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# The Least of These: American Evangelical Parachurch Missions to the Poor, 1947-2005

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Dissertation

THE LEAST OF THESE:  
AMERICAN EVANGELICAL PARACHURCH  
MISSIONS TO THE POOR, 1947-2005

By

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(Order No. )

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Doctor of Theology

Boston University School of Theology, 2010

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation narrates the historical development of American evangelical missions to the poor from 1947-2005 and analyzes the discourse of its main parachurch proponents, especially World Vision, Compassion International, Food for the Hungry, Samaritan's Purse, Sojourners, Evangelicals for Social Action, and the Christian Community Development Association. Although recent scholarship on evangelicalism has been prolific, much of the historical work has focused on earlier periods. Sociological and political scientific scholarship on the postwar period has been attracted mostly to

controversies surrounding the Religious Right, leaving evangelicalism's resurgent concern for the poor relatively understudied. This dissertation addresses these lacunae.

The study consists of three chronological parts, each marked by a distinctive model of mission to the poor. First, the 1950s were characterized by compassionate charity for individual emergencies, a model that cohered neatly with evangelicalism's individualism and emotionalism. This model should be regarded as the quintessential, bedrock evangelical theory of mission to the poor. It remained strong throughout the entire postwar period. Second, in the 1970s, a strong countercurrent emerged that advocated for penitent protest against structural injustice and underdevelopment. In contrast to the first model, it was distinguished by going against the grain of many aspects of evangelical culture, especially its reflexive patriotism and individualism. Third, in the 1990s, an important movement towards developing potential through hopeful holism gained prominence. Its advocates were confident that their integration of biblical principles with insights from contemporary economic development praxis would contribute to drastic, widespread reductions in poverty. This model signaled a new optimism in evangelicalism's engagement with the broader world.

The increasing prominence of missions to the poor within American evangelicalism led to dramatic changes within the movement's worldview: by 2005, evangelicals were mostly unified in their expressed concern for the physical and social needs of the poor, a position that radically reversed their immediate postwar worldview of near-exclusive focus on the spiritual needs of individuals. Nevertheless, missions to

the poor also paralleled, reinforced, and hastened the increasing fragmentation of evangelicalism's identity, as each missional model advocated for highly variant approaches to poverty amelioration that were undergirded by diverse sociological, political, and theological assumptions.



CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION

**Introduction**

In 1947, budding theologian Carl F.H. Henry wrote a short book entitled *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. In it he surveyed the American fundamentalist movement's engagement with the most important social issues of the day. Henry did not so much attack the fundamentalists for their social ethic as for their lack of one. He found little or no contribution to politics, economics, race and labor relations, intellectual life, or the arts. He painted a picture of fundamentalists, back turned to the world, devotedly dissecting the minutiae of obscure prophecy, while taking pride in their complete disjunction from a society destined to perdition.

All this would not seem an unusual interpretation of fundamentalism for a theologian trained at Boston University and Harvard in the 1940s, as was Henry. But what made *Uneasy Conscience* stand out was that Henry was himself a fundamentalist, intent on provoking his compatriots to apply the insights of conservative biblical theology to their contemporary context. While skeptical that fundamentalism's old guard could rise from its slumber, he placed his hope in a younger generation who called themselves evangelicals—a group he hoped could reinvigorate the social consciousness of conservative American Protestantism.

In 2005, the largest privately funded relief and development organization in the world was evangelical;<sup>1</sup> it garnered widespread attention for its response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Hundreds of smaller organizations funneled more than two billion dollars overseas to meet the needs of the poor.<sup>2</sup> One of the most famous evangelical megachurch pastors in America was attempting the complete socioeconomic restructuring of a small African nation.<sup>3</sup> An evangelical released one of the best-selling religious books of the year, urging citizens to make economic justice for the poor high on their list of “values” for which they voted.<sup>4</sup> Evangelicals brought a zealous campaign against child slavery and sexual exploitation to all the major television networks and newspapers.<sup>5</sup> And thousands of neighborhood renewal ministries enlisted millions of American evangelicals in Christian community development of various kinds.<sup>6</sup>

These two snapshots illustrate major changes in the worldview and identity of

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<sup>1</sup> Vic Roberts, “50 Largest U.S. Charities,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 22 2004, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1122/csmimg/p17a.pdf> (accessed November 30, 2009); Kevin D. Miller, “De-Seipling World Vision,” *Christianity Today*, June 15, 1998, Vol. 42, Issue 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Bonk, “Mission and Mammon,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Alan Wolfe, “A Purpose-Driven Nation? Rick Warren goes to Rwanda,” *Wall Street Journal*, 26 August, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> For examples of the coverage of International Justice Mission’s work on child slavery, see founder Gary Haugen’s appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show in November 2005, <http://www.ijm.org/flash/Oprah/oprah.html>; Nicholas D. Kristof, “Sex Slaves? Lock Up the Pimps,” *New York Times*, 29 January, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/29/opinion/29kristof.html>; Quentin Hardy, “Hitting Slavery Where It Hurts,” *Forbes*, 12 January 2004, <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2004/0112/076.html>, (all references accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, “Compassionate Evangelicalism: How a Document Conceived 30 Years Ago has Prompted us to Care More about ‘The Least of These,’” *Christianity Today*, 1 December, 2003, 42.

evangelicalism, one of American's largest religious movements. This dissertation seeks to narrate and analyze how these changes came about in the span of a single lifetime, from 1947 to 2005. In order to do so, it concentrates on one aspect of resurgent evangelical social concern: mission to the poor. If scholarship is any indication, few have marked twentieth century American evangelicalism as noteworthy in its service to the poor. Indeed, between the two World Wars, conservative Protestants in the United States engaged in only episodic efforts on behalf of the poor. In reaction to the social gospel, fundamentalism viewed attempts to ameliorate material poverty as, at best, only a preparation for preaching—and as “liberal” apostasy at worst. But in the waning years of World War II, a new movement of American conservative Protestants emerged. They distinguished themselves from their fundamentalist forebears by taking a less militant, more engaged stance toward cultural and intellectual life, yet they retained a high view of Scripture and traditional doctrinal orthodoxy. Some of these “evangelicals” continued to de-emphasize mission to the poor, preferring to channel their growing social concern towards opposing communism, secularization, abortion, and more recently, gay marriage.

However, while less in the public eye than contenders against these controversial issues, American evangelicals gradually increased their efforts on behalf of the poor. Beginning in the early 1950s, the movement toward engagement with poverty was given powerful impetus as evangelicals founded a number of increasingly prominent relief and development organizations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, these beginnings expanded rapidly, as missions conferences, popular evangelical periodicals, intentional Christian communities, mass-market books and even television telethons all promoted

evangelical concern about poverty, sometimes in radical terms. By the turn of the twenty-first century, most evangelicals, at least rhetorically, embraced some form of outreach to the poor as a non-negotiable part of their perceived mission.

### Thesis

The first goal of this study is simply to expand on the paragraphs above, telling the story of how missions to the poor came to have such a prominent place in post-World War II evangelicals' social concern. Evangelical activism confronting poverty has not yet been adequately analyzed by scholars.<sup>7</sup> There are three reasons for its relative scholarly neglect. The first is chronological. The history of American evangelicalism has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years, but the bulk of the work has concentrated on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while the post-World War II twentieth century is only just beginning to be treated.<sup>8</sup> James T. Fisher summarizes the state of the field: "The remarkable upsurge in public and scholarly attention afforded evangelicalism in the 1990s temporarily obscured the large gaps in recent historical scholarship on the tradition. There is still no full-scale interpretive study of

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<sup>7</sup> According to Donald Miller, "It used to be that only liberal mainline congregations were engaged in serving the poor and dispossessed of our society, while conservative and Pentecostal churches were busy praying and worrying about personal holiness—or at least this is how the story was commonly told. Whether this account is true is for future historians to sort out." This dissertation takes up Miller's challenge. Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Examples of the excellent work focusing on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century American evangelicalism include Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991).

evangelicalism in the period since the 1960s.”<sup>9</sup> The few who do skillfully interpret twentieth century developments rarely extend their inquiry beyond the 1940s.<sup>10</sup> The paucity of historical scholarship in the post-World War II period is especially evident in the sub-field of missions history. Despite their rapid growth, American evangelical missions have received few historical treatments, and missions to the poor even fewer.<sup>11</sup> Since the publication of Timothy L. Smith’s *Revivalism and Social Reform*, historians have brought to light previously neglected aspects of evangelicalism’s social concern, including issues of poverty. Like the field as a whole, however, this scholarship has mostly confined itself to the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this study’s chronological focus adds significant new material.

Second, evangelical mission to the poor has been understudied for political reasons. Much analysis of contemporary evangelism has tried to interpret the political

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Christophe and Roy Rosenzweig Agnew, ed. *A Companion to Post-1945 America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 56.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Dana Lee Robert, *Occupy until I Come: A.T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003); Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Arguably the best historical monograph on post-World War II evangelicalism is George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> The most first important scholarly publication on twentieth century evangelical missions was Joel A. Carpenter, Wilbert R. Shenk, and Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (Wheaton Ill.), *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990). It remains the most invaluable resource on the topic.

<sup>12</sup> Representative works include Norris A. Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1856-1920* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1977); Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: the New York City Mission Movement, 1812-1870* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971); Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828-1860* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

proclivities of evangelicals for a broader audience seeking to understand the new conservative force in American politics.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, political scientists and sociologists have touched upon this dissertation's topic, but "poverty" has often been subsumed under the rubric of "social concern" and political involvement. Therefore, specific focus on the issue of poverty has been overlooked, with more contentious political issues gaining the spotlight. In order to more deeply understand evangelical social activism, it is necessary to move beyond the right-wing political campaigns and support for conservative social issues that have dominated scholars' and journalists' attention to this point.

Third, the best analyses of evangelical missions to the poor have been carried out by missiologists who have carefully tracked the debates emanating from a series of landmark evangelical missions conferences.<sup>14</sup> However, despite their important impact, high-level conferences were only one of the factors generating change in the discourse of

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<sup>13</sup> For a representative sample from both secular and religious perspectives see Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Erling Jorstad, *Popular Religion in America: The Evangelical Voice* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005); Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987); Richard V. Pierard, *The Unequal Yoke: Evangelical Christianity and Political Conservatism* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); Christian Smith, *Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Robert Booth Fowler, *A New Engagement: Evangelical Political Thought, 1966-1976* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) includes some excellent material on evangelicals' preoccupation with world hunger in the 1970s.

<sup>14</sup> Leading examples include Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology, 1948-1975* (Pasadena, Ca: William Carey Library, 1979); Charles E. Van Engen, "A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission," in Carpenter, *Earthen Vessels*; Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982); John R. W. Stott, *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997). See also Efiang S. Utuk, "From Wheaton to Lausanne" in James Scherer and Steven Bevans, *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1992), 99-112; C. Rene Padilla, "Classic Holistic: Evangelism and Social Responsibility - From Wheaton '66 to Wheaton '83," *Transformation*, July/September 1985, 9-18.

evangelical missions to the poor.<sup>15</sup> This study will complement these missiological/theological analyses by providing wider historical, social, and organizational contexts for the developments that were given expression by missions conferences.

Besides filling in gaps in scholarship, narrating the story of evangelical mission to the poor is significant because it reveals important insights about the development of evangelical identities and worldviews in the post-World War II period. In order to understand evangelicals, it is necessary to come to terms with the theory and practice of their missions movements, for missions are a defining aspect of evangelical self-understanding. British historian David Bebbington placed the *activism* that drove missions close to the heart of the historical phenomenon of evangelicalism.<sup>16</sup> If Bebbington is correct and his definition applies to post-World War II American context, then a narrative that tracks fundamental shifts in activism will be indispensable for understanding the entirety of the movement.

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<sup>15</sup> Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992) provides an interesting contrast to the present study. Dorr tracks the last hundred years of Catholic social teaching by analyzing the authoritative documents produced by the Vatican, an approach not available to the scholar of evangelicalism with its lack of hierarchy and clear ecclesial identity.

<sup>16</sup> David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17. Mark Noll has also identified activism as a defining evangelical trait: "The evangelical ethos is activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian. It allows little space for broader or deeper intellectual effort because it is dominated by the urgencies of the movement." However, this study will demonstrate that, at least within the field of missions to the poor, the intellectual effort that did emerge was in fact produced by engaged intellectuals who were immersed in the urgencies of the movement. Whether it was broad or deep will be for the reader to judge. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 12.

This dissertation argues that post-World War II evangelicals produced three such fundamental shifts. In the 1950s the first widely propagated approach established concern for the needs of the poor as a legitimate aspect of missions work, primarily in terms of providing compassionate charity for individual emergencies. This model, which cohered neatly with evangelicalism's individualism and emotionalism, should perhaps be regarded as the quintessential, bedrock evangelical theory of mission to the poor. Second, in the 1970s, a strong countercurrent emerged which advocated for penitent protest against structural injustice and underdevelopment. In contrast to the first model, it was distinguished by going against the grain of many aspects of evangelical culture, especially its reflexive patriotism and individualism. Third, as the twentieth century came to a close, an important movement towards developing potential through hopeful holism gained prominence. It sought to produce a more sophisticated theoretical framework that integrated the strengths of the first two models with contemporary insights from the wider development community.

Each of these models of mission to the poor brought with it highly variant perspectives on the world, the divine mission, and individuals' places within that mission;<sup>17</sup> each implied different views of politics, economics, society, and theology. In addition to their impact "on the field," these models considerably shaped the identity and worldviews of American evangelicals themselves as they encountered them through fundraising, promotion, advertising, and theological debate. But the influence was not

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<sup>17</sup> This work will follow the understanding of theological models used in Avery Dulles' *Models of Revelation*, succinctly defined as "a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated." Cited in Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Rev. and expanded ed., Faith and Cultures Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002).



uniform. Models that emerged later did not supplant earlier ones, but added new options to the mix, so that by 2005, a diverse and eclectic kaleidoscope of ministries thrived. Scholars have noted the increasing diversity and fragmentation of evangelicalism as the twentieth century wound down; this work demonstrates that mission to the poor paralleled, reinforced, and hastened the rising disunity.

### **Scope**

Regarding disciplinary orientation, the dissertation is a work of history. It analyzes printed sources and archival material in order to discern emergent patterns and themes. It then places these patterns into a broader social, political, and theological context in order to understand the implications for the social movement under consideration. This work does not primarily attempt to offer value judgments on the material it analyzes or to construct a normative evangelical missiology of poverty.

More specifically, it is a work of church history (and more specifically still, of mission history). This sub-disciplinary orientation turns the study's focus away from extended consideration of the place of evangelical contributions to the wider history of economic development efforts. Post-World War II Evangelical missions to the poor took root in the context of a tremendous flourishing of engagement with the poor. Western governments offered multilateral and bilateral aid to governments in the global South; government agencies such as USAID funded and administered projects; a relentlessly growing host of Western international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), both secular, Catholic, and mainline Protestant, attacked poverty at the level of short-term

relief, long-term development, and structural advocacy; and a vibrant sector of grassroots organizations empowered the poor in their own countries and communities.

Nevertheless, the primary purpose of this study is to determine the imprint of evangelical missions to the poor on the self-identity and worldview of its own ecclesiastical community, not to analyze evangelicalism's place within this vast ferment. Although these developments will be treated when they directly influenced or paralleled evangelical efforts, this study is not primarily a contribution to the history of relief and development work *per se*.

Because the boundaries and identity of "evangelicalism" are strongly contested, they must be carefully defined for the purposes of this study. The most frequent definitional approach, followed by theologians and some historians, has circumscribed the boundaries of evangelicalism by positing a set of essential doctrinal beliefs and/or religious attitudes that serve as a litmus test for whether an individual or group should be labeled "evangelical."<sup>18</sup> This has led to a cottage industry of rival judgments about the correct criteria for inclusion, whether evangelicalism is a bounded or centered set, which groups should be included, and whether the term is useful at all.<sup>19</sup>

However, this dissertation does not attempt to provide a normative definition for evangelicalism in a sociological or theological sense. In the present study, "Evangelical"

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<sup>18</sup> Bebbington is perhaps the most influential historian using this approach; see note 16 above. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, Ch. 1. For a 'Reformed' definition of evangelicalism, see George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 4-5. This view is critiqued from a Holiness/Methodist perspective by Donald Dayton, "Donald Dayton Replies [to George Marsden]." *Christian Scholar's Review* VII (2, 3): 207-210.

<sup>19</sup> One volume entirely devoted to this debate is Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, *The Varieties of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

refers to the group of post-World War II American Protestants, initially with fundamentalist backgrounds, who self-consciously appropriated the name *evangelical* or *neo-evangelical* in order to distinguish themselves from separatist fundamentalism on the right, and the liberal Protestantism of the World Council of Churches on the left.

Although the term was chosen to signify a new phase in American conservative Protestantism, it was also intended to hearken back to eighteenth and nineteenth century Anglo-American Protestants who also called themselves “evangelical.” The National Association of Evangelicals, founded in 1942, gave initial organizational expression to the movement, which went on to inspire the creation of a related cluster of institutions, including (but not limited to) the periodical *Christianity Today*, Fuller Theological Seminary, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and Campus Crusade for Christ. The movement’s leaders preached in each others’ churches, served on each others’ advisory boards, wrote articles for each others’ periodicals, and attended the same conferences. For their followers, sometimes described as “card-carrying” Evangelicals, loyalty to the Evangelical movement was often more important than denominational affiliation.

Since the early 1970, as the movement has grown, those who claim the term “Evangelical” have reflected greater theological, denominational, and sociological diversity, which has sometimes been resisted by the white, male, Reformed ethos of the first generation leadership. However, self-identifying American Evangelicals still formed a coherent enough grouping to justify this researcher’s choice of them as a focus of study.

From the preceding paragraphs forward, the movement described above will be indicated with an upper case “E,” (Evangelical) whereas a lower case “e” (evangelical) denotes the wider historical movement that began in Europe in the late seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> It is essential to recognize that even in the post-World War II period, the post-fundamentalist Evangelicals that are the focus of this study were only one sub-set of conservative Protestants with “evangelical” characteristics. Christian Smith helpfully reinforces this point: “The broad wing of ‘conservative Protestantism’, in fact, comprises a conglomeration of varied subgroups that differ on many issues and sometimes clash significantly. Among these are major groups that are properly known as pentecostals, fundamentalists, evangelicals, and charismatics. Cutting across these to a certain extent are the black churches, which constitute yet another major segment of conservative Protestantism. Each of these groups has its own history, formative concerns, characteristic tendencies, and organizational location.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in this study, “fundamentalist” denotes American conservative Protestants between 1910 and 1945 who adopted that term to describe their opposition to theological liberalism and, as they saw it, their faithful adherence to historic Christian orthodoxy. From 1945 onward, “fundamentalist” refers to those conservative Protestants who preferred the term to Evangelical, often because they viewed them as insufficiently separatist. The term

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<sup>20</sup> This practice is adapted from David Lewis’s usage in *Lighten our Darkness*, in which he distinguished Anglican Evangelicals from dissenting evangelicals.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.), 36; see also Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War 2* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 237: “The post-fundamentalist party of Evangelical leaders and their institutions” were very influential on the broader Evangelical mosaic.

“conservative Protestant” will at times be used synonymously with “evangelical” to signify the full range of Protestants who distinguished themselves from theological liberals.

For the purposes of this study, “missions to the poor” signifies organized, collective, religiously-motivated action for the sake of ameliorating grave social or material privation. The term is needed because the dissertation’s goal is to track the place of engaging the physical/social needs of the poor within the evangelical understandings of missions as a whole. It serves as an umbrella term tying together activities that were described with great semantic variety. Within popular evangelical discourse, “missions to the poor” denotes “meeting emergency needs,” “holistic mission,” “transformational development,” “relief and development,” “mercy ministry,” “social justice,” among others. The evolution of these terms and the sometimes-contentious competition among them is a central concern of the dissertation, but a singular phrase which encompasses them all is necessary.

Missiologists now commonly differentiate between “mission,” meaning God’s work in the world, and “missions,” which refers to the particular means by which the church participates in God’s mission (*missio Dei*). This distinction is useful because it recognizes that 1) all of the church’s outreach to the “world” has its origin in God’s concern for the world, but it is not the sum total of God’s work in the world; 2) God’s concern for the world (and thus the church’s) includes many aspects, including the spiritual, physical, social, and emotional aspects of human flourishing, as well as the well-being of nature and the environment. This dissertation follows this usage, and will

therefore commonly use the term “missions” (plural) since it focuses on the activities of a particular segment of the Christian community.

The word “poor” also serves as an umbrella term referring to those who suffer grave material privation. Again, it is the sources’ variation in *who counts as poor* that interests this researcher, so there is no need here to enter into the increasingly sophisticated normative definitions offered by economists and social scientists.<sup>22</sup>

Within Evangelical missions to the poor, this dissertation concentrates exclusively on parachurch agencies led by “organic intellectuals.” It contends that this sector contained the key shapers of the topic under consideration. Two points are necessary to explicate this contention. First, parachurch organizations were the driving force of post-World War II American Evangelicalism, as they have been in many other evangelical movements since the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> Robert Wuthnow has gone so far as to identify reliance on parachurches as Evangelicalism’s central operating principle: “it functioned chiefly as a ‘parachurch’ movement—as a cluster of loosely integrated special purpose groups devoted to the cause of evangelism.”<sup>24</sup> Joel Carpenter echoed this judgment when he called parachurch agencies “the dominant organizational form of late-

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<sup>22</sup> For example, Amartya Sen’s influential *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999) can be seen as a book-length argument for redefining what is meant by ‘poor.’

<sup>23</sup> For other historical examples see Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians; the Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1961), Chapter 9—“Ten Thousand Compassions”; William H. Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism: Theology and Praxis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997); Henry Rack, “Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987), 582ff.

<sup>24</sup> Wuthnow, 177. Wuthnow goes on to claim that this typically evangelical organizational structure has come to define all of American religious life: “Special purpose, nondenominational religious agencies...are becoming the focus of American Christians’ religious identity and the channels of their religious activity” (239-40).

twentieth century American evangelicalism.”<sup>25</sup> Further, Nathan Hatch claimed that parachurches were not merely an organizational format, but should be seen as the most important shapers of Evangelical identity. He wrote: “The organizational structures that house the throbbing heart of evangelicalism are not denominations at all, but the special-purpose parachurch agencies that sometimes seem as numberless as the stars in the sky...Parachurch groups have . . . invent[ed] wholly new categories of religious activities to take into the marketplace, and then transmit[ted] back in to the denominations an explicitly nondenominational version of evangelical Christianity.”<sup>26</sup> This entire study can be seen as an exposition of the dynamic identified by Hatch, using missions to the poor as a case study. As a side-benefit, focusing on parachurch organizations also contributes to closing a gap in scholarship, for, despite their increasingly broad influence, “students of American religion have generally paid little attention to these kinds of organizations, relative to the extraordinary interest that has been devoted to churches and denominations.”<sup>27</sup>

Second, in the Evangelical arena, the typical parachurch agency was founded by a charismatic leader who functioned as the face and voice of the organization, especially in the early years. These founder-leaders can be helpfully understood as “organic

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<sup>25</sup> Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Nathan O. Hatch with Michael S Hamilton, “Epilogue,” in D. G. Hart and Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (Wheaton Ill.), *Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), 398.

<sup>27</sup> Wuthnow, 101. However, since Wuthnow made this statement, scholarship on Evangelical parachurch organizations has become more vigorous. One recent example of this trend is John G. Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

intellectuals.” This term comes from Antonio Gramsci, who contrasted “traditional” or “specialist” intellectuals such as “scientists, theoreticians, [and] non-ecclesiastical philosophers” with “organic” intellectuals who arise within every social class as “leaders (specialist plus politician)” in order to pe their groups’ “homogeneity and consciousness.”<sup>28</sup> The intellectual work of these individuals consists of “being actively involved in practical life, as a builder, and organizer, ‘permanently persuasive.’”<sup>29</sup> Unlike traditional academics, “specialists” who believe their intellectual pursuits to be autonomous, free from the interests of a particular social class, organic intellectuals’ work is inseparable from, and evolves within their social class-experience. Although Gramsci developed the concept of the organic intellectual within the context of Italian communism, it remains useful outside of Marxist analysis. In this study, the term more accurately describes the social role of evangelical parachurch leaders than other options such as “public intellectual” or “popularizer.”

Because of the voluntarist, populist, and democratic tendencies of evangelical movements, organic intellectuals were an especially important influence on evangelical identity and worldview, even at the grassroots level. Religious studies scholars typically distinguish between “official” religion, characterized by the authorized pronouncements and theorizing of the institutional hierarchy, and “popular” religion, in which average adherents construct their own religious meaning in ways that may be strikingly at

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince, and Other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 118.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.



variance from approved viewpoints.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, within the freewheeling, entrepreneurial world of evangelicalism, the gap between “official” and “popular” religion was much smaller, since grassroots believers were free to gravitate towards whatever leaders they found persuasive. If at any point they disagreed, they could simply cease to give their money, read their literature, volunteer for their cause, or attend their meetings. The organic intellectuals profiled in these pages were influential not because they were elected by a council or appointed by a hierarchy, but because their message generated money, loyalty, action, and commitment. Thus, this dissertation is justified in following key organic intellectuals and the organizations they led as a means to tracking Evangelical identity and worldview.

Since even the limiting of this work’s scope to parachurches opens a potential field of hundreds of organizations, it has been necessary to restrict analysis to a smaller number of the most influential groups and organic intellectuals. The organization that receives by far the most extensive treatment is World Vision, described by one journalist as the Evangelical “colossus of care.”<sup>31</sup> World Vision was the oldest, the largest, the best-funded, and the best-known organization throughout every year covered by this study, and deserves its pride of place. It produced several front-line organic intellectuals, including its founder Bob Pierce, Stanley Mooneyham, and Bryant Myers, in addition to

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<sup>30</sup> In American contemporary Christianity, frequently cited examples are the birth control practices of American Catholics, which are much more permissive than official teaching would allow, and the disjunction between many theologically liberal mainline Protestant clergy and their relatively traditional congregations.

<sup>31</sup> Tim Stafford, “Colossus of Care,” *Christianity Today*, March 2005, accessed at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/march/18.50.html>.

a highly sophisticated “media machine” of journalistic professionals. A second tier of organizations that concentrated their work overseas also receives consideration, including Food for the Hungry (Larry Ward/Ted Yamamoto), Samaritan’s Purse (Pierce/Franklin Graham), and Compassion International (Everett Swanson/Wes Stafford). Groups with a strong focus on the domestic scene are represented by Sojourners (Jim Wallis), Evangelicals for Social Action (Ronald Sider), and the Christian Community Development Association (John Perkins). Since the primary goal of this work is to identify and analyze the main players and seminal themes animating evangelical mission to the poor rather than to provide encyclopedic coverage, many other important and deserving contributors have been treated only cursorily, including World Relief, MAP International, *Other Side* magazine, World Concern, Opportunity International, International Justice Mission and Habitat for Humanity.

Since this study’s central concern is to understand the impact missions to the poor had on American evangelical identity and worldview, it will be primarily concerned with the discourse produced by organic intellectual-led parachurch agencies. Following Raymond Apthorpe and Des Gasper, discourse is defined as “coherent sets of references that frame the way we understand and act upon the world around us” and as “... an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena.”<sup>32</sup> The “ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories” that made up parachurch organizations’ theories of mission to the poor were transmitted to the American Evangelical public through books, magazines, mass mailings, advertisements,

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<sup>32</sup> Raymond J. Apthorpe and D. Gasper, *Arguing Development Policy: Frames and Discourses* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), 2.

television, conferences, church outreach programs, films, and web sites. These various kinds of mass media generated by organic intellectuals and their organizations make up the main primary sources on which this dissertation draws.

The most accessible primary source materials were popular books and periodicals. Most were published by mass-market evangelical publishers such as InterVarsity Press, Baker Book House, Eerdmans, and Word. Some books, like Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, have the global poor as their central concern; others, such as Wallis' *Agenda for Biblical People*, have a broader focus on discipleship, ethics, or practical theology but deal substantially with the topic at hand. Articles addressing mission to the poor appeared frequently in flagship evangelical periodicals such as *Christianity Today*, *Eternity*, and *Christian Herald* as well as more "radical" publications like *Sojourners*, *The Other Side*, and *Prism* (published by Evangelicals for Social Action). Relief and development agencies also published their own periodicals to promote their ministry and inform donors about ongoing work. These valuable publications include *World Vision*, *World Vision Magazine*, *Heartline* (World Vision), *World Relief Report*, *Compassion Update*, *Compassion at Work*, and *ChildLink* (Compassion International).

Other print materials disseminated by agencies include appeals for funds through mass mailings, magazine advertisements, and collection boxes placed in public areas. These were useful sources because they reveal what organizations chose to communicate when they were allotted only a few words. They also indicated the demographic each agency was hoping to reach—some aimed at a broader public; others tied themselves more closely to the evangelical subculture. Several organizations produced extensive

programs for churches that attempted to aid local congregations in raising awareness about poverty. The programs included printed material, multimedia presentations, sermon helps for pastors, and activities for youth groups. For example, World Vision's *Thirty Hour Famine* was a full-day, comprehensive program in which participants "experience" hunger through fasting together. Finally, annual reports were a concise, publicly accessible means of tracking the growth and changing emphases of each organization.

Several agencies have, throughout their histories, used films and video to reach a broad audience. Originally shown in church basements and fellowship halls (World Vision founder Bob Pierce was one of the first evangelicals to make his own films),<sup>33</sup> these productions illustrated the renowned ability of evangelicals to use the latest technology to communicate their message.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the 1970s, World Vision revived its financial fortunes through television telethons, which were a useful source. Recently all major organizations have used video presentations, broadcast on the internet or sent through the mail in VHS/DVD form.

One final source of evangelical discourse on mission to the poor came from the missions conferences sponsored by InterVarsity at Urbana, Illinois. This triennial gathering of college students steadily increased its emphasis on the topic throughout the period and its plenary addresses were often given by the organic intellectuals discussed

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<sup>33</sup> See John Robert Hamilton, "An Historical Study of Bob Pierce and World Vision's Development of the Evangelical Social Action Film" (University of Southern California, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> See chapter 7 of Carpenter, *Revive Us Again* and Quentin J. Schultze, *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media: Perspectives on the Relationship between American Evangelicals and the Mass Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990).

herein. Its proceedings have been preserved by transcription, publication, or A/V recording.

Much of the material not available in libraries was accessed through archives, including World Vision's International Headquarters in Monrovia, CA, where extensive historical records are maintained; the World Vision U.S. film library, in Federal Way, WA; the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, which maintains the most comprehensive archives on American Evangelicalism; and the headquarters of Evangelicals for Social Action in Philadelphia.

Its emphasis on popular discourse links this dissertation to a growing literature within mission studies that has explored how overseas missionaries shaped the worldview of churchgoers "back home" through their letters, reports, and personal visits.<sup>35</sup> Missiologists call this phenomenon *reflex influence*, and the present study adds to this stream of enquiry.

However, a focus on the publically available discourse of these organizations also results in significant limitations. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to write institutional histories of the organizations considered or detailed biographies of their leaders. Such an undertaking would have quickly overinflated the scope of the project and would have required access to "insider information" revealing organizational inner workings—information carefully guarded by groups who must continually burnish their image in order to maintain trustworthiness in the eyes of the public. Of course, the

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<sup>35</sup> See Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2003) and Dana L. Robert, "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 12.1, Winter 2002, 59-89.

dissertation does cover the organizational contexts in sufficient depth to enable a coherent narrative of the social and organizational dynamics from which the discourse about mission to the poor overflowed.

The focus on discourse also shortchanges consideration of the *practice* of poverty amelioration, making it impossible to deal in any depth with what organizations were actually doing on behalf of the poor. Much of what happened “on the field” was reported in the promotional material that is a focus of this study; the point here is that it is impossible to meaningfully investigate potential discrepancies between the discourse of organic intellectuals and actual practice on the ground. Similarly, the study reveals much about how American organic intellectuals constructed the poor and their poverty, but says nothing about what the poor themselves thought of the efforts made on their behalf. Finally, this work emphasizes organizations and intellectuals who invested significant effort contributing to discourse on poverty, which may or may not be closely correlated with actual effective work. Some very effective ministries were able to have a significant impact, but did not engage the American public. For example, MAP International—one of the largest evangelical NGOs—was primarily an allocator of donated pharmaceuticals to the global South, so it had little financial incentive to produce discourse aimed at American Evangelicals.

### **Organization**

Besides the introduction and conclusion, the dissertation is organized into three chronological parts, roughly corresponding to the emergence of three successive generations of Evangelical leadership: 1947-1965, 1966-1983, and 1984-2005. Each part

contains a narrative chapter and an analytical chapter. The former aims to introduce the main shapers of evangelical missions to the poor for the period under consideration, to describe the distinguishing features of each organization, and to provide the social context for their efforts. It considers the role of each organization's social location within the sub-culture of Evangelicalism, the broader American scene, and the cultures in which they did their work.

The latter chapters of each part analyze the discourse of the most important organizations and organic intellectuals. They seek to describe the contours of each new model for missions to the poor that emerged during the corresponding time period. However, the analytical chapters also recognize the continuing resonance of earlier models. These models of missions to the poor, sometimes cohering and sometimes competing, help to clarify the extent to which Evangelicalism was a unified, coherent tradition, and in what ways it was diverse, divided, and contentious.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 1947-1965 NARRATIVE: REINTRODUCING MISSIONS TO THE POOR

#### **Introduction: The Fundamentalist Inheritance**

This chapter tells the story of how post-World War II Evangelicals reintroduced concern for the physical needs of the poor into their discourse of missions from 1947 to 1965. However, the narrative must begin before the Second World War, since it is necessary first to understand how this aspect of missions was marginalized by their fundamentalist forebears. Two aspects of the fundamentalist inheritance were especially decisive.

First, fundamentalists bequeathed to the Evangelicals a tradition of disinterest and even suspicion concerning missions to the poor. Scholars of American evangelicalism now generally agree that the twenty years before World War II marks the nadir of the movement's engagement with broader social issues. By the early 1950s, most historiography of religion tacitly assumed that the social and political withdrawal of contemporary fundamentalism was characteristic of American evangelicalism as a phenomenon. Then in 1957, Timothy L. Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform* persuasively demonstrated that northern antebellum evangelicals were zealously involved in issues such as slavery, temperance, and poverty. Later studies, such as Dayton's *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (1976) and Norris Magnuson's *Salvation in the Slums* (1977) further documented robust evangelical social concern at least through the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, according to Smith, the fundamentalist rejection of



social involvement was anomalous within the broader evangelical tradition, and should therefore be termed *The Great Reversal*.<sup>1</sup>

In 1980 George Marsden further clarified the nature of the Great Reversal, distinguishing between two phases—first, from the end of the Civil War until the turn of the century, in which “interest in political action diminished although it did not disappear among revivalist evangelicals”<sup>2</sup> and second, from approximately 1900-1930, in which “all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalistic evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role.”<sup>3</sup> Marsden argued that the primary cause of this latter Reversal was the Fundamentalist reaction to the liberal Protestant social gospel. The social gospelers’ intense focus on challenging unjust social structures was deeply threatening to Fundamentalists, who strongly believed that missions should consist of personal evangelism and charity for deserving individuals. Therefore, “as the attacks on liberalism heated up, the position that one could have *both* revivalism and social action became increasingly cumbersome to defend.”<sup>4</sup> In the wake of their denominational losses to liberals in the early 1920s and the public ridicule heaped upon them during the 1925 Scopes Trial, fundamentalists had so distanced themselves from all social concern that they had “forgotten the degree to which their predecessors—

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<sup>1</sup> Sociologist David Moberg later expanded on the idea of the Great Reversal with his eponymous monograph (1972, rev. ed. 1977): David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern*, Rev. ed.(Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

and even they themselves—had earlier espoused rather progressive social concerns.”<sup>5</sup>

Joel Carpenter argued that the Great Reversal was almost inevitable. Given their marginalized, defensive status in the 1930s and 1940s, “it would be hard to see how fundamentalists could have developed an activist impulse.”<sup>6</sup> One of the central concerns of post-World War II evangelicals was to challenge this aspect of the fundamentalist inheritance.

Ironically, a second aspect of the fundamentalist legacy served as an essential vehicle by which Evangelicals expressed their social concern. As Carpenter has shown, fundamentalists responded to their marginalization by turning inward; they energetically built their own institutional structures in the hopes of future revival or, preferably, Christ’s premillennial return. Decisively, fundamentalists did not in the main respond to their denominational losses by starting their own break-away denominations. Instead, they “adopted the parachurch pattern of associational life and thrived on it.”<sup>7</sup> The parachurches were special purpose organizations designed to serve the fundamentalist movement’s needs for education, missionary endeavor, radio broadcasting, literature, and the like. Special purpose organizations complementing denominational ecclesiastical structures had been a distinctive part of evangelicalism’s vitality since the seventeenth

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>6</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 107. On the Great Reversal: Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 85, 90; John Stott claimed that the Great Reversal lasted from 1920-1970: John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Old Tappan, N.J.: F.H. Revell, 1990), xi.

<sup>7</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 32.

century,<sup>8</sup> and the fundamentalists eagerly drew on this tradition, thereby achieving “a loose but effective unity by means of this nonaligned institutional network.”<sup>9</sup>

Both these developments, the Great Reversal and the turn to parachurch structures, expressed themselves forcefully in the fundamentalist missions movement that was the immediate precursor to the evangelical missions under investigation in this study. Nowhere was the fundamentalist preference for parachurch organization more pronounced than in their missions agencies. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, “faith” missions agencies had complemented the denominational mission boards. They were typically promoted by premillennialist precursors of fundamentalism such as A.T. Pierson and A.J. Gordon who were eager to declare the Gospel to every creature so that the way would be clear for Christ’s return (cf. Matt 24:14). Faith agencies emphasized rapid deployment on the field, with missionaries’ support provided only “by faith”—that is, with whatever funds were sent in by supporters in response to prayers for God’s provision. Initially, faith missions were not designed to replace denominational missions, but to complement them.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 34 on parachurches in late 19<sup>th</sup> century conservative Protestants.

<sup>9</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 54; parachurches later became a defining feature of late 20<sup>th</sup> century American Protestantism as denominations’ influence began to go into eclipse: according to Wuthnow, 239-40, “it is important to remember who pioneered this new way of organizing religious life . . . fundamentalists brought the parachurch model of religious endeavor to new levels of use and identity-carrying importance . . . beginning with . . . the 1940s these parachurch agencies began to reach beyond fundamentalism and other varieties of sectarian evangelicalism to involve evangelically minded mainline protestants.”

<sup>10</sup> For a judicious overview of early faith missions, see Dana L. Robert, “The Crisis of Missions: Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions” in Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*.

An especially painful consequence of the waning of conservative influence within mainline Protestantism was the steadily waxing liberalization and bureaucratization of denominational mission boards. Therefore, as the fundamentalist/modernist controversy found its way onto the mission fields, established faith missions such as the China Inland Mission and the Sudan Interior Mission began to be “seen by fundamentalists as ‘trustworthy conservators’ of the faith once delivered.”<sup>11</sup> By the early 1930s faith missions had been integrated as a “familiar and fully accepted part of the fundamentalist’s institutional network.”<sup>12</sup>

On the mission field, fundamentalist reliance on parachurch agencies and the Great Reversal reinforced each other. The faith missions’ pre-existing emphasis on evangelism was combined with growing rejection of social concern to produce a mission theory that severely marginalized mission to the poor. Carpenter summarized: “The faith-missions impulse . . . reinforced the movement’s tendency, already well underway since Moody’s day, to narrow the church’s mission to direct evangelization . . . [and] implanted a strong suspicion of social ethics as a missiological concern.”<sup>13</sup> Charles Van Engen was even more forceful in his evaluation: Prewar fundamentalists “articulated only one major goal of mission: the salvation of individual souls.”<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless—and this is crucial for the story that follows—the fundamentalists’ rejection of mission to the poor was much more pronounced in their theory and discourse

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 125, 132.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 210.

than it was in their practice. According to Van Engen, “Fundamentalist and evangelical missions actually carried out significant educational, medical, agricultural, and social projects in the Third World . . . missionaries found that as they fell in love with the people to whom they had been sent, they yearned to help them in any way they could and ended up bringing education, medicine, agriculture, translation, and other things. . . . On the mission field many . . . found themselves far more socio-economically and politically active than they would have considered being in North America.”<sup>15</sup>

### **The Rise of the Evangelicals**

By the time of the Second World War, a new generation of conservative Protestants were emerging. One segment of younger leaders had begun to worry that the fractious, belligerent tone of fundamentalist rhetoric actually impeded unity among conservatives and dampened the possibility of revival within the nation. Thus, in 1943 the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was born. It deliberately chose the word “evangelical” as better suited to represent conservative Protestantism than “fundamentalism,” with all its contentious baggage. Instigated by J. Edwin Wright, whose New England Fellowship was a uniquely cooperative collection of Pentecostals, holiness revivalists, and fundamentalists, and Harold Ockinga, the influential pastor at Boston’s Park Street Church, the NAE attempted to unite conservative Protestants for the sake of promoting national revival.

Yet the NAE suffered the fate of many organizational attempts at unity within the fissiparous history of evangelicalism—it merely added another faction to the dizzying

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Van Engen, “A Broadening Vision” in *Ibid.*, 211.

array of conservative Protestantism. It is true that the NAE's relatively inclusive tone (within the strict boundaries of doctrinal orthodoxy and scriptural inerrancy) drew together a previously disparate sub-section of Pentecostals, holiness revivalists, small peace churches and moderate fundamentalists. It also united conservatives across regional frontiers and forged "a tighter national network among previously isolated centers of evangelical activity scattered around the country . . . it re-established a link between north and south, largely absent since the Civil War."<sup>16</sup>

But the NAE also provoked a harsh reaction from fundamentalists who interpreted its irenic tone as being soft on liberalism; its founding re-ignited the debate between fundamentalists who demanded strict separation from all liberal denominations and those content to co-exist, while working for a return to orthodoxy. Indeed, the counter-attack from separatists kept even such conservative cornerstones as Wheaton College and the Southern Baptist Convention from joining the NAE during its early years. Therefore, "the NAE was treated more as an ordinary parachurch group rather than a normative call to Christian unity."<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, perhaps the best way to understand the NAE is as a rallying center for a variety of parachurch groups that were to form the heart of the new evangelicalism. The fundamentalist penchant for parachurch groups was thus fully integrated into the new Evangelicalism. It effectively integrated and helped to further coordinate the fundamentalist organizations that were near its heart. Joel Carpenter explains how the

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<sup>16</sup> Wuthnow, 174.

<sup>17</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 159.

NAE served as a vital link between fundamentalist parachurches and the structure of the new emerging Evangelicalism: “the NAE’s provision for individual and parachurch memberships was vitally important . . . the NAE’s founders implicitly recognized this parachurch pattern of organization and tried to accommodate it . . . the actual influence of the NAE came not so much from the formal membership as from the networks into which it was connecting. Fundamentalism’s weblike organizational structure, linked by parachurch ministries, endured, expanded, and exported itself to other evangelicals.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is clear that the parachurch organizations of the sort under scrutiny in this study were, from the first, key players in influencing the identity of the new Evangelical movement. Many of the new parachurches came to be nearly synonymous with Evangelicalism—evangelistic associations like Youth for Christ and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, schools like Fuller Seminary, and publishing centers like *Christianity Today*,<sup>19</sup> Eerdmans and Zondervan.

Evangelicalism’s break with fundamentalism must not be overplayed. Despite its self-conscious desire to differentiate itself from the excesses of fundamentalism, the nascent post-World War II Evangelical movement could be seen as a wing of fundamentalism at least until the late 1950s,<sup>20</sup> when Evangelical leaders began to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>19</sup> They were, in many respects, unimaginably successful. At the start, each bi-weekly issue of *Christianity Today* was sent to 160,000 Protestant ministers and seminary students (thanks to the generous patronage of Sun Oil magnate J. Howard Pew); at the end of the first year, the number of paid subscriptions was at 38,000—some 4,000 beyond the total of their more established liberal rival, the *Christian Century*.

<sup>20</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 152.

distinguish themselves much more sharply and polemically. Nevertheless, as Carpenter summarizes, the NAE “unleashed an idea, a new collective identity, and a dynamic force for religious initiatives. ‘Evangelicalism’ had been born.”<sup>21</sup>

### Reversing the Great Reversal

For the purposes of this study, the most telling feature of the slow divorce between Evangelicals clustered around the NAE and fundamentalists was their rejection of the fundamentalist disengagement from the surrounding culture, or, in a phrase, their reversing of the Great Reversal. Henry’s *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, cited in the opening paragraphs of this study, is certainly the best-known call to return to social engagement, and deserves its symbolic place as the beginning point for the re-opening of the door for evangelical mission to the poor. Nevertheless, *Uneasy Conscience* was somewhat vague on specifics. When Henry spoke in more concrete terms, they were often concerned with growing secularism, whether it was taking root through “godless” universities and mainstream media in the US or “godless” communism abroad. This was certainly congruent with many early Evangelical leaders’ approach to social re-engagement.

According to the influential interpretations of Joel Carpenter and George Marsden, most of Evangelicalism’s early leaders were not thinking specifically about issues that would now be termed “social justice.” Instead, their main preoccupation was intellectual respectability. They felt that unless evangelicals produced quality scholarship

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 160; Evangelicalism’s gradual drift away from fundamentalism was perhaps complete by 1959, when Fuller professor Edward Carnell famously called fundamentalism “orthodoxy gone cultic.” As quoted in Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (1997), 115.



that was recognized by “the world” as excellent, they would never win a hearing among the influential sectors of society. Thus, for Carpenter and Marsden, the driving force behind evangelicalism’s newfound social engagement was a small coterie of highly-educated scholars and sympathetic pastors whose founding of Fuller Seminary in 1947 was “a truly epochal event, the beginning of a new age for evangelicalism.”<sup>22</sup> This longing for intellectual respectability was so evident that it was lampooned by some fundamentalists, one of whom defined Evangelical leaders as “people who say to liberals, ‘I’ll call you a Christian if you’ll call me a scholar’.”<sup>23</sup>

The Marsden/Carpenter approach is clearly an important expression of the re-emergence of Evangelical social concern, but one that needs to be supplemented by influences from the burgeoning theater of missions activity. The remainder of this chapter argues that nascent evangelical social concern had an additional source, found not in the apologetics of Fuller professors, but in direct encounters with raw human suffering in Asia.

### The Evangelical Missions Explosion

During the post-World War II era mainline Protestant missions grew slowly in number or even declined—with many of those who would have become missionaries instead devoting their efforts to “secular” economic development efforts. In contrast, Evangelicals took advantage of new possibilities to found a number of agencies that would come to define the lion’s share of Western missions activity. As Richard Pierard

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<sup>22</sup> Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 241.

and Joel Carpenter have demonstrated, evangelicals' firsthand experience of the war was a primary factor in this flurry of missions activity. Pierard observed a life trajectory common to many of those who founded new agencies: frequently they were first impacted by overseas needs as soldiers, then went to Bible school on the GI bill; often their new agencies were even able to buy American war materiel such as planes and jeeps for their newly sanctified purpose.<sup>24</sup> Fresh experience of war also influenced rhetoric, as leaders frequently used bellicose images to recruit "troops" for the missions surge. Finally, zeal for missions was intensified by post-World War II geopolitical realities. As communism spread and nationalism spawned more new nations resistant to missionary incursion, evangelicals sensed that they must act decisively while they still had the chance. For example, one agency characteristically urged missionaries to go to "the Orient, a suspicious land that is fast closing its doors to the white man."<sup>25</sup>

The new evangelical missions sector was not, at first glance, a likely candidate for the rediscovery of evangelical social engagement. True to their fundamentalist roots, the vast majority of Evangelical missions—whether denominational agencies or parachurches in the faith tradition—devoted themselves overwhelmingly to proclamation evangelism. New frontiers for proselytization were opened up, for example, through technologies newly accessible to agencies such as radio broadcasting (HCJB radio in Quito, Ecuador), and aviation (Missionary Aviation Fellowship). Mission theorists began to incorporate sociology into their strategies for effective evangelization. A seminal

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<sup>24</sup> Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 170; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 180.

<sup>25</sup> Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 164; Advertisement for film *New China Challenge*, *World Vision Magazine*, October/November 1957, 9.

contribution was *Bridges of God* (1957), in which Donald McGavran observed that many cultures converted *en masse*, not individually, as in the West, and argued that “people movements” of this kind should be encouraged and even become the primary focus of evangelistic efforts.

However, a few new Evangelical agencies went beyond their immediate predecessors by including mission to the poor as a major facet of their theory and practice. Three of these agencies became long-standing leaders in evangelical mission to the poor: World Relief, the Everett Swanson Evangelistic Association (later known as Compassion International), and World Vision. World Relief was founded first. In 1944, the NAE launched the War Relief Commission, a subsidiary dedicated to providing food and clothing aid to European civilians displaced by World War II. Along with a whole host of American civic groups and organizations, Evangelical groups organized similar wartime efforts, including Youth for Christ, which was to figure prominently in World Vision’s early history. But after the war, the NAE sustained its work, renaming it “World Relief” in 1950. Through the 1950s and early 1960s its activity expanded modestly.<sup>26</sup> By 1960 World Relief continued to devote itself mainly to a means of livelihood for war widows, supporting orphanages, and distributing food and evangelical tracts.<sup>27</sup> In the early 1960s they extended their work to Taiwan, Vietnam, and Egypt. Because World Relief was funded mostly through the NAE, it did not take up extensive public

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<sup>26</sup> According to the 1961 NAE Annual Report, World Relief’s income rose from \$52,000 in 1955 to \$114,000 (not including Gifts in Kind [GIK]) in 1960. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>27</sup> In 1960, 6 million pounds of food worth \$346,000 and clothing worth \$142,000 was shipped to Korea and Germany; in Korea 177 feeding stations served 30,000 people. 1961 NAE Annual Report, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

advertising for fundraising and therefore made a lesser impact on the American Evangelical public.

Compassion International traced its roots to 1952, when a Swedish-American travelling evangelist named Everett Swanson found his way to Korea, where, according to his figures, 30,000 South Korean troops responded to his message of salvation. On one early morning walk Swanson noticed sanitation workers gently kicking small piles of rags that lay here and there on the sidewalk. To his horror, Swanson soon realized that the piles of rags were homeless children, and the sanitation workers were gathering the bodies of those who had died overnight. When a missionary colleague asked him, “What do you intend to do about it?” Swanson took the challenge as a divine calling. Two years later Swanson initiated a sponsorship program that enabled Americans to provide shelter, care and Bible lessons to Korean orphans. As he promoted the program during his evangelistic travels, the number of orphans sponsors grew steadily. The tally jumped more quickly when, in 1959, Swanson began to publicize his work in national magazines like *Readers Digest*; by the following year 10,000 orphans had been sponsored. In 1960 Swanson also undertook “Operation Long Underwear” which provided 6,000 children with warm winter clothes. In 1963, inspired by Matthew 15:32,<sup>28</sup> the organization was renamed Compassion, Inc.; only two years later, Swanson passed away.<sup>29</sup> The fact that Swanson, a successful evangelist but not a nationally recognized leader, could garner

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<sup>28</sup> “I have compassion on the multitude. I will not send them away hungry,” as cited by Swanson on early organizational letterhead, etc.

<sup>29</sup> For more detail on Compassion’s presentation of its early history, see *Compassion at Work*, Spring 2002; *Compassion Magazine*, September/October 1992; and Corp. Author Compassion International, *One : Celebrating 50 Years of Compassion* (Colorado Springs, Co.: Compassion International, 2002).

such a significant response by himself was indicative of Evangelicals' willingness to become involved with ministries of compassion if given the opportunity. His experience was closely paralleled by another American evangelical leader who founded a similar organization, but on a much larger scale. This third organization, World Vision, was clearly the leading voice for re-introducing mission to the poor into American Evangelicalism, and their story will occupy the remainder of this chapter.

### **The Founding of World Vision**

Like World Relief and Compassion, World Vision reintroduced this previously neglected aspect of fundamentalist missions not by taking an oppositional stance or by importing the missions practices of other Christian traditions. Rather, World Vision validated, supported, publicized, and expanded the practical work among the poor already being carried out by conservative Protestant missionaries. Despite the suppression of concern for the poor in fundamentalist mission rhetoric, World Vision's approach reveals that, on the field, conservative missionaries continued to respond compassionately to the needs of the poor as they encountered them. As World Vision re-energized this underappreciated aspect of their work by lavishing publicity upon it, mission to the poor gained a new visibility and expanded rapidly. In order to better understand how this came about, it is necessary to sketch out the events leading to World Vision's founding and the patterns of its early institutional culture.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The following account relies on primary source materials as well as two popular institutional histories entitled Graeme S. Irvine, *Best Things in the Worst Times: An Insider's View of World Vision* (Wilsonville, OR: Book Partners, 1996) and Norman B. Rohrer, *Open Arms* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1987).

World Vision's origins were intimately linked with another prominent Evangelical parachurch organization. Youth for Christ sought to bring revival to young people through thousands of high-profile rallies across the U.S. in the 1940s and early 1950s. Its early leadership was a seedbed for many patriarchs of later twentieth century evangelicalism, including Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision. When Pierce first joined Youth for Christ in 1943, he had dropped out of a small Nazarene college,<sup>31</sup> turned his back on ministry for a time, and struggled to make ends meet as pastor of a small Baptist church.<sup>32</sup> But as an itinerant evangelist in the Pacific Northwest, Pierce became a popular speaker, and later became a vice-president of Youth for Christ. He formed connections that later provided many of World Vision's key leaders and supporters. Billy Graham, who also got his start through Youth for Christ, was World Vision's chairman of the board of trustees for several years in the 1950s;<sup>33</sup> Ted Engstrom, World Vision's longtime vice-president and later president, had been Youth for Christ's executive director. Pierce also attracted other frontline Evangelical figures into key leadership roles. Larry Ward, *Christianity Today's* first managing editor, became World Vision's most influential voice in media and communications (and later founded Food for the Hungry); Richard Halverson, who would later become chaplain of the U.S. Senate, was World Vision's first Vice-President; and Carl F.H. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*

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<sup>31</sup> The Pasadena campus of this Nazarene college later became Ralph Winter's U.S. Center for World Mission.

<sup>32</sup> Despite this denominational affiliation, Pierce claimed that his formative spirituality was Wesleyan: "My spiritual roots lie in the old Methodist Holiness traditions of camp meetings and brush arbors." Bob Pierce, "Lausanne in Retrospect: A Personal View," *World Vision Magazine*, December 1974, 11.

<sup>33</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, August/September 1957, 8.

and writer of *Uneasy Conscience*, served as a theological consultant and speaker at World Vision's conferences for pastors in Asia.

World Vision's story begins in 1947 when Youth for Christ selected the thirty-two year old Pierce to preach at massive evangelistic rallies in China. The crusade imported American-style revivalism translated directly into Chinese. Pierce's results were notable, reportedly reaching tens of thousands and even converting twenty members of General Chiang Kai Shek's personal bodyguard.<sup>34</sup> However, like Swanson, the deepest impressions made on Pierce during his time in China were not his evangelistic successes, but the scale of desperate poverty he encountered, matched only by the dedication of missionaries who ministered compassionately to those who suffered.

In Kunming, he met fellow Californian Beth Albert, who ran a home for lepers through the China Inland Mission, a prominent faith mission. Although Albert's stated purpose was evangelism, she spent most of her time treating leprosy, teaching brick-making as a vocational skill, and caring for the orphans she had taken in. Deeply moved by Albert's lifestyle, Pierce began his long career of conveying to American evangelicals his experiences with the poor scattered across the globe. He wrote in *Youth for Christ Magazine*, "Work among lepers is a thing of joy. Beth Albert is no weird ascetic. She didn't flee to China in order to escape the eyes of Occidental civilization. Beth Albert is a normal, enthusiastic American girl . . . Beth Albert loves the lepers because she has found the will of God for her life."<sup>35</sup> Pierce then went on to exhort Western young

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<sup>34</sup> *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1949, 67.

<sup>35</sup> *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1949, 69.

people to perhaps “find the will of God for their life” by going to work with lepers. This article, with its accompanying graphic pictures of leprosy’s grotesque ravages, surely stood out, appearing as it did in a magazine catering to carefree young people who sought a style of Christianity congruent with their interest in patriotism, wholesome dating and popular music.

Near the end of his 1947 trip, Pierce had an experience that was to form the “founding myth” of World Vision. In Amoy, China he was invited to preach by Dutch Reformed missionary Tena Hoelkeboer, who ran a school for 400 girls. When one of her students, White Jade, informed her father that she had converted to Christianity, he beat her and threw her out of the house. Hoelkeboer was distressed at the prospect of taking on yet another orphan and demanded of Pierce, “What are you going to do about it?” Deeply moved, Pierce emptied his wallet of the \$5.00 it contained and promised to send the same amount every month. Pierce frequently told the story during appeals for funds after showings of his movies, and it became deeply embedded in the organization’s oral tradition. By the 1980s and after, the story was often employed in advertising and was always told in recounting of World Vision’s history. Even at the end of the period of this study, in 2005, White Jade remained central in defining the organization’s identity and approach for its employees and its donors.<sup>36</sup> Because of its deep rhetorical resonance and staying power, it is possible to suggest that if one were to choose a single point in which

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<sup>36</sup> Lori L. Silverman, *Wake Me Up When the Data is Over: How Organizations Use Stories to Drive Results* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 127.



concern for the poor was re-introduced into the discourse of Evangelical missions, it was Pierce's 1947 encounter with White Jade and Hoelkeboer.

After these seminal experiences in China, Pierce began to focus his ministry overseas, making frequent trips to Asia as Youth for Christ's "Missionary Ambassador-at-Large." Three years later, in the spring of 1950, after conducting a major evangelistic campaign in Korea<sup>37</sup>, Pierce was convinced that the coming war would create massive suffering throughout the entire population. He sensed the Holy Spirit impelling him to create his own organization in order to respond full time to the physical and spiritual needs he had encountered.<sup>38</sup> So in the fall, with the initial support of Youth for Christ, Pierce founded World Vision, named after Youth for Christ's "World Vision Rallies". Pierce maintained his presence in Korea after the war broke out by procuring a war correspondent's credentials in order to preach to soldiers. After seeing the excruciating wartime suffering wreaked on Seoul, he famously wrote on the flyleaf of his Bible, "Break my heart with the things that break the heart of God," a phrase that has remained a World Vision watchword ever since. Pierce's early experiences in Asia formed a pattern that was to shape World Vision under his watch.

### **Organizational Culture of Early World Vision**

Organizational theorists speak of a "charismatic founder" period in which an organization is almost completely shaped by the personality and character of its founder. That was certainly true of World Vision during the early period now under consideration.

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<sup>37</sup> Pierce was invited by the Oriental Missionary Society to lead the rallies.

<sup>38</sup> This was the same year that a fellow YFC colleague founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

While Bob Pierce was president, from 1950-1966, the organization's ethos was indelibly marked by his restless energy, spontaneous generosity, personal shortcomings, and practical theology of mission. Functionally, the organization marched to the beat of Pierce's restless travels in Asia. Following the same pattern he established during his early Youth for Christ forays, Pierce's ministry was a constant cycle of evangelistic rallies, visiting missionaries and "national" evangelical leaders, being moved by needs wherever he found them, and returning to the U.S. to raise funds for those he had promised to support. Pierce clearly viewed himself as a continuing bridge between the American evangelical public and the individual needs he encountered in Korea and later in the period, in Formosa, the Philippines, India, and Hong Kong. In his appeal letters and magazine articles Pierce frequently spoke of World Vision as "a missionary go-between,"<sup>39</sup> with himself as "your errand boy for Christ in Asia."<sup>40</sup> In a sense, he considered himself as the essential link between the two, and seemed to expect this arrangement to go on forever. He invited American Evangelicals into a personal relationship with the needy mediated through himself, at least symbolically.

Pierce always remained an evangelist at heart, and he continued to preach frequently throughout his presidency at World Vision. For example, in 1959, World Vision organized and sponsored a widely publicized crusade in Osaka, Japan. Almost a hundred thousand people attended, and Pierce claimed more than 7,500 conversions. But the main thrust of World Vision's work was not in new outreaches or rallies, but in

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<sup>39</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, September 5, 1960, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>40</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, June 5, 1961, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

supporting missions efforts already in progress. This is clearly reflected in Pierce's original vision statement, which serves as a prism revealing how early World Vision "worked." He defined his fledgling agency as follows: "*World Vision is a missionary service organization meeting emergency needs in crisis areas of the world through existing evangelical agencies.*"<sup>41</sup> As a "missionary service organization," World Vision operated definitively within the advancing post-World War II evangelical missions surge. From its inception, World Vision's eponymous magazine was subtitled, "published in the interest of World Evangelism"; throughout its pages, the words *missions* and *missionary* appeared over and over.<sup>42</sup> World Vision's admiration of the direction of existing evangelical missions is also illustrated by the fact that, during a time when many new evangelical missions organizations were sprouting, World Vision positioned itself as an agency advancing the cause of missions "through existing evangelical agencies." Pierce was adamant about not introducing another competing organization with a new angle—he was in full support of the work already in progress.

On the domestic front, World Vision promoted missions awareness and involvement through a wide variety of approaches: they wrote articles on how to make missions interesting for children,<sup>43</sup> ran a missionary placement service, and offered its films free of charge, asking only that an offering be held for the church's own missions

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<sup>41</sup> This statement was reproduced in many places, including *World Vision Magazine*, June 1957, 2.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, *World Vision Magazine*, April 1959.

<sup>43</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, November 1958, 6, 13-14.

program.<sup>44</sup> Like most missions agencies, they encouraged Americans to become missionaries themselves, often by using the heroic work of missionaries encountered by Pierce as a prod. If anything, World Vision's discourse and programs emphasized missions even more strongly as time passed; beginning in 1964 (to 1976), World Vision began holding a Festival of Missions at Winona Lake, Indiana in order to aggressively promote missions (and World Vision!).

Pierce was also deeply committed to aiding the missions effort through supporting "national" Christians, as World Vision called them. He was especially drawn to the pastors of local churches, with whom he reported a fellowship worthy of New Testament times: "our hearts were stirred like in the apostolic days".<sup>45</sup> In order to encourage pastors, World Vision sponsored and organized Pastor's Conferences, in which respected American Evangelical leaders spoke to large gatherings of local pastors. Pastor's Conferences got their start through another dramatic personal encounter. In the mid-1950s one of the many widows of pastors murdered by the North Korean army gave Pierce her wedding ring. She asked Pierce to sell it and use the proceeds to begin a ministry in support of Korean pastors. By 1964 World Vision claimed to have "brought together more than 45,000 Christian nationals (native workers, ministers and evangelists) in 16 different countries,"<sup>46</sup> especially in the Philippines, Korea, and Formosa. In the

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<sup>44</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, December 1957, 6; Norman B. Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1984), p. 94.

<sup>45</sup> World Vision appeal letter, December 25, 1956, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>46</sup> Promotional Brochure for World Vision Missions Conference, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1964, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

words of a popular history of World Vision, “Bob Pierce bent over backward to make certain the humble worker was not overlooked.”<sup>47</sup> Noted missiologist J. Christy Wilson Jr. said of World Vision in 1956, “they are practically the only interdenominational and independent group which works in full cooperation with the established missions on the field and the indigenous churches.”<sup>48</sup> In 1953 World Vision claimed that they had been “paying the salaries of Korean evangelists and supplying equipment, literature, and operating expenses for a large percentage of all evangelism that has been done among the Prisoners of War [*sic*] in the last two years.”<sup>49</sup>

Not content to remain only with the humble, Pierce was especially proud of his connections with prominent Christian political leaders. In order to demonstrate World Vision’s growing influence, he frequently repeated accounts of visiting and praying with luminaries such as Madame Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa and General Sun Yup Paik of Korea, who invited Pierce to preach to the South Korean military, telling him “I want every man in my Army [*sic*] to know about God.”<sup>50</sup>

So far, World Vision has been portrayed as a significant but relatively unexceptional participant in the Evangelical missions advance. But what distinguished

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<sup>47</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 127.

<sup>48</sup> World Vision Annual Report, 1956, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>49</sup> World Vision appeal letter, July 1, 1953, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>50</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1956; see also Pierce’s interview with Korean president Syngman Rhee in World Vision pictorial *Going with God*, n.d., Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

the organization was Pierce's strong emphasis on the social aspects of the ministries he supported. The heart of World Vision's work was not found in planned events such as crusades or pastors' conferences, but in "emergency needs in crisis areas," as Pierce put it in his vision statement. The majority of World Vision's funding and discourse was invested in *Christian social welfare* and *emergency aid*, as it called them in its organizational Basic Objectives.<sup>51</sup> World Vision aimed to respond to acute situations rather than, for example, by planning sustained intervention to fight chronically recurring poverty. Influenced by the context of the Korean War, and perhaps the example of Marshall Plan aid, World Vision saw its role not as providing long-term support which would create systematic change, but as a temporary gap-filler in unanticipated emergencies. Pierce directed World Vision's financial support through two main channels: "the needy National and the unsung missionary hero."<sup>52</sup>

Pierce's primary means of meeting needs was to visit personally. As he uncovered ministries of mercy carried out by nationals and missionaries, he rushed to the rescue. He aimed to stabilize their funding and "scale up" their work by generating donations through lavish stateside publicity. Pierce did not have to look far to find emergencies to alleviate. He encountered faith missionaries whose financial support was spotty, but who had overextended themselves to take in orphans or nurse the sick. He met conservative denominational missionaries who assuaged suffering "on the side" without direct mission board support for that aspect of their ministry. For example, in

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<sup>51</sup> Reproduced in *World Vision Magazine*, August 1958, 38 and many other times.

<sup>52</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, November 28, 1960, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

Japan, Pierce met Irishwoman Irene Webster-Smith, who lost her funding with the Japan Evangelistic Band when she started an orphanage; Pierce later lionized her in his best-selling 1959 travelogue *Let my Heart be Broken*. In Taiwan, he found an important ally in Lillian Dickson of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, who doctored, trained, evangelized, and educated the shunned aborigines living in the remote highlands. Her denomination looked askance at her “extracurricular” works of mercy, as though such vigor from a missionary wife was out of place.<sup>53</sup> But Pierce described her to his American audience in almost hagiographical terms, as the “valiant missionary-saint of Formosa whose compassion for the souls of lepers, babies, orphans, prisoners, and mountain tribes has added many more names to the Lamb’s Book of Life.”<sup>54</sup> For more than ten years she appeared as a frequently-publicized heroine in World Vision material.

Pierce never lost an opportunity to affirm virtuous missionary self-sacrifice, and often cited the spiritual fervor and commitment of those he supported in order to motivate further donations. For example, when Pierce met Gladys Aylward<sup>55</sup> who ran a children’s home on “faith” principles, in a remote corner of China he asked, “Why are you—a single woman, far from home—why are you here in this remote region of China?” She replied, “Because you aren’t.”<sup>56</sup> After telling an inspiring story of a Korean Christian woman who gave the \$1,500 she received as compensation for her son’s death to aid

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Gehman, *Let My Heart Be Broken with the Things That Break the Heart of God* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), 112.

<sup>54</sup> World Vision pictorial *Other Sheep*, 1955, 3, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>55</sup> Aylward’s life was memorialized in the Ingrid Bergman film *Inn of the Sixth Happiness*.

<sup>56</sup> Collection 415, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

World Vision orphans, Pierce exclaimed, “God could trust the Christians of Korea with the test of martyrdom, because they have perhaps the strongest spiritual structure of any church in the world.”<sup>57</sup> While his heroic portraits of missionaries were typical fare, Pierce’s highlighting of their practical ministry to the poor served to validate it in the eyes of the American Evangelical public.

World Vision’s support of “emergency needs” were as wide as the ministries he encountered, including widow’s homes, a hospital, and especially leprosaria, since the grotesque suffering of the disease and its prominent mention in the gospels frequently drew the attention of conservative missionaries. Pierce met needs in a seemingly *ad hoc* way, as he was moved to do so. In his 1965 film *The Least Ones*, Pierce narrated the story of a Korean man he met through missionaries who had lost his livelihood as a birdcatcher when his net wore out. World Vision loaned him the funds for a new net, which he dutifully paid back at a rate of a few cents a month. Much later, in the age of YouTube, World Vision placed the video clip on the internet, claiming the incident as the origin of its microfinance work—yet another major program with roots in a serendipitous, spontaneous meeting with Bob Pierce.<sup>58</sup>

But the needs which moved Pierce most deeply—and which came to define World Vision—were those of orphans. Pierce found that his experience with White Jade was not uncommon at all—missionaries and national Christians frequently and often without fanfare, found ways to take in orphans, especially in the wake of the Korean War.

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<sup>57</sup> “Bob Pierce: Missionary Ambassador,” *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1951, 10.

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hodEDMGDs-4>, accessed November 30, 2009.



Therefore, World Vision set about vigorously building, funding, and expanding orphanages, at first in Korea, but by 1965, in more than twenty countries. The reported numbers of orphans supported grew from about 2,000 in 1954 to more than 13,000 in 1959 and 20,000 in 1965.<sup>59</sup> In order to more effectively raise funds, Pierce instituted a sponsorship mechanism, beginning in 1953, the year before Everett Swanson's similar program.<sup>60</sup> Speaking of child sponsorship raises the issue of fundraising, which, as the following pages document, was World Vision's forte.

### **World Vision's Main Ministry: Fundraising**

Since World Vision did not initiate or manage its own projects but played only a supportive role, most of the agency's employees were involved in some aspect of fundraising, whether in publishing, media, administration, or logistics. In terms of its Basic Objectives, World Vision grouped all this activity under its heading of *missionary challenge to alert the people of Christ*. The organization focused its fundraising efforts on average, middle class American Evangelicals. Pierce often commented that he would rather have "one dollar from ten thousand average Christians than ten thousand dollars from a rich man, because all those Christians will add their prayers."<sup>61</sup>

Through "missionary challenge," World Vision realized its main impact by mobilizing new American lives and pocketbooks for the mission field. In order to

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<sup>59</sup> *World Vision Magazine* September 1960, p4-5. Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 229.

<sup>60</sup> Child sponsorship had its roots in the nineteenth century women's missions movement, but Pierce spoke as if the inspiration had come directly from his experience with White Jade.

<sup>61</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, September 1956, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

accomplish this goal, World Vision built a colossal media machine that enabled it to reach directly into the hearts of thousands of individual evangelicals. Post-World War II World Vision was at the vanguard of increasingly influential evangelical parachurch agencies whose rise was facilitated by technological advances in mass mailing, publishing, broadcasting and film. These media enabled them to bypass traditional ecclesiastical structures by appealing directly to individual believers. Barry Gardner describes the change that was taking place: “At the start of the [post-World War II] period, agencies of all kinds communicated through bulletin stuffers, sent en masse to churches and distributed largely at the whim of the pastor. But by the end of this period, agencies ... could send their own publications directly to the homes of church members and other interested parties.”<sup>62</sup>

From the very beginning of Pierce’s awakening to the need of the poor, he broadcast his experiences through media. He published extensive accounts of his initial journeys to Asia in Youth for Christ’s monthly magazine. He continued to publish with Youth for Christ during the first few years of World Vision’s existence, but then launched World Vision’s own eponymous periodical in 1957. Its circulation grew to more than 200,000 in 1966<sup>63</sup> and annually won top awards from the Evangelical Press Association.<sup>64</sup> Although such publications are now *de rigueur* for any nonprofit

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<sup>62</sup> Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 302.

<sup>63</sup> 1966 Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>64</sup> 1965 Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

organization, in the 1950s, “no other missionary agency had a periodical the size and circulation of World Vision’s monthly report . . . Response was voluminous.”<sup>65</sup>

The magazine served as both an advocacy and fundraising tool; it ran articles on various aspects of World Vision’s work, inspiring vignettes from past missions history, and edifying exhortations from Pierce or other senior World Vision staff. The magazine at times was funded by subscriptions, other times advertising, other times both. By the end of the period it became devoted to somewhat theological/theoretical discussions of missiological issues, and another magazine entitled *Scope* that focused on World vision projects was sent to all child sponsors. World Vision’s publication wing augmented its monthly production with occasional glossy, large-sized pictorial books, modeled after LIFE magazine’s similar publications.

Films were another important media for disseminating World Vision’s “missionary challenge” message. In Evangelical circles Pierce was a pioneer in his use of 16mm movies shown in church settings. It was only after 1945 that conservative Protestants opened up to the use of film for sanctified purposes, and Pierce helped lead the charge.<sup>66</sup> As one film historian put it, “A Bob Pierce film was always a significant event for the audience of churchgoers, who often had little television or film exposure.”<sup>67</sup> During this period World Vision made seven films reaching hundreds of thousands of

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<sup>65</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 77; Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried*, 95. This judgment should perhaps seen as applying to parachurch organizations only. This researcher did not have access to circulation numbers for denominational missions publications.

<sup>66</sup> Hamilton, 7, 72.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

viewers.<sup>68</sup> For example, in 1959, it released *A Cry in the Night*, a sensationalistic, orientalist depiction of the perceived spiritual and material needs of Asia, in which “Balinese maidens succumb to the powers of demon possession, rise to the intricate steps of a ritual they have never been taught . . . A saintly missionary nurse binds up the wounds of the leprous in the midst of heartbreak such as few in this world ever see.”<sup>69</sup> It was shown 2,380 times to 37 different denominations and 660 interdenominational groups, raising almost \$200,000 for the missionary programs of individual churches.<sup>70</sup>

Another film, 1965’s *Vietnam Profile*, covered the suffering caused by the early stages of America’s involvement in the Vietnamese conflict. It too achieved thousands of showings across the country, and appeared scores of times on television during free public service time.<sup>71</sup> During an era in which images of overseas realities were few and far between, Pierce’s films provided a rare window into a world that seemed far from most Americans. All the films from this period were shot in Asia personally by Pierce, especially in Korea, and were intended to expose Americans to raw human suffering in order to elicit a concrete response. As promotional material for *Cry in the Night* put it, the film’s purpose was “to burden America with the physical and spiritual needs of

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<sup>68</sup> 1965 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California. See also Hamilton, 34, 165. *Vietnam Profile* appeared on television scores of times; there was a two year waiting list for *Cry in the Night*; according to Hamilton, exact statistics are unavailable but totaled hundreds of thousands of viewers.

<sup>69</sup> Full page advertisement for *A Cry in the Night*, *World Vision Magazine*, December 1957, 6.

<sup>70</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, May 1959, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Hamilton, 164-5.

foreign missions, resulting in an unprecedented increase in praying, giving and going to the mission field.”<sup>72</sup>

At the height of Pierce’s standing as a missions leader in the late 1950s and early 1960s, his weekly radio show was heard on more than 130 stations nationwide.<sup>73</sup>

Pierce’s program was something of a missionary variety show. It combined interviews with missionaries and prominent World Vision supporters like Roy Rogers and Dale Evans with homilies expounding Scripture.

Finally, the most frequently used means to challenge Americans to missionary action were direct-mail appeals in the form of personal letters from Pierce and other World Vision leaders. Using new mailing list technology, including early computers, World Vision sent millions of these letters during the early years of its existence.<sup>74</sup> These simple, direct appeals were designed to raise as much money as possible as quickly as possible.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, World Vision, as a “missions service organization,” had a significant impact on evangelical missions to the poor during this era through its ability to dynamically publicize, fund, expand, and theologically validate existing ministries. Pierce was able to bring missions to the poor before the evangelical public eye and

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>73</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, August 1958, 24.

<sup>74</sup> According to handwritten notes to the printer on various proofs appeal letters, World Vision mailed more than 100,000 appeal letters several times a year in the early 1960s. Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

convince many that it was worthy of vigorous support and expansion. The conservative Protestant missionaries who were still working in leprosaria and courageously founding makeshift orphanages with meager stateside support had little impact on attitudes towards the poor back in the States. But when Pierce, a charismatic preacher and important leader in Youth for Christ, well-connected to the evangelical leadership elite, went home and made movies, sent letters and pictures of the lepers to hundreds of thousands of people, attitudes clearly began to shift. Sheer publicity made concern for the poor much more prominent. And of course, as attitudes shifted, funding increased which enabled more work overseas, which then generated more publicity for mission to the poor, and so on.

Perhaps the most important implication of World Vision's story for Evangelical identity was the fact that the reintroduction of missions to the poor was an "insider job." World Vision built a thriving ministry on the existing work of conservative Protestants overseas, which suggests that the Great Reversal was not as great as scholars have implied. When one looks at fundamentalist missions rhetoric, it does indeed seem that missions to the poor had vanished. But World Vision's early history reveals a vibrant practice of work among the poor—although the evidence is anecdotal, to be sure.

Besides suggesting an adjustment to the scope of the Great Reversal, World Vision's story helps to fill in the contours of the Great Reversal. Consideration of the demographics of the ministries supported by World Vision reveals that they were overwhelmingly female, and that Europeans, Canadians, and Asian Christians were greatly over-represented compared to Americans. In terms of gender, this is partly a simple reflection of the greater proportion of women on the mission field—but the

preponderance of World Vision collaborators was even greater still. According to this researcher's informal survey of early World Vision media, more than 80% of the missionaries publicized by Pierce were women. The fact that ministries like those of Lil Dickson, Beth Albert and Tena Hoelkeboer were the dominant force drawing evangelicalism back towards supporting mission to the poor suggests that the "Great Reversal" was much stronger among male theorizers than female practitioners. This observation parallels Dana Robert's findings in her analysis of nineteenth century missions: often, while men dominated the discourse and formal theorizing, women enacted counter-theories born of their relationships and the exigencies of daily life on the field. Robert summarizes: "Women missionaries in practice usually rejected mission theories that called for radical separation of the spiritual and the physical . . . in conservative theological circles . . . women excelled in founding and sustaining 'ministries of compassion' such as orphanages, clinics, and schools for the poor."<sup>75</sup> Perhaps one way to see Pierce is as a male organic intellectual who promoted the female-driven missiology that was common in practice but had been marginalized from the discourse.<sup>76</sup>

Ironically, if this were the case, Pierce seemed mostly unaware of it. One of the few times he addressed gender dynamics at all was to plead for more male missionaries.

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<sup>75</sup> Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996), 411-412.

<sup>76</sup> Ironically, Pierce's tireless advocacy for the poor inspired by these female missionaries caused him to neglect his own wife and daughters. The painful impact of Pierce's constant travels on his family is respectfully but honestly chronicled in his daughter's Marilee Pierce Dunker's memoir: Marilee Pierce Dunker, *Days of Glory, Seasons of Night* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1984).

As he wrote in an article on promoting missions in Sunday Schools, “Remind the boys in your Sunday School that men can be missionaries too! Perhaps our failure to do this is one reason for the all-too-prevalent male response to the missionary call: ‘Here am I, Lord—send my sister!’”<sup>77</sup>

A quick perusal of the national identities of World Vision’s main partners in ministry to the poor reveals a strong Northern European representation—Irish, Norwegian, English, German, and Dutch, as well as Canadians. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that conservative Protestantism in those areas did not experience the same divisive liberal/fundamentalist split that rendered social ministry suspect in the U.S. It also provides yet another historical example of how the links among evangelicals in the North Atlantic world have profoundly shaped the American branch of the movement.

Finally, the role of Asian, especially Korean, Christians in reversing the Great Reversal should not be underestimated. While Pierce’s portrayals of the poor were appallingly paternalistic by contemporary standards, his representation of “national” Christians often stressed their heroism and commitment to relieving the suffering of their compatriots. Their example helped inspire many American evangelicals to join in their works of mercy, as their ministries could not simply be set aside as “liberal.” Thus, the story of World Vision’s role in validating mission to the poor reveals that it drew on insiders to conservative Protestantism who would be considered “safe” by American

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<sup>77</sup> Pierce, brochure entitled “How to Emphasize Missions in the Sunday School,” 1958, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California; reproduced in “Missionary Education in the Sunday School,” *World Vision Magazine*, November 1958, 6.



Evangelicals, but that these heroes also had a social location conspicuously outside its American white, male leadership.

A further implication of World Vision’s story is that the way it unfolded served to preserve the unity of Evangelicalism. If Pierce had been more of an outsider to the movement, or if he had attempted to integrate the missions theories of other Christian traditions, he may have simply created yet another splinter group within the conservative Protestant big tent. But his close association with trusted Evangelical leaders<sup>78</sup> and his support of reliable missionaries meant that his reintroduction of missions to the poor turned out to be relatively uncontroversial.

Explicit opposition in print from Evangelicals to Pierce’s work is difficult to locate. There are occasional echoes of unease, such as Pierce’s admission that “one of the big questions that often comes across my desk is ‘Are you really a Bible-believing group of folks? Aren’t you a little bit social-minded in the gospel you preach?’”<sup>79</sup> There was also an incident in which a separatist fundamentalist from Milton, Massachusetts, sent identical letters to Pierce and Billy Graham excoriating them for their “liberalizing” theology; hearing about the situation, the president of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) reassured Pierce but acknowledged that “we are not unmindful of the unkind (and many times unjust) criticisms, yea, even abuse—which have been heaped

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<sup>78</sup> Pierce gave several keynote addresses for the national conventions of the NAE in the early 1960s (one of eight to do so, including Billy Graham, all white men.) NAE Annual Reports 1961-65, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>79</sup> Franklin Graham and Jeanette W. Lockerbie, *Bob Pierce, This One Thing I Do* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 49.

upon you and your co-workers.”<sup>80</sup> However, given the potentially explosive theological ground on which Pierce tread, such criticism was startlingly rare. It seems that even among those who did not give financially to World Vision, tacitly approved of Pierce, most Evangelicals accepted him as a mainstream leader of Evangelicalism, and viewed his organization as trustworthy. Pierce was too well-known and World Vision’s place among Evangelical missions agencies too prominent to conclude that the lack of criticism was simply due to lack of notice. Instead, World Vision’s efforts should take pride of place along with Carl F H Henry’s *Uneasy Conscience* as prime post-World War II influences that drew Evangelicalism back into social engagement.

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<sup>80</sup> Letter, EFMA president to Pierce, n.d., Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 1947-1965 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: COMPASSIONATE CHARITY FOR INDIVIDUAL EMERGENCIES

“I want to use this camera and this tape recorder to resensitize you, the viewer, to the needs of those in South Korea and all over Asia whom Jesus calls ‘the least ones’”.

—Bob Pierce, in World Vision’s film *The Least Ones*

#### **Introduction**

From 1950 to 1966, World Vision was the major force in reintroducing evangelical mission to the poor by publicizing the pre-existing charitable ministries of previously isolated missionaries. This chapter goes on to ask the questions: what *kind* of mission to the poor did World Vision reintroduce? What perceptions of the poor did it share with American evangelicals? How did it construct the causes of poverty, and what solutions did it advocate? What sorts of action on behalf of the poor did it advocate for American Evangelicals, both for the church as a whole and for individuals back home? On a deeper level, what does the theory of mission to the poor implicit in early World Vision’s discourse indicate about Evangelical habits of mind, their view of the world, and their responsibility to it? How did it shape Evangelicals’ identity or worldview?

This chapter argues that early World Vision’s model of mission to the poor was characterized by charitable action directed toward individuals with urgent, evident needs, motivated by spontaneous compassion. Beneath this relatively straightforward approach lay a number of tensions or paradoxes: an emphasis on single, isolated individuals coexisted with a powerful drive to expand World Vision’s ministry as widely as possible;

its affirmation of spontaneous, emotionally-driven compassion was nevertheless expressed in a highly rationalized manner that relied heavily on technology; and its commitment to acute, short-term needs did not preclude a worldview that attributed poverty to spiritual and political causes on a sweeping, structural level.

Further, this chapter claims that the success of World Vision's theory of mission to the poor can be partially explained by its congruence with many enduring aspects of the Evangelical worldview. In fact, World Vision's individual charity model should be regarded as *the* quintessential Evangelical theory of mission to the poor. Although increasingly diverse approaches emerged in later years, the individual charity model remained strong throughout, and most newer approaches sought to complement it rather than overturn it. Thus in World Vision's discourse during this period can be found a stable, distinctive Evangelical approach to mission to the poor that taps into bedrock assumptions held by most participants identifying themselves with Evangelicalism.

In order to support and analyze these contentions, this chapter will take a closer look at World Vision's discourse, primarily through the voice, pen, and camera of Bob Pierce, directed toward the American evangelical public from 1950-1966. When relevant, other contributors, both from within World Vision and without it, will be drawn upon. But as in the last chapter, Pierce's dominant voice and outsized influence as World Vision's main organic intellectual justifies the heavy focus he receives in the pages that follow.

Through Pierce's brochures, books, fundraising letters, articles, radio broadcasts, and films, World Vision influenced hundreds of thousands of Evangelicals. The sheer

volume of demand for this communication (only direct mail was unsolicited) and the money it generated is strong evidence that World Vision's message found fruitful soil. Pierce's style was simple, direct, and even "folksy," and did not lend itself to systematic argumentation. At the most general level, World Vision's discourse was characterized by vignettes from Pierce's personal experience, interspersed with and interpreted by Scriptural quotations. The Bible was absolutely central to World Vision's message. In keeping with its' Evangelical ethos, direct, explicit Scripture quotation formed the backbone of each appeal. Whether making a broader argument for greater attention to mission to the poor or a very specific appeal to sponsor a particular child, Scripture was usually found at the crux of the argument. For example, each World Vision film ended with a prominently displayed Scripture passage on the screen, read aloud by a narrator. Perusal of World Vision's printed material from this epoch reveals few pages without at least one biblical allusion. However, there was little attempt in World Vision's discourse from this period to synthesize a coherent biblical teaching on mission to the poor or to show how any of the scriptures they utilized related to one another. Instead, texts were employed to illustrate or justify the point immediately at hand. What gave World Vision's appeals their distinctive power was not necessarily the sophistication of its argumentation or theological acumen, but the close juxtaposition of biblical texts calling for compassion for the poor with an unflinching presentation of the harsh empirical realities of contemporary poverty. It was not just World Vision's didactic use of Scripture, but the way it associated it with the needy world that was so effective.

Therefore, the model abstracted from World Vision's discourse must be gleaned from the implicit, but very strong, assumptions that underlie it. Several important themes anchored World Vision's model of mission to the poor, which form the outline of this chapter. First, its approach contained aspects that both challenged and accepted the fundamentalist missions theories that they inherited. On one hand, they forcefully argued that addressing the physical needs of the poor was a legitimate part of missions, which suggested a reversal of the Great Reversal that had so imbued fundamentalist missions. On the other hand, Pierce strongly believed that religious conversion brought tangible social, material and political benefits to individuals and even to entire societies, a theme that fundamentalists had long stressed. Second, World Vision's model was intently fixated on the acute physical needs of individuals. Third, its approach demanded spontaneous, compassionate charity as the appropriate response to those needs. Finally, a tension between spontaneous faith and rational technology suffused World Vision's individual charity approach. Each theme will be considered in turn.

### **Tensions within World Vision's Fundamentalist Heritage**

It is not surprising that as Pierce, an heir of fundamentalism, became increasingly concerned about poverty, he would closely link the spiritual and physical needs of the poor he came across. Yet, although his commitment to evangelism never wavered, an important shift was represented in Pierce's work. Fundamentalist missions rhetoric made spiritual needs so overwhelmingly dominant that the material and social problems were nearly invisible. The world was neatly divided into two categories—*evangelized* or *unevangelized*, *reached* or *unreached*—and the entire goal of missions was to move

people from one category to the other. To be sure, the poor were not ignored (fundamentalists spent tremendous energy and resources evangelizing them) but their socioeconomic state was relevant only in that missionaries strove to devise an evangelistic method that could effectively communicate the fixed propositional content of the Gospel in their context. With Pierce, the physical needs of the poor become a subject of legitimate concern and focus, and he legitimized compassionately meeting physical needs. World Vision's discourse was distinguished by the way it established the basic biblical validity of engaging in any mission to the poor at all. World Vision continually worked to persuade the American public that addressing physical needs were in fact a valid aspect of missions.

Much of the Scripture citation employed by Pierce was used to this end. He especially appealed to the example of Jesus in the gospels. This might seem unremarkable, but much evangelical theology and preaching at this time presented the gospel through the lens of a Pauline emphasis on individual salvation by grace through faith. The life and teaching of Jesus did not receive as much attention as his death and resurrection. So World Vision's frequent citation of the gospels often feels like something of a recovery. For example, one article reminds readers to recall that Christ had more than one commission—in addition to the Great Commission to preach the gospel, Christ was also commissioned to heal the sick and cleanse the lepers.<sup>1</sup> After sharing several harrowing stories of poverty, another appeal letter goes on to ask, “What

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to Matthew 10:18, cited in Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter entitled “Total Evangelism: Ministries Homogenized”, May, 1966, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

would Jesus do?” It continues: “Our answer to that question leads us not only to help those who preach and teach and evangelize, but also to bind up the wounds of the suffering. . . . What did Jesus do with the hungry multitudes? Yes, He taught them . . . but first He took the loaves and fishes and fed them.”<sup>2</sup> Again and again Pierce asked, “When millions of people are suffering from hunger, deprivation, disease and fear, is it enough just to preach to them? The Lord Jesus Christ did not think so. What man is there, He asked, who would give his son a stone when he asked for bread.”<sup>3</sup> World Vision asked for support of its ministry to lepers because it would have the same result as Jesus’ ministry: “and one of the lepers, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. Luke 17:15”<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, for Pierce and early World Vision, meeting spiritual needs was a prerequisite to effectively dealing with material needs. Pierce believed strongly in the poverty-curing effects of religious conversion.<sup>5</sup> Of course, World Vision did not see conversion as merely an instrumental means of overcoming poverty, but as having intrinsic eternal significance. But Pierce taught American Evangelicals that the gospel was the key to unlocking the social and economic potential of the poor as well. This is

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, July 6 1965, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>3</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter entitled “Total Evangelism: Ministries Homogenized”, May 1966, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>4</sup> World Vision Pictorial *Other Sheep* 1955, 12, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>5</sup> Many, perhaps most, fundamentalists agreed with this stance. Yet the larger history of evangelicalism also offers theories of mission that were indifferent to the this-worldly impact of conversion on the poor, even counseling the Christian poor to be content with their lot since it was the will of God. For examples, see chapter three of Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 1988).



because, for Pierce as with his fundamentalist brethren, the *causes* of poverty were fundamentally spiritual to begin with, and therefore they needed spiritual solutions. In his film *New China Challenge*, Pierce explains why China is poor: “For centuries Satan has been wringing his terrible toll through heathen religions [scenes of incense burning, prayers] . . . money desperately needed to feed the hungry is given to thirty foot tall Buddhas with hands fixed in a false blessing.”<sup>6</sup> The film *Red Plague* (1957) reiterated the same straightforward, simplistic rationale for Indian suffering: “India is poor because of its false religion.” Conversion provided not only spiritual benefits—“to win Indians to Christ is to release them from a life of fear and superstition,” but poverty-reducing effects as well: “[Christianity leads to] outward radiance and a new sense of responsibility.”<sup>7</sup> So conversion was the non-negotiable first step towards solving both spiritual and physical poverty; it was the key to unlocking the full restoration of spiritual and social well-being.

Thus, when Pierce described the poor who have become Christians, he enthusiastically emphasized their realized potential, competence and heroic suffering. For example, in one film, as the camera focuses on a newly-converted, emaciated orphaned child, his voice-over narrates, “Brave little fella. He would be a credit to any country. He’ll make it. He’ll make it on his own.”<sup>8</sup> Even victims of leprosy, permanently relegated to the margins of society, were enabled to virtuously wield spiritual influence in the wider world: “In the Church of the Lepers those who love the

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<sup>6</sup> *New China Challenge*, 16mm (Youth for Christ Films, 1948), World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

<sup>7</sup> World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

<sup>8</sup> *The Least Ones*, 16mm, (World Vision Films, 1965), World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

Lord . . . meet at 6:00am to pray for the safety of the world as the Communist threat looms nearer. Their lives are in imminent danger but forgetful of self, they pray for others . . . some have said ‘I am glad that I became a leper, because I have had a chance to hear the gospel.’”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most successful means Pierce had to publicize the idea that Christian faith could unlock the potential of the poor was through the World Vision Korean Orphan Choir. The Choir, composed of converted and rehabilitated orphans, regularly toured the U.S. beginning in 1961, performing before hundreds of thousands. After a performance at a Billy Graham crusade, Graham told the audience that the Choir epitomized the potential of their entire nation: “Korea has become one of the economic powerhouses of the Far East . . . God is doing a great work . . . now in the Far East God is moving –it’s one of the great untold stories of the world.”<sup>10</sup> For Pierce, as a conservative evangelical, the poor were full of potential, but only if actualized by Christian conversion. Non-Christians were presented exclusively as victims, “without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:4 NIV).

For Pierce, exporting American evangelicalism not only had tangible benefits for individuals but for entire societies as well. World Vision was founded in the midst of the very hottest edge of the Cold War—on the front lines of the Korean conflict and its geopolitical stance reflected this. Along with many other Americans of the 1950s and 1960s, Pierce strongly believed that Communism was both a cause and consequence of poverty. As he looked at two Korean orphan siblings, he lamented, “Communism has

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<sup>9</sup> *Other Sheep* Pictorial, 1955, 12, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>10</sup> Video of Graham Crusade in Pittsburgh 1960— Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

robbed these little girls of everything in life . . . Communism breeds on trouble.”<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, to fight communism was to remove one of the most significant roots of global suffering and poverty. In fact, the struggle against communism was so important to Pierce that in 1957, using footage he shot during the Korean War, World Vision made an anticommunist film entitled *Red Plague*, complete with stereotyped graphics of the globe slowly turning red. The film’s main point was to argue that only Christianity could stop communism, therefore patriotic Americans ought to be supportive of missions like World Vision. Pierce warned: “Communism is a godless religion spawned in hell . . . forced upon millions by violence, fraud and trickery . . . false religion is no bulwark against communism, but born-again Christians will never be communists . . . the Red Plague cannot disease a heart that is genuinely won by Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Pierce was in full agreement with the American political establishment’s efforts to prioritize the fight against communism above all other foreign policy goals. However, he felt that his gospel-centered approach was the key to the battle and that “secular” attempts to stem the Red Tide were doomed to failure. In fact, Pierce frequently claimed that evangelical missions like World Vision were the *best* way to promote the prosperity-inducing American evangelical values that were the antithesis of communism. In a bestselling book chronicling Pierce’s travels, Pierce tells the author: “Our people don’t realize it at home, but the Communists are beating us out in most of these countries out here . . . In some places, the pastor’s conferences we sponsor are the

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<sup>11</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, August 1964, 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Red Plague*, World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

only weapons the United States has . . . It's the only way we can get to the native leaders and show them what democracy is about.”<sup>13</sup>

As the above quote suggests, at times Pierce's patriotism was so intense he nearly conflated the spiritual power of the Gospel with American culture. For example, in a passage that harkens back to older “civilizing missions” approaches, Pierce explicitly claimed that the poor in “the Orient” must be converted to an American-influenced Christianity, for it was “our Western concept of individual value” which inspired World Vision to “take care of those who mothers would throw away . . . and encourage men who have the will to help themselves [through microenterprise loans].”<sup>14</sup> According to Pierce, Western-derived conservative faith would imbue converts with a greater value for individual human life than that available in their own Asian cultures, thus leading to economic development through stronger families and successful businesses, even in harsh circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note here that in World Vision's depictions of the poor and of poverty's causes, never is poverty the fault of Western political, religious, or

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<sup>13</sup> Gehman, 205.

<sup>14</sup> *The Least Ones*, World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

<sup>15</sup> Pierce's pro-American stance was consistent throughout World Vision's entire early period. Just as he had done during the Korean War, Pierce was on the front lines of the Vietnamese conflict bringing relief and providing a rare window into the early development of the Vietnam war before body counts were prominently featured on the evening news. The picture he painted was one of great human need—and of Americans, both missionaries and military, valiantly attempting to meet that need. In his widely viewed film *Vietnam Profile*, Pierce provides a “glimpse of Americans and allies working with the Vietnamese people in their struggle for freedom”; he lauded representatives of USAID as “some of the bravest men I know,” and, in a voiceover to a scene of American soldiers compassionately evacuating refugees, challenged his viewers to “remember this scene when you hear someone speak disparagingly about our brave servicemen.” He even characterizes the military's ‘destroy the village in order to save it’ tactic as compassionate, explaining that Viet Cong could be hiding nearby. World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

technological hegemony. Rather, it is the *lack* of those resources so abundant in the West—Christianity, democracy, and technological wealth—that were the cause of poverty. Never does World Vision suggest that America might be complicit in causing the poverty of the poor. Therefore, World Vision’s call to Americans Evangelicals was simply to share all the good things—both spiritually and materially—with which they were blessed.

Ultimately, however, despite what appears to be clear and even strident taking of political sides, Pierce was ambivalent about whether World Vision’s work did or should have political overtones. On one hand, he tried to push back against the political quietism that characterized many American conservative Protestants at the time: “Now I know it sounds like we’re bringing politics into the church. And in a sense we are. But you value worshipping God and communism denies that right.”<sup>16</sup> Yet on the on the other hand he repeatedly claimed to be apolitical. In an appeal letter written from Vietnam on Christmas 1965, Pierce emphasized that World Vision was simply responding to human need wherever it was found: “I know when I write from Viet Nam that people react to even the name of this country with varying emotion . . . but when a tiny baby cries for its missing mother, we do not stop to look for political overtones in its pathetic little sob . . . I know you understand that World Vision’s purposes and motivation are in no sense political. Our purpose is to help; our motivation is the driving force of our Lord’s constraining love.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Red Plague*, World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

<sup>17</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, no date, 1965, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

### Poverty as Individual Emergencies

Clearly, then, Pierce's theory of mission to the poor took place in a context that presupposed the essential goodness of American Evangelical Christianity, individualism, and democracy. For the most part, these assumptions formed the backdrop of Pierce's mission theory. It was "the pathetic little sobs" of the vulnerable that most drew World Vision's explicit attention. Quantitatively, World Vision's discourse assigned just as much space to the physical needs of the poor as to their spiritual needs, in the judgment of this researcher. It gave a prominence to the physical suffering associated with poverty not seen in the discourse of evangelical missions since before the Great Reversal.

World Vision's image of the poor strongly emphasized their raw, physical needs, frequently showing intense or grotesque suffering such as that caused by leprosy and starvation. When Pierce encountered poverty in Asia, it was those who suffered pitifully in public that most struck him—he was initially there to preach, not to seek out the hidden poor—and these were the people he determined to bring to the attention of American Christians back home. To a shocked audience of American teenagers Pierce's travelling companion wrote, "You can find a man or woman or child dying on those streets [of Kunming, China] just about any day you choose . . . one man, whose face was full of sores, looked at us with warm eyes; he cannot smile . . . arms and legs completely gone, the poor chap rolled in the dust, crying for alms as he churned slowly on his way".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ken Anderson, "Her Community is Called Death," *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1949, 18.

Along with physical suffering, Pierce did not spare his audience the emotional distress of those he met in Asia. For example, to one appeal letter was attached a photo of an emaciated orphan child with the following description: “Perhaps even more heartbreaking than his obvious physical need was the fact that this little fellow apparently had been taught—the hard way—never to cry aloud. He had begun to cry, and our hearts ached as we saw his pathetic little body wracked with awful, silent sobs. We took his thin little hand to comfort him, and found it felt more like the claw of a bird than the hand of a child. I confess that we focused through our tears as we took his picture.”<sup>19</sup>

Most nongovernmental agencies (NGOs), including World Vision, would later condemn this graphic approach as exploitative, even labeling it as “the pornography of the poor.” In analyzing its material one does not get the sense that World Vision was seeking out the worst cases in order to maximize revenue, but rather that Pierce—an intensely emotional man—simply wrote about what moved him.<sup>20</sup>

One frequently used method of conveying the reality of poverty to audiences home was to compare it with American middle-class lifestyles. For example, Larry Ward wrote one representative, if particularly effective, piece comparing a typical day in the life of a well-off American boy and of a Korean

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<sup>19</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, February 23, 1959, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>20</sup> In his movies, when it came time for adding commentary to the footage, Pierce often had a hard time following a written script and was most effective when speaking extemporaneously, from the heart. See Hamilton, 112.

war orphan. Scenes from the American boy's life are interspersed with the Korean boy's (printed in italics): "*A ragged beggar boy . . . scurries over to a garbage heap. He . . . burrows quickly through the maggot-ridden debris with his grimy hands . . . Mom smiles indulgently, pours another glass of cold milk, replenishes the supply of tasty cookies . . . He pulls his ragged garment around him, shivers a bit in the twilight chill, then wanders on . . . to the shelter of a railroad bridge . . . Mickey Mouse Club [and] prayers over, the boy curls up drowsily on the clean sheets. His mother turns off the light, pauses for just a moment in the doorway with gentle smile.*"<sup>21</sup> The juxtaposition not only helped throw into stark relief the physical suffering of destitute children, but also sought to extend maternal concern to them through an unapologetic use of guilt motivation.

World Vision also employed contrast through the simple placement of side-by-side "before" and "after" photographs of orphans who had been nursed back to health.<sup>22</sup> Often material of this sort would prominently highlight three to six contrasting photographs, followed by a brief paragraph asking for funds. Clearly the straightforward visceral realities portrayed in the photographs, not a sophisticated analysis of poverty's numerous dimensions, were driving the message.

A corollary to World Vision's concern with physical suffering was its highlighting of the weakest and most helpless members of society. Those Pierce was

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<sup>21</sup> Larry Ward, "A Study in Contrast," *World Vision Magazine*, August/September, 1957, 12. The piece was also made into a brochure.

<sup>22</sup> *Other Sheep*, 58.



drawn to aid were, in his eyes, primarily *individual victims*. He did not consider, for example, villages of landless peasants or unemployed young men, but the orphans and lepers whose poverty was the most pitiable and the most obviously “not their fault.” This is in part because these were the poor with whom most missionaries were working already. And this is not surprising, because evangelical work among the poor has always focused especially on needy children. As a biblical people, evangelicals have always been especially sensitive to the needs of orphans, whose plight is repeatedly remembered throughout the Bible.<sup>23</sup> For example, the magisterial historian of early evangelicalism W.R. Ward playfully but insightfully suggested that eighteenth century evangelicals could be essentially defined as “those who felt spiritually bound to create Orphan Houses.”<sup>24</sup> A focus on children sidestepped a traditional evangelical impediment to caring for the poor—a strong value on individual responsibility. Perhaps one could ignore a poor man’s poverty as being his own fault through laziness or intemperance, but a child’s innocence spoke volumes.

World Vision’s emphasis on the most vulnerable was sharpened by describing them in Scriptural terms. One passage used in this regard, from Matthew 25:31-46, was perhaps the single most quoted biblical text in World Vision’s discourse. In it, Matthew’s Jesus, in his role as Judge of all humanity, surveys the hungry, thirsty, naked, refugees, and prisoners, and then pronounces that “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one

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<sup>23</sup> See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> W.R. Ward, “Evangelical Identity in the Eighteenth Century,” in Lewis, Donald M. *Christianity Reborn : The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* Studies in the History of Christian Missions. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004, 12-13.

of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” This striking passage, which has always been important in Catholic social ethics but had been de-emphasized among conservative Protestants—perhaps because it seemed to imply salvation by works—inspired the title and theme for one of Pierce’s films, *The Least Ones*.<sup>25</sup> Pierce was paraphrasing this passage when he constantly referred to the poor as “the little ones of the earth.”<sup>26</sup>

In describing the physical needs of victims, World Vision rarely considered their suffering in the aggregate or poverty as a broader phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Rather, its discourse focused overwhelmingly on individuals—usually individuals personally encountered by Pierce or other World Vision leadership. The personal, face-to-face encounters that had so provoked Pierce during his Youth for Christ days provided the touchstone for World Vision’s discourse during its early period. Ten years after meeting White Jade, Pierce’s initial momentous encounter with an orphan, he wrote in an appeal for sponsors, “I could have turned down an orphanage as being too big. But I couldn’t refuse one orphan.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Pierce’s act of compassion that day—sponsoring an individual child—continued to be the central means through which World Vision sought to involve Americans in mission to the poor.

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<sup>25</sup> See the epigraph to this chapter.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, February 23, 1959, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>27</sup> In an exception that proved the rule, in September 1957 *World Vision Magazine* published a substantial article devoted to a sophisticated analysis of the global problem and how it might be fully eradicated—perhaps a harbinger of the more analytical 1970s. See pp. 8-15.

<sup>28</sup> George Burnham, “News Stories Tell How your Gifts Were Used,” *World Vision Magazine*, October/November 1957, 9.

World Vision's emphasis on individuals in America sponsoring individual children in Asia was not a merely marketing technique, but an essential expression of how it saw the poor. World Vision came into existence as an attempt to expand the experience of a single man and a single child—Pierce's encounter with White Jade. It was not (for example) the result of a systematic study of world poverty or a desire to deal with the structures that kept the Third World poor, but simply one man trying to give as many other Americans as possible the same opportunity he had to make a difference in the life of one needy child.<sup>29</sup> Many appeal letters reveal this intense relational connection between Pierce and those individuals he hoped to reach. For example, "This is a very personal word: last night, for some reason, I could not sleep. As I tossed and turned, somehow I saw faces—faces of the world, faces in need. I saw the leathery-skinned face of a leper in Formosa . . . the tear-stained face of a refugee child in Hong Kong . . . won't you help us bring smiles of joy and thankfulness to these faces—the faces of the world, the faces of need?"<sup>30</sup> Consideration of World Vision's individualistic bent gives further insight into its preoccupation with orphans and lepers. Cut off from the ties of family and society through death or disease, they were—tragically—the quintessential individuals within their societies. Involvement in their lives did not require complex interactions with the intricacies of Asian cultures, but only compassionate attention to their

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<sup>29</sup> This emphasis on the individual was all the more striking since emerging development thought remained steadfastly focused on macro-level issues. Mainline mission to the poor also emphasized large scale efforts; for example, in 1958 the WCC launched a major effort advocating for Western governments to give 1% of their incomes to economic development programs. See Colette Chabbott, "Development INGOs" in John Boli and George M. Thomas, *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1875* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 233.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, April 7 1960, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

considerable personal needs. In fact, during the 1950s, it was difficult to even promote concern for poor children who had parents among evangelicals. As one popular history of World Vision put it, “Sponsors wanted an orphan. If the child had a mother, North American sponsors reasoned, ‘let her go to work.’”<sup>31</sup>

### **Compassionate Charity**

In response to the urgent physical and spiritual needs of poor individuals, World Vision called for compassionate action. Once again, this call was modeled on Pierce’s personal response to the poverty he had encountered. Near the end of his life, Pierce singled out his emotional, compassionate response to poverty as the key to World Vision’s impact: “I became part of the suffering. I literally felt the child’s blindness, the mother’s grief. And there was no way that I could walk among the lepers and not feel as lonely, as cut off, as abandoned, as brokenhearted, as debased and humiliated as they were; I wept over the poor little orphan children. It was all too real to me when I stood before an audience.”<sup>32</sup> Pierce characterized Asian unaccompanied minors in sentimental terms, as “mercy’s children” or “lovable little darlings.”<sup>33</sup> World Vision often prominently placed in its material photographs of Pierce embracing “rescued” children, a motif also employed by Everett Swanson during this period and by a whole host of

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<sup>31</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 119.

<sup>32</sup> Graham and Lockerbie, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Film at Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

evangelical “relief and development” organizations in later years.<sup>34</sup> Thus the emotionally-driven compassionate paternalism of Pierce’s experience was writ large in its calls to action directed at the American evangelical public.

World Vision’s basic, central “request” was to sponsor a needy individual. In so doing World Vision emphasized that potential donors were entering into a relationship with an indigenous pastor or orphan across the world—a striking possibility in a world without internet or real-time cable news updates. As readers perused a World Vision magazine advertisement, for example, they would not be asked to think about issues like war or poverty or injustice, but to consider “a little girl named Ban Sun Sook, [who] has found happiness in Yo Kwang Children’s home—happiness that can continue with your help.”<sup>35</sup> World Vision offered sponsors not just the chance to do the right thing or to obey some ethical mandate, but to begin an intimate familial relationship: “You can become his (or her) “Mother” or “Dad” . . . and have his picture and letters to warm your heart.”<sup>36</sup> World Vision’s appeals during this era were literally paternalistic.

Therefore, as part of the paternalistic relationship, World Vision offered Americans the opportunity to meet an Asian child’s emotional needs as well. For example, one brochure featured a Korean toddler reaching out her hand toward the reader

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<sup>34</sup> When Swanson’s wife Miriam accompanied him to Korea, she “would take special delight that thousands of Korean children called her ‘Mommie.’” See “Remembering the ‘Heart of Compassion:’ Miriam Swanson Westerberg, 1915-1994,” *Compassion Magazine*, March/April 1994, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Advertisement, *Christian Herald*, January 1958, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Frank Phillips, World Vision appeal letter, World Vision May 1957, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

with a large font, capitalized caption that read “I WANT TO BELONG TO YOU.”<sup>37</sup> Sponsorship was propagated not just as a monetary transaction in order to mitigate poverty, but as an emotional connection that the sponsor could experience through “quaintly worded letters that . . . express the joy of a grateful little heart.”<sup>38</sup> American benefactors were promised that “your heart will be touched by words like these, from a typical letter received by a sponsor: ‘tears of thankfulness poured from my eyes when I could have [*sic*] a precious mother who will pray for me.’”<sup>39</sup> Even when World Vision referred to the vast numbers of orphans it supported, it employed the language of family relationship: “come home to our precious family of nearly thirteen thousand Korean orphans.”<sup>40</sup>

World Vision also emphasized the common humanity of the global family, or, more often, the spiritual solidarity of the Body of Christ, as a goad to giving financially. In a pamphlet directed at Sunday School teachers Pierce wrote, “Your students will be helped today by the responsibility to give and pray for their little ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ across the seas; and at the same time you will be developing an awareness of the needs of others, a burden for the lost of the earth, a world vision that will bear fruit tomorrow!”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Brochure printed 27 June 1958, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, June 5, 1961, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>41</sup> Pierce, brochure entitled “How to Emphasize Missions in the Sunday School,” 1958, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

This paternalistic emphasis on adoption, belonging, and emotional connection was far and away the most frequent portrayal of the appropriate American response to global poverty, especially in single page magazine advertisements and mass mail appeals. World Vision frequently used letters that orphans wrote to sponsors (with the careful coaching of staff) in order to demonstrate the possibility of emotional connection and of concrete evidence that one's investment was paying off. Here is one typical example: "Dear My sponsor: I was very glad when I heard that you always love me very much, and thank to God that he gave me good sponsor, who is living very far place across the ocean. My hope is to work for Christ, to devote all my life for Him. Kim Sung Tai."<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, World Vision did not hesitate to use guilt. Pierce's style was often direct and confrontative in this regard. For example, as he filmed a group of female missionaries on a visit to China in 1949, he turned to the camera and challenged his American audience: "Think of it . . . four white haired old women serving five hundred blind children. What are you doing, buddy? . . . they who have so little sacrificed so much while we who have so much sacrifice so little . . . what you probably spend on food for a single day can care for a leper for a whole month."<sup>43</sup>

Although Pierce never questioned America's basic righteousness as the world's major power nor did he raise the possibility that Americans' wealth might be ill-gotten in any way, he occasionally criticized American consumer culture. For example, in the *Red Plague*, he reminded the audience, "not only communism, but also materialism is a false

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<sup>42</sup> *Other Sheep*, 75.

<sup>43</sup> *New China Challenge*, 16mm, (World Vision films, 1952), World Vision U.S. Film Archive, Federal Way, Washington.

god to be fought against.”<sup>44</sup> In 1957, World Vision heavily publicized Billy Graham’s decision to forego his purchase of a new Chevrolet in order to contribute to a Korean orphanage, and suggested that others imitate his example. Sometimes World Vision gave leaders from the global South a platform to challenge Americans to greater sacrifice on behalf of the poor. At its 1964 Festival of Missions David Lamb, who pastored a Chinese church in Calcutta, pointedly asked the audience, “What is your greatest need today? Money or a luxurious car or a bigger or more beautiful house? What is money or a beautiful car or a luxurious house compared to eternal life? There is a need of spiritual vision.”<sup>45</sup>

Pierce had little patience with those who felt paralyzed by the great needs of the world. He was fond of saying, “Don’t do nothing just because you can’t do everything.”<sup>46</sup> References to the epistle of James would often accompany this sort of exhortation, with its theme that faith must express itself through action. A typical challenge: “Today we too must be ‘doers of the word’ who illuminate the Gospel in such a way that people will have to listen to what we say.”<sup>47</sup>

Some of World Vision’s most effective communication did not involve any cajoling from Pierce at all, but was designed simply to let the words of Scripture themselves directly impact or “convict” the reader. This communication strategy simply

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<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, 79.

<sup>45</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, October 1964, 22.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see flyer “It is Important for You to see *Cry in the Night*,” n.d.; Program for World Vision’s Festival of Missions, Winona Lake, Indiana, July 21, 1964, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>47</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, January 1962, 5.



placed a biblical text in close visual proximity to a contemporary scene of pitiable suffering. One particularly striking example of this oft-used rhetorical approach utilized a full-page black and white photograph of a thin, sickly boy in a bed with a broken arm attached to an IV. Superimposed on the photograph above the boy's head was a quotation from Isaiah 58:10, which read in part “and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity and thy darkness be as the noon day . . . thou shalt be called the Repairer of the breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in.”<sup>48</sup> No other words besides the Scripture appeared—the challenge to the reader needed no other commentary.

World Vision made a significant impact on the evangelical worldview because it went beyond merely arguing that concern for the poor should be part of mission in a generalized sense. It effectively convinced individuals that by sending money to World Vision, one could in fact *act* as a missionary—although at one remove. Pierce explains in an appeal letter: “Did the Lord say ‘heal the sick’ to you? No doubt your first reaction is ‘no, I’m not a doctor. Neither do I have the gift of healing.’ But the Lord did say ‘heal the sick’ to his disciples, and as His disciples, you and I have a responsibility to the sick. You can fulfill part of your responsibility through World Vision.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, but using a different biblical theme, Pierce pleads, “consider Bob Pierce as your emissary representing you as a Good Samaritan giving help to beaten, down-trodden naked

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<sup>48</sup> *Going with God* pictorial, 81, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>49</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, June 1965, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

homeless humanity.”<sup>50</sup>

These examples demonstrate that for donors, giving money was a deeply significant, personal way of being directly involved in compassionate charity. World Vision defined its relationship with donors as involving them in mission—by giving to World Vision, donors could “go overseas by proxy.”<sup>51</sup> Even for children, “Sponsoring a needy little orphan in the Orient will help make mission live for your class.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Tensions between Spontaneous Faith and Rationalized Technology**

When it came to using sponsor dollars in order to ameliorate the physical needs of the poor, World Vision’s approach displayed tension between the spontaneously spiritual and the rationally technological. Again, Pierce’s personal example exemplified the organization’s theory of mission to the poor. On one hand, Pierce’s manner of discerning *which* practical needs should be addressed was characterized by a strong conviction that God would miraculously provide, guide circumstances, and speak directly to him to ensure that “His Word would not return void.” Revealing his deep roots in the faith missions tradition, Pierce expected that if he “stepped out in faith,” God would providentially intervene. When he encountered some great need, he would often immediately offer funds, without knowing if there was enough cash on hand. For example, at the headquarters in California, “One day a cable arrived from [Pierce], who

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<sup>50</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, December 25, 1956, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>51</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, January 1959, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Pierce, “How to Emphasize Missions in the Sunday School.”

was somewhere in India. It read HAVE WRITTEN CHECK FOR \$40,000. COVER IT.”<sup>53</sup> Other times Pierce was able to travel only partway to a destination, but believed that if he flew halfway, God would provide the cash to make it the rest of the way. After one such miraculously successful journey, he reflected, “I arrived without any money, but I had a million dollars worth of experience to prove that ‘faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.’”<sup>54</sup>

Because this spontaneous approach had at its root a confidence in God’s provisional control over “coincidences” and “miraculous timings,” much practical action sprung from these kinds of experiences. For example, Everett Swanson, whose Evangelistic Association took up sponsorship of Korean orphans as did World Vision, was tentative about taking up a new commitment to mission to the poor. But he was decisively pushed into action when, upon arriving home from a trip to Korea, “a check for \$1000 designated ‘for the needy of Korea’ was waiting for him . . . Swanson later wrote in a report, ‘This was conclusive proof to me that God was in it.’”<sup>55</sup>

Pierce invited World Vision’s donors into his kind of spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment faith: “In response to a number of urgent pleas, I am making an emergency trip to Korea immediately to conduct a conference for several hundred of our Korean pastors . . . please pray about permitting me to take your funds with me in hand.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, p. 63.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> “One Tough Question,” *Compassion Magazine*, September/October 1992, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, July 1, 1953, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

Much of World Vision's compassionate charity was spontaneous, spiritual, and unplanned. Yet when it came to its actual interventions on behalf of the poor, World Vision forewent a reliance on the miraculous and instead spent enormous energy bringing physical restoration through the blessings of technology. From the beginning, World Vision shared with the rest of the emerging economic development movement a highly optimistic assessment of technology's power. The earliest example of this was medicine. From its founding, World Vision was up-to-date on the latest advances in leprosy treatment. Later, during the Vietnam War, it spearheaded a major effort to deliver wheelchairs and newly-designed prosthetic limbs to amputees.<sup>57</sup> World Vision clearly saw itself as emulating Jesus' healing ministry through making use of the best medical technology. In a fascinating appeal letter (headed by a photo of a Western-trained Korean nurse), Pierce writes: "When our Lord Jesus Christ brought relief from sin and suffering to the people of His day, He used the things at hand: clay to heal the blind man's eyes, loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, and illustrations drawn from everyday life to teach his parables. If our Lord walked the earth with us today, we believe He would use Band-Aids and antibiotics . . . multipurpose food . . . and space age terminology in His parables".<sup>58</sup> Although Jesus' healing ministry was accomplished by miraculous means, World Vision assumed that its ministry would wield technological weapons instead of "spiritual" ones. The command to heal remained, but the power to

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<sup>57</sup> Appeal letter entitled "Victory through Christ in Vietnam," March 1, 196x (date not legible), Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California. The letter invited readers to choose which practical intervention they would like to fund; it was a predecessor to the later World Vision catalog approach to funding; See note 660.

<sup>58</sup> Bob Pierce, World Vision appeal letter, September 1966, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

heal changed from supernatural to technical, although God was seen to be the author of both. This switch, however, was never commented on.<sup>59</sup>

World Vision also implemented technology in order to mimic the rational efficiency of globalizing business enterprises. Beginning in the early 1960s, in order to more effectively provide basic relief supplies like food, water and clothing, World Vision established sophisticated delivery networks that featured storage, transportation, and distribution systems. For example, in 1965 it inaugurated a massive campaign to deliver “Viet kits” assembled by volunteers in America and shipped to civilians displaced by the war. In 1967 alone nearly 100,000 kits were shipped to Vietnam.<sup>60</sup> Pierce spoke expansively about the opportunities to use technology in the service of missions, even devoting an entire *World Vision Magazine* issue to make his point. He wrote: “Only the One for whom we speak knows the special opportunities for enlarged Christian witness which are now possible through the utilization of today’s satellite communications, global television, the marvels of electronic data processing—and in days ahead through the application of tomorrow’s scientific achievements . . . opportunities which lie ahead as we seek to ‘by all means save some’.”<sup>61</sup>

Even World Vision’s approach to fundraising and communication owed more to technology than to spontaneous faith. Despite Pierce’s explicit admiration for faith

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<sup>59</sup> The idea that an organization that stridently believed in biblical inerrancy and joined other Evangelicals in stoutly defending biblical miracles would never consider healing lepers through prayer as Jesus did is perhaps explained by the influence of Fundamentalist dispensationalism, which claimed that the Gospel miracles belonged to an earlier dispensation, but that miracles of that sort had ceased since the closing of the New Testament canon.

<sup>60</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 230.

<sup>61</sup> Pierce, “Technology: Servant of Missions,” *World Vision Magazine*, March 1966, 6-7.

missions patriarch George Mueller,<sup>62</sup> who was known for funding his orphanage completely through God's miraculous provision in response to prayer, World Vision's strategy was one of aggressive, organized appeals for funds on as large a scale as possible. The organization was one of the first nonprofit organizations in the world to adopt the early IBM computer in order to organize mailing lists and sponsor communication as massively and efficiently as possible. According to Michael S. Hamilton, this partial marginalization of hallowed "faith" principles was of a piece with Evangelicalism more generally: "Since World War II, evangelical entrepreneurs have shown less interest in proving God's existence through their fundraising strategies than in growing their ministries."<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While formerly evangelicalism in its broad historical sense has been interpreted as straightforwardly "enthusiastic," emotional, and anti-intellectual, recent scholarship has emphasized its paradoxical nature.<sup>64</sup> Early World Vision's individual charity model was also distinguished by tensions similar to those that have marked popular evangelicalism for more than two centuries. So World Vision was socially marginal in its conservative "fundamentalist" theology, but mainstream in its patriotic, pro-democracy, anti-

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<sup>62</sup> See Graham and Lockerbie, 57 for Pierce's explicit mention of imitating Mueller.

<sup>63</sup> Eskridge and Noll, 107.

<sup>64</sup> See Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, 234-6; chapter two entitled "Enthusiasm and Enlightenment" in David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

communist politics.<sup>65</sup> It was strongly committed to a supernatural world view in which God's special providences ensured staff that they were doing God's will, yet was equally beholden to Enlightenment modernity, whose gifts of technology, science, and organizational bureaucracy were God's chosen instruments to succor the poor. It was intimately personal and individualistic in its view of the poor, while enthusiastically engaged in making the biggest impact possible, using mass media of every kind to promote its message.

What accounts for the eclectic ingredients that made up the recipe for the individual charity model? In conclusion, two factors were decisive. First, the roles of class and education weighed heavily. Pierce was himself a middle-class college dropout, and he gathered around him men of similar social standing and perspective. Evangelicalism did have its highly educated leaders, but in the main, they were fixated on the battle for intellectual respectability, contending for Evangelical influence in the realms of systematic theology, biblical studies, and apologetics.<sup>66</sup> But leaders like Pierce, Larry Ward and Everett Swanson were more reflective of Evangelicalism as a whole in their middle-American sensibilities.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the individual charity model would be marked by elements that were strong in American popular culture during the 1950s: fascination with technology, especially with the almost magical force of mass media, and an uncritical patriotism that saw the American Way of Life as a

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<sup>65</sup> See Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 34, 11.

<sup>66</sup> See Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* for an excellent analysis of this subset of Evangelical leadership.

<sup>67</sup> Their lack of educational attainment may have been something of a sensitive spot, as suggested by Pierce and Ward's frequent trumpeting of their honorary doctorates from obscure Evangelical colleges.

cure for the ills of the world. Despite the labors of intellectuals at Fuller Theological Seminary, post-World War II Evangelicalism's re-engagement with American culture basically took place at the popular level—it was Youth for Christ using popular music at youth rallies; it was Missionary Aviation Fellowship using second-hand military airplanes for missionary support—and it was Bob Pierce using 16mm film to broadcast images of the poor as widely as possible.

But when it came to the major economic and political trends that shaped mainline Protestant, Catholic, or secular efforts at poverty amelioration, one can trace almost zero impact on the individual charity model. A thumbnail sketch of the broader scene illustrates the contrast: By 1947, much work with the poor was characterized by optimistic attempts to eliminate poverty by engaging it at a structural level. Leading foundations like those of Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford were distinguished by their scientific, rational, research-based attacks on the causes of human misery. Their research programs helped to control previously devastating diseases, sparked the Green Revolution in agriculture, and almost single-handedly established economic development as an academic discipline.<sup>68</sup>

World War II had also spurred major political action on poverty. Roosevelt's ideology of the Four Freedoms, which included freedom from want, was enshrined in the Atlantic Charter, and was purportedly enacted by a massive global structure of institutions including the IMF, World Bank, and UN, all founded in the wake of the war.

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<sup>68</sup>Boli and Thomas, 30.



In the U.S., Truman championed development aid as a tool for modernization through the sharing of Western technical and scientific knowledge.<sup>69</sup>

The economic thought that informed government action in this period had a similarly strong macro-emphasis. The influential Harrod/Domar thesis argued that the key to growth was aid for the sake of capital formation in poor countries at the national level, which would encourage savings rates, increase investment, and raise per capita GNP.<sup>70</sup> Walt Rostow's theories suggested that if enough capital and technical assistance were infused, poor countries would reach a "takeoff stage" and develop autonomously, as the West had done.<sup>71</sup>

Governments and international agencies enacted these theories through programs of comprehensive economic planning in cooperation with (often newly independent) governments in the Global South. Mainline Protestants participated enthusiastically in these macroeconomic approaches,<sup>72</sup> and Catholic social teaching under Pope Pius XII continued to weigh in, moving to a more supportive stance towards capitalism.<sup>73</sup>

Not only did these developments fail to have an impact on the proponents of individual charity, but a survey of Evangelical discourse on mission to the poor reveals

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<sup>69</sup> Anders N rman and David Simon, eds., *Development as Theory and Practice*, (Harlow, Essex, U.K.: Longman, 1999), 15.

<sup>70</sup> H. W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

<sup>71</sup> Roger Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>72</sup> For example, in 1958, the World Council of Churches launched a campaign calling on rich world governments to give 1% and religious denominations to give 2% of their annual budgets to economic development. Boli and Thomas, 234.

<sup>73</sup> See chapter 5 of Dorr, *Option for the Poor*.

hardly any awareness that they even existed. Even when the individual charity approach paralleled that of the broader economic development sector, little recognition of outside influence was forthcoming. For example, World Vision emerged in a context that saw a host of similar international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) founded in order to relieve the unprecedented civilian suffering caused by World War II. Noteworthy examples include Oxfam and CARE, founded in 1942 and 1945 respectively. Major religious relief and development efforts also began as efforts to relieve civilian suffering, such as Catholic Relief Services in 1943 and Church World Service in 1946. Much of these organizations' initial work focused on providing food, shelter, and medicine to areas devastated by bombs and fighting. For example, in an exact parallel to World Vision's Viet Kits, CARE "delivered packages personally assembled by donors in the US to friends or relatives in both allied and axis areas."<sup>74</sup> Like World Vision, during their formative years, INGOs depended on volunteer donors, popularized development involvement through advertising, and were "dominated by small-scale relief and traditional service delivery activities."<sup>75</sup> Yet scarcely any evidence of non-Evangelical INGOs—even as rivals—can be found in Evangelical discourse.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the paradoxical nature of the individual charity model can be partly explained by its generous borrowing

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<sup>74</sup> Boli and Thomas.

<sup>75</sup> Riddell, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Of course, World Vision had contact with other organizations in the relief field—for example, in 1965 their procurement department made contact with Church World Service, Mennonite Central Committee, Lutheran World Relief, and Catholic Relief to inquire about "how we could work together and be of greater assistance to each other." But contacts of this sort seemed to make little impact on their mission theory, nor were they mentioned in public discourse. See World Vision Annual Report 1965, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

of elements from popular culture, but its near-comprehensive avoidance or ignorance of “higher” cultural influence.

This suggests a second factor shedding light on the tensions within the model. If its penchant for technology, mass media, and Western democracy can be explained by affinities with American popular culture, then what accounts for the individualistic charity driven by spontaneous compassion that is at its heart? The answer is found in re-considering Marsden’s view of the Great Reversal. Marsden pointed out that although concern for the poor was strong among late-nineteenth and early twentieth century conservative Protestants, it was shorn of the postmillennial optimism, political advocacy, and structural engagement that had been present during the antebellum era. Instead, turn of the century evangelical mission to the poor was characterized by meeting individual emergency needs,<sup>77</sup> animated by a faith missions/Keswick spirituality. It was this approach that Pierce encountered in the lives of the missionaries he met, and relayed on a large scale to post-World War II Evangelicals, who instinctively recognized it as a trustworthy part of their tradition. Thus, in the end, to use Marsden’s terms, World Vision was instrumental in reversing the second Great Reversal, but not the first. Taking into account some important differences provided by contemporary American culture, World Vision’s discourse essentially succeeded in turning Evangelical mission to the

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<sup>77</sup> For excellent analyses on persistent individualistic modes of thought in evangelicalism, see Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 189ff ; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

poor back to the turn of the century. It would be left to the next generation to begin to reverse the first Great Reversal.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 1966-1983 NARRATIVE: RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND RADICALS

#### **Introduction**

Just as a new generation of leadership opened the door for fresh perspectives in the preceding period, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a similar shift was taking place. This new generation of Evangelical organic intellectuals had an impact on their movement that was just as profound as their forebears' had been on fundamentalism. Two central themes emerge out of their labors from 1966-1983. First, Evangelical missions to the poor grew quantitatively. Many new leaders and organizations sprouted up to join the vanguard of the first generation. Most experienced rapid growth in fundraising, outreach to the American public, and work on the field. In the aggregate, funding for international Evangelical work among the poor increased from \$62 million to \$238 million between 1969 and 1982.<sup>1</sup> Second, work among impoverished populations began to diversify qualitatively. Although the individual charity model continued to predominate, other voices surfaced, supplementing, challenging, and modifying it.

This chapter argues that the principal protagonists for both the qualitative and quantitative expansion of Evangelical mission to the poor can be classified in two principal groups: the Relief and Development Organizations (RDOs) and the radicals. The RDOs were parachurch organizations, led once again by World Vision, who rested comfortably within mainstream Evangelicalism but gradually shifted their corporate

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in David R. Schwartz, "Left Behind: The Evangelical Left and the Limits of Evangelical Politics, 1965-1988," (Notre Dame, 2008), 149.

identities from “missions agencies” to “relief and development organizations” as their commitment to the physical needs of the poor became more pronounced and intentional. The radicals, sometimes called the Evangelical Left,<sup>2</sup> stridently criticized the Evangelical mainstream for what they perceived as a shallow complacency for the plight of the oppressed and marginalized. Many of their leaders came from social locations or political perspectives that had previously been excluded, ignored, or suspected by mainstream Evangelicalism, so their models of mission to the poor brought a new diversity into Evangelical views on the subject. Thus, both the RDOs and the radicals created space outside the missions movement *per se* in which mission to the poor matured and diversified. In contrasting but complementary ways, both increased the legitimacy of engaging in mission to the poor on its own merit, and not merely as a subsidiary of evangelism.

The activities of the RDOs and radicals, combined with the growing visibility of the socioeconomic needs of the poor in the wider world, provoked intense soul-searching on the part of Evangelical leaders as to the proper priority and relationship between evangelism and social concern. While Pierce’s *ad hoc* theory of mission to the poor had been relatively uncontroversial, during this period, a struggle ensued to normalize formally the validity of mission to the poor.

An important arena for the struggle was a series of conferences that punctuated the period. Organic intellectuals used these conferences to influence both the evangelical masses and their fellow leaders. Since the nineteenth century gatherings at Exeter Hall in

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<sup>2</sup> See Ibid.

London, evangelicals had recourse to conferences for a wide variety of purposes, such as carrying out theological debates about the Bible, speculating on the meaning of prophecy, or celebrating manhood and fatherhood. Evangelicalism's nature as a loosely based movement has meant that there is no Magisterium or Council that can authoritatively dictate direction or resolve differences. Therefore, conferences have been an important means by which evangelicals could corporately organize action, define identity, clarify theology, and promote spirituality. Conferences have also been vital for the Protestant missions movement, with London 1888, New York 1900, and Edinburgh 1910 usually cited as the most prominent examples. But after Edinburgh the Protestant missions movement in the U.S. split into liberal and fundamentalist wings, with the latter no longer participating in the continuing International Missionary Council conferences. It is a sign of Evangelical missions' maturity and confidence in this era that they again began to vigorously organize worldwide missions conferences of their own. The fact that the role of concern for the poor was frequently, and sometimes heatedly, debated in these meetings is a sign that it had "arrived" as a central, rather than peripheral, issue for the movement.

This principal goal of this chapter is to recount the emergence of the RDOs and radicals as the driving forces shaping Evangelical missions to the poor. Because conferences served as such vital venues for debate, they will provide the organizational backbone of the chapter. The narrative begins with a series of international mission conferences which fell into the sphere and influence of the RDOs, then turns to an analysis of the most important relief and development organizations themselves. Focus

next returns to conferences, discussing two events at which radical influence made itself felt. After an extended discussion of the three main radical organic intellectuals, the chapter closes with a final cluster of conferences which expose the fault lines in Evangelical views of mission to the poor—fault lines whose volatility was enhanced largely as a result of radical and RDO efforts.

### **Evangelical Missions Conferences 1966-1974**

1966 was a notable year for Evangelical missions conferences. Mission historian Rodger Bassham believes that “the stage in which evangelicals developed a truly global community with a comprehensive view of mission, may be traced from 1966, the year in which evangelicals sponsored two major conferences on mission and evangelism.”<sup>3</sup>

Both conferences were a reaction to the ecumenical movement’s decision to merge the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches, a move widely seen by evangelicals as signaling the mainline Protestants’ decisive demotion of evangelism. The first conference, officially titled the Congress on the Church’s Worldwide Mission, met in Wheaton, Illinois. Sponsored by the IFMA and EFMA, it was “framed to respond to the challenges of the conciliar movement by reaffirming fundamental convictions in an atmosphere of evangelical ecumenicity.”<sup>4</sup> Although the major thrust was to assert the centrality of proclamation evangelism, the conference’s official declaration did break new ground by acknowledging that concern for the poor was part of mission. The Congress confessed that evangelicals had “failed to apply

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<sup>3</sup> Bassham, 291.

<sup>4</sup> Scott Moreau, Harold A Netland, Charles Edward van Engen, David Burnett, et al, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books 2000), 223.



Scriptural principles to such problems as racism, war, population explosion, poverty, family disintegration, social revolution, and communism” and urged evangelicals to “look to the Scriptures for guidance as to what they should do, and how far they should go in expressing [their] social concern, without minimizing the priority of preaching the Gospel of individual salvation.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it did not itself attempt any Scriptural searching or application on these social issues, but merely approved of such work being done at some point in the future.

The second 1966 conference, the World Congress on Evangelism, was convened in Berlin by Billy Graham in honor of *Christianity Today* magazine’s ten-year anniversary. It is considered the first major twentieth century global meeting of Evangelicals.<sup>6</sup> Even more than at Wheaton, Berlin gathered the most prominent statesmen (it was comprised of nearly all male representatives) in order to validate the centrality of proclamation evangelism. In a typical statement Graham declared, “I am convinced that if the church went back to its main task of proclaiming the gospel and getting people converted to Christ, it would have a far greater impact on the social, moral, and psychological needs of men than any other thing it could possibly do.”<sup>7</sup> Respected English Anglican John Stott, who was emerging as a global leader of evangelicalism, was even more blunt: “The mission of the church . . . is exclusively a preaching, converting,

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<sup>5</sup> C. Rene Padilla, “How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility 1966-1983,” *Transformation*, July/September 1985, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Carl F.H. Henry and Stanley Mooneyham, eds., *One Race, One Gospel, One Task, Vol. 1*, (Minneapolis, Minn. : World Wide Publ., 1967), 28.

and teaching mission.”<sup>8</sup> Other means of expressing social concern received little attention, except a brief statement condemning racism.<sup>9</sup>

Eight years later, the tone had changed dramatically. In Lausanne, Switzerland during the summer of 1974, almost 2,500 Evangelicals held their largest and most representative post-World War II missions conference.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the previous conferences, which had limited themselves to particular aspects of mission, the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization aspired to make a well-rounded comprehensive statement on how Evangelicals understood mission. The results of the conference, codified in the Lausanne Covenant, have since served as an influential marker of Evangelical identity and self-definition. Its importance in this regard was magnified by the fact that many Evangelicals were not creedal or de-emphasized denominational affiliations—the Covenant came to take on the role a doctrinal creed would for more confessional groups. In addition to affirming well-established verities, Lausanne mainstreamed two new developments in Evangelicalism’s understanding of missions. First, “unreached people groups” (sociolinguistic blocs of people without a reproducing, Bible-believing church) were to be prioritized in mission work. Second, social action, including fighting poverty, was now officially validated as a partner with evangelism. The Covenant puts it this way: God’s missional concern includes “justice and

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 220.

<sup>9</sup> It is ironic, given its general disinterest in mission to the poor, that the conference was coordinated for the Billy Graham Association by Stanley Mooneyham, who three years later would become president of World Vision.

<sup>10</sup> One could even see Lausanne as Evangelicals’ Vatican II, *mutatis mutandi*.

reconciliation throughout human society and the liberation of men from every kind of oppression;” therefore, “evangelism and socio-political involvement are both parts of our Christian duty.”<sup>11</sup> Stott, perhaps the central figure at Lausanne, embodied evangelicalism’s changing attitudes. Reflecting on his earlier statement in Berlin, he said, “Today . . . I would express myself differently . . . I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission [given by Jesus to the first disciples] but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, significant tensions boiled beneath the cover of the Lausanne Covenant. On one hand, a significant minority, led by non-American evangelicals, especially from Latin America, felt that Lausanne still waffled in its commitment to social concern. At the conference, an *ad hoc* radical Discipleship group led by C. René Padilla of Argentina and Peruvian Samuel Escobar (who had earlier delivered plenary addresses) produced a statement, signed by almost a fifth of the participants, that “repudiate[d] as demonic the attempt to drive a wedge between evangelism and social concern.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, missions historian Timothy Yates notes: “How far Stott and the Lausanne Covenant had really carried the evangelical constituency has been doubted: to the right of Stott there were two for every one who joined him”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in Padilla, “How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility 1966-1983,” 29.

<sup>12</sup> T. E. Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Taken as a group, this cluster of conferences illustrates several developments within Evangelical thinking about mission to the poor during the early years of this period. Within just a few short years, mission leaders went from treating it as a relative afterthought to highlighting it as an integral part of missions. Although there were still detractors who viewed the issue as a zero-sum game—any discussion of the poor detracted from evangelism—the heart of the debate was now about what model of mission to the poor was appropriate, rather than whether it had a place at all. The conferences also illustrate the growing diversity of Evangelicalism, in this case on a global level. Many of the leaders from the global South, such as Padilla and Escobar, were key players in advocating for a stronger emphasis on social concern. However, the ambiguities present at Lausanne intensified afterward, as was evinced in another cluster of missions conferences in the early 1980s. This latter group will be considered at the end of this chapter as a means of summing up the developments in the period. Although the RDOs were well-represented at these conferences, and, in the case of World Vision, extremely influential,<sup>15</sup> they were ironically undergoing a process of change that would gradually move them out of the sphere of “missions agencies” and into a realm of their own.

### **The Relief and Development Organizations**

This cohort brought together established groups like World Vision and Compassion International alongside newly founded organizations such as Food for the

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the contributions of Mooneyham and MARC at Lausanne 1974 in *World Vision Magazine*, December 1974.

Hungry. As the name indicates, they went beyond the first generation by expanding their work to include not only acute, short-term emergencies but longer-term, chronic situations as well. As their commitment to development increased, they recognized that long-term engagement with poverty required a completely new set of skills and competencies. Therefore, in 1979, in order to share best practices, coordinate effort and provide mutual support, these agencies, along with several smaller organizations,<sup>16</sup> formed the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations (AERDO). It is striking that existing missions associations like EFMA were not deemed sufficient for this purpose, and it signaled a change from the RDOs seeing themselves as “missions agencies that do social service” to “relief and development organizations that do evangelism.” To be sure, there was still significant interchange between missions agencies and RDOs—the EFMA was invited to attend AERDO meetings as an observer<sup>17</sup>—but the salient point is that there were now two groups. This shift was not without controversy. Some questioned whether the drift from “missions” to

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<sup>16</sup> The other organizations were the newly founded, Seattle based World Concern, the tiny Institute for International Development, World Relief, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and MAP International. The former three organizations remained very small (\$2million/year or less), and their discourse displayed little or no distinctiveness compared to the larger organizations. The latter two organizations were significant support organizations for the larger missions/relief and development world, but produced little discourse directed toward the American Evangelical public. Further, none of them were headed by leaders who could be considered organic intellectuals of stature. For these reasons, they will not receive consideration in this study.

<sup>17</sup> No Evangelical RDOs responded to a survey for missions organizations sent out by the EFMA in 1975 nor did any of them even attend the mission executives retreat or the national EFMA convention, unlike 13 years earlier. Yet EFMA was invited to attend AERDO’s annual meeting in 1979 as an observer—the connection with “missions” still there. AERDO President David S. McKenzie to EFMA Executive Director Dr. Wade T. Coggins, 10 August 1984; AERDO Financial Statement, January 16, 1984; “President’s Report: Historical Review,” paper presented at the Consortium of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations Annual Meeting, November 15-16, 1979, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

“development” was not indicative of spiritual compromise. For example, one member of World Vision India echoed many concerns when he asked publically, “Why should World Vision be involved in sanitation, hygiene, or agriculture? Are we becoming a secular agency? Is our job to change structures or change hearts?”<sup>18</sup> Viewed another way, however, AERDO was indicative not of the secularization of missions but of merely increasing specialization—which in an Evangelical context always required new kinds of special purpose groups. This section will consider in greater detail the key contributors to AERDO.

### World Vision

As it had in the first generation, World Vision maintained its position as the most powerful force in Evangelical missions to the poor, both within the group of RDOs and among Evangelicals more broadly. In many aspects of its work, World Vision retained continuity with its earlier approach—only on a much larger scale. For example, child sponsorship continued as World Vision’s “headline” ministry. This was reflected in the fact that the organization highlighted it by isolating it as a “Basic objective” instead of merely mentioning “orphans” under the general category of “social welfare services”. During this period the number of children sponsored increased tenfold from just under 30,000 in 1968 to over 300,000 in 1983.<sup>19</sup>

World Vision also remained committed to vigorously expanding its commitment to relief work. World Vision grabbed headlines in Evangelical circles for its intervention

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<sup>18</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> Estimate from Irvine, 261-270.

in such high profile disasters as the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua, a massive tidal wave in Bangladesh that same year, and the famine that devastated Biafra (southeastern Nigeria) in the early 1970s. Until 1975 war refugees, especially displaced South Vietnamese, were still the most frequent recipients of World Vision emergency aid through their vastly expanded Viet Kit program. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of boxes filled with food, clothes, hygienic items, and portions of Scripture packaged in the U.S. by volunteers, World Vision supplied crutches and wheelchairs to those who had lost limbs and built temporary settlements for those whose villages had been bombed.

World Vision experienced massive growth in both the breadth of means it had to reach the American public and in the numerical reach of those means. The agency naturally continued to utilize direct mail and its periodicals. Income from direct mail enjoyed steady growth, starting at a million dollars a year in 1970; eight years later their computer database-managed list of nearly a million names brought in over ten million dollars “and with it hosts of new partners in concern and, hopefully, in prayer as well.”<sup>20</sup> The new flagship magazine, now simply titled *World Vision*, rose in circulation from 200,000 in 1972 to 680,000 by 1980.<sup>21</sup>

But World Vision’s most high profile expansion was into television—becoming “the first international aid agency to successfully use television to raise funds,”<sup>22</sup> which

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<sup>20</sup> 1978 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>21</sup> 1980 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>22</sup> Ken Waters, "How World Vision Rose from Obscurity to Prominence: Television Fundraising, 1972-1982," *American Journalism* 15, no. 4 (1998), 84.

was the key to World Vision's massive increases in revenue, recognition, and influence during this period. In terms of funding, by the late 1970s, television accounted for more than half of World Vision's total income.<sup>23</sup> By 1980, World Vision's gross income topped 65 million dollars, more than the rest of AERDO's revenue combined.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the continuity in its childcare, relief, and public outreach, 1966-1983 was a time of change, some slow and evolutionary and others sharp and wrenching. Perhaps the most monumental shift was in World Vision's leadership. By 1967 Bob Pierce had left the presidency. After a year in a Swiss sanatorium due to "mental exhaustion," and numerous clashes with the board about basic procedural rules that Pierce viewed as Spirit-quenching red tape, Pierce threatened to resign, as he had before. But this time the board accepted his resignation. Graeme Irvine, a longtime World Vision leader who became president of the International organization in 1988, summarized his view of this tumultuous time: "By the middle of its second decade, World Vision was in trouble . . . without Bob Pierce World Vision would probably not have been born. It is equally true, in my opinion, that with him it probably would not have survived. . . . He was a bitter man, critical of his former colleagues and the new leadership of World Vision."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 1979 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>24</sup> 1980 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>25</sup> Irvine, 23-4.



After Pierce resigned, World Vision entered into a stage of uncertainty common to many organizations after the departure of a founder.<sup>26</sup> To lead them through this period World Vision found Stanley Mooneyham, a man whose gifts were in many ways similar to Pierce's. In the last year of his life, Mooneyham described his background to students at the University of San Francisco: "I am a vagabond evangelist, reared in the rural South, a child of poverty, one of eight children born to a sharecropper who could barely write his own name."<sup>27</sup> Despite his inauspicious origins, Mooneyham quickly emerged as an ecclesiastical superstar. Ordained as a Free Will Baptist minister, he launched the denominational magazine as a teenager and led the Association from 1962-65,<sup>28</sup> the youngest ever to hold the position. From there he moved into the high visibility world of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; he organized major missions conferences in Berlin (1966) and Singapore (1968), and edited the National Association of Evangelicals' flagship periodical entitled *United Evangelical Action*. As an evangelist, denominational bureaucrat, and journalist, Mooneyham possessed the combination of experience World Vision was looking for, and in 1969 he agreed to become the second president of the adolescent organization.

Mooneyham led World Vision for thirteen years and left his enduring mark on the agency, even as Pierce had done. Under Mooneyham, the presidency continued to

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<sup>26</sup> According to organizational development thinkers, one of the key factors determining an organization's success is whether they can overcome an unhealthy dependence on the founder ("Founder Syndrome") and move into a stage of routinizing and consolidating the strengths of the agency. See [need references]

<sup>27</sup> "Journeying Together Toward Social Justice," transcript of speech delivered 28 January 1991, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>28</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 106.

function as the central force in the organization. He combined high public visibility as the face and voice of World Vision externally with great decision-making power internally. Mooneyham's most far-reaching organizational change was the process of internationalization which he spearheaded in the 1970s. When internationalization took effect in 1978, the dominance of the U.S. office was replaced by a United Nations style confederacy, and the globalization of World Vision paralleled the globalization of Evangelicalism. Graeme Irvine, who became president of World Vision International in 1989, said that "Mooneyham had a larger-than-life quality. He saw everything on a giant screen . . . he was fond of saying, 'if you're going to make a mistake, make it a big one.'"<sup>29</sup>

But World Vision was now more than the President surrounded by a few lieutenants as it had been previously. With its expansion, many people held key roles that shaped World Vision's discourse. Especially prominent were Senator Mark Hatfield, who joined the World Vision board in 1973. Hatfield, a Republican senator from Oregon for 28 years,<sup>30</sup> was an Evangelical Christian who was seemingly involved in every Evangelical initiative for the poor in the 1970s, ceaselessly speaking at conferences, writing forewords to books, and serving on boards. But World Vision was his chief evangelical affiliation, and they eagerly made use of his notoriety.<sup>31</sup> Hatfield's political influence also opened the door for World Vision to have a larger voice in Washington,

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<sup>29</sup> Irvine, 40.

<sup>30</sup> Although Hatfield was Republican senator, he was known as something of a maverick. He was vociferous in his opposition to the Vietnam War, and later co-wrote a book against nuclear proliferation with Sen. Ted Kennedy.

<sup>31</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 142.

helping it take its first tentative steps into advocacy for the poor in the corridors of power. Ted Engstrom, who since 1963 as executive vice-president had kept World Vision afloat through his administrative skills, now played a larger public role, speaking more than a hundred times a year and writing several well-received books. Engstrom was vital in moving the organization from one that eschewed “long-range planning” and “elaborate mechanisms of administration”<sup>32</sup> to one that valued business management models and bureaucratic efficiency and administered its own programs overseas.<sup>33</sup> Engstrom led World Vision into founding, along with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (EFCA), a watchdog organization that worked to help evangelical organizations avoid financial impropriety—a timely move, given the scandals that were to plague televangelists in the following decade.<sup>34</sup> Through his books, conferences, and professional example, Engstrom was an important force in the professionalization of the evangelical parachurch world.

Geographically, during the waning years of Pierce’s presidency World Vision’s involvement was already beginning to shift away from Korea,<sup>35</sup> which was in the midst of its rapid economic ascent, and towards Southeast Asia. This process accelerated under Mooneyham, until by 1974 one third of all World Vision’s work was in Vietnam,

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<sup>32</sup> Paul S. Rees, “Declaration of Internationalization,” 1978, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>33</sup> Irvine, 22. Instead of working through existing channels, World Vision became increasingly operational.

<sup>34</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 184.

<sup>35</sup> By 1975, Korea itself had become a “major donor” country. *Ibid.*, 247.

Cambodia, and, to a lesser extent, Laos.<sup>36</sup> Cambodia held especially high hopes for World Vision staff after they constructed the country's first pediatric hospital in 1975. Tragically, however, the hospital never saw a patient—the Khmer Rouge overran Phnom Penh only a week after the hospital was finished, and, with horrific irony, used it as a torture chamber.<sup>37</sup> As World Vision staff fled ahead of the Communist governments taking hold of the former Indochina, nearly 30,000 sponsors lost touch with their sponsored children.<sup>38</sup> Just as a huge portion of ministry investment vanished overnight, World Vision's revenue was skyrocketing, so the organization immediately searched out new venues for service. They found them in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa.<sup>39</sup> The children sponsored in these regions tended to be street children, victims of famine, and dwellers in urban slums—all carrying with them complexities different from that of war orphans.

This meant that the face of those served by World Vision also changed. As the “voice” of World Vision, Mooneyham spoke most frequently and most passionately about the hungry. In his 1975 book, *What do you say to a Hungry World?*, he combined narratives of his intense personal encounters weeping alongside hungry families with a broader statistical analysis of global food insecurity. Mooneyham's speaking engagements, appeal letters, and television programs also discussed hunger so frequently

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<sup>36</sup> Irvine, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Theodore Wilhelm Engstrom, *Reflections on a Pilgrimage: Six Decades of Service* (Sister, OR: Loyal Pub., 1999), 114.

<sup>38</sup> Irvine, 47; more than 100 World Vision workers were also killed in the turmoil

<sup>39</sup> Irvine, 86.

that it represented the chief characteristic of poverty for him. A second major area of ministry that developed under Mooneyham was relief of refugees, particularly in Southeast Asia. Always intense, Mooneyham described his feelings for Cambodia as “a love affair”; World Vision’s ministry in the 1970s was intimately connected to the political turmoil in Southeast Asia. A third new development began in 1970 as the World Christian Training Center in Watts, California, which attempted to provide training to African-American pastors who had not been able to attend seminary and to “bridge the communication gap between the inner city and white suburbs.”<sup>40</sup> This, World Vision’s first major project in the United States, indicated the organization’s willingness to involve itself in the poverty and racial strife in its own backyard—just down the Interstate Five from its headquarters.

World Vision’s transition from missions to RDO was gradual, and was more a case of adding the latter without subtracting the former. Like Pierce, Mooneyham was first and foremost an evangelist; he emulated Pierce’s practice of leading large evangelistic crusades in far-flung parts of the world. He continued to closely associate with the evangelical missions movement, including playing a key role in the Lausanne Congress and the Movement that followed it. He was described by his colleague Ted Engstrom as “in the fullest sense a Christian missions strategist.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 1974 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>41</sup> 1975 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

In the wake of Pierce's departure, evangelism lost some of its visibility within World Vision. But World Vision constantly re-committed itself to evangelism. For example, Engstrom declared 1972 to be a year of intensive focus on evangelism and reassured his constituency: "You will be hearing much more about this emphasis . . . with special assistance being given to national evangelists, crusades and evangelistic thrusts."<sup>42</sup> Mooneyham's crusades often met with unprecedented response overseas. In 1973 he held his most significant crusade in Cambodia, a country with less than a thousand evangelicals and "a reputation as one of the most difficult mission fields in the world."<sup>43</sup> When nearly five hundred people indicated interest in conversion on the first night, Mooneyham was incredulous: "Such a thing had never happened before." But interest remained strong, and by the end of the services four days later Mooneyham could report in World Vision magazine: "Suddenly the church has multiplied nearly three times."<sup>44</sup> Stories such as these, as well as others in places like East Timor and Mindanao assured that old-time revivalism continued to have its place under Mooneyham's watch.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, 1966 to 1973 saw a strong trend towards the compartmentalization of World Vision's "missions" involvements and its "relief and development" activities. In 1965 Ed Dayton founded the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC) as an arm of World Vision dedicated exclusively to the "missions" side

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<sup>42</sup> 1971 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>43</sup> W. Stanley Mooneyham, *Come Walk the World: Personal Experiences of Hurt and Hope* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1978), 20.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 23.

<sup>45</sup> There he was even invited to share the homily at a Catholic mass of 1200 worshippers.

of the ledger. Dayton brought the agency into the intense debates about evangelism and social concern that dominated evangelical missions thinking during this time and was instrumental in promoting the “Unreached People Groups” emphasis in missions. Similarly, World Vision re-focused its magazine to aim at “a more scholarly level and more specifically to missions leaders.” It hoped to shape evangelical missiology through the recruitment of top thinkers such as Carl F.H. Henry, Samuel Escobar, and René Padilla as contributors. It was supplemented by an in-house organ called *Heartline*, sent free of charge to donors, which attempted to promote World Vision and provide information about its ever-increasing ministries. Thus, missions retained a central role within World Vision, but it became one aspect of its operations—a department—rather than the unifying force of its organizational identity.

World Vision maintained its close identification with grassroots evangelicalism, yet even this was compartmentalized and departmentalized. Efforts to engage local congregations redoubled, spurred by a new Church Relations Program in 1973. Although the Program did not produce the massive revenue of television, it drew congregants into concern for the poor through numerous community based formats. Two of the Program’s projects were especially effective. First, the Love Loaf Program distributed through churches millions of small plastic banks in the shape of a loaf of bread. Families were encouraged to place these banks on countertops of local businesses and to contribute their coins as a family. Like Pierce’s earlier films, a portion of the funds raised were to be used for the church’s own denominational missions. In 1976, over 2,600 churches raised more than 1.3 million dollars through the project.

The second initiative was less widespread but more substantive. World Vision's Planned Famine curriculum, developed in partnership with youth ministry experts Youth Specialties, brought together youth groups for a 40-hour, overnight experience that included games, activities, and Bible studies designed to raise awareness about hunger. The curriculum asked pointed questions about opulent American lifestyles in the face of global poverty and carried a tone similar to that of the radical Evangelicals discussed in the next section.<sup>46</sup> The program's signature angle was for the students to fast for the duration of the activity in order to personally experience hunger, and to give the money they saved on food to World Vision's famine relief programs. In addition to these programs, World Vision held regular banquets, missions days, and multimedia presentations to spread its message in and through the churches.<sup>47</sup> However, conspicuous by its absence was any mention of challenging churchgoers to become missionaries themselves.

In contrast to its church outreach, World Vision's television programs introduced a new way of presenting itself. In the words of its producer, "World Vision productions couched the organization's Christian motivation in language the average person could understand. We did not want to hide the Christian purpose, but to express it in general terms more appropriate for a television audience."<sup>48</sup> The result was to promote an image of World Vision with the general public that downplayed its evangelical commitments

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<sup>46</sup> It recommended numerous radical titles and extensively quoted Ron Sider, for example.

<sup>47</sup> For example, in 1976 a multimedia presentation based on Mooneyham's book *What do you Say to a Hungry World?* was shown to 16000 persons in 30 banquets and raised \$451,021. (annual report) , Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>48</sup> Waters, 76.



and emphasized widespread Judeo-Christian values of mercy and compassion. As a result, World Vision's donor base broadened considerably, so that, for example, by 1980 nearly 20% of its donors were Catholic.<sup>49</sup> Thus, when "challenging to mission" through television programs, viewers were encouraged to enter into a broad-based humanitarian effort that not only included but also transcended the Evangelical roots of the agency.

But World Vision's most far-reaching changes came from its movement beyond ministry to individuals to a greater engagement with structural aspects of poverty. First, the organization increased its commitment to development, albeit fitfully and gradually. In making an explicit commitment to "long-term survival and growth," World Vision broke new ground when it added this phrase to its list of Basic Objectives in 1974. Since the late 1960s various national offices had engaged in *ad hoc*, intermittent development projects. For example, the regional director for Indonesia provoked wonder by suggesting a duck raising project. The initiative went ahead, but was not widely imitated. As an associate from Indonesia observed, "It sure is a lot harder to raise money for development than for child care and other projects. The emotional tug just isn't there."<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, two factors fostered a growing interest in development among World Vision practitioners. First, follow-up after the initial phase of disaster relief convinced Mooneyham that it was necessary. In the wake of the Nicaraguan earthquake in 1972, World Vision hired a retired army colonel with logistical experience to head its new Relief and Development department. Bryant Myers, who would later become the

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<sup>49</sup> One telethon even showcased a Catholic family as exemplary donors. *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>50</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 152.

organization's chief theorizer on development, worked tirelessly to coordinate sharing of experience among field projects, but acknowledged that enthusiasm ran ahead of experience: "We didn't know a lot about development ourselves then. It was sort of like the teacher who keeps one page ahead of the student."<sup>51</sup>

Within its ministry to children, growing awareness of development provoked important changes. World Vision broadened its focus to include needy *children* instead of just *orphans*. They even changed the name of its beloved singing ambassadors from Korean Orphans' Choir to Korean Children's Choir. This seemingly minor shift actually reflected a growing realization that legitimate poverty could be caused by more than just the loss of parents. Adding ministry "to families" also recognized that poverty ensnared more than just helpless individuals, but larger social units, and indicated the beginnings of a more structural approach to thinking about poverty.

Second, the move towards smaller-scale development projects among other humanitarian organizations began to influence World Vision. Western development experts, both secular and religious, were increasingly turning to poor individuals and communities as the locus of their concern. Development scholar Roger Riddell marvels that "up until the early 1970s, discourse about aid and development could take place without any explicit mention of poverty."<sup>52</sup> According to Chabbott, "The turning point

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>52</sup> Does Foreign Aid Really Work, 31.

... occurred in the 1970s, when the object of development shifted from a unique focus on national economic growth toward individual welfare improvement.”<sup>53</sup> Concern for growth remained, but in the 1970s *equitable* growth became the goal—that is, donors increasingly asked whether the poor were directly benefitting from their efforts instead of exclusively aiming to raise a country’s GNP. These factors led to an increase in local projects on the ground in urban slums and neglected rural districts, which required a great deal of management and expertise. Previously, the macroeconomic foci of the wider development sector had been completely incongruous with evangelical individualism. But in the late 1970s there was something of a meeting in the middle, as Evangelicals began to think more structurally and the rest of the development world (generally speaking) focused more on the level of the neighborhood or village.

A watershed moment came in 1978, when more than fifty World Vision staff attended a five week training sponsored by Institute for Rural Reconstruction.<sup>54</sup> The experience provided many opportunities to interact with other major organizations involved in development and heavily influenced World Vision’s approach. The conference was a landmark not only for its work on the ground but for the way World Vision presented itself to the public. In a 1979 World Vision magazine article, Myers was so enthused he provided a detailed summary of the conference for his American readers, promising that development was to be a major direction “for the next 10 years”;

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<sup>53</sup> Boli and Thomas, 242.

<sup>54</sup> The IRR was founded by James Yen of China, who was an international renowned pioneer in rural development and adult education in the middle of the twentieth century. Although the IRR was non-sectarian, Yen attended a China Inland Mission school in his youth and claimed to be a follower of Jesus during his adult life.

he declared that the agency would hitherto commit 75% of its funding to development.<sup>55</sup> This article was the earliest recognition in its public discourse of significant non-Evangelical influence on its work, and it presaged greater ecumenical openness in the 1980s and beyond. World Vision's newfound openness to learning from "outsiders" also sped up the shift away from the Evangelical missions community, as it began to establish its place within the wider development community. Despite its steep learning curve, World Vision immediately undertook to share its nascent approach to development, especially with other AERDO agencies. In 1978 it began to publish *Together* magazine, which attempted to serve agents working in the development field, both within World Vision and in other agencies.

World Vision's newly discovered structural thinking also had powerful implications for its political involvement as for the first time the agency tried to influence public policy. Its first attempt was unsuccessful: during a 1971 visit to the majority Christian Kachins of Burma, who were reluctantly growing opium poppies to finance their independence efforts, Mooneyham promised to inquire about drug eradication funds from the U.S. government. Back in Washington, Mooneyham relates, "It took a day just to find out to whom I should talk. It was my first real encounter with government bureaucracy, and it was worse than I imagined."<sup>56</sup> The request was denied. Four years later, the results were more encouraging: Mooneyham and board member Senator Mark O. Hatfield attempted to raise consciousness about hunger in the American public and its

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<sup>55</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 153.

<sup>56</sup> Mooneyham, *Come Walk the World*, 36.

elected political leaders through Project FAST, a media campaign kicked off by a luncheon on Capitol Hill in which congressmen were fed the same food offered to famine victims at relief centers in India. This campaign, informed by Mooneyham and Hatfield's frequent public disapproval of America's gluttonous consumption habits, indicated a new willingness to criticize Western culture generally and its political leaders specifically; it was a striking departure from Pierce's warm and uncritical patriotism.

This kind of criticism reached its sharpest edge in 1979 as Mooneyham became concerned about the plight of the Vietnamese "boat people" as they fled their homeland under threat of storms, piracy, and unwelcoming shores. In a scene reminiscent of World Vision's founding myth, prominent African-American pastor E.V. Hill, who was associated with World Vision's training center in Watts, showed Mooneyham a newspaper with a picture of "a Vietnamese mother, cowering under a canvas in the bow of a boat," asking him, "What are you going to do about it?"<sup>57</sup> Mooneyham first tried political persuasion. According to later president Graeme Irvine, "World Vision urged governments and the UN to rescue refugees from the dangerous pirate infested waters. No one was interested."<sup>58</sup> So Mooneyham enacted "Operation Seasweep": he chartered World Vision's own relief vessel to bring aid to those drifting on the South China Sea and stridently censured U.S. government inaction in the Evangelical and mainstream press. However, political engagement was not all adversarial. After World Vision was

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<sup>57</sup> Mooneyham, "Journeying Together toward Social Justice," World Vision archives.

<sup>58</sup> Irvine, 53.

forced out of Cambodia in 1976, Engstrom and other World Vision leaders met with President Carter to discuss the crisis.<sup>59</sup>

World Vision's growing identity as a RDO was also manifest in the way its organizational ethos shifted away from a spontaneous faith missions spirituality to a uniformly rationalized, professional approach. During the 1970s most relief and development NGOs increased their standard of professionalization, as a generation of graduates from university-based economic development departments found work and as veteran practitioners drew on several decades of experience. That World Vision participated in this trend is illustrated by the way it adapted its leadership programs and in the missions theories promoted by MARC.

Pastors' Conferences continued to grow in frequency and attendance, reaching a hundred conferences offered by 1975. However, the curricula offered in such conferences took a very different tone both internationally and on the domestic front. In 1973 Engstrom and Ed Dayton of MARC gave their first "Managing your Time" seminar from which they developed their popular book *Strategy for Living*. During the decade, more than 20,000 American Christian leaders attended. They offered the seminar all over the world as well, where, according to Engstrom, there was "growing interest in practical time management in other cultures besides the West. The seminars were well-received by Third World Christian workers."<sup>60</sup> Through the conferences, World Vision's professionalizing ethos spilled over into the global evangelical community. This kind of

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<sup>59</sup> Engstrom, *Reflections on a Pilgrimage*, 147.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

rationalized approach to time and money management clearly diminished Bob Pierce's faith missions ethos. Theologically, it emphasized responsible, active, self-controlled stewardship of the gifts God had given. It marginalized the earlier stress on inward dependence on God's unexpected, miraculous intervention to provide what was needed. Thus these conferences were both a cause and consequence of a major theological shift that fundamentally shaped the way faithful service was defined.

Rationalization and professionalization spread at an even deeper theoretical level through MARC's influence. In contrast to Pierce's old-time revivals, MARC was characterized by an energetic (if controversial) application of modern technology and managerial methods to the task of global evangelism. In fact, MARC was founded when former aerospace engineer Ed Dayton, who was in the same Sunday School class as Engstrom, began to apply his professional mindset to missions strategy. Under World Vision's sponsorship, Dayton gathered a number of aerospace scientists and organizational managers to discuss the question, "If your company had the task of evangelizing the world, what would you do?" So was born "managerial missions", the latest chapter in the American missions movement's affinity for statistics, organization, and technology.<sup>61</sup> In order to promote this approach, MARC united its management theory with Donald McGavran's and Ralph Winter's teaching on Unreached People Groups. For the Lausanne Conference, MARC published its computer-aided *Directory of Unreached Peoples*, which was then updated annually. The *Directory* was a predecessor

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<sup>61</sup> See "Technology: Servant of Missions," *World Vision Magazine*, March 1966; for an incisive analysis of the 'managerial' style of American missions in historical perspective, see Andrew Walls, "The American Dimension in the Missionary Movement," in Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 1-25.

to the influential *World Christian Encyclopedia*, a comprehensive statistical analysis of Christian adherence broken down by a plethora of demographic and cultural categories. MARC's approach was criticized by a number of prominent evangelical leaders from the developing world, especially Padilla and Escobar, whose articles ironically appeared often on the pages of World Vision's own magazine. In Dayton's report on a major mission conference in 1980, he recognized that "there were major reactions to the 'lack of theology' . . . and the perceived 'racist' approach of people groups."<sup>62</sup> But he dismissed these criticisms as "misunderstandings" and "overreactions."<sup>63</sup> Clearly World Vision was content to give voice to both sides of the debate. Engstrom celebrated MARC's influence on the missions movement: "It is no longer 'unspiritual' to want to run a Christian organization in an efficient, businesslike manner. Missions executives are now talking openly about the advantages of management training for themselves as well as for their staffs."<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, this shift did not necessarily indicate the eclipse of spirituality *per se*, but only the shift to a different kind of spirituality. This new spirituality is perhaps best summarized by Engstrom, who characteristically saw no contradiction in assigning divine agency to the results that came from World Vision's sophisticated, research-driven

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<sup>62</sup> Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) at Pattaya, Thailand; see chapter conclusion for more detail on this conference.

<sup>63</sup> Annual Report 1980, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>64</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, March 1977.



programs: “The Lord has seemingly moved us up to another league—where we are much more visible, and thus far more vulnerable.”<sup>65</sup>

Culminating the process toward an updated RDO identity that began with Mooneyham’s ascendancy, in 1978 World Vision changed its statement of self-definition from “a missionary service organization meeting emergency needs in crisis areas of the world through existing evangelical agencies” to “a humanitarian organization [that] is an interdenominational outreach of Christians concerned for the physical and spiritual needs of people throughout the world”.<sup>66</sup> The commitment to working through existing agencies is gone; this reflects the much greater willingness of World Vision to administer its own projects, although always with local collaborators. World Vision moved to locate itself among “humanitarian” instead of “missionary” organizations. Finally, instead of identifying purely with evangelicals, World Vision became a group of “interdenominational . . . Christians”. This clearly reflects a broadening in World Vision’s funding sources and project partners.

### Food For the Hungry

As World Vision expanded, it spawned another organization destined to become a founding member of AERDO. Larry Ward had been one of World Vision’s key leaders from 1957 to 1970. Licensed to preach at age fifteen, having attended Wheaton College with Billy Graham and Jim Eliot, as a managing editor of several evangelical magazines

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<sup>65</sup> Engstrom, 1975 World Vision Annual Report, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>66</sup> *World Vision Magazine* September 1978, 2.

including *Christianity Today*, Ward brought his stalwart Evangelical credentials to World Vision in 1957 as the first managing editor of its new flagship periodical. Until he became Vice President for Overseas Ministry in 1965, Ward's written words powerfully shaped early World Vision's discourse. Pierce paid homage to his journalistic talents: "Many of the things that have been written over my name, Larry Ward wrote every word of 'em . . . any place it says Bob Pierce . . . you can depend on it, about 99 percent of everything worth reading Larry wrote."<sup>67</sup> Ward produced Pierce's influential film *Vietnam Profile* and his television production *Link of Love* was a transition piece to later telethon programs.<sup>68</sup>

But in 1970 Ward became increasingly burdened about world hunger. Although he was overseeing all of World Vision's wide-ranging relief projects, hunger "emerged like a mountain peak to stand out above the rest."<sup>69</sup> Through a series of dreams, divine urgings, and comments from colleagues that spoke to him with the authority of the Holy Spirit, Ward felt an intense call to focus on world hunger. True to his evangelical instincts, Ward responded by turning to the Bible, rereading every passage in Scripture that referred to hunger. In the margin next to each verse that touched on social justice he wrote the letters, "SJ".<sup>70</sup> While still globetrotting for World Vision, Ward spent months poring over contemporary analyses of the global hunger problem. He emerged from this process full of conviction, determined to start a new ministry that would reflect his soul's

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<sup>67</sup> Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward*, 108.

<sup>68</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 103.

<sup>69</sup> Larry Ward, . . . *And There Will Be Famines* (Glendale, Calif.: G/L Regal Books, 1973). 4

<sup>70</sup> Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward*, 121.

singular focus. Scribbled on grey hotel stationery, he outlined the approach of a new organization: “An all-out campaign alerting Christians to world hunger and informing them of their special responsibility [carried out through] an all-media information program.”<sup>71</sup> In contrast to the expanding scope of World Vision, Ward longed for greater specialization. He later reminisced: “We had the privilege of being something of a pioneer in the field of helping the hungry. Other fine agencies were doing that as *part* of their programs, but to our knowledge we were the first to be directly operational with this as our one specific goal and purpose, the one string on our guitar.”<sup>72</sup> If there was bad blood between Ward and his employer at the idea of him starting a rival organization, it was not evident to the public.<sup>73</sup> World Vision gave Food for the Hungry a \$25,000 seed grant and featured Ward’s new organization in *World Vision* magazine.

Despite Ward’s dramatic calling to start something new, in many ways Food for the Hungry paralleled World Vision in the 1970s, only on a much smaller scale—it could almost be termed a “poor man’s World Vision.” Food for the Hungry duplicated World Vision’s relief activities following the 1972 famine in Bangladesh and the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua; it mirrored Operation Seasweep with its own nearly identical “Operation Rescue;” Ward followed in the footsteps of Pierce and Mooneyham in his conception of an organizational president that traveled constantly and was personally involved everywhere; Ward’s book *There will be Famines* on hunger appeared two years

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>73</sup> The timing of Ward’s restlessness is noteworthy, since Mooneyham had very recently taken over, but no discontent or personality conflicts can be discerned from any published materials.

before Mooneyham's but was more limited in scope and disjointed in presentation;<sup>74</sup> Food for the Hungry copied World Vision's foray into television fundraising,<sup>75</sup> complete with its own celebrity endorsement (actress Tippi Hedren, of Alfred Hitchcock fame), but abandoned the medium after one attempt; and it joined AERDO with World Vision, set up a Geneva office in 1981 and adopted an internationalized structure in 1984, six years after World Vision.

Predictably, Food for the Hungry did not retain its strict focus on hunger, but became heavily involved with refugees from Vietnam. It coordinated a risky operation called "Project Noah" designed to help refugees escape newly communist Vietnam, and administered a refugee resettlement camp of 5,000 called Hope Village located near Sacramento, CA. It was involved in protracted, but ultimately unsuccessful, negotiations with Bolivia as a site for receiving Hmong refugees from the highlands of Indochina.

However, Food for the Hungry was unique in the Evangelical world for its early emphasis on research as a means to alleviate hunger. Since Ward was convinced that "technology can help long range,"<sup>76</sup> he committed Food for the Hungry to fund an international institute for relief and development which provided fellowships and scholarships for specialists working on hunger. Ward characterized his involvement as follows: "I don't pretend to be a technical expert. I just see the needs out there and 'holler' for help."<sup>77</sup> During the first ten years of its existence, Food for the Hungry's

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<sup>74</sup> Foreword by Billy Graham.

<sup>75</sup> The television special was entitled *I Was Hungry* . . .

<sup>76</sup> Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward*, 113.

research “expanded into agri-research, dramatic water purifying projects, hydroponics, irrigation, mud stoves, solar cookers, harnessing of the wind, and catching rainfall in simple dams and cisterns.”<sup>78</sup>

Despite this fresh commitment to research, what distinguished Food for the Hungry most from World Vision was not so much its work on the field, but its underlying organizational tone. Ward led with a strong sense of divine providence through fortuitous circumstances that was closer to Pierce in the 1950s than to Engstrom’s rationalized professionalism in the 1970s. Food for the Hungry became involved in many of its projects through chance meetings with ambassadors or serendipitous requests for help from relatives of the political elite. For example, when he was once unexpectedly stranded in Vietnam, Ward interpreted his predicament as “an adventure for God . . . material for a miracle,” and, sure enough, Food for the Hungry’s work in Borneo began through a “chance meeting” with an Indonesian leader in Saigon.<sup>79</sup> Even after discouraging failures, Ward’s faith in providence was unshaken: “I trust God and cheerfully accept the fact that this just didn’t work out, but I sorta [*sic.*] hope He will explain it all to me someday. You see, our main purpose in this was to show that God *always* has the answers.”<sup>80</sup>

Politically, Food for the Hungry retained the strongly patriotic attitude of World Vision’s first generation. Ward’s biography made this abundantly clear, reproducing a

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 179.

sentimental “letter to the flag” Ward published in a local newspaper and a commendatory letter from President Reagan received by Ward upon his retirement. This patriotism came through clearly in his written works as well, as when Ward explained American withdrawal from Vietnam as having “succumbed to political and media pressures”.<sup>81</sup> Another time, in the midst of discussing the huge gap in protein intake between the First and Third worlds, Ward digresses—not to blame the West for its greed—but to “salute USAID . . . for its tremendous contributions worldwide.”<sup>82</sup> This strong pro-American attitude made for tight links with the emerging political right wing of Evangelicalism. Ward appeared frequently on the 700 Club and was warmly endorsed by Pat Robertson in the introduction to his biography: “It has been a sheer pleasure to know Larry. Whenever there is a cry for help around the world, Larry is there despite danger, Communist tyranny, or bureaucratic roadblocks.”<sup>83</sup> Food for the Hungry’s rescue ship for Vietnamese refugees was funded in large part by Jerry Falwell, and students from Falwell’s Liberty University sailed on board.<sup>84</sup> Ward’s relationships suggest that perhaps the line between Evangelicalism and fundamentalism was still not sharp in the 1970s.

Finally, unlike World Vision, which almost entirely eliminated its earlier challenge to direct missionary service, Food for the Hungry retained this dimension. It

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>82</sup> Ward, *And there Will be Famines*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 129.

spoke not in terms of becoming a missionary, but through an invitation to participate in its Hunger Corps volunteer program, which closely emulated the Peace Corps.<sup>85</sup>

In summary, within the AERDO cohort, Food for the Hungry distinguished itself through two seemingly opposed traits: on the one hand, Food for the Hungry looked forward to stronger association with other RDOs as it committed a greater portion of its resources to long-term, issue-oriented academic study than any other comparable Evangelical organization of its time. Yet on the other hand it looked backwards, as an organization founded by one of World Vision's first generation leaders that desired to maintain the spirituality and ethos of that time. As Ward said, glancing at a photo of Pierce, "If I have five people in my office for a meeting, there are really six. Bob is there too."<sup>86</sup>

### Compassion International

As an organization founded in nearly identical circumstances, it is not surprising that the second stage of Compassion International's organizational history closely paralleled that of World Vision in many respects. After Everett Swanson's death in 1965, Compassion entered into a succession crisis of its own, which was exacerbated by corruption and labor unrest among its Korean staff. Compassion responded by expanding its operations to Indonesia, Singapore, Haiti, and Burma, with a greater reliance on expatriate missionaries instead of locals as ministry liaisons. As its new president, Compassion chose former missionary Henry Harvey, who, like Ted Engstrom of World

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<sup>85</sup> *HOPE magazine* [Food for the Hungry publication], December 1982, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried: The Story of Larry Ward*, 104.

Vision, improved management and organizational efficiency in the wake of a departing charismatic founder.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, Compassion's experience administering orphanages in Korea taught it that many of the "orphans" sponsored by Compassion were actually children abandoned by destitute families in the hopes that life in an institution would be an improvement. In response, Compassion instituted its Family Helper program in 1968, which expanded the sponsorship mechanism to include children of widows or handicapped fathers. By 1974, when Dr. Wally Erickson was promoted from field director to president, succeeding the retiring Harvey, Compassion was involved at least nominally in 17 countries. Under Erickson, Compassion's focus shifted to providing for the educational needs of sponsored children under its new School Project program, so that by 1981, its director of program development could report, "At this point the majority of Compassion's involvements are essentially scholarships for children to attend Christian schools."<sup>88</sup>

Like World Vision, Compassion took advantage of easy access to television advertising, producing several half-hour and hour-long programs in the 1970s.<sup>89</sup> This

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<sup>87</sup> *Compassion Magazine*, September/October 1992, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. 598.11.27 letter from compassion Donald Miller, PhD director of program dev, dated June 19 1981; see also October 16 1981 to Tom Sine regarding the Wheaton '83 missions conference: "Most of compassion's work is to enable children, one way or another, to receive a formal education."

<sup>89</sup> In another minor but interesting fundraising parallel with World Vision, after his death Swanson's widow Miriam Swanson inaugurated a small choir of sponsored Korean children, with whom she toured to promote Compassion. *Compassion Update*, November/Dec 1990, 17. In the early 1980s, Compassion also mimicked World Vision's countertop displays.



fueled modest but steady growth, with income surpassing \$5 million annually in 1975.<sup>90</sup> The number of reported sponsored children peaked at 68,000 in 1982, at about one-fifth of World Vision's reported total for the same year.<sup>91</sup> Its support base spread beyond the U.S. as well, as Compassion opened branches in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and France, and agreed to close collaboration with Tear Fund in the U.K. In 1981, having outgrown its Chicago headquarters, Compassion relocated to Colorado Springs, CO.<sup>92</sup>

Compassion retained distinctive from its larger cousin in two important areas. Although it dabbled in various development projects, Compassion remained an intensely child-focused organization, even strengthening that emphasis during the period. Compassion did begin to incorporate the language of development, but applied it on an individual scale, so that by the end of the period, they were beginning to call themselves a "child development agency." The push towards the broader development arena was given greater force in 1980, when Don Miller, with a Ph.D. from Michigan State in Informal Education in Third World Settings, joined the staff. According to Erickson, Miller's influence "planted us firmly on the side of development in the family of relief and development agencies."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> According to the 1978 Better Business Bureau's Philanthropic Advisory Service Report, child sponsorship contributions accounted for 81% of Compassion's 1977 income. Total income was \$5,180,000. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>91</sup> *Compassion Magazine*, September /October 1992, 7.

<sup>92</sup> This move epitomized a geographical shift in Evangelicalism. In the 1950's Chicago was its hub in terms of where many of its main parachurch organizations were headquartered. By 2005, cheaper land and greater opportunities to network had prompted scores of Evangelical groups to relocate in Colorado Springs, ironically dubbing it 'the Mecca of Evangelicalism.'

<sup>93</sup> *Compassion Magazine*, September/October 1993, 7

Unlike World Vision, Compassion made the crucial decision not to broaden its appeal beyond its Evangelical constituency. When its advertising agency recommended dropping its strong Evangelical overtones for a television program, Compassion dropped the agency instead. Future president Wess Stafford later reflected on the incident, “We are profoundly Christian. We’ve been told we’d be better off without mentioning the name of Jesus in our promotion but that’s not who we are.”<sup>94</sup>

By the early 1980s, RDOs had carved out for themselves a significant place in the overseas outreach of Evangelicals. Ed Dayton of MARC calculated that in 1981, Evangelicals gave 375 million dollars to Evangelical RDOs, compared to \$1.465 billion raised by all other North American Protestant missions agencies combined—mainline and Evangelical.<sup>95</sup> The fact that within just a few years, a handful of Evangelical agencies could achieve a 20% market share of *all* North American Protestant missionary activity is truly remarkable. Clearly a shift in the way Evangelicals understood missions was underway.

### **The Radicals**

Whereas the RDOs worked on behalf of the global poor from a social space that was closely linked to the Evangelical mainstream, the radicals were outsiders.<sup>96</sup> In the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>95</sup> Tom Sine and Wayne Bragg, eds., *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Monrovia, CA. : Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1983), 419.

<sup>96</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the radicals, especially regarding their politics, see Schwartz, “Left Behind: The Evangelical Left and the Limits of Evangelical Politics.” I have chosen the term “radicals” rather than Evangelical Left because it reflects their own usage of the time; in contrast, the

first generation of Evangelicalism, nearly all the significant leaders were white, male, politically conservative, and marked by a strong Reformed ethos.<sup>97</sup> But in the early 1970s, a new generation with a strikingly different demographic profile sharply challenged the hegemony of “establishment Evangelicalism” (as they called it).<sup>98</sup> Most were young, empowered by the contemporary atmosphere of youthful protest. They included many who identified with the historic peace churches, such as Professor Ron Sider, founder of Evangelicals for Social Action, and John F. Alexander, editor of the periodical *The Other Side*. They protested American militarism and emphasized a communal Christian ethic. African Americans, including Fuller professor William Pannell, evangelist Tom Skinner, and John Perkins, founder of Voice of Cavalry Ministries, spoke boldly against the Evangelical acquiescence to racism and called for racial reconciliation. Nancy Hardesty and Sharon Gallagher, among others, led the fight against sexism; Jim Wallis, Wes Michaelson and the *Sojourners* community cast left-wing political activism in a biblical idiom.<sup>99</sup>

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radicals have stridently (but unconvincingly) claimed that they were neither left nor right, but merely biblical.

<sup>97</sup> For the view that Evangelical leadership was heavily Reformed, despite the presence of Pentecostal, Anabaptist, and Wesleyans among the NAE coalition, see Douglas A. Sweeney, “The Essential Evangelicalism Dialectic: The Historiography of the Early Neo-Evangelical Movement and the Observer-Participant Dilemma,” *Church History*, 60, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), 70-84.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Henry, the son of Carl F.H. Henry, and later U.S. Representative from Michigan, forcefully expressed the strife between generations: “To say that there is a generation gap between the post-thirty establishment evangelicals and their pre-thirty offspring is not only to state the obvious but to border on understatement . . . while the establishment continues to split hairs about how we are to separate from the world, we wonder how we can become meaningfully involved.” Cited in Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 218.

<sup>99</sup> Other regionally-based figures who associated or identified with the radicals include the Christian World Liberation Front in Berkeley, CA, publishers of *Right On*, and Roger Dewey of Evangelical Christian Urban Ministries of Boston, publisher of *Inside*.

Frequently calling themselves “radical evangelicals” committed to “radical discipleship,” they remained a numerically small sub-set of Evangelicalism, yet gained disproportionately wide publicity, especially during the mid-1970s. Although always a potentially fractious group, throughout much of the 1970s alliances held, and the radicals formed a relatively cohesive group, taking similar stances, writing in each other’s publications, speaking at one another’s events, and gathering at the same conferences. It is striking that they did not merely form their own separate identity, but zealously engaged the structures, parachurch organizations, publishing houses, periodicals, and educational institutions of the first generation in an effort to influence the Evangelical identity that was constructed by them. In fact, the wider Evangelical public was first made aware of the radicals in their midst by two particularly noteworthy conferences that took place in the early 1970s.

In 1970 InterVarsity Christian Fellowship held its popular triennial Urbana Missions Conference in order to promote greater missions commitment and awareness among college students. InterVarsity was known in Evangelical circles for being relatively socially progressive, especially in comparison to its main competitor, the staunchly right-wing Campus Crusade. In an effort to engage the controversial social issues of the day, and to create a more inclusive atmosphere for African Americans, InterVarsity recruited several speakers with links to the radicals. Samuel Escobar, who was to have such a decisive influence at Lausanne, Mennonite Myron Augsburger, and African-American evangelist Tom Skinner all gave plenary addresses at the conference, whose theme was “Christ the Liberator”. Skinner, who was a former Harlem Lords gang

leader and future mentor of Ron Sider, as well as many other radicals, gave the groundbreaking talk. At the end of a speech laced with harsh condemnations of mainstream Evangelicalism's quietistic compliance with an unjust *status quo*, Skinner closed with a prophetic crescendo: "Go into the world that's enslaved, a world that's filled with hunger and poverty, racism and all those things that are the work of the devil. Proclaim liberation to the captives, preach sight to the blind, set at liberty them that are bruised. Go into the world and tell them who are bound mentally, spiritually, physically. The Liberator has come!"<sup>100</sup> Most of the twelve thousand students responded with wild enthusiasm, and many clamored to suspend the rest of the official program in order to deal with issues of race and class.<sup>101</sup>

If Urbana exemplified radical sway at the grassroots level, then the 1973 Thanksgiving Workshop on Evangelism and Social Concern demonstrated their newfound influence among Evangelical elites. Meeting at an inner-city Chicago YMCA, participants belatedly wrestled with the issues that had dominated headlines since the mid-1960s—racism, sexism, poverty, and militarist nationalism. It was the first gathering of conservative Protestant leaders of stature to consider such controversial social issues since before the second stage of the Great Reversal. The breadth of

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<sup>100</sup> Transcript of speech, <http://www.urbana.org/articles/the-us-racial-crisis-and-world-evangelism-4>, accessed November 30, 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Keith and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, 1940-1990* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 276.

participation and leadership among the fifty-two participants,<sup>102</sup> especially from the radical-dominated younger generation, was indicative of the burgeoning interest in social issues among Evangelicals. The manifesto issued by the group, entitled the Chicago Declaration, unequivocally proclaimed that American power and wealth were responsible for many of the social ills of the nation and the world. In the most wide-ranging and strongly-worded Evangelical statement on poverty so far, conference signatories declared, “Before God and a billion hungry neighbors, we must rethink our values regarding our present standard of living and promote more just acquisition and distribution of the world’s resources.”<sup>103</sup>

Until this point, American Evangelical political attitudes could be summarized in the words of radical conference participant Donald Dayton, “We tended to be apolitical, but when political instincts did surface, they were conservative.”<sup>104</sup> Yet here were a group of Evangelicals gathering to call America to repentance, not to exonerate or justify. The conference was well-covered by Evangelical and even national media. One Chicago newspaper wrote: “Some day American church historians may write that the most significant church-related event of 1973 took place last week at the YMCA hotel . . . it could well change the face of both religion and politics in America.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Unlike the missions conferences referenced above, the Thanksgiving Workshop was a domestic affair. The only non-North American present was, again, Samuel Escobar.

<sup>103</sup> Cited in Ronald J. Sider, *The Chicago Declaration* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1974), 4.

<sup>104</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), xi.

<sup>105</sup> Roy Larson, “Evangelicals Do U-Turn, Take on Social Problems,” *Chicago Sun-Times*

Among the younger generation of radical organic intellectuals present at the Workshop, three among them stood out for their greater stature, their long-lived standing as organic intellectuals beyond the 1970s, and their outsized contributions to a radical theory of mission to the poor: Jim Wallis, Ron Sider, and John Perkins. Thus, the remainder of this section will profile these key leaders and the organizations they founded.

### Jim Wallis

Raised in a devout Plymouth Brethren home, Jim Wallis's background gave little indication that he was to become an "outsider" to mainstream evangelicalism. By his own account, he experienced a typical patriotic, suburban, middle-class Midwestern childhood in the 1950s. But soon he became deeply aware of the different worlds in which blacks and whites lived. As an adolescent, he was shocked to find that "on the other side of town" was an African-American Plymouth Brethren congregation that had no interaction at all with his family's church. So, in his first attempt at activism, Wallis tried in vain to bring the two churches together. When his church responded with reluctance and polite racism, it marked his first step on his road out of the church entirely. In high school, Wallis devoured books like *Autobiography of Malcolm X* and worked as an elevator operator alongside a black liberationist who became a close friend and mentor. Wallis took his final step out of the church in the summer before college after an incident in which he warned a visiting white missionary to South Africa: "Some day

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(December 1, 1973). See also Marjorie Hyer, "Social and Political Activism Is Aim of Evangelical Group," *Washington Post*, 30 November, 1973, p. D17.

when black people in South Africa rise up to take their freedom and put people like you up against the wall, don't you dare have the gall to say you are being persecuted for the sake of Christ."<sup>106</sup> When riots engulfed nearby Detroit in 1968, Wallis watched from the outside, anguished over the safety of those he knew inside; he described what was happening as “a class war, a colonial situation in which the white ruling group was being threatened by a popular uprising.”<sup>107</sup>

As an undergraduate at Michigan State he became a leader of students protesting the Vietnam War. By 1969, Wallis described his participation in the movement in religious terms: during demonstrations he “felt the revival spirit that I had grown up with, but much deeper this time. This was the kind of revival in which I believed: one that spoke about justice, mercy, and peace.”<sup>108</sup> When he was arrested for protesting, he viewed it as an act of solidarity with the oppressed: “To be counted as criminals for the sake of political conscience is the beginning of a taste of what for years has been the experience, of poor, black, and third-world people—anyone who ends up on the wrong side of the interests of American wealth and power.”<sup>109</sup>

However, after graduation, Wallis began to feel disillusioned; although radical to the point of attraction to Marxism, he was increasingly put off by the “patronizing and arrogant attitudes of left-wing ideologues who saw the poor mostly as a constituency to

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<sup>106</sup> Jim Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, Journeys in Faith (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 50.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.



be organized . . . the capitalists exploit the poor, but the communists use their oppression as a means to power.”<sup>110</sup> He turned again to the New Testament, and read through the eyes of a 1960’s radical, it gripped him like never before. He was riveted by the Sermon on the Mount, or the “manifesto of Christ’s new social order,” which in his earlier church experience was relegated to “the time when we all would get to heaven.”<sup>111</sup> But his re-conversion was sparked by the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25—the same passage so favored by Bob Pierce. This passage came to represent the heart of Wallis’s theology: solidarity with the oppressed poor, mediated by Christ himself; he had found a new spiritual foundation for his activism.

Flush with enthusiasm, Wallis enrolled at Trinity Evangelical Seminary outside of Chicago. There he continued to agitate for justice, gathering a group of disaffected seminarians who called themselves the People’s Christian Coalition. Much of the campus was shocked by this intrusion of radicalism onto their quiet campus, and the leadership was perplexed; finally, the dean awkwardly threatened Wallis with expulsion, saying: “It’s not that we don’t trust your sincerity and integrity. It’s not that your concerns are unbiblical . . . it’s just that the presence of you and your friends has cost the seminary almost a million dollars in lost contributions. We can’t afford to keep you here.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 82.

Undaunted, the group promulgated a *Manifesto for Radical Discipleship* and began to publish *The Post-American*, a 1960s-style radical broadside periodical edited by Wallis. In 1972, some of the group decided to live together in community. After initial relational strife in Chicago, the remaining members chose a low-income, African-American neighborhood in Washington DC as the place to live out their vision of discipleship and ministry. They pooled their finances, lived communally and ministered to their neighborhood, especially in housing and youth issues. But their wider impact came through their monthly periodical, now renamed *Sojourners*. Throughout the 1970s *Sojourners* served as arguably the most recognizable voice of radical Evangelicalism as it brought its left-leaning views on poverty, injustice, sexism, militarism, and nationalism before an evangelical audience.<sup>113</sup> In 1976 Wallis published *Agenda for Biblical People*, a distillation of the theology and calls to action that had filled the pages of *Sojourners*. Wallis's main goal was to challenge "establishment Evangelicals" to turn to "radical discipleship." He sought to break what they saw as the stranglehold of American civil religion on Evangelicalism.

While *Sojourners* valued practical service to their poor neighborhood as they lived simply and communally in its midst, the most characteristic expression of their discipleship was political protest. In the late 1970s the community organized scores of demonstrations against gentrification ("real estate speculation"), corporate power, and the "military-industrial complex." By the early 1980s, the community began to protest

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<sup>113</sup> 39,000 subscriptions by the late 1970s: Schwartz, 412.

nuclear weapons at arms conventions, calling nuclear proliferation “the greatest test of our belief in the gospel in our time.”<sup>114</sup> The community also refused to pay what they called “war taxes,” or the proportion of their tax dollars that went to military spending. Essentially, *Sojourners* understood radical discipleship in terms of living a life of regular protest, speaking truth to power on behalf of the oppressed, the poor, and the disenfranchised while demonstrating a communal alternative that embodied the counter-Kingdom of God.

Wallis’s strident, uncompromising rhetoric and stances made him a divisive figure. Among young left-leaning Evangelicals, he was an important rallying point, and many who probably would have left the faith stayed to express their activism in the form of “radical discipleship.” But among the broader Evangelical constituency he constantly attacked, Wallis was regarded as a gadfly at best and as a dangerous, heretical infiltrator at worst. Wallis had little interest in engaging conservative opponents on the level of academic argument—rather, he played the role of prophet and saw his task as calling sinners to repentance.

#### Ronald J. Sider

If Wallis was the radicals’ prophet, then Ron Sider was their professor. He grew up in rural Ontario as the son of a Brethren in Christ minister and farmer.<sup>115</sup> Both his Canadian nationality and his Anabaptist theology placed him outside the mainstream of

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<sup>114</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 134.

<sup>115</sup> For more detail on Sider’s biography, see Tim Stafford, “Ron Sider's Unsettling Crusade,” *Christianity Today* 27 April, 1992, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/marchweb-only/12.0a.html>, accessed November 30, 2009.

post-World War II American Evangelical leadership. But when Sider entered college in the early 1960s, he fell under the influence of InterVarsity, particularly John Warwick Montgomery, an Evangelical historian whose academic work attempted to demonstrate the historical rationality of Christ's resurrection. Desiring to take up the same apologetic call, Sider earned a PhD in history at Yale University. His Ivy League credentials and desire to argue for the intellectual respectability of conservative Protestantism made him an ideal candidate to follow in the footsteps of the first-generation of Evangelical leaders who founded Fuller Seminary.

But at Yale he had begun to become more politically active, and when small Evangelical Messiah College offered him a teaching position at their extension site in inner-city Philadelphia, he accepted enthusiastically. Living with and working among the urban poor began to change Sider's vocational direction. In 1972 at Messiah College, he met politically liberal Evangelicals John F. Alexander and Jim Wallis, and with them Sider helped organize Evangelicals for McGovern, "a shoestring political organization that gained attention because of its man-bites-dog name." Needless to say, George McGovern lost the election, and gained almost no support from Evangelicals. But Sider's turn from apologetics to social issues had been completed.

The following year, at the age of 34, he joined the planning committee of what came to be known as the Thanksgiving Workshop, and soon emerged as the main organizer. In the years following the Workshop, Sider tried to rally Evangelicalism around the themes of the Chicago Declaration through conferences, frequent journal articles and speaking engagements.

He founded an organization called Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) that sponsored four follow-up conferences on social responsibility, racism, and sexism. In 1978, he began to gather “charter members” for ESA, in order to transform it into a grassroots organization “pleading, prodding, and praying for the kinds of biblically rooted social action called for in the Chicago Declaration.” Because Sider recognized that his progressive views were in the Evangelical minority, through ESA he hoped to create common cause with individual Evangelicals who felt “isolated and unsupported by [their] local Christian fellowship.”<sup>116</sup> From the beginning, ESA’s aims were multifaceted: they worked to educate evangelicals about justice issues, to provide a clearinghouse for information, resources and projects, and to initiate political or service action programs. To support the fledgling organization, Sider started a journal entitled *ESA Advocate*. Its primary goal was to empower political participation through informing ESA members about political issues that should concern “justice-oriented” Evangelicals. Nevertheless, ESA was slow to gather a following. According to ESA’s records, their small membership was more than ninety percent white, educated, and male—a cruel irony for an organization with a deep desire to bridge traditional evangelical gaps between class, gender, and race.

But Sider soon found his voice in his breakthrough book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, published by InterVarsity Press in 1977. Though Sider would eventually author thirteen books by 2005, this, his first popular work, turned out to be by far the most influential. In 2006, *Christianity Today*, evangelicalism’s flagship publication,

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<sup>116</sup> Ron Sider, ESA appeal letter, September 1978, Evangelicals for Social Action Archives, Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA.

ranked it seventh among post-World War II books that “most shaped evangelicals.”<sup>117</sup>

The book, a small portion of which had previously appeared in InterVarsity’s *His* periodical, had sold well over a 350,000 copies in four editions by 2005, an astounding number given its subject material. *Rich Christians* offered an overview of world income inequality, an analysis of biblical teaching on poverty and possessions, and an argument calling for Christians to radically alter their lifestyles in light of the first two realities. Although Sider was neither a biblical scholar nor an economist, *Rich Christians* was the most extensive evangelical or fundamentalist treatment of the major scriptural teachings on the poor and possessions since before the turn of the century. Sider’s academic background is evident in the book’s heavily footnoted, research-based approach—very rare among the other books it sat next to on the shelves of Christian bookstores in the 1970s.

During this period Sider became renowned (or vilified) for his advocacy of a simple lifestyle in order to shed the baleful effects of Western materialism and to free up funds for giving to global poverty relief. This theme had some resonance in a historical context concerned about hunger, ecology and energy shortages.<sup>118</sup> In 1980 Sider took his crusade to other Evangelical leaders through organizing two Conferences on Simple Lifestyle. Nevertheless, by the time of the Reagan Revolution, Sider was clearly swimming against a strong rip-current in his attempt to influence personal lifestyles. He

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<sup>117</sup> “Top 50 Books that have Shaped Evangelicals,” *Christianity Today*, October 2006, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/october/23.51.html?start=4> (accessed on November 30, 2009). John Perkins’ *Let Justice Roll Down* ranked #14, and Ted Engstrom’s *Managing your Time* ranked #8.

<sup>118</sup> For the more on the vogue for simple living in the 1970s, see David E. Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life : American Voices, Past and Present*, 1st ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith Books, 1986).

frequently related a story of discussing simple lifestyle with a group of prominent evangelical leaders. When the leader of a well-known missions agency remarked, “I think the evangelical community is ready to live more simply—if we evangelical leaders will model it,” that ended the discussion. There were no more recommendations for living simply.”<sup>119</sup>

Despite his strong Anabaptist assumptions and uncomfortably radical stances, Sider’s underlying attitude was fundamentally irenic, and his constant striving to bring disparate perspectives together under a biblically based Evangelicalism contributed to growing influence in wider Evangelical circles, even if his scholarly approach made him less attractive to the most radical of the radicals.

#### John M. Perkins

John Perkins crossed perhaps the most formidable barrier of all into Evangelical leadership: that of race. Perkins was born during the Great Depression in rural Mississippi. His childhood and adolescence were full of the poverty, oppression, and racism that characterized the deep South at that time: his mother died of protein deficiency; his brother, though a decorated World War II veteran, was murdered at 21, a victim of police brutality. Like many post-World War II southern blacks, Perkins migrated to California in search of better economic opportunities. He found success in a number of blue collar jobs, and his substantial leadership gifts quickly manifested themselves—at 18 he led a successful strike at his first job at a steel plant.

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<sup>119</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005).

In his mid-20s, he also found white Evangelicalism's Jesus. Though he had little religious background, when his children and wife Vera Mae began attending a holiness church in Pasadena, he was intrigued. Through intensive study of the New Testament, Perkins embraced the Evangelical gospel. Following his conversion in 1957, he again rose in leadership, this time in the church. He began evangelizing black children through the ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship and sharing his testimony with professionals through the Christian Businessmen's Committee.<sup>120</sup> For the first time in his life, he experienced "a chance for real Christian fellowship with a group that was at that time an all-white group."<sup>121</sup> For a time, his successful immersion into lay ministry displaced issues of race: "I got so busy I didn't have time anymore to look at the system around me. I almost forgot my upbringing." But after ministering to incarcerated African-American adolescents, many of whom had also immigrated from the South, a deep concern for the rural poverty of his youth was kindled in Perkins. Despite his intention to never return, Perkins soon felt a call from God to Mississippi, although, in his own words, "I had absolutely no strategy for how to take the gospel to my people."<sup>122</sup>

When he arrived back in his home county in 1960, Perkins began to systematically teach the Bible to whoever would listen—mostly children at first. The work was partially funded by white Bible churches and businessmen in California, although support was so meager that Perkins occasionally had to pick cotton to finance the ministry. Although Perkins's initial draw back to the South was the spiritual needs of

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<sup>120</sup> Child Evangelism Fellowship was a charter member of the NAE.

<sup>121</sup> John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1976), 77.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*



blacks, his deep involvement in the community re-introduced him to the pressing social and economic needs everywhere. Because he believed that evangelism must always start with a person's "felt needs," the work soon included day-care centers, lunch programs, and administration of the county's Head Start program.

By the mid-1960s, the civil rights movement came to Mendenhall County, stirring up "a hurricane of white emotions and black expectations."<sup>123</sup> Perkins responded by adding voter registration drives to his growing list of ministries, now called Voice of Cavalry. Perkins later recalled that during the turmoil of those times, "Everybody, black and white, had to take a stand . . . I was involved in a growing institution. So I had to stand up and be counted too . . . I had to practice what I preached—a whole gospel for the whole man."<sup>124</sup> As Perkins's theology continued to mature, Voice of Cavalry worked even more strenuously to meet the community's "basic need for . . . local efforts, local training, and local leadership."<sup>125</sup> In 1968, under the influence of a local black Catholic priest, Perkins organized economic cooperatives for housing and agricultural implements. These moves into the political and economic arenas began to concern his white evangelical funders, who tended to view them as "getting away from getting people saved." Perkins also faced growing skepticism from whites about his civil rights activities, and he was drawn into the need to explain issues of injustice and oppression to his supporters.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 202, 104.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 122.

But the week before Christmas in 1969, much greater involvement in civil rights was suddenly forced upon him. Amidst swirling rumors of police brutality, Perkins and others from Voice of Cavalry went to the police station to investigate an arrest. Impulsively, the sheriff incarcerated them all without any charge. As the incensed black community gathered around the jail, Perkins pleaded with them to remain non-violent and proposed an economic boycott of all local businesses. The boycott was a huge success, but two months after his discharge, Perkins and several other Voice of Cavalry volunteers were arrested and savagely beaten by the Highway Patrol. While legal action against the perpetrators foundered in the southern justice system, the story of Perkins's ordeal did a great deal to raise consciousness about racism in the broader white Evangelical community.

Perkins emerged from that turbulent time with a newfound commitment to racial reconciliation. He moved to Jackson, the state capitol, to expand his ministry, this time with greater partnership from whites. After the release of Perkins's autobiography *Let Justice Roll Down* and his plenary address at the Urbana missions conference in 1976, Perkins became a national figure among Evangelicals.<sup>126</sup> He took on a heavy nationwide speaking schedule, which helped to attract white volunteers from around the country to serve at Voice of Cavalry and generated funding for new ministries in public health and racial reconciliation in three other sites in Mississippi. As Perkins's stature among Evangelicals grew, he attempted to inspire similar programs around the nation that built up poor communities through holistic mission work. Like Pierce, he strove to replicate

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<sup>126</sup> In the months immediately following the release of the book, according to Perkins, VOC's mailing list jumped from around 300 to more than 3000. *Christianity Today*, 30 January 1976, 13.

his own ministry on a wider scale. Building on the groundswell of interest in his autobiography, Perkins promoted his still-forming model of community development through another volume entitled *The Quiet Revolution*, and he increasingly took on the role of mentor for a steady stream of emerging Evangelical community organizers, both black and white. Perkins also found a place in institutional leadership, as World Vision and numerous other parachurch agencies invited him to serve on their boards of directors.

Perkins's compelling personal story, practical success in ministry, and ability to speak the theological language of conservative white Evangelicals all contributed to his wide acclaim across the Evangelical spectrum.<sup>127</sup> For radicals, Perkins authentically spoke the language of justice as one who had himself experienced oppression, while the mainstream was able to countenance his challenging message because it was couched in a safely conservative theology that did not demand government intervention.<sup>128</sup>

#### Summary: The Radicals

Although the radicals were dismissed by many as a mere fallback to theological liberalism, the radicals ultimately successfully diversified Evangelicalism because they vehemently grounded their distinctive approach in traditional Evangelical verities. First, like all Evangelicals, they constantly appealed to the Bible, copiously supporting their

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<sup>127</sup> For example, Chuck Colson endorsed Perkins's blueprint for work with the poor "because of his dependence on Scripture and his practical experience." See *John Perkins, With Justice for All* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982), 8.

<sup>128</sup> That Perkins was broadly appreciated was partially due to his ability to assimilate diverse influences: when he was asked which books had most influenced him, Perkins mentioned G. Campbell Morgan, Franz Fanon, and James Baldwin, possibly one of the few times those authors have been mentioned in the same sentence. *Christianity Today*, 30 January 1976, 12.

“left-wing” views with a flood of Biblical citations. They insisted that they were faithful Bible-believers like other Evangelicals—in fact, that they were actually *more* faithful to the Word. They claimed the term “radical” in the sense of *deep* or *getting to the roots* of the gospel. During speaking engagements, Jim Wallis would frequently hold up a Bible and, with a scissors, begin to cut out all the verses that dealt with justice and poverty—a poignant illustration of what he claimed was the “establishment Evangelical” hermeneutic. He explained this way: “That the scriptures are uncompromising in their demand for economic and social justice is much more clear biblically than most of the issues over which churches have divided . . . we have suppressed the Bible.”<sup>129</sup>

Wallis claimed that a proper ortho-praxy in response to the Bible’s call for justice was more important than the perennial debates that had exercised Evangelicalism: “The most important distinctions in theology are no longer between high church and low church, evangelicals and ecumenicals, Protestants and Catholics, Calvinists and Arminians, or whatever else. What matters most today is whether one is a supporter of establishment Christianity or a practitioner of biblical faith.”<sup>130</sup>

Radicals also strongly argued that their emphasis on social justice was not a new innovation, but a faithful reclamation of historic evangelical tradition. In analyzing their rhetoric, it is important to recognize their intended audience and the opponents they are battling. The previous generation of Evangelical leadership was very focused on the future and on engagement with contemporary secular culture. Their primary

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<sup>129</sup> Jim Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

ecclesiastical opponents were liberal, mainline Protestants. In contrast, radical Evangelicals, because their main audience was less the broader culture and more Evangelicals themselves, frequently justified their perspective with appeals to the past. For example, Donald Dayton's well-regarded scholarly history of 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelical social action entitled *Recovering an Evangelical Heritage* originally made its appearance serially in Wallis's publication, the *Post-American*. Radicals frequently cited evangelical crusades to end slavery, raise the status of women, and the like as justification of the emphases they were trying to re-place within evangelicalism. Wallis again illustrates this tendency: "Looking back there is nothing very new in what we were saying . . . in the evangelical tradition, great social ills such as slavery, industrial exploitation, and discrimination against women were attacked on the basis of faith by revival movements in 18<sup>th</sup> century England and 19<sup>th</sup> century America. Through these forebears, we learned that it was not radical Christian faith that was heretical, but the church's conformity to American civil religion."<sup>131</sup> William Wilberforce, the late 18<sup>th</sup> century parliamentarian who championed the British anti-slavery movement, was a special favorite of the radicals. His example was cited over and over as an inspiration to imitate. For example, Sider writes, "Wilberforce was the central player in this momentous change in world history [abolition]. He did it all because of Christ—because he knew that Jesus was Lord of politics and economics. So many modern Christians do not understand that."<sup>132</sup> In *Eternity* magazine, Paul Henry (son of Carl F.H. Henry), who

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<sup>131</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 16.

<sup>132</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Living Like Jesus: Eleven Essentials for Growing a Genuine Faith*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 121.

proposed an initial draft of the Chicago Declaration, hoped that Evangelicals would respond to the conference “by producing contemporary counterparts to Wilberforce and Shaftesbury.”<sup>133</sup>

Along with these positive claims of biblical orthodoxy and traditional faithfulness, radicals parried criticisms against them from other Evangelicals, who commonly suggested that they were Marxist or socialist or “left wing.”<sup>134</sup> They replied that their distinctive perspective was simply faithful to the gospel, unattenuated by American nationalism as was Establishment evangelicalism. In 1974 Wallis wrote, “The way of Jesus overturns the assumptions of the Right, Left, and Middle, and presents a genuinely new option for both our personal and political lives. It calls for a life lived for God, for neighbor, for the poor, and even for enemies.”<sup>135</sup> Sider too made much of the fact that he “takes flak from both the Left and the Right . . . ‘I’ve been picketed twice,’ he related, ‘by theologians [who believe in applying Old Testament law today] in Australia, and in Minnesota by gay-rights [advocates].’<sup>136</sup> In his view of the gospel, “Jesus’ words are anathema to Marxists and capitalists alike.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Sider, *The Chicago Declaration*, 32.

<sup>134</sup> In fact, the term “evangelical left” has become the standard way to refer to this sub-group. See Schwartz.

<sup>135</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner’s Story*, 74.

<sup>136</sup> Stafford, “Ron Sider’s Unsettling Crusade”; note also that on the back of his 1999 book *Just Generosity* are sided by side endorsements from arch-conservative Bill Bright, the subject of an expose by the Sojourners Community, and Rev Jeremiah Wright, who figured prominently in the 2008 presidential election for referring to the 9/11 attacks as “chickens coming home to roost.”

<sup>137</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 118.

Still, while they denied simply cloaking left-wing ideology in a religious garb, they acknowledged the role of social conditioning in their theological commitments and biblical hermeneutic. This recognition of the power of context to shape belief was very unusual for evangelicals and was another indication that many radicals had very different mental habits than that which characterized the previous generation. According to Donald Dayton, radical evangelicals “have a much greater sophistication about their own historical conditioning. It does not trouble me, for example, that Sojourners was born in the antiwar movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s . . . Why? . . . Because I also understand the historical conditioning of establishment evangelicalism. The social philosophy advocated by many evangelicals has striking affinities with the thought of the 1870s . . . [they are locked in] a holding pattern that locked a whole cultural gestalt of pre-modern values.”<sup>138</sup>

Indeed, the radicals’ main charge against the “establishment” (their usage of that term clearly echoes their 1960s origin) was that they had capitulated to American nationalism and civil religion, thus dulling their ears to the radical teachings of Scripture. For example, in an inter-journal exchange of jabs in which first generation leader Carl F.H. Henry accused the radicals of being theologically lax because they cooperated with “liberals”, Wallis shot back, accusing Henry of expending all his energy critiquing Marxism but none on American capitalism.<sup>139</sup> We find an especially revealing example of the way nationalism divided radicals from first-generation evangelicals in the

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<sup>138</sup> *Other Side* magazine January 1979, 32.

<sup>139</sup> Jim Wallis, “The Young Evangelicals,” *Post-American*, June/July 1974, 3.

following conversation between Jim Wallis and his father: “[father:] Every time I see the flag go up the flagpole, I think of buddies of mine who died in WWII. A tear comes to my eye, and tingles go up and down my spine. [Jim:] Every time I see that flag go up the flagpole, I think of Detroit going up in flames and Vietnamese villagers being burned by the U.S. army, and it makes me sick.”<sup>140</sup>

Radicals also criticized other left-wing activists for their lack of moral and spiritual foundation. Perkins lamented that “one of the greatest tragedies of the civil rights movement is that evangelicals surrendered their leadership in the movement by default to those with either a bankrupt theology or no theology at all.” Although he became deeply involved in civil rights work, Perkins’s theological conservatism made him reticent to fully identify with the Protestant liberalism of Martin Luther King, which left him stuck in the middle between civil rights leaders who didn’t share his theology and evangelicals who didn’t share his social concern.<sup>141</sup> While freely endorsing much of the social analysis of the Left, Wallis was equally at pains to distinguish Sojourners from the secular radicalism out of which many in the movement came: “Sixties’ movements were unable to generate lasting spiritual resources and provide alternative vision, which are perhaps the greatest contributions that an awakened Christian conscience could make.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 63.

<sup>141</sup> Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*. Perkins, 103.

<sup>142</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 9.



### **The Staying Power of Individual Charity: Samaritan's Purse**

The story so far has demonstrated the emergence of new “alternative visions” for evangelical missions to the poor, as the RDOs and radicals filtered the insights of economic development, civil rights, and the new Left through their distinctive theological lenses. Although this ferment accurately describes where the action was, it probably does not do justice to the attitudes of the “silent majority” of Evangelicals, whose intellectual horizons continued to be fully represented by the model of individual charity. The resurgence of Samaritan's Purse is one poignant institutional illustration of the staying power of the first-generation mentality.

From 1966 to 1983, only one organic intellectual strove to maintain the ethos of the first generation with even more passion than Larry Ward had in founding Food for the Hungry: Bob Pierce himself. Despite the conflicts that surrounded Pierce's departure from World Vision, and despite the new leadership's respectful but determined distancing of themselves from him, Pierce still surfaced occasionally in World Vision publications. Here is a brief paragraph from the March 1971 issue of *Heartline*: “Dr. Bob Pierce . . . is giving most of his time to ‘Samaritan's Purse.’ This is a small humanitarian organization designed to meet need on a person to person level as Dr. Bob finds it on his journeys.”<sup>143</sup>

After his recovery, Pierce was eager to serve as he always had. With the organization he founded now a closed door to him, Pierce simply repeated the process. In 1969, Pierce was invited to take leadership of a small, moribund missions agency. He

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<sup>143</sup> *Heartline*, March 1971, 12.

agreed, renamed it Samaritan's Purse, adopted the same vision statement he had used at World Vision, and proceeded with his "Spirit-led" world travels. More than anything, Samaritan's Purse was an attempt to re-create World Vision of the 1950s. Over and over again, as he promoted the new ministry, Pierce argued for the values of that earlier era; often it seemed he was implicitly arguing against what World Vision had become; at other times the argument became explicit, and his disappointment unconcealed.

Pierce wanted to maintain the faith missions approach in Samaritan's Purse. Although he confessed in 1974 that "World Vision's accelerated growth and increasing influence is sometimes terrifying to me,"<sup>144</sup> Pierce did not necessarily oppose size and prominence *per se*; he himself constantly sought ever larger interventions of God on behalf of the poor. Rather, it was the *manner* of growth that concerned Pierce. He posited an almost Manichean dualism between risky faith that relied on divine intervention and a rational, human controlled way of proceeding in which there was no place or need for God. He put it this way, with his characteristic backwoods eloquence: "Nothing is a miracle until it reaches the area where the utmost that human effort can do is not enough and God moves in to fill that space between what is possible and *what He wants done that is impossible*—that is 'God Room' . . . without that miracle quality, you can get your life and business down to where you don't need God. You can operate exactly like Sears & Roebuck or General Motors or IBM—but the blessings will all be gone."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Pierce, "Lausanne in Retrospect: A Personal View," 11.

<sup>145</sup> Graham and Lockerbie, 53.

His critique of World Vision's professionalization is obvious; even during the waning years of his presidency he had clashed with the board over this principle: when he rashly promised a huge sum of money without consulting the board, in violation of IRS rules, the board saw it as irresponsibility, but for Pierce, it was giving God room to do a miracle. From his perspective, the issue wasn't merely about differing organizational styles, but of whether one trusted God's power or was relying idolatrously on one's own strength.

Pierce preferred to continue to travel the world, turning up at just the right moment to meet an emergency need facing some isolated but faithful missionary. Pierce reaffirmed his time-honored principles of individual charity motivated by spontaneous compassion, but this time, they had the feel of an older man trying to hold onto a time that had passed him by. He offered the experience of his generation as a more reliable executor of mission to the poor than the slick, market driven approaches that were so successful in the 1970s. One can almost feel the competition between Old World Vision and New World Vision: "We on the Samaritan's Purse board have spent 25 to 46 years each getting to know the living veteran missionaries—the 'old hands' still at work along almost every conceivable Jericho road of this brutal globe. Such can usually discern between the truly wounded wayfarer and the fraudulent. I offer this personal identification with individual human needs as one alternative to the dilemma that confronts us all in these days of high-powered, yet impersonal, fund-raising appeals."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Pierce, *Samaritans Diary*, 1974, 22, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

When it came to disbursing funds, he disdained the way World Vision was now running its own programs and hearkened back to an earlier time of assisting noble missionaries. For him, this was a question of humility. As he continued to see it, the missionaries' work among the poor was exemplary and sufficient—merely underfunded and undersupported. What they needed was loving encouragement and support, not more competition. Again, his criticism of World Vision is explicit: “I’m not going to start another organization. I’m going to spend my life backing up people [who have] proved they care about people and God. And that basically was what and why World Vision was created . . . When I could no longer do that through World Vision, that’s when I resigned and started Samaritan’s Purse.”<sup>147</sup>

Thus, constant travel in order to build personal relationships continued to be a hallmark of Samaritan’s Purse. In fact, Pierce insisted on this pattern for all the organization’s top leadership: he required each board member to go on the mission field at least once a year so that “he’s *personally* [emphasis in original] aware of the hurts that make people bleed, aware of the plight of the ‘little’ people”.<sup>148</sup> He continued to define his role as “an intermediary between individuals in need and the compassionate persons or person with the answer to that need.”<sup>149</sup>

Pierce sojourned right to the end of his life in fulfillment of this *modus operandi*; even after being diagnosed with leukemia, he travelled to Bhutan and New Guinea. He

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<sup>147</sup> Graham and Lockerbie, 77.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>149</sup> Pierce, *Samaritan’s Diary*, 5.

finally passed away in 1978 at the age of 64. Under Pierce, Samaritan's Purse never gained the influence that World Vision had. The budget ranged between twelve thousand to less than a hundred thousand dollars annually; their biggest grant was only \$1000.<sup>150</sup> Pierce's vision might have died with him, the relic of a pioneer period in evangelical mission to the poor that had now developed in new directions. But he was able to pass on his particular vision to the next generation of leadership—literally in this case—to the son of his generation's most influential evangelist.

Franklin Graham was a stereotypically rebellious preachers' son until, at the age of twenty-two, he put down his cigarettes and scotch (potent symbols of dissolution in the eyes of the evangelical community) and returned to the faith of his father, Billy Graham. About a month later, in the summer of 1974, he met his father's old Youth for Christ associate. Pierce, knowing Graham's love of piloting small aircraft, invited him on a two-month tour of remote mission sites in Indonesia, China, and India. Pierce's risky, adventurous approach to missions was immediately appealing to the young man with a penchant for thrill-seeking. For the next three years Pierce mentored Graham and groomed him as his successor. Graham later said of this period, "Bob Pierce is the man who inspired me, who taught me, who trained me, who left me with a part of the vision to which he had committed his life . . . next to my own father, [he] has most influenced me and set the course of my life."<sup>151</sup> In 1978, Graham's first act as president of Samaritan's Purse was to begin writing a memoir about Pierce based on hours of interviews before his

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<sup>150</sup> Ironically, that grant was sent through World Vision. Pierce, *Samaritan's Diary* 42; Graham and Lockerbie, 84.

<sup>151</sup> Franklin Graham, *Rebel with a Cause* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1995), 39,78.

death; in it Graham pledged to lead the organization in the direction pointed by its founder.

So Graham continued Pierce's eschewal of the move towards professionalized humanitarian projects of his generation, and pursued an organizational strategy that can only be described as missionary adventuring. Graham had found his calling: "I'm going to travel the gutters and the ditches of the world, and I'm going to help people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. My father can go to the big stadiums, but I'll just go to the highways and the byways." The "highways and byways" that Graham was most attracted to were often war zones that other Christian aid organizations engaged more cautiously. But Graham parachuted fearlessly into places like Lebanon, Haiti, and Ethiopia. In an interview with GQ, Graham exuded enthusiastically about his unique muscular Christianity on behalf of the poor: "There's no excitement and thrill like the complexities of war. It heightens perceptions. The smell of gunpowder. The sound of shrapnel hitting a building. Everything in you slows down, except your reflexes. They become quicker, because all of life's emotions are played out on a razor's edge. Your instincts take over . . . War satisfies my need for danger . . . I love to go places where bombs blow up."<sup>152</sup>

In the initial years of Graham's leadership, when Samaritan's Purse almost specialized in distributing relief supplies in war zones, its discourse highlighted the swashbuckling exploits and heroism of Graham himself, frequently overshadowing detailed attention to the needs of the poor themselves. Graham portrayed his interventions as thrilling and personally fulfilling: "I turned my desire for excitement to

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<sup>152</sup> Pat Jordan, "Prodigal Son," *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, April 1993, accessed at <http://www.maryellenmark.com/text/magazines/gq/906S-000-003.html>

good works. I'd go to wars to help people. I got it both ways. People praised me, and I had fun doing it. I do everything I want to do. People think if you give your life to Christ it's a dull life. But . . . I fly planes, shoot guns, go to wars. When I die I'll go immediately to the presence of God, and yet in life I had a blast."<sup>153</sup> For Graham, the needs of war victims were subjugated to his desire to portray faithful Christian service as manly and exciting.

Besides war relief, Samaritan's Purse pursued a wide variety of projects, including funding a health clinic, sponsoring short-term trips for Christian doctors, distributing clothing and supplies to itinerant evangelists, and an improbable (and unrealized) scheme for resettling Hmong refugees at the Guyanan compound that had been the site of Jim Jones' People's Temple massacre.<sup>154</sup> Each endeavor was undertaken with the same spontaneous faith Graham had learned from Pierce—and with his disdain for the RDO approach. Graham firmly identified with Samaritan's Purse as a “missionary” organization: “We are not just a Christian relief organization. We are an evangelistic organization that takes the Gospel to the ditches and gutters.”<sup>155</sup>

Samaritan's Purse's financial breakthrough came in the early 1980s when Graham employed Pierce's “God Room” principle by spontaneously pledging \$400,000 to a hospital in Kenya without any funds to back it up. The situation was “miraculously” resolved through a guest appearance on Jim and Tammy Bakker's PTL Club. After

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Graham, *Rebel with a Cause*, 173ff.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 183.

Graham sheepishly shared his promise to the hospital, Bakker looked into the camera and commanded his audience, “Everybody send Franklin a dollar.” Predictably, the appeal raised just the right amount (plus \$9,000). Graham felt conflicted about this awkward clash between faith missions and televangelist fundraising styles, but he concluded that it was a victory of providence: “I felt a little embarrassed—after all Samaritan’s Purse didn’t do fundraising this way . . . I reminded myself I had not asked for this offering or expected it . . . Franklin Graham didn’t raise that money and neither did Jim Bakker. God did it and I give him the glory.”<sup>156</sup>

What was certain was Samaritan’s Purse’s place back on the Evangelical map. The PTL appearance “made an enormous number of people aware of Samaritan’s Purse,”<sup>157</sup> and buoyed by the Graham family name, Samaritan’s Purse rapidly began to increase its funding base. Between 1978 and 1995 Franklin built the tiny organization into a \$32 million-a-year operation, thereby proving the deep roots of engaging the poor through spontaneous compassion for individual emergencies.

### **Conclusion**

In the early 1980s, another cluster of conferences provided a summary snapshot of the various tensions between the now-competing streams of Evangelical mission to the poor. Despite unified acknowledgement that concern for the poor had a valid place in missions, there remained sharp debate on exactly what that role should be. Four major missions conferences, sponsored by the continuing Lausanne Committee that had come

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 183.



into being in 1974, illustrated both the consensus that had been achieved and the continuing fault lines shaken by this issue.

In 1980 two conferences laid bare the tensions. First, the Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) at Pattaya, Thailand was “a working consultation with the main objective of developing realistic evangelistic strategies to reach for Christ hitherto unreached peoples of the world.”<sup>158</sup> World Vision was a major contributor, with over 40 staff and Board members present;<sup>159</sup> Mooneyham was a plenary speaker. The conference hoped to emphasize and extend Lausanne’s commitment to proclamation evangelism among “unreached people groups” through the “homogeneous unit principle” championed by the Church Growth School.<sup>160</sup> Many third world and radical-leaning American attendees strongly criticized what they felt was a new attempt to marginalize social concern within evangelical missions. As they had at Lausanne, this group issued a Statement of Concern which called on COWE “to identify not only people-groups, but also the social, economic and political institutions that determine their lives and the structures behind them that hinder evangelism” so that the unevangelized “can be reached with the whole biblical gospel and be challenged to repent and work for justice.”<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, the conference organizers stuck to the script. Ed Dayton of World Vision’s

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<sup>158</sup> Cited in Padilla, “How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility,” 30.

<sup>159</sup> 1980 World Vision Annual Report, 9.

<sup>160</sup> According to Ed Dayton, of World Vision’s MARC, “Whereas at Lausanne we felt we had hardly made a dent with the unreached people approach, at Pattaya there was a wide understanding that this approach is not another “method” but a fundamentally new and very biblical way of looking at the task of world evangelization.” World Vision Annual Report 1980, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>161</sup> For another critique see *Orlando E. Costas, Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982), 144.

MARC, later argued that these criticisms were “disappointing . . . misunderstandings” and “overreactions”<sup>162</sup> that misread COWE’s intent to present the homogenous unit principle as *one* mission strategy among others.

That same year a second conference gathered those who hoped for a more radical interpretation of Lausanne. The International Consultation on Simple Lifestyle was organized by Sider and held in Hoddesdon, England. It aimed to flesh out what John Stott had called “the most anxiously debated clause in the Lausanne Covenant.” It read: “Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.”<sup>163</sup> The conference resulted in an uncompromising, justice-oriented statement of concern for the poor that urged the evangelical churches to “stand with God and the poor against injustice [and] suffer with them.” They pledged themselves to “manage on less and give away more . . . to human development projects,” to “pray for peace and justice, as God commands,” and to “love their neighbors by taking part in the political process.”<sup>164</sup> Surprisingly, these provocative statements provoked very little controversy, mostly

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<sup>162</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1980, 9, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>163</sup> Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Biography* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 216. As an illustration of the controversy generated by this clause, Ruth Graham refused to sign the Lausanne Covenant because of it, protesting to Stott “If it said ‘simpler’ I would sign it. But what is ‘simple?’ You live in two rooms; I have a bigger home. You have no children; I have five. You say your life is simple and mine isn’t.” Graham decided “she could be a quite acceptable Christian without signing something she regarded as a bit self-righteous and precious.” Cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Ronald J. Sider, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Theology and Education Group, and World Evangelical Fellowship. Unit on Ethics and Society, *Lifestyle in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*, Contemporary Issues in Social Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 56.

because they garnered little notice in the U.S. Ironically, at just the time of this high-level conference, most Evangelicals' interest in modifying their lifestyles for the sake of the poor was quickly being eclipsed by the unfettered materialism of the Reagan era. Nevertheless, these two conferences revealed that the two main contributions of Lausanne—frontier evangelism and social concern—still divided evangelicals rather than uniting them.

Soon thereafter, in 1982 and 1983, a pair of conferences drawing together Evangelical mission leadership from all sides of the spectrum aimed to forge consensus on the matter. The Grand Rapids Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CESR) affirmed without reservation the centrality of both to mission. It described the relationship like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird. The consultation further recognized that social action was a consequence of evangelism, since it was converted Christians who then carried out good works, but it also described social action as a “bridge to evangelism” in that it demonstrated the love of God to people and made them better disposed to receiving the message. Nevertheless, some still critiqued this attempted resolution for its continued reduction of evangelism to verbal proclamation of a propositional message that could be artificially distinguished from the gospel's social ramifications. According to celebrated missiologist David Bosch, maintaining this distinction created a theologically unjustifiable “dichotomy” that

implied it was possible to “have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension.”<sup>165</sup>

Bosch was much more sanguine about the Church in Response to Human Need conference in Wheaton, Illinois. This conference attempted not only to affirm both evangelism and social responsibility, but to transcend the dualistic separation of the two. Conference participants proposed a theological holism that integrated both into the overarching concept of mission as *transformation*. They argued that since “evil is not only in the human heart but also in social structures . . . the mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the gospel and its demonstration. We must therefore evangelize, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation.”<sup>166</sup> Theologically, this holism was undergirded by a replacement of individual commands like the Great Commission which had driven mission with the synoptic Gospels’ concept of the Kingdom of God. Participants affirmed, “The Kingdom of God is both present and future, both societal and individual, both physical and spiritual. . . . It grows like a mustard seed, both judging and transforming the present age.”<sup>167</sup>

Thus, while these two conferences demonstrated seemingly conclusive agreement on the need for mission to the poor, the division between holistic and “dichotomous” approaches persisted in the years to come. Yet the holistic approach was bound to

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<sup>165</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 405.

<sup>166</sup> Wheaton 1983 Statement, paragraph 26, accessed at <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/transformation-the-church-in-response-to-human-need.html>

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

dominate the discourse of Evangelical mission to the poor in the years leading to the turn of the century.

This cluster of missions conferences were the exclamation point on a season of conferences as vehicles for fruitful growth and debate within global Evangelicalism. In the years to follow, Lausanne-sponsored conferences lost some of their intellectual vigour, despite the largest Lausanne gathering ever in 1989 in Manila. By 1992 missiologist Bryant Myers of World Vision observed that “the Lausanne movement is struggling to survive, unclear as to its mission or its niche.”<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, taken together, the conferences that took place from 1966 to 1983 encapsulate the process of evangelicals finally coming to agreement that ministry to the poor was a vital part of mission—but they also indicate the strong differences of opinion regarding praxis, strategy and views of justice that remained. Both these agreements and disagreements drove the explosion of diverse approaches to ministry to the poor in the years ahead.

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<sup>168</sup> Bryant Myers, “A Funny thing Happened on the Way to Evangelical-Ecumenical Dialogue,” *International Review of Missions*, 53 (no. 323), 398.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 1966-1983 DISCOURSE: INDIVIDUAL VERSUS STRUCTURAL MISSIONS TO THE POOR

Dear friends, so much crushing heartbreak could be averted, so many hungering ones could be fed, if there were just enough Samaritans and Samaritan's Purses.

—Bob Pierce, *Samaritan's Diary*, 1975, p. 38

What if the week after the Good Samaritan picked up the wounded man, he found another victim...and even a fourth, and a fifth? . . . Don't you think that after taking care of the victims, the Samaritan would have gone down to the authorities who had jurisdiction over the road and complained that it was a hazard? Would he have . . . suggested that the road be made safer, either by straightening out some of the curves where the thieves could hide, or by controlling it with guards, or if in modern times, installing some streetlights and some emergency call boxes?"

—John Perkins, *The Quiet Revolution*, p. 101

I was hungry and you blamed it on the Communists.  
I was hungry and you circled the moon.  
I was hungry and you set up a commission.  
I was hungry and you said "So were my ancestors."  
I was hungry and you said, "We don't hire over 35."  
I was hungry and you said, "God helps those . . ."  
I was hungry and you had napalm bills to pay.  
I was hungry and you told me machines do that work now.  
I was hungry and you said the poor are always with us.  
Lord, when did we see you hungry?

— *Post-American* (later *Sojourners*), on Matthew 25:37

### **Introduction**

Having seen the new blood injected into Evangelical mission to the poor by the RDOs and the radicals, it is time to consider how these protagonists shaped Evangelical identity through their discourse from 1966 to 1983. The situation during those years was much more complex than it had been during the first generation. First, there were more

contenders weighing in on mission to the poor, making it more difficult to take account of all their voices. Second, the discourse they produced was more voluminous, as new venues such as television emerged, and older ones, such as periodicals and direct mail, developed more efficient methods for reaching a mass audience. Third, more sophisticated market research enabled organizations to target specific demographics with carefully calibrated messages, thus fragmenting the unity of their overall message.

Despite the increased complexity, the discourse of this period can be readily categorized into two markedly different models of mission to the poor that were in considerable tension with each other. This chapter argues that during these years the individual charity model continued to encapsulate the basic presuppositions of much Evangelical discourse. In fact, it was propagated more effectively than ever, as marketing-oriented RDOs refined their techniques for exploiting its appeal.

However, individualistic interventions no longer completely dominated the Evangelical mind. The structural model, as it shall be called for convenience, also established itself. Stated briefly, it was characterized by penitent protest against structural underdevelopment and injustice. It emphasized the role of social structures, economic forces, and political power in its understanding of poverty's causes and solutions. Indeed, it broke new ground by thinking of "poverty" as a chronic, socially reinforced, global phenomenon rather than apprehending "the poor" as merely an aggregate collection of individuals. During the 1970s, proponents of this model assigned much of the blame for poverty to Western and American injustice and oppression, both contemporary and historical. In response, their discourse called American Evangelicals

to repent of their participation in structural evils exacerbating poverty by standing in protest against them on personal, communal, and political levels.

The radicals were the main proponents of the structural model, although each of their main leaders contributed his own unique approach. RDOs had the distinction of propagating *both* models, depending on their intended audience. When fundraising, they perfected the art of individual charity; but in other contexts, World Vision especially could be just as “radical” as the radicals. In the end, there was little attempt to integrate the two contending paradigms, and so the net result was an Evangelical public divided between those who saw the world in individualistic terms and those who thought structurally.

### **The Staying Power of Individual Charity**

First, much evangelical discourse continued to advocate for compassionate charity in response to individuals with emergency needs. For proponents of this approach, by far the most frequent representation of poverty during this “long” decade was that of victims of hunger. Most images of those threatened with starvation attempted to convey the physical anguish and sheer hopelessness of this kind of poverty. Appeal letters such as the following brought scenes of dying and imminent death to the mailboxes of comfortable American homes: “As I write to you today remembering my travel and living overseas, some disturbing pictures pass in front of me: I see the anguished Indonesian mother who sat in the mud at the side of the road, clinging to her dead baby’s



body—dead of disease that came of hunger.”<sup>1</sup> Often there were horrific scenes of the specter of hunger rending apart families: “Reports tell of a child nursing at the breast of its dead mother . . . a mother and three children in a ditch in a final coma . . . people dragging their sagging bodies out across the dusty land in search of water and food.”<sup>2</sup> The stark images of television conveyed the helplessness of slow starvation even more acutely than words, relentlessly depicting “matchstick thin children, their faces covered with flies, listlessly looking into the camera. Often these children were too lethargic even to eat.”<sup>3</sup> Contemporary sensibilities recoil from this typically brazen caption beneath a photo shamelessly exposing the suffering of a little girl: “Poor little helpless one! This nomad starveling illustrates what is happening to millions in Africa. She shows it all—hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, hopelessness. Her ragged dress cannot conceal the too-rounded stomach or skinny ribs and arms; sullen pain lines her young face.”<sup>4</sup>

Agencies were forthright about the difficulty of bringing these images to intrude on middle-class American life. Mooneyham wrote in one holiday appeal letter: “If it is right that we should have a time of prayer and joy at Thanksgiving, it is also right that we should set aside a time to look at need in all of its ugliness. Need is not pretty.”<sup>5</sup> Yet he

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<sup>1</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, November 1969, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>2</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, February 1, 1974, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>3</sup> Waters, 79.

<sup>4</sup> *World Relief Reporter*, Spring 1975, 7, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>5</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, November 1969, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

was insistent that the suffering of the hungry not be whitewashed or minimized, and vehemently rejected suggestions that their portrayals were manipulative: “Sometimes we at World Vision are criticized for using ‘those sad pictures of little, malnourished children.’ The charge is that we are playing upon the emotions of potential donors. Well, believe me, poverty is hell! Hunger is hell! Injustice is hell! There is an awful sadness in it all. And we need to feel what they feel. Jesus went about. He saw. He heard. He touched. He felt.”<sup>6</sup> Further, Mooneyham reminded readers that the images were necessarily minimized to some degree: “If we were to print the worst pictures, they would just simply be so revolting that people wouldn’t look at them . . . we never manipulate.”<sup>7</sup> Many of the hunger victims portrayed by Mooneyham were people he had met personally, and part of his insistence came from a desire to portray what he had seen with integrity: “This mother began to weep because I was opening up a very deep wound with her. The only justification I have for that is that I wept with her . . . okay, that’s very emotional, but for me not to tell that would be less than honest.”<sup>8</sup> In order to help their audience face such disquieting realities, proponents of individual charity acknowledged how unfamiliar this degree of emergency need was to the American middle class experience. Identifying with his readers, Mooneyham recognized that food insecurity was foreign to his personal experience as well: “In all my life I’ve never felt hunger for

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<sup>6</sup> Stan Mooneyham, “A Christian’s Plea to his Pastor” (transcript of sermon, n.d. [after 1975]), Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>7</sup> “Door Interview with Stanley Mooneyham,” *Wittenburg Door*, February/March 1975, 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

more than perhaps a day and I've never in my life had to pray for a cup of water for myself or my loved ones.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to overcome the indifference born of distance, organizations encouraged their audience to imaginatively identify with poor individuals. In a typical passage, Mooneyham exhorted his reader to “imagine a little four-year-old you love—your grandson or granddaughter . . . or perhaps your own little precious child . . . sleeping in a doorway with only an old newspaper as a covering against the chill of the night air. Ragged, dirty, hungry—fighting other children for a scrap of bread from a garbage can.”<sup>10</sup> In another appeal to a resident of Grimes, Ohio, Mooneyham sympathized: “It’s not easy from where you are in Grimes to put yourself in the place of the man who . . . takes his home apart and sells the lumber for food. And when the last shred of usable material has been used up, he drags his family to the village to beg—perhaps to die—in the street.”<sup>11</sup> Typical of the individual charity model, this excerpt does not burden its reader with complicated arguments or overwhelming statistics—it merely asks for identification with *one* poor man. Mooneyham even characterized imaginative identification as the main goal of World Vision’s television programs: “What we want to

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<sup>9</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, February 1, 1974, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>10</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, August 10, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>11</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, February 1, 1974, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

do is put the average American family inside the skin of these Asian kids and let them feel with us what it is like to be born in a developing world.”<sup>12</sup>

Thanks to extensive media coverage of the famines of the 1970s, most Americans were relatively well aware of the problem of hunger. Therefore, representations of famine victims were less motivated by a need to inform, unlike Pierce and Swanson in the 1950s, whose portrayals of orphans significantly raised American consciousness of Korean suffering in the wake of the war. Instead, narrowing down focus to single individuals served to help viewers bring down the vastness of suffering to manageable levels. For example, Larry Ward’s most repeated phrase during the early phase of Food for the Hungry was “They die one at a time . . . so we can *help them* one at a time.”<sup>13</sup> A similarly individualistic strategy was often applied to the portrayal of refugees in Southeast Asia, another crisis which deeply concerned Evangelical RDOs. In an advertisement raising funds for Food for the Hungry’s rescue vessel in the South China Sea, Ward tells of an encounter with one tiny fishing vessel packed with hundreds of fleeing Vietnamese: “I’m a father with a daughter I love. My heart ached for this little one, as I thought ‘the sea is her world, this little boat her only home’ thank God we can rescue them, disaster’s children.”<sup>14</sup> Instead of calling for political action or even attacking Communism, he instead linked paternal love with one small girl who caught his attention, prompting readers to do the same.

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<sup>12</sup> Waters, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Larry Ward, “Food for the Hungry Pilot Proposal,” 1971, 1, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; Ward, *And There Will Be Famines*, 106.

<sup>14</sup> Food for the Hungry advertisement, *Christianity Today*, 2 November 1979, 15.

Individualized emphases also served to preserve the dignity and personal value of those who suffered, keeping them from becoming faceless statistics lost in a mass phenomena. One newsletter article illustrates this common theme: “Pain is personal . . . help must be personal! . . . though relief programs are sometimes massive, the ministry is to *individuals*—treating each as a *person* having dignity . . . Vietnamese Christians take the bread to people’s homes they know by name and share not only bread but the love of Christ with them.”<sup>15</sup> Emphasis on poor individuals now took place in the context of large-scale operations addressing large-scale disasters, unlike orphans and lepers, whose very isolated individuality was the core of their suffering.

Such simplifying, atomized interpretations tended to preclude consideration of the root causes of hunger or the refugee crisis, turning attention exclusively to symptoms, which were, after all, immediate and urgent. Often this discourse presented little clue of why people were hungry or how they came to be so. Hunger was something that just *was*, or as if it were in the same category as a natural disaster—an unaccounted-for “act of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, when portrayals of poverty were simplistic, emphasizing individuals’ suffering without delving into the causes for their condition, the calls to action that

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<sup>15</sup> *World Relief Reporter*, Spring 1975, 1, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>16</sup> The Evangelical encounter with hunger at times challenged its regnant providentialism. For example, Mooneyham admitted, “I do not know how to reconcile starvation theologically. I find my simplistic theology challenged by the world’s realities . . . David could say in the psalms I have been young and now I am old yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. Now I can no longer share David’s bold sentiment.” Mooneyham, *Come Walk the World*, 22, 48. Other times more traditional theology prevailed: “Perhaps this famine can give us an opportunity to show Christ’s love in a tangible way that could open up all of Africa to Jesus Christ.” Mooneyham, February 1 1974 appeal letter, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

followed were also simple. Television telethons, magazine advertisements, and appeal letters often asked for a very straightforward response to the suffering that had been portrayed—sponsor one child. In the face of the sheer magnitude of need, the organizations’ discourse constantly returned to the theme of helping just *one*. In World Vision’s 1973 television documentary *Children of Zero* Mooneyham characteristically stressed that God “measures results in units of one . . . one mouth to feed, one heart to fill with happiness, one part of God’s creation you can help to mold . . . if you don’t help that one child, nobody will.”<sup>17</sup> For those wracked with guilt about thousands of starving children, this framing of one’s ethical duty was compelling to many.

The appeals followed a time-honored formula that had been in service since the early 1950s—offering emotional connection with a particular named child, appealing to paternalism and compassion, with a constant emphasis on the ease of child sponsorship. “It costs so little to reach out in love and compassion to one child . . . less than half a dollar a day,” wooed one typical magazine advertisement, which also featured a letter from a sponsor extolling their participation as “*a tremendous bargain*.”<sup>18</sup> For their small monthly contribution World Vision offered sponsors “enough warmth, fulfillment, and good feelings to last a lifetime.”<sup>19</sup> Compassion International advertisements typically offered a similar “deal,” with the punch line of this typical advertisement standing for

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<sup>17</sup> World Vision U.S. film library, Federal Way, WA.

<sup>18</sup> Advertisement, *Christianity Today*, 26 March 1976, no page number.

<sup>19</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, August 10, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

hundreds like it: “Add a new dimension to your life . . . let us introduce you to a child you can love and help.”<sup>20</sup>

This sort of ethical demand reinforced the donor’s self-perception as a rescuer or savior, casting him or her as the only possible solution to the needs of the utterly vulnerable poor. Food for the Hungry put it bluntly: “We must share some of what we have with people who cannot live unless we help them.”<sup>21</sup> The individual charity model of the 1970s could also easily shade into the reinforcement of patriotic and ethnocentric prejudices. For example, Mooneyham concluded the television documentary *Escape to Nowhere* by reminding Americans that their ancestors also were once refugees and that the United States was a nation that “from that day until this, has never refused to open our hearts, our hands, yes, and our doors to any people who sought to live as free men.”<sup>22</sup> This was a blatant appeal to the American myth that the U.S. is the upholder of liberty, freedom and compassion for the rest of the world.<sup>23</sup>

These ethical demands aimed for an immediate single response to an urgent situation—sending in a card, or making a phone call. At the end of an appeal letter, in a font made to appear as if it were a postscript personally written by Mooneyham at the last minute, it read, “I’ve just received word that many of the children who need immediate help are suffering from malnutrition and related diseases. Please return the enclosed card

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<sup>20</sup> Advertisement, *Christianity Today*, October 1979, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Advertisement, *Christianity Today*, 2 January 1976.

<sup>22</sup> *Escape to Nowhere* (videocassette, 1978), World Vision U.S. film library, Federal Way, WA.

<sup>23</sup> Waters, 82.

so we can process your gift quickly and send it to the areas of need immediately.”<sup>24</sup>

There is no reason to doubt Mooneyham’s sincerity in writing these words (if he indeed wrote them), but despite their similarity to Pierce’s, they are written here in a different context—as a marketing device. Mooneyham, who had completed a book-length analysis of global hunger, certainly had not “just received word” of the problem, but made it appear so in order to create a sense of immediacy that demanded instant action from the reader.

The above example of an urgent tone generated by marketing techniques suggests a major way the individual charity model of the 1970s differed from its predecessor. For the first generation, individual charity emerged as an expression of the mentality of men like Pierce, who more or less extemporaneously described reality as they interpreted it. But for second-generation RDOs who were coming to an increasingly complex understanding of missions to the poor, individual charity was retained and enhanced because it was an effective marketing tool, whether through television, appeal letters, or magazine advertisements. One brief case study will illustrate the influence of marketing and presentation genre as a key factor in the staying power of individual charity.

In terms of funding, by the late 1970s, television accounted for more than half of World Vision’s total income.<sup>25</sup> The first step towards igniting this spectacular engine of growth was taken in 1970 when World Vision employed the Russ Reid Agency to

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<sup>24</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, December 1, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>25</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1978, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.



coordinate their fundraising efforts.<sup>26</sup> Reid had trained for pastoral ministry but made his mark in marketing, first with Word Records, an evangelical music distributor, and later through his own firm that catered to a faith-based clientele. Reid's association with World Vision started as a young man, when he traveled around the Northwest showing Pierce's film *38<sup>th</sup> Parallel* and promoting child sponsorship.<sup>27</sup> After 1973, Reid's agency produced World Vision's television specials, telethons, and a weekly half hour show featuring Mooneyham's travels entitled *Come Walk the World*— in addition to coordinating their periodical advertising and direct mail. Mooneyham spoke to the key role Reid played in shaping World Visions' discourse: "We consider the Reid agency a kind of arm of World Vision. They know a great deal about our philosophy and about our programs."<sup>28</sup>

World Vision's television programs followed a similar formula, insightfully characterized by Pepperdine Journalism Professor Ken Waters as "a format and presentation style that combined elements of the documentary, the commercial, the infomercial, and the docu-drama."<sup>29</sup> The most high-profile of these programs were telethons, featuring celebrities such as Art Linkletter alongside Mooneyham, who was presented as an expert on behalf of the needs of the poor. The telethons utilized "communication strategies that work well on television: that of reducing large social

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<sup>26</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 103; see also "Door Interview with Russ Reid," *Wittenburg Door*, October-November 1975, 9-14.

<sup>27</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 104.

<sup>28</sup> "Door Interview with Stanley Mooneyham," 31.

<sup>29</sup> Waters, 70.

problems to a personal level; of stressing action and urgency, demanding an immediate response.”<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the same analysis could have applied to appeal letters from the very beginning of World Vision, but television’s fast pace and gripping images, coupled with the possibility of an immediate response through telephone, made it an even more effective medium.

Images on the television screen, anecdotes in appeal letters and periodicals, and the single-impression collages of magazine advertisements made up the vast majority of the discourse of World Vision and its offshoots. While these media reached the widest audience, they were restricted by stringent space and time limitations. For example, the Reid agency’s research on early World Vision telethons indicated that the average viewer tuned in for only twelve minutes before changing the channel—a finding that resulted in even faster pacing for later telethons. Thus “television . . . became in essence the master of the content” due to its “tendency to simplify and sensationalize events and issues and to promise instant gratification.”<sup>31</sup> Because the agencies viewed these media presentations primarily as devices for fundraising, not education or advocacy, this heavily influenced their portrayal of the poor. Even when World Vision attempted to use television to educate the public on their more nuanced understanding of poverty, the limitations of the genre stymied them. Waters incisively illustrates the tensions inherent in these efforts:

In a memo written to World Vision’s television producers, Mooneyham railed against . . . the need to cave in to ‘what works’ best on television . . . Several

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 78, 74.

attempts were made to insert historical and cultural information into scripts in such a way that they reflected favorably on the people, particularly the women . . . These programs failed to raise enough funds to justify the continued purchase of air time. Likewise, whenever World Vision added telethon segments extolling the cultural virtues of a particular country, or the success of long-term development projects, viewership and telephone response rates plummeted.<sup>32</sup>

World Vision's experience in television demonstrated the deep-rooted attractiveness of individual charity not only to Evangelicals, but to the American television-viewing audience in general. As RDOs became increasingly committed to long-term development, they faced a crisis of conscience. Through years of experience on the field, a wider geographic range of service and greater engagement with mainstream development praxis, the agencies' understanding of poverty grew more sophisticated. Yet as their marketing acumen sharpened, it drove them to strip down their message to the barest essentials in order to bring in more funds. This usually meant recourse to the individualism, paternalism, emotionalism, and immediate urgency that characterized individual charity.

One way agencies dealt with this disjunction was to simply refer to both long-term solutions and individual charity in the same appeal, without necessarily resolving the tensions. Consider, for example, the following World Vision advertisement, which placed its text beneath a heart-wrenching image of a mother holding her starving baby:

This mother had no time to explain the hunger crisis. There's no time for talk. No time to discuss the whys. For this desperate mother, words are meaningless at the edge of death. Like thousands of Christians you've read about the hunger crisis . . . There is an answer that goes beyond words: it is Christian love and compassion in action for just \$15 a month . . . and part of your gift will be used to . . . support other projects to help provide long term solutions to the hunger crisis.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 89.

Don't think of the hunger crisis as millions of hungry people--think of one starving family waiting for your help.<sup>33</sup>

All the elements of the individual compassion model were there: the urgency (“no time for talk”), the emphasis on immediate needs instead of deeper causes (“no time to discuss the whys”) and the narrowing down of a complex situation to its impact on individuals (“think of one starving family”). The advertisement posited a choice between reading “meaningless words” about the hunger crisis and “compassion in action” that makes a real difference, a subtle anti-intellectualism that assumed that analysis would lead to inaction instead of more effective action. Yet, in the midst of it all readers were told (somewhat vaguely) that their contribution is not entirely directed at one family but at “other projects to help provide long term solutions.” This advertisement’s formula became increasingly common in the late 1970s and early 1980s—traditional methods of appeal framed the text and images, but almost as an afterthought or postscript, long-term development would be mentioned.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Appearance of a Structural Model**

These hints of a more complex, structural understanding of poverty point to the existence of a very different mentality within Evangelical discourse during this period. The remainder of this chapter proposes that its most important elements are captured in a

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<sup>33</sup> Advertisement, *Christianity Today*, 13 January 1976, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Another straightforward example of an attempt to affirm both models: “Meeting the emergency needs of suffering people throughout the world and making it possible for them to build for future self-reliance.” Advertisement, *World Vision Magazine* February 1977, 19.

structural model that advocated for penitent protest against structural injustice and underdevelopment.

The first evidence that a new worldview had emerged can be seen in the heavy citation of statistics and surveys in order to describe poverty as a pervasive, global phenomenon. Litanies of data on population, food consumption, trade patterns, protein intake, and the like punctuated many discussions of hunger. For example, Sider's picture of global poverty was as overwhelming as it was analytical. It is perhaps best encapsulated in the title of chapter one of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, drawn from a phrase in the Chicago Declaration: *A Billion Hungry Neighbors*. Drawing from newly available UN studies that were just beginning to percolate into the minds of the general public, Sider elucidated various aspects of global poverty with commentary and graphs such as "literacy rates for selected countries," "infant mortality in selected countries," "average annual per capita cereal consumption" and "percentage of disposable income spent on food."<sup>35</sup> He cited a flood of statistics such as "Americans use 191 times as much energy per person as the average Nigerian."<sup>36</sup>

When not stymied by fundraising genres, Mooneyham too presented the complexities of global hunger in formats such as public addresses, books, magazine articles and intensive church programs. Through these media, he attempted to bring a macro-understanding of the problem before the American public. Ever aware of his audience's attention spans, Mooneyham attempted to help people relate to the welter of

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<sup>35</sup> See chapters 1 and 2, Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

data in more manageable terms: “Did you know that if the world’s population were cut down to 100, seventy-five of us would live in want? Seventy-five of us would know hunger at bedtime night after night. Seventy-five of us would live in the dust, the filth, the cold, the need, the sickness that are everywhere in Asia, Africa, and South America.”<sup>37</sup> He often made the privations of the hungry more poignant by immediately juxtaposing them with American abundance: “In India alone 25 million people are receiving . . . about 400 calories, or one third the amount a human being needs to survive . . . meanwhile, here in North America, our problem is overweight [*sic*] and diets.”<sup>38</sup> Mooneyham attempted to present hunger as a global problem, in which his audience was already implicated: “If you are going to live globally, you can start by thinking globally and praying globally . . . Modern communications have truly made the world a neighborhood. There are no more geographical and space barriers—only cultural, ideological, and spiritual ones.”<sup>39</sup> In his book *Come Walk the World* (which also appeared in select markets as a weekly television show), Mooneyham, free of the demands of fundraising, often included substantive passages that described in detail the cultural, political, and historical contexts of poor people he encountered.

Ted Engstrom saw it as part of World Vision’s commission to keep the chronic nature of the hunger problem before a fickle public’s attention: “Our World Vision staff

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<sup>37</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, November 1969, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>38</sup> World Vision press release, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>39</sup> Mooneyham, Biola University commencement address, 1978, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

often discusses . . . when the media gives high visibility and attention to the food problem . . . many people became concerned and involved. But when a continuing crisis is ignored by the press and the electronic media, many so readily forget.”<sup>40</sup> It is ironic that World Vision was now critiquing the secular media’s tendency to present hunger as a series of emergencies, as it had so frequently done in the past.

Of course, such attempts to bring a broader perspective did not preclude the traditional Evangelical emphasis on poverty’s personal impact. Ward summarized the tendency to combine structural analyses with personal impact in a single, memorable sentence: “Statistics have names.”<sup>41</sup> In his overview of world hunger, *What do you Say to a Hungry World?*, Mooneyham also balanced the two approaches, carefully interweaving macro-elements like statistics and economic analysis with micro-anecdotes that zeroed in on individuals. This attempt to do justice to both complex global issues underlying hunger while enabling personal response is perhaps best encapsulated in a World Vision publication directed at seminary students, arguing that we must “see the complexity of the problem and yet recognize at the same time that for each one of us there is something we can do.”<sup>42</sup>

Sider too strove to communicate the sheer magnitude of the issue without losing the personal reality in the masses of figures. He punctuated his quantitative litanies of the

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<sup>40</sup> Engstrom, World Vision Annual Report 1976, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>41</sup> *World Vision Heartline*, August 1972, 31.

<sup>42</sup> Ed Dayton, Fuller Seminary Newsletter, 1977, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California. See also the headline on the cover of World Vision’s *Heartline* magazine April 1971: “10,000 die every day from malnutrition and related causes, but they die one at a time.” The cover is empty, except for a photo of a little girl in tattered clothes in the bottom left corner.

scale of suffering with wrenching stories of hungry families whom Mooneyham had met in his travels to the Philippines and Brazil.<sup>43</sup> He also borrowed two thought experiments from renowned economist Robert Heilbroner—one which speculated on the possibility of a starving India blackmailing the U.S. for grain with her new arsenal of nuclear weapons; the second (which was widely quoted elsewhere as well) encouraged a middle-class American to imagine what it would be like, starting with his or her standard of living, to gradually lose everything until one lived at the level of a Third World slum dweller.<sup>44</sup>

Structural discourse went beyond merely widening its audience's perspective on the magnitude of suffering; it applied structural analysis to the deeper causes of poverty and to its solutions—a comparative rarity within Evangelicalism until this point.

Individual charity had asked only about immediate need only and met it. Hungry people needed food, refugees needed a new place to live, orphans needed a new “family.” The structural model, armed with a statistical big picture, asked *why* the hungry had no food. One major theme was that chronic poverty was caused by underdevelopment and should be engaged by long-term development projects. It is important to note from the outset that Evangelical discourse on development in this period was somewhat inchoate, since advances in development practice did not really occur until the late 1970s. In fact, discourse on development lagged behind organizations' actual practice in many cases. Nevertheless, within the somewhat hazy theory, several themes were prevalent.

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<sup>43</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 26, 31; “Let it Grow!,” World Vision curriculum, Planned Famine youth group event, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California. A revised version of Heilbroner's thought experiment was still in use by World Vision in 2005. See Richard Stearns, “Seven Steps to Poverty,” *World Vision* Autumn 2003, 5.



Development discourse mostly emphasized the long-term *needs* of the poor; it was mostly concerned with factors in which the poor were deficient. To use the language of social work, it was needs-based, not strengths-based, as it would become in the mid-1980s. Many RDOs turned to development work as relief efforts alerted practitioners to longer term problems. World Vision International President Graeme Irvine explained how World Vision was drawn increasingly to development: “‘Our job is immediate relief.’ that was our position in 1970. But we would soon learn to take a fresh look at our traditional welfare approach . . . the move towards development was inevitable as we ‘peeled the onion’ of human need.”<sup>45</sup>

John Perkins, who had initially returned to Mississippi solely for the sake of evangelism, explained how his experience of preaching enabled him to discern and then respond to socioeconomic needs as well: “Real evangelism takes you to the point of standing face to face with the real needs of a person and then reaching out to help meet those needs. The need was so great for mothers to work that they would often pull older children out of school to watch the younger ones at home. We knew these kids needed to be in school; so we began a little day-care center.”<sup>46</sup>

Perkins was describing a turning point in Voice of Cavalry’s ministry; besides the need for day care, VOC soon encountered the full weight of African American rural poverty: “Crises in housing, health care, nutrition, education, skills and economics were

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<sup>45</sup> Irvine, 59-60.

<sup>46</sup> Urbana 1976 plenary address, accessed at <http://www.urbana.org/articles/declare-his-glory-in-the-community-1976>.

crippling the hearts and minds of black people.”<sup>47</sup> But the day care center was their first, *ad hoc* step towards what would later become a full-blown holistic approach to community development.

Development discourse linked its emphasis on the needs of the poor with what it saw as the shortcomings of traditional methods and ways of thinking. For RDOs, this was most often expressed in terms of agricultural practices; the answer was usually better technology. In an article introducing its readers to its emerging emphasis on development, World Vision explained: “There is the need for long-range education. Farmers need to be taught to use deep-cutting plow . . . farmers need to learn to use fertilizers and insecticides.”<sup>48</sup> Another similar piece explained that in the Central African Republic, “Farmers are locked into traditional farming methods, so a World Vision agricultural specialist has begun working with them . . . to provide improved seed, tools and fertilizers.”<sup>49</sup>

Although these sentences seem simple or even banal, explaining the need for such long-term development projects was somewhat risky in the Evangelical world of the 1970s when some donors were still suspicious of expanding child sponsorship beyond orphans to other needy children. Additionally, RDOs were keenly aware that development just did not have the emotional traction of child sponsorship. Therefore,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, March 1978, 11.

<sup>49</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, February 1977, 19. World Vision’s commitment to agricultural technology was substantial but not unqualified. According to Mooneyham, “At World Vision we use every enhancing tool that God has made available through science. But we try not to forget that gadgets are second rate evangelists.” *Christianity Today*, 18 September, 1981, 19.

when fundraising for rural development projects, World Vision utilized strategies to help the donor quantify the tangible results of his or her contribution: “Your gift of \$5.00 will provide 50 pounds of fertilizer. \$10.00 will give an African farmer 75 pounds of seed . . . \$100.00 will help drill a well to bring life-saving water to all the families in a village.”<sup>50</sup>

The use of technology in agricultural development provides one final insight into the way the Evangelical worldview was changing. Often RDO’s discourse implied that technology and proper training would be enough to enable a village or family to become “self-reliant.”<sup>51</sup> Gone was the 1950s emphasis on “heathen religion” causing poverty—now technology provided solutions, heathen or not. Of course, as good Evangelicals, they vehemently affirmed that this was not enough—that even wealthy people who had been lifted out of poverty still needed Jesus. But now the poor could begin the process of being “developed” whether they were Christian or not.

### **Structural Injustice**

Besides underdevelopment, *structural injustice* was a major category through which poverty was analyzed. This aspect was surprisingly widespread, confident, and incisive in the 1970s—therefore it deserves extended attention. Although the organic intellectuals who thought this way rarely provided careful academic definitions of their understanding of injustice, the word was most often used to signify something like

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<sup>50</sup> Mooneyham, World Vision appeal letter, February 1974, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>51</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1976, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

“systematic, structurally established abuse of power in order to exploit or oppress the weak.” Other times the term was used to mean “taking more than is fair.”

Proponents of this aspect of the structural model assigned primary responsibility for poverty to the oppression and injustice wreaked by the rich and powerful. They saw this sort of injustice not as arbitrary, occasional, or capricious, but as intentional, systematic, and endemic to the social structures that linked rich and poor. Their discourse was distinctive first of all because those who emphasized structural injustice used the Bible differently. They frequently cited the numerous biblical passages that cast the poor as protagonists who struggled against their oppressors. In the discourse of the radicals, the contemporary poor could be linked to Israel, who suffered as slaves at the hands of the Egyptians. They were identified with the pre-exilic urban poor exploited by the Hebrew elite, whom the prophet Amos called “cows of Bashan” destined for the day of slaughter. They were landless families for whom the year of Jubilee had come—by Levitical law, their ancestral lands must be returned to them. They were the laborers defended by the apostle James who had been unjustly denied their pay by their employers.

Structural justice proponents also favored passages that described the poor as special objects of God’s concern, those with whom he closely identified, to the point of incarnation as a poor Jewish man, who in his glory would judge the world according to how they had served “the least of these.” They leavened their writings with biblical texts, often of considerable length, which spoke of the poor as especially blessed by God. They pointed to numerous passages which narrated God’s intentional choice of poor people as

special instruments for divine purposes. Sider was the most thorough and comprehensive in his presentation of these kinds of Scriptural teachings about the poor. Indeed, his consideration of biblical passages on the topic occupied over half of *Rich Christians*. But Wallis and Perkins were no less enthusiastic in their frequent biblical citations. These three organic intellectuals were especially keen to re-introduce such Scriptures to an Evangelical community who, despite its extreme stress on the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, usually passed them over in silence.

Just as had been the case for Pierce, they pursued a discursive style that powerfully utilized personal anecdote, interpreted through the lens of biblical categories in order to present a compelling view of the poor. But whereas Pierce's poor were inert victims waiting to be rescued, the poor of the structural model were self-aware agents, protagonists against oppression, with God and the prophets at their side as they cried out for justice. Both the empirical realities they described and the biblical texts chosen contributed to the shift in tone.

Speaking of structural injustice was controversial not only because it used the Bible to emphasize structural causes for poverty, but because it often implicated American Evangelicals in the status quo that supported those structures. Until the 1970s, few if any twentieth century Evangelical leaders had questioned the essential goodness of American political, cultural, or economic hegemony. Thus, the poor who gained their attention were victims of the turmoil in their societies, diseases, famines, or perhaps random natural disasters—safely outside any American responsibility. In contrast, those who wrote about structural injustice in the 1970s testified to a diverse group of oppressed

people whose suffering was caused, as they saw it, by Western, democratic, capitalist interests—in their perspective, victims of *American-made* injustice. Therefore, perhaps the best way to grasp the way structural proponents understood injustice is to consider the two oppressed groups they cited most: American blacks in large northern inner cities and southern rural areas, and yet again, the hungry, whom they argued were starving because of the excesses of affluence.

### Injustice and African Americans

For radical proponents of the structural model, the face of the poor they presented to their Evangelical audience was black. By focusing on African Americans, they turned from human suffering safely “out there” in faraway exotic lands to those “right here” in America itself. Wallis and Perkins had made conscious choices to move into lower-income African-American communities, or in the nomenclature of the 1970s, “the ghetto”.<sup>52</sup> Thus, when they wrote about poor African-Americans, they spoke not as a temporary visitors, as had characterized Pierce’s perspective on the poor, but as part of their community. Wallis described his next door neighbors, the Williams family: “Not one of the kids has finished high school, and it is doubtful that any will. The older kids, having dropped out of school, are unemployed or underemployed. At least one of the boys already has a serious drug and alcohol problem. The oldest girl, still a teenager, recently had a baby. But they are more than a textbook case; they are real people who

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<sup>52</sup> Sider’s choice to move into inner-city Philadelphia caused him to share similar domestic concerns with Wallis and Perkins, and many of the books he wrote from the 1980s onward focused on domestic poverty, with an emphasis on African Americans. It is ironic, therefore, that what he wrote mostly about during this period, and what he was best known for, was global poverty.

were our first friends in Washington.”<sup>53</sup> For Perkins, having returned to the county of his youth, the poor were an integral part of his own identity—they were “me and mine.”<sup>54</sup> Perkins related that when he, a successful middle-class African-American, visited youth prison facilities in California, “The Lord showed me kids just like myself, many from the South. I could hear Mississippi and Alabama in their voices, and I knew that they were just like me, coming up without much education and without any understanding of or exposure to the gospel.”<sup>55</sup>

Thus, they spoke of the effects of injustice as a part of their daily experience. Perkins’s description of a neighbor’s living conditions could have come from anywhere in the Third World: “Miss Hester's place looks like an abandoned shack: Walls slant at different angles . . . The whole structure, much of it rotten, leans so much that when you walk close it seems like you're losing your balance . . . Gaps in the walls and around the fireplace are stuffed with pieces of tin and rags. There are mice and rats . . . [Her daughter] Corrine had gotten sick and was now so malnourished that it looked like her skin had been sewn tightly over her bones. She looked like a living skeleton.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Perkins often equated the poverty endured by blacks in the South with that of the Third World: “When I am told about the growing hunger problem in the world, I am not

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<sup>53</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 119.

<sup>54</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 201.

<sup>55</sup> Perkins, Urbana 1976 Plenary address, transcript, <http://www.urbana.org/articles/declare-his-glory-in-the-community-1976> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

startled because I have seen the hungry grow retarded and the retarded live a life of misery and poverty right here in Mississippi.”<sup>57</sup>

Equally devastating scenes peppered the urban poverty narrated by Wallis. Wallis described the physical landscape of his Washington DC neighborhood: “Rundown houses, abandoned buildings and vacant lots, broken glass and garbage cover the neighborhood like a big dirty carpet.” But perhaps more poignant was his story of a three year-old, who upon surveying the same neighborhood, asked, “Mommy, there was a war here, wasn’t there?”<sup>58</sup>

However, Wallis and Perkins more often spoke in terms of the complexity or multi-faceted nature of poverty rather than just physical suffering. Wallis indignantly listed what he observed as the overwhelming challenges facing the urban poor: “Murder is now the primary cause of death for young, black males; drug abuse among the poor has increased by tremendous proportions since the 1960s; many ghetto schools no longer pretend to teach but turn out graduates who can neither read nor write; four out of ten black students in those schools will not get jobs; police often simply tolerate urban crime unless the victims are white.”<sup>59</sup>

They also placed special emphasis on the psycho-social ramifications of injustice. Comparing rich and poor in the American capitol, Wallis claimed that “the leading characteristic of this ‘other’ Washington DC is powerlessness . . . Colonialism is still the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Jim Wallis, “The New Refugees,” *Sojourners Magazine*, November 1978, 13.

<sup>59</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 111.



best word to describe the tale of these two cities.”<sup>60</sup> Instead of explaining American urban poverty as the result of substance abuse and personal character defects, as was implicitly held in many middle-class Evangelical circles, Wallis reversed the order, describing those maladies as resulting from the psychological traumas induced by injustice: “Alcohol and drugs are a way of life here—the necessary pacifiers of all the rage, bitter frustration and despair that poverty and powerlessness create.”<sup>61</sup> Perkins believed that the strains of oppression, both historic and contemporary, had damaged the culture and psyche of the African-American community, causing family breakdown—his was “the first generation of Perkins since slavery ever to stay together as a family”<sup>62</sup>—and a religious orientation that emphasized coping with suffering instead of overcoming it: “The emotional worship typical of many parts of the black church . . . helped maintain the sanity and mental health of a people suffering and oppressed . . . but other needs were not met, such as the need for economic development.”<sup>63</sup>

However, the African-Americans Wallis described were not ignorant of the fact that injustice was the root of their suffering. Their insights became etched in his politics: “The poor don’t perceive their enemies to be in Moscow, but in Washington’s corridors of power.”<sup>64</sup> After Wallis was arrested for a political protest, he was deeply impressed by the inmates he encountered: “For all the lack of formal education, the level of political

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>61</sup> *Sojourners Magazine*, November 1978, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 104.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>64</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 110.

consciousness is remarkable. These men have a far more realistic view of how this country is run, why and for whom, than did the people with whom I went through years of higher education.”<sup>65</sup>

For Perkins, the overwhelming manifestation of structural injustice causing the poverty of blacks was racism. While Perkins’s penetrating analysis of racism was developed in the context of rural Mississippi, he claimed that the racist structures of the South were relevant to African-Americans across the country. He observed that in midcentury urban California, “Many of the black man’s problems in the ghetto were really the unsolved problems of the South I had left”.<sup>66</sup>

According to Perkins, even the most virulent racist elements of society preferred a subtle exercise of power designed to maintain the system: “Klan-type mentality is not oriented toward open warfare; it is oriented toward control . . . the Klan only wanted to ‘teach a lesson’ not wipe out a group . . . what he wants is to have the blacks under his control, in a special relationship to him.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, even a racist system was dependent on black labor and business patronage, and white power “could have been broken or strained by a total alienation of all blacks, especially those who were more disposed to cooperate with whites.”<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the subtle power of racism denied the black community opportunities and experience of leadership, making them economically dependent, with “weak muscles” when it came to entrepreneurship and self-development. Racist society

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>66</sup> Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 79.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 140.

produced social distortion and self-destructive behavior that deeply troubled Perkins, such as family breakdown, lack of initiative, and erosion of creative leadership.

Thus, Perkins showed Evangelicals that racism was not limited to the spectacle of cross-burning Klan members or frenzied lynch mobs. Rather, racism inhered within “the whole structure of economic and social cages that have neatly boxed in the black man so that ‘nice’ people can join in the oppression without getting their hands dirty—just by letting things run along.”<sup>69</sup> Further, “the system” was pervasive not only in the present, but the long, established history of racism meant that even if American culture were to suddenly become color-blind, historic injustice would still have left African-Americans with crippling disadvantages. He used the analogy of a baseball game in which the home team took a 20-2 lead after seven innings by cheating, but then blithely promised to “play fair” for the remainder of the game.<sup>70</sup>

This kind of analysis was deeply troubling to the Northern white Evangelical mainstream who typically exonerated themselves of any charges of racism because they personally avoided overtly prejudicial behavior. In general, Northern white Evangelicals had responded to the civil rights movement by disavowing racism on an individual level, but they denied or ignored any claims for political or economic justice (again, a manifestation of Evangelicalism’s individualistic worldview). Looked at in the context of other writings from civil rights leaders beginning in the late 1960s, Perkins’s analysis of racism’s structural injustice was rather commonplace. But within the Evangelical

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>70</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 168.

subculture, it was explosive indeed. The idea that social systems had a power all of their own, and could be inherently unjust, suggested a fundamental shift in worldview.

If Perkins exegeted the subtle hegemony of structural injustice, Wallis presented a vision of its raw, rapacious power. He categorized the causes of African-American poverty in the global, primordial, almost ontological terms that he used for all his social analysis. He was highly polemical and absolutely uncompromising in his charge that the primary cause of poverty was the oppression of the rich. Wallis's analysis from his influential book *Agenda for Biblical People* is typical of his prodigious output in *Sojourners* magazine. He defined the essence of contemporary social reality as the estrangement between rich and poor: "The divisions in the world today are less along the lines of ideology than they are along the lines of powerful and powerless, rich and poor, strong and weak . . . the scenario of our times is a growing conflict generated by the radical disparity between the rich and poor of the world."<sup>71</sup> Building on this stark polarity, in an apocalyptic version of zero-sum economics, the wealthy got richer at the expense of the poor: "We are finally coming to understand a discomfoting but central fact of reality—the people of the nonindustrialized world are poor because we are rich . . . our present standard and style of life can be maintained or expanded only at the cost of the suppression of the poor of the world."<sup>72</sup> Finally, the losers in this rigged game were then made scapegoats for the excesses of the winners: "The poor are always made to pay

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<sup>71</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 78.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

for the sins of the rest of society. Always.”<sup>73</sup> Blacks were poor because the system inevitably made it so.

Despite the affinities in this approach with liberation theology, dependency theory, and 1960s-style left-wing politics, true to form, Wallis cited biblical categories to justify his analysis. Drawing from the exegesis of John Howard Yoder and Hendrikus Berkhof, Wallis assigned the ultimate cause of this nefarious social system to spiritual forces of evil, called “principalities and powers” in St. Paul’s epistles.<sup>74</sup>

While Wallis saw this dynamic at work in all societies, he was most concerned to indict the United States of the 1970s, which in his view was the most egregious culprit on the planet: “A totalitarian spirit fuels the engines of both Wall Street and the Kremlin . . . though all the wealthy and powerful nations are deeply implicated in this alliance against the poor and powerless, the clear leader of this oppressive world order is the United States.”<sup>75</sup> Finally, he described how this dynamic of global oppression found its way into his own distressed African-American community: “When the government tightens its belt, it does so around the necks of the poor . . . people in our neighborhood feel under assault by the priorities of a government that has labeled them expendable.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, for Wallis, the poverty generated by injustice was not something that could be undone by incremental band-aids such as relief or development. The system was rigged, and only a

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 110.

revolution could overthrow it.

### Injustice and the Hungry

For many Evangelicals concerned about hunger, the issue served as something of a consensus issue. In the words of political scientist Robert Booth Fowler, “Hunger was a vehicle, a sincere and purposeful vehicle, for those evangelicals who wanted to participate in the new mood of social concern but had no intention of supporting radical, not to say revolutionary, schemes. Hunger was always an important issue—and usually a safe one.”<sup>77</sup> But for those who thought in terms of structural justice, hunger was anything but safe.

Ironically, one of the leading voices in assigning structural causes to the prevalence of world hunger was World Vision’s Mooneyham, who did so much to promote an individual charity perspective on hunger.<sup>78</sup> But in certain interviews, press releases, and most of all in his book *What do You Say to a Hungry World?*, Mooneyham sounded like one of the radicals. He wrote, “The heart of the problem of poverty and hunger are human systems which ignore, mistreat, and exploit man . . . if the hungry are to be fed . . . some of the systems will require dramatic adjustments while others will

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>78</sup> Even the extremely patriotic, pro-American Larry Ward was concerned about the impact of the global economic systems on hunger. In preparation for founding Food for the Hungry, he made it a point to study “the complex matter of national economics vs. humanitarianism [sic.] concern. Hundreds of thousands starve in India while grain enough to feed them is stacked high on the plains of Alberta.” Rohrer, *This Poor Man Cried*, 113-4.

have to be scrapped altogether.”<sup>79</sup> By itself, this statement is quite vague. It illustrates Mooneyham’s structural approach to the issue, but it is unclear just who is at fault or what can be done about it. Nevertheless, Mooneyham sharpened his rhetoric when he referred to “the stranglehold which the developed West has kept on the economic throats of the Third World”<sup>80</sup>—a far cry from Bob Pierce indeed! Finally Mooneyham’s indictment of the West reached its apex: “The hungry nations have suffered long with ‘aid’ that isn’t, with discriminatory trade policies, with the rape of their resources . . . I can tell you this much—if the roles were reversed, we would have repeated long ago on a worldwide scale the revolution of 1776.”<sup>81</sup> Although Mooneyham did not go on to specify what kind of “aid” was unhelpful, or which trade policies were unjust, or how exactly the West exploited the rest, nor did he seriously advocate for the global South to unite in armed rebellion, for a typical Evangelical reader in 1975, these words would have sounded strange indeed. Asking people in the pew to consider trade policy and the morality of government aid was a worldview away from asking them to sponsor one child.

Yet it was just this kind of worldview that Ron Sider advanced in his analysis of world hunger in *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, easily one of the most influential Evangelical books of the decade.<sup>82</sup> Although Sider aimed at a wide, popular Evangelical

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<sup>79</sup> W. Stanley Mooneyham, *What Do You Say to a Hungry World?* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1975), 117.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

audience, his analytical approach, reliance on academic experts, and rational argumentation that engaged opposing viewpoints set him apart. Thus, when Sider made his case for the causes of hunger, he began by recognizing that there are both structural and personal elements, and that individual moral failure or natural disasters certainly do contribute to destitution. However, Sider insisted, *contra* many of his readers' assumptions, that there was much more to the story. Sider attempted a careful, comprehensive biblical argument for the reality of structural injustice that contributed to hunger. He pleaded with Evangelicals to take structural sin as seriously as they did individual behaviors relating to sex or substance abuse.

Similarly, he acknowledged that “ancient social patterns, inherited values and cherished philosophical perspectives” in developing countries were partly responsible for the poverty found there, but that “surely *our* first responsibility is to pluck the beam from our own eye.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the developed West’s sins of structural injustice (as Sider saw them) received nearly all of his focus. So, although he carefully acknowledged “the large gulf between revealed principles and contemporary application,”<sup>84</sup> Sider confidently moved from making the relatively simple case that the Bible teaches the existence of structural evil to the more controversial step of identifying which elements of contemporary economic relationships and political policies were, in fact, structural evil. According to Sider, the “rich world” propagated unjust structures in two main ways:

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<sup>82</sup> Sider was writing about global poverty in general, but as the title indicated, hunger was his primary concern.

<sup>83</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 139.

<sup>84</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 210.



through international trade arrangements and overconsumption of energy and food resources.<sup>85</sup>

Concerning trade, Sider singled out high U.S. tariffs placed on manufactured goods from developing countries and systemic promotion of volatility in the world commodity market as being particularly damaging for the poor. He was sympathetic to the demands of developing world economists of the dependency school for fundamental adjustments to world trade rules, including the right of poor countries to nationalize foreign holdings and to tie prices of commodities to those of manufactured goods. In one passage that must have been particularly unpopular with his American audience, he praised the 400% price increase on oil brought about by OPEC's price collusion on oil; Sider characterized the result as obtaining "a less unjust return on their natural resources for the first time" and hoped that poor countries would take similar action with a wide range of commodities.<sup>86</sup>

In his chapter *Structural Evil and World Hunger*, Sider cited a litany of "foolish, unjust" examples of egregious American overconsumption of resources that contributed to hunger and poverty. Regarding energy and other nonrenewable resources, Sider chided Americans for taking more than their fair share, and claimed that it would be impossible for the entire world to ever live at an American level of consumption—there simply weren't enough resources to go around. When it came to food, Sider claimed, for

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<sup>85</sup> Sider extended this analysis in periodical articles such as "Mischief by Statute: How We Oppress the Poor," *Christianity Today*, 16 July 1976, 14-19.

<sup>86</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 144.

example, that the American penchant for beef, as “the Cadillac of meat products,”<sup>87</sup> required so much grain as feed that it drove up the price of basic cereals so that the poor couldn’t afford bread. Sider was at pains to demonstrate a connection between eating Big Macs “over here” and starvation “over there”—a leap that required a significant mental shift from that of the typical American Evangelical at McDonalds.

### **Penitent Protest**

In contrast to the ease, convenience, and emotional satisfaction that characterized appeals for child sponsorship, the structural model demanded that Evangelicals respond to systemic oppression of the poor with a stance of penitent protest. “Structural” organic intellectuals frequently used the example of Zaccheus to call Evangelicals to repentance. Two extended quotes exemplify their basic stance: “For biblical Christians, the only possible response to sin is repentance. Unconsciously, at least to a degree, we have become entangled in a complex web of institutional sin . . . Zacchaeus should be our model. As a greedy Roman tax collector, Zaccheus was enmeshed in sinful economic structures. But he never supposed that he could come to Jesus and still continue enjoying all the economic benefits of that systemic evil. Coming to Jesus meant repenting of his complicity in social injustice . . . And it meant a whole new lifestyle.”<sup>88</sup> “Folks never want to think that there might be something wrong with the system which gave them their wealth . . . to me reparations is basically Christian . . . Jesus got reparations from Zaccheus not by force or demand, but by making Zaccheus

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 167.

aware of his own past, giving him the opportunity to break with it, and the joyful hope of a new life with him.”<sup>89</sup>

These passages suggested that involvement in mission to the poor was to be motivated by a desire for righteousness, not just generosity. Individual charity assumed that typical American Evangelicals were basically blameless on a societal level, and asked for acts of compassion for “those less fortunate.” But the Zaccheus story, applied as it was, implied that radical action was necessary just to qualify as a follower of Jesus in the first place. According to “structural” theology, involvement in mission to the poor was neither an appeal to become an “elite” Christian (like a missionary) nor a request for a small painless contribution that was emotionally satisfying to the giver, but was nothing less than the call to authentic discipleship. Further, this kind of repentance would be difficult, and it would mean a very distinctive lifestyle in comparison with the surrounding culture and even with other Evangelicals. The RDOs’ influence and impact grew through its ability to collect massive numbers of small contributions made available through incremental lifestyle alterations. Calls for penitent protest, however, stressed the arduousness of the path of discipleship. They challenged their audience to identify with the oppressive rich who needed to repent, admit their complicity with injustice and turn away from it.

But the discourse of the structural model typically demanded more than just a penitent turning away from structural evil—it required a lifestyle of active protest against the malign systems that trapped the poor. Protest, or “standing against,” was to be

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<sup>89</sup> H. Spees, “An Interview with John Perkins,” *Post-American*, March 1975, 15.

expressed on three levels: individual, communal, and political. Beginning with the individual, the call to simplify one's personal lifestyle sounded often in the mid- to late-1970s. World Vision frequently argued that Americans must modify their consumption patterns. For example, Mooneyham asked in one press release, "We all have to re-examine our own lifestyles. At what point do we have too much? As concerned Christians, can we continue to live in prosperity while millions are dying in poverty?"<sup>90</sup>

Since Evangelicals were highly conscious of hunger, it is not surprising that gluttony was the target of many attacks on American lifestyles. In a second release he excoriated the massive waste of food in America: "Food portions served in most restaurants far exceed the quantity we need. The amount of uneaten food we send back to restaurant kitchens could feed millions of hungry people."<sup>91</sup> And in *What do you Say to a Hungry World?* he was even more direct: "We have a choice: change our lifestyles a little or watch millions die of starvation."<sup>92</sup> Mooneyham was positing a causal connection between the overeating rich and the starving poor. World Vision board member Mark Hatfield, senator from Oregon, concurred: "The richer a country becomes, the more it likes to eat meat . . . but which is an utter luxury in the world and like most luxuries is extremely wasteful. We should renew the Christian discipline of fasting as a means for teaching us how to identify with those who hunger, and to deepen our life of prayer for those who suffer . . . we can drastically alter our consumption of meat, and the

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<sup>90</sup> World Vision press release, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Mooneyham, *What Do You Say to a Hungry World?*, 22.

money we save we can give to alleviate world hunger.”<sup>93</sup> Hatfield gave his call to abstinence a deep spiritual foundation, linking the traditional spirituality of fasting, intercessory prayer, and almsgiving with vegetarianism.

As groups of high school students gathered for World Vision’s Planned Famine youth event, they were encouraged to take the Shakertown Pledge, which among other things committed to “lead an ecologically sound life” and “lead a life of creative simplicity and share my personal wealth with the world’s poor.”<sup>94</sup> The program challenged students to spend less money on themselves “as an expression of a personal commitment to a more equitable distribution of the world’s resources . . . as an act of solidarity with the majority of humankind, [and] . . . as an act of sharing with others what has been given to us, or of returning what was usurped by us through unjust social and economic structures.”<sup>95</sup>

During the mid-1970s, calls to lifestyle change echoed even from unlikely corners of World Vision. Ed Dayton, who was well-known for his enthusiastic promotion of Western technology and management patterns, confessed: “Our much vaunted Western technology is as much responsible for overpopulation and hunger as any other single factor . . . I knew that there must be some change, however small, in my own

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<sup>93</sup> *Christianity Today*, 16 July 1976, 13.

<sup>94</sup> “Let it Grow!,” World Vision curriculum, Planned Famine youth group event, n.d., 53, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

personal lifestyle . . . I have thought much, written some, and done not nearly enough to change the small piece of the world that I affect.”<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, despite this rhetoric, World Vision was often vague on exactly what “lifestyle change” meant, refused to give specific examples, and expressed unwillingness to model “a just lifestyle.”<sup>97</sup> The following excerpt from an interview with Mooneyham in *The Wittenburg Door*, while highly commendable for its candor, is illustrative of this ambivalence:

Mooneyham: Yes, reevaluate your lifestyle in the light of scripture, your needs and the needs of the rest of the world . . . [but] I’d be very reluctant to say to anybody that here are the specific things you ought to do . . . I feel guilty and yet I can’t change the place I was born. I can’t help personally the lifestyle that was handed to me . . . I cannot suddenly tomorrow say ‘OK, that lifestyle gets cut by 40 % or 50% or whatever.’

Interviewer: But can’t we change our lifestyle by 50%? We know people who have done it—radically.

Mooneyham: I’m not sure at this point that I could do it without damage or effect to my family or to the situation where I find myself . . . but I’m sure you’re right. If I lost my job and couldn’t find another one, I’d undoubtedly do it . . . I think maybe the answer is to live with the tension. With guilt and with thankfulness.

The radicals, however, were far less cautious. Wallis claimed that the Scriptures’ distinctive teachings on “wealth, poverty, and economic justice” meant that “contrary to the dominant attitude of our own society, our economic life and standard of living is not a private matter. It is a critical issue of faith and discipleship.”<sup>98</sup> The radicals unanimously

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<sup>96</sup> Dayton, Fuller Seminary Newsletter, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>97</sup> In the first few years of Reagan’s presidency, this theme in World’s Vision’s discourse, which had been quite prominent in the 1970s, was quietly dropped; it becomes very difficult to find challenges to the personal spending or food consumption patterns of Americans.

agreed that when it came to one's personal financial spending, a lifestyle of frugality and simplicity was non-negotiable. Typically, Evangelical teaching emphasized tithing to one's local church and placing ultimate trust in God, rather than one's bank account, to provide financial security. But the radicals went much further. After a characteristically copious reproduction of biblical passages on wealth and poverty, Wallis summarized the radicals' view: "The New Testament condemns not just improper attitudes toward wealth, but also the mere possession of undistributed wealth. One of the very first tests of discipleship to Jesus Christ is a radical change in one's relationship to money and the possession of wealth."<sup>99</sup>

According to Sider, the main reason "that Western Christians today must drastically simplify our lifestyles" was because "more than 2 and a half billion people have never heard the gospel and because up to one billion are starving or malnourished."<sup>100</sup> The radicals unapologetically challenged American Evangelicals to give all excess income to the cause of mission to the poor, preferably to efforts that would affect structural change. They did not see this giving as magnanimous generosity, but as living justly. In Wallis's stark terms, "overconsumption is theft from the poor."<sup>101</sup> Besides freeing up financial resources, the choice to live simply was itself a structure-altering decision. Wallis reflected on the Sojourners' motivation for communal frugality:

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<sup>98</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 88.

<sup>99</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 90.

<sup>100</sup> Ron Sider, *Lifestyle in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*, 13.

<sup>101</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 92.

“Scriptural imperative demanded that we break from the societal patterns of overconsumption and waste that helped perpetuate global exploitation.”<sup>102</sup>

True to form, the radicals directed their challenges not only to individuals but to Evangelical communities as well. In view of the magnitude of global suffering, Sider disdained opulent church building programs, accusing them of “presenting affluence while preaching sacrifice.” He asked churches who must build new facilities to “include equal matching funds for Third World (or inner-city) evangelism and long-term development in your fund-raising proposal.”<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the radicals criticized the luxurious settings that characterized most Evangelical conferences and seminars. Sider’s reflection on the South Chicago venue for the Thanksgiving Workshop poignantly encapsulated the radicals’ censure of Evangelical institutions:

The life and sounds of the inner city punctuated lofty theorizing with sharp reminders of the harsh reality of racism and economic injustice. (Just as Paul Henry declared that evangelicals dare no longer remain silent in the face of glaring social evil, a gunshot rang through the hall.) The medium, the planning committee hoped, would help convey the message. If evangelicals seriously intend to acknowledge the existence of a billion hungry neighbors, then that concern will shape their entire lifestyle, including the settings in which they hold their conferences.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, the radicals linked their practice of economic discipleship with their potential political impact. If they could not model sacrificial living on behalf of the poor, how could they demand greater government aid for Africa? As Sider observed, “Much recent Christian social action has been ineffective because Christian leaders called on the

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<sup>102</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 100.

<sup>103</sup> Sider, “Cautions Against Ecclesiastical Elegance,” *Christianity Today*, 17 August 1979, 7.

<sup>104</sup> Sider, *The Chicago Declaration*, 24.



government to legislate what they could not persuade their church members to practice voluntarily.”<sup>105</sup>

If the call to protest structural injustice through individual lifestyle was a departure from typical Evangelical discourse, the radicals’ communal orientation was even more atypical. Christian community was seen as a “living protest” against structural injustice. In response to the vast, global evils that kept the poor in the bondage of poverty, the structural model paradoxically offered local Christian communities as God’s primary vehicle to restore justice to the world. The radicals were especially strong in this emphasis, in contrast with RDOs, who typically focused on individual churchgoers as donors. Wallis called for communities living in solidarity with and learning from the poor, as his own inner-city Sojourners community had done. Since, in their view, Jesus had chosen to share life with the poor, it was entirely appropriate for his followers to do the same. In view of his respect for the resilience and insight of the oppressed, Wallis wrote about their move into the ghetto as motivated not merely by a desire to “save” it, but to learn from it. If their presence in their neighborhood contributed to positive change, it was only because they were adding their presence to the work God was *already* doing there. Further, Wallis wondered whether the greatest benefits of solidarity may have accrued to the middle-class, white members of Sojourners itself: “Perhaps black people were placed here by God to teach America the truth about itself. It seemed to me that black people were central for America’s salvation.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 205.

<sup>106</sup> Wallis, *Revive Us Again: A Sojourner's Story*, 45.

Wallis argued that Christian community could subversively model an “alternative society” that challenged oppressive American hegemony to its roots. In keeping with his prophetic persona, Wallis did not necessarily propose this kind of church life as a “solution” to poverty in the sense of it being a pragmatic plan that would succeed if the steps were followed properly. Rather, radical communities would be a sign to the broader world of what a society not based on power and oppression could look like. In the long term, gathering groups of radical, committed groups following Jesus’ way was how God would reverse the injustice of the status quo, for “the coming of Jesus brings social revolution.”<sup>107</sup> Wallis was aiming at spiritual revolt, not gradual change.

Perkins offered the experience of Voice of Cavalry as a model for communities in lower-income areas who would work together for racial reconciliation and share their resources in order to holistically develop their neighborhoods. Like Wallis, Perkins felt that Evangelicals “cannot work within the system to change it,” but that Christian communities should create “alternative . . . models outside the system. A model has power . . . it can be seen.”<sup>108</sup>

Yet Perkins’s view of community was much more traditionally missional than Wallis’s. He proposed building community around the felt needs of the poor, empowering them and ensuring community ownership of all programs, aiming to restore neighborhoods that had fallen into decay spiritually, socially, and economically. Perkins argued for a “new concept of missions in which we no longer send out individuals or

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<sup>107</sup> Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, 88.

<sup>108</sup> H. Spees, “An Interview with John Perkins,” *Post-American*, March 1975, 13, 15.

families . . . but people in bodies with a balanced range of gifts and skills.”<sup>109</sup> Perkins hoped to spark a wider movement of Evangelicals who would move into poor neighborhoods together and build ministries as he had—a vision which would materialize in the 1980s. In summary, Wallis’s view of community was primarily prophetic—he hoped his communities would be a *sign* of the coming Kingdom, whereas Perkins was primarily pragmatic—his was a method designed to reverse the consequences of injustice as effectively as possible.

In addition to individual and communal protest, the radicals argued vociferously that political action was necessary to stand against structures of evil. Throughout the 1970s, calls for Evangelicals to become politically active as a means to fight poverty at the structural level grew rapidly. This reflected growing comfort among Evangelicals with political participation generally, as indicated by the Chicago Declaration on the left and by the fast-rising Moral Majority of on the right. For Wallis, political action primarily meant literal protest. Christian communities were to demonstrate their rejection of structural evil through voluntary arrest, participation in mass demonstrations against oppressive military and economic regimes, refusal to pay “war taxes” and the like. Wallis offered a model of oppositional political action.

Sider was much more sanguine about believers’ potential for changing unjust structures from within—that is, through participating in the democratic process as citizens. If Wallis’s and Perkins’s communities were to be “cities on a hill,” showing the world a different way, Sider judged that the church could also function as “leaven”,

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<sup>109</sup> John Perkins, “Liberating the Body,” *Sojourners*, October 1976, 39.

working its way through the entire society. Sider encapsulated his position in a short parable entitled “*Ambulance Drivers or Tunnel Builders?*”<sup>110</sup> In it he imagined a group of well-meaning Christians who provide heroic ambulance services for a dangerous stretch of mountain road. The charitable flock is dumbfounded by a prophet-figure who challenges them to advocate for a building a tunnel to replace the road, thus reducing the root cause of the accidents, despite the mayor’s lucrative restaurant and gas station located along the road.

Thus, Sider spent enormous energy in his publications advocating for specific public policy positions he felt could ameliorate injustice and alleviate the systemic causes of poverty. For example, he argued that tariffs must be reduced or eliminated; Americans should voluntarily eat less; the government needed to encourage less gluttonous consumption habits through “public education programs and economic incentives.”<sup>111</sup> Sider appreciatively cited Norway’s example in this regard. Foreign aid should be directed to “agricultural development using intermediate technology” and aid must be untied from political or military objectives.<sup>112</sup> Sider hoped to inspire “Christian citizen’s movements” who would work for such goals through lobbying their representatives and educating their congregations.<sup>113</sup> Sider believed that working for these kinds of incremental political victories, though incomplete, were important, for “the

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<sup>110</sup> ESA tract, n.d., Evangelicals for Social Action Archives, Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA.

<sup>111</sup> Sider, *Rich Christians*, 48.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

closer any secular society comes to the biblical norms for just relationships among the people of God, the more peace, happiness and harmony that society will enjoy.”<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, he failed to rally Evangelicals around any of these issues: it turned out to be easier to bring Evangelicals to an acknowledgement that structural injustice existed than to pinpoint it in the complex world of politics.

World Vision also tentatively modeled an increasing willingness to make strong political statements. In contrast to the radicals, this reflected its growing sense of civic obligation as it expanded its audience beyond its Evangelical core. In one press release, Mooneyham broke new ground when he declared that he was “very much concerned with the American level of foreign aid—through government, church, and private agencies.”<sup>115</sup> Mooneyham was speaking *as an American* and claiming that all elements of U.S. society had a national responsibility to the poor. In his publications and weekly television shows, he defended the political rights of refugees, excoriating governments (including America’s) who chose not to provide asylum or to protect them against attacks in international waters. Immediately following the Khmer Rouge’s takeover of Cambodia, he argued vigorously for international intervention, but was dismayed to realize that the West’s appetite for involvement in Southeast Asia had waned. He lamented his lost hopes that “a caring world will rise in moral indignation against the inhuman practices of Khmer Rouge taskmasters. How do you tell such gentle and trusting people that the United Nations is too busy . . . to bother with a mere six million

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>115</sup> World Vision press release, 1975, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

Cambodians?”<sup>116</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The first post-World War II generation, led by World Vision, reintroduced missions to the poor as a vital element of Evangelicals’ perception of the divine mandate to the church. In Marsden’s terms, the second Great Reversal, in which all concern for the poor was theoretically sidelined, had been overturned. Nevertheless, the first generation still showed little interest in structural roots of poverty, beyond a conviction that if enough individuals converted to Evangelicalism, society would also change. Again, drawing on Marsden, the first Great Reversal was still in force, put into effect by post-Civil War evangelicals who gradually (but not completely) withdrew from politics and from a worldview that directly engaged the social structures responsible for perpetuating poverty.

From 1965 to 1984, this first Great Reversal began to crack. The structural model, bringing such radically different presuppositions about the world, the place of the individual, and community, was a shock to the relatively complacent intellectual life of Evangelicalism. Considering their extremely small numbers, it is striking to consider how much toil and trouble structural thinkers were able to stir up. In the end, perhaps the most enduring contribution to come out of Evangelical missions to the poor from 1966-1984 was its propagation of an epistemology that saw the world not merely in terms of its individual parts, but in also terms of social structures, spiritual “principalities and

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<sup>116</sup> Mooneyham, *Come Walk the World*, 118.

powers” and political forces. Many of the distinctive positions of the 1970s advanced by the radicals, including their emphasis on simple living and much of their geopolitical analysis, quickly faded within Evangelicalism, even by the beginning of Reagan’s second term. But a growing freedom to enter the political arena did endure, although not always in ways the radicals had intended.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 1984-2005: MISSION TO THE POOR ACROSS THE EVANGELICAL SPECTRUM

#### **Introduction**

1984 to 2005 was a time of superlatives for Evangelical missions to the poor. The sector generated more new organizations and raised more money than ever before. Its largest organizations reached a level of self-conscious maturity and confidently battled poverty on an ever-increasing number of fronts on a truly global scale. Missions to the poor achieved a settled, uncontroversial place in the identity of Evangelicalism. Across the whole spectrum of the movement, its validity within the mission of the church was accepted, at least notionally. By the turn of the twenty-first century it had become extremely difficult to find Evangelical leaders worrying that serving the poor might lead down the slippery slope to liberalism, and a large number of organizations and churches not known for working with the poor added it to their ministry portfolio.

This widespread acceptance heralded the height of missions to the poor's power to shape Evangelical identity. The first generation had been limited to the social space circumscribed by traditional missions agencies. The second generation had opened up new spaces for missions to the poor by expanding the boundaries of Evangelicalism itself to include categories for "relief and development" and "justice" work. Nevertheless, these advances only secured legitimacy for mission to the poor as the specialist concern of those who were particularly drawn to those sectors. By 2005, however, embrace of the poor was general, not in the sense that all Evangelicals everywhere were concerned for



the poor, but that missional initiatives on their behalf could, and did, spring up from nearly every sector of Evangelicalism. Megachurch pastors, prominent authors, entrepreneurs and those in the corporate world, college fellowships, youth leaders directing short-term missions trips, and missions agencies previously focused only on evangelism all displayed an interest in addressing poverty from within their sphere of influence.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the tremendous energy emanating from these newcomers, established organizations perhaps contributed most to the widening scope of the field as they matured, diversified, and settled into various organizational niches. Some groups, like World Vision, grew not just in size, but diversified in their methodology and discourse, relentlessly expanding into new means of serving the poor, such as microfinance, political advocacy, and community organizing. Others, like Compassion International, expanded their quantitative impact, but strove to professionalize and specialize in their singular area of expertise—work with children, in case the case of Compassion. Established groups also matured theoretically, as practices such as economic development that had been emerging in inchoate form in the 1970s now crystallized into sharper intellectual expression. Even organizations such as Samaritan’s Purse, which did not substantively modify its ministry model, contributed to diversity, since older approaches remained a strong part of the landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Within these examples, further research recent developments could begin with 1) Opportunity International, an Evangelical NGO and early leader in microfinance, 2) the Business as Missions movement, which seeks to encourage Christians to start evangelistic, socially conscious businesses that serve or employ the poor, 3) the manner in which the dramatic rise in short term missions, especially among youth, shapes perceptions of the poor and 4) International Justice Mission, and NGO employing Christian lawyers and investigators to prosecute cases of child slave labor and sex trafficking, also deserves analysis.

This chapter seeks to describe the dynamism and diversity of Evangelical missions to the poor from 1984 to 2005 through profiling a selection of its most prominent and influential representatives. In the main, smaller and newer entrants into the field of missions to the poor tended to align themselves with the approaches of one of the larger, more established “industry leaders.” Therefore, most of the organizations considered will already be familiar. Within established organizations affiliated with the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Agencies (AERDO), World Vision, Compassion International, Food for the Hungry, and Samaritan’s Purse were again the most prominent. These agencies, who had previously self-identified as RDOs, increasingly took on the nomenclature of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Following precedent, World Vision receives the most extensive treatment. Next, the erstwhile radicals, now calling themselves progressive Evangelicals, continued to be led by Wallis, Sider, and Perkins, as well as newcomer Anthony Campolo. A variety of newcomers influenced by this older generation will also be considered. Finally, the brief case studies of Bruce Wilkinson, Rick Warren, and Campus Crusade for Christ illustrate the expansion of missions to the poor into new, unexpected segments of Evangelicalism.

### **Established AERDO Organizations**

Quantitatively, the “relief and development” sector grew even faster than it had during the previous period. By 1989, six of the seven best-funded parachurch ministries in all of Evangelicalism were affiliated with AERDO, and Evangelicals were giving more than twelve times as much to foreign missions/relief and development as to political

causes.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, the five largest Evangelical NGOs—World Vision, Compassion International, MAP International, Samaritan’s Purse, and Food for the Hungry—received more than 2.25 billion dollars combined, with scores of smaller organizations inflating the number even higher.<sup>3</sup> Nearly every established AERDO organization grew significantly in scale, and from 1980 to 2005, the Association of Evangelical Relief Agencies (AERDO)—expanded from ten to forty-seven affiliates.<sup>4</sup>

Evangelical NGOs benefitted not only from greater acceptance of their work from their co-religionists, but also from the momentum created by the massive expansion of the role of NGOs in aid work. While the rate of new NGO foundings slowed slightly from its height in the 1970s, existing organizations grew at a breathtaking rate, with massive increases in funding both from public and private donors.<sup>5</sup> In the decade from 1982 to 1992, aggregate annual NGO funds increased from 2.3 billion to more than six billion dollars; by 2005 (the year following the Indian Ocean tsunami), that figure had skyrocketed to more than thirty billion dollars, with thirty percent of all global aid administered by NGOs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Eskridge and Noll, 118, 130.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts “50 Largest US Charities”; International Bulletin of Missionary Research 31:4 October 2007, 1; World Vision International Annual Review, 2007; “Top 100 Charities,” *NonProfit Times*, 1 November 2006, 32.

<sup>4</sup> David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 102.

<sup>5</sup> Still, by 1995 there were 2500 NGOs in OECD countries dedicated to relief and development. Boli and Thomas, 226

<sup>6</sup> Riddell, 48.

## World Vision

1984 to 2005 brought yet another period of large-scale expansion for World Vision. Following the 1984 famine in Ethiopia, income jumped 80% in just one year.<sup>7</sup> The remaining years of the decade then saw slower growth “due to compassion fatigue rampant in America.”<sup>8</sup> But in the 1990s, annual double digit growth returned. From 1987 to 1998, the organization’s annual budget more than doubled, increasing from \$145 million to \$348 million.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the period the United States branch of World Vision received more than three quarters of a billion dollars annually in contributions, more than the total income of the next five largest Evangelical poverty-oriented organizations combined.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, World Vision International grew even faster than its originating office, with World Vision USA providing only slightly more than half of World Vision International’s income in 2005.<sup>11</sup> It began to proudly claim that it was “the largest privately funded relief-and-development agency in the world.”<sup>12</sup> During this period World Vision truly became an international partnership and although the U.S. entity still carried much organizational heft, the international partnership structure

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<sup>7</sup> Rohrer, *Open Arms*, 241.

<sup>8</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1986, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>9</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1999, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>10</sup> International Bulletin of Missionary Research 31:4 October 2007, 1.

<sup>11</sup> World Vision Annual Report 2005. Copy in author’s possession.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin D. Miller, “De-Seipling World Vision,” *Christianity Today*, June 15, 1998, Vol. 42, Issue 7

provided each country with considerable leeway within the basic vision and values of the partnership.<sup>13</sup>

Two presidents, Dr. Robert Seiple and Richard Stearns, presided over the latest chapter in World Vision's ascendancy. After Mooneyham resigned in 1982, longtime vice-president Engstrom took leadership for an interim period. In early 1987 Seiple began his eleven-year tenure, coming to World Vision with a background in university administration, having served at Brown University as vice president of development and as president of Eastern College and Seminary.<sup>14</sup> In 1998 Seiple was appointed by President Clinton as the State Department's first Ambassador -At-Large for International Religious Freedom. World Vision next turned to Richard Stearns, a business executive who had been president of Parker Brothers Games and CEO of tableware company Lenox, Inc. These two presidencies marked a major turning point in World Vision's identity. For the first time in its history, World Vision had a president who was not an evangelist or clergyman. Both Seiple and Stearns were committed Evangelicals and high performing, well-rounded leaders with Ivy League degrees, selected primarily for their business and administrative skills now demanded by the sprawling organization. Although Seiple was not an evangelist, his leadership credentials as president of a major Evangelical college and seminary made him familiar with the world of parachurches. But Stearns, although he was a committed layman, had been fully shaped by corporate

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<sup>13</sup> For example, World Vision Australia and New Zealand had the highest rates of name recognition and respect among the general populations of their countries than any World Vision office, but they considerably downplayed their evangelical identity, as did offices in predominantly Muslim countries.

<sup>14</sup> Sider and Campolo taught at Eastern Seminary and Eastern College in Pennsylvania, respectively.

business culture. The learning curve was steep for Stearns, who knew very little about poverty when he reluctantly took the job. Stearns acknowledged, “The first thing the World Vision staff wanted to do was to get this silly president into the field”;<sup>15</sup> on his inaugural trip to Uganda, he was confronted with the realization that he had never even considered that AIDs left behind orphans. While both presidents remained very visible, writing regular columns in World Vision’s publications, they were not primarily organic intellectuals in the way that Mooneyham and Pierce had been.<sup>16</sup>

It is striking that this, World Vision’s most staggering period of growth, was not driven by a highly recognizable personality, as its earlier stages had been. This was partly because World Vision’s donors were now more concerned with competence, trustworthiness, and efficiency than doctrinal zeal or purity.<sup>17</sup> In a sense, then, World Vision had evolved away from the characteristic Evangelical paradigm traced by this dissertation—a highly visible organic intellectual driving an organization through the shaping power of his words.

This professionalizing ethos, which began with Engstrom’s influence in the 1970s, did not stop at the presidency. As longtime employees and leaders from the early days of World Vision retired or passed away<sup>18</sup> and as new positions were created by

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<sup>15</sup> Nina Shapiro, “The AIDs Evangelists,” *Seattle Weekly*, 15 November 2005, accessed at <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2006-11-15/news/the-aids-evangelists/>

<sup>16</sup> Although speculative, it is likely that a very high percentage of World Vision donors in the 1960s and 1970s could name Pierce/Mooneyham as World Vision president, but that was probably less true of Seiple/Stearns.

<sup>17</sup> World Vision donor survey 2002, World Vision U.S. Headquarters, Federal Way, Washington.

<sup>18</sup> World Vision International Council Minutes 1986, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

continual expansion, the organization intentionally aimed to recruit top-notch talent in marketing, fundraising, management, media relations, journalism, and administration. World Vision leadership explicitly made professional excellence a major institutional goal: “World Vision will be a professional, enlightened, efficient, humane organization.”<sup>19</sup> They hoped to attract established professionals who would be willing to take a pay cut to work for a good cause. Their “target employee” was exemplified by a testimonial placed prominently on their employment web page in 2005: “For 5 years, I rose through the ranks at Microsoft. But I wondered where I was ‘storing up my treasure.’ Instead of being ambitious for one of the world’s largest corporations, now I’m ambitious for the poor and children. Working here is the best-kept secret for ex-corporate types.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, World Vision often paid considerably higher than other non-profits. Stearns’ 2005 salary of \$367,000, for example, was by far the highest in the field of Christian agencies that served the poor (although it was an 80% pay cut from his previous job). Thus, when considering World Vision’s discourse from this period, it is important to remember that it was produced not simply by the president and one or two copy writers, but by highly accomplished and professionalized teams of editors, researchers, journalists, and marketers. As was true during the 1970s, this reality continued to create the challenge of creating a unified organizational message, as material produced by different teams for different reasons could be in tension with each other (e.g. marketing versus advocacy).

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<sup>19</sup> Irvine, 134.

<sup>20</sup> Accessed at <http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/about/hr-home?OpenDocument> in November 2005.

As in previous stages of World Vision's evolution, the organization's own statements of self-definition succinctly shed light on how the organization developed from 1984 to 2005. Although World Vision feverishly tinkered with its mission, vision and values statements during this period, key phrases of a self-definition that began to appear prominently in its material near the end of the period provides a helpful framework for analyzing its organizational distinctives.<sup>21</sup>

As it had since the late 1970s, World Vision defined itself as a "Christian relief and development organization."<sup>22</sup> Relief and development organizations now occupied a mature, well established genre within the NGO community; critics could even refer to them as the "disaster relief industry."<sup>23</sup> Already in 1978 World Vision had removed the descriptor "missionary agency" from its self-description, but now World Vision had much more firmly established its identity within the NGO community, both within AERDO and increasingly in the wider world as well. During the late 1980s the agency expended considerable energy building "relations with the United Nations system, the churches and other international organizations",<sup>24</sup> it established official links with the World Health Organization, the UN Children's Emergency Fund, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, among others. Later in the period Stearns began to serve as

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<sup>21</sup> See "Vision Statement," *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, African Issues (London: African Rights & the International African Institute in association with James Currey Oxford & Indiana University Press Bloomington, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Irvine, 114.



a member of USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid. In 1987 World Vision opened an International Liaison Office in Geneva in order to better interact with the conglomeration of international agencies located there. After the turn of the century, World Vision was a prominent sponsor of the ONE campaign, a coalition of NGOs and agencies dedicated to promoting the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>25</sup>

World Vision's enhanced status enabled it to take advantage of the massive pipeline of funding coming from government agencies and corporations. By 2004, in keeping with broader trends affecting all NGOs, gifts in kind (GIK) from corporations and government grants brought in more than sixty percent of its total income—up from just eighteen percent a decade earlier.<sup>26</sup> By 2005, among American NGOs, World Vision International was “the largest handler of food, and nearly all of that food was donated by the U.S. government.”<sup>27</sup>

World Vision continued to remain unabashedly Christian during this period. Its discourse continually quoted Scripture, promoted Christian spirituality, and explicitly cited Christian motivations for their work. It also frequently referred to its historical roots, born of the compassion of an evangelist, especially as their 40- and 50- year anniversaries approached.<sup>28</sup> Internally, the organization continually expressed the need to

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<sup>25</sup> Supporters of the Millennium Development goals pledged themselves to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day, and to a host of sub-goals concerning primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, infectious diseases, and environmental sustainability.

<sup>26</sup> World Vision Annual Report 2004, 2; Kevin D. Miller, “De-Seipling World Vision.”

<sup>27</sup> D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see World Vision advertising response card headlined “Let your heart be broken today” in *Christianity Today*, 9 August, 1999 and 13 January 1992, 1.

“keep the faith”, mindful of the trend for successful organizations to secularize.<sup>29</sup> While varying degrees of religious zeal could be discerned among the national offices around the world, the American branch strongly guarded its Evangelical ethos, with regular chapel services at its headquarters, ad-hoc prayer meetings among staff members, and continued strong links to Evangelicalism.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, as part of World Vision’s increased prominence within the world of NGOs, their continued Christian identity created controversy on all sides.

Secular critics often accused World Vision of clandestine or manipulative proselytizing. At times progressive Catholic or mainline Protestant agencies echoed these accusations.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, despite World Vision’s increased efforts at forging ecumenical links, their Evangelical identity often proved an impediment. Although much progress was made compared to earlier periods in which Evangelicals “were certain that nothing good could come from Geneva” and that the WCC was the “hot-bed of revolution,” a continued divide remained, with stereotypes on both sides.<sup>32</sup> Sensitive to

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<sup>29</sup> Todd Hertz, “Keeping the Faith,” *Christianity Today*, 10 June 10, 2002, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/june10/2.32.html>, accessed on December 1, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> According to Shapiro, “The AIDs Evangelists,” “Every Wednesday at 11 a.m. sharp, the approximately 500 staffers based here rise from their cubicles and file into an auditorium for a chapel service. Stearns, not a pastor, serves as master of ceremonies, but the event, featuring speakers and Bible readings, is distinctly religious. There is no question of excluding employees who do not happen to be Christian; there are no such employees, at least domestically. While World Vision employs nationals of different faiths in the countries where it works, every U.S. staffer must sign a statement of faith that testifies to belief in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.” In 2005, this researcher found a similar ethos prevailing at the World Vision International office in Monrovia, CA.

<sup>31</sup> For one example of scholarly criticism, see David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 282ff; For an incident in which World Vision publically clashed with the progressive Catholic organization *Pax Christi*, see Irvine, 120ff.

accusations of proselytizing, World Vision explicitly reaffirmed in their organizational self-definition their commitment to “serving the poor—regardless of a person’s religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.”<sup>33</sup>

But conservative evangelicals frequently made the opposite criticism—that World Vision had abandoned their commitment to evangelism and was indeed secularizing. This criticism was based on two changes within World Vision. One was a growing emphasis on Christian witness by demonstration through deeds, and a diminishing of support for proclaiming the Gospel through evangelistic crusades. After the retirement of Mooneyham, World Vision was for the first time without the voice of an evangelist who spoke in its name. In truth, World Vision still funded pastoral training (although usually through grants to other organizations), and continued to supply Bibles at a similar rate as in earlier periods. But since these activities now took up a much smaller proportion of World Vision’s total activity, it did indicate a definite shift of focus in its overall organizational ethos.

A second change that provoked the ire of some conservative Evangelicals was the growth of World Vision’s work in Muslim areas and other “sensitive access countries.” Interaction with these countries required a downplaying of Christian identity, and since World Vision was committed to hiring locals, it often hired non-Christians.

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<sup>32</sup> For more detail, see Bryant Myers, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Evangelical-Ecumenical Cooperation.”

<sup>33</sup> “Vision Statement,” *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

One Evangelical philanthropist disapprovingly noted, “World Vision is the largest Christian employer of Muslims around the world.”<sup>34</sup>

The fact that World Vision aimed to serve “children and their communities worldwide” might seem unremarkable, but it actually indicated significant developments in World Vision’s ministry.<sup>35</sup> First, World Vision continued to highlight child sponsorship as their flagship program, despite highly publicized exposés of that approach during the mid-1990s.<sup>36</sup> As World Vision itself acknowledged, sponsorship was open to criticism as an “expensive, sentimental and paternalistic response to the needs of children” that “singles out certain children from others for special treatment.”<sup>37</sup> Yet its power as a fundraising device and its ability to put a personal face on international poverty persuaded World Vision to retain the approach.

However, during the late 1980s, World Vision added the phrase “and their communities.” This phrase signified a major commitment to “move away from many small . . . projects toward ‘area development programs’” (ADPs) which worked on multiple aspects of development across a wide geographical area.<sup>38</sup> The organization

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<sup>34</sup> Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> “Vision Statement,” *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

<sup>36</sup> The most publicized criticism of child sponsorship was Lisa Anderson et al., “The Miracle Merchants,” *Chicago Tribune*, 15 March 1998, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/chicagotribune/access/27276100.html?dids=27276100:27276100&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+15%2C+1998&author=&pub=Chicago+Tribune&edition=&startpage=1&desc=THE+MIRACLE+MERCHANTS+Series%3A+THE+MIRACLE+MERCHANTS.+Special+report.+First+of+two+parts> (accessed November 30, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Irvine, 217.

<sup>38</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking With the Poor* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1999), 254, n. 5.

became keenly aware that individual children were often poor because they were trapped in a broader web of relationships that denied them access to social power. Thus, only interventions that were large enough in scale to deal with a region's infrastructure, social patterns, political power, and economic structure could be effective in the long term. As World Vision's work became regional and multi-faceted in nature, it clashed with the central premise of child sponsorship—that sponsors could impact the lives of one particular child at a time, not the structures of a region in general. The tension between marketing claims to serve individual children and a regional/structural mindset among practitioners was one of the key drivers of World Visions' discourse.

By the twenty-first century World Vision had truly lived up to its name, as its scope of its service grew from forty countries in 1979 to fifty-five in 1989 to one hundred in 2003.<sup>39</sup> The 1980s saw a “great pendulum swing of support for Africa,”<sup>40</sup> spurred on by the exigencies of famine, followed by significant expansion in the Middle East in the 1990s. Encouraged by board members such as John Perkins, World Vision also sharply increased the volume of its work in the United States, both through grants to existing urban ministries and through programs of their own, such as providing school supplies to low-income students.

To briefly recap, in World Vision's first phase of maturation, it confined itself strictly to providing emergency relief assistance as a matter of principle. Next, under Mooneyham's leadership, the agency added longer-term development work. Finally,

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<sup>39</sup> Irvine, 266,268; World Vision Annual Report 2003. Copy in author's possession. World Vision claimed to be serving 100 million people in 2003.

<sup>40</sup> World Vision Annual Report 1986, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

from 1983 to 2005, development not only became the central focus, but World Vision added an explicit institutional commitment to advocating for justice. Thus, it developed a triple focus of relief, development, and advocacy.

### *Relief*

Relief of those affected by natural disasters and civil conflict continued to be an important priority. It was World Vision's responses to major catastrophes such as the 1984 famine in Ethiopia or the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that generated the most media attention in the mainstream press—and the most donations. The Ethiopia famine was significant because it was World Vision's photos and video footage aired on the BBC that first brought the huge scale of suffering to the world's attention. It also heightened World Vision's awareness of the need to remain on the scene well after the immediate crisis had subsided.

By 2004, well in advance of the tsunami, World Vision had leveraged its economies of scale to purchase huge quantities of relief supplies, pre-placed them in strategically located warehouses throughout South Asia, and developed a sophisticated Emergency Response and Disaster Mitigation Plan so that when disaster struck, its response could be timelier. This strategy paid off well in the aftermath of the tsunami; World Vision was widely recognized as being one of the first on the scene. According to Stearns, the tragedy resulted in the opportunity to “introduce millions of Americans who might not have known the depth and breadth of our work. There were more than 60,000 first time U.S. donors over the first few weeks following the tsunami, the greatest number of new supporters responding to a natural disaster since World Vision was established in

1950.”<sup>41</sup> World Vision also increased its sophistication in responding to emergencies generated by civil conflict or “complex humanitarian emergencies” in which recipients might sell the food for guns, thus perpetuating the conflict.

### *Development*

Despite the lives saved and donations generated by emergency relief, the center of World Vision’s organizational focus shifted solidly to “lasting, community-based transformation.”<sup>42</sup> World Vision proudly announced that even after acute interventions in the wake of an emergency, it remained on site to work for long-term change “long after the television cameras had been aimed elsewhere.”<sup>43</sup> The scope of World Vision’s development work during this period could easily be the subject of a dissertation by itself; there is only space here to highlight the most distinctive approaches as they shaped World Vision’s practice. As World Vision moved toward Area Development Projects (ADPs), it edged away from their previous practice of working directly through local churches. Practitioners noted that World Vision churches often wielded inordinate influence as “power brokers” of development benefits, which could cause corruption and division within the broader community and other churches in the area. Instead, church

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<sup>41</sup> For a firsthand overview of the complex logistics involved, see Mark Cutshall, “We’ve Got an Emergency,” *Christian Management Report*, August 2005, 1-3, accessed at <http://www.ministryplanet.net/servlets/DocumentDownloadHandler/264462/39009/418569/13%20-%20CMR%20Article%20-%20We%20ve%20Got%20an%20Emergency.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> “Vision Statement,” *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

<sup>43</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, Summer 2005, 5.

became players in “core groups” of community stakeholders who partnered with the agency in ADPs.<sup>44</sup>

In practice, ADPs consisted of World Vision working to provide various combinations of “access to clean water, food supplies, health care, education, and economic opportunities.”<sup>45</sup> So World Vision development workers, who only a few years earlier struggled to convince the U.S. office to embrace a small duck raising program,<sup>46</sup> became involved in a dizzying variety of projects—drilling deep bore wells, agronomics, forestry, rotating livestock programs, development of fish ponds for protein, public health campaigns, microloans, vocational training and vaccination programs.

In this vast array of development projects, several trends marked World Vision’s institutional ethos. The agency shifted from predominantly rural projects to embrace a greater presence in the vast urban slums that had mushroomed by the beginning of the 1980s. World Vision International president Graeme Irvine explained that World Vision previously focused on rural areas because it “wanted to help stem the flow to the cities by tackling rural poverty.” Further, rural communities’ “defined boundaries and leadership structure”<sup>47</sup> were more suited to development work. In order to tackle the fluid, transient nature of the urban slums, World Vision opened an Office of Urban Advance, led by community organizer Robert Linthicum. From 1985 to 1995 Linthicum “introduced

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<sup>44</sup> For more see Irvine, 196.

<sup>45</sup> “Vision Statement,” *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter 18, Rohrer, *Open Arms*.

<sup>47</sup> Irvine, 126.



principles of community organization specially suited to the urban context,”<sup>48</sup> incubating thirty-four locally-based community organizations scattered throughout megacities on three continents. According to Linthicum’s calculations, “Those organizations built over 6,000 homes, created 52 businesses, provided primary education to hundreds of people and created health care efforts in dozens of slums.”<sup>49</sup> The Office became an active part of an international coalition of urban organization and contributed significantly to the literature of practical experience.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps its most successful case, which emerged as a “best practices” ideal for World Vision, occurred in Madras, India in 1988, where Linthicum set up a project called Organizing People for Progress (OPP).<sup>51</sup> OPP followed traditional community organizing principles, first listening extensively to the concerns of the community, then challenging chosen leaders within the community to take specific action to solve their problems. When the local government rounded up six thousand low-caste homeless people and dumped them in a nearby abandoned valley with no services, OPP was ready for action. After sit-ins in government offices and on highways to block traffic, the government agreed to build homes for each family. Later pressure achieved water, roads, sanitation, and bus service—an astronomical achievement for a group of low-caste homeless people. As an added bonus, the total cost to the government for all its

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Linthicum, “Doing Community Organizing in the Urban Slums of India,” *Social Policy* 32, no. 2 (2001/2002), accessed at <http://www.millenniumtools.org/profiles.php>

<sup>50</sup> Irvine, 128.

<sup>51</sup> The following is summarized from Linthicum’s account in “Doing Community Organizing in the Urban Slums of India.”

rebuilding was \$1.5 million, but World Vision only had to pay \$25,000 to its organizers for its part in the triumph.

Accompanying the shift to the city was a major commitment to microfinance, since desire for employment was the chief force that drew migrants to urban areas. World Vision had episodically engaged in loans for small businesses since its origins, but by 2005 the agency was providing about 108,000 business owners in forty countries with more than 30 million dollars in capital.<sup>52</sup>

World Vision's growing grasp of the complexity of development work led it to a greater awareness of gender inequity. Seiple described the impetus for change: "It used to be that we'd go in, apolitically, and feed the hungry kids. Those days are over . . . As soon as the famine is over, the girl children are still denigrated, still marginalized."<sup>53</sup> In 1989, Joan Levitt, the first woman to become a vice president within World Vision International, created a Commission on Women in Development and Leadership. The Commission resulted in World Vision becoming much more aware of impact of their development work on women. For example, attempts to provide clean water were increasingly prioritized because wells disproportionately helped girls who bore the burden of collecting water. World Vision emphasized educational programs such as paying for school fees because this enabled families to no longer have to choose which child to send to school—a choice that rarely favored daughters. Finally, women were often chosen for greater involvement in World Vision community leadership committees

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<sup>52</sup> *World Vision Today*, Autumn 2002, 7.

<sup>53</sup> *World Vision Childlife*, Summer 1994, 6.

and training teams because 1) staff “discovered that those most motivated to work for change were mothers” who wanted to “address the conditions that directly threatened their children,” and 2) women’s leadership “models greater self-reliance to their daughters.”<sup>54</sup>

Finally, World Vision courted controversy by directing its development work to respond to the global AIDS epidemic. While most Evangelicals did not subscribe to the view of the strident right-wing voices like Jerry Falwell, who famously said that AIDS was God's punishment for any society that tolerated homosexuals, they tended to “pass by on the other side” when it came to AIDS ministry. In 2001, a World Vision-sponsored Barna Research survey found that “evangelical Christians were significantly less likely than non-Christians to give money for AIDS education and prevention programs worldwide,” with only three percent expressing willingness to “donate for international AIDS prevention and education.”<sup>55</sup> Earlier in the 1990s, the number was likely even lower. Yet World Vision began to engage AIDS as early as 1990 in Uganda and Romania; and “over the next decade, World Vision offices around the world addressed the issue on a national and community level.”<sup>56</sup> In 2000 World Vision launched its large-scale, heavily publicized Hope Initiative, touring across the country with a 3,000 foot multi-media exhibit educating viewers about the global prevalence of AIDS, and asking

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<sup>54</sup> Linthicum, “Doing Community Organizing in the Urban Slums of India,” 36; *World Vision Childlife* Summer 1994, 6.

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/pr.nsf/stable/pr\\_us\\_apathy](https://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/pr.nsf/stable/pr_us_apathy), (accessed on November 21, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.worldvisionexperience.org/learn\\_World\\_Vision\\_work.asp](http://www.worldvisionexperience.org/learn_World_Vision_work.asp), (accessed on November 21, 2005).

them to sponsor “Hope Children”—children who were HIV positive. World Vision also worked closely with Irish rock star Bono to raise the profile of the initiative; in a radio spot, Stearns compared Bono to the Good Samaritan for his work raising awareness about AIDs in Africa.<sup>57</sup> In 2004, a follow-up Barna survey found that fourteen percent of Evangelicals were then willing to donate for AIDs work and by 2006, nearly 400,000 Hope Children had been sponsored.<sup>58</sup>

### *Advocacy for Justice*

Just as the experience of working in emergency zones led World Vision to take the next step towards development in the 1970s, so its attempts to tackle root causes of poverty in development work led it to become increasingly involved in their third area of focus, “advocating for justice on behalf of the poor.”<sup>59</sup> One of Mooneyham’s last acts before he resigned was to commission a study of how a biblical perspective on justice should inform World Vision’s work. This aimed the organization in a new trajectory that embraced with unprecedented force the necessity of working for justice at the political, structural level. The move was not without resistance, as a minority within the organization worried that political involvement was indicative of secularizing drift; others were concerned that it was outside World Vision’s realm of expertise. Despite opposition, this new focus within the organization grew robustly and became a full

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<sup>57</sup><http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/imagelib.nsf/main!OpenView&Start=500&ExpandView>, (accessed on November 21, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Shapiro, “The AIDs Evangelists”; Stafford, “Colossus of Care.”

<sup>59</sup> “Vision Statement,” *World Vision Today*, Spring 2005, 2.

partner with relief and development in the organization's work. World Vision International president Graeme Irvine stated the new consensus: "World Vision does not have a political agenda. We have a Christian and humanitarian agenda. But the political consequences of that agenda cannot and must not be avoided."<sup>60</sup> Building on Mooneyham's *ad hoc* attempts to gain political attention to the plight of the "boat people," World Vision began intentional advocacy efforts in the mid-1980s.

Since the organization itself had grown in stature with other players in the development NGO community and with government agencies, it attempted to leverage its standing to advocate for justice issues which they felt competent to address. For example, one of World Vision's first successful forays occurred in 1989, when it capitalized on its longstanding commitment to Cambodia by publically denouncing the presence of a former Khmer Rouge leader representing Cambodia in the UN. In this case, World Vision's voice was part of a coalition that successfully pressured the UN to declare the seat vacant, leading to free elections in 1993. By the new millennium, World Vision leadership regularly testified before Congress both as expert witnesses and in attempts to influence legislation.<sup>61</sup>

Besides direct lobbying, World Vision attempted to rally its huge donor base for grassroots political action campaigns. Often these campaigns grew out of direct field experience; justice issues were frequently brought to World Vision's attention through

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<sup>60</sup> Irvine, 147.

<sup>61</sup> For example, on October 10, 2001, World Vision's government relations manager and Africa policy specialist Rory E. Anderson presented testimony entitled "Conflict Diamonds: Funding Conflict, Fueling Change" before the Trade Subcommittee of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, <http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/learn/globalissues-conflictdiamonds-testimony>, accessed on December 1, 2009.

personal contact with sponsored children. Bonded child labor in South Asia and sexual slavery in Southeast Asia were the most common and egregious injustices encountered by development workers, and they became the front line of World Vision's advocacy work. A seminal experience in this regard occurred in Thailand, when a sponsored 14-year old girl was found to have been deceived into leaving her village, then forced into a brothel. World Vision staff were able to locate her and secure her release for \$640. Although the child was safe again, it was obvious that what was needed was "the enactment and enforcement of protective law."<sup>62</sup> World Vision eventually became deeply involved in supporting legislation in various countries that would prosecute Western child sex offenders for abuses committed in developing countries. World Vision supplemented this legislative lobbying with a public information campaign. Beginning in 2004, prominently-placed billboards sprouted around the world in areas known for sex tourism which warned would be-predators (in English) "Abuse a child in this country, go to jail in yours."<sup>63</sup>

Many other issues taken up for public advocacy followed from World Vision's development emphases. The agency energetically brought such issues as forced female circumcision, inequities in pay, nutrition, and health care, and domestic violence before the public eye. Toward the end of the twentieth century, the advocacy department gained even greater mindshare within the overall organization, and the scope of issues they tackled expanded apace. World Vision became involved in coalitions to ban land mines

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<sup>62</sup> Irvine, 152.

<sup>63</sup> See *World Vision*, Spring 2005, 32 for photographs of the billboard. The campaign took place in partnership with the US Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

and the sale of “blood diamonds” in the U.S. among other campaigns. In 2004 its new website, [www.seekjustice.org](http://www.seekjustice.org), appeared online, at which interested donors could find information on the issues World Vision was tackling, learn how to effectively contact their elected representatives, and send pre-scripted letters and emails. Clearly, World Vision’s size and influence had earned it the title “the Colossus of Care”<sup>64</sup> of American Evangelicalism.

### Food for the Hungry

Food for the Hungry trod a similar path of organizational development as World Vision, but with important qualifications. In 1984, founder Larry Ward retired as president. His replacement, Dr. Tetsuano Yamamori, was a missiologist at Evangelical stalwart Biola University in California. Under his leadership in the 1980s, the organization tracked closely with patterns we have seen at World Vision. Under Yamamori’s watch, the organization grew steadily in terms of income and geographical scope. As of 2004, it worked in 49 countries, of which 10 were support-generating countries. Geographical expansion was balanced around the world—with one or two countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa added every year. This expansion led to a similar internationalizing of their structure, with significant steps taken in 1980 and 1993 to create each national office as relatively independent entities. By 2005 their annual budget had risen to 93 million dollars. Food for the Hungry also participated eagerly in the growing trend of government funding of NGOs—in 2004, more than half the value of

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<sup>64</sup> Stafford, “Colossus of Care.”

Food for the Hungry's income came from US AID; only 11% came from US private donors. This desire for continual expansion, which we have also seen in World Vision, was emblematic of many AERDO organizations. For many, the definition of a successful organization meant ever-increasing budget, newer kinds of development activities, and newer countries in which to work. Some smaller agencies even added one project in several countries as a means of inflating their global reach.

Like World Vision, sustainable development increasingly displaced emergency relief as Food for the Hungry's main ministry activity. This was a natural step for an organization primarily concerned with hunger, and it began new projects in sustainable food production, agricultural training and assistance, agro-forestry, reforestation and land conservation. The desire to be holistic and the recognition that development required attention to many facets of human need drove them to expand beyond their namesake concern as well, and by the end of the 1980s they had begun to add programs in healthcare and child development (although to a smaller degree). Food for the Hungry also added a child sponsorship program. Diversification expanded further in the 1990s, as microenterprise was added to their menu of offerings. By the end of the period, more than seventy percent of Food for the Hungry's resources was invested in sustainable development activities.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Food for the Hungry was not merely a diminutive carbon copy of World Vision. Despite its move towards sustainable development, it re-established a stronger identity as a "missions agency." This was partly because of Yamamori's ties

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<sup>65</sup> World Vision Annual Report 2003



from his time at Biola. He published widely on missiological topics during his presidency. His two books, *God's New Envoys* (1987) and *Penetrating Missions' Final Frontier* (1993) proposed that his concept of symbiotic ministry could be effectively applied by professionals using their vocational skills to serve in countries closed to traditional missionaries. Yamamori was a tireless advocate of a “wholistic” approach to mission to the poor, which he often termed “symbiotic” ministry. Yamamori explained, “Symbiotic ministry blends evangelism (proclamation of the gospel) and social action (meeting people’s physical needs) into a single, integrated, and vastly more effective effort . . . Symbiotic ministry implies that both evangelism and social action, though separate in function, are inseparable in relations and are both essential to the total ministry of Christ’s Church.”<sup>66</sup> While the term “symbiotic ministry” never caught on widely, the wider move towards holism among Evangelicals did, and Yamamori’s thinking was encapsulated in Food for the Hungry’s definition of their ministry as fighting humanity’s “two hungers”—of the body and the soul.<sup>67</sup>

In 1993, at a major international meeting Food for the Hungry promulgated a new Corporate Identity statement that caused it to “change from an organization primarily

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<sup>66</sup> “Holistic” was spelled variably during this period. I have used “holistic” in my own usage, but follow the author’s original spelling in quotations. Quote from *Welcome to Food for the Hungry International: An Orientation to Our Ministry and Corporate Identity* (Bangkok: Food for the Hungry International, 2005), 15. No author indicated; copy in possession of author.

<sup>67</sup> Food for the Hungry’s phone number was 1-800-2-HUNGERS. They also extensively used the phrases “meeting physical and spiritual needs worldwide” and “Value love for the whole person.”

guided by standards of the relief and development industry, to one that was vision-driven.”<sup>68</sup> A significant portion of their new vision was a stronger stress on proclamation evangelism and church-building activity.

### Compassion International

Although Compassion and World Vision followed similar developmental tracks for much of their history, their divergence in this period is striking. From 1984-2005 Compassion International was an extremely stable organization, with little change to report except for constant, even spectacular growth. Compassion solidified its identity as a “child development organization,” focusing on the educational, spiritual, and emotional needs of sponsored children. In 1982, 68,000 children received support. The graph of children impacted continued to angle upwards throughout the period, reaching 180,000 in 1992, 400,000 in 2001, and 611,000 in 2004.<sup>69</sup> Their funding tracked a similar path, peaking at \$166 million in 2004, ranking them consistently in the top four among Evangelical NGOs.<sup>70</sup> Compassion’s fundraising strategy demonstrated that there were other paths to growth than World Vision’s all-encompassing expansion. It stayed intensely focused on the Evangelical market, making most of its fundraising gains through a strategy of persuading Evangelical rock musicians such as Rich Mullins and Michael W. Smith to promote Compassion at their concerts. Since “contemporary

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<sup>68</sup> *Welcome to Food for the Hungry International: An Orientation to Our Ministry and Corporate Identity*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Compassion at Work*, Spring 2002, 4; Compassion International Annual Report 2004. Copy in possession of author.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

Christian music” was rapidly rising in popularity, this was a beneficial match for both sides. The strategy also had the decided advantage of producing a much younger donor base, an important element of long-term growth.

Compassion solidified its Evangelical links through increased church outreach as well. Beginning in 1993, it held an annual “Compassion Sunday” designed to bring in new donors, and Compassion material became a common sight in the foyers of Evangelical churches. Its commitment to the local church was equally evident in its overseas work, as on-site project managers increasingly shifted from expatriate missionaries to local pastors and lay leaders. Compassion partnered with local churches to set up projects that provided education for sponsored children, usually in Christian schools. The church also served as a center for medicine, supplemental food, and Christian instruction for sponsored children.<sup>71</sup>

In 1994 Wes Stafford succeeded Wally Erickson as president. He had grown up as a child of missionaries in Africa, attended Moody, Biola and Wheaton, worked in economic development in Haiti, and eventually received his PhD in nonformal childhood education from Michigan State. His stellar Evangelical background, overseas experience, and sensitivity to the educational needs of children in the Global South made him a perfect match for Compassion’s child-centered strategy.

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<sup>71</sup> “Building the Church through its Children,” *Compassion Magazine*, January/February 1994, 5-12.

### Samaritan's Purse

Samaritan's Purse also joined in the boom times for NGOs. Funding grew steadily, peaking at \$200 million in 2004.<sup>72</sup> By the turn of the twenty-first century, it had vaulted into second place among AERDO organizations in terms of total income, a remarkable feat for an organization just establishing itself at the beginning of the period. Some aspects of Samaritan's Purse's evolution edged it toward standard practices for other Evangelical NGOs. It joined AERDO, Franklin Graham completed an MBA at Appalachian St. University,<sup>73</sup> and the organization professionalized its accounting standards and logistical operations for distributing clothes, food, shelter, and other gifts in kind (GIK).

But on the whole, Samaritan's Purse retained many of the organizational distinctives that Pierce had bequeathed it. First, more than ever, it was an organization totally dependent on the charismatic persona of its president. Almost all of the notoriety Samaritan's Purse achieved was due to the Graham family name, and the organization eagerly exploited it. Graham *was* Samaritan's Purse. His name was prominently displayed on all their communication, and ministry reports looked like a photo essay for a Graham travelogue: Graham was seemingly everywhere, doing everything for the organization.

Yet he was a polarizing figure. For his supporters, Graham was a worthy heir to his father's throne. He picked up where his father had left off as a chaplain of American

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<sup>72</sup> Roberts "50 Largest US Charities."

<sup>73</sup> According to his mother Ruth Graham, Franklin received his undergraduate degree not with honors, but "with relief." Graham, *Rebel with a Cause*, 118.

civil religion, delivering the benediction for the 1996 and 2000 Republican national conventions and for George W. Bush's inaugural address in 2001. He began to embrace crusade preaching, devoting 10% of his time to evangelism and finally ascending to leadership in the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association—a reversal of Billy Graham's previous decision that his son would not succeed him.

But to his detractors, Graham was a magnet for controversy. During the first Gulf War, he piggybacked on a *Dear Abby* campaign to send letters of encouragement to soldiers with a campaign of his own, *Operation Desert Save*. He encouraged Samaritan's Purse donors to send tracts and Bibles (provided by Samaritan's Purse) along with their letters, suggesting "you may want to get a Saudi friend to help you read [the religious] material."<sup>74</sup> He exulted, "Saudi censors will never be able to censor all this mail."<sup>75</sup> Unsurprisingly, "this attempt to nuke them with tracts"<sup>76</sup> turned into a fiasco. A storm of criticism ensued from the Saudis, the American media, the military. General Norman Schwarzkopf publically rebuked Samaritan's Purse, which stung the highly patriotic Graham. His concluding reflections on the matter were: "Schwarzkopf is a great man—a brilliant general—a real hero. I can understand why he took exception to what we were doing. He was a man under authority. So was I."<sup>77</sup> Graham continued to make national headlines, when, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, he called Islam "a very wicked

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 245.

and evil religion.”<sup>78</sup> He then stirred up a firestorm of protest when, after the subsequent invasion of Iraq and with the support of the Bush administration, he took several high profile forays into the Kurdish region to provide relief supplies. Because of his aggressive stances on evangelism, he received criticism from the media for receiving USAID grants, was attacked by Catholics in El Salvador who claimed they were pressured into attending Evangelical services in order to receive earthquake relief, and even got involved in a nasty spat with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (EFCA) over alleged budget discrepancies. In 1992 the EFCA (which World Vision and the BGEA had helped found), suspended Samaritan's Purse while it looked into Franklin's compensation and use of the company plane. Word leaked to the National Enquirer, which purported to quote Billy saying Franklin was “going to destroy what I've worked for years to build.” Franklin pulled out of the council, calling its members “crummy little evangelical busybodies” who were “jealous of me.”<sup>79</sup> Two years later, he rejoined, more punctilious about his accounting, but bad feelings lingered.

When Graham was not making headlines, Samaritan's Purse was disbursing their potent mix of evangelism, emergency aid, and Christmas gifts. From 1992-2005, the organization's headline ministry was *Operation Christmas Child*.<sup>80</sup> Volunteers from

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<sup>78</sup> *Christianity Today*, 27 November, 2002 11/27/2002. Graham frequently made inflammatory remarks against the entire religion of Islam. For example, “I see what Islam has done. I see what it's doing today to Christians. I see what it's doing around the world, the persecution, the slaughter.” Peter S. Canellos and Kevin Baron, “A US boost to Graham's quest for Converts,” *Boston Globe*, 8 October, 2006, [http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/10/08/a\\_us\\_boost\\_to\\_grahams\\_quest\\_for\\_converters/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/10/08/a_us_boost_to_grahams_quest_for_converters/) (accessed November 30, 2009).

<sup>79</sup> Jordan, “Prodigal Son.”

<sup>80</sup> Note the military-sounding names of all their projects.

across the United States packed shoeboxes full of candy, school supplies, mittens, and a gospel tract prepared by Samaritan's Purse. The organization then distributed them to poor children around the world—thousands of them at first, with the numbers rising to 4 million in 2000 and 7.4 million in 2005. Graham proudly reported that every U.S. President since Reagan had packed a shoebox.<sup>81</sup> Samaritan's Purse devoted the lion's share of its funding to this yearly dose of holiday charity—60% or more of its budget.<sup>82</sup>

The organization spent the remainder of its energy on a wide variety of one-time relief efforts, focusing on war-torn areas such as Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Sudan. It created an abstinence-focused curriculum on HIV/AIDS for pastors in the global South, sponsored an average of 400 doctors on short-term mission trips, and each year flew a handful of children with rare heart conditions to the U.S. for surgery, an effort they called the Children's Heart Project.<sup>83</sup> The organization explicitly hoped and expected that these efforts would be an effective inducement for conversion among their recipients.

In summary, despite their varying approaches and emphases, AERDO organizations typically focused their work in the developing world. They funded their efforts through large-scale appeals to the American public and, increasingly, government grants. As the agencies internationalized, their work on the ground was usually carried out by professionals hired locally in lieu of expatriate staff. Thus, the NGOs functioned as global links between geographically separated funders, development professionals, and

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<sup>81</sup> Samaritan's Purse Annual Report 2005. Copy in possession of author.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Samaritan's Purse Annual Reports 2001-2005.

local needs. In contrast, the progressive Evangelicals profiled below asked the American public less for monetary donations, and more for their time, personal commitment, and political participation.

### **The Progressive Evangelicals**

#### The 1980s

The radicals had emerged from the late 1970s with high hopes. The movement was coalescing; the three most prominent leaders had the ear of Evangelicals through best-selling books, and the country had elected as president an Evangelical who prioritized peacemaking and human rights. Yet for the time being, according to Evangelical historian Richard Pierard “this marked the high point of ‘liberal’ evangelical political engagement.”<sup>84</sup> When the Religious Right arose as the most powerful force in Evangelical politics, it destroyed the momentum of the radicals, at least the political side. Wallis expressed the movement’s bitter disappointment, reciting how the Religious Right dealt a crushing blow to the rising hopes of the previous decade:

By the early 1970s a group of younger evangelical pastors, professors, and seminarians were pressing hard for social justice to be high on the evangelical agenda. The Chicago declaration, issued in 1973, expressed that rising evangelical conscience over such fundamental issues as poverty, racism, sexism, and war. Widely respected evangelist Billy Graham, evangelical senior statesmen like England’s John R.W. Stott, and mainstream evangelical colleges and publications also demonstrated ‘the social implications of the gospel,’ perhaps best expressed in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974. It appeared that the Evangelical social responsibility of the 19<sup>th</sup> century revivalist was about to be rediscovered. But suddenly out of nowhere, the American movement was ‘hijacked.’<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Richard Pierard, “A Missed Opportunity,” *Prism*, May/June 2003, 9. *Prism* was ESA’s flagship publication.



The “hijacking” of the Religious Right meant that the decade from approximately the early 1980s to the early 1990s were something of a sojourn in the wilderness for the radicals. They remained active in leadership and ministry, but the tenor of Evangelicalism and the country itself had clearly shifted further away from their views. Their emphasis on simple living and ecological sensitivities seemed out of place in Reagan’s “morning in America.” Their stringent critiques of American political hegemony and rapacious capitalism rung hollow as a newly patriotic country “stared down the Soviets.” Even their favored term “radical” began to sound like a nostalgic longing for the 1960s, and simply out of fashion. For the progressive Evangelicals (the term they now favored), this twenty-year period was something of a roller-coaster, with the 1980s as a time of rebuilding, and the 1990s and following as a period in which their influence reached its apex, allowing them to lead broad-based movements rather than call for small alternative communities.

During the 1980s, Wallis and Sojourners’ ecumenical connections and influences broadened considerably. While Wallis had always openly admired Catholics like Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa and St. Francis, contemporary progressive Catholic spirituality appeared more frequently and forcefully on the pages of *Sojourners* than ever before. Spiritual writers like Thomas Merton were frequently reprinted and commented upon, Henri Nouwen became a regular contributor, and Catholic liberation theologians like Jon Sobrino, Oscar Romero and Daniel Berrigan were lauded as contemporary

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<sup>85</sup> Jim Wallis, *Who Speaks for God?: An Alternative to the Religious Right--a New Politics of Compassion, Community, and Civility* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1996), 18.

saints.<sup>86</sup> Through their influence the Sojourners community took up the cause of the Left in Central America, expressing strong solidarity with the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua and the Sanctuary Movement in the United States that protected undocumented Central American immigrants as political refugees.

Possibly the most pressing issue for Sojourners during this decade was nuclear war. Sojourners actively staged protests at arms conventions, military hardware factories, and military bases during this period. In 1983 Wallis wrote *Peacemakers: Christian Voices from the New Abolitionist Movement*, and articles on the issue dominated the pages of the magazine. Poverty remained an important issue, but it was somewhat eclipsed by these issues.

In contrast to Sojourners' ecumenism, Ron Sider spent the 1980s doggedly engaging mainstream Evangelicalism, frequently critiquing what he saw as the myopia of the Religious Right. He positioned ESA as an organization that promoted *all* the social issues touched on by the gospel. Against Moral Majority's singular focus on abortion as *the* evangelical political issue, Sider wrote *Completely Pro-Life*, which he tellingly subtitled *Abortion, the Family, Nuclear Weapons, the Poor*. He summarized the book's argument in a single sentence: "To be completely pro-life means to defend human life wherever it is threatened."<sup>87</sup> Like Sojourners, Sider expressed his Anabaptist pacifism by

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<sup>86</sup> In 1991 Wallis co-edited a collection of material from Sojourners prominently featuring the biographies and writings of these figures. Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday, *Cloud of Witnesses* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1991).

<sup>87</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Completely Pro-Life : Building a Consistent Stance* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 1.

devoting entire books and numerous articles to issues of war and peace.<sup>88</sup> In the early 1980s ESA published a newsletter that “vigorously opposed the Reagan administration’s funding of the Contra guerrillas who maimed and murdered many Nicaraguans.” Yet unlike Sojourners, ESA also protested “the leftwing Sandinista government’s dangerous restrictions on freedom of speech, press and religion.”<sup>89</sup>

Underlying Sider’s advocacy for these particular issues was his continued theological quest to elevate social concern to equal status with evangelism within Evangelical understandings of mission. Given the rightward swing in American Evangelicalism, he found his strongest allies in this struggle among Evangelical leaders outside America, especially Vinay Samuel in India, Chris Sugden and John Stott of the UK, Rene Padilla in Argentina, and Peruvian Samuel Escobar, a colleague at Eastern Seminary. In 1984 he and Samuel Escobar co-founded the journal *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Evangelical Social Ethics*. It brought together progressive Evangelical leadership from around the globe, aiming at Christian leaders and scholars, not a mass market.

Nevertheless, despite his “left-wing” views in an Evangelical context, Sider’s leadership took on a more irenic tone; he took great pains to promote dialogue among Evangelicals of differing political and social views. Ever the conference organizer, in 1987 Sider, along with Escobar and Sugden, organized the Oxford Conference on Faith and Economics, which brought together 36 Evangelical economists, church leaders and

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<sup>88</sup> For example, see Ron Sider, *Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope : A Book for Christian Peacemakers* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982).

<sup>89</sup> Ron Sider, “Reflecting on 30 Years,” *Prism*, May/June 2003, 36.

theologians from around the globe to debate the implications of various positions on economics for poverty relief. The Wall Street Journal and several other notable periodicals covered the conference, which was most notable for the progress it made in working toward greater consensus in what had been a perennially divisive issue for Evangelicals around the globe.<sup>90</sup> Sider himself, partly through the Oxford consultations, shifted toward a more positive view of capitalism and the market. While he retained his strident criticism of American materialism and miserliness in the face of global suffering, when a third edition of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* came out in 1990, its analysis of structural injustice was more optimistic about including the poor in a globalized economy and less sanguine about socialized solutions. As he said in a later retrospective article, “Today I argue that the market economy is a better framework for the economic order than any alternative we know. I did not say that clearly in the first edition...I am now more cautious and suspicious about government intervention.”<sup>91</sup>

Despite Sider’s persistence and his very successful work among global progressive Evangelical leaders, ESA continued to struggle, with a membership unable to break the 6,000 barrier. Attempts at increasing membership through leafleting Evangelical seminaries and direct mail campaigns brought disappointing results. The Russ Reid marketing agency that had guided World Vision’s fundraising boom in the 1970s advised Sider that ESA could only appeal to “social justice” Evangelicals, not the

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<sup>90</sup> The results of the conference were published in Herbert Schlossberg, Vinay Samuel, and Ronald J. Sider, *Christianity and Economics in the Post-Cold War Era : The Oxford Declaration and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>91</sup> Ron Sider, “Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger Revisited,” *Prism* May/June 1997, 11.

mainstream.<sup>92</sup> Another marketer advised ESA to focus on particular hot-button issues in order to increase membership, but Sider strongly believed that the organization was called to remain “stubbornly multi-issue” because “especially at a time when one-issue, special interest groups are so common, it seems important to have some organizations that try to remind everyone of the wide variety of biblical concerns.”<sup>93</sup>

In 1982, John Perkins published *With Justice for All*, a re-packaging of his methodology of Christian community development. Perkins succinctly encapsulated his approach as *relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution*, and *With Justice* allowed him to move beyond telling his own story to more effectively guide others to replicate his efforts in new contexts. Perkins, determined to pass on his work in Mississippi to the next generation of leadership, moved back to southern California. He intended to retire from direct practice, concentrating on mentoring others through writing and speaking. Nevertheless, “God called”<sup>94</sup> again, and in a violent and disturbed neighborhood in northwest Pasadena, he, his wife Vera Mae, and his son Derek, began applying his community development principles within a setting of urban poverty. The result was Harambee Christian Center, a multi-service agency that was influential in significantly reducing violence within the neighborhood. During this period, as Perkins continued to speak widely, he became aware that numerous urban ministries following his “3 R”

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<sup>92</sup> Russ Reid to Ron Sider, July 31, 1978, Evangelicals for Social Action Archives, Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA.

<sup>93</sup> Bill Berry to Ron Sider, November 7, 1978, Evangelicals for Social Action Archives, Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA.; Ron Sider, “Why ESA is Stubbornly Multi-Issue,” *ESA Advocate*, January 1989, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 16.

principles were springing up around the country. In 1989, in order to deepen the informal relationships that had grown between these ministries, Perkins founded the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) for the sake of mutual encouragement and support for the “committed people of God working in the trenches among America’s poor.”<sup>95</sup> While Perkins was perhaps somewhat less in the Evangelical public eye than he had been in the late 1970s, as he built up the relationships that culminated in the CCDA, he continued to receive support from prominent mainstream Evangelical leaders, including James Dobson and Chuck Colson. Perkins’s ongoing criticism of welfare, emphasis on personal responsibility, and stress on productive work endeared him to “traditional” Evangelicals who might have otherwise been suspicious of his strong positions on race and class.

During the 1980s another major progressive Evangelical leader emerged. Beginning in 1980, Anthony Campolo, a sociology professor at Eastern College near Philadelphia, began publishing a prolific string of books aimed at a popular Evangelical audience.<sup>96</sup> While he wrote on everything from apologetics to politics, he especially delighted in tackling controversial topics within Evangelical circles, with his stances reliably falling on the “radical” end of the Evangelical spectrum. Campolo’s speeches were even more in demand than his books. Stylistically, he combined humor with “prophetic” invective and what can only be called shock value. For example, at InterVarsity’s 1987 Urbana Conference, Campolo famously proclaimed that real

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>96</sup> Eastern College was affiliated with Eastern Seminary, where Sider taught and which housed the offices of ESA. Campolo published twenty-six books during this period, about half of which dealt with poverty in some way.

Christians would not drive BMWs, asking “if Jesus had \$40,000 to buy a car and knew about the kids who are suffering and dying in Haiti, what kind of car would he buy?”<sup>97</sup>

Another typical and oft-repeated Campolo provocation: “I have three things I'd like to say today. First, while you were sleeping last night, 30,000 kids died of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition. Second, most of you don't give a shit. What's worse is that you're more upset with the fact that I said ‘shit’ than the fact that 30,000 kids died last night.”<sup>98</sup>

By the late 1980s, Campolo was easily as influential and recognized as Wallis, Sider and Perkins in progressive Evangelical circles. In the mid-1990s, Campolo even gained the ear of President Clinton, controversially providing him spiritual counsel during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Nevertheless, he did not found a significant parachurch agency to promote his views.<sup>99</sup> Instead, he joined forces with Wallis's and Sider's organizations as well as lent his celebrity and his witty, sharp-edged rhetoric to groups like Compassion International.

### The 1990s and Beyond

The waning years of the twentieth century saw the progressives' influence beginning to wax again. Politically, the Religious Right remained strong, as the Christian

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<sup>97</sup> Tony Campolo, “The Urgency of the Call,” in *Urban Mission: God's Concern for the City*, ed. John E. Kyle (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 151.

<sup>98</sup> Ted Olsen, “The Positive Prophet,” *Christianity Today*, 1 January, 2003, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/january/1.32.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> He did found a small agency called EAPE that gathered volunteers from Christian colleges to work with underserved youth during their summer break.

Coalition, sparked by the Presidential candidacy of Pat Robertson, emerged from the ashes of the Moral Majority. Nevertheless, a backlash developed against what some Evangelicals saw as the Right's sordid grasp for power. For example, by the late 1980s, Moral Majority board member Ed Dobson became unsettled with the movement and later co-wrote a harsh critique tellingly entitled *Blinded by Might*; he became a pastor and started a controversial ministry to AIDS patients. This sensational example indicated what was increasingly true among Evangelicals in general: by 2005, only 30 percent of Evangelicals said the Right spoke for them.<sup>100</sup> This weakening of the united front on the Right created a new opening for the political views of the progressives. Further, the debates surrounding radical changes in welfare laws, essentially reversing much of the 1960's War on Poverty, forced issues of poverty onto the national scene. Clinton's Charitable Choice of 1996 and George W. Bush's Faith Based Initiative in 2001 drew churches and the growing cadre of faith-based charities into the rapidly changing landscape of how the government confronted domestic poverty. Of course, these issues were at the heart of what the erstwhile radicals had been writing about for years. This new context provided them a tailor-made opportunity to both engage public discourse and guide Evangelicals through the maze of opportunities and pitfalls that had emerged.

In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of faith-based work with the poor, each leader under discussion here wrote prolifically about local churches and Evangelical organizations in America that were reaching out to the poor around them. In 1994 Sider weighed in with *Cup of Water, Bread of Life*, drawing from holistic ministries among the

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<sup>100</sup> Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 28.



poor affiliated with ESA, followed by a new batch of case studies in 2002's *Churches that Make a Difference*. In 2000 Wallis penned *Faith Works*, a collection of inspiring vignettes derived from Wallis's Bob Pierce-like visits to progressive churches, causes, and communities. While Wallis's and Sider's works surely impacted individuals and churches, Perkins's influence was easier to trace, as the CCDA provided an effective vehicle for implementing his ideas.

In 1993 Perkins released *Beyond Charity*, which narrated his decade-long work in urban ministry in California and offered theological and practical guidance for others called to follow in his steps. In many ways it was a reprise of *Let Justice Roll Down*, but this time using examples from an urban setting. In the same year he edited *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, a "how-to" guide for would-be urban ministers written by leading CCDA community development workers. As the CCDA rapidly expanded, Perkins could draw from many stories other than his own. In the former book's introduction, he exulted, "For years I have said that we are staging a 'quiet revolution.' As our numbers are multiplying, I'm not so sure we will be able to call this movement 'quiet' much longer."<sup>101</sup>

CCDA's mounting momentum in the early 1990s manifested itself in several books by newer leaders of CCDA-affiliated ministries. *Theirs is the Kingdom*, by Robert Lupton, celebrated learning from the poor in urban Atlanta, while in *Real Hope in Chicago*, former schoolteacher Wayne Gordon told a story that rivaled Perkins's. Gordon, a white man, had moved into the notorious Lawndale housing project in

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<sup>101</sup> John M. Perkins, ed., *Restoring At-Risk Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 8.

Chicago, under the inspiration of Perkins, whom he hailed as “one of my heroes and chief mentors . . . the movement has given rise to many ‘Joshuas’ . . . but John Perkins stands alone as the ‘Moses’ of the movement.”<sup>102</sup> By following Perkins’s principles,<sup>103</sup> Gordon’s efforts at neighborhood empowerment resulted in a multiethnic church, large-scale medical clinic, laundromat, tutoring center, and numerous small businesses. By 1995, Gordon was president of the CCDA, which had grown from 37 founding members to 3,000 individuals and 300 churches and ministries.<sup>104</sup>

If Perkins’s main contribution was through his grassroots network, Wallis and Sider, along with Campolo, took the progressives’ message into the political limelight during these years. In 1994, they promulgated a document called “Cry for Renewal” which they hoped would “correct the media-created public impression of a monolithic right-wing evangelical juggernaut.”<sup>105</sup> They attacked the “almost total identification of the Religious Right with the new Republican majority” and argued that “the religious critique of power has been replaced with religious competition for power.” As they had since the 1970s, they called “ourselves and our churches back to a biblical focus that transcends the Left and Right.”<sup>106</sup> They hoped to lead a new “coalition of Christian

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<sup>102</sup> Robert D. Lupton, *Theirs is the Kingdom: Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989); Wayne L. Gordon with a Foreword by John Perkins, *Real Hope in Chicago* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 99.

<sup>103</sup> Gordon’s ministry also had a strong faith missions flavor; he often referred to Hudson Taylor and George Mueller as models. See Gordon, *Real Hope*, 109.

<sup>104</sup> Gordon, *Real Hope*, 110.

<sup>105</sup> *Sojourners Magazine*, July-August 1995. Accessed at <http://www.calltorenewal.org/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj9507&article=950751>

leaders united by their commitment to working for compassion and justice” whose political engagement would “try to find common ground between warring factions by taking the public discourse to higher ground.”<sup>107</sup> When it came to policy specifics, the document was content to remain general, advocating a grab bag of compassion for the poor, community service, compassion, healing from materialism, environmental stewardship, and repentance for racism, sexism, and oppression. Although the document criticized the way religious groups on the left and right were attempting to gain power in Washington, its real target was the Christian Coalition and its Contract with the American Family. Unlike the Coalition, however, which had amassed a grassroots following of almost a million people, Cry for Renewal was primarily an attempt to gain political and media attention, which it did—Cry for Renewal leaders met with congressional leaders from both parties and the event was covered by nearly all the major networks and newspapers.<sup>108</sup> The Cry also built on Wallis’s broadening ecumenism in the 1980s, as it successfully brought a variety of Christian leaders into its Evangelical core, including “pentecostals, black church leaders, Catholic bishops and women religious, and the heads of most of the Protestant churches.”<sup>109</sup>

The following year Cry for Renewal leadership launched their attempt to build a progressive grassroots movement called Call to Renewal. While the diverse groups that

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> “The Cry for Renewal: Let Other Voices be Heard,” *Prism* May/June 1995, 22-23.

<sup>108</sup> “The Cry for Renewal: Evangelicals Join Biblical Call for Sanity, Civility, and Responsible Christian Politics,” *Prism*, July/August 1995, 20, 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Sojourners Magazine*, July/August, 1995. Accessed at <http://www.calltorenewal.org/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj9507&article=950751>. Wallis’ ecumenism took a personal turn in 1997, when remarried prominent Anglican priest Rev. Joy Carroll, who was the inspiration for the BBC television series *Vicar of Dibley*.

came together were divided on many issues, according to Wallis, “all agreed on the biblical priority of the poor and wanted to come together around a common mission to overcome poverty” through political action.<sup>110</sup> The movement sponsored various conferences, town meetings, mobilizations, summits, and campaigns to support such causes as raising the minimum wage, forgiving foreign debt owed by poor countries, job training, and expanding government programs like Head Start. Following Sojourners’ long-standing tradition, Call to Renewal also organized protests, as when many of the leaders were arrested at the Capitol in 1995 for protesting welfare cuts.

Wallis bookended this period with two very similar books. Much of the ethos of Call to Renewal was guided by Wallis’s 1994 book *The Soul of Politics*, which sold over 60,000 copies in the first several years after its publication. In 2005 Wallis followed the divisive American presidential campaign with *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get it*. Although more or less a reprise of *The Soul of Politics*, it was, as Wallis confessed, “the right book at the right time.”<sup>111</sup> It made the New York Times bestseller list, and made Wallis a regular on the cable television news circuit. Both books retained Wallis’s characteristic prophetic, preacher-like prose, full of sweeping statements and inspiring anecdotes. But this time, Wallis wrote in a more optimistic tone than he had in the 1970s. Then, he had called for small communities, shining as isolated points of light in a dark world. Now, he dared to hope for a broad

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<sup>110</sup> *Sojourners Magazine*, September/October 2006. Accessed at <http://www.sojournal.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=Soj0609&article=060951>

<sup>111</sup> Quote accessed at [http://www.ekklelesia.co.uk/content/news\\_syndication/article\\_050121godspolitics.shtml](http://www.ekklelesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_050121godspolitics.shtml)

movement of spiritually rooted progressivism that suffused the very political process itself. Buoyed by his increased name recognition,<sup>112</sup> Wallis spoke triumphantly about contemporary developments: “Thirty-five years ago, we young seminarians often felt like voices crying in the wilderness. Now, a new and powerful movement that connects faith to social justice is emerging across the country and around the world.”<sup>113</sup> Wallis’s triumphalism must be put into perspective, however. By 2005, *Sojourners*’s mailing list was still only a tenth the size of that of its most powerful counterpart on the Right, Focus on the Family.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast, Sider continued in his role as the “professor” of the movement. In 1993 Sider wrote *One Sided Christianity*, another book length argument for the validity of both evangelism and social concern in mission. The book was well received, and was reprinted seven times before 2005. By the mid 1990’s, Sider was beginning to sense that the tide had finally turned his way within Evangelicalism, observing, “The bitter battle between conservative Christians who emphasize evangelism and liberal Christians who stress social action that weakened the church for much of this century has largely ended. Increasingly, most agree that Christians should combine the Good News with good works and imitate Jesus’ special concern for the poor.”<sup>115</sup> Having sensed victory in that

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<sup>112</sup> Wallis was especially proud of teaching several classes at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in the early 2000s.

<sup>113</sup> *Sojourners Magazine*, September/October 2006 accessed at <http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=Soj0609&article=060951>

<sup>114</sup> Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 28. The figures were 200,000 for *Sojourners*, and two million for Focus on the Family. Data for 2006, after *God’s Politics* had made its full impact, was not available to this researcher.

theological clash, Sider therefore turned increasingly to the battle for praxis—to *how* evangelicals carried out their concern for the poor.

His signature book from this period, 1997's *Just Generosity*, can be seen as a “domestic poverty” version of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. The book maintained Sider’s long-established approach: distill complex social issues into terms accessible at a popular level, paying attention to all sides of the debate, and judge the issues based on his understanding of biblical justice. The book offered a condensed biblical section; the bulk of the work is an analysis of public policy positions judged to be most congruent with Sider’s interpretation of scripture in the areas of welfare, health care, education, tax policy, and minimum wage. Aiming for the center, *Just Generosity* carried endorsements from Democrats and Republicans and from Evangelicals as far apart on the political spectrum as Bill Bright and Rev. Jeremiah Wright.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, creating a grassroots movement of political activists who paid careful attention to a variety of complicated policy issues was a much more difficult challenge than merely arguing that social concern in some form was valid. Even among the Call for Renewal leadership, there was less enthusiasm for the minutiae of policy debate. One observer of the founding Call meeting documented the difficulty Sider had finding traction for his “professorial” approach: “Sider . . . produced an extensive outline which he offered as the basis for a comprehensive evangelical political agenda. The decidedly lukewarm

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<sup>115</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 217.

<sup>116</sup> It is ironic to see these two names right next to each other on the back of the book in light of the controversy generated by President Obama’s relationship with Wright during the 2008 presidential campaign.

reception the document received, however, suggests that there may not be much interest within the movement in doing the hard work necessary to fashion a coherent public policy program.”<sup>117</sup>

### New Directions

Perhaps the most telling indication of the purchase the progressives’ praxis was finding within Evangelicalism was the fact that their message was now being propagated by a new generation of followers. This was certainly true, as we have seen, of the rapidly expanding membership in the CCDA, many of whom were originally drawn into Christian community development by Perkins’s message. The CCDA gave an organizational center to hundreds of small-scale ministries scattered around lower income neighborhoods throughout the United States. Besides the obvious relational encouragement, CCDA’s conferences, materials and networking surely raised many ministries’ quality of work. However, CCDA generated little new material aimed at a broader Evangelical audience. Perkins’s books mostly continued to serve that function.

Immediately following the turn of the century, another distinct tributary of the progressives emerged. In September of 2005, *Christianity Today* and *Christian Century* both featured cover stories on a phenomenon they called the New Monasticism. The periodicals highlighted a number of mission agencies, ad-hoc communities, and Protestant groups who called themselves religious orders. Most of these groups had made their homes in lower-income areas among the poor, lived together in community

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<sup>117</sup> Luis E. Lugo, “The Call to Renewal,” *Center for Public Justice Report*, May-June 1996, [http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader\\$860](http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$860) (accessed on November 30, 2009).

for the sake of support and service, and had chosen relatively simple lifestyles. Although still a relatively new movement as of 2005, they had impact beyond their numbers through an energetic recruiting for their ideal through books, speaking, and the internet. Of the Evangelical groups highlighted, two streams can be distinguished.

A small cluster of missions agencies whose members lived and served in slums of megacities around the globe have been called “the New Friars.” These groups, of whom InnerChange, Servant Partners, and Word Made Flesh were the most prominent American representatives, typically started with a visionary leader who moved into an impoverished immigrant neighborhood in the U.S. in preparation for a second stage of ministry in the slums overseas. For example, InnerChange founder John B. Hays moved into an impoverished Cambodian-American community in Southern California in 1985; by 2005 InnerChange had added communities in Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Caracas, and Minneapolis. They all acknowledged Perkins as a primary, formative example. Servant Partners was birthed when “a small group gathered to discuss the prophetic challenges that people like John Perkins . . . were laying out for the Western church.”<sup>118</sup> Hayes initially relocated in response to Perkins’s suggestion to “find a place I could ‘nail my feet to the floor’” in ministry; subsequently Perkins became “one of the most significant mentors in my life.”<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, unlike Perkins, they spoke and wrote openly about a variety of eclectic, ecumenical influences. New Zealand evangelical Viv Grigg helped draw many

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<sup>118</sup> Scott Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World’s Poor* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 177.

<sup>119</sup> John B. Hayes with a foreword by John Perkins, *Sub-merge: Service, Justice, and Contemplation Among the World’s Poor* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 171.



of the New Friars to the slums of the Third World. Grigg, inspired by the example of Toyohiko Kagawa's ministry to the ramshackle neighborhoods of Kobe, Japan in the 1930s, moved into the slums of Manila in 1979 to plant churches and minister holistically to his new neighbors. After eleven years of ministry he founded a missions agency called Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. He chronicled his experiences in his book *Companion to the Poor* and laid out his strategy to send out a new wave of young missionaries into the slums of megacities around the world in *Cry of the Urban Poor*. Both books (published by World Vision's MARC division) have had a significant impact on the New Friars movement. Scott Bessenecker, who founded and directed InterVarsity's Global Urban Treks in which college students spend a summer in the slums of Cairo or Manila, says that Grigg "was a picture of a modern-day Franciscan to me, and I was captivated by his example."<sup>120</sup> Grigg later directly aided Bessenecker's with the initial teams. Many Urban Trek alums found their way into the "New Friars" agencies.

In terms of their discourse, however, the New Friars (as the name suggests) identified most strongly with Catholic missionary orders throughout history, especially the Franciscans. For example, in Hayes' three hundred page book *sub-merge*, he makes over forty references to St. Francis; Bessenecker's *The New Friars* is premised upon documenting the parallels between these contemporary Evangelical groups and the Franciscans, Poor Clares, Jesuits, and Dominicans. The "New Friars" were attracted to the "Old Friars" especially because of their emphasis on the *imitation Cristi*—that is, living among the poor as one of the poor imitated the incarnation; ministering to the poor

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<sup>120</sup> Bessenecker, *New Friars*, 79.

was ministering to Christ Himself. They also felt a strong need to be grounded in a spirituality that was more than activism or even “serving God.” Instead of seeing themselves as traditional missionary teams, Hayes recounted, “I saw the need to develop mission workers among the poor whose priorities were spiritual and emotional growth.”<sup>121</sup> InnerChange finally defined itself as “an order composed of communities of workers joined to God, His church, one another and the poor, commissioned as missionaries . . . prophets . . . and contemplatives.”<sup>122</sup> The thirteenth and fourteenth century friars deeply shaped the formation of InnerChange: as Hayes considered starting it, “time and time again I came back to how God used these dedicated men and women.”<sup>123</sup> This kind of overt ecumenical cross-pollination at the level of overt group identity was unprecedented in Evangelical missions to the poor.

Besides these internationally-focused groups, numerous similar communities sprang up in American inner cities—the “domestic cousins” of the New Friars.<sup>124</sup> Building on the heritage of older, established groups like the Bruderhof and Chicago’s Reba Place Fellowship, these communities met in 2004 to write a voluntary rule that would unite them all. One of the leaders of the movement, Shane Claiborne, was an Evangelical’s Evangelical, having attended Wheaton College, Eastern University, and the famous megachurch Willow Creek. At Eastern, under the influence of Campolo and Sider, Claiborne became socially active. When a group of Eastern students became

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<sup>121</sup> Hayes, *Sub-merge*, 48.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>124</sup> Bessenecker, *New Friars*, 188.

aware of a group of homeless people who were about to be evicted from an abandoned church by the City of Philadelphia, they responded with deliberate echoes of St. Francis: “a few of us announced our intention to join the struggle of the families and begin repairing a Church that was in ruins.”<sup>125</sup>

Claiborne and the others took shifts sleeping in the church in solidarity, and the incident launched Claiborne into leadership as an Evangelical “radical.” Claiborne subsequently served with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, flew to Iraq after the American invasion as a “Christian peacemaker,” and moved into Philadelphia’s poorest neighborhood. Along with his community, the Simple Way, Claiborne protested laws restricting where the homeless could sleep, renovated abandoned properties, planted gardens in vacant lots, and maintained a ministry of presence among his poor neighbors. Claiborne’s notoriety in Evangelical circles grew, buoyed by his casual, youth-oriented speaking style and his half monk/half hippie appearance. In 2006 Claiborne laid claim to the older rhetoric of Evangelical radicalism as he narrated his story in *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*. In the foreword, Jim Wallis mused that Claiborne reminded him of himself when he was founding Sojourners; he called Claiborne’s book “the best evidence so far that a new generation of believers is waking up and catching on fire with the gospel again.”<sup>126</sup> Claiborne was a frequent speaker at CCDA conferences and other progressive gatherings. As of 2005, publicity on New Monasticism likely outweighed both their numbers and their impact among the poor. But

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<sup>125</sup> Shane Claiborne with a foreword by Jim Wallis, *Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 58.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

the fact that it generated so much notice, even among Evangelicals unlikely to follow their path personally, demonstrated growing interest in even extreme commitment to missions to the poor as a personal ideal.

In summary, while the progressives began the 1980s lamenting their sidelined status within Evangelicalism, by 2005 they had achieved many of their goals, established a non-right wing political alternative, and were on their way to passing on their vision to a new generation.

### **New Entrants to Missions to the Poor**

So far, this chapter has demonstrated the expansion of missions to the poor through established organizations that had consistently grown, both in terms of their quantitative impact and the qualitative scope of their activities. It is now time to consider a sample of new entrants embracing missions to the poor. From 1984-2005, growth in unexpected sectors was best illustrated by Rick and Kay Warren, Bruce Wilkinson, and Campus Crusade. These cases were only the most high-profile examples of a trend demonstrating the fact that Evangelical acceptance of mission to the poor was now nearly complete, having reached even into the most unlikely corners of its disparate network.

#### *Bruce Wilkinson*

Bruce Wilkinson was a noted leader and president of Walk through the Bible ministries, when, in 2000, his small book *The Prayer of Jabez* made him an Evangelical superstar. *Jabez* was a succinct, highly marketable version of Wilkinson's theology,

which could be described as a melding of the “name-it-and-claim-it” Prosperity gospel with the “power of positive thinking” stream in American religion that runs from Norman Vincent Peale through Robert Schueller to Joel Olsteen. This made Wilkinson a highly unlikely candidate for involvement in mission to the poor, but in 2002, after a preaching tour in Africa, Wilkinson testified dramatically, "God ripped open our chest, took out our heart, dug a hole in Africa, put it in, covered it with soil and said, 'Now, follow your heart and move down to Africa.'"<sup>127</sup> Wilkinson was especially struck by the numbers of orphans he encountered, so, following the well-worn path of Evangelical orphanage-building, he announced grandiose plans to save one million orphans. He moved to South Africa and, following his famous *Jabez* mantra that asked God to “enlarge my territory,” began to single handedly-tackle poverty, hunger, and AIDs. His “faith” approach caused him to shun the expertise of other Evangelicals working in Africa (“because I don't come out of this arena of humanitarian aid, I have a fresh pair of eyes”)<sup>128</sup> and to dream big. He founded an NGO, called Dream for Africa, announcing, “We're going to see the largest humanitarian religious movement in the history of the world from the U.S. to Africa to help in this crisis.”<sup>129</sup> Inspired by the fruit trees in the Garden of Eden, Wilkinson enacted “God’s plan” to defeat hunger in Africa through recruiting American

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<sup>127</sup> Michael M. Phillips, “In Swaziland, U.S. Preacher Sees His Dream Vanish,” *Wall Street Journal*, 19 December, 2005, A1.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

volunteers to plant vegetable gardens in the backyards of households headed by orphans.<sup>130</sup>

But his ultimate solution was to be called the “African Dream Village,” a \$190 million venture that would house a thousand orphans and train them to run a nearby theme park, golf course, and luxury hotel. In 2005 Wilkinson got initial approval from the King of Swaziland to build on Swazi soil and launched the project with great fanfare and publicity. But when the Swazi press heard of Wilkinson’s demands to control a wide swath of its territory, including its national park, public opinion turned against him and the king demurred. Stung by these setbacks, Wilkinson wrote to his supporters in the U.S., “Swaziland takes a massive amount of effort to do the simplest things.”<sup>131</sup> Two months later, Wilkinson quit Africa entirely, claiming that God had told him to leave as abruptly as he came. He left behind a shell of an organization and a host of bewildered volunteers.

### *Rick Warren*

Compared to Rick Warren, Wilkinson’s grandiose plans seemed small indeed. In the world of early twenty-first century Evangelicalism, only superlatives could describe Warren’s stature. Many commentators suggested that Warren was the successor to Billy Graham, a touchstone leader that nearly all of Evangelicalism’s diverse constituency could endorse. By 2005, Warren had built Saddleback Community Church in Orange

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

County, CA into one of the most influential megachurches in the nation and had written the best-selling hardback non-fiction book in history, *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Warren extended his influence through his website, *pastors.com*, which anchored a network of thousands of churches in the U.S. patterning themselves after Saddleback. Like Wilkinson, Warren, who planted Saddleback using Donald McGavran's "homogenous unit principle" applied to the American context,<sup>132</sup> seemed unlikely to wade into the murky waters of international mission to the poor. In 2004 Warren confessed that for most of his ministry, "I have been so busy building my church that I have not cared about the poor." When it came to AIDs, Warren "felt like anyone who was HIV-positive probably deserved to be ill."<sup>133</sup>

In 2002, Warren underwent a "conversion experience" prompted by his wife, Kay Warren. Like her husband, Kay Warren had no particular interest in the poor, changing the television channel whenever suffering appeared on the screen.<sup>134</sup> But when she saw magazine photographs of AIDs orphans in Africa, she "made a conscious decision to open my heart to the pain. When I did, God broke my heart. He shattered it in a million pieces, and I cried for days."<sup>135</sup> After a phone call to World Vision,<sup>136</sup> by then the

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<sup>132</sup> Warren described this strategy for church planting in his bestselling *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>133</sup> Marc Gunther, "Will Success Spoil Rick Warren?," *Fortune Magazine*, 31 October 2005, [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/2005/10/31/8359189/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2005/10/31/8359189/index.htm) (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>134</sup> Kay Warren, "Joining the Resistance," *Christianity Today* August 2008, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2008/august/22.48.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

recognized Evangelical authority on AIDs, she came to grips with the statistical magnitude of the problem: “I couldn’t believe there were 12 million orphans anywhere due to anything.”<sup>137</sup>

At first Rick Warren was supportive but unmoved by his wife’s newfound concern. Nevertheless, according to his account, “God used my wife to grab my heart . . . nothing is as strong as pillow talk.”<sup>138</sup> After several months Scripture study in which he “found those 2,000 verses on the poor,” he asked himself, “How did I miss that? I went to Bible college, two seminaries, and I got a doctorate. How did I miss God’s compassion for the poor?”<sup>139</sup>

The Warrens’ next step was to visit Africa in person, where Warren decided that God was calling him to “the cause of ending global poverty.”<sup>140</sup> In a space of months, he devised his “P.E.A.C.E. plan”, which stood for “Plant churches, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick and Educate the next generation.”<sup>141</sup> All Warren now

<sup>135</sup> Manda Gibson, “Kay Warren: Pondering suffering, caring for people with AIDS/HIV,” *Baptist Press*, 23 November, 2005, <http://www.sbc Baptist Press.org/BPnews.asp?ID=22147> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>136</sup> Shapiro, “The AIDs Evangelists.”

<sup>137</sup> Gibson, “Kay Warren.”

<sup>138</sup> Timothy C. Morgan, “Purpose Driven in Rwanda: Rick Warren’s Sweeping Plan to Defeat Poverty,” *Christianity Today* October 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/october/17.32.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Holly Lebowitz Rossi, “Rick Warren Publicly Pursuing Programs against World Poverty,” *Christian Century* 12 July 2005, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1058/is\\_14\\_122/ai\\_n14839666/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_14_122/ai_n14839666/) (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>141</sup> Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox, “Facing the Five Giants,” <http://legacy.pastors.com/RWMT/?id=200&artid=8140&expand=1> (accessed on November 30, 2009).



needed was a place to carry out his holistic hubris. He found it when Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda, called him after reading the *Purpose Driven Life*. The two agreed to make Rwanda a “Purpose-Driven Nation”: each of the 2,600 small groups at Saddleback would sponsor a Rwandan village, sending medical and educational supplies directly to churches. Warren reasoned that he could bypass the bureaucratic “middle men” of government and aid agencies, since “the church has a distribution point in every community, and we have a massive army of volunteers that neither business nor government has.”<sup>142</sup> Reversing the oft-used Evangelical interpretation of America as a Chosen Nation, Warren proclaimed, “In the Old Testament, God took a small nation and He blessed the world with it. . . . Just as God used Israel to bring the Good News to the world, I believe that God wants to use Rwanda, this nation, in the 21st century.”<sup>143</sup>

In April of 2005, Warren rolled out his intervention in Rwanda at Saddleback’s twenty-fifth anniversary celebration, drawing support from John Stott and Billy Graham, who called the plan “the greatest, most comprehensive and most biblical vision for world missions I’ve ever heard or read about.”<sup>144</sup> President George W. Bush taped a greeting for the celebration, and media magnate Rupert Murdoch contributed \$2 million.<sup>145</sup> Warren’s plan received widespread media attention both in the Evangelical and mainstream press. Many commentators, such as religion scholar Alan Wolfe, were

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<sup>142</sup> Gunther, “Will Success Spoil Rick Warren?”

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> David Van Biema, “Warren of Rwanda,” *TIME Magazine*, 15 August, 2005, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1093746,00.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>145</sup> Gunther, “Will Success Spoil Rick Warren?”

bemused but wished Warren the best: “I do not believe that Rick Warren has a bad bone in his body. But I do believe that his remarkable enthusiasm is fueled by considerable naiveté.”<sup>146</sup> Yet Warren reveled in what he saw as “stepping out in faith”: “The P.E.A.C.E. plan is in some ways about flying the plane while we're building it. What we're doing, a lot of it hasn't been done before. [It] is an amateur movement . . . I love the word amateur. I'm proud to be an amateur. It comes from the Latin word amore. . . . It means, I do it out of love.”<sup>147</sup>

Warren next leveraged his network of pastors to expand his plan to the whole of Africa. At a meeting of 1,700 pastors, Warren's followers conducted a bizarre Evangelical reenactment of the nineteenth century colonial Scramble for Africa. According to Warren, “There was a lot of energy . . . Guys with tears in their eyes. A guy was going, ‘I'll take Mozambique,’ and one was going, ‘I'll take Nigeria.’ They were dividing up the world.”<sup>148</sup>

As of 2005, results on the ground were unclear. What was clear was that, for better or worse, Warren had raised Evangelical mission to the poor to new levels of visibility and ambition. Wolfe, who was certainly not ignorant of the developments chronicled in this study, judged that “Historians are likely to pinpoint Mr. Warren's trip to

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<sup>146</sup> Alan Wolfe, “A Purpose-Driven Nation? Rick Warren goes to Rwanda,” *Wall Street Journal*, 26 August, 2005, [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/rvp/pubaf/05/wolfe-wsj.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/05/wolfe-wsj.html) (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>147</sup> Cynthia McFadden and Ted Gerstein, “Rick Warren's 'Long-Term Relationship' with Rwanda,” *ABC News Nightline*, 31 July 31, 2008, <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=5479972&page=1> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

<sup>148</sup> David Van Biema, “The Global Ambition of Rick Warren,” *TIME Magazine*, 8 August, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1830147,00.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

Rwanda as the moment when conservative evangelical Protestantism made questions of social justice central to its concerns.”<sup>149</sup>

*Campus Crusade for Christ*

The final example in this discussion of new sectors who added mission to the poor to their already-established ministries comes from the realm of missions agencies. This study has already noted the willingness of most Evangelical missions agencies to cede work with the poor to RDOs while they focused on church planting and discipleship, at least at an official level. It is an indication of mission to the poor’s growing importance during this period that many missions agencies began to add relief or development programs to their portfolio of ministries. While an extended survey of this trend is outside the scope of this study, consideration of one such parachurch organization is illustrative. Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) was founded in 1951 by the entrepreneurial Bill Bright for the purpose of evangelistic outreach on American college campuses. By 2002 its budget was \$374 million and it worked in 191 countries on a total of 470 campuses overseas.<sup>150</sup> In 1979 it made and distributed worldwide *the Jesus Film*, which Campus Crusade later claimed to be the most viewed film in history. For most of its existence, Campus Crusade was known for aggressive personal evangelism using its *Four Spiritual Laws* tract, which was printed over 2.5 billion times. Politically and

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<sup>149</sup> Alan Wolfe, “A Purpose-Driven Nation?”

<sup>150</sup> *GAiN* Press Release, January 18, 2005, <http://www.gainusa.org/atf/cf/%7B42FDC3C4-5EBF-4C53-910D-B3AC6C1D0AC3%7D/NewsReleaseaboutGlobalAidNetwork.pdf> (accessed November 30, 2009).

theologically, CCC was firmly on the conservative side of the Evangelical spectrum;<sup>151</sup> Bright was one of the forerunners of the Religious Right, having organized a scheme in 1976 to mobilize Evangelical prayer groups on behalf of right wing politicians. Until 1991, the organization had no interest at all in mission to the poor. But at that time, “Campus Crusade leadership began to realize the benefits of humanitarian aid assistance as a part of a Great Commission-focused ministry.”<sup>152</sup> In order to support evangelistic efforts in the former Soviet Union, staff worker Josh McDowell instituted Operation Carelift, which by 2005 had sent over 4,000 tons of relief aid packed by more than 65,000 volunteers, often in the form of donated CarePacks of school supplies and clothing.<sup>153</sup> Relief work increasingly accompanied CCC’s global evangelism, and in 2005 it formed the Global Aid Network (GAiN) which delivered “a lot of different compassion-based tools—medicine, clothing, food, water, even teddy bears . . . in the name of existing CCC ministries to position them in the eyes of the community . . . as a way to create new avenues to spread the gospel.”<sup>154</sup> The same year CCC released its *Compassion by Command* curricula, a multimedia Bible study on “God’s heart for the poor” designed for its American campus chapters. Some of these changes surely emanated from Bright himself, who, in his old age, softened enough to reconcile with Jim

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<sup>151</sup> Even the word “Crusade” in the organization’s name illustrates this.

<sup>152</sup> *GAiN* Press Release, January 18, 2005.

<sup>153</sup> *Operation Carelift Newsletter*, November 2004; see also newsletter *Campus Crusade Today: A Special Report*, April 2005. Copies in possession of author.

<sup>154</sup> *GAiN* Press Release, January 18, 2005.

Wallis after a decades-long feud, even sending *Sojourners* a check for \$1,000 in his last days of life.<sup>155</sup>

In summary, besides the central point that mission to the poor was expanding into new Evangelical spheres of influence, these case studies illustrate several perennial aspects of Evangelicalism's character. Each was driven by an entrepreneurial spirit suffused by limitless confidence. They had no doubts that their success in church planting, book-writing, or evangelism would translate into effective ministry to the poor. Their American, "can-do" attitude was bolstered by the belief that they were stepping out in faith, directly inspired by God. This faith-based entrepreneurial stance had as its corollary a sometimes intransigent eschewal of learning from others—even other Evangelicals. As of 2005, both Warren and Wilkinson both viewed their inexperience in mission to the poor as a boon, and were uninterested in partnership with established NGOs. Indeed, it is striking that Warren presented his turn to the poor as an event mediated only by his wife and his Bible, making no reference to any of the Evangelical discourse concerning the poor that swirled around him. Finally, the continued reoccurrence of individual charity must again be noted, and in Wilkinson's and the Warrens' cases, a sudden awareness of orphans was again the "entry point." Even Warren's ambitious plan, which aimed to deal with the structural roots of poverty, was at its core a scheme to ship boxes of "stuff" to Africa.

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<sup>155</sup> For Wallis's account of this episode, see *God's Politics*, 357-361.

## Conclusion

The fundamental acceptance of missions to the poor was increasingly a unifying factor for Evangelical identity, as ameliorating physical and social needs gained a more solid, accepted place within the praxis of missions than it had hitherto experienced in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the widespread adoption of concern for the poor paradoxically had an even more pronounced fragmenting effect on the movement because Evangelicalism was itself diversifying at an accelerated rate. As various segments of the movement carried out their activism on behalf of the disadvantaged, they injected their work with their own particular cultural affinities, worldviews, and political leanings. Thus, from 1984 to 2005 missions to the poor paralleled, reinforced, and hastened the increasing fragmentation of evangelicalism's identity.

The disparate approaches to missions to the poor described in this chapter—from World Vision's professionalized, businesslike sophistication to Bruce Wilkinson's spontaneous, "Spirit-led," adventuring—were rooted in the larger fact of Evangelicalism itself becoming more diverse as a movement. Theologically, increasing numbers of Pentecostals identified with Evangelicalism, a rapprochement mediated by charismatic "denominations" such as the Vineyard and Calvary Chapel.<sup>156</sup> A much wider spectrum of views on God's sovereignty, divine action, gender roles and Scripture were espoused from evangelical seminaries, publications, and pulpits. Ethnically, while whites continued to predominate, a rising number of Latinos and Asian-Americans (especially the second-generation children of immigrants) matriculated in Evangelical seminaries,

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<sup>156</sup> See Miller, *Reinventing Protestantism* for an excellent overview of these new developments.

affiliated with Evangelical movements, and attended Evangelical churches. Most famously, Evangelical political participation took a sharp turn to the right during the Reagan years and after, although the Clinton years saw a growing progressive minority among college-educated Evangelicals as well. This swelling cacophony prompted sharp polemics from partisans about who qualified as a “real” Evangelical, and numerous attempts from theologians to define the contours and limits of the movement. On one hand, a sub-set of older leaders closely linked with the post-World War II surge claimed rigorous biblical inerrancy and certain Reformed-tinged theological positions as the “true” markers of Evangelicalism. Others argued that drawing theological lines in the sand was both futile and counterproductive, since Evangelicalism’s vitality had historically been “directly related to its entrepreneurial quality, its populist and decentralized structure, and its penchant for splitting, forming, and re-forming.”<sup>157</sup> In other words, late twentieth century Evangelicalism was just becoming more diverse as evangelical movements always did. The shape taken by missions to the poor was both a cause and consequence of that diversity.

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<sup>157</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, as cited in Jon Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism*, 175.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 1984-2005 DISCOURSE: HOLISM IN THE EVANGELICAL CENTER

“Lord we know you’ll be comin’ through this line today, so Lord, help us to treat you well.”

—Mary Glover

“One of my lesser-known mentors was an old Pentecostal woman in our neighborhood named Mary Glover. She taught me more about the call of Jesus to the poor than any seminary professor I ever had . . . So poor that she too needed the bag of groceries passed out each week, Mary often said the prayer . . . simply because she was our best pray-er . . . Her prayer comes right out of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel . . . I’ve read almost every commentary on the text, and no biblical scholar gets it better than Mary Glover.<sup>1</sup>

—Jim Wallis

#### Introduction

In the complex arena of politics, spatial metaphors are commonly employed as models. We say that a particular party is “center-right;” we describe a guerilla uprising as “leftist.” In order to track the variegated and prolific discourse of Evangelical missions to the poor of 1984 to 2005, a spatial metaphor will also prove helpful. One might think of the 1950s’ individual charity model as constituting a single point within Evangelicalism, and the 1970s as characterized by a bi-polar split between individual charity and the structural model. Building on these images, the era up to 2005 might be conceived of as a broad range of positions, with a substantial center. Although the discourse was diverse, fragmented, and “all over the map,” this chapter argues that a

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<sup>1</sup> Wallis, *God’s Politics*, 217; see also Wallis, *Soul of Politics*, 82, 59.



holistic model can be discerned in the center of Evangelical missions to the poor. This was manifested most simply by the fact that the term “holism” appeared constantly in the media and literature of the organizations surveyed in this study—it was the benchmark to which many aspired and an important mark of self-identity for the most influential organic intellectuals. On a deeper level, holism’s most basic distinguishing feature was the creation of comprehensive responses to poverty that attempted to engage it in all its dimensions—physical, spiritual, and social.

The “holistic” model, as this chapter constructs it, was characterized by three secondary characteristics. First, holistic discourse was committed to theoretical reflection that could guide the praxis of mission to the poor. In contrast to the spontaneous action of the individual charity model, it valued intentional, deliberate theorizing that could provide a long-term framework for action. Second, holism integrated aspects of mission to the poor that had often been bifurcated, such as relief and development, evangelism and social concern, and individual versus structural perspectives. Similarly, it frequently sought to intentionally assimilate insights from secular or ecumenical sources into its Evangelical framework dominated by the Bible. Third, the holistic model viewed the poor as full of potential, and as an integral part of the development process. It called non-poor Americans to empower the poor’s potential through a hopeful approach aimed at sustainable, long-lasting change in which the poor themselves were not the objects but the instruments of their own transformation. Therefore, holism should be regarded as “central” to Evangelical discourse from 1984 to 2005 both because it was a widespread,

unifying concept, and because it sought not extreme or unilateral positions but integration of insights from various perspectives on a spectrum.

Within these basic characteristics, numerous versions of holism emerged to guide their respective organizations. Holistic approaches emerged through organizations working in different contexts and directing their discourse to diverse audiences. This chapter will highlight three of the most influential. World Vision's transformational development approach guided the organization's long-term development work across relatively wide geographical areas. Next, Compassion International used the language and concepts of holism to refine its commitment to a child development model that held firmly to sponsorship of individual children—not just as a fundraising device, but as its strategic centerpiece. Finally, a movement of Christian community development took place in American inner cities and in the urban slums of the global South. This model owed its foundations primarily to Perkins's newly refined principles for community development, as well as Sider's writings on holistic church ministry.

Nevertheless, Evangelical discourse was not by any means limited to or dominated by the holistic model. The chapter's final section analyzes two influential actors within missions to the poor which cannot be placed within the "holistic center." On the left, the discourse of Jim Wallis turned so decisively to promoting progressive political movements grounded in ecumenically defined spiritual values that he left behind earlier emphases such as evangelism and the role of community. On the right, Samaritan's Purse demonstrated once again the persistence of individual charity in a form that seemed to ignore the intense theorizing going on in the Evangelical center.

But before turning to the discourse of the particular organizations noted above, the chapter opens with an exploration of the new tone of hopefulness and potential, which was not limited to any one expression of holism but pervaded the discourse of the entire period.

### **Potential and Hope**

In contrast to earlier approaches which concentrated on the needs or deficits of the poor, Evangelical discourse from this period overwhelmingly emphasized the *potential* of the poor. This shift is almost perfectly epitomized by a two page photo spread in a *Compassion at Work* magazine which chronicled a Compassion International staff members' trip to AIDS-ravaged areas of Ethiopia and Uganda. Her testimony reads like a conversion narrative: "I don't know when it began. Maybe it was the haunting images of Ethiopia's 1984 famine—the bloated bellies and gaunt, vacant stares . . . At some point though—I began to think of Africans as victims and statistics . . . Then I went to Africa . . . I never once met a victim or statistic. Instead, I met vibrant, flesh-and-blood human beings struggling valiantly to make do with what they have. Many of those I met have become my heroes."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most immediately obvious evidence of this change can be seen in the photographs used by the RDOs' fundraising literature. The growth of Evangelical mission to the poor ensured that the representations of the poor were just as kaleidoscopic as the vast array of Evangelicalism's global reach. Poor people from every region of the

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<sup>2</sup> Janet Root, "Hope in the Face of AIDS," *Compassion at Work* Spring 2003, 6.

world (including the United States), every age group, and both genders were well represented in the discourse. Nevertheless, one striking change set them apart from the earlier images of the poor: they were nearly all smiling. After a brief period following the Ethiopian famine in the mid-1980s, it became almost impossible to find images of extreme suffering in “holistic” Evangelical media. Gone were the leprous limbs and the tear-stained countenances. In their place were vibrant, happy faces brimming with joy.<sup>3</sup> In one representative example, the Winter 2003 edition of World Vision’s eponymous periodical contained thirty-four photographs of poor people; twenty-nine of them were smiling broadly, and the rest wore expressions of concentration as they busily worked, played, or studied. Even the way World Vision depicted the dress of the poor had changed. African traditional dresses, Bolivian wool sweaters, elegant South Asian saris—these vibrant colors now jumped off the glossy pages of World Vision’s magazines and the glowing screens of its website, replacing the muted rags worn by the poor in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

Through these smiles Evangelicals highlighted the success of their ministries: former sponsored child Thelma Tan of the Philippines was beaming because she was now an elementary school student in a Christian school<sup>5</sup>; the Sanchez children, from northern Mexico, were skipping and jumping because World Vision had built their widowed

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<sup>3</sup> Multiplying examples, in the 1999 World Vision Christmas ‘Gift Catalog’ entitled “International Gifts of Joy and Hope,” every photograph includes a person smiling broadly. Aside from the text, its tone would be difficult to distinguish from a fashion catalog. Resource in possession of author.

<sup>4</sup> Generally speaking, this change in the way the poor were represented had happened perhaps as much as a decade earlier among most secular organizations and mainline Protestants working among the poor.

<sup>5</sup> *World Vision Magazine*, Summer 2005, 28

mother a new house that could withstand the heavy rains.<sup>6</sup> A smiling photo of sponsored child-turned Ethiopian Olympic champion Addis Gezahegn, medals hanging from her neck, bore the headline, “I felt like such a worthless girl”; but “now I am a role model for women and children in my country.”<sup>7</sup> New sponsors were enticed by the possibility of adding to the happy throng: “Find out how you can help put the sparkle of God’s love in the eyes of a child.”<sup>8</sup>

Although the ubiquitous presentation of the positive character, potential, and agency of the poor was new, it had been present in the past, often according to the formula that *if* a child enters an Evangelical orphanage and converts to Christianity, *then* his or her potential would manifest itself. But here was a striking shift towards presenting entire classes of poor people in a positive light, without mentioning religious affiliation. For example, Compassion president Wes Stafford, who had lived in Haiti for four years, was effusive in his praise of the character of the Haitian poor: “I have never known people with more grace, more strength, or a more tenacious survival instinct . . . these people face many struggles that might totally overpower most westerners, but they hang in there. They are a tremendous illustration of grace under pressure.”<sup>9</sup>

The most fundamental rationale for this shift in discourse was the holistic

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<sup>6</sup> *World Vision Magazine* Autumn 2003, 31.

<sup>7</sup> World Vision advertisement, *Christianity Today* July 18, 1994, 10.

<sup>8</sup> World Vision advertisement insert, *Christianity Today*, August 9 1999. See also World Vision appeal in *World Vision Magazine* Spring 2003, 21 with the headline “How do you put a big smile on a small face?” The response card read “Yes, I want to make a child smile!”

<sup>9</sup> “Histories of Sorrow,” *Compassion Update*, May/June/July 1989, 3.

Evangelicals' aim to represent the poor as responsible agents who were fully capable of improving their lives if given a fair chance. Within a few short years, many Evangelicals transitioned from primarily representing what they were doing for the poor to what the poor were doing for themselves; this trend became more pronounced as the years wore on. The poor were now portrayed as partners, not merely beneficiaries. One participant in a World Vision microfinance program came from a family that had been destitute for generations, but broke through gender stereotypes that prevented her from becoming a carpenter: "In Cuzco, Peru, Maria Lourdes de Ortiz had a hammer, a saw, a square and a ruler. With a loan from World Vision and training in business administration, she built a dream."<sup>10</sup> Note the structure of the final sentence: World Vision was relegated to the dependent clause, and Ms. Ortiz was the subject: "*She* built a dream."

While holistic Evangelicals still showcased the generosity of their donors and sponsors, they now also regularly narrated stories emphasizing the generosity and gifts of the poor—they too were givers who could pass on the blessings of development. For example, World Vision highlighted the story of Margaret Phiri of Zambia, who tripled her farming output during World Vision field trials of a new agricultural method. She was selected as "lead farmer" and charged with "offering help and advice on every conceivable agricultural problem to 300 farmers in her community. Men who weren't thrilled about taking direction from a woman were soon silenced by the runaway success of the methods she promotes."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Dollars and Sense," *World Vision Magazine*, Autumn 2002, 8.

<sup>11</sup> James Addis, "Wonder Trees," *World Vision Today* Spring 2003, 10.

World Vision president Seiple illustrated this same point with his unfamiliar exegesis of the now-familiar Good Samaritan parable: “The parable does not tell of the casual philanthropy of a wealthy businessman, but the sacrificial giving of a poor person . . . who knew he could make a difference personally.<sup>12</sup> In Seiple’s rendition, the Good Samaritan was no longer a well-meaning American who has come to rescue victims from the global South; instead the Samaritan is a poor person from the global South demonstrating true sacrificial compassion.

Jim Wallis went even further—he expected the moral and spiritual leadership in the global quest for justice to come from the poor themselves. He pointed to the Zapatista uprising in Mexico as “a first sign of protest against the world’s system of economic apartheid”; he warned his readers not to forget that the end of apartheid in South Africa began with “the defiant hope of a 14 year old boy” from the townships; and he claimed that during a gang summit following the Los Angeles riots of 1992, the “Bloods and Crips’ proposal for L.A.’s facelift [was] greatly superior to the ideas emanating from the official city rebuilding commission, the White House, or Congress.”<sup>13</sup>

For many in a generation of younger, middle-class Evangelicals moving into low-income urban neighborhoods, their motivation was as much to receive from the poor as to give to them. One wrote that living amidst the poor was “a means of spiritual gain [if]

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Seiple, *One Life at a Time* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), xviii.

<sup>13</sup> Wallis, *Soul of Politics*, 35, 282, 22.

we open ourselves to good news *from* the poor.”<sup>14</sup> Another reported a similar experience: “At first I went on missions trips to ‘take the good news’ to poor people. Then I discovered that they were the ones who brought good news to me.”<sup>15</sup>

The emphasis on potential was at its strongest when it came to holistic Evangelicals’ portrayals of children. Despite their greatly diversified portfolio of engagement with the poor, images of children continued to predominate. In previous periods, presentations of childhood usually represented vulnerability and piteousness and were coupled with calls to protect or rescue the child. Now a child stood for a hopeful future filled with possibility. Nowhere is this shift better illustrated than in the titles of two heavily promoted World Vision television specials from two different eras: “Children of Zero” from 1973 and “Children of Hope” of 2002. Even children affected by AIDs were called “Hope Children” by World Vision.

Often potential was conveyed implicitly in the vibrant physical posture of the children or in the triumphant narratives of formerly disadvantaged sponsored children who had grown up to become successful adults, which were a mainstay in RDO periodicals. At other times children’s potential was an explicit theme. Compassion International defined their whole ministry approach in terms of potential. One typical advertisement succinctly summarized their approach: “Compassion believes in helping individual children reach their full potential through development.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hayes, *Sub-merge*, 119.

<sup>15</sup> Claiborne, *Irresistible Revolution*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Compassion Update*, January/February 1991, 11.



Similarly, World Vision's 2002 Annual Report opened with a cropped close-up photograph of a Latino boy on a blank white page with the caption, "What do you see?" The following page announces, "There's always more to the picture" and here the reader sees the rest of the boy's picture—he is sitting in a classroom, pencil at the ready. Behind him, in 100-point, all caps font, it reads POTENTIAL. The rest of the report hammered away at this message: "Together with our partners and supporters, World Vision sees and walks alongside people in some of the world's worst circumstances. Crippling poverty. Pandemic disease. Entire communities in despair. In the middle of these tragedies, we see people. And in those people, we see God-given potential."<sup>17</sup>

In World Vision's discourse, this optimistic perspective was not merely the power of positive thinking, but a theological imperative: "God blesses us with a glimpse of heaven because we see people as God intended: *in the light of their potential*."<sup>18</sup> In theological terms, one might explicate the shift from the previous two models to the present one in terms of a movement from an emphasis on the consequences of the Fall to a focus on the image of God present in every human being. Wallis echoes these sentiments: "At times I think the truest image of God today is a black inner-city grandmother in the US or a mother of the disappeared in Argentina or the [Nicaraguan] women who wake up early to make tortillas in refugee camps."<sup>19</sup>

The optimistic tone that suffused its portrayals of the poor also characterized the holistic model's communication with the American middle class. Whereas repentance,

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<sup>17</sup> World Vision Annual Report 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Wallis, *Soul of Politics*, 195-6.

sacrifice, and protest had been the watchwords of the structural model, now *hope* became the main theme. The previous two approaches had laid a heavy load at the feet of their comfortable American audience—first, the desperate needs of vulnerable individuals, and next, even more difficult to countenance, an entire world bent low under systematic oppression that was partly Americans’ own doing. This increased awareness of the depths of poverty inculcated a sense of despair and resignation in many Americans, a phenomenon often called “compassion fatigue.”<sup>20</sup>

In this context many agencies attempted to re-establish hope with the message that “you can make a difference.” For example, World Vision drew on the notoriety of wealthy philanthropists like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet to encourage its more modestly endowed readers: “You can do the impossible—make the difference of a lifetime—anyone can be a philanthropist.”<sup>21</sup> Another version of this message took a different tack, explaining that even a young boy could have lasting impact with his paper route money through sponsoring a child: he “discovered a world of need beyond his own comfortable backyard—a world where even a child can help make a lasting difference.”<sup>22</sup> The implication for the reader was clear—if I child can do it, so can you. The same message of hopefulness was translated into a teenage idiom, as this advertisement for a World Vision 30 Hour Famine fundraiser demonstrates: “Tyler Burke survived 57 clothespins

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<sup>20</sup> For a critique of the popular media’s role in causing compassion fatigue in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue : How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999); World Vision began to explicitly combat ‘compassion fatigue’ as early as 1961, but at that time the prescription was “commitment” and “confrontation.” See *World Vision Magazine*, September 1961, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Insert, *World Vision Magazine*, Spring 2005.

<sup>22</sup> World Vision advertisement, *Christianity Today*, October 1992, no page number.

clipped to face. Saved no one. Ali Manzano survived 30 hours without food. Helped save an entire village.”<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, holistic Evangelicals had begun to offer their would-be donors and followers hope for more than just impacting individual lives—they could become part of a movement for sweeping change. Whereas in the 1970s the call was to be part of a faithful remnant, now one could become part of what was gaining momentum and popularity. For this style of discourse, merely sponsoring a child could seem too small—now leaders spoke of ending poverty entirely.

For some, the hopefulness they offered was the result of progress after long-standing commitments to work among the poor. In 1993, after almost thirty years of ministry, Perkins encouraged those who were taking up his model: “Yes, there are still barriers that need to come down and attitudes that need to change. But we have won enough opportunity to begin shaping the future for our children and our community.”<sup>24</sup>

Sider offered a similarly hopeful prognosis: “after decades of fairly hostile marginalization of religious voices, the top levels of the public policy community have begun to warmly welcome and seriously explore the contribution that faith-based agencies can make to overcoming poverty.”<sup>25</sup> He went on to warn Evangelicals that they should get involved immediately, while the environment was still favorable.

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<sup>23</sup> World Vision advertisement, *Christianity Today*, June 2002, no page number (insert).

<sup>24</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Sider, *Just Generosity*, 218.

For others, buoyant optimism was driven by the excitement of joining a new cause, together with considerable naïveté. Flush with exuberance, Rick Warren proclaimed that his P.E.A.C.E. plan would soon make Rwanda the African equivalent of Singapore, an attitude that was clearly taken up by his followers. Tom Wheeler, a public works director in Orange County, “wanted to serve God, and wanted to be part of something big.” So when Warren challenged him to work in Kigali for a year, he agreed, positive that he could produce “sidewalks all around a city where 90% of the people have to walk — that would be huge!” Wheeler’s confidence led him to see Rwanda as a blank slate, on which he was now privileged to write: “I’m really getting in on the ground floor . . . This is like a brand-new country. You can actually make a difference here.”<sup>26</sup>

For most holistically inclined organizations, speaking hopefully about the potential for positive change did not preclude speaking equally forcefully about the need for change. Several holistically inclined organizations in fact theorized about the complexity of poverty with much greater sophistication than the post-World War II Evangelical world had previously seen. The following section considers three of the most prominent versions of Evangelical Holism.

## **Models of Holistic Development**

### Transformational Development

World Vision called its holistic approach “transformational development.” It emerged in the context of a need to integrate under one theoretical framework its relief,

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<sup>26</sup> Rick Hampson, “Americans Finding Purpose in Hopes for Africa’s Future,” *USA Today*, 23 July, 2008, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-21-rwanda\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-21-rwanda_N.htm) (accessed on November 30, 2009).

development, and advocacy efforts, while taking account of its new interpretation of evangelism as demonstration. As early as 1986 at a major meeting of the worldwide partnership, World Vision International president Tom Houston summarized the transition that was taking place: “[We are shifting] from fragmented ministry to holistic ministry. Integration of all that we do, so that we keep in view the whole Gospel for the whole person through the whole church in the whole world as our watchword and battle cry. We are committed to making Jesus known by word and seed and sign, all together, though not always in the same order . . . We reject the dichotomy that separates evangelism from social responsibility.”<sup>27</sup>

Houston’s call for greater holism prompted earnest theoretical reflection throughout the World Vision partnership. Besides internal documents, their theorizing discourse was presented in the form of conference presentations, position papers addressed to the NGO community,<sup>28</sup> and in *Together*, a new periodical addressed to other development practitioners. As World Vision professionalized, many among its staff were qualified to write at a high level due to their academic background and field experience, and they contributed to the organization’s sharpening theoretical stance. Yet for the purposes of this brief overview, Vice President for International Program Strategy Bryant Myers’ *Walking with the Poor* (1999) will serve as a primary reference in the analysis that follows. This book, which was intended for field practitioners, seminary students,

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<sup>27</sup> World Vision International Council Minutes, 1986, 4, Archives of World Vision International, Monrovia, California.

<sup>28</sup> For example see *Here We Stand: World Vision and Child Rights*, accessed at [http://www.worldvision.com.au/Libraries/3\\_3\\_1\\_Children\\_PDF\\_reports/Here\\_We\\_Stand\\_-\\_World\\_Vision\\_and\\_Child\\_Rights.sflb.ashx](http://www.worldvision.com.au/Libraries/3_3_1_Children_PDF_reports/Here_We_Stand_-_World_Vision_and_Child_Rights.sflb.ashx)

and undergraduate courses, comprehensively encapsulated the theory which guided World Vision's practice during this period. It could plausibly be regarded as the most ambitious, sophisticated rendering of a holistic Evangelical development approach. Since it gave expression to many of the trends that influenced holistically-minded Evangelical RDOs, it will receive extended consideration.<sup>29</sup>

*Walking with the Poor* began in good evangelical form with an excursus on the holism of the biblical story. Drawing on Walter Wink's writing about structural evil caused by spiritual forces, Myers reminded his audience that the Fall manifested itself not just in individual sin, but in communities, nations, cultures, and economic systems. According to Myers, Jesus, as the center of God's story, came to bring God's Kingdom to bear at every level affected by the sin. He accomplished redemption not only through his cross and resurrection, but also through his life of solidarity with the poor and works of power among them—and passed on a similar holistic ministry to the church, who was called to take up its place in God's story of transformation. The rest of the book detailed World Vision's and other RDO's place in this larger calling.

Bryant next considered poverty and the poor themselves. His interpretation of poverty's causes was heavily indebted to development theorists David Korten, John Friedman, and Robert Chambers, all of whom stressed poverty's complex, structural nature involving political power, corporate economy, civil society, geography, and cultural matrices. In conjunction with his World Vision colleague Jayakumar Christian,

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<sup>29</sup> *Walking with the Poor* was published by the progressive Catholic press Orbis, an indication of Myers's (and World Vision's) increased ecumenicity. By 2007 it had gone through thirteen printings.

Myers deepened this analysis by exposing the root cause of poverty to be broken relationships with God, which then manifested in “relationships that do not work”<sup>30</sup> on personal, social, and structural levels, resulting in a lack of freedom to grow and a lack of access to social power. These broken relationships are sustained by cosmic evil forces that reify social oppression through culturally-entrenched lies that things must always be so. For the poor, each aspect of brokenness mutually reinforces the others, culminating in “entanglement” that can trap families in poverty for generations.

Myers then laid out his vision of “transformational development” which attempted to engage poverty in all of its complexity detailed above. For Bryant, transformational development was nothing less than the kingdom of God established amidst individuals and communities, bringing with it healed relationships between the poor and God, their own bodies, their self-identities, their societies, their worldview, and the creation around them.<sup>31</sup> According to Bryant, effective transformational development must work at both the personal, local, and global levels.<sup>32</sup> Again, Bryant drew heavily on Korten, Friedman, and Chambers, all of whom consulted for World Vision. From Korten’s “people-centered development” he emphasized that development should be “consistent with [the poor’s] own aspirations” through promoting their own pre-existing movements for justice.<sup>33</sup> From Friedman, he demonstrated that an essential part of

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<sup>30</sup> Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 86.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>32</sup> 124 Bryant borrowed the concept of ‘transformation’ from Wayne Bragg’s seminal paper delivered at the Wheaton ’83—see 13-14, 95 in *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

transformation includes “expanding access to social power” for the marginalized—work which inevitably draws the practitioner into political advocacy.<sup>34</sup> Finally, he appropriated from Chambers an optimistic view that development can and should serve to improve the poor’s intrinsic capabilities in a context of sustainable equity.

Myers did not uncritically incorporate the entirety of these theorists’ stances—he worried especially about their shared Western liberal worldview that believes “there is enough good in people so that human political processes can correct themselves if we work at it long enough.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, much of World Vision’s increasingly optimistic view of the poor’s capabilities can be traced to the influence of the wider development community through theorists such as those appropriated by Myers.

Myers went on to show how the transformational development model worked in World Vision’s practice. First, in order to work at a high enough level to truly implement their holistic approach, it shifted their strategic focus beyond individuals, families, or villages to small regions. These projects, now called Area Development Projects (ADPs), enabled World Vision to consider the interlocking various political, social, technical, and spiritual systems that entangled the poor. World Vision’s increased respect for the capabilities of the poor was manifest in their first step of engagement with a project: using various methods drawn from the wider development community such as Appreciative Inquiry or Participatory Learning and Action, staff would *listen* to the community. They attempted to respect its indigenous knowledge and acknowledge that

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 102 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 106.



they already knew how to survive.<sup>36</sup> Myers then described World Vision's ongoing relationship with the community as one of *mutual learning* and *mutual transformation*, recognizing that Western development professionals had much to learn from the poor as well. The agency's involvement would commence at whatever entry point determined by the community's participation.

In 1999, when this book was released, the praxis described above was standard issue for the vast majority of development NGOs, at least in theory. Although the transformational development model was couched in terms of a biblical framework, and Myers's evangelical theology caused him to supplement and "tweak" the theoreticians he was reading, the overall impression was that of World Vision striving to adopt the same "best practices" as other development NGOs.

Therefore, *Walking with the Poor* concludes with a reflection on the role of evangelism, an essential feature of World Vision's evangelical identity. Myers employed his holistic mindset to make two distinctive points. First, he claimed that the entire debate about "evangelism" and "social concern" rested on a false dichotomy perpetrated by Enlightenment epistemology. Following Fuller Seminary missiologist Paul Heibert and the thinking of the Wheaton '83 conference, Myers concluded that the modern division between "natural" and "supernatural" was artificial, and that pre-modern beliefs about the spiritual being constantly intertwined with the natural were closer to the biblical

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 141ff. In another article, Myers suggested that such techniques need to be supplemented with questions concerning the religious worldview and the perceived 'spiritual geography' of a village. See Bryant Myers, "What Makes Development Christian? Recovering from the Impact of Modernity," *Missiology* 26, no. 2 (1998).

worldview.<sup>37</sup> If evangelism could not be consigned only to the “supernatural” and social action to the “natural,” then both were to be seen as aspects of the integrated whole that was transformational development.

Second, Myers broadened his definition of evangelism to include all Christian witness, asserting that it took place not only through evangelistic crusades, but through “life, deed, word, and sign.”<sup>38</sup> Myers pointed out that “there is no such thing as not witnessing. Christian development promoters are witnessing all the time. The only question is to whom or to what?”<sup>39</sup> Thus, digging a well could become a demonstration or embodiment of the gospel and thus “evangelistic.” Myers was attempting to show one could not discern whether authentic evangelism was present simply by asking whether or not an “altar call” had been given.

As Myers and others refined the transformational development model, the organization was faced with communicating its emerging holism to potential and actual donors.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the period, the organization learned to carefully craft its discourse in order to educate its clientele about transformational development, while also retaining

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<sup>37</sup> This made Myers sympathetic to many aspects of post-modernity as well. See again *Ibid.*, 144-153.

<sup>38</sup> Irvine, 277.

<sup>39</sup> Myers, *Walking With the Poor*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> The organization’s discourse attempted to express their wide range of (integrated) concerns to a more diverse audience than ever before. Guided by numerous marketing studies, World Vision produced material that they hoped would reach every age and demographic segment of the population. Just as it had in its 1970s-era television shows, the agency shifted its tone depending on its audience—thus, advertisements in secular magazines, books aimed at evangelicals, magazines sent to longtime donors, material produced for churches, media interviews for the national press, and reports directed at UN agencies all represented the organization’s work differently. Nevertheless, World Vision’s core constituency remained Evangelicals first and foremost, followed by a significant minority of Catholics, mainline Protestants, and “golden rule” Christians (to use Nancy Ammerman’s term).

donors and generating new contributions. Several strategies were evident. Its most immediate task was to deal with the clash between transformational development and World Vision's primary marketing model of child sponsorship, which required frequent appeals to "help one child." World Vision had to walk the line between the promise that sponsorship formed an intimate link between the donor, and the reality that the child was merely one representative of an area-wide development project in which everyone in his community would benefit. Therefore, the agency frequently used emotionally "warm" stories about individuals or sponsored children as a "hook" to draw the reader into a discussion of more complex issues.

For example, the short article "How Sponsorship Freed Murugamma" provides an account of a sixteen-year old South Asian girl who had been freed from child slavery. Through a World Vision sewing class (complete with Bible study and prayer), Murugamma's life was transformed so that "with marketable skills she might also marry at a more mature age, perhaps in her 20s, instead of becoming a teen bride."<sup>41</sup> Once the emotional impact of the story about a particular individual had been made, the article explained that the sewing class has been attended by 530 local women as part of an ongoing, community-wide effort to provide women with more vocational choices. At the conclusion of the article, a small offset box in a different font with the headline "WHAT YOU CAN DO" offered readers an opportunity to advocate for justice through political action. It read: "Some of us could be, unwittingly, supporting child labor by purchasing clothes imported from Bangladeshi sweatshops . . . if child labor concerns you, urge your

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<sup>41</sup> Katherine Kam and Jane Sutton, "Buying Back Childhood," *Childlife*, Spring 1994, 4.

senator or congressional representative to support the Child Labor Deterrence Act of 1993.”<sup>42</sup> In this article, Muragama’s story served as a prism which separated out the complex interrelated factors that had kept her in slavery, including gender discrimination, lack of vocational training, and cultural norms. It also demonstrated World Vision’s holistic response that engaged all of those factors at once, and invited the reader not just to donate money, but to act politically. The article also illustrates World Vision’s usage of child sponsorship as an “entry level” involvement, with invitations to advocate for justice as a later stage.

Even in advertisements seeking new donors, after drawing the reader to the smiling face of one prominently placed child, the readers were immediately called to think more broadly: “your sponsorship gifts help your child’s family and community become self-reliant.”<sup>43</sup> If a potential donor sought to sponsor a Hope Child, they would be greeted by a particular child like Mutari of Kenya, but also reminded that he is living in a *community* “severely affected by the HIV and AIDS crisis and that “the disease has impacted the entire social structure.”<sup>44</sup> Conversely, when World Vision described successes gained through their Area Development Programs, they were careful to show the impact on particular individuals in the community. Ever conscious of the importance of the individual in donor’s minds, World Vision’s editors carefully balanced close-up

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>43</sup> World Vision advertisement, *Christianity Today*, 10 February, 1992, no page number.

<sup>44</sup> World Vision International, [http://donate.worldvision.org/OA\\_HTML/xxwv2ibeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=10322](http://donate.worldvision.org/OA_HTML/xxwv2ibeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=10322) (accessed in November 2005).

photographs of individual faces with action shots showing people in their social and geographical context.

World Vision also expanded the sponsorship model itself as a means to broaden donors' vision. In 2003, the agency introduced a new "Family Sponsorship" program, in which donors could sponsor an entire family (at a slightly higher cost). This approach permitted the agency to more easily touch on the wider social dynamics of poverty, especially the vital role of the mother. Luci Swindoll, author and wife of well known pastor Chuck Swindoll, introduced readers to the family she sponsored, a family that, after the desertion of its father and husband, was headed by "Abena, a cheerful, gentle woman with meager income and a huge heart, a woman with enough stubborn love to hang on when every chip was not only down, but buried in the dirt of an inescapable lifestyle."<sup>45</sup> Through education and daycare provided by World Vision, Abena was able to drastically improve the prospects for her children.

In order to market its transformational development model to a public shaped by consumerism, World Vision offered a "smorgasboard" approach that briefly laid out its wide range of poverty interventions, but then invited the donors to pick out the one that most interested them. The most common vehicle for this method was the Gift Catalog, in which for various "prices," readers could "buy" such interventions as "A Dairy Goat for a Child-Headed Household in Rwanda, Drill a Well for a Village in Senegal, Build an Adobe Block Home in Honduras, Three Bibles for Christians in Mozambique,"<sup>46</sup> Survival

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<sup>45</sup> Lucy Swindoll, "Abena the Great," *World Vision Magazine*, Winter 2003, 30.

<sup>46</sup> In this context Bibles were presented as a scarce commodity prized by the local population.

Pack for a Resettling Kosovar Family, HarvestPaks to Help Two Families Grow Their Own Food, Vitamin A Capsules for 227 Children in the Philippines, Motorcycle Ambulance in Cambodia, Stock a Medicine Chest at a Rural Health Clinic in Peru, Teach a Woman in Mali to Read and Write, Microenterprise Loan and Business Training for One Family in Peru” and many more. As readers “shopped,” they were effectively exposed to the various aspects of transformational development, but were not overwhelmed, since they were only being invited to support one type of intervention.<sup>47</sup>

Even in pieces devoted to particular interventions, readers were always reminded that they were just one facet in World Vision’s wider holistic approach. In 2004 World Vision concluded an online profile of its microenterprise program with the following words from president Rich Stearns: “Individuals and whole communities are better able to escape grinding poverty when microfinance is included in a well-conceived, holistic development strategy.”<sup>48</sup>

Finally, World Vision attempted to convey its views on evangelism as a demonstration of the gospel to Evangelical readers who held more traditional stances of evangelism as proclamation. One representative advertisement in *Christianity Today* opened with the headline: “Hunger. Pain. Oppression. Hopelessness. Now let’s talk about his physical needs.” The text continued, in part: “When people don’t water their

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<sup>47</sup> Another example of the “smorgasboard” approach was a month long family devotional introducing families to every aspect of holistic development with case studies of families from the global South, what World Vision is doing, how donors’ gifts helped, along with Bible verses and prayer points. Electronic copy of devotional in author’s possession. No date, after 2000.

<sup>48</sup> Vision Fund (a World Vision subsidiary, “Our Holistic Partnership,” <http://visionfundinternational.org/VisionFund/VisionFundweb.nsf/maindocs/6AF8F9A0B8E21F11852573B40059076F?opendocument> (Accessed on November 30, 2009).

crops because they expect local spirits to bring rain, hunger is an echo of spiritual poverty. So it's never just about irrigating fields, but allowing Christ's love to irrigate hearts . . . faith is love in action . . . action that relieves present suffering and helps nurture people's eternal relationship with God."<sup>49</sup> Traditional religious beliefs were framed not as "heathen" or "primitive" but as a manifestation of spiritual poverty that resulted in material poverty. World Vision's development intervention therefore was as much spiritual as material—it irrigated "hearts" as well as fields. Evangelism was here accomplished through faith as "love in action"<sup>50</sup>—the gospel was demonstrated, rather than preached. Finally, this style of evangelism demanded not sudden conversion, but presented people's spiritual growth as a gradual process that was to be "nurtured."

### Holistic Child Development

Compassion International's "child development" version of holism provided a striking counterpoint to World Vision's expansive approach. Compassion used the language of holism to articulate a more sophisticated, multi-faceted approach to ministry to children. Guided by executive program director Don Miller and president Wes Stafford, who graduated from the same Michigan State PhD program in Nonformal Education in Third World Settings, Compassion became aware of the complex, intertwined nature of poverty and the necessity of a holistic approach to engage it. Nevertheless, it remained steadfastly and self-consciously committed to a program

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<sup>49</sup> World Vision advertisement, *Christianity Today* March 3, 1997, 13.

<sup>50</sup> An echo of James 2:17, "Faith without works is dead."

strategy of developing individual children, as opposed to broader-based work.

Compassion was very straightforward in explaining its holistic theory to its donors, since it did not experience the same tension between fundraising and program execution that World Vision had.

In one magazine issue devoted to explaining *What Compassion Believes*, Miller provided Compassion's "thesis statement" for holistic child development: "Most of the time when people talk about development, they're talking about activities like community development or water projects or agricultural projects. When we talk about development at Compassion, we're thinking of results—improvements in one child's life . . . development occurs within individuals. But individuals interact with their social and physical environment. Human development must address conditions and relationships individuals face within their family, church, and community . . . development occurs holistically."<sup>51</sup> Miller assured donors that he understands other prevalent models of development, but seeks to show how Compassion's is distinctive. He appeals to deep-seated Evangelical beliefs that ultimate societal change must happen "within individuals." Yet he presents each individual as the locus within which all the complexities of poverty inhere, as individuals are shaped by their environment. Nevertheless, for Compassion, development happens not through modifying the environment, but by designing a program that will holistically address all the complex impacts of the environment on individual children.

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<sup>51</sup> Don Miller, "What Compassion Believes," *Compassion Update*, January/February 1991, 5.



Compassion also explained its holistic approach to donors by contrasting it with Compassion's own approach in the past. In one especially telling graph, the organization described its traditional model as "Child Care," distinguished by "material help in the present, focus on urgent needs, "doing *for* the child," and dealing with symptoms." "Child care" viewed children as "helpless, simple, sick, compliant." Indeed, this small graph succinctly provided an excellent summary of the individual charity model this study has been analyzing. It then compared this older approach with "Child Development," characterized as "doing *with* the child, dealing with root causes, and providing ongoing opportunities to learn; its view of the child is "teachable, motivated, and responsible."<sup>52</sup> Here is a holistic model emphasizing the potential of the child to take responsibility for personal growth as he or she gradually confronts the deep, root causes of her poverty in partnership with Compassion.

Not content to show how Compassion was different from more broad-based approaches, Stafford explicitly argued that its approach was better than the others: "Some development agencies consider child development too narrow an approach for meeting a poor family's needs. Compassion agrees that some problems affecting children are best addressed at a broader level...but we have a greater impact on an individual and the family rather than letting the help trickle down through community development. Christ has compassion on the masses, but he helped them one at a time."<sup>53</sup> Stafford framed community-based approaches such as World Vision's in Reaganesque,

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<sup>52</sup> "Your Investment in Child Development," *Compassion Magazine*, Fall/Winter 1995, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Miller, "What Compassion Believes," 3.

*laissez-faire* economics terms, claiming that such programs did not “trickle down” to children in the same way that Compassion’s careful focus on individuals did. He also subtly implied that Compassion’s approach was more Christlike, since it more closely approximated Jesus’ own ministry.

Nevertheless, Compassion did not make the larger claim that its holistic model was the path to ending global poverty. (At times World Vision seemed to imply that if they could simply “scale up” enough ADPs in the world, poverty would be substantially eliminated). Instead, Compassion seemed to be content to follow its calling to pluck out individuals from the complex world of poverty, and make them shining examples of how recovery could be possible. In the words of president Wally Erickson “we have chosen to invest in children because they are our future. We have chosen to minister to them one by one because we are constantly reminded that we may not change the whole world, but we can change the world for one child.”<sup>54</sup>

Central to Compassion’s holism was its emphasis on the emotional aspects of child development. Whereas World Vision attempted to show the complex technological and spiritual aspects of transformational development, Compassion took a more personal, psychological approach. According to Stafford, “The presence of Compassion sponsors in children’s lives strategically attacks the very root of poverty by giving children a reason for hope. They begin to think ‘if they believe in me—value me—why should I give up? I matter to them, and to God, I have worth.’”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “One Tough Question,” *Compassion Magazine*, September/October 1992, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Wesley K. Stafford, “25 Years with Compassion,” *Compassion at Work*, Fall 2002, 2.

Consequently, Compassion constantly encouraged their sponsors to write to “their” children. Although there was still an edge of paternalism present, their discourse tended to portray sponsors’ emotional support more in terms of a life coach or mentor-figure. For example: “Compassion is not a relief agency. It is a Christian child development ministry, and development takes time. By their actions, sponsors say I will enter into a vulnerable relationship with someone in need, and will commit myself to give to them regularly.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the benefits that would accrue to sponsors and their families were not the sentimental, paternalistic emotional satisfactions of years past, but of responsible members of the Global Body of Christ. The following quote well illustrates this point: “Dedicated parents have discovered that becoming involved in Compassion not only blesses their sponsored child, but their own children as well. They tell us that their sons and daughters are becoming compassionate, caring global Christians through Compassion.”<sup>57</sup>

Next, Compassion’s model retained an important place for local churches. The agency again criticized other organizations like World Vision, whose broader approach made local churches only one stakeholder at the larger table of the Area Development Project: “partnering with churches is one of the distinctives of Compassion. Other agencies, even Christian agencies, are moving away from this important channel for ministry to God’s people.”<sup>58</sup> In contrast, Compassion argued that by making local

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<sup>56</sup> Miller, “What Compassion Believes,” 6.

<sup>57</sup> Wesley K Stafford, “25 Years with Compassion,” 2.

<sup>58</sup> “Building the Church Through its Children, *Compassion Magazine*, January/February 1994, 6.

churches the focus of their programs, they equipped the local church through their training, eliminated excess administrative costs, supported the churches through providing new members, and retained an ecclesiology that respected the place of the congregation.

Compassion further viewed its model as a critical plank in the conversion of the world. Agency leaders frequently repeated the following statistics: “Children are a critical group in the Great Commission strategy . . . 85% of the people who make a decision for Christ do so between the ages of 4 and 14, and nearly half the world’s population is under 15 years of age.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, the organization emphasized that its inclusion of Bible teaching and church attendance was merely part of holistically developing the whole child—spiritual aspects included. Conversion was not mandatory or assumed, but all sponsored children were required to receive religious instruction.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, like World Vision, Compassion used the individual stories of their sponsored children as a way of providing a window into the complex world of poverty in the Global South for American donors. This examination of Compassion’s model closes with a case study of how Compassion linked gender discrimination as an impoverishing force with the stories of sponsored children.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Wesley Stafford, “Making Children Matter in the Great Commission Strategy,” *Compassion Magazine*, Fall 1994, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Kamon Sampson, “A Compassionate Milestone,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 28 June, 2003, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4191/is\\_20030628/ai\\_n10022540/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4191/is_20030628/ai_n10022540/) (accessed November 30, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Stories of sponsored children succeeded so well for Evangelical RDOs partly because of the deep, historically grounded importance of testimonies and “bearing witness” within the tradition.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Compassion regularly dedicated issues of their periodical to explaining how their programs upheld the dignity of women. As has already been made clear, development work in this period was keenly aware of the central role of women's education and vocational empowerment through microenterprise loans for poverty alleviation. Compassion claimed that its holistic approach effectively improved the status of women and girls. Their approach typically included three steps. First, at the broadest level, in order to raise awareness for their readers, Compassion articles cited reams of statistics and studies on gender bias. Next, they provided Scriptural responses to the issue, as the following excerpts illustrate: "Scripture explodes with the wrath of a God who deplores the oppression of the poor and needy. The abuses against this vulnerable population, the daughters of the poor, require God's people to intervene . . . Jesus affirms women, as with Mary Magdalene and the woman subject to bleeding."<sup>62</sup>

But the key point was to show that sponsored Compassion girls had great potential to escape the worst effects of gender discrimination, since "learning opportunities are a fundamental benefit afforded to every girl registered for sponsorship . . . Christian education, which emphasizes a Heavenly Father who loves girls and boys equally, is especially valuable in helping girls see their value and worth."<sup>63</sup> Compassion claimed that conversion would have powerful holistic effects since "As more families accept Christ, their homes will become more loving and stable. Women will be

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<sup>62</sup> Wallace Erickson, "Reclaiming Women's Dignity," *Compassion Update*, March/April 1991, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Janet Root, "Reclaiming the Daughters of the Poor," *Compassion at Work*, Winter 2001, 7.

empowered to become all they can be, and children will be the benefactors.”<sup>64</sup> Often stories would add drama, as with the account of a fifteen-year old Indian girl who refused her father’s arranged marriage so she could continue her education. The father kicked her, declaring “You’re just another mouth to feed!” but later relented after the intervention of Compassion staff.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, sponsors were educated as to how their letters could more effectively empower the girls they sponsored. In a sidebar entitled “What more can you do?” sponsors were advised: “In your correspondence to your girl: encouraging words that affirm her intrinsic worth as a human being, photos and stories of educated, successful young women in present day society. If you have a daughter, share her dreams about the future.”<sup>66</sup>

In summary, Compassion International’s holistic model of child development illustrated that it was possible to retain the individualism of the individual charity model, while taking on a great deal of the worldview that characterized other holistic approaches.

### Holistic Christian Community Development

The “Christian community development” (CCD) approach to Evangelical holism was an outgrowth of John Perkins’s ministry in rural Mississippi through Voice of Cavalry. With his publication of *With Justice for All* in 1982, Perkins translated his personal narrative into a set of memorable principles that could provide a blueprint for

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<sup>64</sup> Erickson, “Reclaiming Women’s Dignity.”

<sup>65</sup> Root, “Reclaiming the Daughters of the Poor,” 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Compassion at Work*, Winter 2001, 9

others wishing to emulate him. As the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) expanded, he and others in the movement refined his approach to account for the urban setting of many ministries (including Perkins's own new efforts in Southern California); as the period came to a close, other new missions agencies extended the model to urban slums in the developing world.

Part of the reason for CCD's effectiveness was its ability to encapsulate its understanding of the "wholistic gospel"<sup>67</sup> into three alliterative words (just like a typical Evangelical sermon): relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution. For many CCD practitioners, these principles were not merely a model, but were a biblical imperative for ministry to the poor. According to one member of the CCDA, "these three Rs are not man-made principles. We must agree that they are rather man-made labels for clear biblical principles. Unless we can find them grounded in the Bible, they should rightly be dismissed by serious Christians as fine social theory but not very good theology."<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Perkins himself was adamant that CCD was developed through a combination of empirical and biblical reflection—no "secular" or "academic" influences contributed. In Perkins's words, "CCD is not a concept that was developed in a classroom, nor formulated by people foreign to the poor community. These are practical biblical principles evolved from years of living and working with the poor."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Phil Reed, "Toward a Theology of Christian Community Development," in Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 17.

Perkins's first R was relocation, by which he meant that those who were to engage in ministry to the poor must move into their disadvantaged communities in order to share their lives as neighbors alongside them. He called both suburban, educated whites, as well as middle class blacks to this decisive step. For CCD practitioners, relocation was the non-negotiable basis of the model, first of all because it was viewed as a scriptural mandate: "Relocation is a biblically based principle. Where we live frequently reflects our economic desires rather than God's will."<sup>70</sup> CCD practitioners grounded their emphasis on relocation in the example of Jesus, sometimes calling it "incarnational ministry," which implied that in relocating from the suburbs to an urban slum, one was imitating Christ's incarnation. Perkins put it directly: "Jesus relocated. He became one of us. He didn't commute back and forth to heaven."<sup>71</sup> John Hayes, founder of InnerChange, which followed CCD principles, echoed Perkins: "Why would God choose to be born among a defeated people in a backwoods town under a shadow of dishonor through a dirt-poor, unwed teenager? Solidarity, that's why . . . God is not a voyeur. He wants to be involved."<sup>72</sup> The implication was clear: if God could not minister to humanity from a distance, neither could those who wanted to carry out missions to the poor. CCD practitioners frequently spoke of relocation in almost sacramental terms. Upon moving into a multiethnic inner-city neighborhood in Southern California, Hayes testified: "I prayed as I walked . . . The night was less fearful than

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<sup>70</sup> Bob Lupton, "Relocation," in Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 104.

<sup>71</sup> Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Bessenecker, *New Friars*, 60.



sacred. I remember an impulse to take off my shoes because the ground felt so holy . . . in approaching every new poor community, we step onto holy ground.”<sup>73</sup>

Aside from theological reasons, Perkins saw relocation as essential because he had seen it work. Underlying the entire CCD model was the idea that personal relationships were the key to effective ministry, and that impersonal engagement was often not only ineffective but harmful. As Perkins surveyed African-Americans on the bottom of the economic ladder, he saw a people who had first been victimized by slavery and Jim Crow, and then eviscerated by the charity schemes of well-meaning whites. Perkins was especially unsparing in his criticism of the welfare system.<sup>74</sup> He claimed that “AFDC had helped to forestall and break up more black families than anything since slavery’s auction blocks.”<sup>75</sup> Perkins argued that government intervention had “retarded and dehumanized”<sup>76</sup> African Americans and that it “destroys initiative and drive” by “making it unprofitable to work.”<sup>77</sup> Moreover, welfare provided perverse incentives to “have more kids, to live together without getting married, and to lie to qualify for food stamps.”<sup>78</sup> According to Perkins, the core reason for welfare’s failure was its design by outside experts who did not personally understand the people or their life situations. This

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<sup>73</sup> Hayes, *Sub-merge*, 173.

<sup>74</sup> But he wasn’t against all government help. Perkins promoted Headstart and government programs that encouraged home ownership, for example.

<sup>75</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 9.

<sup>76</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 90.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-60.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

was inevitable, since even “our best attempts to reach people from the outside will patronize them.”<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, those who moved into the community would understand it because they would experience the travails of the community for themselves. Perkins was fond of saying that when he moved back to poor rural Mississippi, “I was not a ‘have’ giving handouts to ‘have nots’ . . . we lived among the people, we knew their needs, we felt their needs—in fact, we shared their needs.”<sup>80</sup> Relocation enabled those who ministered to the poor to understand the needs of a neighborhood from the inside, rather than imposing outside solutions to problems that were perhaps not central to the experiences of the poor.

Besides the insight into the community that living there entailed, CCDA practitioners frequently stressed that relationships themselves were the foundation for any programs that might later emerge, and assumed that authentic relationships were highly improbable without living in physical proximity. According to Hayes, “Poverty, we know about. It’s poor people we do not know; but it’s *knowing* poor people that enables substantive change and authentic empowerment to take place.”<sup>81</sup> Another young “incarnational minister” encouraged would-be recruits to “enter into the ministry of sitting around . . . releasing ourselves from the compulsion to *do* in order to take to take

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 60-1. Perkins’s emphasis on relocation was in fact a profound critique of most of the NGOs profiled in this study, since they relied almost universally on professionals who lived outside of poor neighborhoods. The most extreme example was that of Samaritan’s Purse, whose representatives normally only encountered the poor in the context of a one-time mass gift delivery.

<sup>81</sup> Hayes, *Sub-merge*, 71.

time to *be*.”<sup>82</sup> Even after the Lawndale community had developed an impressive array of projects that reached more than a thousand people, Gordon stressed, “despite the many outreach ministries of Lawndale Community Church, none of them are more important than spending time with someone on a street corner, to pray, listen, or perhaps offer an encouraging word.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, many CCD practitioners felt that non-residential models were doomed to ineffectiveness, for “church leaders and missionaries lose touch when their realities differ greatly from the people they serve.”<sup>84</sup>

Most important, the relationships born of relocation enabled CCD practitioners to raise up leaders from within those communities. Perkins stressed that the core problem of the urban ghetto was lack of social capital, not financial capital. He blamed white flight and the upward mobility of newly middle class blacks for creating dangerous vacuums in which “the moral and spiritual restraint provided by the leadership of the middle class was no longer present.”<sup>85</sup> Bob Lupton, a CCD practitioner in Atlanta, echoed Perkins: “It’s not hard to create a ghetto. Just remove the capable neighbors. To produce a substandard school system, withdraw the students of achieving parents. To create a culture of chronically dependent people, merely extract the upwardly mobile role models from the community.”<sup>86</sup> In such an environment, relocaters could re-inject vital social, spiritual, and financial capital into neighborhoods that lacked stability. The crux

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<sup>82</sup> Bessenecker, *New Friars*, 90.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon, *Real Hope*, 170.

<sup>84</sup> Bessenecker, *New Friars*, 125.

<sup>85</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 9.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 72.

of the model was whether emergent “indigenous” leadership would stay in their neighborhood, adding their newfound social capital, or whether they would simply join the middle class exodus themselves.

Perkins’s second R, reconciliation, was also born out of his personal experience. By his own admission, his move to Mississippi was initially motivated exclusively by a concern for oppressed blacks of his childhood. When it came to relationships with whites, “what I really wanted in the sixties was for the white man to leave us alone, to let us be.”<sup>87</sup> However, Perkins’s horrific experience of police brutality made him aware of the poverty of white racists as well: “For the first time I saw what hate had done to those people . . . The only way they knew how to find a sense of worth was by beating us. Their racism made them feel like ‘somebody.’ When I saw that I just couldn’t hate back. I could only pity them . . . I came out alive –and with a new call. My call to preach the gospel now extended to whites. That night in the Brandon jail I had for the first time seen how the white man was a victim of his own racism.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Perkins’s teaching on racial reconciliation, already strong in the 1970s, became the second R of the CCD model. Perkins touted racial reconciliation an indispensable part of justice for the poor: “True justice could only come as people’s hearts were made right with God and God’s love motivated them to be reconciled to each other.”<sup>89</sup> While Perkins’s emphasis on personal relationship was a traditional Evangelical hallmark, he went beyond the

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<sup>87</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 102.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

individualism that usually implied by stressing the importance of Christian community as a model of wholeness that could bring restoration to poor neighborhoods

If Christian groups reflected the hatred and alienation between races in the larger society, their influence was crippled by injustice from the start. Perkins constantly exhorted, “We must begin by being a reconciled fellowship, by being the body of Christ. We must model the kind of relationships into which we want to invite others.”<sup>90</sup>

Reconciliation was important not merely because whites had resources needed by poor blacks; Perkins viewed reconciliation as essential to whites’ escape from the impoverishing stains of racism as well. Through the Spirit, a reconciled community that included both races “could move whites beyond guilt-motivated patronization to responsible partnership with blacks in working for justice.”<sup>91</sup>

While the model of a reconciled community included sharing the entirety of daily experience, “living, working, and worshipping together,”<sup>92</sup> Perkins especially emphasized serving together on behalf of poor neighborhoods’ needs as essential for achieving reconciliation: He poignantly illustrated this point by recounting Voice of Cavalry’s opening of a new medical clinic. They had purchased a dilapidated local facility that had always been segregated, and when his integrated team set to work on it, a powerful moment of reconciliation was the result: “When we remodeled the building, it was a real joy to go into that waiting room with hammers and crowbars and literally tear down the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>92</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 15.

dividing wall between blacks and whites. That simple act dramatically proclaimed the victory of reconciliation that Jesus Christ won almost two thousand years ago: ‘for he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.’”<sup>93</sup>

As should be clear from the above discussion, by redistribution, the third “R,” Perkins did not simply mean charitable cash transfers to the poor. He stressed that financial giving by itself was incomplete: “if you took all the money from the rich and gave it to the poor, the rich would have it back within a few days . . . because the poor would spend all their money on . . . empty symbols of ‘success’.”<sup>94</sup> Even worse, charity was dangerous because it created in the giver a “sense of satisfaction that takes away any motivation to seek more creative long-range development strategies . . . undisciplined giving can be just as destructive as the poverty it was meant to alleviate.”<sup>95</sup>

In Perkins’s view, generations of oppression had created a culture of dependency and had crushed creativity and initiative. Thus, what Perkins most wanted the middle class to redistribute was not just its capital, but its ability to generate capital: “The poor need . . . basic education . . . motivation . . . vocational and management skills . . . To achieve real redistribution, real economic justice, we must redistribute the means of production.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 137.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>95</sup> Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 23, 24.

<sup>96</sup> Perkins, *With Justice for All*, 155.

According to Perkins's model, relocation and redistribution were closely entwined, since middle class believers who had relocated, racially reconciled, and bonded relationally with the poor were just the ones who could pass on their social capital: "*There is no redistribution without relocation . . . justice cannot be achieved long-distance . . . Our redistribution must involve us—our time, our energy, our gifts, and our skills.*"<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, Perkins urged relocaters not to enter with a pre-set program agenda but to allow ministries to emerge in which the poor become empowered through learning leadership and skills. The ultimate goal was for the people's own development to become fully "theirs." Perkins put the difference between charity and empowerment in straightforward terms: "Don't provide services *for* the people; develop community based responses to their needs *with* them."<sup>98</sup> Perkins combined a strong belief in the destructiveness of a culture of poverty with an equally strong sense that the ghetto retained the potential to find solutions from within.

CCD theorists taught that if these principles for redistribution were followed, then effective financial giving would also fall into place: "If we are sharing ourselves, sharing our money will follow naturally . . . only after people are redistributed can we employ money in ways that produce development rather than dependency."<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, relocaters could serve as a bridge between the genuine, self-defined needs of the community and their home suburban churches, thereby helping them to redistribute in an

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 154, 179.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 179, 154.

empowering fashion: “Churches which respond most compassionately to the needy are those which have sent out from their own congregations people to live and walk and eat and breathe among the poor and who then hear their eyewitness accounts of the need, the opportunity and the challenge.”<sup>100</sup>

Perkins summarized the holistic goals of the three R’s which he had seen through his work in Mississippi and California: “strong ministry, financially independent, led by indigenous leaders—people who grew up in this community, rose through our leadership development program, went off to school then returned to take over the work. That’s what needs to happen in every poor community in the country.”<sup>101</sup> Although Perkins was most concerned about poverty among African-Americans, he stressed that the model was not limited to blacks; rather, his holistic model for Christian Community Development was for “ministry teams all over our nation relocating into our ghettos, our Indian reservations, our depressed rural areas [and] in third-world countries.”<sup>102</sup>

As CCDA practitioners implemented Perkins’s basic model in greater numbers, one of the tensions that most frequently emerged was that of the relationship between those who had relocated into the neighborhood and the established local churches in that neighborhood—a classic example of the perennial potential for conflict between the church and parachurch within Evangelicalism. Sometimes local churches participated enthusiastically in the new community development efforts and their churches became

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 131, 94.



centers of ministry. But more often relationships were awkward, as local churches were frequently not prepared to become multi-class, multi-cultural congregations, nor did they share Perkins's holistic vision. Thus, CCDA "missionaries" often planted new churches, aiming to staff them with leaders raised up from the neighborhood. "The Rock" Church in Chicago's Lawndale, with more than 2,000 members by 2005, was the most successful example of this development. Under this model, relocators would usually establish a separate non-profit corporation through which its community development activities could be managed.<sup>103</sup>

In summary, organic intellectuals and organizations that advanced holistic models of mission to the poor were chiefly concerned with *integration*. They hoped to reconcile the tensions between previous models and to show that, for example, relief of individuals, long-term development, and structural justice could all hold an integrated place in the practice of ameliorating poverty. In various ways they affirmed both evangelism and social action; they combined personal, spiritual, technological, and structural solutions to poverty.

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<sup>103</sup> In the 1990s and after, Ron Sider contributed to the Christian Community Development model through his books *Cup of Water, Bread of Life* and *Churches that Make a Difference*, as well as a small subset of ESA called *Network 9:35*. Sider offered a very similar vision to Perkins's 3 R's model, but often in the context of partnerships between urban and suburban churches. He defined 'holistic ministry' this way: "There are at least eight central features of holistic ministry: (1) unconditional commitment to Christ; (2) a passion for evangelism; (3) a passion for the poor; (4) a concern for the whole person in community; (5) consciously chosen programs to enable committed Christians to develop informal, relaxed friendships with non-Christians; (6) relocation among the needy; (7) partnership with the larger body of Christ; (8) the presence of the Holy Spirit. Whether you are talking about a church or an organization or a person, if these eight features are present in some form, then it fits our understanding of holistic ministry." *Cup of Water, Bread of Life: Inspiring Stories About Overcoming Lopsided Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 177.

### Outside the Holistic Center

Nevertheless, on the edges of this holistic center, many important players in Evangelical mission to the poor chose not integration but *specialization*. That is, both in their discourse and in their praxis of missions to the poor, they held up a particular approach as the key ingredient for battling poverty. The conclusion to this chapter will explore this landscape outside the holistic center, considering two prominent representatives of two opposite tendencies. On the left, Jim Wallis and Call to Renewal/Sojourners sought to stimulate a progressive political movement that would be rooted in what he vaguely called “spiritual values.” On the right, Samaritan’s Purse offered a discourse of mission to the poor that had scarcely changed its model from that of World Vision in the 1950s, and made little reference, even in criticism, to any of the models that had emerged since.

#### Jim Wallis

In the 1970s, Jim Wallis’s Sojourners community and its interactions with their troubled neighborhood in Washington DC had formed the backdrop to his writing, generating frequent anecdotes and analysis related to their community-based work. While Wallis continued to live in the same (considerably gentrified) neighborhood through 2005, this aspect of his thinking on mission to the poor faded, as political action and structural change gained almost his full attention.<sup>104</sup> From Wallis’s 1993 *The Soul of Politics* to 2005’s *God’s Politics* (strikingly similar books), and all his prolific *Sojourners*

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<sup>104</sup> Although he now spent much of his time travelling, he still reflected on his urban location from time to time. For example, upon returning from a conference on urban violence, he mused, “I’ve often wondered if more people in those kinds of meetings came home to yellow tape in the streets where their own children play, whether something might finally be done” Wallis, *Who Speaks for God*, 58.

columns in between, he became transfixed with the possibility of “a progressive and prophetic vision of faith and politics.”<sup>105</sup> While his colleagues Sider and Perkins continued to speak to Evangelicals as their main audience, hoping to push the movement in a more holistic direction that *included* politics as part of its vision, Wallis broadened his intended audience to include a wide variety of spiritually-minded progressives in order to better promote what he hoped would become a grassroots political movement.

These changes became the new hallmarks of his discourse. Wallis wrote: “The world isn’t working . . . change will demand a new kind of politics—a politics with spiritual virtues.”<sup>106</sup> Wallis was attempting to juxtapose his vision of “spiritually virtuous” politics with the entire American system of democratic, oppositional politics based in compromise. He was frustrated even with fellow progressive Bill Clinton because, as he saw it, “the system” inevitably hamstrung real change. Here is Wallis’s view of traditional politics: “a lofty goal is stated, a proposal is offered to achieve about one twentieth of the original idea; and after wrangling in the Congress and the media, one-fiftieth of the vision is approved—subject to further modifications.”<sup>107</sup> As he did in the 1970s, Wallis was calling for spiritual revolution—he wanted not to modify social structures, but to replace them entirely, for “our great macrosystems have both failed especially morally and spiritually. They have failed the poor, the earth, and the human

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<sup>105</sup> Wallis, *God’s Politics*, xix.

<sup>106</sup> Wallis, *Soul of Politics*, xiii.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

heart.”<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, Wallis’s prescription for revolution was very different than it had been previously, when he called for faithful communities of Evangelicals to live simply in the midst of the poor, corporately demonstrating Kingdom values. Wallis was much more optimistic about sweeping change. He resolutely declared, “I believe we are on the verge of a spiritually based movement for social change. I’m using the word ‘movement’ deliberately, even daringly. For too long we’ve been afraid to speak of a movement, ever since the death of Martin Luther King Jr.”<sup>109</sup> Moving away from the tone of protest that had dominated his earlier writings, he admonished, “Saying no is good, but having an alternative is better. Protest is not enough; it is necessary to show a better way . . . protest should not merely be the politics of complaint . . . perhaps it's time to turn our mourning into rebuilding.”<sup>110</sup>

Theologically, Wallis grounded his hopefulness in an interpretation of the resurrection that saw it promising not just life after death, but an inbreaking pattern of renewal in the political structures of this present world-system. In conclusion to *Soul of Politics*, he wrote, “We can stand on the faith of those who have given the news of resurrection before us, as they have walked through the doors of hope time and time again. . . . It is not nonsense to believe that our families can be restored and reconciled. It is not nonsense to believe that peace will come to Haiti and Bosnia or that justice and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>109</sup> Jim Wallis, *Faith Works* (New York: Random House, 2000), 316.

<sup>110</sup> Wallis, *God’s Politics*, 45; Wallis, *The Soul of Politics*, 271.

freedom will come to China. It is not nonsense to believe that decent and affordable housing will be available to the poor of our cities.”<sup>111</sup>

But even more importantly, his optimism was the product of the wide range of left-leaning religious people he was meeting in his travels. He observed, “Today I see a new kind of activist emerging...bringing spiritual values to the difficult process of social change, these activists may be able to accomplish things that polarized political factions have failed to do.”<sup>112</sup> One may question whether Wallis was noting a genuine increase in progressive politics among religious people, or whether he was simply meeting more of them because he was increasingly looking outside the borders of Evangelicalism. Either way, Wallis’s increased ecumenical enthusiasm caused him to write in inclusive terms unlike that of most Evangelicals: “In most of our religious traditions, justice is best understood as the establishment of a right relationship between peoples, among communities, and with the earth itself. It’s time to reclaim those traditions.”<sup>113</sup> Having given up on reforming Evangelicalism, he now enthusiastically worked to build a broadly defined spiritually liberative coalition: “The most vital legacy of liberation movements may be their commitment to inclusive patterns of social and political involvement . . . everyone's perspective and participation will be needed.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 284. Wallis at times tempered his sweeping optimism with statements like these: “political realism requires us never to underestimate the human capacity for evil...Both realism and hope have deep theological roots.” Ibid., 177. But the overall shift in his tone was striking.

<sup>112</sup> Wallis, *Faith Works*, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Wallis, *Soul of Politics*, xxii.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 272.

The point of this analysis of Wallis is not to make any judgments about whether Wallis himself still held evangelical beliefs (small “e”) or whether he personally believed in evangelism or engaging the poor in communities (he clearly did). The point is to observe that Wallis’s discourse dropped such points of emphasis in order to take up the single-minded goal of promoting spiritually-rooted progressive politics. He had found a cause larger than Evangelicalism, and had thus travelled outside of Evangelicalism in order to promote it.

#### Samaritan’s Purse

With the final organization under consideration in this chapter, Samaritan’s Purse, the story of Evangelical mission to the poor over the approximately sixty years of the post-World War II period comes full circle. It began with Bob Pierce recovering a model of compassionate charity for individual emergencies, and it ended with Franklin Graham faithfully preserving that model. Upon taking on the presidency of Samaritan’s Purse in 1978, Graham worried that the existing board would “turn Samaritan’s Purse into a Christian bureaucracy and strip away the uniqueness of a ministry that could move quickly and provide support and assistance without a lot of meetings and special studies. Most of all I feared that they might take away the flag Bob had instructed me to carry—that the Lord Jesus Christ would be foremost in everything Samaritan’s Purse did.”<sup>115</sup> Graham’s missions model in the following years would prove his fears unfounded. Samaritan’s Purse’s discourse from this period, whether in the form of Graham’s books,

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<sup>115</sup> Graham, *Rebel with a Cause*, 249.

prayer calendars for children, or advertisements, was typically characterized by a simple, two-step formula. First, it related a story of how Samaritan's Purse's charitable interventions had providentially provided for an individual's urgent needs. Second, it nearly always showed how that compassionate charity sparked conversion to Evangelical Christianity. Several examples will serve to illustrate this basic pattern. First, the formula was most evident when Samaritan's Purse was promoting its *Operation Christmas Child*. Graham's small children's book, *Miracle in a Shoebox*, provided the most extended example. Graham tells the story of a Bosnian Muslim family suffering through the midst of the war in the Balkans in the 1990s. Christmas Eve arrives, with the family's father in a POW camp. But he is released in a prisoner exchange, and when he sees the Samaritan's Purse truck with gifts for the children, "He felt hopeful for the first time in months," and thought about "the prayer he had prayed late one night in prison: God, if you're out there, show me you care." The family collects their Samaritan's Purse shoeboxes, and finds that the gifts inside were exactly what they had wanted—a doll wearing her favorite color dress for the daughter, who had "dropped hers in the street as they ran from a sniper's bullets" and a scarf that "fits just right" for the son. Finally, the tracts packed by Samaritan's Purse have done their work: Christmas day breaks as the family bows their heads in prayer to Jesus for the first time. The father reflects: "Our friends in America have shown us they care by sending these wonderful gifts. But God has given us the greatest gift of all: his Son . . . tonight we will put our faith in him."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Franklin Graham, Estelle Condra, and Dilleen Marsh, *Miracle in a Shoebox: A Christmas gift of wonder* (Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson, 1995), 8-20.

The same trope was followed in shorter advertising formats. One highlighted a letter purportedly sent by a 10 year old street child who received a Christmas shoebox. A staged facsimile of the letter, blown up to fill an entire magazine page, read in part “I thought I would pray about getting a gift, but I realized I didn’t even know who I was praying to. This morning, Christmas morning, you came with gifts. The best thing was that you told me who I was praying to. It was as though you had read my thoughts and they became real.”<sup>117</sup> Providentially guided compassion, “warming the hearts of children”<sup>118</sup> made these shoeboxes sources of spiritual connection, rather than just material exchange, according to the organization.

Providence continued to guide the spontaneous acts of faith that guided Graham to intervene in disaster situations. A skeptically minded reader of a Samaritan’s Purse annual Ministry Report might conclude that the organization’s involvements were simply randomly scattered around the world, with an emphasis on war zones. But for Graham, each opportunity to provide emergency aid was the result of divine appointment. For example, according to Graham, when a top general from the CIA-funded Nicaraguan *contras* called asking for Samaritan’s Purse’s aid for his army, Graham was reluctant, since “I had heard both sides of the issue, but I didn’t know what to believe . . . I had been glad not to be involved.”<sup>119</sup> But Graham investigated, and told God that if God would send a Spanish-speaking evangelist, they would do it. Upon visiting Central

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<sup>117</sup> Samaritan’s Purse advertisement, *Christianity Today*, September 6, 1999, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Samaritan’s Purse advertisement, *Christianity Today*, June 1999, no page number.

<sup>119</sup> Graham, *Rebel with a Cause*, 220.



America, Graham met Ruben Guerrero from Dallas, TX who was in Honduras seeking to evangelize the Contras. Graham exulted, “God had answered my fleece with what I felt was a firm ‘yes’ that we should be involved. And the fleece now had a name—‘Brother Ruben.’”<sup>120</sup> This experience of guidance led to extensive material support for the Contras for Samaritan’s Purse, and its training of an Evangelical chaplain corps for the army, some of whom later started churches in Nicaragua and attended seminary—all funded by Samaritan’s Purse.

Examples such as these could be multiplied, but these well illustrate the individual charity delivered through divine intervention that Graham so faithfully borrowed from Pierce. The fact that Samaritan’s Purse had become the second largest Evangelical RDO showed that many Evangelicals continued to share their faith as well.

### **Conclusion**

It is appropriate at this final stage of analysis to retrospectively compare the complex relationships between the individual charity, structural, and holistic models. By way of brief review, the individual charity model was re-introduced by Bob Pierce in the first generation and reproduced on a large scale in the second through the RDOs. This model presented the poor as intensely suffering individuals, and attempted to respond with an urgency equal to the emergencies they were encountering. By the second

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<sup>120</sup> “Putting out a fleece” refers to the practice of seeking God’s will by imitating the example of Gideon from the book of Judges chapter 6 in the Hebrew Bible. Graham, *Rebel with a Cause*, 224.

generation, formulaic appeals for child sponsorship or disaster relief provoked millions of individual acts of compassionate charity.<sup>121</sup>

The next model, advanced by a new generation of RDOs and radicals beginning in the 1970s, brought structural thinking about poverty to the fore for the first time in the Evangelical movement. It cast the poor as underdeveloped and oppressed by larger social structures created and supported in part by Western cultural, economic, and political power. In the face of this overwhelming societal evil, the only appropriate response was repentance and protest in the context of Christian communities expressing solidarity with the poor through personal lifestyle and political action. Although the structural and individual charity models encapsulated sharply divergent world views, World Vision was ironically responsible for promoting both models, depending on whether it was advertising for child sponsorship or condemning the Western greed and gluttony that partly contributed to the need for child sponsorship.

Although few put the radical implications of the structural model into long-term practice, its discourse sowed the seeds of new patterns of structural thinking within Evangelicalism—seeds which germinated during the years under consideration in this chapter: 1984-2005. The holistic model was in many ways a direct descendant of the structural model. The link was as close as the leaders themselves, for figures like Ron Sider and John Perkins were pivotal in shaping both models, and they were striving for holism in their theorizing even in the 1970s. They were holistic in the sense that during

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<sup>121</sup> The formulaic nature of appeals for emergency aid suggests certain parallels with the “ritualized spontaneity” of Pentecostal worship.

their “radical” phase they affirmed both evangelism and social concern, both relief and justice. Nevertheless the vast majority of their rhetorical energy was invested in reclaiming the social concern and justice side of the ledger. Therefore, structural proponents said comparatively less about how integration could happen. It is also true many structural proponents were relatively inexperienced, and their thought had not yet coalesced. This was evident in Perkins’ case when one compares his relatively inchoate *Quiet Revolution* (1976) with the much more developed *Beyond Charity* (1993). Similarly, RDOs’ thinking on development was just beginning in the late 1970s and was still poorly integrated into their overall praxis.

But the holistic model was not just a more mature version of the structural—important aspects of the structural model dropped. Holism’s optimistic tone contrasted sharply with the structural model’s calls for penitent protest. Its warnings against American materialism and nationalism were replaced by an encouraging tone inviting Americans to “make a difference,” “change the world,” and even “end global poverty”—but not necessarily at great cost to themselves. Holistic agencies like World Vision and Compassion energetically raised issues of injustice, but only when it was perpetrated by distant evils, not by American hegemony.

Holistic models also differed from the structural model because they intentionally integrated with the individual charity model, as the World Vision and Compassion cases have demonstrated. Indeed, it is unlikely that those two organizations would have grown as they did without the driving force of child sponsorship. Only once donors had chosen

to sponsor a child could the organizations ask them to broaden their horizons by considering long term development or advocacy for justice.

Finally, it is noteworthy that from 1984 to 2005, a time marked by a trend towards integration, the structural model and individual charity models also appeared prominently in their most extreme forms. Wallis represented the lone major representative of the structural model, now modified to emphasize almost exclusively broad based political action campaigns. And while Bob Pierce had been, in a sense, “holistic” in his support of long-term care of the emotional, spiritual, and physical needs of lepers and orphans, his successor at Samaritan’s Purse, for the most part, reduced individual charity to one-time gifts of tracts and candy for those whose needs included literacy and basic hygiene.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

Construction of group identity for religious movements has always been a complex and contentious process, with class, nationality, ethnicity, gender, popular culture, education, spirituality, and theological tradition all playing a part. This was even more true for Evangelicals, who did not have the benefit of an authoritative institution or hierarchy that could provide a locus of identity. The point of this study has been to introduce one factor—missions to the poor—as a vigorous aspect of Evangelical activism that made a significant contribution to shaping the overall identity of the movement. Throughout the preceding analysis, the theme of unity and diversity within the identity of Evangelicalism has never been far from the surface. The narrative has demonstrated a gradual, steady increase in the acceptance of missions to the poor as an essential, biblically mandated aspect of Evangelical activism. By 2005 Evangelicals were remarkably unified on this point—perhaps as much as such a dynamic, de-centered movement could be on an issue of importance. Since a desire for more effective missionary activism was one of the main motivating factors for the initial coalescence of the movement, such a dramatic shift deeply modified their understanding of who they were and what God was calling them to do. Nevertheless, analysis of the three models encapsulating the praxis of confronting poverty has revealed deep fissures in worldview among those who called themselves Evangelicals. Their discourse introduced highly

variant views of social theory, spirituality, attitudes towards rationalized efficiency, and American political and economic power. The models differed radically on the content and relative importance of justice, development and charity. This study's attention to both the factors that promoted unity and diversity has served as an important corrective to popular (and sometimes academic) stereotypes of Evangelicals as a monolithic group whose social preoccupations revolved solely around proselytization and promotion of conservative values.

In framing its main thesis as described above, this study has primarily asked how missions to the poor influenced Evangelical identity. Yet it has been evident that the reverse was also true—Evangelical identity profoundly impacted the shape and development of its missions to the poor. The following concluding reflections will take up this theme, seeking out aspects of Evangelical identity that were especially salient in influencing the course of anti-poverty efforts. From the perspective of a synoptic overview of the entire period 1947 to 2005, four factors in particular seem worthy of further consideration: the role of the Bible, class identity, political engagement, and movement boundaries. These factors will serve as a lens through which it is possible to observe various elements of Evangelicalism's distinctive features at work.

### **The Role of the Bible**

The fact that the Bible strongly influenced the shape of missions to the poor may seem too obvious to mention. Since respect for the Scriptures is perhaps the central identifying characteristic of Evangelicals, it could hardly be otherwise. Nevertheless, a

closer look at how its impact was made manifest reveals much. Use of the Scriptures was arguably the most fundamental unifying factor in the discourse of missions to the poor. Despite significant disagreements among advocates of missions to the poor, Scripture was the court of appeal for everyone. Although at the level of academic theology, Evangelicals were riven by debates about the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, in the arena of missions to the poor, no such disunity was apparent.<sup>1</sup> Missions to the poor were explained, justified, and promoted through appeal to the Scripture by every model and every organization in every decade of the post-WWII years. From the urgent proof-texting of Pierce to the radicals' passionate reappropriation of justice-oriented passages to World Vision's grounding of its holistic approach in the entire sweep of the sacred narrative, the Bible provided a strong unifying center. It was the main weapon in the effort to justify concern for the poor as an Evangelical priority; it buttressed the distinguishing features of the three models of missional praxis. The Scriptures provided the motivating force for greater involvement with and commitment to the poor. Fundamentalists who feared that greater social concern might bring with it a "liberalizing" diminution of biblical authority proved wrong indeed. The only exceptions to this Scripture-heavy approach were World Vision's television programs in the 1970s and Wallis' later writings—both of which were directed to a broader audience.

Biblical argumentation was arguably the primary reason for Evangelicals' ultimate embrace of the poor, simply because those who would have preferred to reject it had few biblical resources at hand. Even the eclipse of missions to the poor during the

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent summary of the "Battle for the Bible" in the mid-1970s as it played out at Fuller Seminary, see Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, pp. 277-292.

era of fundamentalist preeminence within evangelicalism (approximately 1910-1945) was more the result of commitment to other priorities and guilt by association with the Social Gospel than of marshalling of strong, constructive biblical arguments against it. Fundamentalists never denied the authority of the many Scriptural passages calling for mission to the poor—they merely de-emphasized them and ignored their practical import. So for a movement with such deep reverence for the Bible, unleashing a flood of Scripture quotations could be revolutionary. Nathan Hatch, citing eminent historian Edmund S. Morgan, insightfully summarized this dynamic: “Change in Christian thought . . . is usually a matter of emphasis. Certain ideas are given greater weight than was previously accorded them, or one idea is carried to its logical conclusion at the expense of others. ‘One age slides into the next,’ [Morgan] says, ‘and an intellectual revolution may be achieved by the expression of ideas that everyone had always professed to accept.’”<sup>2</sup>

Further, as Evangelicals discovered new dimensions of poverty through war, famine, oppression, injustice, and chronic underdevelopment, they interpreted these empirical realities through biblical categories. The introduction of “the poor” as a religiously significant segment of humanity carried with it profound effects on the worldviews of Evangelicals. Fundamentalist mission rhetoric taught its adherents to see the world in only three categories: saved, unsaved, and unevangelized (a subset of “unsaved”). Socioeconomic status was not significant except to the extent that it influenced a missionary’s strategy for crafting rhetorically effective gospel proclamation.

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<sup>2</sup> Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 182.



By contrast, even in its most simplistic, paternalistic form, frequent exposure to the empirical realities of poverty, interpreted through a biblical lens, encouraged Evangelicals to see the world with a wider range of mental categories. It also likely encouraged a perception of God as concerned with this-worldly affairs and perhaps dampened the acceptance of theological systems such as dispensationalism or certain interpretations of pre-millennialism that encouraged exclusive concern for the hereafter.

### **Class Identity**

A second aspect of Evangelical identity that strongly influenced missions to the poor was its strong presumption of (at least) middle-class status. Scholars have documented that most Evangelical incomes rose dramatically in the years of prosperity in America following the Second World War, and the discourse of missions to the poor both assumed and reinforced this class mentality.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the model or decade, organic intellectuals took for granted that their audience was not itself poor—the poor were always the Other. For Wallis, they were the idealized Other; for Pierce and Graham on the other side of the scale, they were the paternalized Other, but either way, Evangelicals did not identify themselves as poor. Just as traditional evangelistic missions focused on reaching outsiders, so missions to the poor assumed that the objects of its efforts were not inside the boundaries of “us.” Even the most radical calls to identify with the poor were couched in terms that presupposed the middle class status of their audience—in Perkins’ case, the call to “incarnational” ministry explicitly identified

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<sup>3</sup> For two examples, see Hamilton, “More Money, More Ministry” and John and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows*.

middle class Evangelicals with the Son of God and the poor with the fallen world that Jesus came to rescue.

Some of the presumption of middle class status might have been due to the selected audience of the discourse; that is, fundraising efforts aimed at those with disposable income, and pleas for personal action on behalf of the poor targeted those with social capital. But even accounting for this, the discourse was relatively silent about the possibility of the poor who might be “among us.” For example, it is striking that despite the explosion of evangelicalism among the poor of the global South, very little awareness of this fact or reflection on its implications was forthcoming.<sup>4</sup> One might have expected abundant references to biblical passages that call for economic sharing within the global Body for Christ, but such appeals were rare.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the close identification of American Evangelicals with a certain class status made it harder to see poor Christians as peers. Similarly, in the domestic arena, CCDA-related discourse often seemed to presume that everyone in poor neighborhoods needed to be evangelized, and there was a de-emphasis on partnership with existing poor storefront churches—a reflection of Perkins’ view of the black church as excessively emotional and doctrinally suspect.<sup>6</sup>

One final illustration of strong identification with middle-class values was the fate of attempts by Sider, Wallis and other advocates of the structural model in the mid-1970s to challenge acquisitiveness and materialism. Their pleas to live more simply were

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<sup>4</sup> One exception to this generalization was Pierce’s frequent admiring references to “national Christians,” especially in Korea.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Acts 2:41-46 or II Corinthians 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> There is also an exception to this generalization: Sider worked hard to promote partnerships between middle-class and lower-income churches, but without notable success.

clearly directed a middle class audience with a degree of excess, disposable income. These ideas gained plausibility from vigorous biblical argumentation, the example of the pro-ecology, anti-consumerist counterculture movement with roots in the late 1960s, and the stark comparison of American affluence with global poverty. Nevertheless, during and after the Reagan years, Evangelicals decisively rejected these intrusions into their middle-class lifestyles, and even their main proponents were mostly reduced to silence. In his 2005, Sider provided the last word on the issue, mostly in terms of lamenting lost opportunity. If American Evangelicals had only given a tithe of their income to the poor, rued Sider, absolute poverty in the entire world could have already been eliminated.<sup>7</sup> Values common to middle-class American identity placed clear limits on the extent to which organic intellectuals could shape Evangelicalism.<sup>8</sup>

### **Political Engagement**

Although the individual charity model had little place for politics, the structural model vigorously argued that political protest was an essential expression of the Kingdom of God, and most holistic Evangelicals sought to integrate political action as an important part of their praxis. Yet the overall impression one gains from this period is that attempts to rally Evangelicals to effective, coherent political action on issues related to poverty were circumscribed and ineffective compared to their works of charity. The radicals' signature political critiques of American capitalism and political hegemony as

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<sup>7</sup> Sider, *Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, 21-22.

<sup>8</sup> Again, the exception that proves the rule is the New Monasticism movement, which drew its inspiration from those like St. Francis who have chosen voluntary poverty and solidarity with the poor.

contributing to global hunger failed to convince most Evangelicals even in their heyday in the 1970s, and the progressives as a group softened their views in the following decades.<sup>9</sup> Later progressive Evangelical convocations such as Call to Renewal were successful in gaining publicity, but did not translate into legislative action; attempts to create cadres of Evangelicals who diligently tracked public policy debates that impacted the poor foundered. Led by groups like World Vision, Evangelicals occasionally got behind campaigns against blood diamonds, child slavery, and sexual exploitation of children, but these efforts were relatively episodic and tentative. Historians should not minimize the significance of these excursions into the political realm, especially since they contrasted so sharply with evangelicals' regnant quietism for most of the century. But compared to the political machine that conservatives mustered against abortion and gay marriage or to the public witness of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church on behalf of the poor, Evangelicals appeared as disinterested, disorganized amateurs.

Two distinctive features of Evangelical identity help to shed light on the limited political vigor of their missions to the poor. First, the voluntarist ecclesiology that undergirded the movement (and led to such a prominent place for parachurch agencies) made it difficult to construct a sustained, coherent, unified political platform. Since Evangelicals lacked a centralized hierarchy that could have spoken on their behalf, they found their voice attenuated in the political realm. In contrast, the papacy had constructed an evolving but stable Catholic social teaching stretching back into the

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<sup>9</sup> Consider, for example, Sider's tentative embrace of market capitalism in later editions of *Rich Christians*.

nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Voluntarist atomization was an especially strong impediment when it came to the complex, controversial topic of poverty in which competing views of economics, justice, and governmental responsibility confounded the issue. By contrast, Evangelicals have found it easier to rally the troops around issues such as abortion which were more easily portrayed in black-and-white moral terms.

Evangelicals' voluntarist ecclesiology in the late twentieth century had profound historical roots in earlier phases of the evangelicalism. The movement evolved in the context of European state-supported churches in Europe that often monopolized religious access to political power, effectively sidelining evangelicals from political participation *qua* evangelicals. A similar dynamic happened when American fundamentalists lost influence within the mainline Protestant establishment that was closely linked to political power. In short, Evangelicals' pedigree made sustained, sophisticated political action a non-intuitive activity.

Since Evangelicalism was saddled with attenuated political instincts, its attempts at social change were most often guided by powerful individualistic assumptions. Sociologist Christian Smith claims that at the grassroots level, most late twentieth century Evangelicals subscribed to a "personal influence strategy" of social change that assumed "a very personalized, individualistic approach to social change through the influence of relationships." This approach did not "attempt to transform social or cultural systems, but merely to alleviate some of the harm caused by the existing system."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Dorr, *Option for the Poor*. Cf. note 15, chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 198-199.

According to Smith, Evangelical individualism, which like voluntarism has been a defining characteristic of evangelicalism since the eighteenth century, rendered evangelicals “largely incapable of seeing how supraindividual social structures, collective processes, and institutional systems profoundly pattern and influence human consciousness, experience, and life-chances.”<sup>12</sup> This observation helps to explain why the vigorous efforts of structural and holistic organic intellectuals, which were a major force in the *discourse* of missions to the poor, struggled to win the day in terms of political *practice* among the grassroots.

Lastly, it is important to note that the *kinds* of political action open to Evangelicals was limited by the movement’s reflexive patriotism and strong support for *status quo* capitalism. Joel Carpenter has documented the early Evangelical fusion of its theological conservative values with American nationalism, and this pattern persisted over time, handed down by leaders such as Bob Pierce and Larry Ward.<sup>13</sup> Evangelical nationalism did not prevent critique of aspects of American culture, but it frequently led to the claim that objects of critique such as “secular humanism” were “un-American.” Thus, Evangelicals were reluctant to gather behind a political cause that challenged the government’s public policy, international relations, or the workings of the market. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, for example, Evangelicals were unlikely to be found at WTO protests. Nevertheless, Evangelicals have been willing to become involved in issues of justice that

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 189.

<sup>13</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 161-176.

impacted the poor—as long as American democracy or capitalism was not implicated in the injustice.

### **Movement Boundaries**

The three factors examined so far have dealt mainly with aspects of identity that united Evangelicals and therefore shaped missions to the poor in a relatively consistent fashion. Respect for the Bible provided a central point of agreement and authority, even if conclusions garnered from its pages differed. Middle class status influenced portrayal of the poor as Other and limited Evangelical generosity. Free church ecclesiology, individualism, and nationalism teamed up to stymie efforts at organizing decisive political action on behalf of the poor. By contrast, the fourth and final topic of movement boundaries was an animating force behind much of the fragmentation that characterized missions to the poor.

The term “movement boundaries” is used here to refer to the question of what kind of engagement with outsiders was acceptable to Evangelicals. It deals with how Evangelicals discerned which aspects of “the world” could or should be imported into the fabric of their movement. One of Evangelicalism’s founding impulses was a determination to engage American culture more proactively, in contrast to what they saw as unwarranted isolationism among fundamentalists. Nevertheless, Evangelicals selectively maintained high boundaries with “the world,” a fact that helped reinforce their identity as “different.” Again, Christian Smith helpfully elucidates this dynamic: late twentieth century Evangelicals “maintain both high tension with and high integration into

mainstream American society simultaneously. Evangelical sensibilities allow neither complete disengagement from nor total assimilation into the dominant culture. This provokes a situation of sustained dissonance”<sup>14</sup> This dissonance meant that Evangelicals’ actual pattern of cultural engagement was spotty and selective. They proved able to uncritically adopt some cultural developments, but to fully seal themselves off from others. It also contributed to the fragmentation of the movement, as sub-groups chose different aspects of “the world” to embrace or to shun.

In general, Evangelicals were highly likely to adopt popular and pragmatic elements of culture. Evangelical parachurches were among the first to acquire and exploit new technology. Popular culture and its delivery mechanism, the media, were embraced wholeheartedly—as has been abundantly illustrated by the films, television, advertising, and periodicals canvassed in this study. Rationalized, bureaucratic management and marketing techniques also fell into this category, as by the second generation, advocates of “faith” principles of fundraising and organizational development had become a defensive minority.

By contrast, theoretical or intellectual elements of culture generated a more ambivalent response. Evangelicals were deeply divided in their response to higher education, ecumenical interaction, and secular social movements. Those who were open to these aspects of “the world” can be called, for want of a better term, “integrationalists” since they sought to integrate them into their biblical worldview. Those who rejected higher education, ecumenical interaction, and secular social movements could be termed

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 150.



“primitivists,” which refers to a recurrent evangelical trait that sought to find truth only in the space between the individual, God, and one’s self-interpreted Bible.<sup>15</sup>

Differing approaches of the integrationists and the primitivists to theoretical or intellectual aspects of “the world” provide an important explanatory key to the diversity that developed within Evangelical missions to the poor. The first generation of organic intellectuals was almost uniformly primitivist. Pierce and Swanson founded their organizations in response to what they perceived as direct divine guidance to them personally, and built up their organizations without recourse to the theorizing and research that formed similar organizations.<sup>16</sup> Even practices such as child sponsorship, which were borrowed from earlier precedents, were re-styled as providential, serendipitous encounters. In fact, examination of the discourse of Evangelical relief and development organizations indicates that they were almost totally innocent of the ferment of development thinking produced by secular organizations such as Oxfam, government agencies such as the World Bank, and religiously motivated development work such as the Church World Service or Catholic Relief Services until approximately the mid-1970s, when Mooneyham researched global hunger for *What do you Say to a Hungry World?* and World Vision began appropriating the development praxis of the Institute for Rural Reconstruction.

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<sup>15</sup> Nathan Hatch masterfully describes this impulse in the context of antebellum America in *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

<sup>16</sup> Carpenter’s observation perfectly describes this primitivist, entrepreneurial mentality as “the spirit of religious enterprise, which led visionaries to form ministries without consulting anyone but the Almighty.” *Revive us Again*, 160.

The second generation brought the first integrationist perspectives to bear on mission to the poor. Sider's higher education, Wallis's participation in the 1960s counterculture, and even Perkins's African-American cultural background heavily influenced their communitarian, justice-centered readings of the Bible. The structural model they helped construct would likely have been impossible without drawing on aspects of American culture that were "non-native" to Evangelicalism. Nevertheless, by the time their critiques of racism, domestic poverty, and structural injustice wrought by American hegemony came into the Evangelical consciousness, those issues had been raised by their secular counterparts for more than a decade.

The third generation showed Evangelical missions to the poor neatly divided into integrationist and primitivist camps.<sup>17</sup> These generated deep tensions within the missional endeavor, even what one could call competing worldviews. On one side was the irenic scholarship of Sider, the ecumenical progressivism of Wallis, and the collaborative holism of World Vision; on the other stood Samaritan's Purse, scaling up sentimental charity to massive proportions, and Rick Warren with Bruce Wilkinson, confidently combining entrepreneurial faith with studied indifference to the experience of others. These high-profile organic intellectuals were representative of the basic division within the field of missions to the poor. Integrationist leaders and practitioners tended to be better educated, often in disciplines such as international relations, business

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<sup>17</sup> John Perkins was a curious mixture of both. His community development ministries were profoundly shaped at key moments by the civil rights movement and by secular community organizing principles. Yet in his later discourse he stressed that his approach was purely the result of his ministry experience and biblical reflection. This need to underplay the influence of "the world" often caused primitivists to fail to recognize the cultural lenses through which they viewed the Bible and ironically gave those lenses an uncritical power over their perceptions.

administration, economic development, or social work. They typically viewed their education as a tool for more effective ministry. By contrast, primitivists, upon receiving a “call to the poor” would tend to go straight to work, acting by faith and learning on the job. Primitivists probably produced fewer large-scale organizations, but they were legion. Any visit to a “developing” country in which Evangelicals were active would turn up a host of ad-hoc orphanages and relief efforts re-writing (on a much smaller scale) the script of Pierce and Swanson.

Although there was little public criticism, primitivists and integrationists clearly looked askance at each other. Speaking in broad generalizations, primitivists tended to suspect that integrationists had started down the slippery slope to secularization through an idolatrous desire for cultural respectability. They instinctively feared that integrationists were substituting worldly wisdom for the pure, all-sufficient insights of the Bible and had replaced Spirit-led leadership with impersonal bureaucracy. For their part, integrationists saw primitivists as arrogantly refusing to learn from the insights of others and compromising their effectiveness by unnecessarily “re-inventing the wheel.”

Integrationists were discomfited by a litany of organizations run by minor populist demagogues without any real expertise.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Marsden pungently summarizes this aspect of Evangelical organizational leadership, which certainly applies to many of its parachurches devoted to the poor: “The most distinctive institutions of American evangelicalism have often been parts of the personal empires of successful evangelists. Usually these institutions have been run autocratically or by an oligarchy; in any case, they have typically been regarded virtually as private property.” *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 2. A final note on ecumenical impact: While ecumenical influences were relatively infrequent in the discourse surveyed in this study, it is mildly surprising that Catholics made a much larger imprint on Evangelicals than did mainline Protestants, given the long 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century history of anti-Catholicism among conservative evangelicals. Mother Teresa was of course universally and overtly admired, a black Catholic priest was instrumental in forming Perkins’s approach, liberation theologians inspired the Sojourners community, and St. Francis was a “patron saint” of Wallis and the New Monastics. By contrast, explicitly positive references to mainline

## Conclusion

This conclusion has highlighted the coherence—or lack thereof— of Evangelical identity as it expressed itself through missions to the poor. In closing, it is appropriate to ask to whether the post-World War II Evangelical coalition was a cohesive movement with enough agreed-upon identity markers to portend a long life as a religious movement, or whether its coming together was merely a moment in time, as the centripetal forces always at work within the “evangelical kaleidoscope”<sup>19</sup> pulled apart various constituents into new alliances marked by incompatible worldviews. Naturally, absolute pronouncements on these questions are impossible, especially since missions to the poor were but one aspect of the feverish activity of Evangelicals.

Nevertheless, some insight into the question can be gained by one final glance at the institutional structures generated by missions to the poor. The Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Agencies (AERDO) brought together in fellowship and mutual recognition of Evangelical identity organizations as different as World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse.<sup>20</sup> By 2005 AERDO continued to grow and counted within its ranks both integrationist- and primitivist-style organizations, although the balance was definitely on the integrationist side. World Vision was a co-founder of the Evangelical

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Protestants were far to find—Sojourners’ appreciation of William Stringfellow is the only one that comes to mind. It seems that the mistrust of “liberal” Protestants lingered long after other movement boundaries had broken down. For an insider’s reflection of why the distance persisted, see Bryant Myers, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Evangelical-Ecumenical Dialogue,” *International Review of Missions*, July 1992.

<sup>19</sup> This expression, now frequently used by scholars of evangelicalism, was coined by Timothy L. Smith.

<sup>20</sup> It is ironic that the relief and development organizations that best represent opposite tendencies among Evangelicals were founded by the same man.

Council for Financial Accountability (EFCA), which promoted not only professional accounting standards but was also a locus of Evangelical identity. Finally, the Lausanne Covenant and the attendant conferences sponsored by the Lausanne Movement became a significant rallying point for Evangelical identity. For many independent Evangelical parachurches and congregations, the Covenant served as a trustworthy doctrinal creed for a decidedly non-creedal movement. And it was this Covenant that first decisively enshrined the legitimacy of social concern, including missions to the poor. Therefore, the question of the cohesiveness of Evangelical identity can partially be answered on a relational level— despite the variegated contours of their worldviews, the groups who affirmed these institutions continued to identify with one another. Evangelicalism was voluntaristic at the core—so in the end, its coherence as a movement is perhaps best measured by whether people continued to choose to associate with each other. Since missions to the poor often provided sufficient motivation to draw them together in fellowship, Evangelicals were unified at least in their mutual concern for “the least of these.”

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