

A History of  
Presbyterian Missions  
1944–2007

EDITED BY  
*Scott W. Sunquist*  
*and*  
*Caroline N. Becker*

*A Project of the World Mission Initiative  
of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary*



Geneva Press  
Louisville, Kentucky

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*Book design by Sharon Adams*

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*Cover art: The Glory of the Cross, Sawai Chinnawong. This painting by an ethnic Mon artist from northern Thailand at the McGilvary College of Divinity represents a major theme of this book: the transition of Christian leadership to local leadership, while showing respect for the past missionaries.*

*First edition*

Published by Geneva Press  
Louisville, Kentucky

This book is printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute Z39.48 standard. ☺

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A history of Presbyterian missions : 1944–2007 / edited by Scott W. Sunquist and Caroline N. Becker.—1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-664-50300-0 (alk. paper)

1. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—Missions—History—20th century.
2. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—Missions—History—21st century. I. Sunquist, Scott W., 1953– II. Caroline Becker.

BV2570.H57 2008

266'.5109—dc22

2007046196

This book is dedicated to Lois Anderson,  
wife of William Anderson, and their daughter,  
Zelda White, who were both shot and killed in a carjacking  
near Nairobi, Kenya, January 27, 2007.

It is hard to imagine that God has created a person who had  
more joy in the Lord, trust in other people, and love  
for the people of Africa than Lois Anderson.

To the memory of Lois, her daughter, Zelda, and all the other missionaries  
and missionary families who have laid down their lives for their friends,  
we dedicate this volume.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.  
Psalm 116:15 RSV

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# Foreword

You are about to read a Christian love story. American Presbyterians have been caught up in God's love for the world, and so we have formed enduring relationships that witness to that love in scores of countries.

Our relationships and witness have been tested, and this book's review of a sixty-year period provides a breathtaking summary of the tests. Our mission relationships have gone through decolonization and nationalism, the rise of the United States to superpower status, official repression of Christ's disciples in many lands, widespread movements for equality and social justice, declines in U.S. mainline church membership, denominational unions, and experiments in organizational and funding systems, to name some major examples.

Through it all, one constant that emerges clearly in these pages is the steadfastness of a love that has repeatedly moved U.S. Presbyterians, sometimes in considerable anguish, to a new level of creativity and adaptability. This was true of their mission workers as well as the people who sent them, and true also of many of the other dimensions that make up a denomination. Perhaps the most dramatic example of a loving willingness to change for the sake of witness was the move so many mission workers made in this period from a decision-making role as a missionary to a more servant-like role as a fraternal worker or mission coworker. They embraced this challenging life change, and for that they deserved more affirmation than they often received back in their U.S. context. There are many other examples of bold adaptability for the sake of God's love in mission, including the development of new patterns of mission service such as binational service and bringing people in mission to the United States; the founding of new mission-support organizations, mission networks, and grassroots international mission partnerships to mobilize grassroots church involvement; the creation of new offerings and programs to mobilize support; and generous and strategic responses to the opening up of large unevangelized territories, especially after the Cold War.

It is good to consider how best to approach reading this Christian love story. Because it is a collective story, I recommend that you find others with whom to read it. Look for other persons, ideally in your own congregation, who care about the church of Jesus Christ and its manner of participating in God's ministry of reconciliation and redemption in the whole world. Since the book is long, you might divide up the geographic chapters among you, each choosing regions of the

world about which you have special feelings. Pose for yourselves the same kinds of questions that led to the creativity and commitment about which you will read: “In what ways will we as Christ’s church witness to all nations in light of the major dynamics in the world today?” “In what specific ways can my congregation and denomination improve ourselves and our manner of involvement?” You have in your hands not only a book, but also a way to begin a dialogue with the written and human resources available today concerning these two questions.

Everything you will read about here happened because people like yourself wanted their church to be part of God’s gracious gathering of all things in creation (Eph. 1:10), and did not take that participation for granted. Please remember that the commitments to which this book leads you and your fellow believers will provide part of the Christian love story that will eventually be written about the first half of the twenty-first century!

—(The Reverend) Marian McClure, PhD, Director of the PC(USA)’s World-wide Ministries Division 1997–2006.

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# Abbreviations

AACC	All-Africa Conference of Churches
ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ACBC	Association of Costa Rican Bible Churches
ACMC	Advancing Churches in Mission Commitment
ACT	Action by Churches Together
ANC	African National Congress
AP	American Presbyterian
APCCM	Association of Presbyterians for Cross-Cultural Mission
APCM	American Presbyterian Congo Mission
APMP	Association of Presbyterian Mission Pastors
APRCLA	Alliance of Presbyterian Reformed Churches in Latin America
ASHA	American Schools and Hospitals Abroad
AUC	American University in Cairo
BFM	Board of Foreign Missions—UPCNA, UPCUSA, PCUSA
BNM	Board of National Missions
BNS	Bi-National Service
BWM	Board of World Missions—PCUS
CANACOM	Caribbean and North American Council for Mission
CAREE	Christians Associated for Relationships in Eastern Europe
CASA	Center for Arabic Study Abroad
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CCC	China Christian Council
CCD	Christian Commission for Development
CCT	Church of Christ in Thailand
CELEP	Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies
CEOSS	Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services
CFK	Christian Friends of Korea
CIMADE	Comité Inter-Mouvements auprès de Evacués
CIP	Inter-Presbyterian Council
CLAI	Latin American Council of Churches
CMS	Church Missionary Society
COCAR	Council on Church and Race
COEMAR	Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations



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CORAT	Christian Organizations Research Advisory Trust
DCM	Division of Corporate and Social Mission—PCUS
DCS	Division of Central Support Services—PCUS
DCW	Division of Cooperative Work
DIM	Division of International Mission—PCUS
DMS	Directed Mission Support
DNM	Division of National Mission—PCUS
DPD	Division of Professional Development—PCUS
ECO	Extra Commitment Opportunities
ECZ	Church of Christ in Zaire
EEC	Emerging Economies Corporation
EPC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
EPCC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Chile
FCEC	Fraternity of Costa Rican Evangelical Churches
FIM	Frontier Internship in Mission
FTPY	Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaounde
GA	General Assembly
GAMB	General Assembly Mission Board
GMU	Global Mission Ministry Unit
IMC	International Missionary Council
IMCK	Institut Médical Chrétien du Kasai
IPB	Presbyterian Church of Brazil
IPC	Inter-Presbyterian Council
IPIB	Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil
IPRC	Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba
IRD	Institute on Religion and Democracy
ISEDET	University Institute of Higher Theological Studies
LEI	Literary and Evangelism International
LINKS	International Short-Term Volunteer Program of the PC(USA)
MBF	Medical Benevolence Foundation
MECC	Middle East Council of Churches
MRTI	Mission Responsibility through Investment
MUSA	Mission to the U.S.A.
NCC	National Council of Churches in the USA
NECC	Near East Council of Churches
NEPCG	National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPCM	National Presbyterian Church of Mexico
NSCC	National Sudan Council of Churches
NTC	Nile Theological College
NWMC	New Wilmington Missionary Conference
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ORE	Office of Review and Evaluation—PCUS
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America

PCC	Presbyterian Church of Colombia
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
PCI	Presbyterian Church in Ireland
PCIR	Permanent Committee on Interchurch Relations—PCUSA
PCK	Presbyterian Church in Korea
PCMS	Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies
PCOS	Presbyterian Church of Sudan
PCPC	Permanent Commission of Presbyterian Cooperation
PCR	Program to Combat Racism
PCUS	Presbyterian Church in the United States; Southern
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
PC(USA)	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PECGA	Project for Evangelism and Church Growth in Africa
PFF	Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship
PGF	Presbyterian Global Fellowship
PIMM	People in Mutual Mission
PMHP	Presbyterian Mission History Project
PMMF	Presbyterian Medical Mission Fund
POP	Program of Progress
POWE	Presbyterian Order for World Evangelization
PROK	Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
PSCE	Presbyterian School of Christian Education
PUMA	Presbyterians United for Mission Advancement
R&M	Reconciliation and Mission
RCA	Reformed Church in America
REO	Regional Ecumenical Organization
SDP	Self-Development of People
SOS	Special Opportunities for Support
SPEC	Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TEF	Theological Education Fund
TOF	The Outreach Foundation
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement (China)
UAIM	United Andean Indian Mission
UCCP	United Church of Christ of the Philippines
UCJCI	United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
UCNI	United Church of Northern India
UECE	United Evangelical Church of Ecuador
UN	United Nations
UP	United Presbyterian
UPC	Union des Populations de Cameroun
UPCUSA	United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
UPCNA	United Presbyterian Church of North America
VIM	Volunteers in Mission

VMSG	Validated Mission Support Groups
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WECRP	Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate
WGMS	Women's General Missionary Society
WMD	Worldwide Ministries Division
YAV	Young Adult Volunteer
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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# Introduction

SCOTT W. SUNQUIST  
AND CAROLINE N. BECKER

In the last two generations Christianity and Christian mission went through the greatest transformation since the time of Constantine. When Christians went from persecuted sect to favored faith in the early fourth century, Christians and especially priests and bishops went through ecclesial whiplash. One day they were hiding and carrying on what others often interpreted as secret or Gnostic religious practices. Within a generation they were being called together by the emperor to his palace in Nicaea (present-day Turkey) to discuss theology. It was like the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the slow decay of the bamboo curtain, and the end of Western colonialism all at once. There has been no such sudden change in the place of Christianity globally<sup>1</sup> until the second half of the twentieth century.

Our recent transformation of Christianity was no less dramatic, but probably less well-known. We begin this volume with the end of World War II (War of Japanese Aggression, East Asians call it) and the rather sudden dismantling of Western and Asian colonialisms. The ecumenical church was reeling from two world wars, the territorial loss of the largest Christian nation in the world (Russia), and the rise of atheistic communism in both Eastern Europe and Asia. Many of the former colonial regions in Africa and Asia took on precolonial religious identities. The new state of Pakistan was intentionally Muslim, Burma was intentionally

Buddhist, Malaysia was Muslim, and Nepal, Hindu. Over 95 percent of the colonial nations gained their independence between 1945 and 1969, in what Ralph Winter has called the *Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years*.<sup>2</sup> Those years were unbelievable for the political reconfigurations of the countries of the world, but of greater importance and almost more unbelievable is what happened regarding the development of Christianity from 1944 to the turn of the century. Until quite recently—but still in many universities in the West—it was assumed that the “extension” of Christianity in countries like China, Ghana, Kenya, and India was the result of Christian missions riding on the coattails of Western colonialism. Christianity only spread, so the story goes, because it was protected and promoted by Western European imperial countries like Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany. Lamin Sanneh<sup>3</sup> of Yale and many others have now proved this to be blatantly false, for in fact Christianity grew much more rapidly *after* colonialism was dismantled. Growth can be measured in terms of numbers of adherents, percent of Christians in a country, number of new movements and institutions, or in terms of the many new Latin American, African, and Asian missionary societies. The postcolonial growth has involved all of these. It seems that Western imperialism had been a great hindrance to Christian development in the non-Western world. This volume covers that very period when colonialism was being dismantled, Western churches were in decline, and, paradoxically, Christianity grew more in the non-Western world than it had in 1,900 years.

## HISTORY OF THE HISTORY

Early in 2003 a number of concerned Presbyterian mission advocates recognized the fact that nothing had been written and nothing was being written about Presbyterian missions<sup>4</sup> since World War II, during this time of great transition. The people who have firsthand information about this story are getting much older and many have already passed on. Recognizing the need to act quickly, a group was informally called together at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, under the auspices of the World Mission Initiative. Present at that first meeting on March 25–26 of 2003 were Scott Sunquist (moderator), Harold Kurtz (Ethiopia, now with the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship), Paul Pierson (Brazil, now at Fuller Theological Seminary), Tommy Brown (Korea and China, now retired from Columbia Theological Seminary), Kenneth Bailey (Cyprus, Egypt, and Lebanon, now in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania), Don Dawson (Director of the World Mission Initiative and the New Wilmington Mission Conference), and David Dawson (Presbytery Executive from Shenango Presbytery). At the last minute Sam and Eileen Moffett (Korea) had to cancel out, but they participated throughout the planning stages. This was our Presbyterian Mission History Project committee that guided the project from that first formative meeting until publication. During this meeting much of the mission history was rehearsed, and later we realized that some of our writing would have been much easier if we had only taped these two days of

reminiscing, celebrations, mourning, frustrations, joy, and hope. It is not often that missionaries working on different continents get together to share common experiences and to contrast political and religious contexts of church ministry. The overwhelming impression that I (Scott) remember from this meeting is the resolute commitment and love that all of these missionaries have for the people in Brazil, Lebanon, China, Korea, and Ethiopia. Institutions may enhance or detract from that loyalty, but missionaries, at least these missionaries at this time and place, were unambiguous in their purpose. Later, after we had interviewed retired missionaries, we found this to be true as a general rule.

This meeting resulted in a commitment to find a way to gather as much information as possible, study the results, write it up, and make it available to as many as possible. We owe it to the ecumenical church to write up what has happened in Presbyterian mission from the United States since World War II. We owe it also to our own denomination to reflect on our recent past in global mission. Five years later we have this volume.

## METHOD AND PURPOSE

From the beginning the purpose of the project was to give as accurate a picture as we could of the Presbyterian missions during the turbulent years after World War II up to the opening years of the twenty-first century. We desired to pull together information that would be available for scholars in future years, as well as produce a single volume that would be of help in the present as Christians consider and reconsider what it means to be responsibly involved in God's mission. We hoped that simply raising the issue of "what happened" and asking people for pictures, writings, and other materials to be placed in an archive—all this would help to preserve important materials. This is happening. Many missionaries sent us their life stories and other printed material regarding their missionary work. Again, we were concerned both to produce a volume for today and to provide materials for future scholars.

Our methodology actually involved five stages; this was much more than just a project to write a book. First, it was decided by the PMHP Committee that the missionaries who lived through this turbulent period needed to be surveyed. We wanted to gather as much information as quickly as possible from those still alive. A survey instrument was drawn up (see appendix 2), names were gathered from the Worldwide Ministries Division (World Mission) in Louisville, Kentucky, and we asked (on the survey) for suggestions of other names. Then, after gathering all the names, 830 surveys were sent out between 2003 and 2005 by me (Caroline) and 332 surveys were filled out and returned.<sup>5</sup> One of the most common comments on the surveys was something like this: "These questions are awfully long and involved." Many of the people filling out the surveys were in their eighties and even their nineties, so it was difficult for them to write long answers. A number of the surveys were returned with just the basic information, but quite

a few had very detailed responses. One can only assume that being a missionary makes you very exacting and careful, or it could be that only people who are very exacting and careful become missionaries. Some people attached essays as a way of answering the questions, and others sent us copies of books that they had written and published—books that described their missionary work, with helpful reflections on how they viewed their work. When looking over these surveys, we realized that we had touched the pulse of something very special. It was then decided that we needed to be intentional about listening to the missionaries, by interviewing some of them personally.

Our second stage in this project involved a series of interviews. As much as possible we wanted the missionaries to have a voice in what was their work, their lives, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. Many times on these trips we heard something like this: “I am so glad that someone is going to listen to us. Is this going to be published?” Listening was a necessary step in remembering, and so we worked to listen carefully. But listening carefully also meant reading all of the surveys and summarizing them, and it meant videotaping interviews and then putting them into transcript form. In past interviews, both in Asia and in the United States, we had learned that it is often better to have two or more people together in an interview to help in the “remembering.” People remember different things, and they remember different things in different ways. Thus, our interviews were never done with a single person (although one couple was interviewed alone). Instead, we generally interviewed between five and ten people at a time, and usually people who had worked in different regions of the world. Therefore, when we asked questions about the impact of world events or church decisions upon the work in the various mission lands, we would gather a broader picture. Some issues were very localized in their impact on missionary work (communist insurgency in Ethiopia, partition of India, and the civil wars in Korea or China), and other issues seemed to have had an impact upon all missionaries (restructuring, funding crises, and so forth).

Interviews were done in Scott Sunquist’s office, at the New Wilmington Missionary Conference,<sup>6</sup> at Westminster Gardens in Duarte, California, and at the Lodge in Montreat, North Carolina. It would have been wonderful to have had more centers to bring in more people, but these interviews did begin to paint a thematic picture of the period and the people. Missionaries were generally given a series of questions to be thinking about before the session, and the sessions varied from one-and-a-half to three hours each. After the interviews were done, the videotapes were transcribed, and some corrections were made with feedback from missionaries, which we believe has given a more-accurate rendition of the interviews. This was quite helpful since some of the missionaries had comments attributed to them that were spoken by someone else, and some of the missionaries had time to reflect and sharpen their responses.

A note of appreciation is in order. All of the interviews were done by the coeditors, and we cannot thank the missionaries enough for their grace, wisdom, and attention to detail in these interviews. A number of the missionaries provided hospitality for us, and many came with notecards and paper to make sure they

did not forget important issues. Some came skeptical (“Now who exactly are you, and why are you doing this?”), but virtually all thanked us for listening. We did not plan it this way, but we believe our listening performed a pastoral function for many of these wonderful people.

Listening to the stories was an experience we will never forget. It was truly sacred time and space as we listened to mothers tell about children who died because of poor medical facilities, or other parents who talked about adopting local children who were abandoned. We heard people talk about being imprisoned by the Japanese, taken to court, and exiled; our favorite opening line was, “We lived through four major regional wars.” Were the missionaries bitter or upset about changes in the world, or about the perceived failures of their work or of governments? It would be hard to detect any bitterness. In fact, the overwhelming impression we got from our time with all of these missionaries is that they are an uplifting group of people to be around. Even those whose work was “lost” or destroyed by governments or wars—we found them to be gentle, kind, forgiving, and gracious. It would be hard to design a better job for overcoming melancholy than sitting down and talking to retired missionaries. We believe that the most overwhelming impression we have, even taking these previous impressions into account, is their love for the people with whom they worked. Most, but not all, of the people we interviewed had been long-term missionaries who learned the local language(s) and who saw their children raised with local children. When these people would talk about their work “on the field,” they would talk about specific people who had become good friends, and many had tears in their eyes as they began to remember their Japanese, Brazilian, Pakistani, Lebanese, or Ethiopian friends. We are thankful for this precious part of an academic project.

The third stage of the project was deciding upon and assigning chapters related to important themes in Presbyterian mission. The themes (part 1 of this volume) were suggested by the editors and then refined by the committee. We do believe that the more ways you slice the history, the more accurate the picture will be. We were fortunate to gather an excellent team of writers who know the period well and who are experts on the areas about which they write. In this section, as you will see, we have missionaries, former missionaries, academics, former mission board personnel, and one person at the World Council of Churches. Perspective is not everything, but it is important. Looking at Presbyterian mission from the perspectives of these different writers and from the various perspectives of the chapters will, we believe, fill in a lot of the blanks regarding our past sixty years of missionary work.

The fourth stage of the history project was to produce the histories by geographic region. This was probably the most frustrating for the authors, since all of our authors know the material and the history quite well. If given the time and space, each could write a book this size just on their region of the world. These chapters have to be considered an outline of the Presbyterian work in each region. All of the authors were given access to the interviews and surveys to help fill in more personal reflections on what happened during the time period.



The final stage of this project is harvested in the last chapter: “An Epilogue and a Prologue.” It is a brief reflection on some of the themes that have emerged, but it is also a prologue to future missional involvement of the PC(USA), as well as for others who may be listening in. Before writing this last chapter, we sent most of the previous chapters to ecumenical partners from other churches and from other countries and asked them for comments. Some of these observations have been incorporated into this final chapter. There are no dramatic conclusions, but most of the observations and conclusions will not surprise the reader who has worked through the previous chapters. We believe that this is a valuable chapter for all those involved in mission leadership today.

## AUTHORS AND CHAPTERS

The authors in this volume come from a variety of backgrounds, experiences in mission, and educational preparation for this task. The first chapter on the changing context for mission is written by Theo Gill. Theo serves in Geneva as the senior editor working for the World Council of Churches. He comes from a family of Presbyterian leaders and previously did editorial and reporting work for the PC(USA) in Louisville, Kentucky. He is very well situated and prepared to write this chapter on the ecumenical changes that took place during our sixty-year period. Presbyterians were carrying out missionary work not in a vacuum but in the midst of global shifts and changes that were also having an impact on other churches. Chapter 2 is written by David Dawson, the Executive for the Shenango Presbytery in Western Pennsylvania. David has been studying Presbyterian mission and money since he did his STM degree at Yale on this very topic in 1987. In this chapter he traces not only the money problem, but he also looks at other statistical trends and has some creative insights and conclusions about Presbyterians in mission. Chapter 3, on the changing structures, is written by two “insiders,” T. Donald Black and G. Thompson (Tommy) Brown. Donald Black’s name comes up a number of times in this volume since he held several important leadership positions: Executive Secretary—Board of Foreign Missions (UPCNA), General Secretary—Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (UPCUSA), Associate General Director—Program Agency (UPCUSA), Executive Director—General Assembly Council (PCUSA), and interim staff positions with the National Council of Churches and the WCC. Tommy Brown was born of missionary parents in China, served twenty years in Korea, returned to the United States, served as Asia Secretary for the Board of World Missions, was elected to the position of Director of Division of International Mission (PCUS), and then became a faculty member at Columbia Theological Seminary. We were very fortunate to have these two work together on the chapter since the story of structural changes with three different denominations is quite complex.

Chapter 4, on the changing ideas and practices of mission in the period, is written by a Presbyterian missionary to Brazil, Sherron George. Sherron has stud-

ied and taught this subject matter for over three decades, so she brings a varied perspective from both North and South Americas. Chapter 5 helps to explain some of the shifting movements in Presbyterian mission that are mentioned in other chapters. Rob Weingartner, Executive Director of the Outreach Foundation, brings to this chapter personal involvement both on the General Assembly Council and as a board member and now staff with the type of “mission within a mission” about which he writes. One of the themes of the whole volume, which is central to Rob’s chapter (as you will soon see), is keeping together the diversity of Presbyterian mission around a core of commitments in an increasingly distrustful milieu. Chapter 6, where we give the missionaries a chance to speak, concludes the thematic section of the book. After looking at structures and ideas, it seems only fitting that we look at people. Caroline organized and oversaw the surveys and organized the personal interviews, so she brings with her a good feel for the material. Hundreds of hours of “listening” were involved in this chapter, and we pray that all who read will have a better understanding of the thoughts, joys, disappointments, and idiosyncrasies of Presbyterians working through a period of tremendous transition. We believe this is a unique chapter in missionary history writing: giving voice to the people on the front line.

Part 2 looks at Presbyterian mission geographically. We begin with the chapter by Frank Arnold on Presbyterians in Latin America. Frank worked over thirty years in Brazil and was also, for two years, Area Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Division of International Mission of the former PCUS. Again, it is helpful to have someone write who, on both sides of the water, has been participating in Presbyterian Mission. Chapter 8, on mission to the United States of America, is written by Patricia Lloyd-Sidle. Tricia has served as a coworker in Uruguay, and from 1993 to 2001 she was the coordinator of the Global Awareness and Involvement unit of the Worldwide Ministries Division in Louisville. At present, she serves as the Regional Liaison for the Caribbean, with special attention to Cuba and the Caribbean–North American Council for Mission (CANACOM). Chapter 9 is one of four chapters that either covers or touches on Asia. Presbyterians have focused on Muslim regions of West Asia, on India and Pakistan, and on the Confucian and Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia. This chapter on East Asia is written by Scott Sunquist, now at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, but who previously served for eight years in Singapore, teaching Asian Church History at Trinity Theological College. Chapter 10, on the Middle East, is written by Stan Skreslet of Union-PSCE in Richmond, Virginia. Previously Stan taught at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt, for ten years. Chapter 11, on Presbyterian mission work in Africa, is written by William (Bill) Anderson, African historian and missionary, who worked for nearly half a century in Africa. Chapter 12, on Europe, was written by Duncan Hanson with the help of Art Beals. Duncan Hanson has been the PCUSA area coordinator for Western Europe and is currently the supervisor of Reformed Church in America mission programs in Europe and Russia. Art Beals presently serves as the Regional Liaison for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the

Balkans. Formerly Art was the Mission Pastor at University Presbyterian Church, Seattle, Washington. Chapter 13 is written by John Webster, well-known scholar of Indian Christianity, but especially of Dalit Church history and theology. John has served over twenty-two years in India.

### WHAT TYPE OF HISTORY IS THIS?

History of Christian missions used to be the cornerstone of mission studies. Many of the great mission scholars, like Kenneth Scott Latourette, Stephen Neill, and others, were really historians of Western missions and missionaries. This book is not a mission history. If it were, you would have before you a chronological description of the story of Presbyterians going out into different lands, planting churches, building schools, and developing hospitals. Mission history is really the intercultural dimension or foreign relations department of church history. Much of this type of history focuses upon institutional development and the “extension” of the church in foreign lands. Some of this volume partakes of history of missions, but there are other angles and concerns—other questions—that moved this project forward.

In this project we were concerned about two issues: making a record of what happened, and doing this in such a way that it would serve the church. It is possible to simply record history as one sterile fact after another. That is not what you have in your hands now. In service to the church, we designed this history so that it tries to uncover motives, responses to social change, and contextual variables. Still there is much missing. If we had the time and space, we could easily write a “volume 2” made up of biographies of twenty or thirty missionaries and executives. History is, after all, really about people, their thoughts, relationships, and decisions. In this history, we have decided that future generations need to have different angles of vision to better understand what has happened in, to, and through the various Presbyterian missions. For those more attuned to historical studies today, we have sipped from the pools of sociological studies, postcolonial studies, and postmodern critique to give some definition and heightened awareness of some of the issues before us. In editing this volume, we have become aware of the limits of such a grand design, but also the benefits. One of the benefits is that certain themes begin to present themselves, and these themes have more integrity when they come from a variety of approaches, people, and disciplines.

These themes emerged as we saw that many of the topics discussed in this volume were taken up in different chapters, giving the reader a sense of repetition. What this actually reveals is that there are a number of themes, issues, events, and writings that have had a broad impact on Presbyterian mission, and this volume looks at these items from different perspectives. Four examples will make this clear. First, the 1956–61 period of mission study that culminated with the publication of *An Advisory Study* was a critical moment in Presbyterian mission. This

study is mentioned in the first chapter on the larger ecumenical context, in the chapter on changing structures of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (chapter 3) and in chapter 4, on Presbyterian theology during this period. The initiative of Charles Leber and the forward-looking concept of listening to and following the advice of overseas partners set a major new direction, with deep and lasting consequences. Presbyterian missionary activity, priorities, funding, and deployment and recalling of missionaries were all decisions that were made in light of the new pattern of mission outlined in *An Advisory Study*.

A second issue that comes up a number of times is the issue of funding. Even in talking about Presbyterian theology of mission, Sherron George mentions methods of funding and the decrease in funding for missionaries. Funding issues also came up quite often in our interviews of missionaries, and in addition, these issues are mentioned in the Annual Reports beginning in the mid-1950s. Dave Dawson sorts through some of the funding issues in all three streams of the Presbyterian Church to show similar patterns, which produced chronic results in the late 1960s. As early as the 1951 Report of the Board of World Missions (PCUS) to the General Assembly, we hear the concern expressed as a warning:<sup>7</sup> in 1920 the church gave 12 cents of every dollar to foreign mission; in 1930—8 cents; in 1945—5 cents; and in 1950 only 3 cents.

A third theme that resurfaces a number of times is the relationship between “ecumenical partnerships” and “mission.” Renaming the “Board of Foreign Missions” as the “Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations” expressed a theological and ideological turn toward the newly formed national churches. No longer were we imposing our will upon these self-governing churches; instead, we now worked as ecumenical partners, as requested by national churches overseas. However, it soon became clear that when it came to ecumenical partners, one size did not fit all. Some of the national churches, although self-governing, were far from ready to assume responsibility for the large institutions that Presbyterian missions had established. Some of the partners were more than ready, and the transfer was quite late indeed. However, a quick read of the General Assembly Minutes reveals the radical nature of the change. The reports of the General Assembly through the 1950s always speak of the national churches *and* the work of missionaries. In the index we find “missions” and “missionaries,” and we also find information on missionary work in the Report. By 1964, the Minutes no longer list “mission,” “missionaries,” or even the new term “fraternal workers” in the index. In fact, the COEMAR report for 1964 is an extensive analysis of the global situation and social shifts, with nothing on the work of our missionaries. “The changes which are taking place in our world are not normal phases in the familiar process of change which is always at work in history, but the most radical revolution that has taken place since the dawn of civilization.”<sup>8</sup> The word “revolution” is used six times in the first two paragraphs. The report discusses meetings, consultations, and ecumenical gatherings in which the church is engaged, but nothing is said of missionary work. It was remarked by a

number of missionaries that their work was not appreciated as it had been, and COEMAR had become, so it seemed, dominated by ecumenical relations. Other missionaries, however, said the changes did not touch their work at all.

Closely related to the shift toward ecumenical relations, as we see in this volume, is the repeated theme of missionary presence: the size, purpose, and duration. It is clear that there has been a decline in global Presbyterian mission presence, and David Dawson in chapter 2 describes that neatly for us. However, is a moratorium, “reduction of force,” or relocation and repositioning the proper response to the contemporary context? Don Snow, Presbyterian teaching in Nanjing, has argued that with the political and religious tensions in the world today, Christians need to be present, even as English teachers, as “preemptive peacemakers.” Most all Presbyterians agreed that a different set of skills and training are required today than during the heyday of colonialism, but how does that translate into missional presence? We have found no disagreement that the missionary is commissioned to prepare a church, its leaders, and its institutions to be under local church authority, but the timing and method, we have found, are most difficult to work out. By the end of the volume, there may be some answers to these questions, or at least some better questions.

The advantage of having these themes and issues treated in different chapters and from different contexts is that we begin to have a better understanding of what really happened in and through Presbyterian mission(s) in this critical sixty-year period. We hear some from the executives, from missionaries, from official reports, and then from the global church. History is best told from different perspectives, listening to a variety of sources, and turning over more rather than less evidence. We think the reader will find this true in the present volume.

And so the hundreds of Presbyterian missionaries, scholars, and church leaders also offer this volume as a gift to the global church, with the prayer that it will bring about greater faithfulness to God’s mission as together we pray, “Thy kingdom come on earth.” We end with an appropriate quotation from the Minutes of the 1953 General Assembly of the PCUS: just as the Korean War was coming to a close, the last missionaries were being released by Communist China, and just a year before the important 1954 Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches, whose theme was, “Jesus Christ—Hope for the World.”

There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the church receives her existence is that by which she is also given her world mission.<sup>9</sup>

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PART I  
HISTORICAL SETTING  
AND THEMES

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## Chapter 1

# Historical Context for Mission, 1944–2007

THEODORE A. GILL JR.

*Culture after culture with which the faith has been intimately associated has passed into history, seemingly to carry it also into oblivion. Yet the faith spreads ever more widely and moulds more and more peoples.*

*To many who have been counted wise by their fellows and in their own eyes, the story of the cross has seemed foolishness. Yet never has Jesus been as widely potent in shaping history as in A.D. 1944, when in many ways he and what he stood for have appeared the most obviously defeated.*

Kenneth Scott Latourette,  
*A History of the Expansion of Christianity*<sup>1</sup>

### SIGNS OF THE TIME

Perhaps each moment in human history is both the best and worst of times. Yale professor Kenneth Latourette, concluding his magisterial seven-volume account of the spread of Christianity through nineteen centuries, saw divine providence at work in the world of 1944 despite the evidence that principalities and powers were doing their utmost to thwart Christ's love. Our consideration of sixty years in Presbyterian mission history begins at that beginning, with events unfolding around Dr. Latourette as he contemplated the world.

In May 1944, Mahatma Gandhi was released from British custody; whatever its significance for the British Empire, the Quit India movement was no longer reckoned a threat to the war effort. The following August, Anne Frank and her family were taken into custody in Amsterdam. Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent the full year in German captivity. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a decorated Soviet soldier who included criticism of the Kremlin in letters home from the front, by year's end was just weeks away from deportation to the Siberian gulag. Hundreds of millions

languished due to war and repression, under occupation, under siege, in camps or prisons, and in fear.

In 1944 a Chinese-born child of YMCA missionaries, John S. Service, undertook the first U.S. diplomatic mission to Mao Zedong. Elsewhere in China an Indian-born child of Southern Baptist missionaries, the passionately anticommunist John Birch, served with distinction as an officer of the Flying Tigers seconded to OSS operations. At the same time, an envoy was sent from Washington to Chiang Kai-shek, seeking a temporary alliance with Mao to defeat the common enemy. The nationalist leader was also persuaded to release Ho Chi Minh from a Chinese prison to command guerrillas resisting the Japanese occupation of Indochina. Imperial Japan dominated East Asia, from Indonesia and the Philippines to Korea and Manchuria.

In El Salvador and Guatemala, national strikes drove dictatorial presidents from power. The president of Argentina, a general in office since the preceding year's military coup, appointed Colonel Juan Perón as vice president and secretary of war.

For many people from the global south, colonialism and paternalism set life's pattern. In 1944 Jomo Kenyatta, who would become the first prime minister and president of an independent Kenya, was laboring as a farm worker in England to avoid conscription into the armed forces. In South Africa, young activists impatient with moderate policies of the African National Congress organized the more radical ANC Youth League; the rising leadership included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo.

In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood, expanding across the Middle East since its founding by Ḥassan al-Banna in 1928, relocated its central offices from Aleppo to Damascus. In Palestine, the British commissioned a Jewish Brigade of three infantry battalions and related support units, authorizing use of the Zionist flag as the brigade's standard.

Allied authorities began to show optimism that the war was in its closing stages. In Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, a July conference of statesmen, economists, and bankers laid plans for a postwar international bank for reconstruction and development, and for an international monetary fund. The following month at a Washington, D.C., mansion called Dumbarton Oaks, diplomats drafted a framework for the future United Nations.

Harvard University installed the Mark 1, the first automatic digital computer put into daily use. Scientists and technicians of the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos, New Mexico, received the first shipments of reactor-bred plutonium from colleagues in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Meanwhile, aircraft with jet engines were introduced into service by both the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force.

Germany's long-range missiles were in production at last, and the V-2's frightening success established rocket science as a potent technology. Nevertheless, there were decisive events throughout 1944 that threatened the Axis dominion: the successful invasion of Normandy; the liberation of Rome, Paris, and Warsaw; the defeat of the Japanese navy in the Philippine Sea with repercussions across the Pacific; failure in late December of Germany's counteroffensive in the Ardennes.



The year was bracketed by meetings of the “Big Three”—Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill—at Tehran in late 1943 and Yalta in early 1945. Media coverage of these conferences emphasized the immediate impact of decisions on the war, with limited speculation concerning long-term consequences. The term “Cold War” had no currency in the searing heat of World War II. Nor did any real optimism survive from an earlier conflict that this might be “the war to end war.” It was called the “Second” World War, with no guarantee that the count was complete.

Among the natural deaths that fell in 1944 was that of William Temple, for two and a half years the archbishop of Canterbury and since 1938 chair of the provisional committee of the “World Council of Churches in process of formation.” Temple was widely known and well regarded as a priest, social activist, scholar, author, advocate of Christian mission near and far, former bishop of Manchester and archbishop of York, and Anglican representative to international gatherings since his youthful service as an usher at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910.<sup>2</sup> In his 1942 enthronement sermon the archbishop had surveyed the global situation, noting a significant development within Christianity despite the nations’ tumult: “Almost incidentally the great world-fellowship has arisen; it is the great new fact of our era.” While this assertion came to be associated with the World Council of Churches (WCC), William Temple’s intent was to describe the emergent fellowship among all Christians rendered possible by advances in transport and communication.

With the expansion of rail services and shipping, and the beginnings of passenger air travel, prewar Christian convocations had welcomed an ever-broader cross section of people from churches and mission agencies spread across the inhabited continents and islands. Now newspapers and magazines linked to foreign correspondents by cable- and radio-telegraphy reported recent news from locations around the globe, among other things serving as a compelling resource for intercessory prayer. Maps and photos from war-torn regions were staples of print journalism, and newsreels conveyed, with audio-video impact, up-to-date information to mass audiences. Developments in radio broadcasting since the First World War made it possible to hear voices, music, or the sounds of battle on another continent with only a slight lag in transmission. Contacts between churches, too, were being maintained even across enemy lines. The unprecedented immediacy of far-flung believers and communities led Christians from many traditions and cultures to recognize a “great world fellowship” maintained through a relatively informal network of relations rather than by any one institution. A concomitant secular appreciation of the world’s many cultures bred the tentative hope that a postwar United Nations could avoid the fate of the League of Nations.

Delay in founding a global council to direct the ecumenical impulse inspired a sense of déjà vu among church veterans. Following the Edinburgh conference of 1910, churches and mission agencies intended to move with dispatch toward a council through which the evangelistic, educational, medical, and diaconal work of foreign missions could be coordinated. The First World War had intervened in 1914, so the International Missionary Council (IMC) finally came into

being in 1921. Now proposals of the late 1930s for an assembly inaugurating a World Council of Churches, intended to provide leadership in the quest for Christian unity in faith and service, had been postponed in 1939, following yet another outbreak of hostilities in Europe. As the political and economic spheres were planning a U.N. and World Bank, the churches looked forward to new possibilities for cooperation and reconciliation in a world at peace. But the past was prelude to succeeding decades, and the germ of events in the remainder of the century was evident in the realities of 1944.

### MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP AND OBEDIENCE

Three Presbyterian churches from the United States were members of the IMC and would be among the founders of the WCC in 1948. They were the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA), the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS, or the “southern church,” dating from separation at the outbreak of the American Civil War), and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA). Cooperation among the three foreign mission boards was not unknown, but it was not routine before the 1950s. In 1958 the PCUSA and UPCNA formed the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA). In the spring of 1983 the denominations would evolve through further negotiation and reunion into one church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or PC(USA).

International mission, from the end of the war to the end of the century and beyond, was to be conducted in an interactive mode. A postwar model put forward by the International Missionary Council was partnership, building on the theme of “partnership in obedience” at the 1947 mission conference in Whitby, Ontario. Christians in each place were claiming responsibility for taking the gospel to their neighbors, according to Lesslie Newbigin, and discussion of mission within the IMC, the WCC, and their member institutions was “about evangelism in six continents, rather than about mission to six continents.”<sup>3</sup> This concept of partnership inspired such program titles as “interchurch aid” and “joint action in mission.”

After the Allied victory, many overseas ministries of the American Presbyterian churches put an emphasis on the reconstruction of devastated lands and communities, a concern for refugees, rebuilding, infrastructure, and finances that would contribute to Christian involvement in later economic and social development worldwide. Veteran service agencies of the historic peace churches like the American Friends Service Committee (founded 1917) and Mennonite Central Committee (1920) were now joined by such U.S.-based diaconal organizations as Catholic Relief Services (1943), Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief (1946), and World Vision International (1950).<sup>4</sup> With U.S. mission workers returning in significant numbers to Europe and Asia, such ministries to refugees and ruined communities became unavoidable preoccupations. Suffering and recovery from war and occupation called for a compassionate Christ-

ian response, and this continued to be true during the death throes of colonialism, the East-West conflict between ideologies, and later clashes of civilizations. The call to rebuilding and relief efforts involved mission workers from many churches, including the American Presbyterian denominations, often under the coordination of the International Missionary Council (IMC). The IMC was chaired from 1947 to 1958 by Presbyterian John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Theological Seminary.

As North American Protestants of the postwar period found themselves working alongside members of European churches, and as others experienced ancient Asian cultures awakening from alien captivity, many from the United States began to call themselves “fraternal workers” in ecumenical mission, rather than “missionaries,” vocabulary that would become official by the late 1950s as union negotiations between the PCUSA and the UPCNA created the UPCUSA and its Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR).<sup>5</sup> At this time John Mackay could report that cooperation in mission had come to include full partnership with newly independent churches on every continent, transforming “the Protestant Christian mission from a unilateral Western sending operation into a missionary enterprise with a world-wide base and a world-wide field of operation.”<sup>6</sup>

The fraternal approach drew on Whitby’s theme of partnership and later on mission theory emerging from the 1952 IMC conference in Willingen, Germany, best remembered for its affirmation of Christian mission as *missio Dei*; that is, *God’s mission* rather than the churches’ mission—or even the church’s mission. According to the concept of *missio Dei*, God is the “sending agent,” all mission is God’s alone, and all churches together cooperate in carrying out this mission in obedience to God. The field is the world, the whole world, “developed” as well as underdeveloped.<sup>7</sup> This was mission theory for a postcolonial age. Henceforth, it was said, a missionary going “to a country other than his own knows that he is going as a servant.”<sup>8</sup> Global mission partnerships envisioned at this time were not with people of other faiths but between one Christian group and other Christians elsewhere, to be carried out in a spirit of equality and interdependence, for the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ “as the crucified and living One, as Savior and Lord.”<sup>9</sup>

In the years between Willingen and the founding of COEMAR, the interactive approach to mission was hailed by PCUSA mission planners as a “new day dawning.”<sup>10</sup> In the spring of 1956 that church’s board of foreign missions, with the participation of the UPCNA mission leadership, invited twenty-two representatives of newly independent churches in the developing world to a consultation at Lake Mohonk, New York. The gist of the invitation has been summarized in the words “We want you to tell us what to do.”<sup>11</sup> Through listening to overseas representatives,

the Mohonk Consultation witnessed the process of growing independence and achieving maturity on the part of the younger churches coming to fruition. The Consultation took decisive action concerning the integration of missionary work with that of indigenous churches around the world, so that these churches might increasingly determine policy and administer work within their borders.<sup>12</sup>

Two years later, the creation of COEMAR combined the ecumenical relations commissions of the two predecessor churches with their boards of foreign mission. Lake Mohonk's participatory style of making strategy carried over into the new body, resulting in the 1961 publication of *An Advisory Study* pointing the way for the UPCUSA's mission on the basis of input offered by consultants from churches on other continents.<sup>13</sup> An addendum to the study was titled "The Ecumenical Movement as a Factor Conditioning the United Presbyterian Church's Fulfillment of Mission Overseas."

Not all American Presbyterians had been ecumenically conditioned. In the PCUS, resistance to ecumenical mission theory appeared frequently in the pages of the influential *Presbyterian Journal*. A new journalistic voice, *Christianity Today* magazine, cautioned against excessive novelty in the field of evangelism. On the other hand, the equally independent *Presbyterian Outlook* offered generally positive coverage of developments in the IMC and the WCC. The executive secretary of the PCUS Board of World Missions, C. Darby Fulton, favored the older system of evangelization from a "sending" church to "receiving" missions. Even the General Assembly's ad interim committee on the future of PCUS mission—appointed in 1952 and producing recommendations that there be greater cooperation with local leadership and integration of work into the life of national churches—failed to achieve immediate change.<sup>14</sup> But when Fulton retired in 1960, the PCUS called as his successor T. Watson Street, professor of missiology and church history at Austin Theological Seminary, a committed proponent of the conciliar ecumenical movement. Street convened a consultation on mission culminating at Montreat, North Carolina, in 1962. The report from Montreat called for mutuality in international mission, the need to evangelize through actions as well as words, and the courage to experiment in response to changing times and social situations. Lake Mohonk and Montreat set the tone for the two churches' mission policies through the 1960s.

Change in policy at the level of a Presbyterian mission board does not signal a change in every Presbyterian heart. There were and are Presbyterians who personally or collectively have chosen to support independent and parachurch organizations in preference to efforts by their own church's mission board. Some individuals and congregations, convinced that older methods are proved and remain faithful to the gospel, have favored agencies and missionaries that continue sending-receiving models of evangelism and use traditional categories and language. Many have insisted upon evangelistic preaching and a call to conversion as the leading pattern in any mission program they support. A denomination's more traditional missionaries who have solid support from congregations seldom are required to alter the philosophy of mission assumed in their letters and itineration, although other longtime missionaries have lobbied for and endorsed new policies.

Many Presbyterian donors and participants in mission have balanced the partnership model with proclamation aimed at conversion of populations. The Billy Graham organization has been deliberately interdenominational in its structure

and appeal, inviting congregations of many Christian traditions to join its crusades, and some members of the Graham family maintain the Presbyterian heritage of Ruth Bell Graham, the Chinese-born daughter of famed PCUS missionary L. Nelson Bell. World Vision International has also been successful in its appeals for support of an evangelistic approach to relief services and has shown willingness to interact with both evangelical and ecumenical alliances as well as denominational mission offices. Some other organizations not directed by the PC(USA) have negotiated mutually beneficial “covenant relationships” with church structures. Such arrangements address a waning enthusiasm for church-based approaches to mission:

In the USA, ecumenical churches with the admirable goal of involving the whole church in mission have included mission activity in unified budgetary, planning and administrative procedures. Yet many lay people and missionaries believe this has stifled flexibility, initiative, and close personal relations between missionaries, congregations, and the areas of missionary engagement.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever Presbyterians’ official policies, a variety of mission theories have come into operation across Presbyterian churches. Hans Küng has observed that theological paradigms abandoned by some Christians remain the standards of others, so that patristic Hellenism remains the confessional norm in Eastern Orthodoxy, medieval scholasticism forms the basis for contemporary Catholic traditionalism, Reformation and seventeenth-century canons shape Protestant confessionalism, and Enlightenment thought exercises considerable influence on theological modernism.<sup>16</sup> David Bosch added that theologians on the cusp of change, like Erasmus, Luther, and Barth, may incorporate ideas from worldviews old and new. According to Bosch, mission strategists of the late twentieth century found themselves caught between paradigms, influenced by biblical and confessional models, inescapably molded by Enlightenment assumptions, and open to the voices of oppressed people with whom Western churches have been in partnership and conversation. This leaves Christians in mission with “a kind of theological schizophrenia, which we just have to put up with while at the same time groping our way toward greater clarity.”<sup>17</sup>

A paradigm shift at the highest level of the Roman Catholic Church came with the papacy of John XXIII and Vatican II, the council he convened in Rome. This in turn affected the network of relationships among Christian world communions as well as joint operations of the churches. Meeting from October 1962 into the reign of Paul VI (pope, 1963–78) in December 1965, the Second Vatican Council signified a renewal of Catholic thinking on theology, ecumenical relations, modern culture, and the role of the church in the world. Orthodox and Protestant theologians were among the experts (*periti*) who participated in discussion and in the drafting of conciliar documents. The 1965 General Assembly of the UPCUSA hailed the new ecumenical situation in which “doors have been opened for conversation and cooperation between Protestant and Roman

Catholic, and for ventures in ecumenical trust and faith.”<sup>18</sup> Soon joint projects in the areas of research, theology, education, service, and outreach were flourishing from the local to the international levels of the churches. In 1970 a joint working group of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church began to issue a series of study documents on common witness, described as “a demand of the very gospel we proclaim” and calling on Christians in all churches to “look beyond our own and see the millions of people who do not know the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>19</sup> Catholic participation grew on joint commissions dedicated to faith and order, mission and evangelism, and Christian medical work. Following progressive social teachings in such Vatican II documents as *Mater et magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in terris* (1963), and the Latin American bishops’ Medellín endorsement of “God’s preferential option for the poor” in 1968, ecumenical work on justice was accentuated; from 1968 to 1983, many of these ministries were coordinated through a joint WCC and Vatican committee on society, development, and peace.<sup>20</sup> Together, the people of God approached Christian unity through service.

Mission theology became well integrated at the level of formal dialogues and in academic circles. By 1976 missiologist R. Pierce Beaver would note that younger participants in a symposium on American missions had come to lump the history of Catholic and Protestant missionary efforts into one undifferentiated “history of Christian mission,” failing to recognize that until recently the two traditions were prone not to identify each other as truly Christian, having “completely identified the gospel with their own particular varieties of Christianity.”<sup>21</sup> That so great a change in thinking had been taken for granted in so short a time is testimony to the radical shift in self-understanding brought about by Vatican II.

In this period the Catholic Church also opened bilateral dialogues with particular confessional families, represented by communions like the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), “for thorough and detailed study of specific issues which separate two traditions,” while also surfacing “the elements they have in common and which have been preserved in both traditions, despite their separation.” In this way, Presbyterian and Reformed churches with membership in WARC but not in the WCC became engaged in dialogue with Catholics on such issues as “the problem of mixed marriages” or “the presence of Christ in church and world.”<sup>22</sup> By the 1980s, the Roman Catholic Church would also be in formal dialogues with representatives of the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements.<sup>23</sup>

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, too, welcomed bilateral and multilateral dialogues with their fellow Christian world communions, from Lutherans and Disciples of Christ to Orthodox churches. Like the Roman Catholics, world communions including WARC have sought out dialogues with Evangelical and Pentecostal associations. Many international sister churches of the American Presbyterians, in places like Canada, the United Kingdom, India, China, Japan, and Australia, have become united and uniting churches—either by choice or of necessity—holding membership in WARC and one or more other Christian world communions. WARC has devoted decades to exploring the relationship between

Christian mission and church unity, with the terminology shifting from “mission and unity” in the 1980s to “mission in unity” by the end of the 1990s.<sup>24</sup>

### REGIONALISM, FRAGMENTATION, AND SECULARIZATION

From the late 1950s, the creation of regional ecumenical organizations (REOs) and the proliferation of national councils of churches provided additional connections within the ecumenical network. The earliest REOs, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Conference of European Churches, have been joined by equivalent bodies in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. The only major inhabited region not formally represented in an REO by the start of the twenty-first century was North America; the functional substitute was found in cordial relations between the Canadian Council of Churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. The growth of regional and national expressions of interconfessional activity “demonstrates that the goals of the global ecumenical movement cannot be attained unless churches are able to apply them in the milieu where they live and witness”; in addition, the formation of such councils in the global South may be seen as a deliberate attempt to find a voice “over against the Northern powers dominating the world scene.”<sup>25</sup>

Decolonization, national independence, and the autonomy of churches, conferences, and councils have manifested a degree of cultural fragmentation, beginning with awareness of the East-West political and ideological division during the Cold War and a North-South divide in global economics. The modernist, “ecumenical” ideal of one world, or one household of God, came into conflict with the particularities of those Christians, viewed from the West and North as “younger churches,” who were in search of a clear self-identity within their own national and cultural contexts. Contextual theologies began to clash with “ecumenical” theologies.

The sociological theory of secularization, based on arguments advanced by Max Weber early in the twentieth century, describes an Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment process of rationalization in Western culture that gradually drives religion from the public sphere until it becomes a largely private set of beliefs.<sup>26</sup> Western civilization, in turn, moves steadily from the assumption of an established Christendom with religious values at its moral core to the disestablishment of any church and to moral relativism. Christianity is no longer the insider’s faith but must approach all aspects of culture from outside the circle of temporal authority. Secularization was seen as an especially important facet of urban, as opposed to rural, life, and adoption of the theory held important consequences for mission in an age of rapid urbanization. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, youth and mission conferences began to focus on the consequences of what seemed a rising tide of secularization.<sup>27</sup> Publication of the prison correspondence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer invited Christian communities to develop a theological theory of secularization

that contemplates a faith appropriate to “a world come of age,” a renewed, “religionless” Christianity. “Before God and with him we live without God,” Bonhoeffer wrote on July 16, 1944. “God allows himself to be edged out of the world and onto a cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us.”<sup>28</sup>

For many thinkers in newly liberated churches, the way of mission was no longer the way of empire, or crusades, or “Christian soldiers marching as to war”: the way of the gospel was, as Bonhoeffer wrote just months before his execution, the way of servanthood and the cross. If this were accepted, then more marginal Christian communities had at least as much to contribute to theology and practice as the churches of traditional Christendom. Who was in the best position to teach the lessons learned from poverty, suffering, marginalization—and who had the need to learn them? Methodist bishop Federico Pagura of Latin America warned missionaries that attitudes must change if the mission workers were to remain a part of Southern societies:

If your allegiance and fidelity to your nation of origin are stronger than loyalty and obedience to Jesus Christ, who came “to put down the mighty and lift up the lowly” (Luke 1:52): Missionary, go home. If you are not able to love and respect as equals those whom you once came to evangelize as “the lost”: Missionary, go home. If you are not able to rejoice at the entry of new peoples and churches upon a new stage of maturity, independence, and responsibility, even at the price of committing errors like those which you and your compatriots committed also in the past: Missionary, go home.<sup>29</sup>

Doubts about Christian entanglement with culture were not exactly new. On the eve of the Edinburgh conference in 1910, John R. Mott had asked a colleague, “Do you now consider that we have on the home field a type of Christianity that should be propagated all over the world?”<sup>30</sup> Ecumenical theologian H. Richard Niebuhr had grappled with the same subject in his 1951 book *Christ and Culture*.<sup>31</sup>

Now it was in regional circles that the call for a “moratorium” on foreign missionaries began to arise. In 1971 the concept of “partnership” between north and south was challenged by Emerito P. Nacpil, then president of Union Seminary in Manila, who argued that “cooperation between Asian and western Christians can only be a partnership between the weak and the strong. And that means the continued dependence of the weak upon the strong and the continued dominance of the strong. . . . In other words, the most *missionary* service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home.” Similar sentiments were being expressed in other regions, notably by Paul Verghese in India, José Míguez-Bonino in Argentina, and Presbyterian theologian John Gatu in Kenya. Verghese, who would later come to be known as Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, claimed at this time that “the mission of the church is the greatest enemy of the gospel.”<sup>32</sup> In 1972, the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico celebrated its centennial with a request that the PCUS and UPCUSA withdraw all their missionaries for a period of at least five years; full relations were not reestablished until 1979.<sup>33</sup> Such calls for a moratorium on missionaries, and



a pattern for mission that led beyond unequal partnerships to a broader *koinōnia*, or fellowship, set the stage for the great debates on inculturation and contextualization of the mid-1970s and 1980s. But the dynamics of North-South church relations in this period cannot be fully understood apart from the East-West tensions of the Cold War.

## THE GEOPOLITICS OF MISSION

As the printing press had brought the Bible to vast new audiences in the sixteenth century, news and entertainment media of the twentieth century gave consumers vivid images of the world. Some observed with appreciation or trepidation, while others were motivated to action. After mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki hastened the surrender of Japan, the attention of a generation was riveted upon the potentials and dangers of science and technology in “the atomic age.” Optimistic reports on the peaceful use of nuclear energy ran alongside sobering stories on the testing of ever more sophisticated weapons. World War II—era allies of East and West now vied for dominance in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while border wars, civil wars, and revolutions proliferated around the globe. India and Pakistan were born amid bloodshed and ancient religious hatreds, as was the modern state of Israel. Indonesia refused to be reoccupied by colonial forces, winning its own independence from the recently liberated Netherlands. Chiang Kai-shek’s forces retreated to Taiwan as Mao took command in Mainland China. Confrontation in Korea led to the withdrawal of communist delegates from the United Nations and of Chinese churches from the WCC. Any sign of an uprising in Eastern Europe was thwarted by Soviet force. The United States and members of its military alliances rushed support to governments threatened by leftists. Reporters and broadcasters hastened to bring all this into people’s homes.

At the end of the Second World War, Christian leaders and institutions occupied high-profile positions. John R. Mott, the grand old man of the student volunteer movement, YMCA, and nascent WCC, shared the 1946 Nobel Prize for Peace with American social activist Emily G. Balch. The following year, the prize went to the Religious Society of Friends’ service committees of the United States and Great Britain. In 1952, the Nobel peace laureate would be awarded to Protestant medical missionary Albert Schweitzer. Representatives of churches, most of them from the West, played key roles in the shaping of postwar institutions. Reinhold Niebuhr, a professor of social ethics at Union Seminary in New York and counselor to leading U.S. political thinkers, was the subject of a cover story in *Time* magazine. International lawyer, diplomat, and PCUSA member John Foster Dulles, later President Eisenhower’s secretary of state, had been a longtime chair of the Federal Council of Churches’ commission on a just and durable peace. At war’s end, Dulles was instrumental in persuading the IMC and WCC to form the Churches’ Commission on International Affairs, and this body in

turn became a “principal player” in helping to formulate the U.N.’s universal declaration on human rights and structures by which it was to be upheld.<sup>34</sup>

While the intentions of these and other Christian founders of the new world order were oriented primarily toward the ideals of freedom and justice, some observers from other regions of the world perceived many such churchmen as servants of the Western power elite. Ancient Eastern churches harbored mistrust of the value that Westerners placed on religious freedom. It seemed to them a cover for the practice of proselytism by Protestant missionaries and evangelists in traditionally Orthodox lands. This was denounced as sheep-stealing, and worse: its consumer-oriented approach embodied elements of the worst in Western culture. Indeed, this became the deal breaker when Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe were invited to participate in the WCC from its founding in 1948. The Russian Orthodox Church declined in these words:

The direction of the efforts of the ecumenical movement into the channels of social and political life, and towards the creation of an “Ecumenical Church” as an influential international force, appears to us to be a falling into the temptation rejected by Christ in the wilderness. For the Church to accept it would involve departure from its own true path through attempting to catch souls for Christ by using non-Christian means.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Russian Orthodox and other Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe would decide to join the WCC in 1961, the issues of Enlightenment culture, the manner of participation in politics, and especially proselytism remain sore points in the Council’s internal dialogue.<sup>36</sup>

When the United Nations began in 1945, its members numbered 51 states. By 2004, membership had grown to 191. The WCC’s first assembly in 1948 welcomed 147 member churches; for the most part, they were traditional “sending” churches based in Europe and North America. As we have seen, the three American Presbyterian founders had united into one church by 1983, and a similar diminution of denominations through church union (see below) was experienced in other united and uniting denominations; however, the total number of WCC members in 2004 had increased to 347.<sup>37</sup>

The IMC merged with the WCC at the Council’s 1961 assembly in New Delhi, at the same time that a significant number of Orthodox and newly independent churches came into membership. The character of the Council was obviously changing, and questions arose concerning the effect a church body of such diversity might have on the mission activities that it encouraged and reviewed. John Coventry Smith of COEMAR, one of the architects of the IMC’s incorporation into the WCC, argued vigorously that “the church is the instrument that God founded for witness and it should be trusted.”<sup>38</sup> It was in the setting of this merger that two influential and widely studied books were written by American Presbyterian leaders: *Ecumenics: The Science of the Church Universal*, a textbook by John A. Mackay, and T. Watson Street’s adult education text *The Church and the Churches*. These books introduced Presbyterian pastors

and people in the pews to the modern ecumenical movement, in theory and practice.<sup>39</sup> Both works on ecumenics were grounded in the Protestant missionary enterprise. Church unity, wrote Mackay, “is never so real or so Christian as when it is fulfilled in mission. For it is in mission, and only in mission, that individual members of the community achieve true stature, when each discovers his place within the whole and becomes equipped to play his part worthily.”<sup>40</sup> But not everyone agreed on the nature of “mission.” During the 1960s many Presbyterians were involved in the civil rights movement, viewing it as an essential part of God’s mission at that time. In the summer of 1963, Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the UPCUSA General Assembly, marched on Washington with Martin Luther King Jr. and was arrested while protesting the segregation of an amusement park near Baltimore. Presbyterian congregations in the South and North provided resources for civil rights projects. Two hundred fifty PCUS missionaries signed a 1964 statement on race relations, decrying “the effect that the existence of various forms of racial segregation in the church has on the work of Christ in other lands.”<sup>41</sup> While some evangelical leaders distanced themselves from civil rights demonstrations, others like Donald McGavran lent support, if “only as a kind of parenthesis, a temporary diversion from evangelism and church growth,” which they saw as the ultimate route to a just society.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, there also were Protestants who saw civil disobedience and attempts to change society as an attack on the American system. Similarly, criticism of U.S. policy overseas was taken by some Presbyterians as a form of defeatism. It was an age of activism but also an age of controversy, and the struggle to uphold one’s ideals transcended national borders.

War and rumors of war sounded a constant undertone throughout the twentieth century. The departure of the French from Indochina was followed by a simmering civil war that came to a boil as the great powers supplied and supported the combatants. The revolutionary government of Cuba formed an alliance with the USSR, building toward the 1962 missile crisis with the United States. Images of violence and devastation were transmitted from the Middle East, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Korea, the borders of India and Pakistan, Congo, Nigeria, Angola, Rhodesia, Namibia, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador—the list goes on. In dialogue with church leaders throughout the world, mission officials of the American Presbyterian churches heard their partners’ expressions of discontent with U.S. policy and tactics on many fronts.

Responding to entreaties from partners and reports from fraternal workers, many in Protestant leadership felt compelled to play an advocacy role. In 1965, a deputation from COEMAR met with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Defense Secretary Robert MacNamara (both Presbyterians) and Rusk’s deputy George Ball to explain their misgivings about the American presence in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam. When challenged why leaders of an American church felt compelled to speak about foreign policy, John Coventry Smith replied, “We are not just American Christians. We belong to a wider Christian community which is disturbed, and we cannot keep quiet.”<sup>43</sup>

In 1966, Eugene Carson Blake was elected general secretary of the WCC. His arrival coincided with the 1966 Church and Society Conference in Geneva, focusing on rapid social and technological change. For the first time, a global ecumenical conference hosted as many representatives from the developing world as from the North Atlantic nations, in addition to a significant representation from Orthodox churches based in Eastern Europe. Radical change was embraced by many speakers, one of the most widely quoted of whom was mission professor Richard Shaull of Princeton Seminary. In an early evocation of Latin American liberation theology, the former UPCUSA fraternal worker in Brazil called for Christians to support “guerilla units with a clear sense of self-identity, a vision of a new social order and a commitment to constant struggle for change, inside or outside the social structures.”<sup>44</sup> Less revolutionary statements from Geneva nonetheless leveled criticism at U.S. foreign policy, especially in Vietnam, and supported civil disobedience in defense of human rights. In the following months, themes of social change were taken up by WCC member churches, national and regional councils of churches, congregations, and mission agencies. The struggle for justice in Latin America was to be a project in which churches and councils confronted dictatorial governments for decades, often finding themselves running afoul of U.S. foreign policy in the region and risking charges of being soft on communism.<sup>45</sup>

Opposition to the official line on mission and ecumenics crystallized in conservative publications, and notably in the UPCUSA with the organization of the Presbyterian Lay Committee. The first edition of its newspaper, *The Presbyterian Layman*, appeared in early 1968, and from its inception the *Layman* opposed Presbyterian involvement in the WCC and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Editorials held that the policies of these ecumenical bodies were “not in the best interests of the United States.”<sup>46</sup>

Social activism has been an easier target than theology for opponents of ecumenical councils. There is no official “ecumenical theology” since the doctrines of churches in membership of ecumenical councils run the gamut from Orthodox patristic thought through the fundamentalism of nineteenth-century missionary church planters to liberationist statements of recent decades. This theological pluralism in itself may be cause for criticism, and it is the subject of continuing discussion at several levels through faith-and-order commissions. But it is difficult to pin a particular heresy on the movement as a whole.

Ecumenical social activists and their critics opened a new chapter of mutual antagonism at the end of the 1960s when the World Council of Churches under the leadership of Eugene Carson Blake took on the policy of apartheid in South Africa and the white minority government in Rhodesia. A key theme at the WCC’s 1968 assembly in Uppsala (Sweden) was “white racism.” Following the assembly, Blake organized a conference at Notting Hill in London under the chairmanship of U.S. senator and future presidential candidate George McGovern, who had been a United Methodist delegate to the Uppsala assembly. The conference’s purpose was to formulate concrete proposals, eventually resulting in the WCC’s Pro-

gram to Combat Racism (PCR) and the Special Fund to Combat Racism. Baldwin Sjollema, the first director of PCR, later observed that, after Uppsala,

Christians could no longer live between the fortified walls of their churches, but had to cooperate with the much wider *oikoumenē* of the whole inhabited earth. In the case of the PCR this meant that its partners were not only the churches and their agencies, but also the many secular groups constituting the worldwide anti-apartheid movement and all those struggling against racism in many parts of the world. Most importantly, the debate about racial justice had to take place in the presence and with the participation of the victims themselves.<sup>47</sup>

Blake was instrumental in the formulation of the WCC's program and special fund against racism, and in seeing it through to adoption by the central committee during a stormy meeting at Canterbury late in 1969. The program and fund, once created, began to supply money to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and other victims of racially separatist regimes, including those of Rhodesia and South Africa. Contributions were administered through agents recommended by churches in Africa; among these agents were auxiliaries of banned organizations like the African National Congress. As might be expected, most of the money was used for its intended purposes, but accurate accounting and accountability were difficult in wartime conditions, and it is this ambiguity that critics seized upon. The WCC, however, was joined in its condemnation of apartheid by bodies like the Lutheran World Federation and WARC, which declared apartheid theologically incompatible with Lutheran and Reformed traditions of the Christian faith.

Before Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and 1993 respectively, the anti-apartheid movement was frequently depicted in Western media as a front for world communism, brutal, and intent on destruction of Western democracies. Many church members believed that ecumenical organizations and their supporting churches had become more political than religious, and that ecumenical politics tended to favor the forces of socialism.

The ecumenical campaign against apartheid would make the WCC and member churches targets of criticism into the 1990s, but the dangers were apparent from early on. In 1971 Eugene Carson Blake addressed the joint commission on Faith and Order at Louvain,<sup>48</sup> defending the struggle for justice and peace in the world as an intrinsic part of the churches' quest for unity. Despite his conviction that the World Council's path was correct, Blake warned: "Unless it becomes clearer to our whole constituency than it now is that all that the World Council is and does arises out of the gospel, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, an increasing and destructive polarization of the church may be expected."<sup>49</sup> A generation later another WCC general secretary, Konrad Raiser of Germany, recognized "that the destructive polarization of which Gene Blake spoke in 1971 did indeed occur and that it became a serious threat to the ecumenical movement."<sup>50</sup>

## CLASHES OF CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS

The impact of secularization theory on ecumenical mission played out dramatically at a teaching conference of the World Student Christian Federation at Strasbourg, France, in 1960. Johannes C. Hoekendijk deplored the ecclesiological assumptions of fellow lecturers Karl Barth and W. A. Visser 't Hooft, calling for “high worldmanship” among Christian students in place of “high churchmanship.”<sup>51</sup> He issued this challenge: “Are there no revolutionaries here? People who do not want to improve or to modify the structures and institutions of our Christian life but who are ready to break out of these prisons?”<sup>52</sup>

Adopting Bonhoeffer’s description of Jesus as “the man for others,” Hoekendijk argued that Christians in the world must live and act for others, and not for the sake of the churches and their institutions. The themes of the world as the arena for Christian mission and “the church for others” were key elements in the development of ecumenical approaches to mission, from the WCC’s assembly at New Delhi in 1961, through the 1966 Geneva Conference on Church and Society and the emphasis on “humanization” at the Uppsala assembly of 1968, to the WCC’s Mission and Evangelism Conference at Bangkok in 1973. Ecumenical studies concerning mission increasingly focused on social, economic, and cultural factors.<sup>53</sup>

While the 1973 conference on world mission and evangelism at Bangkok did produce statements endorsing church growth and personal evangelism, it was most famous—many would say notorious—for its explication of cultural dimensions of its theme “Salvation Today.” The conference’s definitions of salvation were mostly this-worldly, including liberation from economic injustice, political oppression, social alienation, discrimination on the basis of one’s sex, and personal despair. In the first section of its final report on “Culture and Identity,” the conference voiced approval of theological inculturation of the gospel, citing black theology as an example of the translation of Christian teaching into the life experience of a community.<sup>54</sup> In the field of Christian social ethics, the unified theory of “responsible society” that had provided a conceptual framework for approaching a limited number of economic contexts<sup>55</sup> gave way to case-by-case encounters with particular situations through action followed by reflection. From Bangkok onward, contextualized theology including instances of liberation and feminist theology would become a regular feature of ecumenical discussions, where these new schools of thought would vie with traditional orthodoxies. The scattered diversity of world Christianity led some “to encourage these many self-confident social theologies to undertake a more incisive dialogue with each other.”<sup>56</sup>

In parts of the world a mission focus on cultures encouraged dialogue both with some Christians unrelated to the World Council of Churches and with peoples of other faiths and ideologies. A Catholic theologian from Africa described the broad approach to inculturation:

Inculturation asserts the right of all peoples to enjoy and develop their own culture, the right to be different and to live as authentic Christians while

remaining truly themselves at the same time. It makes Christianity feel truly at home in the culture of each people, thus reflecting its universality. . . . The scope of inculturation extends to the totality of Christian life and doctrine, the central ministry of Christ and all other ministries which derive from it, the manner of witnessing to Christ, to proclaiming his message, worship, organization of church, study of the Bible, and theology and pastoral methods.<sup>57</sup>

Latin American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez described the “rise of ecumenical groups, often marginal to their ecclesiastical authorities, in which Christians shared their faith and struggled to create a more just society. The common struggle made the traditional ecumenical programs seem obsolete (‘a marriage between senior citizens,’ as someone has said) and impelled them to look for new paths towards unity.”<sup>58</sup> Subsequent proposals for a new, universal paradigm to serve as a framework for ecumenical theology were liberation thought, the equality of men and women in church and society, justice, peace, and creation—or several of these in combination.

For evangelicals like Arthur F. Glasser, the WCC’s sponsorship of contextual theology as an approach to mission at Bangkok (1973), the Nairobi assembly (1975), and the Melbourne mission conference (1980) resulted in discussions “so deeply committed to listening to voices from Latin America that great contemporary missiological issues were hardly given serious attention.”<sup>59</sup> In approaching people of other faiths and ideologies, he denounced the apparent ecumenical “obligation” to “‘dialogue’ of the sort that stops short of gospel proclamation and the essentiality of the call to conversion.”<sup>60</sup> Within WCC circles, too, there were those who worried over what they perceived as “the ‘loss of nerve’ in Christian mission that has accompanied the decline of western imperialism.”<sup>61</sup>

A new international mission body came into existence following the July 1974 Congress on World Evangelism held in Lausanne, Switzerland. John R. W. Stott provided leadership, with principal funding from the Billy Graham organization. In a keynote address, Stott affirmed that humanization, liberation, and justice are desirable goals, but “these things do not constitute the ‘salvation’ that God is offering the world in and through Christ. They could be included in the ‘mission of God,’ insofar as Christians are giving themselves to serve in these fields. But to call socio-political liberation ‘salvation’ is to be guilty of a gross theological confusion.”<sup>62</sup> The congress culminated in adoption of the fifteen-article “Lausanne covenant,” a document “reflecting the spirit and stance of the evangelical community in the late twentieth century.”<sup>63</sup> Although it was not the intention of organizers of the congress to found an ongoing missionary body, the covenant became the platform used several months later by enthusiastic evangelicals who became founders of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.<sup>64</sup>

Not without reason, the “Lausanne movement” and the conciliar “ecumenical movement” were depicted in succeeding years as competitors or even opponents, the former majoring in old-style evangelism and the latter frequently portrayed as blown about by trends of doctrine.<sup>65</sup> The truth was more complex.

There was an overlap in the two circles of mission activity and support.<sup>66</sup> Among other concerns, evangelical leaders insisted on Christians' obligations to the poor and to social justice. In the 1980s, reconciliation between East and West became an important theme of Billy Graham's preaching and media interviews. The WCC leaders responded to the challenge of Lausanne with a reexamination of their policies and rhetoric, deliberating in the WCC's Nairobi assembly of 1975 and the Melbourne mission conference of 1980, finally issuing the report *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*.<sup>67</sup>

The network of dialogues on mission that included Catholics, Orthodox, ecumenical and evangelical Protestants, Pentecostals, and others marked out common ground on which Christians could stand together, evidencing a "movement toward convergence" on mission and evangelism through "a basis of trust" that made honest dialogue possible.<sup>68</sup> The shared concerns for conversion of hearts and for justice came into focus as complementary aspects of Christian mission.<sup>69</sup> Common projects in mission and advocacy multiplied, among them programs addressing hunger, malaria, tuberculosis, and the new scourge of HIV and AIDS. In retirement, Eugene Carson Blake became the first chairperson of the citizen's lobby Bread for the World. World Vision International opened new channels of communication and cooperation with conciliar agencies.

There continued to be moments when theologies of inculturation tested the limits of a wider community, as when Korean theologian Chung Hyun-Kyung combined aboriginal spirituality and ancestor worship with elements of minjung and feminist theologies in her keynote address at the WCC's 1991 assembly in Canberra. Another high-profile moment came in 1993–94, when a "Re-Imagining Conference" highlighting feminist theology was held in Minneapolis (November 1993), with partial funding from an office of the World Council and from the women's unit of the PC(USA). Less-than-flattering reports of the event circulated in publications ranging from *Christianity Today* to *The Presbyterian Layman*, and unit director Mary Ann Lundy was asked to resign from her PC(USA) leadership position. Subsequently, she was called as deputy general secretary to the WCC's newly installed Konrad Raiser. In these cases and others, Orthodox and more traditional Protestant members of the WCC—many from the global South—were as uncomfortable as was anyone in the Lausanne movement.<sup>70</sup>

One issue raised throughout debates on inculturation and a missionary moratorium was the question of the ability of indigenous minority communities of Christians to prosper if cut off from outside aid. A stunning reply came following the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) in the People's Republic of China. For decades, Westerners had mourned the "loss" of China and its churches to communism after Mao's conquest (or what the Chinese call the Liberation) of China in 1949. But with the reopening of church buildings and renewed permission for the public practice of religion, it became apparent that the Chinese church had been multiplying far beyond Western imagining. A Presbyterian "old mission hand" put it this way:



In the early 1950s the missionary movement had come to an end. . . . Yet in spite of the limitations of the missionaries—their foreignness and their connection with the colonial system—the seed of the Christian gospel had been buried deep in the soil of China. And when springtime finally came, new shoots full of vitality and life began to emerge. But it was not the same as what had been planted. Christianity had taken a form and shape which the missionary could not have planned or predicted or understood. What finally came up . . . was distinctively and thoroughly Chinese!<sup>71</sup>

Chinese church leaders saw the next decade as a period of recovery, followed by rapid expansion in the 1990s. In a 2003 study sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation, seminary president Feng Gao reported on officially recognized congregations:

It is estimated that there are now fifteen million [Protestant] Christians, more than a twenty-fold increase compared with the 700,000 disciples in 1949. In the last twenty years, sixteen thousand churches have been opened, seventy percent of which are newly constructed; and there are over three thousand meeting points. The church has reclaimed from government and private sources an average of six church buildings a day.<sup>72</sup>

The news from China contrasted strikingly with church statistics in the United States and both Western and Eastern Europe. By the late 1970s it was common to speak of the “decline” of “mainline” Protestant churches, a trend perceived by more than a few as “the blaring alarm of a denominational meltdown.”<sup>73</sup> Total memberships in the PCUS and UPCUSA had peaked in the early 1960s, and the combined membership dropped steadily from the PC(USA)’s 1983 reunion through the period covered by this book.<sup>74</sup> The number of post-war, full-time missionaries peaked at 1,284 in the UPCUSA during 1959, and at 567 in the PCUS during 1965.<sup>75</sup> Although lower numbers of U.S. mission workers had much to do with new strategies of mission through partnership, and although giving to Presbyterian causes in general actually rose, raw membership figures fed the sense of “decline” and inferiority to conservative religious organizations that had ongoing numerical growth. It was easy to move from a conviction of church decline to the belief that Christianity itself was in retreat. Early in the twenty-first century, WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia of Kenya reminded a North American audience that theirs was not the only perspective to be considered:

In the world context, Christianity is growing—not shrinking. Its growth is most prodigious in the global South, and particularly on my own continent of Africa. Statisticians now locate Christianity’s demographic center of gravity near Timbuktu in the Sahara desert, and it continues to shift southward year by year. In addition, traditional forms of Christianity that were shaped in Europe, from Constantinople and Rome to Wittenberg and Geneva, are less and less normative. African-initiated churches proliferate, and in all the regions of the globe Pentecostalism expands even as the U.S. mainline churches contract. It is all part of the interplay, the ebb and flow, of the

church's life. Within this exciting and nerve-racking pattern of global change, each member has its role to play within the unity of the one body. And within the providence of God, prosperity may come again to the North American mainline through the Spirit's action among Christians of Indonesia or Nigeria or Brazil.

Perhaps this poses the greatest of the contemporary challenges to North American Christians and their churches: the need to adjust to a new position within the wider church of Jesus Christ, the need to give up total control of the missionary enterprise, the need—as has been said—to “let go, and let God.”<sup>76</sup>

A number of initiatives developed over the years that encouraged multidirectional patterns of aid, evangelism, and renewal, including the Frontier Internship Program, Mission to the U.S.A., and international exchanges of Christians through the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and governing body partnerships. Support for mission in and to the West came from Lesslie Newbigin's drive to reconceptualize the “first world” in post-Enlightenment times as a mission field in need of cross-cultural encounter with authentic Christianity from other shores.<sup>77</sup> While he approved of conciliar statements in favor of joint action with more conservative evangelicals, he doubted “that the desire here expressed will be fulfilled unless the WCC gives much more evidence of being filled with a longing to bring the Gospel to all peoples.”<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, ensuing years brought interaction on “gospel and culture” involving participants from diverse theological perspectives.

The acceptance of cultural pluralism and the broad internationalism of ecumenical mission came into conflict with a rising tide of neoconservatism in the era of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and a new pope from Communist Poland suspicious of liberationist thought and activities. Neoconservative philosophy stepped away from the geopolitical “realism” and the superpowers' “spheres of influence” that had been accepted by strategists ranging from Reinhold Niebuhr to Henry Kissinger. Neoconservatives demanded an unyielding mission to eradicate Marxist ideology. Princeton political scientist Stephen Kotkin categorizes neoconservatism as a continuation of “the missionary impulse” of U.S. triumphalism earlier embodied by William McKinley and Woodrow Wilson: the world was to be “converted” to Western democratic ideals and remade in the image of America.<sup>79</sup> Neoconservatism reinforced themes that had long been found in critiques of the WCC and the National Council of Churches (NCC) like those of *The Presbyterian Layman*. Erskine Clarke has offered a sympathetic explanation of why such criticism of ecumenical mission sways readers:

Behind many of these attacks are opposing views of the American experience and the role of the United States in the world. The *Layman* expresses the older view, long held by the Protestant establishment, that the United States has been a great source of hope for the world and a defender of justice and democracy. An alternative view, often found in the pronouncements of the NCC and WCC, is that the United States is the source of most serious problems because of its racism, consumerism, militarism, and impe-

rialism. Such an alternative view of the American experience and the United States' place in the contemporary world has contributed ironically to the decline of the ecumenical movement in the United States.<sup>80</sup>

One expression of the neoconservative political movement is the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), which from its founding in the early 1980s has opposed the policies of the WCC and NCC. The IRD particularly objected to ecumenical ties with opponents of the “dirty wars” in Latin America and apartheid in southern Africa, to the sanctuary movement and antinuclear campaigning at the close of the Cold War. The IRD proved effective in attracting media attention to their charges of churchly anti-Americanism. Paul Crow, former ecumenical officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has described the prime examples of conservative and neoconservative criticism of ecumenical internationalism:

The severest attacks on both councils came in three articles in *The Reader's Digest* in 1973, 1983, and 1993. Also in 1983 the CBS television show “60 Minutes” did a television version of these attacks—claiming the councils misused funds and lost the trust of the churches by supporting liberation armies in Africa and elsewhere and by involvement in similar political activities around the world. . . . Research at the time brought forth evidence that assistance to those who made these erroneous attacks was given in the form of funds by the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a neo-conservative research institute in Washington that received a large percentage of its funds from right-wing foundations. After considerable time, the churches have proved that these critiques were gross distortions, but unfortunately the correct impression did not always reach the pews and pulpits.<sup>81</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, neoconservative Francis Fukuyama foresaw “the end of history,” or a least an end to worldwide ideological conflict. He wrote that he observed the coming peace “with ambivalence,” since it seemed to be the end of a struggle “that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism.”<sup>82</sup> There was an unprecedented opening of trade and dialogue between East and West. Representatives of Eastern and Western churches began gingerly to reassess their relationships.<sup>83</sup> In postapartheid South Africa, ecumenist and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu was put in charge of the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an attempt to find healing that was embraced by peace activists in many parts of the world.

On the other hand, the historian Samuel P. Huntington prophesied “that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.”<sup>84</sup> He noted that militant expressions of religion were an engine of bellicosity among competing cultures.

After September 11, 2001, the date of al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, "the clash of civilizations" seemed a fair summary of the framework within which the U.S. administration viewed the world and promoted its policy of "preemptive war" in the face of terrorism. Following Western-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the incarceration without trial as well as rendition for torture of suspected terrorists, the WCC and NCC found themselves once again in opposition to central policies of the U.S. government, while the IRD and others renewed their critique of the councils.<sup>85</sup> Ecumenical leadership was unapologetic, emphasizing again their responsibility to Christians in all countries. Samuel Kobia, in his challenge to North Americans, explained what he was hearing as he visited Christians in each of the world's regions:

Many people in the world—east and west, north and south, regardless of political or economic conviction—mistrust or openly fear the United States. . . . People in many nations ask themselves where the doctrine of preemptive war may next be employed, and for what stated reason, . . . if any.

The U.S. is seen as the bulwark of economic globalization that forces poorer nations to live according to the dictates of wealthy corporate interests and financial institutions controlled by those interests. In recent years, we have seen a gathering backlash to these policies in Latin America—but this is not the only region in which the United States has suffered a loss of respect and support. . . . Among educated people, the U.S. is feared for its willful disregard of global warming as a threat to the future of our planet.<sup>86</sup>

As civilizations clashed, the churches and their councils sought new means toward dialogue and cooperation. The WCC spoke of the post-9/11 period as "a critical moment" for interreligious dialogue, inviting representatives of Islam, Judaism, and many other world faiths to consultations and conferences.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, the conciliar movement was seeking a wider network of national and regional "churches together" and a "global forum" that could attract Catholics, Pentecostals, and conservative evangelicals in addition to the traditional membership of the WCC.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, simultaneous attempts at intra-Christian and interreligious dialogue provoked disagreement, since varying traditions could agree neither on basic guidelines nor on theological assumptions. This was also an obstacle to some joint mission projects.

Michael Kinnamon, reflecting on preparations for the 2005 Athens conference on mission and evangelism, noted that this WCC event was attracting unprecedented numbers of Catholics, Pentecostals, and evangelicals not affiliated with the council. But he also remarked that in the first decade of the twenty-first century,

the great question for us is that of inter-religious dialogue, yet the interfaith dimension of mission is noticeable by its absence from the agenda of this conference. . . . [So.] expanding participation on the part of Christian traditions may also make some issues more difficult to deal with. As an ecumenist, I want to say an emphatic Yes! to expanding participation in the movement. But we should recognize that it does complicate things. For the moment, we continue to accept the two main assertions on interfaith rela-

tions formulated in the San Antonio mission conference in 1989: We know that we can place no limits on the extent of God's grace, but at the same time we know that we are called as Christians to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Kinnamon expressed hope that, "as the relationship matures" among traditions represented at the Athens conference, a new conversation may begin on "the place of faiths other than Christianity in God's plan for salvation."<sup>89</sup> But this remains one of many mission projects for the future.

Prophecy is a dangerous business, and as our little journey through ecumenical mission history and theology has shown us, no one in 1944 could have predicted such global and seismic shifts among the world's churches from the end of World War II to the present. We can see immediately before us the need to focus on theologies of religion, witness in partnership, the growth of mission from the non-West, and the ongoing struggle to find full and visible expressions of Christian unity. But what major changes will develop in Christianity in the next ten or twenty years? No one knows.

Now, as in the past, the great world fellowship struggles to be obedient in each place, in each year. As ever, principalities and powers conspire together. And Presbyterians, by the grace of God and in communion with the church militant and triumphant, press on in faith and action, seeking to follow wherever Christ leads.