activity and experience in the world. Unlike those who would “limit the range of missionary concern to a few functions – perhaps evangelism or church extension,” then, the concerns of ecumenical missionary work must be similarly wide-ranging.¹⁰⁶

The effects of this “depluralization” of missions on the institutions and organization of the ecumenical missionary movement were altogether apparent throughout the 1960s. The prominent journal *International Review of Missions*, for example, approved of the shift via an adjustment of its name to the *International Review of Mission*. In 1961, following the 1957 merger which created the United Church of Christ (UCC) and in an even larger gesture toward holistic, singular mission, the ABCFM joined with several Christian service agencies to form the new United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM), with Stowe as its General Secretary for Interpretation and Personnel. The change in language from “foreign missions” to “world ministries” explicitly signaled the enlarged scope of ecumenical missionary concern. Indeed, the statement of purpose developed by Stowe and others for this new Board – “God calls us into his church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in the service of men, to proclaim the gospel to all the world, and to resist the powers of evil” – reflected the new

¹⁰⁶David M. Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church: A Coursebook for Leaders of Adults* (Boston: United Church Press, 1966), 1, 7, 25, 108-9; David M. Stowe, “The Scope of the Christian Mission Today,” 18 July 1967, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 110; David M. Stowe, “Credibility in Evangelism” (Monrovia, California: World Vision, 1967), 13-15; David M. Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 49; David M. Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” in *Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission: The Ecumenical-Conservative Encounter*, ed. Norman A. Horner (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 156-7; David M. Stowe, “Statement on World Hunger,” *Vellore News* (Fall 1967); David M. Stowe, “Why Mission Today?” 14 November 1967, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 110; David M. Stowe, “Stewardship is: Mission,” 13 December 1967, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 110; David M. Stowe, “Christianity: Cause or Cure of the World’s Ills,” February and May 1969, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 41; David M. Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?” 22 October 1967, DMS Papers, Box 219, Folder 24; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 11, 17-19.

amalgam of programs for justice, rights, peace, service, and evangelization included under “mission.”¹⁰⁷

In the same year as the creation of the UCBWM, the WCC held its third General Assembly in New Delhi, and there too, proselytism was condemned as “a corruption of witness.” Saving souls and improving individual character “on the assumption that good people will produce good government” was, in other words, inadequate.¹⁰⁸ As an explicit (and controversial) sign of this sentiment, the autonomous International Missionary Council (IMC), which had emerged in 1921 out of the missionary cooperation movement begun at Edinburgh in 1910, was formally integrated into the WCC as its Division (later Commission) of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME, or later CWME). Amidst concerns about the new and untested status of the WCC and the submergence of a dedicated voluntary agency specifically for mission, this was a clear structural indication that mission was no longer to be considered discrete from the larger projects of church unity and social action. Stowe, like many other ecumenicals, saw this incorporation of two previously parallel bodies – a missionary one and a larger ecumenical network – as “the most dramatic and by far the most important thing that happened at New Delhi.” For Stowe, it indicated that the church finally and decisively realized its “destiny”: mission was not a “side hobby,” but the “main show.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Glenn H. Utter, *Mainline Christians and U.S. Public Policy: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 15-7; Gunneman, 54, 75; Anderson, “Ecumenical Movements,” 99; J.C. Barrett, 125; David M. Stowe, Proposed Statement of Purpose for UCBWM, 15 May 1962, DMS Papers, Box 29, Folder 10; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe.

¹⁰⁸World Council of Churches, *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time: Report of the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), 110; Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, “From Missions to Mission,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 144; Brouwer, 263.

¹⁰⁹David M. Stowe, Bible Study Lectures I and II, 23-26 September 1968, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 116; Leslie Newbigin, “The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review*

But as missionary and University of Chicago missions professor R. Pierce Beaver recorded in his 1964 publication *From Missions to Mission*, it was nationalist movements and “younger churches” in the global South – who viewed missionaries as agents of colonialism – that pushed ecumenicals to stress “peace and justice issues alongside proclamation.”¹¹⁰ In other words, for mission agencies in Europe and the US, shifting the focus of their work away from proselytism to a new, singular, all-encompassing “mission” served as both a response to critiques of paternalism and “a form of reparation” for that legacy.¹¹¹ At New Delhi in 1961, for example, 23 churches applied for and were granted membership in the WCC, 18 of them from the global South. The Report from that conference, no doubt influenced by this growing demographic in the WCC, indeed noted that because “so many new nations have come into being and are in the early stages of establishing political institutions, that more account must be taken of the difficulties which such nations face.” As such, socio-economic human rights were given a new emphasis alongside individual ones, largely due to the increased awareness provided by these new delegates of the disparities between the industrialized North and the “underdeveloped” South. The polarization and tensions of the Cold War that were evident at Amsterdam and Evanston would seem increasingly less compelling than the needs and rights of the global South and, together with the acceptance of several Orthodox churches from “behind the Iron Curtain” into

14, no. 2 (1962): 208-15; W. A. Visser 'T. Hooft (ed.), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 56-60; Yates, 157, 193, 197; Kinnamon, 53. See Laing (2011) for further elaboration on the meanings of the IMC-WCC merger.

¹¹⁰Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 362.

¹¹¹Wacker, “Second Thoughts,” 296; Nielsens et al, 19; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 68-9; Sweet, “The Modernization of Protestant Religion in America,” 36; Porterfield, 64; Pritchard, 255; Lantzer, 111. For the history of anti-imperialism, see Stanley (1990).

the WCC at the same time, the necessity of a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to rights was now clear to many ecumenicals.¹¹²

Shortly after New Delhi, and perhaps interested in concretizing its promises, Stowe spent his sabbatical from the UCBWM serving a one-year term as professor of theology at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon. There, he trained a cadre of international students for the ministry and worked to find ways to extend the school's service and bolster its budget and administration. He also gained a fuller sense of the issues facing mission, from persistent paternalism to the complexities of church selfhood and independence as he visited mission stations, attended African and Asian ecumenical conferences, and met new contacts from around the global South. He also reported being surrounded by thousands of Palestinian refugees (some of whom he called "personal friends"), which ignited a lifelong interest (and strong political opinions) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Future return trips to Lebanon in the midst of the Israeli invasion of 1982 and Jerusalem in the mid-1980s would only confirm his anxiety about the "complexities and agonies" of the Middle East.¹¹³

Upon his return in 1963, however, he intended to draw from these "linkages with indigenous churches" as he assumed a new role as Executive Secretary of the Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) of the National Council of Churches (NCC). The NCC, formed in 1950 amidst the same wave of postwar ecumenism and religious revival which had prompted the organization of its global counterpart the WCC two years earlier, was originally imagined by its

¹¹²Tergel, 207; Fitzgerald, 112-3; Chabbott, 233-4; Visser 'T. Hooft, 63-70, 100, 275-7; Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 14-5, 17, 19; David M. Stowe, "New Delhi – The Church Finds its Destiny," November-December 1961, DMS Papers, Box 161, Folder 343.

¹¹³David M. Stowe, "Report on University Christian Center, Beirut, Lebanon," 1962, DMS Papers, Box 2, Folder 35; David M. Stowe, Reports from Beirut (3), September 1962-March/April 1963 DMS Papers, Box 181, Folder 8 and Folder 9; David M. Stowe, "Reflections on the Kampala Assembly, AACC," 13 May 1963 DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 25; David M. Stowe, "Reflections on a Visit to the Southern Rhodesia Mission," 13 May 1963 DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 188; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; Stowe, "Some Reflections on 50 Years of Ministry."

leaders as a way to unite the numerous mainline Protestant agencies for mission, relief, education, media, and fellowship as one against the threats of secularism, communism, and Roman Catholicism. It also, according to many of its early members, took seriously “its responsibility to give guidance to the thinking of Americans about their relation with other peoples of the world.” But the scale and complexity of an organization that represented these myriad agencies and interests (as well as 40 million people from 29 church denominations) proved to be a challenge, prompting some observers to characterize the NCC as a “snake that had swallowed a grand piano.”¹¹⁴

Shortly after Stowe took over his new role, then, these difficulties together with the aforementioned shifts in ecumenical missionary thinking prompted significant reorganization in the NCC. As part of a larger reorganization of the NCC’s internal structure, a new Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) was established in 1965, which would integrate the missionary work of the DFM with the global service and relief efforts of Church World Service (CWS). CWS, known for its early successes like its refugee resettlement program and its distribution of at least \$40 million in funds and supplies to forty countries in its first three years of operation from 1946-49, had previously operated autonomously within the NCC. Now, Stowe was nominated to stay on as the Associate General Secretary of a division which would incorporate it with his former DFM.

Though the months of preparation for the consolidation of this new DOM were “thick and black with organizational maneuvers,” and thus extremely taxing for Stowe as its first director, the new unit – like the WCC-IMC merger – embodied the ecumenical sense of

¹¹⁴Martin E. Marty, “The Global Context of Ecumenism 1968-2000,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 4; Rosenthal, 40; Utter, 3, 26; Anderson, “Ecumenical Movements,” 95-6; Cavert, 206, 220, 248.

“holistic” mission, one that included both service and evangelization. Indeed, Stowe suggested, this reorganization was “profoundly correct,” because “unless we are to confine mission to verbal evangelism – which means largely ineffectual evangelism – there is no way of maintaining a clear distinction between mission and services.” The DOM would be the largest unit of the NCC, representing some 70 mission boards and 30 Protestant denominations in the US and operating with a budget of \$50 million (nearly two-thirds of NCC funds) and an international staff of over 100. These massive resources, inherited from the boom in religious prosperity in the 1950s, provided a significant opportunity for Stowe to implement many of the ideas forged both by his own missionary experience and by his continued engagement with Christians from the global South.¹¹⁵

Indeed, Stowe was one of the many Americans with international missionary experience whose perspective, historians have noted, then dominated the ecumenical movement; decades of missionary activity, in other words, had populated the ecumenical landscape with internationally-minded leaders who publicized the need to “supplement a local perspective with a global one.” At its first assembly in Nashville in October 1965, for example, Stowe expressed optimism about the new DOM and its dialogues with Japanese Christians regarding peace in Asia, Latin American churches concerning American intervention in the Dominican Republic, and the All Africa Conference of Churches in connection with an Ecumenical Program for Emergency Action in Africa. As he described it to the first assembly of the DOM, the primary objectives of their many programs for development, evangelism, media, political action, and foreign assistance were to “recognize that the primary frame of reference for all significant action today is the

¹¹⁵Cavert, 191-2; David Stowe to parents, 29 May 1964, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 3; David Stowe to parents, 12 September 1964, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 3; Stowe, *A New Look at an Old Subject*; Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe; Stowe, “Credibility in Evangelism.”

international community, and turn the churches and the National Council away from preoccupation with domestic society to the world society.” To be sure, a global consciousness was beginning to more fully shape the program and policy of American ecumenicals, and this interconnected pursuit of international ecumenism would only intensify as the century wore on. So too, however, would the ire of some evangelicals and fundamentalists (James DeForest Murch and Carl McIntire, for example) who continued to fear that the NCC and WCC were “super-church” leviathans bent on propagating weak humanistic principles, liberal evangelism, and a “left-wing political program not far removed from communism.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶David M. Stowe, “The Shape of Our Calling to Mission,” 19 October 1965, DMS Papers, Box 184, Folder 18; Paul A. Crow Jr., “North America,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 615; Rosenthal, 70-1; Hollinger, *Cloven Tongues*, 29, 72; Vischer, 32. See also Ruotsila (2016).

4.0 'THE GENEVA EXPERIENCE': RELIEF, DEVELOPMENT, AND DEPENDENCY (1966-1970)

"The Church was never meant to be a quantitative success; Christianity is not an industry in competition with other industries...[the preacher's] job is to stand and witness, not to pack a room, or operate a 'plant.'"
– John Updike, *A Month of Sundays* (1974)

As Stowe took over as Associate General Secretary of the newly formed DOM, ecumenical collaboration in foreign aid projects with both an increasingly professionalized, secular humanitarian network and with the US government was becoming more and more problematic in light of critiques and ideas from their Christian partners in the global South. This chapter will review three of the most significant of those global challenges facing the American ecumenical movement – regarding its complicity in patterns of socio-economic injustice and American imperialism, its use of humanitarian aid as a tool of oppression, and its endorsement of “development” strategies as paternalistic and imperialist – as well as the attempts by Stowe and others like him to rethink the objectives and methods of mission work to respond to each. These include, in addition to strengthening their prophetic critiques of their own government and cutting some ties with government agencies and funding, refocusing many of their own projects from the distribution of simple aid toward solidarity with the oppressed, advocacy for human rights, and “structural” (rather than individual) conversion. Perhaps predictably, as this chapter will also review, evangelicals and more theologically conservatives like missiologist Donald

McGavran were generally resistant to such changes, seeing them instead as corruptions of the true missionary endeavor: the saving of souls.

The first of these critiques from the global South, of the ecumenical movement's historic role in "attach[ing] themselves to the status quo" at the "cost of justice," was a point of contention at the WCC's Church and Society conference in Geneva in 1966, the year Stowe began his tenure as head of the DOM. Notably, this conference was also the first occasion in which participants represented both laity and clergy and First and Third World in equal numbers. The critique of ecumenicals' "silence in the face of oppression" and lack of sympathy for social change came most noticeably in the form of objections to the philosophy of Christian realism which dominated ecumenical discourse, and especially to two paradigms which were built on its insights: "responsible society" and "middle axioms."¹¹⁷

A fundamental socio-ethical paradigm of the ecumenical movement since the WCC's founding in 1948, "responsible society" was a metric by which to judge existing social orders proposed by missionary leader and WCC architect J.H. Oldham. It suggested, simply put, that the ideal social arrangement was one based equally in freedom, order, justice, and liberty, and in which its members felt a responsibility for those values and where those in power exercised it responsibly. All members in such a society ought to be guaranteed certain freedoms (religious practice, thought and speech, participation in the community) and all governments ought to be amenable to "peaceful change." The utility of this objective set of Christian criteria for circumventing Cold War tensions was perhaps its greatest benefit and chief source of appeal. As

¹¹⁷Martin Conway, "Under Public Scrutiny," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 433-4; WCC, Geneva Report, 67, 77, 198-200, 209; Dickinson, 404; Kinnamon, 52; Lefever, *From Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 23. An alteration in the process for selecting representatives to the conference had been implemented before Geneva to ensure proper lay and Third World representation. See WCC, Geneva Report, 9-10.

discussed when Stowe spoke to the flaws of both communism and capitalism following his missionary experience in China, the responsible society rhetoric often led the WCC in the 1950s to condemn both capitalist and communist systems alike. In other words, to many ecumenicals, its status as a set of guidelines rather than a statement of commitment to any specific kind of socio-economic order gave the responsible society concept significant flexibility and power.¹¹⁸

But beginning at New Delhi in 1961, and especially now at Geneva, responsible society rhetoric came under attack, largely as a function of decolonization and revolutionary movements in the global South. In mandating the responsible exercise of power and advocating for peaceful change and public order, Southern critics at Geneva (and beyond) contested that responsible society was essentially a thinly-veiled endorsement of liberal democracy. In favoring peaceful change over radical social revolution, in other words, it benefitted and maintained the status quo socio-economic structures of “developed” nations and failed to speak to the contexts and needs of newly formed or “underdeveloped” ones. Some critics also believed that this repressive philosophy of “stability at all costs” quashed the popular movements and undermined the “political independence, economic self-sufficiency, and cultural cohesion” of those nations. While the perceived tone of resentment accompanying these complaints surprised many of the Geneva delegates (prompting some conservative observers to critique the climate as “un-American”), it was echoed by many others even from within the Northern churches – especially women and ethnic minorities.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸Van der Bent, 366-7; Duff, 94-5, 117-8, 191-2.

¹¹⁹Lewis S. Mudge, “Ecumenical Social Thought,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 281; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 27-9; Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 262; Lefever, *From Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 22-3.

As a function of these critiques, the prevailing strategy of “middle axioms,” also initiated by Oldham and defended in the WCC’s early years by prominent realist John C. Bennett, was coming under fire as well. As a process of applying normative theological principles (the “first act”) to practice in specific situations (the “second act”), and as an aspect of the responsible society paradigm, it too seemed to be overly inflected by the concerns of the ecumenical movement’s privileged, male, and Northern members. Despite its intention as a missional means of reforming social structures, in other words, the middle axiom strategy was built on Niebuhrian thought and tended to favor “obedience” over “ends.” Critics at Geneva especially feared that it encouraged cooperation with those in power, rather than analyses of injustice from the perspective of the poor and oppressed.¹²⁰

Such challenges to the Western churches’ role in perpetuating imperialism and oppression stimulated significant reflection and change within the ecumenical missionary movement. The WCC Central Committee would later describe this period as one of uncovering wrongly-held “assumptions” about effecting social change through contact and negotiation with high level experts and politicians (those who “possessed formal power”). Indeed, ecumenical discourse in this period was increasingly characterized not by discussions about the responsible exercise of power, but by expressions of solidarity with those who had none. Stowe, for his part, was likewise convinced that Christian mission must not only “comfort the afflicted through service” but also “afflict the comfortable through social action,” especially when that comfort was “built upon injustice.” Accordingly, the Geneva Report, despite its acknowledgment of the

¹²⁰J.H. Oldham and W.A. Visser’t Hooft, *The Church and its Function in Society* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937), 209-10; John C. Bennett, *Christian Ethics and Social Policy* (New York: Scribner, 1946); William J. Danaher, Jr., “Healing Broken Bodies: The Missional Ecclesiology Behind J.H. Oldham’s Middle Axioms,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 297-320; Miguel A. de la Torre, “Liberation Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, eds. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 27-9; Yates, 185; Tergel, 208.

historic genesis of the responsible society paradigm at Amsterdam in 1948, recognized that novel circumstances demanded new, situation-specific “experiments in social organization” – models which must “first emerge in the developing nations” themselves.¹²¹

By the time of the General Assembly at Uppsala in July 1968, the WCC’s fourth, the growing discomfort with the responsible society and middle axiom models had also penetrated to the Niebuhrian theology of Christian realism which underpinned it. Just as Stowe’s missionary experience in North China had encouraged a shift away from neo-orthodoxy several years earlier, an increasing sense of “the global” – and the ever-growing presence of Christians from the global South (and especially their theologies of liberation and revolution) in the ecumenical movement – was likewise inspiring a broad wave of liberal, internationally-minded Protestant theology in 1960s America. No other topic was more prominent in the wider Protestant press at this time than “the world,” and delegates at conferences like Uppsala declared that it was that world – not “foreign missions fields” and not the church – which should set the agenda for the churches. Not insignificantly, by the time of Uppsala, regional church councils had emerged in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Pacific, and the assembly ended with the election of a “new team” to the Central Committee and Executive committee – one much more diverse, international, and no longer dominated by those whose churches contributed the lion’s share to the WCC Treasury.¹²²

¹²¹Douglas E. Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), 133-4; WCC, Geneva Report, 50, 66, 199; Mudge, 281; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 69; Stowe, *The Church’s Witness in the World*, 58-9; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 82.

¹²²Toulouse, 79; Preston, 507-8; van der Bent, 399; Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 261; Stevens, 12; Noll, *New Shape*, 145; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, xvii; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 160; Yates, 196-7; Kinnamon, 75-6; David M. Stowe, Address to UCBWM Board of Directors on Uppsala Assembly, September 1968, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 26.

Stowe spoke to this “global” orientation to colleagues, interviewers, readers, and graduating students alike throughout the 1960s, suggesting that the task of mission was to “take seriously the world and its agenda, its questions and its convictions” so that missionary resources could be “linked constructively with needed revolutionary change” in the global South. Stowe was not alone, however, in the seriousness and significance which he assigned to the changing demographics of global Christianity.¹²³ Bennett, for example, by then President of Union Theological Seminary and co-Chairman of Section III of the Geneva Conference (as well as a former professor of Stowe’s), recounted his experience at Geneva as having persuaded him of the limited scope of realism. In the journal he had co-founded with Niebuhr, *Christianity and Crisis*, Bennett explicitly attributed his calls for a “more open-ended, multiculturalist corrective” to Christian realism and nationalist ideology to his dialogue and engagement with Southern Christians – what he called “the Geneva experience.”¹²⁴ Famed American theologian Harvey Cox, too, took the “status quo” theologies and inability of Western churches to participate in revolutionary change as an impetus to create a new theology of social change which was “defined and shaped by what God is *now* doing in the world.”¹²⁵

The experiences of prominent Princeton theologian Richard Shaull as a missionary in Colombia likewise precipitated a shift away from Niebuhrian theology and toward a liberationist alternative to Christian realism that drew from the experiences of Southern, black, and other marginalized Christian communities. In a popular and widely reprinted address given at Geneva,

¹²³Donald H. Gill, “They Serve the World from 475,” *World Vision* (March 1968): 20-21, 34; David M. Stowe, “Two Centuries – One Mission,” 27 May 1966, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 109; David M. Stowe, “Continuity and Contrast in Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 17, no. 7 (July 1966): 1-7; David M. Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand,” 30 June 1970, DMS Papers, Box 21, Folder 9; Stowe, Bible Study Lectures I and II; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 139-40, 145-152.

¹²⁴John C. Bennett, “A Critique of Paul Ramsey,” *Christianity and Crisis* 27 (1967): 249; Dorrien, *Soul in Society*, 7, 178-9.

¹²⁵Harvey Gallagher Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 105-8, 121-6; Edwards, “Can Christianity Save Civilization,” 65.

Shaull – like Bennett and many others – portrayed realism as the philosophy of the dominant order, and offered critiques of its maintenance of the status quo which buttressed the similar claims made by Southern Christians.¹²⁶ The ecumenical establishment would in large part follow suit, as its foremost publication *The Christian Century* shed its gothic logotype for a cleaner, bolder print in 1969 – an editorial decision which has been widely read as symbolic of the ecumenical movement’s abandonment of triumphalist old-world neo-orthodoxy for a more service-oriented global humanism.¹²⁷

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that at Uppsala, both “Niebuhrian caution” and its cousin “responsible society” gave way to new biblical mandates of oppression and exodus that were “available to anyone.” In other words, a philosophy of “order” was being replaced by a theology of liberation and revolution, and by 1975, a new model of “Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society” (JPSS) would come to replace “responsible society” as the dominant vision for socio-economic change.¹²⁸ At Uppsala too, the influence of liberation theology (and the concurrent decline of Christian realism) was stimulating a reversal of the middle axiom methodology as well. Arguably the father of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez stressed frequently in the late 1960s and early 70s that theology should be understood as “critical reflection on praxis.” Theology, he insisted, must be subsequent to careful, compassionate consideration of the actions and needs of the poor, and should in fact be a reflection of them. In other words, social ethics should not mean the dictation of universal doctrinal truths which then get encoded, applied, or

¹²⁶Richard Shaull, “The Revolutionary Challenge to Church and Theology,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 60, no. 1 (1966): 25-32; Peter Lodberg, “Justice and Peace in a World of Chaos,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 325; Dorrien, *Soul in Society*, 163-4.

¹²⁷WCC, Geneva Report, 24-5; Edwards, 181; Toulouse, 77; “Good-by to Gothic,” *Christian Century* (January 1, 1969): 4.

¹²⁸Mudge, 283; Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 21.

enforced in the world. Rather, orthodoxy should flow from orthopraxy via a process of induction.

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Taking center stage at Uppsala, then, a new “action-reflection” methodology sought to address socio-economic concerns through “a dialectical interaction between theory and practice, each informing the other.” Despite the fact that Protestantism could already be seen as providing significant theological grounding for social action (as in the Social Gospel era, for example), the action-reflection mode signaled a fundamental reorientation of the relationship between theology and social issues. Rather than locate a theological or biblical justification to legitimize social concern, action-reflection considered the experiences of historically marginalized groups and then integrated those reflections into new theological dictums. In sum, the action-reflection paradigm “invoke[d] reciprocity between social engagement and theological reflection and root[ed] theological method in everyday experience.” In this way, it was intended to enact the sentiments of solidarity issued at Geneva by moving beyond simply talking *about* victims of poverty in order to listen *to* them.¹³⁰ In this way, the very process of the global reflex, more than a simple influence on the action-reflection paradigm, was actually embodied and actualized within it. Indeed, with the benefit of historical hindsight, many historians have identified the Uppsala Assembly as a dramatic turning point, characterized by “radical changes in the internal life of the WCC and in its institutional concerns.”¹³¹

To Stowe’s disappointment, however, change was slow in an ecumenical movement that was rarely of one mind. The “only major Protestant theological speech” at Uppsala, he

¹²⁹Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 30-1; Yates, 179. Listed on many rosters of prominent liberation theologians are also several Protestants (many of whom, notably, have been active in the WCC): Emilio Castro, Julio de Santa Ana, Rubem Alves, and Miguez Bonino, to name a few.

¹³⁰Dickinson, 405, 427; Kinnamon, 54; de la Torre, 26; Fitzgerald, 114; Abrecht, 147-9.

¹³¹Kollman, 427; Maffly-Kipp, 52-3.

complained, was given by Dutch Reformed theologian Hendrikus Berkhof, whom Stowe saw as a “veteran party-liner, a Barthian.” Stowe’s missionary experience and personal theological journey certainly played a part in his encouragement of even swifter changes than were already underway in the WCC, as his own postgraduate theological work post-China had been dedicated to fleshing out the direction of mission in this new “post-neo-orthodox” context.¹³² But it is also likely that Stowe’s urgency was the result of the fact that the critique of ecumenical complicity in the exploitation and oppression of the global South was particularly virulent, and much more persistent, when it came to American ecumenicals. The conduct and reputation of the American government during the Cold War, and especially in Vietnam, had soured popular opinion (both in America and around the world) regarding its supposed defense of democratic values and economic progress. Furthermore, the hypocrisy of spreading American values when racial discrimination persisted at home did not endear many in the global South to the American cause. Although the Peace Corps had been established in 1961 in part to dispel these perceptions of the “ugly American,” the formation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the same year signaled the government’s intent to continue, as it had since the Truman Administration, to leverage overseas aid as a means of slowing the advance of communism in decolonizing countries and “wooing” Third World governments to look not to the Soviets but to the Americans for leadership.¹³³

¹³²Stowe, Address to UCBWM Board of Directors on Uppsala Assembly; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 9.

¹³³Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 86; Larry Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 4, 7-11, 15-6; Lowell L. Livezey, “PVOs, Human Rights, and the Humanitarian Task,” in *The Moral Nation: Humanitarianism and U.S. Foreign Policy Today*, eds. Bruce J. Nichols and Gil Loescher (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 208; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 72; Hutchison, “From Protestant to Pluralist America,” viii; Beuttler, 110; Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology,” 3; Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology,” 7; Immerwahr, 1-4; David M. Stowe, ““Report of Latin America Visit,” March 1971, DMS

As such, American ecumenicals were exposed to elevated criticism for a number of interrelated reasons: because of the increased suspicion of imperialism on the part of any American emissary to foreign lands, because of their direct collaboration with the American government in foreign aid projects, and because of the apparent hypocrisy of preaching love, democracy, and human rights when they appeared absent amidst the ongoing Civil Rights Movement. With regard to the first charge, American policymakers continued to appeal to national security to justify their foreign conduct, but American missionaries received no such reprieve. Southern Christians, secular anthropologists, Vietnam War protestors, and even historians, in their criticisms of missionary imperialism and cooperation in the destruction of native cultures, contributed to a “widespread backlash” against missionary work. Perceptions (popular especially among evangelicals) that mission stations could serve as “outposts against the spread of Communist influence” which paralleled the government’s “cultural offensive” did little to improve public opinion of American mission work. Despite considerable dialogue, especially in two 1964 publications – Methodist missionary (and later bishop in Africa) Ralph Dodge’s *The Unpopular Missionary* and Lutheran missiologist (and Stowe’s colleague in China) James Scherer’s *Missionary Go Home* – ecumenicals watched as support for mission collapsed, and mainline seminaries were forced to eliminate “passé” mission programs and positions. Stowe himself often noted the “embarrassment” of some of his seminary students at being involved in “an enterprise which so often has a very bad press,” and the ways in which American (and

Papers, Box 28, Folder 188; David M. Stowe, “Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today's World,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20, no. 1 (January 1969): 5; Stowe, Bible Study Lectures I and II; Stowe, “Christianity: Cause or Cure of the World’s Ills”; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 159-60.

American church) hypocrisy “furnishe[d] fuel for most valid protest by our youth against [the] whole Establishment.”¹³⁴

Further compounding the issue was the fact that these perceptions of a “tainted” missionary legacy were also part and parcel of an accelerating “secularization” process in the world of humanitarianism. The increasing role of state and commercial entities in humanitarian work beginning after WWII, in other words, had by this time produced a regime which emphasized professionalization, neutrality, and bureaucratization, and instituted “objective” standards of accountability, cost-benefit analysis, and efficiency. As such, religious agencies (especially missionary-oriented ones) were more and more encouraged to downplay their religious identities and goals of proselytism in favor of public, civil, legal, and institutional principles that legitimized their enterprises in the eyes of the US government or the UN – or else be replaced. American human rights groups like Amnesty International (1961) were, in fact, already rising to prominence, and would soon be followed by a number of like-minded agencies in the 1970s, including Helsinki Watch (later Human Rights Watch) and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (later Human Rights First), among others.¹³⁵

¹³⁴Ibid. See also Ralph E. Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (Westwood, NJ: F.H. Revell, 1964); David Beckmann, "Debunking Myths about Foreign Aid," *Christian Century* 118, no. 22 (August 2001): 26; Gary R. Hess, "Waging the Cold War in the Third World: The Foundations and Challenges of Development," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, eds. Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark Douglas McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 320-7; McCleary, 74, 78-9; Preston, 417, 431; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 107; Bowden, 59-60; Tyrrell, 178-9, 185; R. Drew Smith, 6-7; David M. Stowe, "Our Mission Covenant Today," 23 October 1983, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 130; David M. Stowe, "New World, One World," 15 September 1970, DMS Papers, Box 21, Folder 9; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 100; Demerath, 465; Marty, "Protestantism Enters Third Phase"; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 25-6; Hollinger, "Religious Liberalism and Ecumenical Self-Interrogation," 380; Klassen, xxi; Swartz, 225;. Evangelical missions also came under fire for their close connections to Cold War politics; they were too American-controlled and American-financed, and thus too "emotionally involved in the ideological East-West conflict of these times." See Escobar, 347.

¹³⁵David M. Paton (ed.), *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1976), 137. On the secularization of humanitarian work, see Keys, 12; Fassin, 4-5; Barnett and Stein, 5, 24; Barnett, "Faith in the Machine," 191-2; Taihe, 179-80; Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 10; Brackney, 135; McCleary, 13, 83-4; Lehmann, 222.

Stowe engaged this challenge by publicly insisting that his work with the DOM was not only consistent with current humanitarian standards, but superior to them. Earlier with the DOM, too, Stowe had characterized the CWS ethos as “fiercely non-proselytizing” and their programs as committed to objective research, development theory, professionalism, and “technical competence.” (With the UCBWM after 1970, too, Stowe would continue to insist that despite the increasing “takeover” by government and voluntary agencies of relief and justice work, their projects would continue with humility, economy, charity, internationalism, and technological sophistication.) Furthermore, the programs of these ecumenical organizations under his leadership being up to code, as it were, Stowe also believed that their work provided additional benefits and “fill[ed] in the gaps” beyond what secular NGOs or “governmental mechanisms” could provide.¹³⁶

For one thing, missionaries offered a kind of sensitivity and care that land developers or international corporations would not, and thus could act as a buffer in what he saw as the sometimes brutal but otherwise inevitable process of modernization. In other words, the UCBWM’s programs could promise something more than the convenience and comforts of modernization. Christians could also ensure that those who fell “between the cracks of government programs” or were “neglected” by the international humanitarian system were attended to – a task Stowe saw as a “humbler role and yet in its own way one of significant leadership.” Beyond this, ecumenical organizations also had a resource which the UN or wealthy foundations did not: “the most widespread, pervasive, effective communications’ network that the world has ever seen” – a transnational network of local Christian communities and

¹³⁶David M. Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” in *The Word in the Third World*, ed. James P. Cotter (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 274; David M. Stowe, “Mission 1970s: End of Anachronism.” *Encounter* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 149-155; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 94; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 146.

missionaries. In other words, although “the sun was setting” on historical missionary dynamics, the era of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights advocacy was just coming into its own – with ecumenicals like Stowe firmly on board.¹³⁷

But this very assent to the standards of secular humanitarian organizations and the US government prompted even more substantive critiques of the American ecumenical movement. As the “moral underpinnings” of the Vietnam conflict came under scrutiny, even the act of aiding war victims was quickly becoming a partisan one, and the payment of handling charges by CWS to ship government surplus food stocks overseas through the Food for Peace program (previously lauded by Stowe and others) was now seen as a yet another misguided link between missionary humanitarianism and an American government preoccupied with Cold War strategy.¹³⁸ Although Christian groups were by no means the only guilty parties (the foundations of Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie being perhaps the most prominent otherwise), it was ecumenical organizations, especially the NCC, which were the most “scarred” by their now-embarrassing association with the American intervention in Vietnam, and with American foreign policy in general.

The “CIA controversy” which embroiled the NCC from 1966 to 1968 is perhaps paradigmatic of these thorny relationships. Triggered by a set of *New York Times* articles in April

¹³⁷Ibid. See also Robert, *Christian Mission*, 92; David M. Stowe, “From a Haystack to the World,” *Historical Intelligencer* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 3-11; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 2; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 2; David M. Stowe, Memoranda on Development, April-September 1969 DMS Papers, Box 125, Folder 60; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 155; Stowe, “Why Mission Today?”; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 13, 35, 80; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 35, 50.

¹³⁸Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 72; Roof and McKinney, 86; Hutchison, “Protestant to Pluralist,” viii; Livezey, “PVOs, Human Rights, and the Humanitarian Task,” 208; Beuttler, 110; Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology,” 3; Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology,” 7; Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 1-4; Grubbs, 4, 7-11, 15-6; Stowe, Bible Study Lectures I and II; Stowe, “Christianity: Cause or Cure of the World’s Ills”; Stowe, “Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today’s World,” 5; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 159-60; Stowe, ““Report of Latin America Visit.””

1966 which alleged that CIA agents regularly posed as missionaries or Christian youth organizers, the scandal quickly grew as allegations swarmed of the CIA's systematic solicitation of missionaries and administrators for information. (At this time, in fact, some historians suggest that anywhere between 10 and 25 percent of all American missionaries were providing information to an American intelligence authority.)¹³⁹

Stowe stood at the center of this intense storm of debate between two divided camps within the ecumenical movement – one which argued that missionaries abroad must perform their duty as loyal American citizens and cooperate with the CIA, and the other which maintained that CIA affiliation (informal or otherwise) would jeopardize missionary relations with local communities and lend itself to characterizations of missionaries as synonymous with the brand of American imperialism for which the CIA was often resented. Stowe vehemently defended the latter position, claiming it was a matter of public relations, to be sure, but also of continued access, effectiveness, and “Christian integrity” in foreign countries. Even a few cases of collusion, he suggested, could damage the entire missionary effort, and so he pressed the DOM staff cabinet in the summer of 1966 to approve a blanket policy statement eschewing NCC-CIA collaboration. The proposal was voted down in the fall, with justifications ranging from the right of individual conscience to the necessity of supplying the CIA with accurate information such as missionaries could provide.¹⁴⁰

Following the rejection of his proposal, however, Stowe sent a personal memo (sans “official force”) to the DOM staff, counseling them to avoid sharing information with the CIA,

¹³⁹James K. Batten, “CIA Agents Try to Enlist Missionaries,” *Chicago Daily News* 20 July; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to DOM Executive Committee, 27 February 1967, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 107; Hess, 323; Amstutz, 62.

¹⁴⁰Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches, Staff Cabinet Meeting Minutes, 1 June 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches, Staff Cabinet Meeting Minutes, 14 June 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to DOM Staff Cabinet, 15 June 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41.

and in the ensuing months continued to communicate with the Director of the Washington NCC office and other administrators for advice. In February of 1967, the controversy was reignited following a series of exposés from *Ramparts* magazine on covert CIA activity, including grants to the National Student Association. The NCC thus felt it prudent to release detailed information about the three foundations with links to CIA funding which had donated to its programs, in addition to the 38% of the DOM's 1967 budget which came from governmental freight reimbursements through Food for Peace. Despite Stowe and the NCC's assurances that extreme care would be taken to ensure that future funding was "free from any involvement" with the CIA "taint," Stowe's original proposal was reintroduced shortly after, and swiftly approved:

"Because our ministries around the world depend upon sensitive and intimate relationships of trust with persons of many nations, we cannot afford to jeopardize these by permitting any allegation that DOM is knowingly involved with CIA activities. We are glad to enter into appropriate discussions with other agencies of the U.S. government, but state as a matter of policy that we do not approve staff of DOM, either at home or abroad, reporting to CIA agents or entering into any other involvement with the CIA."¹⁴¹

Despite this issuance, and its continued citation for all of Stowe's staff and missionaries even into the 1970s with the UCBWM, the matter continued to resurface in the press leading up to and directly following the Uppsala Assembly in 1968. Despite the Geneva Report's apologetic denouncement of the use of Third World nations as "instruments of Cold War politics,"¹⁴² delegates at Uppsala leveled sustained criticism at the WCC's human rights organ, the CCIA, for being too Anglo-American, too male, too old, and too connected to the US State Department. The reported chants of "CCIA is CIA!" at Uppsala further demonstrated these concerns, as did

¹⁴¹David M. Stowe, Memorandum to DOM Staff Cabinet, 14 November 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to DOM Staff Cabinet, 16 November 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe to Vernon Ferwerda, 25 May 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe to E. Espy, 23 June 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe, "Statement on the NCC and Foundation Gifts Linked with the CIA," 22 February 1967, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe to Councils of Churches, 11 July 1967, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; David M. Stowe, "Program and Budget Outline for NCC-DOM," 3 October 1965, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 107.

¹⁴²WCC, Geneva Report, 80, 140.

the appointment of Leopoldo Niilus (a lawyer from the global South who focused on human rights) as long-time director Frederick Nolde's replacement in 1969.¹⁴³

This saga was certainly part of a larger struggle to discern the relationship of missionary service to America's role in the world. Despite Stowe's continued condemnation, and director of the CIA George H. W. Bush's assurances that they would no longer use missionaries or journalists as informants, accusations of the CIA's controversial use of clergy or journalists as "spies" would recur throughout the 1970s. So too would the question of utilizing government funds like those available through provisions like the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act (FAA), which had created the USAID. As American aid continued to be regarded as a "self-serving" extension of American power that perpetuated dependency, Stowe would find himself at the center of deliberations about these funds again and again well into the 1970s, although his position rarely changed; he consistently cautioned that government funding compromised the integrity of mission by establishing unwanted connections between Christian mission and American policies, programs, and interests.¹⁴⁴

As a result of these entanglements, religious organizations stepped up their "antigovernment rhetoric" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Groups like CWS, Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV), and the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, as well as individuals like Stowe, John Bennett, William Sloan Coffin, and Reinhold Niebuhr

¹⁴³David M. Stowe to All UCBWM Missionaries, 12 June 1972, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to DOM Executive Committee, 28 August 1968, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 41; Nurser, *For All Peoples*, 30; Gort, 217; Lehmann, 212-4; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 218-222.

¹⁴⁴David M. Stowe, "Use of U.S. Government Funds by UCBWM," 11 February 1971 DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; David M. Stowe, "Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment," 15 July 1976. DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; "CIA Admits Using Press, Professors, Clergy as Spies: Stowe Sends Sharp Protest to President Carter," *Whole Earth Newsletter* 10, no. 1 (Summer 1980): 10; Kenneth A. Briggs, "The Missionary-CIA Connection," *Christian Century* 18 February 1976. Stowe's files (in particular Box 180, Folder 2) contain a large number of clippings from national and local newspapers reporting on the CIA-missionary controversy.

helped to turn public opinion against the war in Vietnam, and in the process amended the ways that transnational religious groups engaged with the American government. The NCC, for example, was the first religious body to issue a critical statement on the war, when in December of 1965 it publicly condemned President Johnson's bombing of North Vietnam and urged him to consider a "phased withdrawal." These groups and individuals, in other words, looked to redefine the American agenda for a post-Vietnam era – a task which, for many of them, led to human rights activism. Indeed, Barbara Keys' suggestion that Americans took on human rights advocacy as a means of "reclaiming American virtue" on the global stage after the embarrassment of the Vietnam War rings true here, and parallels similar claims by Michael Barnett that "the international community has tended to rally around humanitarianism at precisely the moment that its humanity is most suspect."¹⁴⁵

In fact, in the early 1970s, even Congress itself had begun to adopt human rights policies as a means of "expressing its own dissatisfaction with the Nixon-Kissinger approach." And despite his opprobrium for Nixon and the "tragic...mistake" in Vietnam, the greatest "catastrophe" of all for Stowe was the disillusionment that war had produced regarding "the credibility of any American effort to exercise global responsibility." It is perhaps no surprise,

¹⁴⁵David M. Stowe to Richard Nixon, 1972, DMS Papers, Box 3, Folder 40; Lester Kurtz and Kelly Goran Fulton, "Love Your Enemies? Protestants and United States Foreign Policy," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 369; James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1993), 182; A. Glenn Mower, *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: The Carter and Reagan Experiences* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 13-4; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 15; Preston, 520-1; Flipse, 222; Keys, 3-4, 6-10, 270-1. Stowe articulated his negative appraisal of the Vietnam War both in private correspondence (see DMS Papers, Box 1, Folders 4, 5, and 6) and in public talks and publications – see especially David M. Stowe, "Issues in World Evangelism," Address to General Board of NCC, 14 September 1967, DMS Papers, Box 184, Folder 18; David M. Stowe, "World Responsibilities for American Christians?" in *Four Faces of Christian Ministry: Essays in Honor of A. Dale Fiers*, eds. A. Dale Fiers and Granville T. Walker (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1973); David M. Stowe, "Morning Prayer," 28 July 1968, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 40; Stowe, "The Scope of the Christian Mission Today"; Stowe, "Credibility in Evangelism"; Stowe, "Christianity: Cause or Cure of the World's Ills?"

then, that he joined this American Christian effort to replace military action with that of the humanitarian variety, and publicly lauded the collaborative service efforts in Vietnam being conducted by the WCC, NCC (through CWS), Lutheran World Relief, and Mennonite World Service. By 1978, in fact, CWS would openly disobey the State Department's denial of permission for a shipment of food to Vietnam; CWS delivered it anyway, apparently to make a statement in favor of "normalizing relations" between the U.S. and Vietnam and to pressure the government to remove the embargo on Vietnam (which it ultimately did not).¹⁴⁶

Stowe also renewed his correspondence with Bennett in this period, as the latter wrote specifically to approve of Stowe's frequent affirmations of Vietnam's right to self-determination (the exercise of which war made impossible), the international community's obligation to support its economic development and alleviate human suffering, and the necessity of de-escalating America's military campaign in favor of diplomatic negotiations. Many church-going Americans, however, increasingly viewed positions like Bennett and Stowe's, and those of ecumenical organizations like the NCC, as "elitist" and possibly communist. Although it was perhaps on the issue of Vietnam that the NCC and the average layperson were most starkly divided, Stowe's advice in both public and private that the American government ought to let the Vietnamese "determine their own future" is a testament to the deep connections between religious opposition to American foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s and the kind of ecumenical missionary work, influenced by Southern Christian dialogue and critique, which was increasingly aimed at avoiding Western imperialism and ensuring human rights.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶Ibid. See also McCleary, 113.

¹⁴⁷David M. Stowe, "Ecumenism, Pluralism, and the Future of American Experience," 9 March 1976, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; David M. Stowe to John C. Bennett, 14 December 1965, DMS Papers, Box 184, Folder 19; National Council of Churches and East Asian Council of Churches, "Report of the Consultation on Vietnam," 8 December 1965, DMS Papers, Box 184, Folder 19; Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of their Faith: CALCAV and*

Despite this stand against Vietnam, the issue of racial injustice at home continued to undercut the reputation and efficacy of the American ecumenical commitment to human rights abroad. The racial attitudes of American missionaries, as intimated in the earlier discussion of the “hierarchy of heathenism” that underpinned 19th and early 20th century mission work, had long been complicated, founded as they were in the persistent tension between an acute sense of racial difference and the belief in the ability of non-Western peoples to be converted and civilized. Compounding this were a set of contextual factors that considerably limited ecumenical action on racial issues before the 1960s. In the first place, the “establishment” status and bureaucratic procedures of American Protestantism and its institutions in the 1950s were not conducive to radical political action, either grassroots or governmental. Moreover, groups like the NCC were often slow to act on racial issues as a means of avoiding McCarthy-era charges of leftist leanings, as well as protestation from conservative Protestants (and the majority of the laity) that racism was an individual matter of the “human heart” rather than a priority for “institutional engagement.” In other words, the NCC in the 1950s issued numerous resolutions and sponsored education programs on segregation as well as a yearly “Race Relations Sunday,” but stopped short of significant “direct action” for structural change. But the postwar economic boom that had given mainline Protestantism its affluent status had not extended to racial minorities, and the NCC’s hesitance to engage in racial activism engendered increasing distrust of its largely white leadership, especially among black clergy.¹⁴⁸

Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); 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, 2011); Flipse, 207-8, 210-2; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 30; Nichols, *An Uneasy Alliance*, 101-7; McCleary, 101; Hess, 320-7; Grubbs, 2; Toulouse, 52; Preston, 525-536; Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions,” 130.

¹⁴⁸David M. Stowe, “What is Christian Witness?” 29 January 1962, DMS Papers, Box 220, Folder 31; Bradford Verter, “Furthering the Freedom Struggle: Racial Justice Activism in the Mainline Churches since the Civil Rights Era,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*,

On an international level, too, ecumenicals struggled with the disjoint between pronouncement and change on racial issues in the 1950s and early 1960s. The WCC's 1961 New Delhi Assembly Report, for example, urged churches to identify with the oppressed, participate in non-violent protest, and put "its own house in order" by desegregating churches and encouraging more equitable representation in church leadership positions. But it also acknowledged that while these principles were "clear in the abstract," they were rarely reflected in "actual situations." Church members were often too apathetic and complacent in their "secure and homogeneous" communities which remained persistently divided along the "color line." Even Stowe noted, despite his enthusiasm about New Delhi's successes, that the "Niagara of complicated paragraphs" that flowed out of that conference did little to effect tangible change.¹⁴⁹

With a new cadre of leaders attuned to perceptions of the NCC's "tepid efforts" on racial issues and suffused with a new urgency owing to the mass protests in places like Montgomery, Charlotte, Selma, and Birmingham, however, the NCC made significant attempts to move beyond lip-service activism in the 1960s. By most accounts, this process began with the formation of the NCC's Commission on Religion and Race in 1963 to coordinate religious activism against the "denial of rights on the basis of race or color." The Commission quickly went to work, developing programs like the "Delta Ministry" that would provide agricultural and leadership training programs to ensure the self-support, community development, and economic stability of black communities. The Commission also engaged more seriously in direct forms of political pressure, like coordinating Protestant participation in public demonstrations like the

eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 186-8, 190; Henry J. Pratt, *The Liberalization of American Protestantism: A Case Study in Complex Organizations* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), 19-21, 151, 165; Findlay, 12, 15-6; Hollinger, "The Realist-Pacifist Summit," 674; Toulouse, 67-8; Lantzer, 52, 56; Visser 'T. Hooft, *New Delhi Report*, 102-4; Cavert, 241-2.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

famed March on Washington and Freedom Summer in Mississippi, as well as lobbying for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. The ecumenical establishment also heartedly supported the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr., with the flagship mainline publication *Christian Century* being the first national publication to publish his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and the WCC arranging for him to address the Uppsala Assembly in 1968. (King, however, was assassinated just weeks before the meeting commenced.)¹⁵⁰

Most historical accounts indeed underscore the influence of new leadership in the NCC and the mass protests in the American South as stimulants for its increased racial activism in the 1960s. They often fail to acknowledge, however, that for ecumenicals like Stowe who were involved in foreign ministries, racial injustice was an urgent issue not only because of domestic developments, but also because of the ways it threatened the legitimacy of their humanitarian and human rights work overseas; it was, as one historian has called it, the “Achilles heel” in their international promotion of human rights. In other words, critics in the Soviet Union and the global South alike could point to Jim Crow as a means of undermining America’s claim as “leader of the free world” and casting suspicion on the work of Americans for “freedom” abroad. As such, a prominent motivation for Stowe’s racial activism was that it seemed poignantly unethical that in America, some racial groups were, for example, “worse off than our Chinese friends under communism.” As he saw it, the hypocrisy of American missionaries preaching messages of love and justice when their home churches had done little about “Little Rock and lynching” indeed detracted from their effectiveness and credibility on the world stage. Beyond mere pragmatism, too, it was not just concern for the reputation of American mission that compelled Stowe to racial activism, but also his experience with the fruits of those very

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

missions: a growing population of capable, engaged non-white Christians within the ecumenical movement. And indeed, even in perhaps his most direct confrontation with the civil rights movement – the “Black Manifesto” controversy – Stowe continued to frame American racial issues in a global perspective.¹⁵¹

The controversy began when, in May of 1969, civil rights activist James Forman interrupted services at Riverside Church in New York City, the “Cathedral of Protestantism” directly across the street from both Union Theological Seminary and the Interchurch Center which housed the NCC and other mainline establishment offices. There, on land bequeathed by John D. Rockefeller and adjacent to nearby Harlem, Forman confronted those present with his “Black Manifesto.” A leader in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Forman had become increasingly impatient with the gradual successes of its non-violent approach, and was part of the push from within the organization for a more aggressive, “Black Power” approach. In 1968, Forman had also taken on the role of Minister for Foreign Affairs within the more militant, nationalist Black Panther Party. Now, the Manifesto he presented at Riverside forcefully called for self-determination and equality in the churches, and demanded \$500 million in reparations from the “racist white Christian Church with its hypocritical declarations and doctrines of brotherhood.” Beyond its dramatic delivery, the document also reverberated powerfully as it found support among seminary students at nearby Union and black church leaders within the ecumenical movement.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹Ibid. See also Preston, 490-2, 505-6; Keys, 29-31. On the Delta Ministry, see Findlay, Chs. 4 and 5. For Stowe’s view, see David M. Stowe to Parents, 4 October 1964, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 3; David M. Stowe, “Success for Our Church,” 9 October 1955, DMS Papers, Box 8, Folder 23; Stowe to Parents, 8 February 1956; Stowe, “Can the Church Make a Difference in the World?”; Stowe, “Square on Target.”

¹⁵²Verter, 187-90; Findlay, 11, 202-4, 207; Pratt, 189; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today.”

The response from the “white bureaucracy” to these arguments for reparations and equality within the churches, however, has been characterized by historians as one of “resistance and retrenchment.” Following the Riverside incident, a restraining order was leveled against Forman that prevented him from entering (or occupying) Riverside Church and, after several subsequent sit-ins at the Interchurch Center, the offices at that location as well. Even though the NCC ultimately lifted the orders, released conciliatory statements, and took part in thorny discussions on reparations, the Manifesto controversy represented the eruption of years of dissatisfaction with the gradualist approach of the ecumenical establishment which would not be easily assuaged – a moment in which the movements in the larger culture calling for more radical or militant action (like Black Power) were brought to bear on the American churches.¹⁵³

And indeed, it seemed that few churches had made any significant progress in overcoming their voluntary segregation, and even fewer white leaders seemed willing to “surrender their privileged positions.” Even within the NCC, the Commission on Race and Religion had been absorbed into its Department of Social Justice in early 1967, prompting concerns that its mission would be deprioritized and subsumed into ecumenical bureaucracy. For these and other reasons, most of the ecumenical work for racial justice in the 1960s, despite “good intentions” and mild successes, is often seen as an “elitist effort” that had “discouraging results.” Following the Forman controversy, and for at least a decade, American ecumenicals in large part withdrew from the field of racial justice at home. The WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), formed in 1970, continued to focus on global issues like apartheid in South Africa, as did American ecumenicals’ efforts in the “socially responsible investment” movement

¹⁵³Ibid. See also Verter, 183, 186; Findlay, 187-8, 205, 222-3; Pratt, 190, 196-7.

in the 1970s and 1980s, but promoting racial freedom worldwide did little to combat the disenfranchisement of blacks in American church life.¹⁵⁴

While Stowe likewise did not cede his administrative responsibilities, and despite his concerns about Forman's "uncertain credentials" (perhaps referring to his ties to the Black Panthers, or to his lack of involvement in church affairs before this time), he was directly involved in the post-Riverside dialogues between Forman and the UCC. To his mind, the Manifesto controversy was the "inevitable price of a shocking slowness" on the part of the American churches to address race relations in a "constructive way," and through his involvement he hoped to steer the dialogue engendered by the Manifesto away from its tendency to be, at turns, "extravagant and abusive" and "romantic [and] utopian." And as mentioned, this work to open up space for more productive conversations about race was profoundly linked to his international missionary perspective. Reflecting on the Manifesto, for example, Stowe was grateful that it had made clear to American churchmen something which had become clear to him as well: that they had their own "third world" of "alienated colonial peoples" at home. That Stowe framed a domestic social issue by way of an analogy with a global one is a clear indication of his global missionary reflexes; indeed, a constructive conversation on race was especially important to him because, as had been and would continue to be borne out in the decade to come, "a church linked with a society which caters to injustice pays the penalty of its witness by acquiescence."¹⁵⁵

In addition to these critiques that Western (and especially American) ecumenicals were complicit in oppression and injustice, another challenge voiced at conferences like Geneva and

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵David Stowe to extended family, 29 June 1969, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 5; David Stowe to extended family, 14 July 1969, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 5; Stowe, "Mission 1970s: End of Anachronism"; Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World*, 19-20.

Uppsala and witnessed by missionaries themselves came in the form of a critique of humanitarian aid writ large, not just of the American variety. It was increasingly recognized that while relief and aid projects were beneficial in some ways, “not all human misery was the immediate consequence of a disaster.” More importantly, aid sent to alleviate suffering could be “inadequate” and even “counter-productive” in removing its causes. Earlier reports from New Delhi in 1961 had briefly mentioned the suspicions of recipients about aid, as well as the confusion created by the vast number of agencies seeking to dispense it. Now, however, the critique was more forceful: aid projects rarely “contribute to the replacement rather than the reinforcement of colonial or dependent structures,” the Geneva Report recorded, and do nothing to assuage the larger and more fundamental problem of inequitable economic relationships. Furthermore, there were often “strings attached” to charity, and donations frequently benefitted the donors (or their governments) as much as the recipients; recipients were often responsible for paying transport fees or eliminating important tariffs, for example. Put plainly, what did even massive aid matter if “the system itself simply reinforced and perpetuated the privileged position of the already powerful”?¹⁵⁶

If Northern Christians were serious about encouraging true selfhood in the “younger” churches, they quickly realized it would require more than just fine words and food deliveries. The Geneva Report suggested, for example, that where aid was dispensed, it was the churches’ task to “struggle against attitudes of condescension, superiority, impatient, pride and ungraciousness” on the part of the givers and “attitudes of servility, inferiority and resentment” on the part of the receivers. Its assertion that “the spirit in which technical assistance is given and the cooperation of the host country are fully as important as its amount” was mirrored in many of

¹⁵⁶WCC, *Geneva Report*, 84; Visser 'T. Hooft, *New Delhi Report*, 106; Fitzpatrick-Behrens, 9-10; Dickinson, 406-8; van der Bent, 115.

Stowe's warnings that the "relationships between mission and church become poor in quality when there is resentment and tendency to beggary on one side, and more or less unconscious arrogance of affluence and dislike for beggary on the other side."¹⁵⁷

Stowe had seen in the animated critiques at Geneva the ways in which this dynamic challenged the paradigm of benevolent giving, and incorporated this insight into his plans for the NCC DOM and its service arm, CWS. At the May 1968 dedication ceremony for the new CWS building in Windsor, Maryland, for example, he noted that it would only take "a half day's reading in the literature coming from the most talented young Christians of Latin America" to understand the critiques of Christian giving. And although he expressed a vision of CWS as the embodiment of compassion, of concern and outreach to all people regardless of "color, creed, or condition," he spoke candidly about the potentially problematic nature of such compassion, using the mother-child relationship as a metaphor to convey the critique. Mothers often derive happiness, he suggested, from the control they exercise in the name of love and the consequent dependence and gratitude of their children. From the child's perspective, however, "mother-love" was too often a "cover-up for self-gratification and self-aggrandizement" or an "instrument of tyranny." This thin analogy soon fell away entirely, as Stowe built to a passionate oration on the ways in which compassion (as simple aid) could be used to

"buy freedom from their resentment, to dull their hunger and thirst for justice. It asserts a claim on their forgiveness; it damps the flame of their aspiration for equity...[compassion] attempts to substitute palliatives for a realistic attack on evils which spring from the very way in which society is organized. It

¹⁵⁷Stowe "Strategy: The Church's Response to What God is Doing," 166; Stowe, "Stewardship is: Mission." Amanda Porterfield has labeled the kind of relationship to which Stowe refers as the "dynamic of reciprocity," in which donor success is gauged by how grateful the recipients appear and by how visible the results of charity are, both of which advance the status and feeling of the donor. Historically, American missionaries have rarely acknowledged this "hierarchical" nature of gift-giving, one which reinforces the donor's "dominance" and the recipient's "respectful submission." Stowe's position here, and that of many liberal Protestants beginning in the early twentieth century, as Porterfield notes, is exceptional in this regard, as they began to demonstrate awareness and concern about the imposition of certain cultural values and the unequal dynamics inherent in charitable giving. (Porterfield, 50).

treats cancer with candy, leprosy with aspirin. The more successful the programs of compassion, the more difficult it is to achieve that realism and radicalism which is essential for significant progress.”

Recognizing this, Stowe urged self-reflection: How often does aid build up the self-esteem or reputation of the donor? How does giving function as a form of bondage or control out of which beneficiaries are unable to break? Ultimately, Stowe concluded, the view from process theology, in which all beings are interrelated as in a family, affirmed the fundamental need for compassion. Here too it is evident that Stowe’s use of process theology was intimately bound up with global influences, as it allowed him to rearticulate compassion in a way that inherently included as equal those Southern voices which were calling for its redefinition. Compassion, Stowe now argued, should draw from the etymology of the word itself – a “feeling *with*,” a compassion rooted in the notion of a common interest “from which our own is inseparable.” That had been the impetus of Christians throughout history, he suggested at Windsor and elsewhere, and that was to be the business of the CWS under his direction.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, these critiques of aid – ones which presaged contemporary research on humanitarian aid as at best “a balm for economic ills” and at worst “an opiate to postpone economic revolution” – encouraged thoroughgoing changes in the priorities of the ecumenical movement and its mission.¹⁵⁹ Rather than focus on alleviating the symptoms of socio-economic disparity, ecumenicals became increasingly concerned with its root causes, and thus with a new set of interrelated concepts: social justice, human rights, and “development.” Charity, in other words, would be transformed into solidarity through new programs like the aforementioned

¹⁵⁸Stowe also noted “how frequently persons are subjected to the bondage of the past, because in change and growth there is danger of breaking into freedom, out of the enveloping net of mother-love. Hence the drama and anguish, generation after generation, of youthful rebellion.” See David M. Stowe, “Compassion,” Speech at Dedication of new Church World Service Center building, Windsor, MD, 25 May 1968, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 116.

¹⁵⁹Problematizations of aid in fact still dominate much of the contemporary literature on humanitarianism and likewise suggest, *inter alia*, that “humanitarianism is by definition an emblem of failure, not success. The disaster has already happened.” See McCleary, 121; Rieff, 21.

emphasis on Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society (JPSS) and action-reflection that supplanted the responsible society and middle axiom concepts. In these new paradigms, the socio-economically powerful nations of the world were expected to shoulder the responsibility for structural or systemic change, rectifying patterns of injustice by universalizing (making available to poorer ones) the same kinds of technical and economic advantages which had lent themselves to Western prosperity. As Stowe explained to his readers, “the parable of the rich man and Lazarus reminds us of the horror that overtakes those who have no conscience about the gulf between their abundance and their neighbor’s poverty... We must be perfectly clear about it. In the late twentieth century America is the rich man, and Asia and Africa are Lazarus.”¹⁶⁰

Despite the apparent resonance of the 19th century “white man’s burden” in this assumption of responsibility for Southern progress, the paradigms of social justice, human rights, and development would become hugely dominant over the next decade. Many church-associated publishing houses – Orbis, Seabury, John Knox, Westminster, Fortress – began reflecting concerns about social justice, and an ecumenical social justice reading public quickly developed. Delegates at Geneva and Uppsala urged the WCC to agitate for “firmer guarantees” of human rights and to be more committed to action for social justice. Following up on New Delhi’s affirmation of a wider corpus of rights, WCC Reports also called the churches to support early efforts for the enactment and enforcement of the UN’s two 1966 International Covenants, the first regarding civil and political rights (ICCPR) and the second on economic, social, and cultural ones (ICESCR). In other words, the notion at Amsterdam that individual rights (and especially religious freedoms) were a “precondition for the rights of society as a whole” – a premise which had shown cracks at New Delhi – was discarded by 1968, as Uppsala clarified that “the rights of

¹⁶⁰Gort, 226; van der Bent, 216, 220, 400; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 83; Stowe, *The Church’s Witness in the World*, 76; Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” 238-9.

the individual are inevitably bound up with the struggle for a better standard of living for the underprivileged of all nations. Human rights cannot be safeguarded in a world of glaring inequalities and social conflict.”¹⁶¹

Other organizational moves reflected this “explosion of action” around development, human rights, and social justice as well. The Uppsala Assembly formally endorsed “development,” in contrast to the kind of aid which merely “smoothes our own conscience,” and this led to the establishment of the official WCC Commission on the Churches’ Participation in Development (CCPD) in 1970. The WCC’s second unit, “Justice and Service,” quickly became its largest, and older programs, too, were renovated and revived in line these new emphases: the Urban Industrial Mission Program, Christian Medical Commission, Programme for the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, and Christian Education. Perhaps most significantly, the CCIA saw a complete turnover of its predominantly British and American staff. Now, laity and theologians from Latin America, Africa, and Asia headed the agency, and were tasked with full responsibility for the program emphasis on human rights.¹⁶²

In line with this new emphasis on socio-economic justice, development, and rights advocacy after 1968, the aims of mission work were again subject to revision. Having shifted their focus from individual, spiritual conversion to HEW services in years prior, ecumenical thinkers and missionaries again began to rearticulate the task of the church’s (newly singular) mission neither as an individual experience or a humanitarian project, but as the “radical

¹⁶¹Sister Mary Augusta Neal, “Social Justice and the Sacred,” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 335-7; Morris B. Abram, “The U.N. and Human Rights,” *Foreign Affairs* 47, no. 2 (January 1969): 364; WCC, *Geneva Report*, 73, 89-90, 103, 111-2, 114-9, 130-2, 136-7, 149, 180-1, 200, 220; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 6, 39-40, 51-4, 59, 63-5, 67-8, 72, 144-6, 186-7; Visser ‘T. Hooft, *New Delhi Report*, 107, 272; Abrecht, 145; Gort, 203-4, 206; Traer, 21; Donnelly, 26; Brackney, 121; Tergel, 205-10; Keys, 30; Lefever, *From Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 27-8; Kinnamon, 64; Mudge, 281; Vischer, 26; Kinnamon, 67; Mudge, 287-90; Johnson, 146.

¹⁶²Ibid. See also Abrecht, 145-6.

remaking” of socio-economic structures. Rather than encourage the accumulation of converts into existing churches and unjust social structures, in other words, ecumenicals began to promote conversion “on the corporate level in the form of social change.” Building on the work of ecumenical thought leaders Emilio Castro and Paul Löffler, the Uppsala delegation, as well as other contemporaneous publications (most notably the July 1967 issue of *Ecumenical Review*), argued that “we can never be content to treat our concern for physical and social needs as merely secondary to our responsibility for the needs of the spirit,” as mission was “suspect when the church is preoccupied with its own numerical and institutional strength.”¹⁶³

Stowe approvingly noted the Report’s structural, perhaps more “secular” understanding of mission, but was correspondingly critical of the ways it continued to “bow low” or include “gracenotes” toward “those who are terribly concerned to maintain the conceptions of a worldwide evangelism which is aimed at bringing the largest possible amount of growth to the church.” Indeed, in many of his publications, sermons, and lectures during this period, Stowe asserted that the “central motive” of mission should not be to save single souls or draw “recruits” to the church, but for both individuals and the structures of society to demonstrate “allegiance to a covenant of love and justice and brotherhood.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³At the Uppsala Assembly itself, delegates adopted the phrase “go-structures” as a (however cumbersome) means of “inveighing against a static ‘waiting church’ that merely sits, preening and perfecting itself, inviting others to come in on the church’s terms or not at all.” Stowe alluded to this language at various times, noting that “go structured” churches are judged not by their conversion numbers but by their utility for the “true end of mission—which is the kingdom of God.” See Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 28, 32, 35; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 180-6; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 161; Hutchison, “Christianity, Culture, and Complications,” 90-2; van der Bent, 96; Lodberg, 325-6.

¹⁶⁴Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 24; David M. Stowe, Address (II) to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions, July 1971, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; David M. Stowe, Untitled remarks, 25 August 1971, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; David M. Stowe, “A New Perspective on the World Christian Mission.” *Missiology: An International Review* 12, no.1 (January 1984): 53; David M. Stowe, “Ecumenicity and Church Growth,” 16 October 1968, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 116; Stowe, Address to UCBWM Board of Directors on Uppsala Assembly; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 18-9; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 121; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 144; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today.”

Enacting these new insights, the DOM under Stowe's direction founded its programs on a definition of conversion as "the continuing reorientation of individuals and communities to the willing service of God," and began to emphasize the "corporate" dimensions of mission: socio-economic development and justice, education and family planning, interreligious dialogue, and the defense of human rights. While Stowe was careful to note that these stated goals were not exhaustive, nowhere was individual conversion explicitly mentioned in the new DOM policy initiatives. Similarly, the Division on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC, with which Stowe was affiliated, was restructured into a Commission (CWME) in 1971. Shortly after, they began to compose statements redefining the goal of mission not as the "communication of certain doctrines" but the "practical, active living out of a commitment to the will of God." (Although it was not until 1974 that their definition of mission officially changed from the "proclamation of the gospel to the end that all men may believe and be saved.")¹⁶⁵

It was certainly the case that emphasizing a social or structural kind of conversion was a means of addressing the critiques that simple aid did little to remedy structural injustice; Uppsala specifically attributed its formulation of a new missionary strategy to the proliferation of "independent, rapidly growing indigenous Christian movements," and chastised WCC churches for neglecting their relationships with them.¹⁶⁶ But it was at times unclear what a mission aimed at this new objective might look like. Popular especially among students and advanced by Western mission theorists like Max Warren, one potential strategy – known as "presence" –

¹⁶⁵David M. Stowe, "New Guidelines for Missionary Service," *Information Service* 48, no.3 (8 February 1969): 1; David M. Stowe, "The Debate About Conversion," 15 December 1966, DMS Papers, Box 125, Folder 53; David M. Stowe, "What Conversion Means," *World Call* (September 1970): 18, 27; David M. Stowe, "Overseas Ministries and Human Rights: Some Guidelines," 12 March 1970, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 40; David M. Stowe, "1984 and World Evangelism: The Integrity of the Faith and Witness to the World," 1984, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 131; David M. Stowe, "The Last War," February 1984, DMS Papers, Box 10, Folder 54; Stowe, Address (II) to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions.

¹⁶⁶Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 32, 38.

renewed the ecumenical deemphasis on proselytism and individual conversion by suggesting that missionaries simply “be there” in the name of Christ,

“often anonymously, listening before we speak, hoping that men will recognize Jesus for what he is and stay where they are, involved in the fierce fight against all that dehumanizes, ready to act against demonic powers, to identify with the outcast... Presence 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 the normal manhood as we see it in Jesus.”¹⁶⁷

Although Stowe admitted that this was a relatively vague mandate, and that missionaries might find it in “painful tension with their drive to use their skills well, and to make a significant contribution,” he recommended it to the General Board of the NCC in 1967, the Second Triennial Assembly of the DOM in 1968, and in a number of other sermons, articles, and lectures. It was the most appropriate method, he argued, given the global context in which they served, and it offered a more humble and open alternative to the image of missionary as “propagandist” that was hampering recruitment and complicating their role overseas.¹⁶⁸

In a related move, many ecumenicals also began to suggest that missionaries cede an enlarged responsibility to lay Christians. As early as 1954, in fact, the WCC had begun framing the role of lay people as one of “missionaries of Christ in every secular sphere.” Taking fresh impetus from the rise of social conversion and a corresponding new school of missionary thought known as *missio dei*, the Uppsala Report insisted that participation in mission was not the sole responsibility of “specialized agencies” but of all Christian churches, congregations, and individuals. Stowe too, in fact, had maintained since the early 1960s that laypeople in secular fields overseas were a central and significant part of missionary endeavor, and represented a “pioneering thrust into some area of life needing Christian presence.” Laypeople could no longer

¹⁶⁷Robert, “Cross-Cultural Friendship,” 105; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 173.

¹⁶⁸Yates, 158-9; Stowe, “Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today’s World,” 6; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 174.

fulfill their obligations by “handing over to paid ‘professional missionaries’ the mission outreach of the church,” he argued, as even in the first century it was the unordained – the apostles, Paul, and other laypeople working in vocational trades – that “powered the first great age of Christian expansion.” More and more, Stowe and others accepted that the missionary vocation could be both “authentic and temporary,” and referenced the important missionary “presence” of laypeople who had no affiliation with boards or denominations but served “in the thick of secular occupations, bearing witness in word and deed, winning others to faith, and helping redeem the structures of business, labor, government, or education.”¹⁶⁹

One practical result of this recommendation was the establishment of the Committee on American Laymen Overseas within the DOM, an organization which formally brought to bear a decade of increased attention to the role of lay “churchmen abroad.” This theme would continue to animate Stowe’s work, and that of the larger ecumenical movement, even into the 1970s; the UCBWM under his direction would emphasize “the effective involvement of UCC laypeople in mission overseas, especially through secular vocations” as one of their primary objectives for 1969-1972 and beyond. His very first “Message from the EVP” in the UCBWM’s *Whole Earth Newsletter*, in fact, brought the issue front and center:

“Even if Americans ought to roam the world in mission should they be sent as professionals by boards? Or is it a vast, informal people-to-people movement that we should envisage, with this Board functioning as travel agency? And what is the task, in any event? What can Americans do ‘for’ other peoples that they

¹⁶⁹George Dugan, “U.S. Missionaries Facing Showdown on Identity,” *New York Times*, 20 November 1968; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 25, 33; van der Bent, 232-4; Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology,” 4; Kinnamon, 59; Yates, 196-7. The crucial caveat for Stowe was that these were not “secular missionaries.” Rather, their underlying purpose must remain “spiritual, ethical, theological in substance” regardless of the “form of work – teaching, theater, translation, broadcasting, or agriculture.” See David M. Stowe, “The Statistics – The Image: Missionaries for Today.” *Response* 1, no. 3 (March 1969): 14-33; David M. Stowe, “Is Mission Work Over?” *Lutheran Standard* 9, no. 16 (5 August 1969): 6-8; David M. Stowe, “Foreign Missions Today: A Spent Force?” *The Baptist Student* 49, no. 3 (December 1969): 37-9; David M. Stowe, “Forms of Missionary Service in the UCBWM,” 13-14 February 1961, DMS Papers, Box 206, Folder 7; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 20; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 24-6, 35, 106, 110; Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” 244-5; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 29; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 169; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”.

cannot do better for themselves? Do American Christians have ‘objectives’ abroad; or do they have chiefly presence and perception to offer?”¹⁷⁰

Where these attempts at strategizing structural mission were often transient or nebulous (the strategy of layperson-as-missionary would lose traction by the 1970s, for example), there was one particularly potent instance to which Stowe returned again and again – perhaps more than any other anecdote – because it seemed to him to express the idea with perfect clarity. It began, he recounted, when 20 used Ku Klux Klan robes were anonymously donated to a CWS facility in Houston, Texas. After some deliberation, the robes were washed, torn into strips, and sent to a mission hospital to be used as bandages. In this case, he explained, the very “material of human prejudice” was “hammered somehow” into “material for the kingdom of God.” In other words, “pieces of cloth that represented the closed mind at its worst were converted into expressions of the open mind and the open heart. In a nutshell, that is mission.”¹⁷¹ Although not without some “constructive” debate and “bureaucratic infighting,” many ecumenicals were on board with this kind of social-structural mission, however unclear its practice – a kind which could, both literally and figuratively, convert “instruments of dehumanizing” into a means of healing.¹⁷²

Many other Protestants, however, were decidedly not, and (as Stowe suspected) found strategies like “presence” too “tentative, theologically hazy, and...humanistic.” Some expressed nostalgia for the “tough-minded realism” of Niebuhr, while others, like Princeton ethicist Paul

¹⁷⁰Douglas W. Johnson, “The American Laymen Overseas,” *Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library* 20, no. 8 (October 1969): 1-9; David M. Stowe, “Mission Priorities of UCBWM.” 6 October 1970, DMS Papers, Box 29. Folder 10; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1971): 2; Stowe, “Issues in World Evangelism”; Stowe, “Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today’s World.”

¹⁷¹Van der Bent, 234; David M. Stowe, “Can Christianity Survive the World Council of Churches?” 28 July 1968, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 40; David M. Stowe, Notes on new aims of salvation, 1973, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 123; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 19, 33; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 144; Stowe, “The Scope of the Christian Mission Today”; Stowe, “Ecumenicity and Church Growth”; Stowe, “The Debate About Conversion”; Stowe, “Mission 1970s: End of Anachronism.”

¹⁷²David M. Stowe to extended family, 27 April 1969, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 5.

Ramsey in his 1967 monograph *Who Speaks for the Church?: A Critique of the 1966 Geneva Conference on World and Society*, denounced the WCC's attempts to influence governmental policy as a confusion of the roles of church and state. Similarly, the growing ecumenical concern with worldly or "secular" affairs incited some charges of political "meddling" or imprudent church involvement in insurgency and Marxist revolution – charges that were hardly new but which would nevertheless recur frequently over the next decade.¹⁷³

A distrust of the ecumenical movement continued to develop especially among many American evangelicals, particularly over concerns that Uppsala's "kingdom" perspective on mission (focusing on justice and development) was a "secularization" or denial of true evangelization. These misgivings had only increased in earnest since the controversial IMC-WCC merger in 1961, and now many of these evangelicals, notable evangelist Billy Graham among them, began to hold their own independent gatherings (the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, for example). Others, feeling underrepresented and ignored by the apparent radicalism of Uppsala's proclamations, publicly broke from the WCC altogether.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps the most outspoken of these detractors was missiologist Donald McGavran (1897-1990), who felt that the WCC had "betrayed" the supposed two billion people in the world who had not yet spiritually converted to Christianity by forcing the concept of mission to bear such "radically different freight." Asserting that "a famine of the Word of God is more terrible by far than the sporadic physical famines which occur in unfortunate lands," McGavran

¹⁷³George W. Cornell, "Foreign Missionaries Have Battle," *Daily Times*, 28 March 1968; Paul Ramsey, *Who Speaks for the Church? A Critique of the 1966 Geneva Conference on Church and Society* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967); Hulsether, "Shifting Perspectives," 35; Lefever, *From Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 25-6; WCC, *Geneva Report*, 80, 89-90; Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 262; van der Bent, 28; Stowe, "Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today's World," 6; Stowe, "Strategy: The Church's Response to What God is Doing," 174.

¹⁷⁴Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 11; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, xvi; Moreton, 238-40; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 178, 187-92; Hutchison, "Americans in World Mission," 163; Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 26-7; Kinnamon, 78; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 12; Yates, 196; Fitzgerald, 120.

forwarded a “church growth” framework that employed a “homogenous unit principle.” This program essentially focused on the drawing of *ethne* (“people groups” or “social units”) into unique churches within and for each group, and measured success primarily by the numerical growth of those churches. McGavran also emphasized the ways in which anthropological research and ethnographic data could be harnessed “solely to accelerate [sic] sound church growth.”¹⁷⁵

Through his popular treatise *Bridges of God* in 1954 as well as the establishment of his School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary in 1965 (which built on the Institute for Church Growth (ICG) that he had opened in Oregon in 1961), McGavran’s ideas attracted the attention – and ire – of many ecumenicals. As his support for a new social or structural understanding of conversion indicated, Stowe in particular disagreed with these methods, finding the “crude” practice of “quantifying evangelism” much too similar to “head-hunting,” as well as insufficiently attentive to practical social issues and ministries. Prominent British missionary thinker and head of the CWME Lesslie Newbigin, as another example, alleged that the kind of evangelism apparent in Church Growth strategies had the “stench of imperialism,” and that offering “‘cheap grace’ to individuals by peeling off all the social and political implications of the gospel is to denature the gospel.” In fact, many ecumenicals who felt they were already “awakened” – those like Stowe and Hoekendijk (discussed in the previous chapter) who had been arguing for at least a decade that the church should not be understood as an institution whose goal was membership growth – were growing increasingly “impatient with those who they thought were still asleep.” For them, the “doing” of mission – serving the poor, standing

¹⁷⁵Donald McGavran, “Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?” *Church Growth Bulletin* 4, no. 5 (May 1968): 1; Donald McGavran to David Stowe, 13 February 1967, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; Donald McGavran to David Stowe, 15 July 1964, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 25-6; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 161; Yates, 215-218; Beuttler, 125; Taber, 143.

with the oppressed, encouraging freedom and dignity – defined Christianity “far better than any institutional language,” and ecclesiocentric strategies like Church Growth appeared to be a vestige of an imperialist past they were anxious to discard.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, while many ecumenicals like Stowe were also convinced of the relevance of the social sciences to mission – so much so that a formal discipline for the anthropology of missions, known as “missiology,” was established by the early 1970s – they were more inclined to view the insights gained from such research as a means of critiquing their imperialist assumptions and excising old ethnocentric views of “heathen” cultures, rather than as useful tools for aiding the conversion of them. Stowe, for example, suggested that the work of political scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists could be “part of the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry overseas,” and frequently pointed out that such “applied intelligence” could guide mission to its proper aims. He specifically pointed to Margaret Mead, the famed anthropologist (and active WCC member) as compelling evidence for the role of the social sciences in the relationship between church and society. Indeed, these “missiologists” and their new institutions (like the American Society of Missiology, or ASM, formed in 1973) credited 19th century mission theorist Gustav Warneck as the father of the discipline – a man who had often cautioned against models of mission as conquest, warned against the conflation of Euro-

¹⁷⁶Stowe also found fault in the lack of unity and cooperation among evangelical mission groups themselves, which he read as further justification for cooperation as a fundamental principle of American mission work. See Preston, 516; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 178, 198; Yates, 165-6; David M. Stowe, “A Perspective on the Church Growth Question,” 5 October 1967, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; David M. Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions,” April 1976, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; David M. Stowe, Memorandum on Woodstock Conference, 6 April 1967, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 26; Stowe, “Can Christianity Survive the World Council of Churches?”; Stowe, “Ecumenicity and Church Growth”; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 23, 29, 36; Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” 271; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 32; Stowe, “Credibility in Evangelism”; Stowe, “The Scope of the Christian Mission Today.”

American culture and Christian faith, and lectured that “not more but less English...should be the watchword of the twentieth century.”¹⁷⁷

But despite the fact that Stowe believed communities would be judged not by their size but by their “instrumental” value in enacting justice, he was also deeply concerned that this divisiveness would undercut mission abroad. He was especially dismayed when he reported that evangelicals “deliberately” conspired to get his organization, CWS, expelled from certain countries in Latin America or denounced ecumenicals as communists to the “violently anti-communist governments of Taiwan and Korea.” When Asians and Africans saw the intense missionary competition, the theological bickering, and the vilification between various Christian groups, Stowe argued, they could only assume it was inherent to Christianity, and that it would threaten their nascent national unity. In one instance, as he often relayed, a Chinese woman wanted to become a Christian, but was unsure which of the fifty-seven Protestant missions then in Taiwan she was supposed to join. It was likely in the interest of limiting the destructiveness of this Protestant disunity, then, that Stowe worked to maintain a civil relationship with McGavran.¹⁷⁸

A careful review of McGavran’s edited collection *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (1965), for example, saw Stowe temper his concerns about the “multiplication of believers and of

¹⁷⁷Yates, 4, 19; Kollman, 433; Beaver, 116, 130; van der Bent, 258-9; WCC, *Geneva Report*, 39, 49, 90, 161, 180-1, 184; Lodberg, 325; Taber, 131; Montgomery, 304; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to Executive Staff, 5 January 1971, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 151; Stowe, “Stewardship is: Mission”; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*.

¹⁷⁸David M. Stowe to Ralph T. Palmer, 5 August 1966, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; David M. Stowe, “Christian Responsibility Now Toward Witness in China,” in *China and Christian Responsibility: A Symposium*, ed. William Jerome Richardson (New York: Maryknoll Publications, 1968), 114; Donald McGavran to David Stowe, 31 October 1963, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; David M. Stowe to Donald McGavran, 18 August 1964, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; David M. Stowe, “Church Growth as a Guide for Mission Policy” Memorandum, 6 November 1963, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 37; David M. Stowe, “Goals for Mission in the 1970s,” 29 March 1968, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; McGavran to Stowe, 15 July 1964; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 9, 23-9, 33-4; Stowe, “Ecumenicity and Church Growth”; Stowe, “A Perspective on the Church Growth Question”; Stowe, “The Scope of the Christian Mission Today.”

churches” with a recognition of the value of the volume, especially as a means to enlarge the ecumenical dialogue beyond its “one-sided” Protestant-Catholic-Orthodox emphasis. McGavran likewise lauded Stowe’s efforts and those of the CWME with which he was involved; he suggested that the carefully moderated statements of Stowe and others were “making friends” and could lead to more “cooperative ventures” between the NCC and McGavran’s institute, and between conservative and ecumenical Christians more broadly. Stowe also encouraged the NCC to affirm its “interest” in church growth, develop cooperative research projects, and send specialized missionary staff members for study and training at the ICG. By 1968, the DOM affirmed “making disciples” as a fundamental imperative of its work – albeit alongside the three other obligations of healing, providing food and other basic necessities, and freeing the oppressed. It was likely also the result of these (however tentative) collaborations and correspondences, and out of his desire to engender further cooperation between the two factions, that Stowe agreed to deliver the Annual Church Growth lecture for Fuller Seminary in February of 1967, the text of which was compiled into his 1970 monograph *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*. Stowe indeed acknowledged in that publication that the very invitation of a NCC executive to address the conservatives at Fuller was “stimulating,” and represented the kind of “free exchange” which was preferable to the divisiveness he otherwise observed.¹⁷⁹

Despite these attempts at ecumenism, however, the heavy emphasis on numeric growth and functionalist anthropology and apparent ambivalence to issues of socio-economic justice in McGavran’s Church Growth strategy served as a foil to the kind of structural missionary strategy that Stowe and other ecumenicals was asserting as an alternative. In fact, as Stowe experienced,

¹⁷⁹D. Gill, 20; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 9, 34; McGavran to Stowe, 31 October 1963; Stowe to McGavran, 18 August 1964; Stowe, “Church Growth as a Guide for Mission Policy”; Stowe, “Goals for Mission in the 1970s”; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 143.

“fruitful cooperation” was much more likely between ecumenical Protestants and Roman Catholics than it was between rival Protestant groups at this time, given their shared interests in development strategies and socio-economic liberation. In 1967, for example, Stowe participated – along with R. Pierce Beaver, Richard Shaull, and other Protestants and Catholics from around the world – in a mission theology conference hosted at Woodstock College in Maryland which touted itself as “the first ecumenical study of missions” held after Vatican II. The results of these discussions on acculturation, conversion, and socio-economic development were then published, with contributions from Stowe, as *The Word in the Third World* in 1968.¹⁸⁰

In that year, too, the same year as the WCC Uppsala Assembly, the Conference of Latin American Bishops met in Medellin, Colombia to discuss socio-economic justice and the new liberation theology, and commissions of the WCC and the Holy See (under a new Joint Commission on Society, Development, and Peace named SODEPAX) gathered in Beirut to consider strategies for economic development. Beyond religious organizations, too, in the wider context of international politics, development projects and institution-building were beginning to replace simple aid as the lingua franca of humanitarian work. Programs like the Alliance for Progress, Food for Peace, the Act of Bogota, and the Agency for International Development (AID) in the early 1960s had inaugurated this process, reflecting the Kennedy administration’s new emphasis on economic development rather than public assistance as an instrument of foreign policy – a sentiment reinforced both by Kennedy’s appointment of noted modernization theorist Walter Rostow as the Department of State’s Director of Policy Planning and by his proposal (quickly approved by the UN) of the 1960s as the “development decade.” Despite its growing popularity, however, development and modernization theory were almost immediately

¹⁸⁰Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation”; Stowe, Memorandum on Woodstock Conference.

subject to criticism, both from other Western economists and from the very peoples it aimed to help.¹⁸¹

On a practical level, the success of development programs was questionable. The wealth gap appeared to be widening rather than narrowing, structural change proved difficult to effect, revolutionary movements were squelched by dictatorships, debt figures grew, and militarization stoked fear and disillusionment about the possibilities for peace.¹⁸² Even in a context of general support for development as “the major task” of mission, Stowe had acknowledged at Woodstock that development was “terribly difficult, costly, technical, and political.”¹⁸³ Furthermore, the term itself was somewhat ambiguous, and the action it required not entirely clear. Stowe lamented that Uppsala’s rhetorical affirmation of development did not offer a concrete path of action through its complexities, and in fact had left the crucial issue untouched: “Is development to come through *noblesse oblige* by the well-off peoples on behalf of the poor ones, or through a radical revolution whereby the less well-off peoples take the rich by the throat and shake it out of them?”¹⁸⁴

As Stowe’s question suggests, development strategies were indeed criticized not only for their meager results or practical failures but also on a conceptual level – primarily for their perpetuation of patterns of inequality and neocolonialism. That is, a common critique of modernization theories like Rostow’s was that they aimed to universalize a model of Western development that, for a variety of reasons, could not or should not be replicated in the global South. Even the delegates at Uppsala, who in general had affirmed development, recognized the

¹⁸¹WCC, *Geneva Report*, 53, 87, 210; McCleary, 121; Rieff, 21.

¹⁸²Vischer, 26.

¹⁸³Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” 274

¹⁸⁴Stowe, Address to UCBWM Board of Directors on Uppsala Assembly; Stowe, Memorandum on Development.

slow progress of development programs and the failure of capitalist modernization to transfer economic and technological growth to the global South. In particular, theories of “unequal exchange,” “economic dependency,” and “colonial psychology” – collectively known as “dependency theory” – which had emerged as early as the 1950s were now serving as the foundation for an expansive critique of development and modernization approaches.

The Singer-Prebisch hypothesis, the economic dimension of dependency theory, was first initiated by German economist Hans Singer and soon expanded by director of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America Raul Prebisch. It proposed that the terms of trade between raw materials (primary commodities like coal, coffee, and cocoa), on the one hand, and manufactured products, on the other, would inevitably deteriorate over time as the price of the former declined relative to the latter. Because “developing” countries were the primary exporters of raw materials which the “First World” transformed into products to be sold back at a higher price, the implication of this proposal was that the very structure of the world market was responsible for global inequality; it simply reproduced colonial patterns of domination. In other words, the poverty and inequality of “peripheral” nations existed as a deliberate consequence of their exploitation by capitalist imperialists in the “center.” The perceived “backwardness” or lack of “progress” in the global South was not due to deficient internal conditions, then, but to their inequitable relationship with the industrialized world.¹⁸⁵

In the 1950s and 1960s, psychological, political, and philosophical theories were also developed which supplemented this economic dependency argument. French psychologist Octave Mannoni, for example, drew from his experience as a colonial official in Madagascar to argue that the colonized-colonizer relationship was rooted in the psychology of inferiority and

¹⁸⁵Joseph L. Love, “Raul Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange,” *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 3 (1980): 45-6; Fitzpatrick-Behrens, 11.

dependence. Extending this notion beyond the psychological to the historical, material, and racial as well, Martinique-born psychoanalyst and revolutionary Frantz Fanon also developed theories regarding the psychology of racial and colonial oppression in his 1952 analysis *Black Skin, White Masks* as well as his 1961 “handbook for revolution” or “bible of decolonization,” *The Wretched of the Earth*.¹⁸⁶

Drawing in part on these analyses of dependence, the notion of shepherding “developing” nations along a path of modernization which the Western nations had pioneered before them thus came under increasing fire in the late 1960s and 1970s. While WWII had weakened European imperial power in ways that stimulated the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa, it also drew the colonies into an international economic system that compelled them to serve the war needs of those disintegrating European empires. Addressing “underdevelopment,” therefore, would have to be contingent on recognizing Western capitalist exploitation as its fundamental cause, and a more equitable international economic order as the solution. Not just aid, as had already been realized, but even development programs, especially when conducted in isolation from efforts at addressing needed changes in international trade terms, perpetuated patterns of capitalist expansion and colonial dependence. Furthermore, if Northern wealth and industrial power was achieved through the exploitation of the South, and such was the cause of their poverty, then a model which mandated progression through the same stages of modernization was both impracticable and undesirable.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶Schlesinger, 368-9; Ishay, 196. The issue of dependence, however, was not an entirely new one, and was also not articulated only by native leaders. Missionary societies in Britain which had cultivated humanitarian associations in the 19th century around the issues of emancipation and aboriginal protection soon found themselves overwhelmed by requests for support, to which they felt “mounting resentment at any suggestion of restoring the missionary tie when disengagement and local independence was their goal.” (Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 182).

¹⁸⁷Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 21-2; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 32-3.

Dependency theory did not, of course, offer settled answers about what kinds of action should be taken (should former colonies withdraw from the international market or negotiate better terms within it?), and it focused on national borders perhaps to the exclusion of class divisions (was it really America vs. Brazil, or rich vs. poor?). Southern Christians too were of different minds regarding the dilemma of accepting development funds and entering the world economy (and thus possibly subjecting themselves to outside control) versus refusing outside aid to ensure true self-determination (but in doing so limiting improvement of their standard of living.) Nonetheless, dependency theory's marriage of psychological theory, Marxism, and Keynesian economics "overthrew" modernization theory in many parts of the global South.¹⁸⁸

On the wider (and increasingly secular) humanitarian scene, these doubts contributed to American liberal isolationism and "disillusionment about the applicability of Western models," as well as to distrust from recipient countries suspicious of their donors' presumed knowledge of their problems. As the optimism of the "development decade" waned, it became clear that the dominant developmentalist measures of "progress" – quantitative yardsticks like the GNP, caloric intake, per capita income, or output growth rates – also elided the larger problem of dependency and ignored local realities.¹⁸⁹ Many liberals indeed attributed the meager results of development projects to "top down" strategies heedless of local "grassroots input." These perceived failures of many aspects of the modernization paradigm "undermined the legitimacy of international development as 'science'" and prompted greater attention to cultural factors as well as economic ones. As a result, American foreign policy shifted to a strategy focused on "basic human needs," which placed greater weight on "cultural development" as one of those needs. By the 1980s, the "institution-building" projects of development by the American government and

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹De La Torre, 28; Lodberg, 324; Dickinson, 408; Chabbott, 238-40; Hess, 335.

western NGOs would give way a new kind of development which focused not on replicating Western strategies but on fostering indigenous, self-sustaining institutions with an eye toward American withdrawal.¹⁹⁰

The ecumenical response to criticism from within and without their own movement followed a similar path. Although Stowe and others continued to use the language of development, the consensus among the majority of ecumenicals was that a strictly economic understanding of development had too often been used as “panacea for problems that were more deeply rooted.” Critics of the WCC saw their development and anti-racism efforts as socialist and secular, while even socially-minded ecumenicals expressed trepidation about the connections between development aid and government funding.¹⁹¹ In a series of theological sessions, conferences, studies, and surveys in the late 1960s and early 1970s, both Stowe and the wider ecumenical movement thus sought to articulate a broader concept of “human” development. As the 1969 World Service Report of the UCBWM – the organization Stowe was soon to head – explained, “all this is done with the cooperation of the church, state, and the local community, toward the goal, not merely of economic and social advance but of human development.”¹⁹²

In many cases, this involved “macro-level analysis” of dependency – global trading patterns, debt, the concentration of economic power, the policies of the UN and IMF, or economic-technical monopolies – as a balance for the “micro-level work” that remedied problems now identified as merely symptomatic. Despite the clear parallels between early

¹⁹⁰Robert W. Merry, *Sands of Empire: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy, and the Hazards of Global Ambition* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 89-92; Chabbott, 245; Hess, 334-6; McCleary, 121.

¹⁹¹Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 152; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 21-2, 25, 32, 232 f.43; Abrecht, 157.

¹⁹²United Church Board for World Ministries, *Division of World Service 1969 Report* (New York, United Church Board for World Ministries, 1969).

“civilizing” missions and this socio-cultural and political missionary emphasis on the “human,” it appeared necessary in light of the recognition that the problem was not (or not only) poverty but also dependency and exploitation. Projects which were “truly developmental,” Stowe suggested, would deal with “diseases not symptoms, justice not charity, fundamental social change not relief.” They would promote self-help, have a “multiplier effect,” and contribute not only to the economy but to the material, physical, *and* social well-being of “developing” peoples.¹⁹³

Several changes were instituted by Stowe and other ecumenicals as a result of this new perspective and analysis, the first of which was a reconsideration of “objective” economic measures like the GNP as markers of progress. More often than not, Stowe suggested, the results of mission were “intangible” and did not “lend themselves to human measurement” – which was, perhaps ironically, one of the reasons that economic development had been emphasized by secular humanitarian organizations in the first place. In any case, Stowe suggested that the focus might better be placed on wider notions of the “realized value or improvement in the human situation,” or on alternative criteria to aggregate measures like the GNP, such as the Physical Quality of Life Indicator (PQLI), which combined the parameters of life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps the most significant shift in programming and policy that was instituted, however, and the one that likely effected the most change on the ground, was the notion that the designs and resources for creating more just economic relationships must come from within the

¹⁹³David M. Stowe, “Challenges to Christian World Ministries,” 9 November 1980, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 128; Watt, 14; Dickinson, 407-10, 413, 430; Chabbott, 238-40; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 140-1, 147-8; Kinnamon, 67; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 32.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.* See also WCC, *Geneva Report*, 55; David M. Stowe, “Who is Human?” Asilomar Lecture, DMS Papers, Box 220, Folder 39; David M. Stowe, “Are Christians Good Investors?” 13 October 1981, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 134; Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand”; Stowe, Memorandum on Development.

developing countries themselves, rather than from the budgets and theories of foreign administrators. In other words, critiques of the application of a supposedly “universal” process of development led ecumenicals like Stowe to reorient the provisions and priorities of their programs toward concepts like self-sufficiency and self-direction; justice, it seemed, had for too long been distributive rather than participatory. The CCPD, for example, identified social justice, self-reliance, and economic growth as the primary objectives for its Ecumenical Development Fund – a set of criteria, it is important to note, proposed by prominent Indian ecumenical and economist Samuel Parmar – before ultimately abandoning many of the core notions of economic developmentalism and significantly reducing the number of projects with which it assisted by the end of the 1970s. In suggesting that most of the suspicion of foreign aid could be overcome if the agency “becomes as indigenous as possible,” the Geneva Report had also drawn powerful connections between the insufficiency of mere aid and the lack of indigeneity in socio-economic policy. Uppsala delegates in 1968 also affirmed, in their emphasis on self-determination, that missionary resources must be “related to the needs of that community and incorporated into its life,” and many delegates expressed concerns over the very terminology of “developing” countries.¹⁹⁵

Now working with a definition of development as “a self-sustaining change process...aimed at improving human life by increasing the wealth, health, education, and effective self-determination available to all, both as individuals and as national societies,” the guidelines developed by Stowe and the DOM Program Board increasingly reflected ideas about dependency and self-determination. With new standards of progress, like the degree to which people felt they have “power over one’s destiny,” decisions regarding the DOM’s programs were

¹⁹⁵WCC, *Geneva Report*, 16-7, 66, 71, 77, 81, 113, 141, 147; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 35, 43, 46, 55-6; Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 41.

to be guided by the “developing peoples” themselves, and focused on “self-regenerating” change in the fields of family planning, education, agricultural work, and literacy. Additionally, new requirements (both in the DOM and in many other ecumenical organizations) were instituted which stipulated that recipients of assistance around the world – in Cameroon, the Caribbean, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Uruguay, and elsewhere – must plan, supervise, and evaluate programs for themselves. As Stowe would later reflect, admittedly with some “sinful pride,” this model of “simple, grassroots programs” in which the beneficiaries themselves participated was in place in the DOM many years earlier than in larger, secular organizations like the World Bank or the UN.¹⁹⁶

In the next decade, as Chapter 5 will discuss, these notions of self-determination would penetrate also to missionary strategy and theological matters. In other words, theories of economic and psychological dependency would come to serve as the context and subtext for the emergence of Southern critiques of theological dependency as well; so long as Northern ecumenicals still spoke of “younger” or “developing” churches, it would be argued, those churches would be “reduced to dependency” not just on Northern goods and funds, but also on Northern Christian personnel, terminology, and theology. In this way, Southern Christians would soon begin to articulate the need for a “second phase” of independence; now that economic independence had been asserted, the next step was to develop a Christianity that would credibly speak to their own cultural and political environments.¹⁹⁷

In 1970, on the eve of these calls for theological independence, Stowe left his position with the NCC to head the United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM) – the successor

¹⁹⁶David M. Stowe to extended family, 26 October 1969, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 5; David M. Stowe, “Have You Eaten?” December 1976, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; Stowe, Memorandum on Development.

¹⁹⁷Marty, “The Global Context of Ecumenism 1968-2000,” 15-6; Lantzer, 105; Vischer, 32.

to the ABCFM – as its Executive Vice President (EVP). In some ways a “return home” to the familial community which had supported his mission to North China, it also seemed a fitting move given the UCBWM’s shifting priorities; it too had invested in moving beyond “relief” toward development – “helping people to help themselves” – and now stressed that its programs should be “naturalized” under indigenous leadership as quickly as possible.¹⁹⁸ During his tenure there, Stowe would further address these themes, and develop others, as American ecumenicals continued to navigate the increasingly choppy waters of their engagement with the global South.

¹⁹⁸UCBWM, *Division of World Service 1969 Report*.

5.0 THE END OF MISSION, THE HEYDAY OF HUMAN RIGHTS (1970-1985)

“This Board has been on a partnership pilgrimage for a long time. Today we find it bringing our work new dimensions of depth and range, and we rejoice.”
– David M. Stowe, “The Power of Partnership” (1979)

The priorities of the UCBWM, given his earlier experience with the organization’s predecessor, the ABCFM, and the style of his work with the DOM, were quite familiar to Stowe as he stepped into his new role as its Executive Vice President in 1970. This is because the UCBWM at that time was similarly concerned with the “total mission” of the church, managing a budget of over five million dollars, an executive staff of 26, and 343 missionaries that supported evangelistic, development, relief, and socio-political projects in some sixty countries. (In fact, the UCBWM channeled much of its relief through CWS, and in the 1990s, would join with the DOM to form the Common Global Ministries Board.) In his inaugural address to a large crowd gathered at Plymouth Church in Seattle, Stowe indeed reasserted many of the themes which had been at the heart of his work with the DOM in the 1960s – lay involvement in mission, human development, and racial justice, for example. But his address also signaled the emergence of three additional priorities, ones likewise stimulated by a burgeoning Christian population in the global South which would outnumber that of the North by 1980: the lack of indigeneity in Christian mission, the conduct of transnational American corporations, and the systemic injustices which denied those in the global South the rights to socio-economic necessities (food in particular), a clean and healthy environment, and national or cultural self-

determination. This chapter will review those three priorities of Stowe’s fifteen-year tenure with the UCBWM, as well as the criticisms that addressing these issues invited from the rising evangelical movement, American commentators on cultural imperialism, and the global South itself.¹⁹⁹

Just as Stowe settled into his new role with the UCBWM, in fact, and amidst a global climate of anti-colonial and nationalist movements, the first of those issues – indigeneity in mission – erupted into a controversy that sent the ecumenical movement reeling. It began most explicitly in 1971, when East African ecumenical leader John Gatu issued his famous “call for a moratorium” at a mission conference in Milwaukee – a request for a total suspension of foreign funding and missionaries to the churches of Africa. Gatu’s call was soon buttressed by similar requests from figures like Emerito P. Nacpil (then the dean of Union Theological Seminary in Manila), Paul Verghese (an Orthodox Christian representing India in the WCC), and José Miguez-Bonino (an active WCC staff member and prominent liberation theologian from Argentina), as well as delegates at the 1973 conference of the CWME in Bangkok and the Lusaka meeting of the All-Africa Council of Churches in 1974. As such, ecumenicals were unavoidably confronted with the rallying cry that had been rumbling among regional church organizations around the world, especially in Africa and Latin America: “Missionary, Go Home!”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹For the text of Stowe’s inaugural address, see Stowe, “New World, One World.” The priorities mentioned here were also reaffirmed at the Tenth General Synod of UCC in 1975. See David M. Stowe, “Priorities in Global Context,” August 1975, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 136; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1975): 2; Stowe, “Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment.”

²⁰⁰“Call for Moratorium, Report of the Third Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Lusaka, 1974,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, eds. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 364; Robert Reese, “John Gatu and the Moratorium on Missionaries,” *Missiology* 42, no. 3 (October 2013): 245-256; Beuttler, 121; Yates, 199; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 92.

As was evident in their earlier receptiveness to critiques of development theory, many within the ecumenical movement had already begun to recognize the inherent inequality in the traditional missionary posture of “senders and receivers.” In fact, the practice of “younger churches” relying on funds and direction from the established churches and missionary boards of the North had already begun to be displaced by other models in the 1960s, like the Joint Action for Mission (JAM) initiative or the “Six Continents” approach to mission. Supported and publicized by Stowe, the former had proposed agreement by both Northern and Southern representatives as a contingency of all missionary surveys, plans, and actions, while the latter dispensed with the model of mission as an “export” in favor of local churches engaging in mission in their own societies (including the US).²⁰¹

In his earlier work, Stowe had aimed to establish this kind of “joint action” in every aspect of mission, especially following his attendance at the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in Singapore in 1963, at which the JAM initiatives were implemented. In his policy statements and proposals surrounding the reorganization of the DFM in 1964-5, a philosophy of “native priority” dominated in which American staff was to be “responsible” rather than paternal. Although the DOM could still technically undertake separate operations, its main role was simply to make local churches “aware of their own capacity for service,” and then turn over

²⁰¹For Stowe’s endorsements of the JAM program, see David M. Stowe, “Joint Action for Mission,” 21 January 1964, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 106; David M. Stowe, “A Time to Gather,” 15 November 1965, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 107; Stowe, “Continuity and Contrast in Mission”; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 175-7; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 76; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 43. On the “Six Continents” approach, see Robert O. Latham, ed., *God for All Men: The Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches at Mexico City, December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 71-2; Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Held in Mexico City, December 8th to 9th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964); Kinnamon, 59; Yates, 165-6; David M. Stowe, Address to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions, July 1971, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; David M. Stowe, “The Witness of the Church Across National Boundaries,” 21 January 1964, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 106; Stowe, “Two Centuries – One Mission”; Stowe, “Continuity and Contrast in Mission”; Stowe, “Stewardship is: Mission”; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”; Stowe, “World Responsibilities for American Christians?”.

primary responsibility as quickly as possible. The new DOM's partnerships with churches in Japan, Turkey, Nigeria, Indonesia, and other countries proceeded at the discretion of the local church, and the relief programs of CWS rerouted the donation of basic supplies towards local development projects in which every field officer was to work within the local church structure and be matched with a local Christian colleague. Indeed, as Stowe wrote to the *New York Times* in the midst of the reorganization, "missionary dominance is ending, as it should; but missionary partnership has, I am convinced, a very promising future."²⁰²

The 1963 Mexico City meeting of the CWME under the Six Continents theme, as another example, was similarly concerned with dependency in missionary relationships well before the moratorium call. In fact, it was the first such conference that delegates from local church councils (and not exclusively foreign mission agencies or boards) had ever attended, and the majority of speeches were given by "home mission" representatives like the Rev. Harry Daniel, an Indian serving in urban-industrial missions in Bangalore, and George Todd, an American Presbyterian who had cut short a foreign mission career for urban-industrial missions and community organizing with Saul Alinsky in the US. Furthermore, the Mexico City assembly voted that the CWME should be composed not of missionary societies but of national or regional councils of churches, further solidifying the emphasis on local churches engaging in mission in their own societies – and on the need of even North America and Europe to be evangelized. Home mission in all continents, supported in partnership by the global missionary community,

²⁰²Robert, "Shifting Southward," 53; David M. Stowe, "A Modest Proposal," 15 May 1962, DMS Papers, Box 181, Folder 4; David M. Stowe, "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times*, 15 April 1964; David M. Stowe, "The Flavor of the Tokyo Conference," 196, DMS Papers, Box 181, Folder 8; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 99; Stowe, "Issues in World Evangelism"; D. Gill, 20-21, 34; Stowe, "Goals for Mission in the 1970s"; Stowe, "Program and Budget Outline for NCC-DOM"; Stowe "Strategy: The Church's Response to What God is Doing," 165-6; Stowe, "Why Mission Today?"; Stowe, "Stewardship is: Mission"; Stowe, "Christianity: Cause or Cure of the World's Ills"; Stowe, "What Destiny for Christianity?"; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 30; Stowe, *A New Look at an Old Subject*.

was well on its way toward becoming what Stowe called the new “typical” and “primary” form of mission: “missionaries no longer need to be sanctified by salt water: they can fulfill their calling at home.”²⁰³

Given this earlier recognition of the unbalanced relationships between North and South in the JAM and Six Continents initiatives, it is perhaps unsurprising that while some evangelicals protested the 1970s moratorium call as a convenient excuse to scale back already-declining missionary numbers, many ecumenicals felt compelled to seriously reflect on its implications. Despite some confusion of interpretation (both among those issuing the call and those on the receiving end), the report following the CWME conference in Bangkok in 1973 soul-searchingly admitted that the moratorium debate was the result of “our failure to relate to one another in a way which does not dehumanize,” and of the mission agencies’ involvement in “cultural, spiritual, economic and political domination.” Profound ecumenical reflection over the next few years was also evident in prominent missionary and ecumenical journals regarding the impact, likelihood of success, and budgetary implications of a potential moratorium. The tone of the responses, however, varied widely even among ecumenical leaders.²⁰⁴

On the one hand, a minority of ecumenicals suggested fulfilling the calls for a moratorium as a means of encouraging self-reliance rather than dependency in churches in the

²⁰³Ibid. See also David M. Stowe, “Future of the Missionary,” *Tripod* 45 (30 March 1988): 33-39.

²⁰⁴The entire issues of *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 254 (April 1975) and *International Documentation*, 63 (1974) were devoted to the moratorium issue. See also Preston, 490; Larsson and Castro, 127; Dickinson, 405, 409; Yates, 199; Reese, 245. Among those not receptive to these claims, the German missiologists in the WCC would split between conciliar and evangelical missionary agencies finally after Bangkok, over disputes similar to those between liberals and evangelicals.

Interestingly, in answer to the question of the effects of a moratorium on the African churches, the Lusaka call suggested that it would prompt church leaders to “come home to their true role in evangelizing and strengthening the church at home.” Where the moratorium did cause “many existing church structures to crumble,” it was a sign that they “should not have been established in the first place,” and would allow for a new, truly African church to emerge from the ashes. Furthermore, should those churches crumble, “the African church would have performed a service in redeeming God’s people in the northern hemisphere from a distorted view of the mission of the church in the world.” See “Call for Moratorium, Lusaka 1974” in Kinnamon and Cope, 364.

global South. Elliot Kendall, for example, an administrator for the British Council of Churches and former missionary in China and Africa, published *The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary* in 1978, in which he argued that Northern missionaries were not only unnecessary in Africa, but in fact were stifling the local church. Reflecting the emphases of the earlier push for home mission, Kendall suggested that missionaries should understand their duty as being primarily to their home societies. Then-director of the CWME (and future WCC General Secretary) Emilio Castro of Uruguay, a bit more reservedly, also feared that certain missionary practices “suffocat[ed]” local initiative and contributed to “relations of dependency.”²⁰⁵

Then-president of the American Society of Missiology Gerald Anderson, however, seemed more wary. In a January 1974 article in the *Christian Century*, Anderson judged that a total moratorium was “shortsighted and simplistic,” and that it might allow “tribal religion” or “cultural paganism” to encroach on extant Christian communities. Other ecumenicals similarly worried about the effects of the moratorium debate in the West, fearing it would discourage young people from missionary service and suppress the donation of funds for mission. Closer to the consensus position among American ecumenicals, Anderson’s analysis nonetheless acknowledged the need for a thorough reevaluation of the missionary role in continued social, political, and economic oppression. In other words, many other ecumenicals echoed Anderson’s sentiment that the call should encourage, not the severing of missionary ties entirely but the purification of mission work from “imperialistic activities.”²⁰⁶

Stowe’s reaction indeed was closer to Anderson’s than to Kendall’s. Although averse to the ways in which “moratorium” was being wielded as a “verbal symbol” or “rhetorical

²⁰⁵ R. Elliott Kendall, *The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary* (London: S.P.C.K., 1978); Reese, 246.

²⁰⁶ Gerald Anderson, “A Moratorium on Missionaries?” *Christian Century*, January 16, 1974, 43-5; Reese, 246.

flourish,” Stowe realized that mission had many questions to face regarding its “implicit downgrading of the capacity of natives to handle significant tasks (or to be trained for them).” This was, in other words, a boiling point of sorts with regard to the long-held tension in missionary ideology between racial superiority and the belief in the ability of all mankind to be evangelized. Based on conversations with partner churches, regional church leaders, and ecumenical missionaries, then, Stowe and his colleagues at the UCC and the UCBWM evaluated whether a moratorium might be “salutary and constructive,” and came to the sober realization that they “should not wait for people from the third world to have to pound on the door.” Although the UCBWM decided that it would take seriously any specific requests for a withdrawal of its personnel or funding, however, Stowe noted that few were willing to “throw out the baby of mission aid with the bathwater of missionary relationships.” “Selfhood” did not have to mean “separation.” Like Anderson, in other words, Stowe believed the best response to the moratorium call to be a reorientation, maturation, or “better design” of relationships, not an elimination of them; as he understood it, it was not Christianity itself per se that was the target of Southern Christian critique, but rather the “abuses” and “patterns of authority that denied them an equal place” in Christian institutions. Gatu himself would later seem to affirm this sentiment in a number of interviews and talks, including one 2008 interview: “My view of the moratorium is not cutting a relationship. It is only cutting a relationship in terms of paternalism.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷Reese, 254; David M. Stowe, “Second Thoughts on Moratorium,” 16 October 1974, DMS Papers, Box 131, Folder 154; David M. Stowe, “Agenda for World Ministries,” 17 November 1975, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; Stowe, “Future of the Missionary.” For more on designing better missionary relationships and considering requests for divestment, see Etherington, “Introduction,” 13; Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 26-9; “Record of the Third UCC Seminar on Salvation Today and Contemporary Experience.” Union Theological Seminary, 6 March 1973; “Toward a UCBWM Stance on Moratorium,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 5, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1975): 12-15; David M. Stowe, “Guidelines: Direction of Change in Overseas Relationships,” 3 June 1975, DMS Papers, Box 131, Folder 154; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 6, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 1976): 11; David M. Stowe, “The Future of a Heritage,” 8 November 1981, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 129; David M. Stowe, “Opening Business Session Statement,” 10 November 1974, DMS Papers, Box 16,

Ecumenical leaders, now trumpeting the “end of missionary initiative from the white Atlantic community” and the beginning of an era of world mission with the “fully responsible participation” of the global South, increasingly replaced the language of “younger churches” or “receivers” with a rhetoric of full “partnership” with them in mission. Partnership strategies were evident in new bilateral “sister church” relationships between individual churches in the North and South, which gained substantial popularity into the 1980s. These collaborations focused not on efficiency or “measurable results” but on shared power, solidarity, and interpersonal relationships. Larger programs like the WCC’s Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR) also served as a platform for churches in the South and ministry agencies in the North to participate together in reflection on their relationship. The ESR in particular issued guidelines to the effect that “all churches are both givers and receivers of resources, that those resources include both spiritual and material ones, and that all decisions about sharing should be characterized by wide participation and mutual accountability.” Some ecumenicals took to calling this approach “mission with empty hands,” although Stowe thought it too negative a moniker for the richness which could come from two-way collaboration in mission as he had experienced in China and other locales. But in any case, one clear effect of the moratorium was its stimulation of this shift from a paradigm of “sending and receiving” to one of “sharing” and “partnership.”²⁰⁸

Folder 124; David M. Stowe, “Mission in the 80s,” in *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, ed. Samuel Wilson (Monrovia, California: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center of World Vision International, 1979), 10; Stowe, “Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today’s World,” 5-6; Stowe, “Continuity and Contrast in Mission,” 3; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 140-3, 160-1, 167-8; Stowe, “Why Mission Today?”; Stowe, “Stewardship is: Mission”; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe, “Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment.

²⁰⁸World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Bangkok Assembly 1973* (New York: World Council of Churches, 1973), 5, 13-22, 85-7, 93-5, 102; Janel Kragt Bakker, “The Sister Church Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Restructuring of American Christianity Against the Backdrop of Globalization,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 3 (July 2012): 129; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP.” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 2; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 11, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 2; David M. Stowe, “Dimensions of Our Fellowship,” 12 February 1973, DMS

As in the wider ecumenical movement, and much like the earlier policy changes during his time with the DOM, the revisions Stowe made to UCBWM programs and policies reflected the demise of the “Christendom” model (the missionary parallel to imperial expansion) and the ascension of these new partnership strategies. UCBWM administrators, Stowe explained, now imagined for themselves a role not as final “decision-makers” or benefactors of more than 15% of any group or project’s total budget, but as catalysts for and supporters of local initiative. Like many other denominations and societies, the UCBWM committed itself to “internationalizing” its staff beginning in 1974, as a means of guaranteeing that their overseas projects were not “made in the USA” but instead explicitly directed by reflex influences. This internationalization meant the inclusion of overseas nationals, missionaries with first-hand experience, and well-traveled Board members, among others, in the halls of mainline Protestant power. In other words, the opinions of those “closest to the action” now held the most weight, and the “renewal and development” of the local church were of primary importance.²⁰⁹

Furthermore, some property deeds held by the UCBWM were turned over to local communities in places like Honduras, while in others (especially Japan), the salaries of American missionaries were taken over by the local church. Many permanent or long-term subsidies for

Papers, Box 16, Folder 122.; Larsson and Castro, 126; Kinnamon, 60; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 82-3, 87-8; “Record of the Third UCC Seminar on Salvation Today and Contemporary Experience.”

²⁰⁹Although the proposal to include overseas nationals as voting Board members did not pass, some foreign representatives did attend the UCBWM Board of Directors meeting in 1975, and in the spirit of partnership the UCBWM thereafter made an effort to include an “overseas national in residence as adjunct staff, with voice and vote.” Some of the reasons that the proposal did not become a by-law included legal concerns (the General Synod had previously been the electors of the voting body), questions about the identity of the UCBWM (it was not an ecumenical forum like the WCC, but a partner agency in an ecumenical network), financial and logistical issues (would this further complicate an already complex program of grants and personnel?), fears of imperialism (“If they are chosen by their churches, we shall get ‘official church types.’ If we choose them, this would be rather imperialistic”), and a commitment to self-determination (would not these voting members be “token” representatives of their respective churches?). See David M. Stowe, “How UCBWM Decisions are Made,” 4 November 1977, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 137; David M. Stowe, “Internationalizing the UCBWM,” 2 May 1974, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; “How We Work with Overseas Partners in Decision-Making,” UCBWM Staff Paper, 2 May 1974; Stowe, “Agenda for World Ministries.”

Southern churches were gradually phased out, foreign missionaries were granted membership in local churches by invitation only, and the overall framework for UCBWM projects shifted from one of “coping” for an otherwise unsustainable local church to one of “enabling” it to sustain itself. Further partnerships were also developed through joint education initiatives in India, communications internship programs in Mexico, hospital and publishing services in Turkey, counseling for American servicemen in Japan, political activism in Rhodesia, and linguistic training and church grants in Ghana. By the time Stowe attended the CWME’s 1979 “Heads of Mission Agencies Consultation” in Glion, Switzerland, the rhetoric and policies of “equal access to decision-making,” mutual enrichment, resource sharing, and self-determination were commonplace. By that time, too, the UCBWM was devoting more of its budget to supporting partner churches than it was to sending American missionaries.²¹⁰

Like the UCBWM, most American Protestant church and missionary institutions maintained their relationships with churches and communities in the global South, albeit under new conditions. Calls for a moratorium would ultimately die down by the early 1980s, but they also had implications beyond the new partnership policies of American mission boards. That is, the moratorium debate had provoked a dialogue not just about economic or political dependency, but about theological expression: a truly equal “partnership” required not just the financial

²¹⁰Documentation of policy and program changes reflecting the “enabling” strategy can be found in David M. Stowe to UCBWM Elected Staff, 14 May 1970, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 136.; David M. Stowe, “Principles/Assumptions Underlying UCBWM Program,” 30 April 1979, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 137; David M. Stowe, “Statement on Moratorium,” 29 April 1974, DMS Papers, Box 131, Folder 154; Stowe, “Agenda for World Ministries”; Stowe, “Mission Policy for Ecumenopolis”; Stowe, “Mission Priorities of UCBWM.” On partnership and related strategies more generally and in the UCBWM, see Beuttler, 119; Larsson and Castro, 143; David M. Stowe, “The Power of Partnership,” 11 November 1979, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 127; David M. Stowe, “Christian Mission Comes of Age,” 27 September 1981, DMS Papers, Box 10, Folder 51; David M. Stowe, Memorandum to UCBWM Overseas Personnel, 5 June 1975, DMS Papers, Box 131, Folder 156; David M. Stowe, “Mission: Interaction Around the World,” 1971, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1974): 2; Stowe, Address to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe, “Principles/Assumptions Underlying UCBWM Program.”

autonomy of both parties, but their theological independence as well. Many historical missionaries had operated with a “cultural replacement” approach, in which “heathen” ways of life would be replaced by those of Christian civilization – although a few respected missionary thinkers since the nineteenth century had aimed to preach “nothing but Christ” and thus cultivate “indigenization.” Even for these leaders, however, contemporary scholars and missiologists point out that the general assumption was that the gospel would be essentially the same in all cultures, “barring necessary but superficial adjustments in the form of presentation.”²¹¹

The message that underpinned the calls for moratorium in the 1970s, in contrast, was that the gospel was in fact *not* the same, and that the “hegemony of Western theology” could no longer abide. Furthermore, the desire of theologians in the global South to “stake out” their own positions was tied up in some ways with Cold War geopolitics, as it matched similar sentiments within the rising “non-aligned movement” which sought to assert the independence of certain countries in the “Third World” from interference by the American and Soviet blocs. In an increasingly bipolar and decolonizing context, then, Stowe referred to this as the moment “when the conscience of the Western mission and the sense of selfhood in the younger church intersected and both said ‘Enough.’” The WCC, for its part, likewise expressed sympathy and support for the non-aligned movement and its assertions of national, cultural, and theological independence. To the historical Anderson-Venn formula of self-support, self-government, and

²¹¹Delegates at Edinburgh in 1910 or Jerusalem in 1928, as well as the drafters of the Hocking Report in 1932, for example, had all expressed a similar desire to collaborate or otherwise express unity with indigenous churches. Prominent figures like Rufus Anderson and Daniel Fleming had likewise popularized the notion of preaching the message without its cultural trappings. See Marsha Snulligan Haney, “The Changing Nature of Christianity and the Challenge of U.S.-Africa Mission Partnerships,” in *Freedom's Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 194-5; WCC, *Bangkok 1973*, 33-4; 105; Taber, 174-7; Edwards, 11, 140; Larsson and Castro, 127, 142, 146; Robert 2000, 52; Dickinson, 427; Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*, 134-42; Mudge, 304; Harris, *Nothing But Christ*; Stowe “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 163.

self-propagation, then, moratorium-callers and their Northern partners in dialogue added a “fourth self”: self-theologizing, sometimes referred to as “contextualization.”²¹²

Many American ecumenicals at the time characterized these calls for contextualization and theological independence as an outgrowth of Christian ideology itself – a notion also affirmed by some contemporary scholars in recent years. In tandem with the democratic principles that often attended its export from America, the argument goes, Christianity functioned as a “modernizing” factor that provided the ideological justification for assertions of self-sufficiency, self-governance, and self-determination, as well as the conditions for the creation or solidification of language and writing systems which established self-identity. Stowe, for example, characterized the process as one in which missionaries served as “change agents” who bore the “fruit of Christianity”: “revolutionary social change” and “rising expectations” in the global South.²¹³ As such, Stowe believed that the calls for self-sufficiency and self-theologizing were a sign not of the failure of mission, but of its successful progress. The Bangkok Report likewise read the push for independence in the global South as a potentially positive “breakthrough” (however radical or painful), as did Gerald Anderson, who attributed these “shocking” calls to the vitality and maturation of churches in the global South: “the challenge they pose is the fruit of our labors in world mission over the past 180 years.” The crucial demonstrative irony in this regard, as noted by many historians and by Stowe, was that

²¹²Ibid.

²¹³Richard N. Ostling, “The New Missionary,” *Time*, 27 December 1982; Paul Landau, “Language,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Comaroff and Comaroff, 4; Yates, 133; Maxwell, 285-6, 296-8; Robert, “Shifting Southward,” 51; Preston, 195-6; David M. Stowe, “Christian Missions in Social Revolution,” 9 April 1964, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 106; David M. Stowe, “The Church and Change,” 29 November 1967, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 26; David M. Stowe, “A Divine Extravagance,” 20 October 1977, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 48; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 150-1; Stowe, Bible Study Lectures I and II; Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand.”

many of the individuals calling for independence (or leading the 38 independent nations which had emerged between 1956 and 1982) had been educated in mission schools.²¹⁴

As such, Stowe urged his colleagues to forgo their concerns about “syncretism” and accept that “no foreigner...can possibly do the fundamental tasks of transcultural translation – and even more, of cultural creativity – which real indigenization requires.” At a policy level, he promoted a set of criteria for UCBWM expenditures that included whether the program demonstrated “indigeneity,” and worked to eliminate programs in which decision-making power was not “firmly in the hands of indigenous partner churches,” contextual expression was discouraged, relationships were imbalanced, or local potential not fully utilized. As in the wider ecumenical movement and in much of Stowe’s previous work with the DOM, the mantra became “the more indigenous the church, the better.”²¹⁵ Such a mantra, many ecumenicals believed, allowed for the development of selfhood and identity in the local church, and created space for Southern Christians to use their own theological language to negotiate or challenge modernization and development programs. It also corresponded well with the observations of many missionaries and scholars that the most successful agents of conversion were in fact local Christians, not foreign missionaries, and that the most vibrant Southern Christian communities were often those least inhibited by foreign control.²¹⁶

In addition, the push for indigeneity among American ecumenicals also addressed persistent challenges not only from the global South, but also from critics at home – Vietnam

²¹⁴WCC, *Bangkok 1973*, 24-5; Stowe, “Can the Church Make a Difference in the World?”.

²¹⁵David M. Stowe, “Christian Responsibility of American Churches Toward the Christian Witness in China,” 27 March 1967, DMS Papers, Box 15, Folder 110; Stowe, “Christian Responsibility Now Toward Witness in China,” 125-6; Stowe, “Issues in World Evangelism.”

²¹⁶Noll, *The New Shape*, 196; E. E. Andrews, 668; Etherington, “Introduction,” 7; Case, 7-8; Robert, “Shifting Southward,” 53. Paradoxically, however, much of this Southern theological development was more conservative in nature than that of their liberal American fellow ecumenists; Southern theologies today tend to be more doctrinally conservative, which some scholars argue is because their cultural circumstances “do not lend themselves to being open to liberal theology.” See Lantzer, 113.

War protesters who rejected the notion of “cultural Christianity,” for example, or Western academics who painted missionaries as atavistic imperialists out of place in a modern world. Prescient of contemporary scholars’ descriptions of Christianity as “unalterably Western” and inherently imperial in its universalism, the development of theories that identified missionaries as “cultural” or “moral” imperialists, associated with Harvard historian and former Kennedy advisor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in 1974 and intellectual historian William Hutchison in the early 1980s, were perhaps the most acute of these home-grown challenges. The work of thinkers like Foucault, Said, and Gramsci, the rise of identity politics and postcolonial discourse, and other socio-cultural trends toward “secularization” also encouraged this negative perception of missionaries.²¹⁷

Ironically, the specific critique of “cultural imperialism” was more incisive with regard to the socially-focused missionary work of ecumenicals than to the evangelistic brand of many nondenominational groups; humanitarian or development programs in mission, it was suggested, “widened the sweep of interference” to include not just religious but also social “heresies.” In other words, ecumenicals were confronted with the notion that their “altruistic persuasion” and the coercive imperialism which they sought to excise from their mission work were in fact “two sides of the same coin.”²¹⁸ Presaging the theses of many contemporary historians, Stowe expressed frustration that scholars often seemed to assume an “integral planned kind of cooperation between colonial-imperial systems and missions,” and instead emphasized the historical ambivalence – and sometimes antagonism – of missionaries to the political or

²¹⁷Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 183-4; Sanneh, *Disciples*, 217; Schlesinger, Jr.; Hutchison, “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism”; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 93-4; Robert, “Introduction” in *Converting Colonialism*, 1; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 365-6; Harris, “Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries,” 309.

²¹⁸Paul Harvey and Edward J. Blum, “Introduction: Major Themes in American Religious History,” in *The Columbia Guide to Religion in American History*, eds. Paul Harvey and Edward J. Blum (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 24; Schlesinger, 354-5.

economic interests of empire. (He would later express gratitude for the work of mission historian and theorist Lamin Sanneh and others in the late 1980s and 1990s, discussed in the introduction, who challenged the cultural imperialism paradigm by speaking directly to what Stowe called the “complexity” of missionary relationships with indigenous cultures.)²¹⁹

Nonetheless, the anti-missionary climate had a significant effect on the shape of the ecumenical missionary force. As is often highlighted within narratives of “mainline decline” after 1950, funding and enthusiasm for foreign missions waned within the ecumenical movement. Denominations and mission boards affiliated with the NCC, for example, drastically scaled back the number of missionary personnel in traditional evangelistic roles. As the evangelical missionary endeavor, in the form of “independent” or “faith” agencies, surged ahead, NCC-church missionaries would dwindle from their postwar peak of 10,042 in 1968 to 4,349 by 1985. Many of these up-and-coming evangelicals appeared to be less concerned with social factors and cultural imperialism, and some scholars have suggested that their rejection of higher biblical criticism “liberated them from crippling reservations about the uniqueness of Christian revelation” which may have otherwise stunted their missionary numbers. As such, by 1973, only 16% of the UCBWM budget went to “church development” or evangelistic work, and by 1980, it was clear to Stowe and many others that the “center of gravity” for proselytism had shifted toward “conservative or fundamentalist” agencies. Indeed, to the “consternation” of some liberal Protestants, non-denominational or evangelical agencies would come to represent 91% of the

²¹⁹See Stanley (1990) and Sanneh (2009). See also David M. Stowe, Draft Letter to the Editor of *Christian Century*, 8 April 1987, DMS Papers, Box 107, Folder 62; Ostling, “The New Missionary”; Stowe, “From a Haystack to the World”; Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 2; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 155.

American Protestant missionary force and an overwhelming majority of missionary funds by 1999, up from about half in 1952.²²⁰

In 1970, Stowe began his inaugural address as EVP with a forthright assessment of this situation: “everything that isn’t nailed down is coming loose...anything that has worked well for a long time, like this historic Board, is suspected of being a dinosaur’s adaptation to a world that is gone.”²²¹ Over the course of the next decade, the UCBWM felt the practical repercussions of such a climate: administrative staff at its New York headquarters was reduced, programs were reviewed and expenses cut by hundreds of thousands of dollars, and most missionaries leaving the field in the early 1970s were not replaced (bringing its total number of missionaries from 373 in 1970 to 182 by 1976). Fewer resources, Stowe suggested, meant that the Board’s programs would have to adapt to smarter, less personnel-oriented commitments. The Board would have to compensate for their dwindling “sheer money power” with partnership projects, self-supporting lay missionaries, streamlined administration, and shrewder management of capital assets. With less “muscle,” in other words, the UCBWM would need “more brains than ever.”²²²

There were some points of optimism, however. Although the “church finance bubble” had burst, Stowe frequently spoke to the efforts of many of his colleagues who were exploring “new and radical” means of fundraising. He especially lauded the continued success of

²²⁰Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 122; Wilbert R. Shenk, “Introduction,” in *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), xii-xiii; Noll, *The New Shape*, 83-5; Bays and Wacker, 188; Etherington, “Introduction,” 13; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 72; R. Drew Smith, 3; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 92; Robert, “Introduction” in *Gospel Bearers*, 17-18; Larsson and Castro, 127, 142; Lantzer, 110; Stowe, “Mission in the 80s,” 9; Stowe, “Future of the Missionary.”

²²¹Stowe, “New World, One World.”

²²²David M. Stowe, “What Do We Use to Replace Money as a Major Resource for Mission?” 17 January 1980, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; David M. Stowe, Keynote-Update Address to the 162nd UCBWM Annual Meeting, 8 November 1971, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; David M. Stowe, “World Ministries Seeks New Style Missionary,” *Keeping You Posted*, 15 April 1973: 5-7; David Stowe to UCBWM Elected Staff, 14 May 1970; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (Summer-Fall 1973): 2; Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand”; Stowe, Memorandum to Executive Staff, 5 January 1971; Stowe, “Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment.”

ecumenical relief campaigns like “One Great Hour of Sharing,” the UCC’s annual Lenten offering to support disaster, refugee, and development activities. Furthermore, Stowe suggested, the increasingly “sharp and cumulative reductions” in UCBWM income could be seen as an opportunity to become more efficient and less materialistic, and thus to “grow in symbolic identification with the vast majority of the world’s people.” He also saw a reduction in missionary funds as a means of responding to critiques of simple aid; just as a drowning man would not be helped by someone who shouts “I can’t swim, would ten dollars help?”, Stowe argued that “the world needs from us other things than money, and needs them much more.”²²³

The primary source of optimism, though, was not budgetary but programmatic. In perceived contrast to the evangelical practice of posting missionaries “without waiting to be invited,” ecumenical organizations like the UCBWM focused on cooperating with indigenous groups and restructuring their organizations (like the NCC or the United Christian Missionary Society) to better support partnership projects. More specific, short-term assignments for lay missionaries or service workers increasingly served as an alternative to “full-time, fully supported” professional missionaries inspired by a “mystical” lifelong calling. Stowe anticipated that the UCBWM would likely begin to function less like a “payroll department” for missionaries and more like a “grant-making foundation,” with fewer programs dependent on American personnel and a smaller, or different, kind of “home base” staff than had previously existed to support foreign missionaries. And indeed, this new framework of “mission without missionaries” was demonstrated in the budgets of ecumenical mission boards like the UCBWM,

²²³David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 2; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 2; Stowe, Keynote-Update Address to the 162nd UCBWM Annual Meeting; David Stowe to All UCBWM Missionaries. 12 June 1972; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand”; Stowe, “World Ministries Seeks New Style Missionary”; Stowe, Address to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions.

which increasingly devoted more funds to programs than to personnel. Therefore, just as the calls for moratorium and theological independence were viewed as signs of missionary success, so the decline in ecumenical missionary personnel and funding by the early 1970s was seen as a sign of positive change; it indicated their faith in the strength of local indigenous churches, and also served to mitigate critiques of imperialism. Fewer career missionaries might, after all, mean that a space for “nationals” to serve had been opened, and smaller budgets devoted to partnership might be “better spent than the huge budgets of the evangelical entrepreneurs.”²²⁴

Because the reduced number of missionaries could be seen as a sign of progress, Stowe viewed the panicked “poll-watching” of missionary statistics itself as an anachronism to be dispensed with, much like the imperial legacy which was the source of so many critiques of missionaries in the first place. The concept of the career missionary was in fact a relatively recent one, “parallel with the period of Western expansion,” and thus a product of colonialism rather than a fundamental aspect of mission, he argued. With this in mind, Stowe refuted claims that “one group is more mission-minded than another because it sends more missionaries,” or

²²⁴Stowe conceded that “career” missionaries were valuable, and perhaps even necessary, but recognized that the Board simply did not have the resources to support them, nor a sufficient amount of qualified (linguistically, culturally, and otherwise) applicants to fill those roles. Some of his colleagues argued this point, claiming it was a lack of recruitment for long-term missionaries, and not a lack of competent candidates, that was responsible for the shortage – and Stowe did devote some resources in the late 1970s and early 80s to better recruitment of missionaries for long term, in-depth overseas commitments. See David M. Stowe, “9.5 Theses in Regard to Mission without Missionaries,” 16 September 1975, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; David M. Stowe, “Summary of Discussion on ‘Mission without Missionaries,’” 16 September 1975 DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 136; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1979): 2; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe, “Mission in the 80s,” 14; Ostling, “The New Missionary”; David M. Stowe, “Scenario for World Ministries,” 19 September 1977, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 137; David M. Stowe, “Imperatives and Opportunities for World Ministries, 1977-1984,” 14 November 1977, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 125; David M. Stowe, “Statement on UCBWM Mission,” 1969-70, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; David M. Stowe, “Planning for World Ministries,” 16 January 1974, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 136; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 7, no. 3 (Winter-Spring 1978): 2; Stowe, “Ecumenical Experimentation,” 243-4; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 169; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”; Stowe, “Mission 1970s: End of Anachronism,” 153; Stowe, Untitled remarks, 25 August 1971; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 21, 71-2; Stowe, “World Ministries Seeks New Style Missionary”; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe, “World Responsibilities for American Christians?”; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today”; Stowe, “Strategy: The Church’s Response to What God is Doing,” 161; Stowe, “Mission in the 80s,” 10; Stowe, “The Division of Overseas Ministries: From Then till Now.”

that a denomination or organization's "vitality" could be determined by such statistics; if the moratorium debate had taught them anything, he reminded, it was that it was "not the quantity of job-holders" but the quality of mission work that was central. By 1976, it was clear to Stowe that where other churches (namely, evangelical ones) might be "preoccupied with soul-saving or ceremonial," and where some critics might suggest that social development programs were as intrusive (or even moreso) than traditional proselytism, the UCBWM and its partners would remain committed to socio-economic change and advocacy.²²⁵

Having now recognized humanitarian aid as a limited solution and unilateral American mission work as lacking sufficient partnership and contextualization, many ecumenical thinkers and missionaries in the 1970s began to broaden and solidify their human rights commitments as an alternative. Early meetings, like the aforementioned Bangkok conference in 1973 and the WCC's international consultation on Human Rights and Christian Responsibility at St. Polten, Austria in October 1974, affirmed the process of moving beyond "the Western liberal preoccupation" with individual civil and political rights that had begun at New Delhi and Uppsala. In other words, the school of thinking which suggested that economic, social, or cultural rights were not legitimate in the same way as individual rights (which were endowed by God), and should instead be understood as parts of Christian service, in large part lost out to the view that it was poor socio-economic conditions which were in fact the root causes of the non-implementation of individual rights.²²⁶ And in general, it was the concern for the basic necessities of life in the global South which ultimately made Cold War tensions between civil-political and socio-economic rights seem increasingly trivial and even selfish, and led many

²²⁵Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, 45; Stowe, "Mission 1970s: End of Anachronism," 149-50; Stowe, Untitled remarks, 25 August 1971.

²²⁶Gort, 209-10; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 129; Tergel, 224-5.

ecumenicals to chastise those who would “oppose social welfare legislation and national planning in the name of the defense of individual rights.”²²⁷

In addition to stimulating the affirmation of these two sets of rights, delegates from the global South also had an impact on a further extension of ecumenical human rights activity: advocacy for national and cultural self-determination. St. Polten delegates from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, for example, articulated concerns about the lack of democratic process and the use of military force to suppress their struggles for independence, among other topics. Meanwhile, recent appeals from the Latin American churches of the WCC for assistance with refugees and human rights violations in the wake of Augusto Pinochet’s coup in Chile had led to the creation of the Human Rights Resource Office for Latin America (HRROLA) in 1973. Taken together, these concerns from Southern Christians seeking “freedom from colonial dependence, cultural alienation, and political suppression” encouraged attention to what are sometimes called “third generation” rights – group and collective rights to self-determination, a healthy environment, and to other aspects of cultural and socio-economic development. As a follow-up to these debates and the aforementioned critiques of the hegemony of Western theology, then, numerous ecumenical conferences and councils in the 1970s affirmed the conceptual connections between self-theologizing and the right to self-determination. By the end of the decade, theological and missionary conferences around the world would speak plainly of the trend to contextualize theology as a corollary project to that of the contextual implementation of human rights, and to third generation rights as a fundamental element of that project.²²⁸

²²⁷Bertil Dunér, *The Global Human Rights Regime* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002), 22-3; Gort, 208-9; Lodberg, 333; Tergel, 47, 206, 224; Preston, 490; WCC, *Bangkok 1973*, 94.

²²⁸Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 5-8; Ishay, 11; Goodall, *Uppsala Report*, 65; Tergel, 240; Hertzke, 15; Gort, 207-8; Dickinson, 410; Lodberg, 327. For an example of the kinds of global conferences which dealt with the imbrication of collective human rights

Indeed, many of the Southern delegates' concerns were reflected among the six categories of rights proposed by the 1974 St. Polten consensus: the right to guarantees of life; the right to determine and preserve one's cultural identity, especially in the case of minorities; the right to participate in decision-making within one's society; the right to dissent; the right to personal dignity; and freedom of choice with respect to religion.²²⁹ This tentative agreement on a broader set of rights was a prelude to one of the "watershed" moments for ecumenical human rights: the WCC General Assembly at Nairobi from late November to early December of 1975, at which Stowe served as a delegate for the UCC. Nairobi officially endorsed and recommended St. Polten's set of six proposed rights, as well as its conclusions about the "indivisibility of the whole complex of human rights." Consensus was also reached regarding the special duty of Christians to express solidarity with the victims of human rights violations and to participate fully in the work against the social, political, or economic structures which contributed to the conditions under which they were denied. Nairobi also made recommendations regarding the churches' responsibility to raise awareness, educate, develop expertise, gather data, establish channels of communication, agitate at international and local levels, and promote human rights training for clergy and military personnel alike. Taken together, it was this Nairobi consensus that would be frequently reaffirmed and endorsed by ecumenical conferences, agencies, and individuals over the next decade.²³⁰

and self-theologizing, see especially the publication of the Asian Theological Conference held in 1979 in Sri Lanka (Fabella 1979).

²²⁹David M. Stowe, "Proclaim Liberty," 17 October 1976, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; Charles Villavicencio, "Theology and Human Rights," in *Human Rights & Religion: A Reader*, ed. Liam Gearon (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), 101; Tergel, 229.

²³⁰David M. Stowe, "One World – One Family – One Lord," 12 November 1978, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 126; Kinnamon, 67-8; R. Drew Smith, 2; Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 102-117, 123, 307; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 33, 88-9, 135, 175-6; Gort, 211-4; Traer, 22; Lodberg, 335-8; Fitzgerald, 115; Vischer, 39; Mudge, 285, 291, 295; Dickinson, 412.

In fact, Nairobi saw consensus even from many evangelicals, some of whom had begun to tentatively reengage with the WCC after the controversial years following Uppsala. Attributed in part to Nairobi's more chastened tone and explicit qualification that evangelistic dimensions were included within the holistic missionary framework, the initiation of this "era of convergence" was also the result of increased attention to social issues in evangelical circles. Signaled by its more holistic stance on mission at meetings in Chicago in 1973 and Lausanne in 1974, this "maturation" of evangelicalism in large part appears to have been a result of the increased presence of Southern Christians in evangelical dialogues, and their characterizations of the lack of social concern within conservative Protestantism as unbiblical and unhelpful in their struggle for human rights. Although independent conferences like Lausanne still took "reaching the unreached" as their collective mantra, and although not all parties were agreeable to the new declarations, the Lausanne Covenant expressed "penitence" for neglecting social concerns and recognized that although social action was not evangelism and political liberation was not salvation, both evangelism and socio-political involvement were part of their "Christian duty." This admission that "faith without works was dead," despite its utterance in the context of opposition to WCC radicalism, contributed to perceptions of a more progressive evangelicalism which contrasted with its earlier apoliticism. As Stowe reflected later, evangelical missiology at this time seemed to be "stretching to include a more comprehensive concern for the whole person."²³¹

²³¹"Lausanne Covenant," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Official Reference Volume, International Congress on World Evangelism, Lausanne*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 3-9; J.R.W. Stott, "The Significance of Lausanne," *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 255 (July 1975): 288-294; Brantley W. Gasaway, *Progressive Evangelicals and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 24, 47, 51; Jason Bivins, *The Fracture of Good Order: Christian Antiliberalism and the Challenge to American Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 45-51; Charles E. Van Engen, "A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946-1986," in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand

Additionally, the concerted efforts of prominent non-Western figures like Emilio Castro of Uruguay (the aforementioned director of the CWME and later Secretary General of the WCC), Orlando Costas of Puerto Rico (later dean of Andover Newton Theological School), Samuel Escobar of Peru (a leading evangelical theologian), René Padilla of Ecuador (creator of the holistic “*misión integral*” strategy) and David Bosch of South Africa (a hugely influential postcolonial missiologist), among others, worked to bridge gaps between evangelical and ecumenical positions on mission, often finding more common ground than a simple “liberal vs. conservative” portrayal of the two groups would predict. Internal disagreements among progressive evangelicals, as well as the ascendance of groups like the Religious Right, would eventually undermine some of this evangelical social concern. For now, however, an emerging consensus was apparent.²³²

Affirming the ecumenical agreement that socio-economic and communal rights were “inseparable” from individual freedoms, Stowe incorporated this broader agenda of “visible and focused” human rights activism as a “new direction” for mission into UCBWM policy changes. What was mission, he asked, if not “direct and constant confrontation with social justice and human rights issues?” As the UCBWM officially voted to make human rights an organizational priority at its 1976 Annual Meeting under the theme “Proclaim Liberty,” Stowe built on previous

Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 221-3; Amstutz, 74; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 195; Hutchison, “Americans in World Mission,” 165-8; Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology,” 10-11; van der Bent, 379; Sweet, “The Modernization of Protestant Religion in America,” 40; Larsson and Castro, 138; Beuttler, 126-7; Yates, 200-2; Swartz, 227-8; Unruh and Sider, 165; Yates, 204, 219-20; Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 17, 231-36; Dahle, Dahle, and Jorgensen, 372-3; Stowe, “1984 and World Evangelism: The Integrity of the Faith and Witness to the World”; David M. Stowe, “Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission: A Mission Executive's Perspective,” *Missiology* 15, no. 4 (October 1987): 457.

²³²Ibid. By the 1980s, for example, the Lausanne Committee would affirm the priority of evangelism over social responsibility, reiterating a more traditional view of social responsibility as a consequence of or bridge to evangelism. On prominent individuals within the evangelical and ecumenical movement who advocated for holism in evangelical mission, see Escobar, 342, 348, 359; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 196; Conway, 441; Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology,” 15; Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology,” 5.

work with the NCC as well as new studies and consultations to compose guidelines for UCBWM involvement in human rights activism, from what action missionaries should take regarding the rights of those living under totalitarian governments to whether they should remain as witnesses in situations of civil strife or leave for their own safety. The UCBWM also promoted their own campaigns for civil liberties, the release of prisoners of conscience, and the ratification of international human rights conventions, and urged support of groups like Amnesty International and its renowned Urgent Action Network letter-writing campaigns (in which Stowe himself participated). The most extensive budgetary resources within the UCC and UCBWM, however, were sent directly to activist groups, families of political prisoners, refugees, schools, and other vocational or legal training facilities in Angola, South Africa, Argentina, Honduras, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan, India, Palestine, and elsewhere around the world.²³³

In devising this new style of “missionary presence with human rights ramifications,” wherein missionaries traveled with equally deep commitments to the gospel and to human rights, both Stowe’s UCWBM and other groups like the NCC attested to the further demise of the “responsible society” paradigm. The traditional ideal that missionaries remain “apolitical”

²³³For Stowe, this meant monitoring or rehabilitating Protestant mission programs to ensure their compliance with that standard, and also agitating for human rights through publicity, confrontation, or ministry to the victims of abuses. Stowe also cautioned his audiences that singling out certain rights and dismissing others (the right to property, for example) was problematic – no claim of the silenced, exploited, or tortured could be selectively ignored, especially out of self-interest. Stowe’s working files were stuffed with copies of the UDHR, newspaper clippings, and copies of letters sent around the world regarding drinking water, the assassination of Oscar Romero, false arrests, export controls, refugees, the developing conflicts in Vietnam and the Middle East, and many more. See UCBWM, “Priority on Human Rights” Resolution, 1976-7; United Church of Christ, “Report on Human Rights Priority Objectives,” 1979; UCBWM, Minutes and Guidelines on Christians Under Totalitarian Governments, UCBWM Mission Strategy Committee, 20-24 May 1977, DMS Papers, Box 107, Folder 59; “UCBWM Urges Action on Human Rights,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 7, no. 3 (Winter-Spring 1978): 1; “Board Studies Human Rights Strategy,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1977): 11; Audrey C. Smock, “Churches Urged to Work for Human Rights,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 7; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 7, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1977): 2; Paul Gregory to David M. Stowe, 26 September 1976, DMS Papers, Box 107, Folder 59; David M. Stowe, UCBWM Memorandum on Totalitarianism, 2 June 1977, DMS Papers, Box 107, Folder 59; Stowe, “Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment”; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today”; Stowe, Notes on Human Rights policy, 29 October 1969; Stowe, “Imperatives and Opportunities for World Ministries, 1977-1984”; Stowe, “Proclaim Liberty”; Stowe, “Overseas Ministries and Human Rights: Some Guidelines.” See also Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 103; Brackney, 121; Tergel, 234; Traer, 23, 26-7; Cmiel, 1240-1.

simply sustained the injustice and corruption of the status quo and was thus, in fact, deeply political. As Stowe explained, the context for mission in the late 1970s and 1980s was one in which missionaries now had a critically important obligation to “search out the truth and tell it” – to put human interest above national or economic interest, to inform the US church constituency of global human rights violations, and to enlist them in bringing “constructive influence” on American policy. As such, they would use the global Christian network as a means of “fostering the mobilization” of UCC, North American, and world opinion.²³⁴

In addition to forging general UCBWM human rights policies, then, Stowe directed his efforts toward drawing attention to three human rights issues in particular: world hunger, the environment, and corporate exploitation. The first of these rose quickly on the agenda during the global food crises of the 1970s, and the comprehensive Hunger Action Program coordinated by the UCBWM aimed to address the acute need for immediate relief by providing fertilizer and food shipments as well as loans for wells or water conservancy projects. But Stowe and others also believed their program could work to address the larger structural or socio-political circumstances which precipitated the crises. As such, the UCC and its programs provided agricultural training and industrial-technological support in the developing world, amidst the tentative optimism of the “green revolution” which had won American agronomist Norman Borlaug a Nobel Prize in 1970. These ecumenical programs often prioritized nutrition education and family planning services to curtail the world “population explosion,” pushed for the US to pay out fairer prices for foreign imports, and aimed to cultivate grassroots networks of assistance

²³⁴David M. Stowe to Members of the UCBWM Planning and Correlation Committee, 5 September 1979, DMS Papers, Box 115, Folder 137; David M. Stowe, “Defining Mission as We Approach 2000 A.D.” *A.D.* 1982 (June 1982): 30-1; David M. Stowe, “World Ministries and World Peace,” 14 November 1982, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 130; Stowe, “Principles/Assumptions Underlying UCBWM Program”; United Church of Christ, “Report on Human Rights Priority Objectives.”

through socio-economic development or agricultural missions. In implementing these programs, the UCC also urged for non-interference in foreign government affairs so as to foster self-reliance and self-determination, and opposed land and tax policies that exploited tenant farmers.²³⁵

In fact, on both the palliative and systemic levels, Stowe's global perspective encouraged his belief that Americans had a special responsibility to alleviate world hunger; it was their country, after all, that controlled half of the food in the world market and whose citizens consumed five to eight times as much grain as their Asian or African counterparts. A mere 10% reduction in American grain consumption could compensate for the deficit in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, Stowe lamented. Americans thus had an obligation to press their government to increase (not decrease) foreign aid funding, lobby for reforms to the IMF, and make substantial contributions to the World Food Bank. At the same time, however, the US could not feed the world forever. In other words, addressing the food crisis was a matter not just of charity but of the *right* to food and the means to its production. The needs for food and for rights-based justice, in other words, were one related, comprehensive need.²³⁶

A second major human rights issue had also concerned Stowe for at least a decade prior to its ascension on the official ecumenical agenda: the planetary ecosystem. And much of his

²³⁵Brian Steensland, "The Hydra and the Swords: Social Welfare and Mainline Advocacy, 1964-2000," in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 223; "Board Agrees to Coordinate Synod Hunger Action Program." *Whole Earth Newsletter* 6, no.1 (Winter/Spring 1976): 6; David M. Stowe, Update from the Executive Vice President, Fall 1974, DMS Papers, Box 124, Folder 40; David M. Stowe, "A Christian Looks at Hunger in Asia," October 1974, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 123; David M. Stowe, "God's View of the Population Explosion," 10 November 1974, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 124; David M. Stowe, "Hunger," 9 March 1975, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 46; David M. Stowe, "Christian Word in a Hungry World," 23 March 1980, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 128; Stowe, "Report of the Executive Vice President to the UCBWM Board of Directors," 26 June 1984, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 188.

²³⁶David M. Stowe, "Christian Faith and Global Consciousness," 10 November 1974, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 45; David M. Stowe, "Servants and Pioneers," 2 March 1975, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 46; Stowe, "Hunger"; Stowe, "Have You Eaten?"; Stowe, "Imperatives and Opportunities for World Ministries, 1977-1984."

work, like that of the larger ecumenical movement, was deeply connected to overseas relationships. Early environmental programs and policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s were often directed by the advice of returning missionaries, and as a result were bound up with ecumenical ideas about social justice (in ways that secular advocates and evangelicals would not acknowledge for more than a decade.) In particular, increasingly audible voices from the southern hemisphere, aroused by the anxieties of the nuclear threat, had begun to articulate concerns to these missionaries and fellow ecumenicals about the consequences of the nuclear proliferation, rampant pollution, irresponsible expansion, and overconsumption of the “technologically advanced North.”²³⁷

In other words, the growing disapproval of modernization or development models now included a critique of development on ecological grounds, not just socio-economic ones; the Northern model was neither sustainable nor replicable, and, as Stowe put it, “the special abundance of America had limits after all.” Stowe also expressed these tensions between development and ecological health from a moral perspective: “for Christian mission simply to foster the anti-ecological development of simpler societies in the pattern of the polluting West

²³⁷Both evangelical and secular advocacy for environmental issues and other humanitarian causes has been associated largely with “charity,” not “justice.” As Stephen Rock suggests, “charity imposes less of a moral obligation than justice (or denial of rights) ... Moreover, charity tends to be a private obligation, rather than a public one.” See Stephen R. Rock, *Faith and Foreign Policy: The Views and Influence of U.S. Christians and Christian Organizations* (New York: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2011), 84; Richard R. Bohannon and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Environmental Justice and Eco-Justice,” in *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, eds. Whitney A. Bauman, Richard R. Bohannon II, and Kevin J. O’Brien (New York: Routledge, 2011); Michael Moody, “Caring for Creation: Environmental Advocacy by Mainline Protestant Organizations,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 239-241; Robert Booth Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 152; David G. Hallman, *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1994), 3-5; Stanley Samuel Harakas, “Science, Technology, Ecology,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3: 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tssetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 373-5; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 30; Stowe, “Agenda for World Ministries.”

would be unethical and anti-Christian.”²³⁸ The contrast between this view, following years of engagement with global influences, and Stowe’s earlier rhetoric is stark; in an earlier public statement in 1952 he had thanked God “for all the high gifts of mind and strength by which we men are able to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over Thy creatures, as Thou hast ordained.”²³⁹

Now, in a wealth of articles, sermons, and other writings over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, Stowe set forth a model of “evangelization in an ecosystem,” a sustainable style of mission rooted in process theology that was both reinforced and shaped by similar “ecocentric” proposals from process thinkers like John Cobb and Charles Birch. Because process thought emphasized the interconnectedness of all life, and thus its intrinsic value, it served as an “inherent” justification for ecological concern; as Stowe insisted, “process theology IS ecological theology.” Furthermore, it seems that process theology may have appealed to ecumenical Protestants like Stowe because it addressed the global South’s concerns about the natural environment, but in a way that inherently included their voices as just as fundamentally related (and thus intrinsically valuable) as all else. As such, Stowe incorporated these considerations into his programmatic decisions with the UCBWM, and on his own time chastised apocalyptic Christians and Ronald Reagan alike for disregarding their environmental responsibilities. Even into retirement years later, Stowe maintained a regular schedule of donations to a host of environmental organizations (the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and World Wildlife Fund, for

²³⁸Pieterse, 90; Dickinson, 411; Tyrrell, 204-5, 216; David M. Stowe, “Evangelization in an Ecosystem,” 17 March 1972, DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 121 See also Shiva (1991) on the “violence” of the green revolution and Dorrien (1995) on John Cobb and Charles Birch’s similar hope that Third World countries might pursue a different, more sustainable path of growth than that of the “rich world.”

²³⁹David M. Stowe, Prayer at 66th Annual Meeting of the Fire Underwriters Association of the Pacific, 5 March 1952, DMS Papers, Box 206, Folder 6.

example), and a “No Farms No Food” bumper sticker remained emblazoned on the family vehicle well into the 1990s.²⁴⁰

Like Stowe, imbued with this new consciousness of the “limits to growth” (one which he insisted that “our Asian and African partners in the human enterprise have long assumed”), the larger ecumenical movement also organized a vast array of studies, conferences, and publications on environmental issues, from the NCC’s Eco-Justice working group and the WCC’s 1974 *Humanum and Futurum* studies to articles in *Christianity and Crisis* and ecumenical meetings in Bucharest in 1974 and Seoul in 1990. The prevailing language associated with this work also gradually shifted to continually reflect the concerns of the global South; new rhetorics involving “the human,” for example, offered a condemnation of Western manipulation as a threat to “quality of life.” Similarly, the “Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society” (JPSS) program initiated at Nairobi in 1975 was altered, at the WCC Vancouver Assembly in 1983, to “Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) to reflect concerns about how the “society” language might reinscribe the faults of the responsible society paradigm that JPSS had aimed to avoid. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, JPIC would also affirm the fundamental connections between concern for the environment and human rights.²⁴¹

Another manifestation of human rights advocacy in mission, as Stowe’s inaugural UCBWM address had anticipated, was the encouragement of corporate social responsibility. And here, too, the rights of those in the global South (and the imperialistic, exploitative conduct of

²⁴⁰See Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ch. 4 and Fowler, Ch. 7.

²⁴¹David M. Stowe, “Limits to Growth, Horizons of Development,” 1974-5, DMS Papers, Box 220, Folder 39; David M. Stowe, “Man’s World, God’s World,” 7 November 1971. DMS Papers, Box 16, Folder 120; Willis Jenkins, “Sustainability,” in *Grounding Religion: A Field Guide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, eds. Whitney A. Bauman, Richard R. Bohannon II, and Kevin J. O’Brien (New York: Routledge, 2011), 98-100; Moody, 240-2; Rock, 157; Harakas, 376-81, 389; Mudge, 292, 299-301, 316; Lodberg, 326-9; Dickinson, 411-2; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 213-4; Tergel, 48; Vischer, 26; Kinnamon, 64; Gort, 221; Fowler, 15.

American corporations which threatened them) were of foremost concern. In both the rhetoric of American ecumenicals and the causes which they chose to take on, the inextricable ties between these issues were obvious; at Nairobi, for example, Stanford professor and Christian ethicist Robert McAfee Brown (1920-2001) delivered a keynote address in which he expressed deep shame that people in the global South were starving because “American business exploits them.” Such was his guilt at the evils his country had committed that he delivered the address in Spanish to “avoid the language of ‘imperialism’” – a guilt that was no doubt at least partially responsible for the aggressive stance of the WCC as a whole toward transnational corporations over the next decade.²⁴² Stowe too seemed to recognize, in no small part because of reflex influences, the threat that American corporations could present to the realization of human rights. Advice from local church leaders in South Africa, for example, had brought him to the conclusion that “civil, social, and political rights for all persons regardless of race” could not be achieved so long as American economic interests perpetuated racism and inequality there.²⁴³

Joining with similar “socially responsible investment” (SRI) initiatives in the NCC (namely, its Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility) and the WCC (like the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society), Stowe’s corporate human rights work from the 1960s to the 1980s had three interrelated facets. First, the UCBWM (as well as the UCBHM, the UCC Pension Board, and the United Church Foundation) practiced “responsible investment” by purging their corporate portfolios of investments in, or publicizing boycotts of, multinational corporations involved in the production of nuclear or biochemical weapons, environmentally hazardous practices, or “collaboration” with racist, unjust, or corrupt forces abroad. They invested instead in those businesses which were “non-exploitative” and supported human

²⁴²Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 41; Lefever, *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 57-8.

²⁴³Stowe, “Mission Policy for Ecumenopolis.”

rights.²⁴⁴ Second, the UCBWM communicated directly with certain companies to press them to adopt practices which increased the economic power and dignity of local people. Certain critics (both inside and outside of the Board) expressed doubt that such negotiations would have greater success in getting corporations to “sell out their interests” than outright divestment or organized boycotts, but Stowe offered that a dialogue might generate public awareness or shame those companies into action.²⁴⁵ A third tactic spoke directly to the importance of public awareness, and also to the missionary role as a conduit for reflex influences: the public documentation by groups like the UCBWM of working conditions, employment or land-use policies, and environmental practices that violated human rights in the global South. This, to Stowe, was a form of witness that missionaries could make in the “corridors of power and in the press and in the public consciousness.”²⁴⁶

In practice, Stowe imagined that this tripartite SRI strategy could persuade companies like General Motors, Bristol-Myers, BankAmerica, and Goodyear to close sweatshops and raise income in Asia, refuse loans which supported apartheid in South Africa, limit the sale of arms to repressive governments, or cease ecological destruction and the use of agricultural pesticides in Puerto Rico. Together with two Roman Catholic orders, for example, the UCBWM co-filed a

²⁴⁴Lynn D. Robinson, “Doing Good and Doing Well: Shareholder Activism, Responsible Investment, and Mainline Protestantism,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, eds. Robert Wuthnow and John Hyde Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 344, 346; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 12; Audrey C. Smock, “Peace and the Church’s Investments,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 7; Audrey C. Smock, “Investing for Peace,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 3 (Winter 1983): 12; Audrey C. Smock, “What is Corporate Social Responsibility? A Look at the Principles and the Practice,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 11, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 7; Audrey C. Smock, “Corporate Social Responsibility and the Pursuit of Human Rights,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 6, 13; Zelle W. Andrews, “The Church Stands Fast Against Poison Gas,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 10; “Shareholder Action Report,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 6, no.1 (Winter/Spring 1976): 7; Stowe to UCBWM Elected Staff, 14 May 1970; David M. Stowe to all UCBWM Missionaries, 18 March 1983, DMS Papers, Box 180, Folder 1; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today.”

²⁴⁵Stowe, “Mission Policy for Ecumenopolis”; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today.”

²⁴⁶David M. Stowe, Letter to the Editor, *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 1983; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions.”

shareholder resolution to the Union Carbide Corporation in 1976. In his accompanying statement, Stowe asked Union Carbide to cease its import of chrome ore from Rhodesia until its “despotic” white minority government (supported by Ian Smith, the white “racist operator” of its mines) was replaced by an independent African majority government. Although imports from Rhodesia were considered by some to be a “flagrant violation” of UN economic sanctions which the US itself had approved, the 1971 Byrd Amendment had made a special exception for the import of Rhodesian chrome, largely because the only other principal source was the USSR. The fact that such imports were given special dispensation, to Stowe, was simply another case of Cold War politicking, and he urged Union Carbide to cease its imports as well as its lobbying to prevent the repeal of the Byrd Act. (In 1977, Jimmy Carter would indeed pressure congress into its repeal.)²⁴⁷

In 1981, as another example, Stowe travelled to the Dole/Standard Fruit plantations in Honduras and Nicaragua with the executive vice president of their parent company, Castle and Cooke, and several local church leaders. After years of (sometimes “hostile”) dialogue with the corporation as one of its shareholders, the UCBWM sent Stowe to observe labor practices and working conditions in the factories, and to conduct interviews with plantation managers, union and community leaders, other local missionaries, and regional military officers. His report back was largely positive but also frank about the progress that still needed to be made; in any case, it

²⁴⁷Kurtz and Fulton, 372; L.D. Robinson, 350-2; “UCBWM Urges Action on Human Rights”; United Church of Christ, “Report on Human Rights Priority Objectives”; David M. Stowe to extended family, 1 March 1981, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; David Stowe to extended family, 8 April 1981, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; David M. Stowe to Avery Post and John Bracke, 13 April 1981, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; David M. Stowe, Statement to Union Carbide Company stockholders meeting, 27 April 1976, DMS Papers, Box 180, Folder 1; David M. Stowe to Avery Post and George Myers, 10 October 1978, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 188.

seemed that Castle and Cooke were largely standing by the “Statement of Principles” they had adopted as a result of public pressure.²⁴⁸

By encouraging more ethical or responsible practices in transnational businesses like Union Carbide or Castle and Cooke, including 17 shareholder resolutions in 1983 alone, Stowe believed that American economic presence abroad could be transformed into a force for self-determination and other human rights. The 1983 ecumenical boycott of Nestle products until better guidelines were established for the advertisement and free distribution of infant formula (over against breastfeeding, which was more sustainable, cost-effective, and hygienic in developing countries) provided an object-lesson in this approach. So too did the UCBWM’s divestment of stock holdings in General Electric and American Telephone & Telegraph for their involvement in nuclear weapons production. In other words, through shareholder leverage, open negotiation, and public awareness, the UCBWM imagined that its investments could serve as a “prime tool” of mission, not just as a source of income for it. Despite the mixed success of their activist SRI approach, Stowe suggested that even the smallest change in the comportment of a six-billion-dollar corporation might mean more for local people than anything a single other missionary program could achieve.²⁴⁹

Despite its broader scope than in previous decades, attending as it did to issues like food production, environmental conditions, and corporate exploitation, the human rights work of groups like the UCBWM did not proceed without continued feedback and criticism from their

²⁴⁸Ibid.

²⁴⁹Kurtz and Fulton, 373; L.D. Robinson, 352-4; “World Board’s Corporate Members Endorse Boycott of Nestle Products,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1979): 13; “Nestle Boycott Continues,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 16; “General Synod 13 Votes Overwhelmingly to Continue Nestle Boycott,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 12; Stowe, Address to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions; Stowe, “Priorities in Global Context”; Stowe, Keynote-Update Address to the 162nd Annual UCBWM Meeting; Stowe, “Mission Policy in Search of New Directions”; Stowe to all UCBWM Missionaries, 18 March 1983.

Christian partners in the global South. Lending weight to these assessments, too, were the rapidly shifting demographic realities of world Christianity. By the 1970s, Stowe was especially astonished by the enormous growth of Christian communities in places like Panama, El Salvador, Indonesia, South Korea, and parts of Africa, and insisted that it was time for the “rapid rise” of these churches to “get into our perspective.” Indeed, by 1982, non-white Christians would outnumber their American and European counterparts (see Figure 2) – a statistic increasingly reflected in the membership of ecumenical networks like the WCC. In addition to the aforementioned eighteen “younger churches” that had joined the WCC at its New Delhi assembly, the Council’s 1975 assembly in Nairobi was the first held south of the equator. Furthermore, Nairobi was the first assembly at which upwards of 80% of its delegates had never attended a WCC Assembly before – compared to the 30 out of 147 churches from the global South present at the inaugural Amsterdam assembly in 1948. By 1980, 40% of Japanese and 60% of Indian Protestants belonged to bodies affiliated with the WCC.²⁵⁰

Indeed, while this “demographic revolution” or “shift to the global South” was largely responsible for stimulating the new style of missionary who approached Christian communities overseas less as a “leader” than as a “servant” supporting “heroic indigenous believers,”²⁵¹ it also strengthened the collective voice with which many Southern Christians evaluated even the most well-intentioned American ecumenical efforts. As the director of Church and Society for the WCC, Paul Abrecht, later reflected, most of the new WCC members during this period hailed from the global South, and their perspectives and problems (including their “conflict with the

²⁵⁰Yates, 131; Kinnamon, 52; van der Bent, 6; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 202; Jenkins; Lefever, *Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 40; David M. Stowe, “One Man’s Nairobi,” 31 December 1975, DMS Papers, Box 185, Folder 26; David M. Stowe, “Message from the EVP.” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 2; Stowe, “Challenges to Christian World Ministries”; Stowe, “Our Mission Covenant Today”; Stowe, “1984 and World Evangelism: The Integrity of the Faith and Witness to the World”; Stowe, “A New Perspective on the World Christian Mission,” 50, 52.

²⁵¹Hertzke, 16-23.

industrialized Western nations”) were inevitably reflected in “what the Council does and how it does it.” In many cases, he noted, this “internationalization” had not been easy for the Western churches.²⁵²

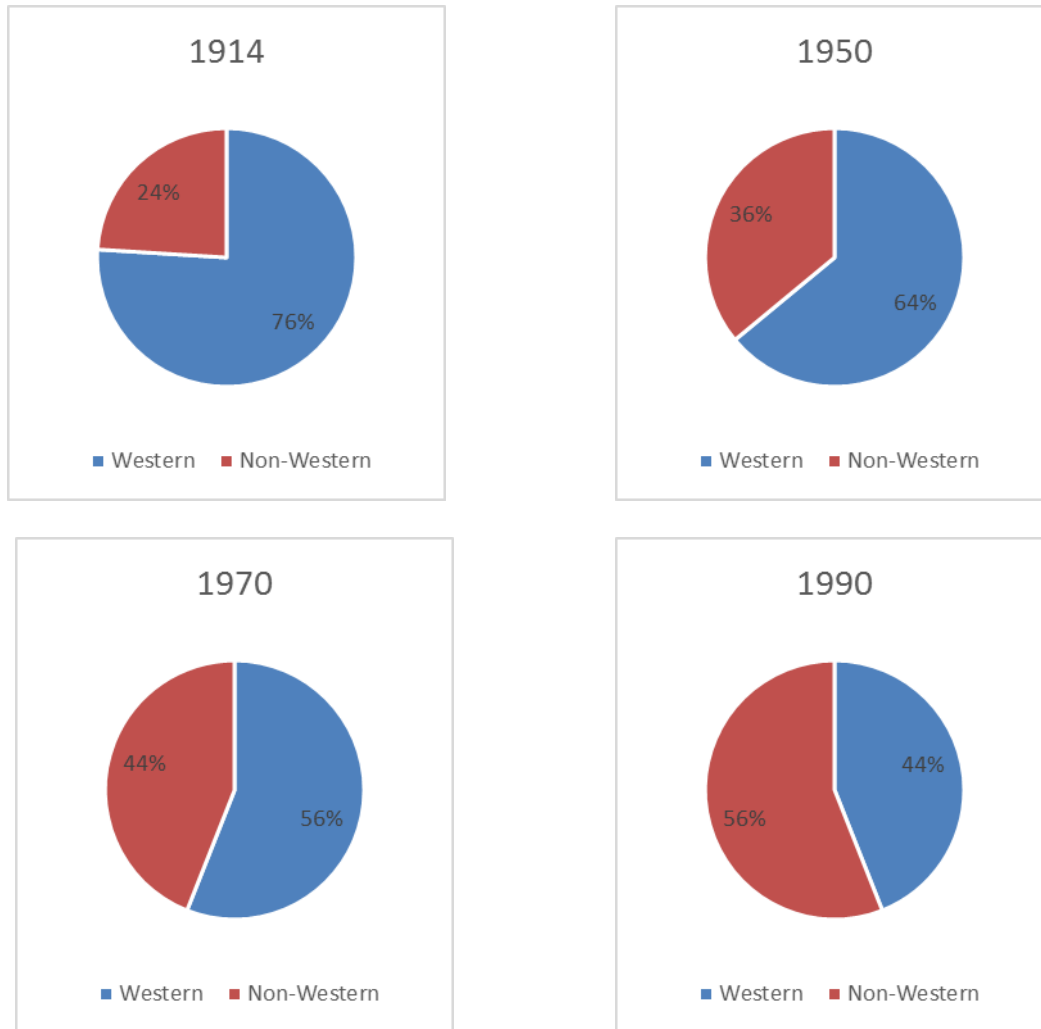


Figure 3. Global Proportion of Western to Non-Western Christians, 1914-1990
(Source: Shenk, Introduction to *Enlarging the Story*, xiii)

²⁵²Abrecht, 138.

Indeed, carrying forward many of the themes from critiques heard throughout the 1960s (discussed in the previous chapter), chief among the complaints of these new WCC members in the 1970s and 1980s was the apparent duplicity and hypocrisy of ecumenicals from America promoting human rights and social justice abroad. In this particular context, it was the ongoing civil strife and racial and social injustice in American society, on the one hand, and the thorny relationship between American human rights advocacy and its strategic Cold War aims, on the other, that generated the most criticism and prompted the most frequent adjustments to American ecumenical human rights advocacy.

The American political and social climate in the 1970s indeed generated substantive critiques of the credibility of Western (and especially American) ecumenicals who promoted human rights on a global scale. The WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), for example, which had been established in 1970 to ensure the rights of the racially oppressed, was subjected to special scrutiny for directing its attention almost wholly toward places on the African continent while ignoring the ongoing racial strife in the US. (Much of the critique also stemmed from the PCR's attempts to "make a political statement" by explicitly choosing a side in conflicts over which regimes would control areas like Rhodesia, Angola, and Mozambique, and providing funding to those groups – many of whom critics accused of violent liberationist warfare and "terrorism.") Although the 1975 Nairobi Assembly nonetheless affirmed the WCC's commitment to the controversial program, it became clear that American ecumenical work for justice and rights abroad continued to be undermined, as it had in the 1960s, by the lack of introspection and action regarding the ills of their own society. Section V of that assembly, for example, titled "Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation" and moderated by none

other than John Gatu (perhaps the most well-known advocates of the missionary moratorium a few years earlier), suggested that “because of the discrepancies between what we profess and what we practise it is crucial for the churches to move from making declarations about human rights, to working for the full implementation of those rights.”²⁵³

Stowe and other American ecumenical leaders took these concerns seriously, at least in their public statements, and in doing so joined a long line of liberal Protestants who frequently engaged in public self-criticism and introspection. In fact, ecumenical and progressive Protestants even at the turn of the twentieth century had been aware of the ways in which missionaries and their “home” cultures did not “practice what they preached.” Social Gospel icon Walter Rauschenbusch, for example, noted in 1907 that “the social wrongs which we permit...contradict our gospel abroad and debilitate our missionary enthusiasm at home.” Non-Christian peoples, either directly or indirectly, see “our poverty and our vice, our wealth and our heartlessness, and they like their own forms of misery rather better.” Prominent SVM leader Sherwood Eddy also expressed regret about American superiority in the turn-of-the-century missionary enterprise, which now seemed cringe-worthy coming from a country which was increasingly perceived by many as no longer Christian itself and, worse, plagued by pervasive racial prejudice. These sentiments were reflected as well in the conviction of early ecumenical leader J.H. Oldham, the WCC powerhouse behind the “responsible society” approach and its “middle axioms,” who was concerned with the declining interest in missions after Christianity proved unable to prevent world war: “the attitude of the non-Christian people towards

²⁵³WCC Central Committee, “Plan for an Ecumenical Programme to Combat Racism,” in *World Council of Churches Statements and Actions on Racism, 1948-1979*, ed. Ans J. Van der Bent (Geneva: Programme to Combat Racism, World Council of Churches, 1980), 27-9; Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 18, 42, 47, 57, 64, 102-3; Lefever, *Nairobi to Vancouver* 31-7; Vischer, 40; Preston, 490-1; Tergel, 211-2, 215; Mudge, 286; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 31; Conway, 435-7; Robert, *Christian Mission*, 107; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 152-162.

Christianity will be determined in the end by what Christianity actually is in practice and not by what missionaries declare it to be.”²⁵⁴

In the 1960s and 1970s, then, Stowe and others continued to make clear gestures at taking responsibility for this hypocrisy, often framing their humility as a result of missionary experience and transnational commitments not experienced by those “unencumbered by loyalties to spiritual kith and kin overseas.” Indeed, Stowe described mission as a process in which American Christians help others, but are also helped by them to “unmask the pretensions” and presence of “original sin” even in their own nation. As a result, the ecumenical missionary, he insisted, welcomed “radical self-criticism” and “correction,” refused to “overvalue” his or her own perspective, and was willing to recognize “a plurality of values and approaches.” In his sermons and coursebooks, Stowe entreated his audiences to consider the particular problem at hand: “is our witness valid if our lives do not match our words?” Considering all of America’s domestic shortcomings – the atom bomb, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Kennedys, high rates of juvenile delinquency, corruption, drug abuse, racism, and crime – wasn’t this “Christian nation” itself the “neediest mission field”? What kind of message could any missionary convey that would not be “eviscerated by the failures of the society” he or she represented? What right did Americans have to “project a ministry to the rest of the world”? They sat in paneled houses with backyard pools and watched television while more than a billion people around the world were starving or suffering from disease, Stowe lamented. What kind of progress was that?²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴Hutchison, “Modernism and Missions,” 113, 121; Porterfield, 64; Brouwer, 2011, 267, 274; Maxwell, 297; Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 238; Thompson, *For God and Globe*, 1-2, 14; Oldham quoted in Flett, 17.

²⁵⁵As another example, in the early 1980s, the US government refused to ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which Stowe saw as a transparent act of self-interest that denied equitable access to the oceans upon which the welfare of all humanity depended. “Hardly a way to build bridges between rich and poor, weak and

Stowe was joined by many other ecumenical and liberal Protestant thinkers in this sentiment; theologian Harvey Cox suggested, for example, that “we live in the time of the invalidation of the Christian gospel by Christians themselves...we have managed to prove to most of the world’s people that we don’t really mean what we say.” WCC leader and ecumenical ethicist Paul Abrecht also later reflected that in this period, the “peoples and churches of the North learned to view the revolutions of the Third World as the result of immense political, economic and social changes which they themselves had unleashed in the world and which were now bringing under judgment their own political and economic ambitions and systems.”²⁵⁶

Alternatively, this ecumenical self-criticism was (often intentionally) juxtaposed to evangelical missionaries’ apparent lack thereof. Politically conservative Americans in general, in fact, found much to criticize in ecumenical proceedings like those at Nairobi: the popularity of anti-American rhetoric (and a lack of a similarly sustained critique of Soviet abuses), the “revolutionary maxims clothed in a borrowed theological vocabulary,” and the “this-worldly heresies” that grew like a “poisonous plant” in the shadow of détente. Stowe, in response, noted that the new wave of conservative missionaries was fueled by what he saw as an errant and aggressive sense of “American rightness and righteousness,” especially against communism but also against the perceived “perfidy” of liberal criticism itself. He bemoaned,

strong. Hardly a way to weave a fabric of mutual confidence and mutual interest which will have some chance of containing the tugs and tensions of national self-interests, suspicions, and dislikes,” Stowe quipped. See Swartz, 226; Bays and Wacker, 9; David M. Stowe, “Bridging Faiths, Cultures, Nations,” 1981, DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 129; David M. Stowe, “Builders of the Ruined Temple,” 1977, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 48; Stowe, “New World, One World”; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 39, 111; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 30; Stowe, “Proclaim Liberty”; Stowe, “World Responsibilities for American Christians?”; Stowe, *Ecumenicity and Evangelism*, 12.

²⁵⁶Cox quoted in Preston, 513-5; Abrecht, 156.

“The pushy self-confidence of fundamentalist nationalism and religion seems yet another case of arrogance and falsity hell-bent on saving the world while deeper sins than the innocent superstitions of ‘paganism’ haunt and curse an America which pays lip service to conventional Christianity.”²⁵⁷

America’s homegrown shortcomings were not the only source of contention, however; the foreign affairs of the American government (especially during the Cold War) also prompted critiques of hypocrisy that cut even deeper to the heart of American ecumenical human rights advocacy. Critics accused the WCC of “selective indignation” about human rights, in focusing on the oppression of people in socialist countries in Eastern Europe and thereby failing to sufficiently address human rights violations committed by capitalist nations like the US. In part, these concerns drew on long-standing narratives of American imperialism and missionary paternalism; Northern delegates at Nairobi, for example, were explicitly described as having come to Africa with “the bible in one hand and the gun in the other,” and were “tarred with the same brush” as Arab slave-traders and European colonialists. Even Western advocacy for corporate social responsibility or human rights in the global South, as many postcolonial scholars still argue today, had “strong undertones” of the colonial civilizing project.²⁵⁸ During the Cold War in particular, however, the fact that the American government appeared to support human rights primarily where it was perceived as politically expedient, crucial to the containment of communism, or a rhetorical weapon against the Soviet Union and its satellites threw additional suspicion on American ecumenicals who advocated for human rights around the world.

At Nairobi in 1975, for example, delegates from the global South pushed back against the ecumenical movement’s new discussion of human rights violations in Eastern Europe initiated by the recent Helsinki Accords. Signed by the US, USSR, and roughly 30 other countries at the

²⁵⁷Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology”; Stowe, “World Responsibilities for American Christians”; Jeffrey Hart, “Church Assembly Grotesque,” *Allentown Morning Call*, 27 December 1975.

²⁵⁸Armel Brice Adanhounme, “Corporate Social Responsibility in Postcolonial Africa: Another Civilizing Mission?” *Journal of Change Management* 11, no. 1 (March 2011): 91-3; Ann E. Cudd, “Missionary Positions,” *Hypatia* 20, no. 4 (November 2005): 165-6; Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 17-9.

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) only a few months prior to Nairobi, the Helsinki Accords (or Final Act) elucidated four “baskets” of concerns, the third of which included humanitarian and human rights issues. Because it had been signed by the Soviets and some of their satellite states, many ecumenicals (as well as many secular thinkers) read the “third basket” provisions of the Final Act as justification for breaking their silence on human rights issues in Eastern Europe, which had previously been maintained in part to avoid alienating the Orthodox members of the WCC. Stowe indeed reported that “a breakthrough in candor and credibility” was signaled by Nairobi’s explicit conversation about religious liberty and human rights in communist countries. American opinion about the accords, however, varied widely. Some (especially political conservatives) were horrified by the postwar “final settlement” provisions of the Helsinki Accords, which established the “permanency of Europe’s existing boundaries” in what they characterized as a weak-kneed legitimization of communism’s governance over parts of Europe. But while the détente signaled by the Helsinki Final Act may have seemed a “sellout” to conservatives, it signaled to others that a liberal human rights agenda had finally achieved prominence “on par with concerns for traditional security.” Groups like Helsinki Watch (later Human Rights Watch) were quickly formed to capitalize on this apparent victory. Delegates at Nairobi likewise passed a resolution endorsing the Helsinki Accords, and soon established the Churches’ Human Rights Programme for the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act.²⁵⁹

Southern spokespersons, however, feared that devoting resources to European human rights violations was politically motivated, and would result in the neglect of “necessary work in

²⁵⁹American endorsement of the Helsinki Accords rang to some as a “sellout to communist tyranny and the ultimate sin [Nixon’s Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger had ever committed in his pursuit of détente.” See Preston, 572-3; Keys 223-4, 270; Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 172-5; Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 152; Duner, 19; Douzinas, 30; Cmiel, 1234-6, 1248; Vischer, 37.

the Southern hemisphere.” Nairobi delegates from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East all attested to flagrant human rights violations in their communities and demanded the Assembly’s attention to these situations. Thus in addition to their support of the Final Act and development of programs for its implementation, ecumenicals at conferences like those in Montreux, Switzerland in the 1970s established social justice and self-reliance as criteria for development projects and founded the Human Rights Advisory Group (HRAG, within the WCC’s CCIA) to monitor trends and collect data on human rights conditions all over the world – and especially in the global South.²⁶⁰

Aside from concerns that Helsinki’s apparent validation of attention to Eastern European human rights conditions would detract from violations in the global South, the next decade would bring further criticisms from Christians in the global South with regard to America’s use of human rights as a tool of foreign policy in the Cold War. Spurred by these concerns, American ecumenicals like Stowe often supported political figures and legislation with a broad, apolitical approach to human rights, and opposed those which they perceived did not. Between 1974 and 1977, for example, the American government made several amendments to the FAA – previously such a source of anxiety for Stowe – and passed the International Financial Institutions (IFI) Act, which together made most American foreign assistance contingent upon a “consistent standard of human rights performance” by recipients. By 1980, the Carter administration had opposed aid on human rights grounds 117 times, voting “no” in 41 cases and affecting aid to at least 19 countries. Stowe and the UCBWM fully supported these new aid requirements and conducted their own monitoring of the government’s adherence to its new foreign loan policies, on several occasions calling for an even stricter application of the policy –

²⁶⁰Ibid. See also Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 103; Lefever, *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 38; Vischer, 38; Lodberg, 334; Traer, 22-5; Gort, 212-3; Lauren, 256; Tergel, 233, 238; van der Bent, 191.

with regard to Pakistan and its genocidal suppression of East Bengalis, for example. They, like many American ecumenicals, also supported Carter's human rights approach more generally, championing his broad embrace of both political and socio-economic rights and lauding many of his specific actions – returning the Canal Zone to Panama, cancelling the production of the B-1 bomber, and granting amnesty to Vietnam draft dodgers – as human rights victories.²⁶¹

Although the ecumenical dedication to a human rights program unfettered by Cold War machinations was patently clear by the end of the 1970s,²⁶² the liberal view of human rights predominant in Carter's administration was soon superseded by Reagan's – one in which Cold War objectives and national security were generally assigned a higher priority than human rights considerations. Many of Carter's human rights policies were relaxed or reversed in part as a means of reasserting the American power that those policies had allegedly failed to demonstrate. In their place, the "Reagan Doctrine" commissioned humanitarian organizations and the American military to support regimes around the world that were often critiqued for perpetrating human rights violations, so long as those regimes were American allies in the Cold War. The human rights provisions in the IFI Act, for example, were primarily used as a means of selectively pressuring leftist countries seen as unfriendly to American interests; the Reagan administration opposed loans to left-wing countries ten times as often as right-wing regimes. In other words, Reagan's tactic of promoting "democratization" because it, more than any other

²⁶¹New FAA and IFI Act legislation also required the State Department to produce an annual publication, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. See Mower, 36-38, 89-93, 105-6, 11-112; Duner, 13; McCleary, 103, 124, 169; Livezey, "PVOs, Human Rights, and the Humanitarian Task," 196-7; Kurtz and Fulton, 371; Cmiel, 1242; Tergel, 72; Lauren, 256; Keys, 1; Preston, 576; UCBWM, "Priority on Human Rights" Resolution. See also Renouard (2016), Ch. 3.

²⁶²See especially the *International Review of Mission* 66, no 263, July 1977, and the meetings of HRAG at Glion in 1981, for example. See Lowell L. Livezey, "U.S. Religious Organizations and the International Human Rights Movement," *Human Rights Quarterly* 11 (1989): 17; Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 129; Brackney, 79; Gort, 213, 217-9; Kurtz and Fulton, 364, 369-71.

system, respected human rights signaled to many that human rights rhetoric had become “indistinguishable from anticommunism.” Furthermore, many observers perceived that human rights rhetoric was being deployed merely “as a stick with which to beat the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe.” Beyond this, Reagan also often failed to acknowledge economic and social rights as Carter had, believing that those rights were the purview of the private sector, not the government, and would “take care of themselves” once civil and political ones were established – much as some Protestants believed (and had for centuries) that “civilization” would follow naturally from conversion to normative Christian ideals, or that socio-economic justice was an aspect of Christian charity rather than a right to be guaranteed.²⁶³

As such, the Reagan presidency stimulated ecumenical human rights activists in the UCBWM, NCC, Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, and other Protestant groups to oppose US foreign intervention or misconduct. Whereas their tactics under Carter had been directed toward bolstering and monitoring his human rights initiatives, these groups now led a robust charge against Reagan’s policy approach entirely. The Coalition, for example, demonstrated this stance through its “Campaign Against U.S. Intervention,” which became the centerpiece of their human rights work. They also joined the chorus of critiques against the June 1981 nomination of Ernest W. Lefever as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (the head of the Human Rights Bureau). Lefever, who chronicled WCC meetings like Uppsala and Nairobi with explicit disdain for their Marxist leanings, had also directly gainsaid Carter policy by rejecting the notion that human rights norms should be a condition of business transactions with the US. Lefever also told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during his confirmation hearings that the US should not act to “promote human rights

²⁶³Chabbott, 241; Tyrrell, 219-20; McCleary, 73, 123, 137; Keys, 3-4, 13, 273; Douzinas, 31; Preston, 583; Kurtz and Fulton, 366; Mower, 26-7, 33, 35, 39-40, 48, 109; Glendon, 214. See also Renouard (2016), Ch. 4.

in other sovereign states,” and he condemned the brutality of communist regimes much more harshly than any others – even excusing the use of torture by the military junta in Chile as a historical-cultural practice. Other controversial moments during the hearing did little to smooth over these apparent heresies – namely, Lefever’s admission of accidentally advocating for the repeal of all human rights standards and his accusation that those opposed to his nomination were inspired by communism. Lefever was indeed ultimately rejected for the post as head of the Human Rights Bureau, and the Coalition further protested Reagan’s reluctance to submit another nominee.²⁶⁴

Like the Coalition, Stowe and the UCBWM also chastised the Reagan administration for “its manifold sins of commission and omission,” its bellicosity, its support of “oppressive regimes,” its limited interventionist approach to human rights, and its decisions against “common sense” and “human dignity.” Stowe and several other UCBWM colleagues, for example, added their names to the list of 71 prominent American religious leaders signing a letter pressing Reagan to speak out on human rights issues in El Salvador, South Korea, and Haiti. This was not necessarily a new claim, of course; liberals both Protestant and secular had long been attuned to, and critical of, the cooptation of human rights for Cold War causes. As early as the 1960s, Stowe had posed the question to his readers: “Is the desire to stop communism a valid reason for carrying on missionary witness?” Mission and humanitarian work, to his mind, had always borne the obligation to avoid “any appearance of being an instrument of American foreign policy.”

²⁶⁴The post was ultimately filled by Elliot Abrams in November 1981. See Mower, 34; Livezey, “PVOs, Human Rights, and the Humanitarian Task,” 199-200. In his scholarly work on the ecumenical movement, furthermore, Lefever’s summaries often focused on critiques of the revolutionary ferment typical of Geneva and Uppsala as “un-American” and an “orgy of Western confessions of guilt.” See Lefever, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 22-7.

Reagan's policies complicated but also renewed the vigilance with which Stowe and others maintained this obligation.²⁶⁵

Indeed, liberal dissatisfaction with Reagan's policies did not force an ecumenical retreat from their own vision of human rights activism; rather, critiques of American foreign policy became a substantive part of it – and largely because of the aforementioned critiques by Christians in the global South. Stowe and the UCBWM's disapproval of, for example, the Reagan administration's military assistance to the government of El Salvador, sent as a measure against the threat of communist insurgency, was explicitly tied to the human rights abuses that government was purportedly committing (especially in the infamous cases of murdered missionaries, including Oscar Romero in 1980). Stowe rejected Reagan's justification that the government in El Salvador had made enough progress with regard to human rights to qualify for continued American military and other aid. Furthermore, the government's declaration of El Salvadorian refugees as economic rather than political, making them ineligible for refugee status in the US, was read by ecumenical groups as a refusal to acknowledge that "its ally was repressive."²⁶⁶

Groups like the Coalition and the UCBWM were supported in the joint projects of promoting human rights and lodging protests against the Reagan administration by the wider

²⁶⁵Stowe initially leveled these indictments only privately (citing the reservation that he "ought to speak for the churches" rather than himself), but within the year, his public talks and quotations in the press (albeit sometimes "out of context," according to Stowe) were more than explicit about his distaste for the Reagan administration. See Stowe, *The Church's Witness in the World*; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 13; David M. Stowe to Constance Stowe, 18 May 1981, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; David Stowe to Constance Stowe, 30 August 1981, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; "Leading Churchman Criticizes American Policies," *The Stars and Stripes*, 12 November 1983; Kenneth Jautz, "Churchman Criticizes U.S. at Martin Luther Ceremony," Associated Press, November 1983; David M. Stowe, Travel Report, 20 December 1983, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 188; "To Reagan: 'Speak Out on Human Rights,'" *Whole Earth Newsletter* 10, no. 3 (Winter 1981): 6; Stowe, "Our Mission Covenant Today."

²⁶⁶Mower, 36, 48; Kurtz and Fulton, 366; David M. Stowe to extended family, 22 February 1981 DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 13; Stowe to extended family, 1 March 1981.

ecumenical movement as well. Protestant publications like *Christianity and Crisis* frequently published reports from Latin America detailing human rights abuses, and often promoted solidarity with the Latin American left. Missionaries, in reports and conversations with US contacts, relayed information about the situation in Central America, while some liberal Protestants traveled to Nicaragua themselves to witness and report on the conflict. Some there acted as “human shields against Central American armies,” but more common was the adoption of “sanctuary” policies at home, in which churches across the US, like Chicago’s Wellington Avenue UCC, offered Central American refugees protection from immigration authorities and deportation. This grassroots sanctuary movement garnered emotional response as well as official support from the NCC and UCC, and it continued the critique of US foreign policy by “cast[ing] the U.S. government not as a protector of human rights but as their worst violator.” Reagan’s order for extensive surveillance of some of these sanctuary churches is a testament to the powerful effects of the reflex influence on ecumenical Protestants and their political activity.²⁶⁷

Although ecumenical Protestants were in the “vanguard” of opposition to the subordination of human rights action to Cold War aims, secular NGOs and human rights advocates also grew more critical of Reagan’s human rights agenda, joining ecumenical Christians in indicting the US for its hypocrisy and “double standards.” As Christians in the global South had recognized, the US seemed to focus disproportionately on human rights violations around the world (especially in Eastern Europe) while supporting violating regimes, resisting self-compliance, and ignoring their own domestic shortcomings, especially in the cases

²⁶⁷Michael McConnell, “A View from the Sanctuary Movement,” in *The Moral Nation: Humanitarianism and U.S. Foreign Policy Today*, eds. Bruce J. Nichols and Gil Loesch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989); Susan Bibler Coutin, *The Culture of Protest: Religious Activism and the U.S. Sanctuary Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Kurtz and Fulton, 368; Preston, 588-9; Hulsether, “Shifting Perspectives,” 30-1; “Refugees: Report on an Urgent Priority,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 4-5; “Urgent Need for Refugee Sponsorships,” *Whole Earth Newsletter* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 16; David Stowe to all UCBWM Missionaries, 12 July 1983 DMS Papers, Box 180, Folder 1.

of racial discrimination, police brutality, the treatment of asylum seekers, prison conditions, the death sentence, and the imprisonment of conscientious objectors.²⁶⁸

At home, however, conservatives critiqued human rights as a factor which undermined national security, in a sense urging Reagan to subordinate human rights to national self-interest even further. During the late 1970s and 1980s, too, both the secular media (like *Reader's Digest* and *60 Minutes*) and conservative critics (Lefever among them) lambasted the WCC and NCC's support of radical, revolutionary, and sometimes violent social activism abroad. In exposés with titles like *The Fraudulent Gospel*, "The Gospel According to Whom?", and *The Unholy Alliance*, these critics forced the question of whether the church should be "financing revolution" (especially with the sincere donations of "ordinary" Americans) or "serving Marx" instead of Christ. (Stowe, for the record, thought this critique was a "fusillade of innuendo, half-truth, and emotional rhetoric." Other ecumenicals similarly characterized the accusations as "trad[ing] on stereotypes," and relying on the "skillful use of innuendo and quotations out of context.")²⁶⁹

As these arguments became more polarized, however, it was clear that the Nairobi consensus on human rights could not hold; the American ecumenical movement, in trying to maintain "a clear conceptual distinction" between the "discredited colonial imperative" and what they understood as their "ongoing missionary obligation," had widened the gap at home between their own movement and an increasingly dominant evangelical one. Conservative Christians both Protestant and Catholic were concerned that ecumenical calls for justice sounded too similar to Marxist ones, and that the church might thus be co-opted by communist regimes as a "usefully

²⁶⁸Preston, 587; Keys, 272; Duner, 41, 64; Swartz, 226; Nichols, *The Uneasy Alliance*, 16; Tyrrell, 219-20; Douzinas, 31; Conway, 440; Crow, 615; Fitzgerald, 119; Paton, *Nairobi Report*, 97.

²⁶⁹Ibid. See also van der Bent, 27-9. For an example of the conservative critique of the NCC/WCC, see Lefever's own accounts of WCC General Assemblies (1979, 1988), Singer (1975), B. Smith (1976), or Billingsley (1990). For Stowe and the UCBWM's response, see "Stowe and Staff Respond to 'The Gospel According to Whom?'" *Whole Earth Newsletter* 12, no. 3 (Winter 1983): 1; "The Reader's Digest / World Council, *Whole Earth Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 20; Stowe, "Man's World, God's World."

undiscerning tool.” Freedom for liberals, however, meant economic and social justice, not freedom from communism, and it was this view that reenergized the conservative critiques of the WCC and NCC that had sparked so much controversy at Uppsala. This distrust of the ecumenical movement and disagreement about the role and function of human rights, however, would not be resolved by internecine dialogue as it had at Nairobi. Rather, the conservative position was gaining overwhelming financial and rhetorical support, media exposure, and political leverage; the “Religious Right” was coming into its own in American culture and politics. Since the “Year of the Evangelical” in 1976, evangelical missionary numbers continued to soar, major political action groups (4 in 1979 alone, including Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority) were formed, and immense financial and other resources poured into evangelical organizations.²⁷⁰

Two ecumenical conferences held in the early 1980s provide a window into these shifting tensions as they related to evangelistic and humanitarian work: the 1980 meeting of the WCC’s CWME in Melbourne and the WCC General Assembly in Vancouver in 1983. The former of these meetings, as a conference devoted to the state and aims of mission work, took steps to solidify the position that an essential part of mission itself was standing with the poor and marginalized in active participation in their struggle for human rights. Thus, joining the poor and fighting for human rights became the two “most used criterion” for mission, and this emphasis on solidarity with “the poor” (as subjects or agents) signaled the final culmination of a gradual shift from previous attention to “poverty” (its victims being objects).²⁷¹ Looking at Melbourne in

²⁷⁰The four political coalitions mentioned include the Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable, Christian Voice, and National Christian Action Coalition. See Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 19; Fitzgerald, 120; Preston, 545-6, 550-1, 555; Yates, 194-5; Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 198-200; Vischer, 40; Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, xxviii.

²⁷¹World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), xiv, 171-178; “Melbourne Conference Section Reports,” *International Review of Mission* 69, no. 276-7 (October 1980 – January 1981): 388-436; Mudge, 279-80; Dickinson, 427; van der Bent, 276-

1980, one indeed might deduce that the shift from the ideology of benevolent aid to that of social justice within the ecumenical movement was complete – and largely as a result of reflex influences. In other words, Melbourne attendees focused on the poor not only because of their special need for justice, but also because, as their global experience had revealed, the poor had perspectives crucial to their own development, ones which were more effective than any “unproductive moral suasion” a Westerner might offer.²⁷²

Stowe’s public lecture (and companion article) reporting on Melbourne to the American Society of Missiology endorsed this focus on “works evangelism” rather than “word evangelism.” Despite some disappointment with what he saw as the abstract, non-empirical nature of the discussion, he affirmed that “missionary concern includes a concern for the religious condition of persons, but their social condition largely motivates mission and directs mission strategy.”²⁷³ Perhaps predictably, and in contrast, many evangelicals felt that the “explicit proclamation” aspect of mission had been neglected at the Melbourne conference; to their dismay, the conference had demonstrated a deep passion for the poor, but not for “the lost” or “the unreached.” They claimed that the terms “mission” and “evangelism” had become so

7; Kinnamon, 60; Traer, 26; Lodberg, 327; Larsson and Castro, 127-8. For Stowe’s reflections on Melbourne, see David M. Stowe, “The World Church Looks at Mission in the 80s,” Report to the UCBWM Board of Directors, 22 May 1980, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190.

²⁷²Dickinson, 410.

²⁷³It was also Stowe’s suggestion that simple exploitation and the sins of capitalism were not the only sources of poverty and that as such, too heavy an emphasis had been placed on economic and political issues. In this and other of Stowe’s works of the time, he elaborated on the contextual reasons for poverty beyond the economic: war, limited natural resources and other ecological conditions, racism, overpopulation, unstable or oppressive national leadership, various psychological factors, and more. It was important for mission, if it was to alleviate poverty, to recognize these. Stowe attempted to have included in the Section I Melbourne Report a clause which spoke to these other stimuli for poverty. In the process of producing the report, however, a Latin American delegate reportedly added “that have been imposed from outside” to the end of his clause. See WCC CWME, *Your Kingdom Come*, 173; David M. Stowe to extended family, 1 June 1980, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 12; David M. Stowe, “What Did Melbourne Say?” *Missiology* 9, no. 1 (January 1981): 31-2, 34-5; David M. Stowe, “The Poor and Oppressed,” in *Call to Global Mission: Background Papers to the Document for Presentation to the Convention of the Lutheran Church in America, September 3-10, 1982*, ed. John Mangum (Division for World Mission and Ecumenism of the Lutheran Church in America and Kutztown Publishing, 1982), 305-6, 311.

overloaded with meaning as to become meaningless. As such, a rival mission conference held in Pattaya, Thailand in the same year catered more explicitly to ensuring that evangelism and mission did not “evaporate into generalizations.”²⁷⁴

Still, many ecumenicals were not content to leave the gap unbridged. Most of Melbourne’s insights were compiled into what Stowe and many others described as a “landmark” report in 1982 – “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation” – but the text was careful to convey that both liberationist and evangelistic elements were integral to mission. Stowe too understood that achieving a consensus on human rights and its place in mission meant recognizing that evangelism also belonged in the missionary enterprise. When the DFM had been reorganized into the DOM in the 1960s, for example, he had established an internal Evangelism Committee whose tasks had previously been inherent in the DFM but were now explicitly included among the DOM’s many other service and development projects. Now, Stowe considered Nairobi and Melbourne highly successful in this “recovery and reaffirmation” of evangelism as central to the work of the ecumenical movement, a victory that coincided well with his UCBWM goal to deemphasize simple aid (HEW services) in favor of two new objectives: evangelism and advocacy for systemic change.²⁷⁵

Enacting this policy aim as early as 1971, Stowe established two new positions within the UCBWM – a “world issues secretary” and a “consultant on evangelism.” To the former post,

²⁷⁴Larsson and Castro, 138-9; Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Mission,” 363.

²⁷⁵Krass himself was simultaneously studying for an advanced degree in the social sciences to better understand the “social facts” that would enable better communication of the gospel – perhaps belying the opposition to McGavran and other evangelicals’ use of those disciplines. See D. Gill, “They Serve the World from 475”; David M. Stowe to Theodore Erickson, 7 December 1972, DMS Papers, Box 126, Folder 78; David M. Stowe, “Standard Paragraph on Evangelism in the Work of UCBWM,” 5 July 1972, DMS Papers, Box 28, Folder 190; Stowe, “Goals for Mission in the 1970s”; Stowe, “One Man’s Nairobi”; Stowe, “New World, One World”; Stowe, Address (II) to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions; Stowe, Keynote-Update Address to the 162nd UCBWM Annual Meeting; Stowe, “Mission Policy for Ecumenopolis”; Stowe, “Mission in the 70s: A Midpoint Assessment.”

Stowe appointed Howard Schomer, who had been an active member of the UN Commission on Human Rights, a close associate of Martin Luther King Jr.'s, and president of Chicago Theological Seminary. Recognizing that “better hospitals overseas didn’t get at the great public health issue” and “Christian service didn’t get at the problems of endemic poverty,” the primary goal of this new position was to make the UCBWM more “intentionally active” in socio-political advocacy for causes like peace in Vietnam and corporate social responsibility in Africa. For the position of consultant on evangelism, alternatively, Stowe tapped former Ghana missionary Alfred Krass, and together they directed a massive study on evangelism that consulted with overseas church leaders and missionaries to better evaluate the need and opportunity for evangelism around the world. By 1974, an Interstaff Committee on Evangelism Programming had also been created within the UCWBM.²⁷⁶

As contradictory as a renewed emphasis on evangelism might seem, the program was in fact contingent on Stowe’s understanding of evangelism as a critique of power, a force for equality and human rights, and a more effective tool in bringing about the kingdom of God than any “showoff” aid or service program they could “invent.” It was also unique for being paired, in Stowe’s formulation, with advocacy programs for systemic change, an indication of the mutuality he saw between the two emphases as alternatives to simple aid. He still felt “little personal sympathy” and even some “antipathy” for “certain fundamentalist” missions, and so his reaffirmation of evangelism remained redolent with phrases that typified the 1960s argument for holistic mission: “It is not shouting ‘Lord, Lord,’ but doing the work of the Lord, lifting his example and his intention to such high visibility that – as he himself promised – finally all persons will be drawn to him. Whether or not they take the name Christian, whether or not they

²⁷⁶Oral History of Life of David M. Stowe.

join our church or any church, is not our decision.” Regardless, the renewed acknowledgement of evangelism at all allowed for a space in which the two groups, ecumenical and evangelical, might meet – which was no doubt a factor in Stowe’s decisions.²⁷⁷

And indeed, with support from administrators like Stowe, the more balanced conclusions of the “Ecumenical Affirmation” were officially adopted by the WCC Central Committee at a subsequent meeting of the General Assembly in 1983 in Vancouver, the same conference at which a more justice-oriented approach to ecological concern was inaugurated. Conciliated by this more centrist position on mission, many evangelicals in fact wrote “open letters” to Vancouver welcoming the Affirmation – although they still reemphasized evangelization and urged for a greater voice in the WCC.²⁷⁸ Less mollifying for some evangelicals, however, was Vancouver’s condemnation of those nation-states which refused to recognize their own role as the best and most “pragmatic” instrument for securing human rights. Conference statements also urged for national political frameworks that would ensure those rights, and appealed to the churches to continue to work for them through its four recommended modes: monitoring, study, advocacy, and awareness. For its focus on rights, justice, and other “revolutionary” points (like

²⁷⁷This notion of integration between evangelism, service, and justice was not only evident in Stowe’s UCBWM, but was also reflected in Nairobi’s declaration of an open, “dialogical” style as the one appropriate “even for evangelism,” a view which Stowe supported and often spoke to in the early 1980s. On this dialogical style, see “Workshop Reports,” *Missiology* 7, no. 1 (January 1979): 96-100. For Stowe’s view, see David M. Stowe, “Faith’s Selective Eye and Act,” 1971, DMS Papers, Box 9, Folder 43; David M. Stowe, “Your Kingdom Come,” 1980, DMS Papers, Box 10, Folder 50; David M. Stowe, “The Word in the World of Religions,” 23 March 1980, DMS Papers, Box 10, Folder 50; Stowe, “God’s Left Hand and Right Hand”; Stowe, Memorandum to Executive Staff, 5 January 1971; Stowe, “New World, One World”; Stowe, Address (II) to Annual Meeting of Presbyterian Church USA Board of Foreign Missions; Stowe, Keynote-Update Address to the 162nd UCBWM Annual Meeting; Stowe, “Standard Paragraph on Evangelism in the Work of UCBWM”; Stowe, “Ecumenism, Pluralism, and the Future of American Experience”; Stowe, “One World – One Family – One Lord”; Stowe, “Mission in the 80s,” 10, 13; Stowe, “Planning for World Ministries”; David M. Stowe, “1984 and World Evangelism: The Integrity of the Faith and Witness to the World”; Stowe, “A New Perspective on the World Christian Mission,” 53.

²⁷⁸Robert, “Forty Years of North American Missiology,” 4; Kinnamon, 62; Larsson and Castro, 137-8; “An Open Letter: Evangelicals, WCC Assembly, Vancouver 1983,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, eds. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 383; WCC CWME, “Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation”; David M. Stowe, Notes on WCC Statement “Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation,” 1982, DMS Papers, Box 126, Folder 76.

advocacy for social justice in Africa), Vancouver prompted further derision from some observers and media outlets that the WCC was “communist.” These foci were perhaps unsurprising to others, however, given the unprecedented diversity of the Vancouver delegates: more than 60% came from outside North America and Western Europe.²⁷⁹

Indeed, the evangelical position was not only a function of Cold War ideological battles but also of the general emphasis (especially of the “Christian Right”) on domestic social policy in the 20th century. While most evangelicals did not engage with foreign policy issues until the end of the Cold War in the 1990s (and even then in an ambiguous way on which there is little scholarly consensus), many ecumenical Protestants like Stowe tended to be more deeply invested in foreign policy and global humanitarian issues. Thus despite the rising political clout of the Christian right at home, the “decline” in American political influence of many ecumenicals who hailed from mainline denominations is perhaps better described as a decline in influence on domestic political issues. As the conclusion will shortly discuss, it is this point that is perhaps the key to overcoming both the facile historiographical narratives of mainline “decline” as well as the relegation of religious perspectives and actors from the field of humanitarianism.²⁸⁰

As Stowe’s fifteen-year tenure as executive vice president of the UCBWM drew to a close in 1985, its international focus was indeed clear: partnership and indigenization, social justice and human rights, and the elimination of structures of imperialism and exploitation. Retirement testimonials and published tributes expressed deep thanks and admiration for Stowe’s devotion to these globally-minded objectives; for many, he *was* the UCBWM, the “embodiment

²⁷⁹Tom Stransky, “World Council of Churches,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky, José Miguez Bonino, John Pobee, and Tom Stransky (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991), 1086; Rock, 85; Lodberg, 323, 328, 331-3; Mudge, 297; Gort, 220; Tergel, 23, 41, 252; Neal, 336.

²⁸⁰For more on the “new evangelical social engagement” with human rights, see Joel A. Nichols, “Evangelicals and Human Rights: The Continuing Ambivalence of Evangelical Christians’ Support for Human Rights,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 24, no. 2 (2008-2009): 630, 645-57; Swartz, 229-31; Amstutz, 4; Hertzke, 5.

of its purposes and the guide for its development.”²⁸¹ And indeed, that development was guided in profound ways by global influences – so much so that the UCBWM has been critiqued as an autonomous board “far removed” from the experience of American churchgoers. Stowe himself described his role there less as shepherd than as “quarterback,” attending a dizzying array of meetings and trips but ultimately functioning as a “creative switchboard” for ideas, issues, visions, agonies, [and] hopes” from around the world. Through him, and despite some moments of doubt and fatigue, these reflex influences were translated into concrete “agendas, assignments, projects, inquiries, experiments, [and] programs,” in ways that “forever changed” American Protestant mission.²⁸²

²⁸¹David M. Stowe, *Year 175: A Brief History of the United Church Board for World Ministries* (New York: United Church Board for World Ministries, 1984), 7.

²⁸²Gunneman, 201; UCC Office of Communication. “David M. Stowe, former UCC missions executive, dies,” Press Release, 11 January 2000; David M. Stowe, “What Do I Do in What I am Doing?” 17 August 1972, DMS Papers, Box 207, Folder 8; David M. Stowe to extended family, 22 February 1970, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 5; David M. Stowe to extended family, 16 March 1980, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 12.

6.0 CONCLUSION: AMERICAN ECUMENICALS, TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, AND THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

“In a modern humanistic and participatory society nothing but timidity or incompetence prevents one's beliefs and values from playing an effective public role, even while it is recognized that others have differing opinions and have equal right in public forums. ‘A decent respect for the opinions of mankind’ compels us both to put forward our own beliefs and at the same time to seek with others whatever larger or fuller truth the tested and shared experience of all may offer.”

– David M. Stowe, “Modernization and Resistance” (1988)

“We need to contemplate religion with equanimity. It merits neither a special awe nor a unique horror.”
– Lata Mani, *SacredSecular* (2009)

Following his retirement from the UCBWM in 1985, Stowe remained deeply involved and invested in what he called the “global networks of Christian mission.” He maintained correspondence with ecumenical contacts in the US and around the world (especially in China), dined with and took in sermons from visiting foreign Christians, attended seminars and conferences with UCBWM missionaries and board members, and served as an active participant in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (an interfaith NGO with consultative UN status) and the American Society of Missiology (ASM).²⁸³ Maintaining a strong sense of the international scope of Christian history, he also compiled and outlined materials for a history of the ABCFM (which was never completed), served as volunteer archivist and historian for the ABCFM/UCBWM, contributed more than 100 articles to reference volumes on the histories of

²⁸³David M. Stowe to extended family, 3 February 1985; David M. Stowe to extended family, 16 November 1985, DMS Papers, Box 1, Folder 17; Stowe, “The Original and Continuing Reformation,” DMS Papers, Box 10, Folder 55.

Christianity and mission, and led, with his wife Virginia, several month-long historical tours of China through United Church Tours. Even after Stowe took on “emeritus” status, then, these and other transnational reflex influences continued to shape the content of a steady schedule of teaching assignments, sermons, and publications on world hunger, international peace, the planetary ecosystem, human rights, and other topics in mission.

Indeed, both in retirement and throughout his career, Stowe’s priorities and policies were profoundly affected by what he called the “growing, living network” of world Christian mission, as an analysis of his life’s work makes clear.²⁸⁴ His missionary sojourn to China, for example, rattled the theological convictions he had honed in a domestic context. In his administrative roles with the NCC and the UCBWM as well, research and study programs apprised him of international issues and demographic trends, and ongoing correspondence and dialogue with missionaries, service workers, and local Christians alerted him to the needs and concerns of people around the world. Together with an extensive travel schedule of mission visits and ecumenical conferences in major European cities (Prague, London, Istanbul, Geneva, Paris, Lisbon, and Berlin, to name a few) and in the global South (Nigeria, South Korea, Ecuador, Rhodesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Taiwan, among many others), these transnational reflex influences stimulated fresh thinking about aid, development, justice, missionary relationships and strategies, American foreign policy, contextual theology, and human rights. Stowe’s sermons, lectures, and publications at home in the US told these stories – of “the grime of Osaka and the fields of Tsurakawa...the excitement and vitality of Hong Kong...the troubling beauty of Taiwan...the hot sun of Luzon and the bright stars of New Delhi...and classrooms in Beirut

²⁸⁴Stowe, “Man’s World God’s World.”

[and] Turkey”²⁸⁵ – in another instance of the role of the missionary as conduit for global influences, even as he was under their sway himself.

Perhaps more significantly, what Stowe’s work also reveals is that the influence of global missionary experience and transnational Christian networks on American ecumenicals was, far from a passive osmosis, in fact well-observed and deliberately cultivated by ecumenicals themselves. In a 1960 lecture at Harvard Divinity School, for example, Stowe spoke passionately about the ways in which involvement in world mission could “fertilize and correct” ecumenical theology and priorities. In another address, this one to the Annual Meeting of the UCBWM in 1982, he reminded his audience that many kinds of missionary experiences could, and should, be used as “turning points” for seeing things from a new perspective. These could include, he described, anything from “reading a missionary letter or a mission study book, talking with mission visitors from Cuba or Zambia, taking responsibility through a second mile gift for the desperate needs in a Bombay slum or a refugee camp in Central America, [or] discussing nuclear deterrence with a Christian from East Germany or Hiroshima.”²⁸⁶ Indeed, in these speeches and many others throughout his career, he advocated for an intentionally global conception of Christianity, “the most important element” of which was that “the values by which we live...will continually be criticized and reshaped by the insights and experience of others in the global church.” As the epigraph to Chapter 6 reveals, the more substantive the partnerships between

²⁸⁵Stowe, “What is Christian Witness.”

²⁸⁶David M. Stowe, “The Interplay of Missions and Theology,” Box 220, Folder 35; Stowe, “World Ministries and World Peace.”

American ecumenicals and local Christians in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the more deep and wide-ranging Stowe found the changes to be – and for that, he “rejoiced.”²⁸⁷

One legacy of this purposeful cultivation of global perspective and concern is that more than half of all US church members, one 2008 study suggests, consider international human rights and world hunger to be important policy goals. (Perhaps unsurprisingly, congregational support of a foreign missionary was one of the positive predictors of support for those causes.)²⁸⁸

Another outgrowth of the themes in this history resides within contemporary theological work being done by the next generation of ecumenical thinkers. Reflecting on the work of theologian and liberal Protestant muse Rudolf Bultmann, for example, Protestant theologian David W. Congdon describes the missionary task as “always a *conversion of oneself to the other*, and not in the least a conversion of the other to oneself.” Mission is defined as a “transgression into the unknown,” in which it is the missionary, he explains, who is “the one being evangelized.”²⁸⁹

The contemporary Christian landscape, however, also reflects another trend that began to emerge during Stowe’s lifetime – namely, the numeric dominance of evangelical or nondenominational groups in American foreign mission work. In particular, Pentecostals (especially the Assemblies of God), Southern Baptists, and Mormons boast the largest mission budgets and missionary forces coming from America.²⁹⁰ And yet, when the success of 20th century ecumenical ideas and the demographic growth of evangelicalism are viewed together, it

²⁸⁷David M. Stowe, “Toward a Global Reconciliation of Christianity,” DMS Papers, Box 17, Folder 133; David M. Stowe, “Modernization and Resistance: Theological Implications for Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12, no. 4 (October 1988): 150.

²⁸⁸Robert Wuthnow and Valerie Lewis, “Religion and Altruistic U.S. Foreign Policy Goals: Evidence from a National Survey of Church Members,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 2 (June 2008): 196-7, 201, 204.

²⁸⁹David W. Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann’s Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 823.

²⁹⁰Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 83.

becomes more difficult to reconcile the ubiquitous historiographical narrative of an “evangelical resurgence” at the expense of a “mainline decline.”

That is to say, driven by the concerns of Christians in the global South and other issues in American foreign affairs, ecumenicals like Stowe deliberately curbed the number of proselytizing missionaries which they supported, instead focusing first on humanitarian service and later on advocacy for social justice and human rights as a means of forestalling humanitarian crises which would require aid. As historians David Hollinger, Jay Demerath, Matthew Hedstrom, and others suggest, focusing on the demographic decline or loss of “institutional authority” and “organizational hegemony” of mainline denominations like the UCC obscures the fact that they succeeded in furthering certain concepts in the larger national culture – pluralism, internationalism, intellectual inquiry, socio-economic justice, and human rights, for instance. Many activists today, Hollinger argues, pursue goals for which the ecumenical establishment in the 20th century had been the “primary vehicle,” despite the fact that they no longer feel the need to identify with Christianity in order to advocate for them – especially when that kind of public, activist Christianity has been increasingly “claimed” by politically conservative evangelicals. Sociologists too have pointed to the fact that religion in the contemporary situation is often most present in the self-evident – not in religious revival or resurgence, but in what French anthropologist and sociologist Didier Fassin calls “its lasting presence at the heart of our democratic secular values.” Taken together, the suggestion of this scholarship is that ecumenical and liberal Protestants secured a kind of “cultural victory,” rather than a numeric one. Much of their “success,” in other words, lies “beyond the churches” – and as with any group whose

message is intended to overflow its boundaries, perhaps “the success of [the] cause is the doom of [the] organization.”²⁹¹

And indeed, it seems that the problem for historians of American religion is largely one of measurement and perception. The quantitative successes of Pentecostal traditions in contemporary Africa, for example, as well as the qualitative assessment of many evangelicals, would suggest that mainline and ecumenical traditions have suffered a decisive loss. Many historical accounts also assume a plot which portrays the mainline as responsible for its own demise, in that its deemphasis on proclamation and theological specificity (and prioritization of ecumenism and humanitarianism) led to decreases in membership and missionaries. But if 20th-century ecumenicals, as historian William Hutchison records, demonstrated a “decisive break” from “the rubrics and terminology of the classical era,” then it would indeed be hasty to conclude that conservatives and evangelicals dominated missionary work as intensely as their eleven-to-one proportion of “classical” missionary personnel would imply. Rather, if ecumenicals redefined their modes and aims of mission, historians must also redefine the parameters for its analysis, or else risk overlooking the ecumenicals who – in greater numbers than ever before – were working abroad in “religious or quasireligious” occupations in the twentieth century.²⁹²

This analysis of Stowe’s career has been, therefore, an attempt to provide further evidentiary support for this thesis, as he played a part in several ecumenical transitions – from more traditional (albeit holistic) missionary work to HEW services, and again from simple humanitarian aid to advocacy for socio-political justice and human rights. To concerns from

²⁹¹Gort, 213; Keys, 223-4; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues*, xii, 46-7, 160; Hedstrom, 4-6, 11; Demerath, 460-8; Preston, 192; Dickinson, 427; Pyle, 50; Marsden, *The Twilight of the American Enlightenment*, 124; Fassin, 249-51.

²⁹²Hutchison, *Errand*, 177, 200-2; Hutchison in Lotz, 155-6; Hedstrom, 10. For examples of such accounts, see Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 175; Amstutz, 39-41; Turner, 267-9; Balmer, 5; Roof and McKinney 182-4.

colleagues about the decreases in missionaries and mission funding, Stowe counseled again and again that “poll-watching” was ill-advised, as it did not account for the fact that the “convictions and the purposes of Jesus [were] slowly becoming the common-sense of the world.” In fact, he insisted, there had been a “cumulative measurable increase in the presence and power of the identifiable Christ-spirit in the world,” if only it were measured properly – by “the evolution of ‘secular’ norms of conduct” or the “formulations of social goals,” for example. In particular, like many ecumenicals, Stowe saw the UDHR as carrying forward the “spirit,” if not the letter, of Christianity. He called the document a “full...and uncompromising statement” that the values he thought fundamental (though not exclusive) to Protestantism were now “de facto universal” – although, perhaps expectedly, he urged that they must maintain a continuous sensitivity to the local application of such a standard.²⁹³

Of course, this is not to say that Christianity inherently validates and promotes human rights, or that the Protestant theological tradition (as some argue) is the primary source or even the best grounds for the justification of them. In any given historical or geographical or political context, religious groups may challenge, support, repudiate, defend, or remain ambivalent to human rights, and the violence, extremism, and conflict which can attend religion should certainly not be ignored. But to suggest, as some (from both religious and secular backgrounds) do, that religion and human rights are “competing paradigms” or that human rights represent the rational, secular successor to tribalistic religious values is facile, and neglects the imbrication between the two that is evident in the history contained in the preceding chapters. Stowe’s lifelong commitment to the Christian spirit which he believed undergirded human rights

²⁹³David M. Stowe to Robert Porter, 13 March 1988, DMS Papers, Box 126, Folder 76; David M. Stowe, Notes on human rights policy, 29 October 1969, DMS Papers, Box 127, Folder 98; Stowe, “What Destiny for Christianity?”

conventions was consistently demonstrated by his unwillingness to abandon mission for a wholly secular campaign for those rights. It is this very fidelity to mission, and the transnational experiences which were part and parcel of that missionary work, that motivated and animated Stowe's advocacy for social justice; failing to understand that connection risked robbing human rights conventions of any force, as far as Stowe was concerned, and risks robbing the historian of crucial context today. Despite this clear connection between mission and human rights in Stowe's work, however, the secularization and professionalization of humanitarian and human rights work that gradually occurred over the course of his lifetime has produced today a situation in which the historical connections between religious work and human rights that compelled Stowe are often severed, largely as a means of avoiding the politicization or deprivatization of religion and the "tainted" imperial legacy of mission work. Religious circles, in other words, are "generally not from whence today's heroes of human rights, environmentalism, development, or public health emerge."²⁹⁴

The secular relief and development expertise that emerged in the 20th century, however, drew heavily on missionary and colonial administration models, and the critiques of simple aid and the transition to social justice and partnership with which Stowe grappled in the 1960s and

²⁹⁴For an example of the 'competing paradigms' rhetoric, see Martha Fineman and Karen Worthington, *What Is Right for Children? The Competing Paradigms of Religion and Human Rights* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009). To this point, as Barnett and Stein (among many others) point out, dividing agencies into secular vs. religious categories is difficult because oftentimes those in faith-based groups differ more from their fellow FBOs than from secular organizations (Barnett and Stein, 23, 29). See also John Witte, Jr., "Introduction," in *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, eds. John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40-1; Liam Gearon, "Introduction," in *Human Rights & Religion: A Reader*, ed. Liam Gearon (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), 11; Carrie Gustafson and Peter H. Juviler, eds., *Religion and Human Rights: Competing Claims?* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999); John Kelsay and Sumner B. Twiss, eds., *Religion and Human Rights* (New York: Project on Religion and Human Rights, 1994); Linda Hogan, *Keeping Faith with Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 2; Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 10-1; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 6; Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert Orsi, "On Not Talking to the Press," *Religious Studies News: AAR Edition* 19, no. 3 (May 2004): 15; Douzinas, 10-1; Tergel, 43; Brackney, 71; Huber and Lutkehaus, 5.

70s also served as the foundation for similar discussions among secular NGOs years later. And yet in its professionalization as a science – in its emerging technicality and bureaucracy – modern humanitarianism “renewed” on its missionary genealogy. As historian and director of the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute Bertrand Taithe writes, seemingly confirming Hollinger’s hypothesis, “the missionaries’ Pyrrhic victory was to have been so successful at becoming experts and indispensable architects of the postcolonial world that their original role was weakened by the new one.”²⁹⁵

Stowe too, for his part, often acknowledged the missionary contribution to the very secular agencies which seemed to be displacing them. The government and secular NGOs were adopting the “missionary idea” themselves, he explained, by engaging in social development projects which Christian missions had “virtually invented” and employing personnel “of the same type that Christian missions ha[d] long been using” – in some cases former missionaries themselves. In other words, the “massive entry by governments” into HEW services was, to Stowe’s mind, a “tribute to the social conscience which missions, in many places, first quickened.” Programmatically, too, Stowe believed that organizations like the World Bank and the UN adopted the model of small, grassroots program with local input almost a decade later than the ecumenical missionary and ministry groups had, and yet the former seemed poised to “supplant” the latter. Ecumenical missionary donations dwindled and more people joined secular groups like the Peace Corps, he suspected, largely because of widespread ignorance about

²⁹⁵Ibid. See also Bertrand Taithe, “Pyrrhic Victories? French Catholic Missionaries, Modern Expertise, and Secularizing Technologies,” in *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, eds. Michael N. Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 181; Ferris, 618.

ecumenicals' new ministries and motivations, which increasingly "veer[ed] more and more widely from the stereotypes."²⁹⁶

The effect of this "embrace of secularization as a legitimating strategy" today, however, is that it leaves the humanitarian regime unequipped to understand the religious and ideological commitments of both the donors and the recipients of its efforts. The failure of some secular NGOs and other such organizations to engage with religiously-motivated activists in the US, interrogate their own secular value systems, or contextualize human rights conventions within the complexities of, for example, Islamic law in the Muslim world, does a disservice to public discourse and socio-political activism in America and beyond. That is, it precludes a truly "dialogical pluralism," in preventing people of religious faith from contributing to policy discussions or humanitarian projects as just that – people of religious faith, rather than ordinary citizens or passive beneficiaries whose beliefs are relegated to the private sphere. Given the significance of ecumenical activism (and its transnational connections) to human rights and humanitarian issues during the 20th century, then, and as many contemporary researchers have noted, the marginalization of religious perspectives unnecessarily limits the contributions of religious people and organizations to global civil society.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 13, 35, 80; Stowe, *Memoranda on Development*; Stowe, *Partners with the Almighty*, 35, 50; Stowe, "Message from the EVP," (Fall 1984); Stowe, "The Shape of Our Calling to Mission."

²⁹⁷Linda Hogan, Paul Brink, and Alf Tergel as well as Allen Hertzke and John Witte Jr. make similar arguments about allowing space for religious perspectives, as such, in human rights discourse specifically. Banchoff and Wuthnow (2011) make a comparable argument regarding the place of religious actors in public dialogue more generally, as does Jose Casanova (1994) in his discussion of the ways in which religion can positively contribute to strengthening the public sphere of modern civil societies. George Marsden makes a similar case for the place of Christian thought in the contemporary university and the value of religious reflection in the academy in his 1997 monograph *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. See Hogan, 9; Tergel, 356; Hertzke, 5; Witte Jr, 14, 42; Paul A. Brink, "Debating International Human Rights: The 'Middle Ground' for Religious Participants," *The Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 13-20; Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 217-9; Christian Smith, "Introduction: Rethinking the Secularization of American Public Life," in *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*, ed. Christian Smith

As many historians and human rights scholars point out, missionaries have a deep familiarity (however painstakingly arrived at) with the contextualization and local expression of supposedly universal truths, as well as with the navigation of the complicated, often porous boundaries between religious and secular spheres which may be required for the implementation of development projects or human rights. And as Stowe saw it, both during his career and later on in his reflections on the past and future of mission, ecumenical missionary efforts had benefits beyond those of secular NGOs – a vast, transnational network of Christian communities, a sensitivity to local concerns which corporations or governments lacked, a focus on grassroots, local-led programs that predated similar plans in international institutions like the UN or World Bank, and a less pragmatic, calculating approach which recognized that the “criteria for success are not simply contained in the experience of achieving results.” Indeed, as development scholar and practitioner Wendy Tyndale has argued, rather than viewing religion as an “anti-development force,” secular NGOs could benefit not only from paying attention to the local cultural and religious climate in the areas to be “developed” and the fact that “no other organizations are more firmly rooted or have better networks in poor communities than the religious ones,” but also from recognizing that while technical knowledge and “abstraction,

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 11; Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Rescued by Law? Gender and the Global Politics of Secularism,” in *Religion, the Secular, and the Politics of Sexual Difference*, eds. Linell Cady and Tracy Fessenden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 220-2; Johannes A. Van der Ven, Jaco S. Dreyer, and Hendrik J. C. Pieterse, *Is There a God of Human Rights?: The Complex Relationship between Human Rights and Religion: A South African Case* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 255-6; Frances S. Adeney, “Human Rights and Responsibilities: Christian Perspectives,” in *Christianity and Human Rights: Influences and Issues*, eds. Frances S. Adeney and Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 29-30; Abdullahi A. An-Na’im, “The Politics of Religion and the Morality of Globalization,” in *Religion in Global Civil Society*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 40-1; Clapham, 160; Barnett and Stein, 25.

For examples of contemporary critiques of humanitarianism and human rights, see Boltanski (1999), Hesford (2011), Kennedy (2004), Klein (2007), Persaud (2003), Bricmont (2006), An-Naim and Deng (1990), Chomsky (1978, 2000, 2008), Fassin and Pandolfi (2010), Bornstein and Redfield (2011), Rieff (2002), and Douzinas (2007). For discussion and explication, see McCleary, 29-35; Bass, 5; Livezey, 192-5; Taithe, 172; Witte Jr., 10; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 6, 11-12, 21; van der Ven, Dreyer, and Pieterse, xi; Watt, 7; Hogan, 1-2; Porterfield, 62, 69.

analysis and summary” are valid ways of “understanding reality,” so too are grassroots experience, intuitive knowledge, and spiritual insight. With Stowe’s story in mind as well, among the other potential contributions of Protestant missionaries could be, somewhat ironically, a whole body of experience grappling with accusations of paternalism and “benevolent hegemony” – charges which plague contemporary secular humanitarianism no less doggedly than the missionaries from whom it seeks to distance itself.²⁹⁸

It is somewhat interesting, in this light, to note that in the latter half of Stowe’s career, he and other ecumenicals appeared increasingly aware of the possible benefits of Protestant collaboration not just with other Christian churches or even those of other faiths (“wider” ecumenism), but with secular organizations, peoples, and ideas as well (“universal” ecumenism). Along with ecumenical thinkers like mission professor Richey Hogg and civil and human rights advocate John J. Harmon, Stowe argued for a “universal” or “secular” ecumenism – not an “intramural affair among fossil remains of Christian quarrels,” but an “ecumenical openness” to dialogue and collaboration with other religious traditions as well as the secular world. And to Stowe, this idea of a secular ecumenism – an “effort to make common cause with all men” that went beyond interchurch dialogue – had direct ties to the missionary movement. This was first of all because, as Stowe put it, missionaries by their very nature had to articulate their convictions

²⁹⁸Michael Ignatieff, “Introduction: American Exceptionalism and Human Rights,” in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 26; Andrea Paras and Janice Gross Stein, “Bridging the Sacred and the Profane in Humanitarian Life,” in *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, eds. Michael N. Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 211, 230; Wendy Tyndale, “Idealism and Practicality: The Role of Religion in Development,” *Development* 46, no. 4 (December 2003): 26; Bryant L. Myers, “Progressive Pentecostalism, Development, and Christian Development NGOs: A Challenge and an Opportunity,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 3 (July 2015): 115, 118; Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith and Humanitarianism: It’s Complicated,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 22; Barnett and Stein, 21; Taithe, 167; Stowe, “Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission,” 453. On the pragmatic, results-oriented focus of contemporary humanitarianism, see Adrian Wood, Raymond Apthorpe, and John Borton, *Evaluating International Humanitarian Action: Reflections from Practitioners* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2001), xx, 1-5

“rationally” if they were to appeal to people of other traditions – or none at all. Appeals to blind faith, as his experience in China had revealed to him, did little to satisfy the need for a “point of contact” or “common measure of validity” between Christian belief and other cultural, intellectual, or religious commitments.²⁹⁹

More specifically, however, the concept of secular ecumenism appears to have been bound up with the increasing investment by missionaries like Stowe in socio-economic and political causes on a global scale over the course of the 20th century; the unification of humanity was to be achieved, in one way or another, by common witness for justice and peace. The emphasis by many ecumenicals on social conversion rather than numeric growth, in other words, reflected an understanding of mission work not as a counter-attack against secularization, but as a form of participation in the processes of liberation and humanization. The WCC, for example, had frequently attested to cooperation with secular organizations in aid and justice projects as “reconciling, pioneering, and educational,” and their consultative status with the UN represented a significant religious-secular relationship on human rights issues. The landmark 1982 document “Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation” had similarly pointed to the value of dialogue with “civil authorities” in defining and securing human rights. As Harmon put it,

²⁹⁹Dietrich Werner, “Missionary Structure of Congregations,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky, José Miguez Bonino, John Pobee, and Tom Stransky (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991), 700; Stowe, “Two Centuries – One Mission”; Stowe, “The Interplay of Missions and Theology.”

The terminology here is important. The term “wider ecumenism” is typically used in reference specifically to harmony or dialogue between the world’s religions, and merges with the interfaith movement at many points (see Phan (1990), for example). Stowe and others, however, referred more broadly to an ecumenism that would encompass all of humanity. For examples of the ecumenical argument for this kind of “secular ecumenism,” see Hogg (1971, 1977), Harmon (1966), Bianchi (1969), and Snook (1966).

perhaps hyperbolically, “to perpetuate ecclesial, introverted ecumenism is to perpetuate racism, anti-Semitism, poverty, and war.”³⁰⁰

Stowe likewise insisted that this “radical ecumenism” was deeply connected to an “equally radical social concern,” and that as such it was the “responsibility” of organizations like the UCBWM to cooperate with secular agencies and non-Christian faiths alike in humanitarian efforts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the advent of human rights conventions was his case in point:

“it is by inductive and empirical as well as political procedures that the modern world is arriving, slowly and painfully, at an effective Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That process shows how the fundamental method of science can operate in the realm of values using the widest range of evidence, including the evidence of...the effect of biblical religion in the lives of Western and other peoples.”³⁰¹

In this way, the story of Stowe’s life reveals not only the ways in which many ecumenical Protestants and missionaries were influenced by the global reflex, but also the ways in which this contributed to a transnational perspective – a new “spaciousness of vision” – that circumvented the polarity of either steadfastly opposing or fully accommodating “the secular.” Perhaps this last lesson is one from which we all can learn.

³⁰⁰Hogg, 24; Geneva Report, 76; Nairobi Report, 118; van der Bent, 190; World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, “Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation,” *International Review of Mission* 61, no. 284 (1982); Harmon, 161.

³⁰¹Stowe, “Modernization and Resistance,” 148-9; Stowe, *The Worldwide Mission of the Church*, 41; Stowe, “Program and Budget Outline for NCC-DOM”; Stowe, “Continuity and Contrast in Mission”; Stowe, “The Future of a Heritage”; Stowe, “Defining Mission as We Approach 2000 A.D.”

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