

Toward a Framework for a
Practical Theology of Institutions
for Faith-Based Organizations

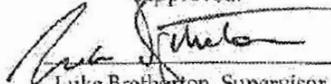
by

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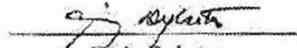
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Abstract

U.S. faith-based organizations (FBOs) founded by Christians have gained wide recognition and influence both nationally and internationally and have become, to a large extent, the de facto bearers of contemporary Christian mission in an increasingly post-denominational landscape. Yet the focus of this thesis is how FBOs suffer from a separation between missiology, ecclesiology, and theological reflection in ways that inhibit their participation in the mission of God, or *missio Dei*.

The thesis draws on history, sociology, and missiology to provide a critical framework for an inter-disciplinary analysis of FBOs that illuminates the problems they face and describes what is required for a recovery of faithful witness. The thesis begins with the emergence of FBOs as a uniquely Protestant story, locating their origins within the history of Protestant missions, the emergence of the voluntary society, and their evolution into humanitarianism and the problems which emerge out of that history. A move to sociological analysis situates contemporary FBOs within a wider social ecology of powerful forces that cause non-profits to behave like for-profit corporations, often giving themselves over to bureaucratic models shaped by a technological understanding of practice. The final move to missiology and ecclesiology makes the claim that the critical reference point for evaluation of the FBO is the flourishing of the practice of Christian missions.

This constructive missiology provides the basis for proposing marks of a faithful mission-type organization in the contemporary context which can sustain the practice of missions not primarily as activism, but as participation in the *missio Dei*. The thesis re-narrates

FBOs and the marks we should look for in FBOs by proposing several organizational disciplines that provide a response to the challenges facing the contemporary FBO. These marks are displayed through brief case studies from three FBOs: L'Arche International, the U.S. national organization InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and New Song Urban Ministries in Baltimore.

*To my parents, in gratitude for your faithful life and witness
through 16 years of missionary service with the Korean people*

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1. Introduction

Over the past five decades, hundreds of U.S. faith-based organizations (FBOs) founded by Christians have gained wide recognition and influence—from global organizations such as World Vision and Habitat for Humanity, to national organizations such as the Call to Renewal and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, to denominational initiatives such as the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Church World Service, to local food banks and community development corporations.¹

Yet through 25 years of service in both FBOs and in the theological academy—from grassroots community development in Mississippi, to the Duke Divinity School Center for Reconciliation and engagements with both U.S. ministries and numerous global contexts—I have become increasingly concerned about a growing number of Christian organizations and institutions that appear to engage their work and evaluate their effectiveness little differently from secular organizations. I was alarmed by the comment of a friend who served in long-term service with a major international Christian organization. “I think half the staff around the world will leave in the next five years,” he said. “It has become too much about business, too little about ministry.” Yet over these same years I have also encountered many signs of hope—FBOs that have, over decades, sustained their mission in the world and organizational life, marked by a specialness and expansiveness in how they relate to neighbor, others in

¹ Elizabeth Ferris writes: “According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, there were about 26,000 international NGOs by the year 2000, compared with 6,000 in 1990. The US alone has about 2 million NGOs, 70% of which are more than 30 years old. India has about 1 million grassroots groups, while more than 100,000 NGOs sprang up in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1995. ‘As a group, NGOs now deliver more aid than the whole United Nations system.’ Some observers estimate that the total funding channeled through NGOs worldwide is in excess of US\$ 8.5 billion per year” (2005: 312).

their organization, and both policy and Scripture. Not to mention their communal sense of joy.

In *After Virtue*, Alasdair Macintyre draws a distinction between practices and institutions. “Chess, physics, and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities, and hospitals are institutions.”² The ultimate goal is the flourishing of the practices, with institutions being bearers of practices. By this description contemporary FBOs are institutions. If the FBO as a social institution is therefore a bearer of practices, and if the ultimate goal is the flourishing of the practice at stake (of chess, physics, medicine), what is the practice of which the institution of the faith-based organization is a steward and bearer? The argument of this thesis is this: the FBO did not drop from the sky, but emerged in a particular shape and time and social influence through the evolution of Protestant Christian missions, and it is the practice of *Christian missions* that is ultimately at stake in an analysis of the FBO.

If this claim has validity, then what is the redemptive form needed for the FBO to sustain the practice of Christian missions? One argument of this thesis is that a critical ability required for redeeming the form of the FBO for Christian missions is learning a peculiar kind of “institutional imagination.” Jewish rabbi and theologian Abraham Heschel gets to the heart of this challenge in a distinction between “content” and “container”:

Why do so many of the great religions which had their origins in the mystery come ultimately to be social service agencies, or in their religious life to be preoccupied with form and concerned more with the container than the content?³

² Macintyre (1984: 194).

³ Quoted in Greenleaf (1977: 254).

Heschel identifies a predicament at the heart of institutionalization: the loss of transcendence as growth occurs and the quest for longevity and even permanence is pursued. In reference to container and form, I take Heschel's key words to be "ultimately" and "preoccupied." The warning is to not "ultimately" lose a clear sense of mission and *telos*, to keep the vitality of religious content at the heart as growth is engaged. Yet to pay faithful attention to containers is not the same as being "preoccupied" with them. If containers without content can become durable bottles containing bitter wine, then content without containers can become only a brief taste of succulence without the wineskin to ferment into its best possible taste.⁴ A kind of failure will happen when we become preoccupied with *either* content *or* container.

1.1 Overview of the Arguments and Movements

The movements of my argument in this thesis attempt to illuminate this critical relationship between mission and means, or imagination and organizational form. I begin with the history of Protestant missions, and tell a story about problems that emerge out of that history. From the outset, missions became separated from ecclesiology, and institutional modes of pragmatism developed that were in some respects antithetical to the gospel. Secondly I engage the contemporary context of missions to see how these problems are being re-capitulated. Here I examine the contemporary FBO through the categories of sociology and what is called "institutional isomorphism," that is, the tendency for non-profits to

⁴ Greenleaf once argued that healthy institutions and structures are not only necessary but indispensable. Thriving institutions can "lift people up to nobler stature and greater effectiveness than they are likely to achieve on their own or with a less demanding discipline." Ibid.

eventually behave like for-profits. We see a FBO in contemporary times shaped out of the unfortunate trajectories of the history and often giving itself over to bureaucratic models shaped by a technological understanding of practice. The third movement asks, how do we think rightly about the FBO? Missiology and ecclesiology is engaged here. Finally, I seek to provide marks of a faithful mission-type organization in the contemporary context. In terms of methodology, I start with history, because the problems emerging for the FBO are inherent in their particular history; move to sociology in order to broaden the landscape of the FBO beyond organizations themselves to the wider social ecology in which they both act and are acted upon; and finally move to missiology and ecclesiology to extend my claim that it is the flourishing of the practice of Christian missions that is at stake in the faithful FBO.

1.2 Scope and Limits of the Thesis

The thesis engages three areas of research that are critical to analysis of the FBO— history, sociology, and missiology. Each area is limited to one chapter and a focus on broad trends and categories (for example, the first chapter on history focuses on five key developments, one in each century from the seventeenth century through the twenty-first). Outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to name other critical areas of research for a wider and deeper analysis of the FBO. One is an exploration of the different trajectories of Roman Catholic missions, which provides a critical place of comparison and contrast. Another area not engaged is the field of business knowledge. Given my argument about the prevailing bureaucratic and technological institutional models, an analysis of the assumptions that drive this model both in terms of imagination and form is needed, but will

not be provided here. Given such limits, this thesis seeks to provide some critical analysis and categories toward developing a framework for a practical theology of institutions to assist faith-based Christian organizations for faithful and effective reasoning, judgment, action, and witness.

1.3 Overview of Chapters

The thesis has four chapters, moving from history, to sociology, to missiology, to a constructive approach and integrative analysis.

Chapter one focuses on the history of FBOs as a uniquely Protestant story, locating the origins of the FBO within the history of Protestant missions and their evolution into humanitarianism (a brief comparison is drawn to the Catholic trajectory, a very different story). It raises questions about the problems that have emerged out of this history in terms of understanding the relationship of FBOs to ecclesial forms, to mission, and to the professional service organization, and examines how these different understandings influenced what FBOs look like today. This history reveals a critical interrelationship between mission and polity, that is, how mission is imagined, and how it is formed and carried out via organizational and ecclesial means.

Chapter two focuses on assessing FBOs through the lens of sociological analysis. The use of concepts such as “sectors,” “organizational field,” and “institutional isomorphism” offers an account of FBOs within a multi-dimensional social ecology of social powers, forces, and captivities. I describe how FBOs are both acting and acted upon within a complex landscape of institutions and the dominant sectors of market, state, and other forces. Two

prevailing organizational models on the contemporary landscape are engaged: the bureaucratic model and the aid model. I then move to engage sociological typologies of the FBO to seek to recover the special nature of the “faith” in the FBO. At the end of the chapter I introduce the concept of “institutional imagination” with respect to understanding FBOs and the consequences when that is missing.

Chapter three engages a theological and missiological critique, taking into account the historical and sociological analysis. I re-narrate “faith” and “organization” in FBOs by providing an analysis of FBOs located in what the Christian tradition has called “missions” and the logic and nature of Christian mission. This analysis describes a wider institutional, cosmic, and eschatological ecology required by a Christian account of FBOs. This includes drawing on accounts of institutions, practices, social imaginaries, cultural liturgies, and principalities and powers.

In the final chapter I offer my recommendation for re-imagining FBOs in light of my constructive missiology. Drawing on this constructive missiology, I re-name and re-narrate FBOs and the marks we should look for in FBOs by proposing several organizational disciplines that provide a response to the challenges facing the contemporary FBO. Brief case studies are offered of three FBOs: L’Arche International, the U.S. national organization InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and New Song Urban Ministries in Baltimore.

1.4 The Special Nature and Charism of the Faith-Based Organization

From the Salvation Army and its outreach of mercy, to World Vision and its \$3 billion annual budget directed to relief and development, to Habitat for Humanity and its widely-

admired public service in the name of homeownership for the marginalized, to the myriad of organizations and ministries in local communities, FBOs have become to a large extent the de facto bearers of contemporary Christian mission in an increasingly post-denominational landscape. Their vitality is therefore of great consequence.

The ground this thesis seeks to open is five-fold. First, I seek to show that the practice of Christian missions is the critical reference point for evaluation of the FBO historically, sociologically, and theologically. This means that the redemptive form needed from the FBO is one that can sustain the practice of missions not primarily as activism, but as participation in the *missio Dei*.

Secondly, that redemption cannot occur without understanding the historical, social, institutional, and cosmic pressures that deform the FBO. The story of Scripture from creation to fall to redemption is in part a story of the navigation of particular polities and powers: Garden, Egypt, Wilderness, Monarchy, Exile, Empire and Occupation, the New Jerusalem. A theological account of this wider landscape of powers is critical for analyzing the challenges facing the FBO.

Third, the redemption of the FBO thus requires thinking about both mission and means, for the challenges facing FBOs are *institutional* problems that concern a historical dichotomy between mission and ecclesiology. This is why I propose a missiological account of institutional imagination as the framework for analyzing the FBO in terms of how Christian mission is *imagined* (its guiding mission), how Christian mission is *formed* (use of means), and how Christian mission is *proclaimed* (the work of theological reflection and language).

Fourth, by moving the thesis toward engaging organizational disciplines I seek to show redemptive forms of power that can resist and provide a positive response to the pressures on the social landscape that impoverish Christian mission.

Finally, if there is such a thing as exemplary lives of personal holiness (people whose lives, in a special way, participate with and bear witness to God's good news), I raise the question whether there is such a thing as *institutional* holiness.

2. The Historical Evolution of Protestant Missions into the Faith-Based Organization

What are commonly known today as “faith-based organizations” are a Protestant phenomenon and have emerged out of a uniquely Protestant history. In this chapter I trace their emergence out of the history of Protestant missions. In doing so, I show certain confusions facing FBOs regarding their purpose and identity that are inherent in this history. For this is a story of the evolution of Protestant missions alongside the evolution of humanitarianism, and the resulting tensions. The history identifies several broad transformations in Protestant mission from Pietism and the great Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century, to the nineteenth century voluntary society, to the twentieth century parachurch organization and (later) faith-based organization, and to the twenty-first century Christian humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO). At the heart of these transformations were changes not only in how the world and church was imagined, but in organizational forms and polity. This history thus reveals a critical interrelationship between mission and polity, that is, how mission is imagined, and how it is formed and carried out via organizational and ecclesial means. Indeed, as innovators sought to adapt to new crises and situations in the name of the internal renewal of Christianity and external outreach to the world, significant organizational transformations led to reformulations of Christianity itself. The history suggests that alongside the extensive and even astounding global influence these innovations have released, they have intensified an unfortunate dichotomy between church and mission. At the end of the chapter I identify several problems arising out of this story of

Protestant missions that pose significant challenges to the FBO and its place in the *missio Dei* and the Christian community's participation in that mission.

2.1 Eighteenth Century Pietism, the Protestant Evangelical Revival, and the Renewal of Christendom

The origins of Protestant missions lie in revivalist impulses in seventeenth and eighteenth century post-Reformation Europe. Across church polities, the landscape at the time was dominated by a structural link between church and state within the shared assumption that Christianity required Christendom. The concept of a Christian *nation* was a given.¹ Yet some were not satisfied with the establishment arrangement. Two movements were crucial forces in planting seeds for a new understanding of Christian mission, Pietism and the Evangelical Revival.

As a eighteenth century renewal movement in Germany in which Moravians were prominent, Pietism set its renewal against what was viewed as a complacent church-state establishment. Three marks of what David Bosch terms the "Pietist Breakthrough" are critical in his account, and each has great significance in the subsequent story of Protestant missions. One mark of Pietist missions was the focus on personal decisions, a radical break from the church-state based assumption that all people within their territory are Christian.² Secondly, in Pietism this deeply personal experience of salvation was accompanied by what Bosch terms "an almost unbearable impatience to go to the ends of the earth."³ The missionary impulse combined with the emphasis on personal decisions for salvation

¹ Walls (1996: 81).

² Bosch (1991: 254).

³ *Ibid.*, 252.

formulated mission not as a church activity but of Christ through the Holy Spirit, yet using people as the vessels. The result was a radical new understanding that expanded the means of and responsibility for mission: "Pietism thus introduced the principle of 'voluntarism' in mission."⁴ The Church as such was seen as lifeless and was not the bearer of mission, but rather the "*ecclesiola in ecclesiae*" (community inside the church). Bosch names the significance of this church-mission divide: "From here it was only one step toward mission becoming the hobby of special-interest groups, a practice that militated against the idea of the priesthood of all believers."⁵ A third mark of Pietist missions was organizing service to both soul and body, both preaching and starting schools for the poor, homes for widows, and hospitals.⁶ These three marks combined to shift mission from the responsibility of the establishment to the "total dedication" of the *ecclesiola in ecclesiae*. "Now ordinary men and women," states Bosch, "most of them simple artisans, went literally to the ends of the earth,"⁷ a Moravian commitment previously assumed to be found only in Roman Catholic monasticism. Although Pietism was not able to withstand the forces of Enlightenment, remained at the margins of Lutheran orthodoxy, and never penetrated the mainstream,⁸ Pietist understandings of personal decision, voluntarism, and missional fervor planted seeds that would have continuing influence in Protestant missions.

⁴ Bosch (1991: 253).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸ *Ibid.*

The second reform movement emerged from British soil and was grounded in historic evangelicalism. According to historian Andrew Walls, the resulting eighteenth-century protest was far more than an event or a movement:⁹

The Evangelical Revival was perhaps the most successful of all the reformulations of Christianity in the context of changing western culture ... [it] extended and clarified the Reformation idea ... of a life of holy obedience in the secular world and the family ... It helped to make evangelical religion a critical force in Western culture, a version of Christianity thoroughly authentic and indigenous there. To use the appalling current missiological jargon, the Evangelical Revival contextualized the gospel for the northern protestant world.¹⁰

Four trajectories can be traced from Wall's analysis of the Evangelical Revival that will become critical in the ensuing story of Protestant missions, with some striking similarities to the Pietist vision. First, for the British revivalists the "spiritual parity of the unregenerate of Christendom and the heathen abroad had important missionary consequences."¹¹ The revivalist impulse emerged out of an understanding of a two-fold crisis and challenge—the renewal of the Christian church of which they were members, and the conversion of the non-Christian pagan.¹² The revivalist imagination and action reached both inward to the church and outward to the world.

A second forceful trajectory of the Evangelical Revival was to challenge a fundamental assumption underlying the church-state establishment, namely, that "[I]ndividual choice could hardly exist, even in concept."¹³ Just as the unprecedented

⁹ Walls describes historic evangelicalism as "a paradigm of conversion [that] begins with the personal knowledge of sin, moves to personal trust in Christ's finished work, and issues in godly personal life," (1996: 83). Noll names the four key marks of evangelicalism as biblicism, conversionism and new birth, activism ("an energetic, individualistic approach to religious duties and self-involvement"), and crucicentrism (2009: 46).

¹⁰ Walls (1996: 84).

¹¹ Ibid., 79.

¹² Ibid., 81, 83.

¹³ Ibid., 82.

relocation of third-century Christian ascetics into desert desolation gave rise to radical new formulations of Christianity, the new concept of individual choice and personal decision would birth new forms of Christianity never before envisioned.

A third critical trajectory for the story of Protestant missions out of the Evangelical Revival was how *imagining* the potential of the individual in a new time in Western culture was supported by powerful new means and innovations of *doing* Christianity differently. “Above all,” writes Walls “[the Evangelical Revival] combined the traditional framework of the Christian nation and the established church ... with serious recognition of individual selfhood and personal decision.”¹⁴ This synthesis gave rise to innovations in pursuing change via new means of organizing, logistics, and networking. It was the marriage of the new imagination (personal choice) with a new organizational means that gave power to the two-fold impulse for church renewal and world conversion.

A fourth trajectory of the Evangelical Revival shaping the stream of subsequent Protestant missions emerges from Mark Noll’s contention that “as eager as evangelicals were to carry out reform, their reforms were inevitably shaped by the main cultural currents of early-modern Europe.”¹⁵ These included using the “techniques of entrepreneurial market capitalism for spreading the gospel,” defending the faith by “scientific rationality,” and creating a gospel “relevant for an Enlightenment sense of the self.”¹⁶ If on one side the Protestant Reformation was losing its connection to lay-led vitality and was in dire need of reform, the activist tendencies of reform were subject to great tensions between “sacred” and

¹⁴ Ibid., 84.

¹⁵ Noll (2010: 43).

¹⁶ Ibid., 43-44.

“secular.” Indeed, Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield locate the origins of humanitarianism in eighteenth-century Britain and its subsequent evolution alongside that of Protestant missions.¹⁷ While they contend the philosophical roots of humanitarianism have “long intertwined with specifically religious conceptions of giving,” if such humanitarianism is (as they contend) “inherently presentist” in temporal terms, this differs from an orthodox Christian eschatology. From the beginning, Protestant missions was not a strictly religious story. Christian ideals constantly negotiated notions of presentism, pity, altruistic feeling, empathy for humanity and the misfortune of others inspired by Enlightenment humanitarianism.¹⁸

In no small terms, Walls contends that the “modern missionary movement is an autumnal child of the Evangelical Revival.”¹⁹ In the subsequent story of Protestant missions, the four trajectories of the Evangelical Revival mattered greatly for eventual transformations: the two-fold revivalist impulse inward and outward, the powers and perils of individual choice, the indispensability of innovative new forms and polities, and the messy negotiation and relationship between Christian and secular impulses. And if the Evangelical Revival was nothing less than a “reformulation” of Christianity (Walls’ term), further reformulations were to come.

¹⁷ Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 25).

¹⁸ For Bornstein and Redfield, the “fundamental problem which humanitarianism seeks to confront is suffering, usually understood as bodily or psychological anguish. In temporal terms humanitarianism is inherently presentist; the lives and welfare of those now living fundamentally matter and cannot be conscientiously sacrificed in the pursuit of other goals” (2007: 5). The authors name three “marks of distinction”: compassion across boundaries (a “vow to help strangers in distant lands”); transcendental significance (“the belief that there is something larger than us,” which should not be restricted to religious belief); and the belief it is possible to engineer progress. “Although humanitarianism has this other-worldly quality, it also is very much of this world. Humanitarianism is imprinted by modernity, the Enlightenment, and the belief that it is possible to engineer progress” (2007: 12).

¹⁹ Walls (1996: 79, 144).

2.2 *The Nineteenth-Century Voluntary Society and “The Use of Means”*

Kevin Scott Latourette once described the two marks of the nineteenth century as “the Great Century of Missions” and “preeminently the Protestant century.”²⁰ The century began with vigorous public revivals based in British evangelicalism, saw wide and deep church growth on the North American continent, and culminated with the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, whose tone was set by the John R. Mott book, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*.²¹

Yet the bold proposal of vision and method for the century’s astounding growth in missions did not come from the center but from the margins, in a 1792 publication titled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. The English author William Carey was not a member of the elite. He was a cobbler, not a clergyman, and he did not attend Oxford or Cambridge or any college. But behind his ambitious vision Carey did have something like a business plan. He married a powerful new idea grounded in the call of the individual (an obligation on the part of every Christian “for the conversion of the heathen”) to a powerful new instrument (a “use of means”) that has come to be called “the Voluntary Society.”²²

²⁰ Latourette (1941).

²¹ Mott’s book included a chapter titled “The Possibilities of Evangelizing the World in This Generation in View of the Opportunities, Facilities, and Resources of the Church” (Bosch, 1991: 337).

²² Walls notes the significance of the voluntary society being overlooked in scholarship: “It is surprising how little attention the voluntary society has attracted in studies of the nineteenth-century Church, considering the immense impact on Western Christianity and the transformation of world Christianity which (through its special form in the missionary society) it helped to effect” (1996: 241). With regard to Carey, Bosch contends there were similar innovators at the time and that Carey is “as much a product as a shaper of the spirit of the time. Church renewal and mission were simply in the air” (Bosch: 1991, 280).

Drawing his methods from the knowledge of successful commerce, Carey used the joint stock trading company as his source for missional innovation. Renewal in mission as akin to starting multiple new business enterprises was a radical new concept. Walls states:

It is significant that Carey—a man of the provinces and of humble station—took his analogy from commerce; organizing a society is something like floating a company. He looked for the appropriate means to accomplish a task which could not be accomplished through the usual machinery of the Church ... [The early mission societies] were all equally pragmatic in their origins. The simple fact was that the Church as then organized, whether Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Congregational, could not effectively operate missions overseas. Christians accordingly had to “use means” to do so.²³

“Voluntary society” describes this new organizational form far too softly.

Contemporary society assumes constant requests for funds and immersion in a flurry of independent social service and mission organizations. But Walls notes that eighteenth-century Christians thought in categories of parish congregations and ordained and appointed clergy, not self-organizing, self-governing, and self-funding voluntary associations. Bosch baldly states the audacity of the proposal: “The fact is that, for more than a century, after the Reformation, the mere idea of forming such ‘voluntary societies’ next to the church was anathema in Protestantism.”²⁴ In the 1792 world of European Christendom, “voluntary” meant no less than a transfer of power from the established church to private “promoters” and “crews” (Carey’s terms) to create their own organizations, raise their own funding and employees, and make up their own rules and regulations.²⁵

²³ Ibid., 246.

²⁴ Bosch (1991: 328).

²⁵ The commercial analogy pervades Carey’s own words, which are worth hearing at length: “When a trading company has obtained their charter, the promoters will go to the utmost limits to put the enterprise on a proper footing. They select their stock, ships, and crews with care; they seek every scrap of useful information. They undergo danger at sea, brave unfriendly climates and peoples, take risks and pay for it all in anxiety, because their minds are set on success. Their interest is involved, and does not the interest of Christians lie in the *extension of Messiah’s Kingdom?* ... Suppose a *company* of serious

This bypassed the dominant European arrangements of church-state establishment where individual choice with regard to church life was unimaginable. The creation of the voluntary society fits well within the two-fold activist, revivalist impulse to subvert a lethargic church and convert the “uttermost parts of the earth.” The voluntary society was the vehicle for both a shift in imagination (eyes raised outward from settled Christendom to the pragmatic “extension of Messiah’s kingdom”) and in organizational power, situating new Protestant mission societies with a self-organizing, self-governing, and self-funded capacity to reach across oceans and frontiers.

For Walls, in the end the voluntary society amounted to a “fortunate subversion of the church” because “it suddenly became clear that there were matters—and not small matters, but big matters, matters like the evangelization of the world—which were beyond the capacities of these splendid systems of gospel truth.”²⁶ Yet the historic transformation birthed in the voluntary society did not come without considerable problems and perils that would have a continuing trajectory in the story of Protestant missions.

One acute problem was a breach between mission, church, and academy. Walls bluntly asserts that there “never was a *theology* of the voluntary society.” In the early phase, “men of high theological and ecclesiastical principle were often the enemies of the missionary movement.”²⁷ The voluntary society was a sign of a growing fragmentation

Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries, the means of defraying the expense, etc., etc. This society must consist of persons whose hearts are in the work, men of serious religion, and possessing a spirit of perseverance; there must be a determination not to admit any person who is not of this description, or to retain him longer than he answers to it” (Walls, 1997: 245).

²⁶ Ibid., 247.

²⁷ Writes Walls: “In one of those stories which is probably not true but which *ought* to be true, the elder Ryland barked out at Carey, ‘Young man, sit down; when God wants to convert the heathens, He’ll do it without your help or mine,’” (1997: 246).

between institutions of mission (the world of self-organizing activism), academy (the world of theological education and scholarship), and church (the world of worship and sacraments). John Flett writes in his commentary on Karl Barth's missiology that "the ecclesiologies of the period proved insufficient for the missionary task... the church misconceives herself. She is too static."²⁸ The tragic result was distinctive entities that threatened to separate church from mission and mission from worship. Detached from the missionary impulse bringing engagement with a wider world, academic and ecclesial powers were in danger of becoming insular and self-satisfied. Detached from theological and ecclesial discipline, the voluntary society could become increasingly subject to the logic of the trading company. For Bosch, the Enlightenment understanding of progress added to the mood that the whole world could be reached with the gospel.²⁹ Yet this understanding went unchecked by theological reflection and a Christian eschatological imagination that resists the presentist and immediatistic vision of here and now progress.

Indeed, the ecclesiastical debates in Carey's time were intense.³⁰ After all, the voluntary society may have launched *Protestant* missions, but it was not the beginning of *Christian* missions. Didn't 1800 years of Christian wisdom have something to say about a necessary relationship between missional charism and ecclesial form? It is no small thing that it was not a Catholic scholar but the evangelical missiologist and church growth

²⁸ Flett (2010: location 697 Kindle edition).

²⁹ Bosch (1991: 280).

³⁰ Walls (1997: 247).

advocate Ralph Winter who described the emergence of the voluntary society as “the second Protestant schism.”³¹

The three-way fragmentation between mission society, church, and academy would continue to haunt the Protestant landscape of missions. The pragmatically-oriented voluntary society that contributed to this fragmentation was uniquely Protestant, but it was not inevitably so. Long before the call for a Reformation, desert asceticism, the monastery, and the religious order were innovations in their own time that renewed Christian missions and Christianity itself. They were also initiated by outliers responding to crises of church and missional decay. Yet over time, within the different polity, imagination, and habits of Roman Catholicism—as continued from pre-reformation Catholic Church patterns—these innovations took a different turn ecclesially, eventually (often after strong resistance) given legitimacy and continuity in being embraced as a new “charism” to bring greater vitality to Roman Catholicism writ large. This revealed a far greater institutional capacity within Catholicism for reform from within. To use a biblical metaphor, Catholic religious orders showed an ability to hold new wine while stretching but not breaking the old ecclesial wineskin of Catholicism, and keeping polity, missions, and sacraments together (even if it was an often-turbulent mixture).³²

³¹ Winter (1980: 194-224). David Bosch lays blame on all sides; he sees an inherent schismatic nature to the missionary paradigm of the Protestant Reformation, “something could not again be undone” once the believer is set in a direct relationship with God independent of the church. The “seeds of schism” are sown in “different believers interpreting God’s will differently ... To some extent, at least, the multiplying of separate churches in Protestantism has to be seen as the running amuck of the principle of the priesthood of all” (Bosch, 1991: 243). When wedded with the Enlightenment’s optimistic view of progress stirring people into action, “the church was increasingly fractured into a great variety of denominations which ... were not decisively different from missionary and other religious societies. Denominations, too, were organized on the voluntary principle of like-minded individuals banding together. They were, in a sense, para-church organizations” (Bosch, 1991: 329).

³² See Finke and Wittberg for an account of the different Roman Catholic trajectory (2000). Scheitle contends that “the Catholic Church allows relatively independent activity-based outreach through religious orders and other internal

When Winter described this as “the enviable Roman Catholic synthesis,” he identifies a Protestant problem whereby the Protestant Christian community was constantly under threat of intensifying separations between mission and ecclesial-traditioned forms.³³ The power of Carey’s innovation was the subversion of complacent enemies in the elite and a renewed seriousness about reform and evangelization with a powerful vehicle to carry it. Yet the absence of a theology and the detachment from Christian tradition made this a mixed blessing regarding sacred and secular impulses. The reasoning of commerce was tapped unabashedly in the name of providential blessing without being disciplined by theological reflection and the ecclesial imagination of the Christian tradition. If evangelical revivalism was a powerful force in the creation of the voluntary society, so were the trade routes and means established by the powers of the market.³⁴

Another critical turning point in the evolution of Protestant missions emerged a few decades after the birth of voluntary societies, this time on American soil. In the wake of the revivals led by John Wesley and others, by 1816 there were fully 200,000 Methodists in the United States.³⁵ Carey famously said “Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God,”³⁶ and if Carey invented the voluntary society at the margins, nineteenth-century American Christianity would perfect it and extend its power into the mainstream. Walls states: “The principle of the voluntary society is identify the task to be done, find appropriate means of carrying it out; unite and organize a group of like-minded people for the

mechanisms but these activities are held together under the larger identity of Catholicism. The group is flexible enough to allow independent activity-based outreach, but the group identity is still the basis for those activities” (2010: 46).

³³ Winter (1980: 194-224).

³⁴ See Noll (2009: 43) and Schmidt (1998: 637).

³⁵ Wilmer (1998: 30).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

purpose.”³⁷ One of the most important American mission theorists and leaders of the time, Rufus Anderson, gave further power to the voluntary principle with a distinctively American methodology in his famous “three-self” formulation: self-organizing, self-governing, and self-funded.³⁸ The three-self methodology would bear great influence throughout the world where U.S. missionaries served.³⁹

An ambitious imagination accompanied this three-self form. In Anderson’s 1837 sermon titled “The Time for the World’s Conversion Come,” he described a kind of apocalyptic significance to a historic convergence. Anderson names the American governmental form of civil and religious liberty, wide-scale communication and transportation advances, and capacity to raise funds in organizations that are “not restricted to ecclesiastics.” This convergence has created the perfect conditions for what Anderson celebrates as an organizational form that is “among the great results of the progress of Christian civilization in this ‘fullness of time’ for the world’s conversion” — the “Protestant form of association” that is “peculiar to modern times, and almost to our age.” Here is the apocalyptic significance of these powers of means and form: “Never, till now, did the social

³⁷ Walls (1997: 229).

³⁸ Bosch (1991: 297).

³⁹ For example, Yonsei University in South Korea was founded by first-generation Presbyterian missionaries and is now a leading university. In 1970, nearly 200 years after Carey and Anderson, Yonsei president L. George Paik’s reflections on Korean Christianity’s growth with respect to the “three-self” principle are surprisingly nationalistic and devoid of theological markers: “Self-support was successfully carried out. Both self-propagation and self-government were the logical consequences of the self-support program. The persistence of the principle gave the Koreans the feeling that the whole enterprise was theirs. The teachers who taught them were their own servants and the churches in which they worshipped were theirs ... It is the self-support principle that created the self-respect, self-reliance, and independent spirit which are necessary for any successful movement, and that made the Korean Church active and endowed it with resources which sustained it through all its trials,” quoted in Noll (2010: 155).

condition of mankind render it possible to organize the armies requisite for the world's spiritual conquest."⁴⁰

This kind of ambitious and pragmatic vision is a display of Bosch's claim that the presentist imagination of mission received its greatest religious legitimacy and mainstream power in American Christianity. Drawing on the work of George Marsden, Bosch contends that Americans understood themselves to be "inaugurators of a new order for the ages,"⁴¹ and this was matched with being entrenched as a de facto establishment religion. In the nineteenth-century United States, "[l]ittle tension was felt between progress and the gospel. Rather, scientific advance was regarded in a rather simplistic way as heralding the advent of the kingdom of God. The manifestations of secularism, such as materialism, and capitalism, were blessed with Christian symbolism."⁴²

Anderson's bright forecast about American mobilization for missions proved to be accurate. By 1860 voluntary societies permeated the American landscape, from the YMCA to the American Bible Society, and societies for seamen, education, abolition and emancipation, temperance, foreign missions, and Sunday schools were common.⁴³

Yet two problems began to intensify. The first problem was an intensification of the divide between missiology and ecclesiology. In a way that was unmistakably American, argues Walls, "When this [voluntary] principle was applied to the business of making and sustaining congregations of Christian disciples, the distinction between church and voluntary society, always fundamental in Europe, sometimes all but disappeared in America.

⁴⁰ Walls (1997: 223).

⁴¹ Bosch (1991: 282).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴³ Scheitle (2010: 24).

A congregation, or a whole denomination, might in principle be no different from a voluntary society. In strife or disagreement, one could always leave and join—or even start—another.”⁴⁴ American pragmatism began to intensify the dichotomy between mission and church and simultaneously blurred the lines between the two.

The second problem was an intensification of the divide between missions and theological reflection that Walls noted with regard to Carey’s voluntary society. In describing the emerging unique breed of nineteenth-century American evangelicalism and its eventual enormous influence in missions, Noll names what he calls three perilous marks: the “individualistic,” the “activistic,” and the “immediatistic.” The result of this was that missions became “more inclined to action in market relationships than they are to thought about the theological meaning of markets and their effects.”⁴⁵

One final development brought another historical force to the scene. According to Stefan Collini, it was in this century that the idea of “altruism” was coined and altered patterns of thinking. What John Stuart Mill had described as the “Religion of Humanity” and “the majesty” of the “idea of the general interest of the human race,” had now become central to the understanding of social progress. From the 1850s to the 1880s, altruism took hold of the Victorian English imagination whereby “social work [provided] an antidote to doubt ... and they ‘transferred’ its direction from God to man.”⁴⁶ The birth in 1863 of the Red Cross—often named the first international humanitarian organization—marked a milestone

⁴⁴ Walls (1997: 229).

⁴⁵ Noll (2010: 44). Another description is “forms of Christian faith that are conversionist, voluntarist, entrepreneurial, and nondenominational” (ibid., 91).

⁴⁶ Collini (1991: 70-85).

in the institutionalization of altruism.⁴⁷ This rise in humanitarianism and the power of a “Religion of Humanity” ran alongside the rise of the voluntary society and Protestant missions.

The century to follow would bring the challenges of the voluntary principle and the rise of humanitarianism to press upon Protestant missions in unprecedented ways in a new time of both American power and, eventually, the rise of globalization.

2.3 The Twentieth-Century Parachurch Organization and Rise of American Power

If the nineteenth was the Protestant century, the twentieth was the U.S. century of missions. There were two noteworthy developments in the first fifty years of this latter century.

First, in an address at the historic 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, a courageous Anglican from India named V.S. Azariah said racism and missionary paternalism had become obstacles to Christian witness. He appealed for a major shift: “Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest to the heroism and self-denying labors of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS!” According to

⁴⁷ The visionary behind the Red Cross was Henry Dunant, a Swiss evangelical (Barnett: 79). As stated earlier, from the beginning, Protestant missions was not a strictly religious story. Likewise, humanitarianism was not a strictly secular story. According to Barnett and Stein, “Religious discourses and organizations helped to establish humanitarianism in the early nineteenth century, and it is only a slight exaggeration to say ‘no religion, no humanitarianism’” (2012: 3). Yet as the history indicates, it is more accurate to say, “No *evangelical* religion, no humanitarianism.”

Dana Robert, Azariah had also experienced cross-cultural friendship as a form of power which could resist the paternalism.⁴⁸ Robert states:

For unknown numbers of missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders in the early to mid-twentieth century, friendship was a potent yet under-recognized ethic and practice in the creation of world Christianity as a multicultural community. Indeed, without friendship as clear witness to Christlike love, the inequities and racism of the colonial period might have prevented the spread of Christianity across cultures.⁴⁹

While this situation would change, this development was a milestone. The second noteworthy development was a resurgence of U.S. Protestant mainline missions (especially Presbyterian and Methodist). Their emphasis on establishing new overseas institutions (universities, seminaries, and hospitals) made a lasting mark even as denomination-based missions declined in the early 1980s.⁵⁰ The numerical trends indicate what happened next.

Table 1: U.S. Protestant Missionaries Serving Overseas⁵¹

	<u>1935</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1999</u>
Mainline Protestant denominations	5035	4246	3543	1583
Evangelical denominations	2672	3223	10,109	14,194
Interdenominational agencies	137	756	6684	9276

By the end of the century, the growth of U.S. Protestant overseas missionaries from evangelical denominations⁵² and so-called “interdenominational agencies” was so great that

⁴⁸ Robert (2011: 100).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁰ Scheitle gives an account of the “rise of denominational agencies” (2010: 26-27). As a personal observation from growing up as a child of Presbyterian missionaries in South Korea from 1966-1978, mainline missions thrived during these years. In South Korea for example, Presbyterian and Methodists missionary presence began in the late nineteenth century, and began what have become leading universities, seminaries, and hospitals in what is now the world’s eleventh largest economy. Missionaries from the U.S. also made significant contributions to the democratization movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, their focus in Korea was on a “three-self” autonomous Korean church: self-governed, self-governed, and self-spreading. Indeed, in spite of a relatively small population, the Korean church is now second in the world in sending overseas missionaries and provides significant funding through the Korean Bible Society (publishing bibles for China) and World Vision (with Korea now the second-biggest international funder of World Vision after the U.S).

⁵¹ Presented in Noll (2009: 83) drawing from *Mission Handbook 1973*, 89, 97-99; *Mission Handbook 2001-2003*, 53.

⁵² The Assemblies of God alone had nearly as many overseas missionaries in 1999 (1,543) as the total mainline denominations combined, and the Southern Baptists three times as many (4,562). The three largest evangelical sending denominations by far were the Southern Baptists, Churches of Christ, and Assemblies of God (Ibid.)

more U.S. missionaries were serving overseas than ever before in history.⁵³ The term “interdenominational agencies” is not precise. After World War II a vast array of new evangelical organizations were started that identified themselves as “parachurch,” and they were marked by their autonomy and entrepreneurial ethos. By 1999 nearly ten thousand Americans were serving overseas with parachurch agencies whose growth and achievements were astounding, ranging from Wycliffe Bible Translators (founded 1935), New Tribes Mission (1942), and World Vision (1951), to Campus Crusade for Christ (1951) and Youth with a Mission (1961).⁵⁴

Some scholars inaccurately identify the pre-twentieth century voluntary and missionary societies as parachurch agencies. Certainly the post-World War II parachurch organizations were in their direct lineage.⁵⁵ But, quite significantly, the term “parachurch” arose in the historical context of a new kind of voluntary society blossoming in the post-World War II rise of American global power and Cold War contention. Richard Pierard describes three critical factors in this U.S. climate which influenced parachurch organizations: the self-identity of a national chosenness with responsibility to proclaim the gospel; the sense of an unprecedented global opportunity; and these two factors matched with a World War II cohort from which came what he calls “the most remarkable group in the history of American evangelical Christianity.”⁵⁶ They included parachurch founders Billy

⁵³ From 1972 to 1999, evangelical denominational missionary numbers increased 40 percent, while mainline missionaries decreased 55 percent (Ibid.).

⁵⁴ In 1999 the four largest parachurch mission agencies were Wycliffe Bible Translators with 2930 missionaries (founded 1935), Youth with a Mission with 1817 (founded in 1961), New Tribes Mission with 1514 (founded in 1942), and Campus Crusade for Christ with 973 (founded in 1951). Other large agencies included The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), Society for International Ministries (SIM) Frontiers, Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) International, and Operation Mobilization. See Noll (2009: 117).

⁵⁵ Scheitle (2010: 36).

⁵⁶ Pierard (1990: 170).

Graham, Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), Bob Pierce (World Vision, and his successor Ted Engstrom), and scholar Ralph Winter.⁵⁷ In this new imaginative and technological context of unprecedented American ambition and reach (economic, military, cultural), like the difference between the Model T and the Mustang, the Voluntary Society was the first vehicle and the parachurch offered entirely new possibilities in a new time of American global power.

For these organizations, “parachurch” was understood in a range from *alongside* or *with* the church, to *renewal of* the church, to *in spite of* the church. In other words, they were not “nondenominational” or “interdenominational,” because they did not have denominational affiliation in mind, but rather rapid response and growth in response to dire human need (whether evangelism or social relief). In governance they were independent and autonomous 501(c)3 organizations governed by a board of directors and single president focused on a singular mission. Their legitimacy and authority was generally derived by charisma and ability to communicate with increasing networks of individual supporters; capacity to raise funds, organize, and attain rapid and wide-scale growth; and stated ability to prove their impact in visible and tangible ways. In a new time of U.S. ambition, parachurch organizations were unmistakably American in the way that Andrew Walls describes as the “tendency to translate [transcendent dimensions] ... into technological terms, problems to be solved.”⁵⁸ In scale, budget, and reach, the parachurch expanded the power of the voluntary society in unprecedented ways.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Walls (1997: 223). In 1926 Japanese church leader Kanzo Uchimura, himself converted by U.S. missionaries, wrote of American Christianity’s greatness in building, democracy, and money, but not religion. “Americans must count religion in

Even as the Bible began to be welcomed into many local languages through Wycliffe's translation work, as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade expanded ministry to more and more campuses, as World Vision grew from Bob Pierce's post-war orphanages in Korea into a several hundred million-dollar child sponsorship organization, autonomous parachurch growth illuminated an old and now glaring problem. Along with the rich gifts of American evangelical missions history, power is one of the "chronic perils" Mark Noll names in that muddy history:

However reluctant some Christian groups have been to talk directly about the exercise of power, power is a constant presence in the recent world history of Christianity—power as financial means, power as protected by military might, power as dominance through communications media, power through control of education, and more. No body of Christians has been as capable at exercising power as American believers, though few have been more reluctant to address questions of power face on.⁵⁹

The new form of mission that began at the margins with William Carey and other eighteenth century mission society pions had now metamorphosed into methods that could greatly increase power for enormous global reach. But it was largely unexamined power. The trajectory of the fragmentation between missions, ecclesiology, and theology was now accompanied by this problem of unexamined power. In the story of the evolution of Protestant missions, the emergence of the U.S. parachurch organization in a new time of American global reach highlighted a severe blind spot regarding power that continued to be unaddressed.

order to see or show its value," he wrote. "Statistics is their way of showing success or failure in their religion as in their commerce and politics. Numbers, oh, how they value numbers!" Quoted in Walls (1997: 223).

⁵⁹ Noll (2010: 59).

2.4 The Late-Twentieth-Century Faith-Based Organization and Globalization

In 1987 Walls described the Western and American missionary movement as “in its old age.”⁶⁰ Yet connecting the origins of the post-World War II parachurch organization back into the historical stream of the Protestant voluntary society suggests that the U.S. parachurch *was* the new form of a reformulated missionary movement (and even reformulated Christianity), with enormous vitality. In the 1990s and over the next two decades, from parachurch momentum came another fresh U.S. adaptation to new times in a surge of what Barnett and Stein term “faith-based action” in both new agencies and in their evangelical ethos.⁶¹ Mission activity hardly dried up in the U.S.; instead it increased, and the parachurch organizations and related faith-based organizations were at the core of that restless missional activity and growth, even while many were wrestling with their Christian identity in the midst.⁶²

The evolution of Protestant missions into the faith-based organization (FBO) was not a change in form but was a significant shift in language, identity, and audience in a rapidly changing world of globalization and pluralization, and the new opportunities and challenges that came with that. One milestone in this regard was the birth of a new global force that ran parallel with the post-World War II surge in parachurch agencies: the United Nations.

⁶⁰ Walls (1997: 261).

⁶¹ Barnett and Stein (2012: 3) maintain that almost 80 percent of all faith-based agencies in 2012 were evangelical in nature, and made up the vast majority of new FBOs since 1980. In explaining this growth they note several factors including American Christians being wealthier than ever before; increased awareness of the world and new geographic opportunities via globalization; and an increase in megachurches creating their own global ministries.

⁶² The evidence indicates this is true, as indicated later in the thesis. While Walls names the American missionary movement as in its “old age,” this does not account well enough for the de facto new age and form of American mission that the explosive growth of FBOs represents. In their accounts of World Vision, King (2012) and Noll (2009) locate World Vision as a Christian missionary enterprise and do not account for its transformations over the past twenty years into something quite different.

Along with decolonization, the emergence of the UN was gradually followed by a new wave of what were called “nongovernmental organizations” (NGOs). The UN began to establish an enormous global infrastructure via its intimate relationship with governments and vast budgets, with Western governments as the primary funders.

If parachurch organizations had an ambivalent relationship with church and denomination, they were not shy about inserting “church” in their self-descriptions. Furthermore, the UN and its donor states were initially wary of funding religious organizations, and the parachurch organizations were wary of how their Christian nature might be changed by such funding. But this mutual suspicion gradually changed in a new climate of globalization and pluralization. Barnett and Stein contend that, from one direction, “religious-secular relations appeared to enter a new chapter in which religion was gaining in strength and influence within humanitarianism.”⁶³ Internationally the UN eventually started a “Faith and Development” office and corresponding projects, and in the U.S., the government’s “Charitable Choice” initiative offered new and unprecedented legitimacy and funding to what were termed “faith-based” organizations. From the other direction, “once-avowedly church-related organizations such as World Vision International and Catholic Relief Services downplayed their religious identity,” adopting the more generic “faith-based.” The language of “faith-based” was thus influenced and largely adopted from both directions.⁶⁴

Whether a strategic decision in the name of expanding Christian mission or an unconscious surrender to secularization, in the 1990s many parachurch organizations

⁶³ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

dropped the “church”-related description and re-defined themselves as “faith-based” as they grew exponentially in size and scope. While before the 1990s secular agencies had a decided advantage in receiving funding, the situation had changed. By the end of the century World Vision was a two *billion* dollar organization, no longer described itself as “missionary” in the traditional sense, and as a result of its size and scale adopted increasingly managerial methods. Also by now, according to Barnett and Stein, “Catholic Relief Services looked a lot more like CARE than it did Samaritan’s Purse.”⁶⁵ For a number of organizations, Noll’s four marks of American evangelicalism arguably became a de facto two-fold hierarchy: activism first, biblical second, with conversionism and crucicentrism slipping from emphasis.

These shifts illuminate the intensifying trajectories of the two problems of the dichotomy between missions and ecclesiology, and of unexamined power. Yet along with them a third perilous challenge had emerged given the wide influence of the FBOs. In 1987 Walls contended that a new chapter of church history had occurred in the late twentieth-century rise of the church in Southern and Eastern hemispheres. While Walls believed this was due to the success of the modern missionary movement, that western movement had not only exhausted the “use of means,” the organizational form of the voluntary society itself had become a major barrier in its very form:

The Protestant missionary movement developed by means of the voluntary society, and America perfected its application to the purposes of overseas mission. The resultant mission agencies were admirably designed for their task: to direct the resources of Christians in one country to the preaching of the gospel and the establishing of churches in another country. That is, the task in hand was principally giving; the design was essentially for one-way traffic. But with the new shape of the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 22. Founded in 1945, CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) is a “non-sectarian” humanitarian organization with an annual budget of over \$800 million.

Christian world, there are needs for which the perfect instrument was not designed. Instruments are now needed for *two*-way traffic: for sharing and for receiving.⁶⁶

The problem of “one-way traffic” is the problem of a donor-recipient model that Walls describes as inherent to both the imagination and the form. The imagination was “giving,” the form was directing resources from one (very powerful) group of Christians in one country (or class, as in the case of Habitat’s work in the U.S.). The means of the voluntary society became perfected in the United States for this purpose, and now those means threatened the formation of the kind of authentic “Christian brother and sister” *koinonia* that is suggested by Robert in the gift of emerging cross-cultural friendships in the first half of twentieth-century Protestant missions.⁶⁷ Christianity as a multi-cultural reality was threatened by one-way traffic, and the now deeply embedded and powerful form of certain kinds of FBOs had become a major carrier of the virus.

2.5 The Twenty-First-Century Humanitarian NGO

If the twentieth was the American century of missions, the twenty-first century surge of NGOs (both faith-based and secular) suggests this will be the humanitarian century. No doubt, American evangelical missions efforts—with foci on church planting, evangelism, and service—are thriving alongside Christian NGOs and FBOs.⁶⁸ While the new language of

⁶⁶ Walls (1997: 254).

⁶⁷ Robert (2011: 101).

⁶⁸ Barnett and Stein offer the following stunning details: “American churches have increased their giving to overseas ministries by almost 50 percent over the past decade and, according to recent figures, gave nearly \$3.7 billion; the Southern Baptist Convention spends nearly \$300 million a year on international ministries, while spending by the Assemblies of God is almost \$200 million annually. According to Robert Wuthnow, the ‘number of full-time missionaries serving abroad has increased steadily over the same period and is significantly larger than a half century ago.’ More than forty-two thousand U.S. citizens were working full-time as missionaries, an increase of 16 percent over the last decade and significantly over the highwater mark of the 1950s. The Assemblies of God support more than 2,500 missionaries” (2012: 2).

“NGO” is a critical development, as Bernard Taithe indicates, the Christian NGO is another variation born of a particular Protestant history. Writes Taithe, “From the colonial era to the post-colonial present, the transition from missionary work to faith-based organizations (FBO) or nongovernmental organizations (NGO) seems almost seamless, as witness the continuities of staff between these organizations.”⁶⁹ Indeed, “seamless” (and as a consequence often unexamined) transitions describe well the entire history from voluntary mission society, to parachurch, to FBO, to NGO.

From cobbler William Carey’s voluntary society to the CEOs of contemporary Christian humanitarian NGOs, the “use of means” is a story of Protestant missions marked by innovations of increasing efficiency and achievement with often “seamless” transitions between increasingly powerful variations of the voluntary society. American Christianity took this to astonishing influence and scale, seen in the history of universities and hospitals established, church plants, Habitat homes built, World Vision children sponsored, millions of times the Jesus Film has been watched, and the scattering in contemporary times of almost 1.5 million U.S. short term mission volunteers across the world every year.⁷⁰

Yet the enormous achievements out of the evolution of Protestant missions call for a deeper analysis alongside the simultaneous stories of the cleavage between mission and ecclesiology and of the rise of humanitarianism and the relationship to secularization. Leigh F. Schmidt asserts that fluctuations of church membership numbers in American history “tell us little about whether or not American religion has been remade from the inside in terms of

⁶⁹ Taithe (2012: 166).

⁷⁰ Barnett and Stein (2012: 2). They write that in 2012 fully 350,000 Americans had served as short-term mission volunteers for between two weeks and a year, and one million more for less than two weeks.

largely 'secular' ideals, notably therapeutic, consumerist, privatistic, aesthetic, market, or naturalist forces."⁷¹ In a similar vein, Robert Wuthnow argues that the most relevant secularization theory concerns "not [whether] religion has diminished numerically but [whether] it has been transformed qualitatively."⁷²

How do the achievements and prominence of the Christian FBO relate to the challenge of being transformed qualitatively by "secular" ideals? As Schmidt and Wuthnow suggest, numbers hardly tell the whole story. Four considerable problems have emerged from the evolution of Protestant missions into the voluntary society, and intensified in contemporary times in the FBO. First is the problem of the breach between missions and theological reflection. Second is the problem of the rise of enormous power that has been taken for granted and often gone unexamined. A third problem arising out of the history is the "one-way traffic" of donors and recipients inherent to the voluntary model that presses the question Robert asks: "Is true friendship of equals possible across widening economic divides, or is it a self-deluding rationalization that makes the wealthy feel good about their charitable activities?"⁷³ The fourth problem emerging from the history is an increasingly bureaucratic model dominated by managerial methods and imagination of growth, a major focus of the next chapter, which assesses the FBO through a sociological lens.

As the story in this chapter indicates, these problems all arose from what Winter termed "the second Protestant schism," the breach between mission and ecclesiology out of the origins of the Protestant voluntary society as a new missional imagination and

⁷¹ Schmidt (1998: 639).

⁷² Quoted in Schmidt (ibid.)

⁷³ Robert (2011: 106).

organizational form. The lesson here is that we cannot think about mission without thinking about means and polity. These are *institutional* problems that concern a dichotomy between mission and polity.

In his critique of “one-way traffic,” Walls contended that if voluntary Protestant Christianity was as revolutionary for the reformulation of Christian life and mission as the monasteries were in their own time, a new historical challenge of “sharing and receiving” required new instruments that would need to “prove equally disturbing.”⁷⁴ We now turn to the categories of sociology as lenses for seeing the captivity of the contemporary FBO more clearly, and thus what kinds of transformations are needed for a new time of Christian life and mission.

⁷⁴ Walls (1996: 254).

3. Assessing the Faith-Based Organization on the Sociological Landscape

In this chapter I engage sociological analysis as well as some anthropological scholarship to give an account of the FBO within its contemporary context of mission. To turn from historical to sociological analysis is itself to begin to address the problems of the FBO with respect to unexamined power and “use of means” described in chapter one. For sociology locates FBOs not as singular organizations in full control of their own existence, but within a wider landscape of social and institutional history and power where they both act and are acted upon. And when enormous power is taken for granted and unexamined, the FBO can proceed under a false assumption not only of innocence but of goodness. The sociological categories used for analysis—sectors, social ecology, organizational field, institutional isomorphism—provide a lens to begin to examine how FBOs have become susceptible to deformations of their special nature. I will lay out two problems facing the contemporary FBO: the bureaucratic model and the aid model. I then provide a point of reference to examine the FBO, drawing from a Macintyrian understanding of the difference between institutions and practices. This leads to exegesis of the special nature of the FBO via sociological typologies. The goal of this analysis is to begin to search for terms concerning the special nature of the FBO, keeping in mind Jerome Baggett’s claim that the true nature of nonprofit organizations embodies “a sense of moral obligation to others that far surpasses perceiving and treating them as mere clients or consumers.”¹

¹ Baggett (2001: 4).

3.1 Sectors, Social Ecology, and Institutional Isomorphism

The concepts of sectors, social ecology, organizational field, and institutional isomorphism provide significant points of sociological analysis of the contentious landscape on which the contemporary FBO exists. As described in chapter one, FBOs arose out of the historical prominence of voluntary societies in the United States. Sociologists group what are termed non-profit organizations such as the FBO in the “voluntary sector.” This sector is associated with civil society and also termed the “third sector.” The intention is to mark the voluntary sector both in distinction to, and within a shared social landscape with, the first “state sector” and the second “market sector.” One sociological distinction is that citizens cannot withdraw from the state and its powers of compliance, or from a relationship with the market. The third sector, however, is regarded as one of choice to which one can join or withdraw, thus “voluntary.”² Therefore the FBO does not operate independently, but within a wider and multi-dimensional “social ecology” with the market and state sectors.

According to Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, these two sectors have enormous influence. In contemporary times the corporation and the state have been so institutionalized and their bureaucracies so entrenched that they have emerged as “the great rationalizers” of the latter twentieth century.³ Furthermore, they have become a form of “homogenization,”⁴ sculpting other institutions into their own form, toward their respective ends: the market sector’s operating principle of profitability, and the state’s governing principle of coercion.⁵

² This account is drawn from Baggett (2001: 4-6).

³ DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 147).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Baggett (2001: 4).

FBOs are thus understood not only to *act* but to be *acted upon* within a complex landscape of institutions and the different aims, powers, and desires they bear, with the state and market as primary. Yet the ways FBOs are acted upon is not self-evident. The term institutional isomorphism is used to describe what Baggett terms “the tendency for non-profits to behave like for-profit enterprises.”⁶ Patricia Wittberg emphasizes that this tendency is a factor of which the FBO may be conscious or unconscious. The commonly-understood sources of isomorphic pressures for institutional conformity are described by Wittberg as follows, illuminating the influence that the state, professionalization, funding agencies, and peers or competitors are understood to have in three differing but powerful ways:

“Coercive pressures” develop from government mandates, tax laws, or the requirements of accrediting agencies. “Normative pressures” are embodied in the training courses and expectations of the professional schools which provide the organization’s workers, and in the culture of the foundations which provide the funds. And “mimetic pressures” arise in times of uncertainty, when each organization tends to model itself, consciously or unconsciously, on what its competitors are doing.⁷

Organizations in the voluntary sector, including FBOs, make their judgments under these coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphic pressures from an external environment of government, donors, educational norms, and the cultures that shape those forces. The added concept of “organizational field” becomes critical here and its influence on any organization’s shifts in culture.⁸ Wittberg offers the example of the hospital, which operates on an organizational field that includes other hospitals (its peers and competitors, thus a

⁶ Baggett credits his understanding of institutional isomorphism to DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

⁷ Wittberg (2006: 14).

⁸ DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 147).

source of mimetic pressure); insurance agencies, changing government regulations (coercive pressures); associations of medical professionals (both coercive and normative), and pharmaceutical companies (normative pressures). Over time, organizations often begin to shift their organizational field because of such pressures. For example, as described in chapter one, when previously unavailable sources of U.N.- and government-related funding became available to religious organizations, some began to change their religious identity in order to receive it. Furthermore, as organizations which once pioneered are joined by similar organizations, over time the “field” begins to institutionalize and isomorphic pressure causes them to seek legitimacy not in innovation but in not deviating from the field.⁹ A critical factor to emphasize here is that organizations without the capacity to resist co-optation tend to make changes not only consciously, but *unconsciously*.

In the early stages of voluntary societies, there were no coercive pressures from the state in terms of mandates and laws, no foundations providing vast funds, and few peers or competitors. Isomorphism is not considered a challenge at the innovation stage.¹⁰ But two centuries later, the Christian FBOs and NGOs which are successors of the voluntary societies are well-established, pervasive, and even sought after, from the United Nations to funding within the U.S. government’s Charitable Choice laws. And the FBO is no longer on the frontier by itself; it goes there only to find UNICEF, WHO, Amnesty International, and Doctors Without Borders there as well. And along with highly-developed FBOs, these “secular” organizations have become part of the contemporary organizational field of the FBO. “Once disparate organizations are structured into an actual field (... by competition,

⁹ Wittberg (2006: 14).

¹⁰ DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148).

the state, or the professions), powerful forces emerge that lead them to become more similar to one another.”¹¹ At this point, according to DiMaggio and Powell, “a threshold is reached beyond which adoption [of similarity] provides legitimacy rather than improves performance.”¹² In other words, the FBO faces the intensifying reality of referring itself not to the church or Christian theology, nor to further innovation at the frontier, but to seeking legitimacy from its perceived peers in the established field. Barnett and Stein’s earlier statement captures the challenge of contemporary time: “Catholic Relief Services looked a lot more like CARE than it did Samaritan’s Purse.”¹³

The FBO negotiates a complex landscape of highly-developed, well-endowed, and professionalized institutional actors of state, market, and voluntary sectors. What isomorphic forces lie on the landscape of this new contemporary situation for the FBO? One danger the FBO faces is being reconstructed into a bureaucratic model. We now examine that challenge in sociological terms.

3.2 The Bureaucratic Challenge

Sociologist Christopher Scheitle is one of the most important new researchers engaging the FBO.¹⁴ In *Beyond the Congregation*, Scheitle offers a vigorous defense of the historical contributions of the Christian nonprofit. We will delve deeply into Scheitle’s defense, not only because he provides perhaps the most comprehensive recent sociological

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴ Scheitle’s book is perhaps the most comprehensive sociological account of Christian nonprofits, which includes chapters on history, financial analysis, leadership, relationship to the state, and case studies and profiles.

work on the Christian nonprofit, but because his account provides a rationale and defense for the FBO as currently constituted in contemporary times. There are two key parts to his argument, they are related, and both connect to historical challenges described in chapter one. The first regards his account of pragmatic effectiveness, the second his rationale for the necessity of detaching the organizational form of the Christian nonprofit from that of the church.

With regard to effectiveness, Scheitle's book offers a taxonomy of Christian nonprofits divided into nine sectors with near-omnipresence throughout the world.¹⁵ Yet he notes that for these FBOs, quantifying effectiveness is problematic given "value-based goals that are not easily measured through such objective criteria."¹⁶ Indeed, Scheitle notes that the most common measurements of effectiveness within the promotional literature of Christian nonprofits themselves concern *numbers and growth in size*: numbers of houses built, missionaries supported, pastors trained, and people served.¹⁷ Scheitle defends the metamorphosis of the once-fledgling voluntary society into the highly-developed twenty-first century bureaucratic model precisely because of the enormous capacity of pragmatic business models to deliver more social and spiritual goods and services:

Since when has religion not been defined by free enterprise, especially in the United States where the history books are littered with schisms, new religious groups, and charismatic leaders forging their own path? ... At their heart, these theological arguments are ultimately about power. What we must recognize is that innovation and free enterprise tend to challenge the status quo ... when it comes to many of the

¹⁵ The nine sectors are charismatic evangelism, relief and development, education and training, publishing and resources, radio and television, missions and missionary, fellowship and enrichment, advocacy and activism, and fundraising and grant making (Scheitle: 2010, 59-90).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

overlapping activities, the bureaucratic model allows parachurch organizations to produce more goods and services faster, more efficiently, and more predictably.¹⁸

A bureaucratic model of Christian nonprofits is required because when it comes to results “the parachurch agency may be run like a business ... People who don’t do the job can be dismissed. Decisions can be quickly made. Their promotions are slick and results obvious. Pragmatic people like this.”¹⁹ This provides the grounds for a second part of Scheitle’s argument, a rationale for a clear differentiation between mission and church. In response to concerns about the parachurch and FBO that range from their biblical illegitimacy to the theological priority of congregations for all outreach, Scheitle contrasts Christian nonprofits favorably to churches that “are not built around the same highly rationalized business model.”²⁰ He understands the nature of churches to be “purely voluntary” and thus characterized by “struggles, compromises, and fellowship” and “more long-term goals ... (e.g. spiritual development, fellowship).” Scheitle notes all this is what might be called “the beauty of churches. An Amish barn raising would be less inspiring if it was done by subcontractors.”²¹ But in providing clear evidence of effectiveness, “Christian nonprofits will undoubtedly win.”²² In sum, the highly professionalized managerial model Christian nonprofit is an immense social gift because of its unprecedented and immediate

¹⁸ Scheitle (2010: 35).

¹⁹ Scheitle (2010: 256), quoting Stephen Board, “The Great Evangelical Power Shift,” *Eternity*, June 1979.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Scheitle (2010: 112).

results, and this *necessitates* detachment from the slow-moving, gradualist, generalist, and long-term model of the church.²³

Sociological categories reveal four problems in this bureaucratic model of the FBO. First, the bureaucratic model as described by Scheitle is undergirded by economic and technological assumptions and metaphors: “free enterprise,” “goods and services,” “more,” “faster,” “efficiently,” “predictably.” This describes what Scheitle explicitly terms the “religious market” of competition between church and parachurch.²⁴ In the isomorphic terms described above, Scheitle describes what has become an established organizational field; the establishment of the gradualist church in its dominant forms has been joined by the establishment of the productive FBO and NGO world. Strikingly absent is an account of the wider social ecology of market and state sectors, and of whether isomorphic pressures from the market have acted to create this bureaucratic and technological model and its high levels of efficiency, productivity, and distribution. As described above, when a field becomes established within certain shared understandings, the power of isomorphic homogenization within the field becomes more acute, in this case, homogenization into the market sector’s operating principle of profitability through competition. This is what Craig Dykstra terms a “technological understanding to practice” where the sole criteria is whether results can be brought under the control of the organization itself to produce expected and planned results.²⁵ Mimetic isomorphic pressures are seen in FBOs modeling themselves after the results-driven nature of their peers and competitors. Normative isomorphic pressures are

²³ A detailed and optimistic account of the parachurch is offered in *The Prospering Parachurch: Enlarging the Boundaries of God’s Kingdom*. See Willmer, Schmidt, and Smith (2008).

²⁴ Scheitle (2010: 5-7).

²⁵ Dykstra (1991: 39).

seen from the “pragmatic” funders Scheitle describes, motivated by “slick promotions and obvious results.” But when, as Bretherton states, “the underlying assumption becomes economics conceived as the best way of organizing society and organizations,” this threatens the different aims for human relationships said to be needed by the third, “non-profit” sector.²⁶

A second problem is how the bureaucratic model provides an insufficient account of its own relationship to power. The landscape of the FBO described by Scheitle in his taxonomy is a highly-developed organizational field from publishing to broadcasting, from education to relief and development, all of which is supported by sophisticated forms of fundraising, communications, and organizational development. But there is a great danger in giving legitimacy to the FBO via the guiding terms of effectiveness. According to Macintyre’s critique of Max Weber’s bureaucratic model, the self-generating logic of such a model becomes not a vision beyond itself but “bureaucratic authority which appeals precisely to its own *effectiveness*. And what this appeal reveals is that bureaucratic authority is nothing other than successful power.”²⁷ This marks the bureaucratic model as self-legitimizing, as subject to no overarching *telos* or vision beyond itself and its own power to establish effectiveness itself as authority. The bureaucratic model thus greatly intensifies the problem of unexamined power that emerges so perilously from Protestant mission history into contemporary times, especially in the American forms of individualistic missions.

²⁶ Bretherton (2010: 39) offers an account of these economic assumptions with reference to terms such as “social capital” and to how economics came to pervade thinking about human relationships.

²⁷ Scheitle (2010: 256).

A third problem is that the bureaucratic model does not need the church to succeed. It is striking that Scheitle names the FBO as lacking the “long-term goals” (such as spiritual development and fellowship) that churches pursue.²⁸ Not only is it assumed that such goals do not matter for the FBO, but the bureaucratic model provides no resources to address the breach between mission, ecclesiology, and theology in Protestant missions history that has distanced the FBO from the disciplines of theological reflection and ecclesial wisdom. The criterion of effectiveness necessitates distancing from ecclesial forms and knowledge.

Finally, the bureaucratic model does not meet Baggett’s test for the *raison d’être* for the third sector, the *telos* of “value-based goals.” When the sole aim is goods and services—more, faster, more efficiently, more reliably—this hardly meets the terms of a “noninstrumentalized organizational logic” and generating “a sense of moral obligation to others that far surpasses perceiving and treating them as mere clients or consumers.”²⁹ This bureaucratic and managerial model is exactly what Barnett and Stein contend is a pervasive problem in the third sector that FBO are part of:

By secularization of humanitarianism we mean the process by which elements of the everyday and the profane insinuate themselves and become integrated into humanitarianism, thus challenging its sacred standing. Secularization is evident in the growing role of states and commercial enterprises, the centrality of fundraising, encroachment of earthly matters such as governance, processes of bureaucratization and professionalization, and the kinds of evidence that are required to demonstrate effectiveness.³⁰

They go on to name the harmful influences of globalization from the power-motivated state and profit-motivated market, seen in humanitarian organizations captive to

²⁸ Ibid., 112.

²⁹ Baggett (2001: 4).

³⁰ Barnett and Stein (2012: 7).

“the constant need to ... commodify suffering in order to keep the agency afloat financially,” the dangers of efficiency trouncing spirituality. “The emphasis on means-and-ends calculations and efficiency meant that a more explicit consequentialist ethic displaced a sense of duty.”³¹ The kind of necessary pragmatism that Scheitle celebrates is for Barnett and Stein a new contemporary situation where humanitarianism is increasingly marked by the profane.³²

Baggett’s analysis of one highly influential FBO, Habitat for Humanity, illuminates how “profane” isomorphic pressures inherent in the bureaucratic model have begun to infiltrate FBOs once marked by value-based goals, causing them to focus on the productivity that characterizes the market sector. Habitat for Humanity was founded with the self-stated aim of “partnership” across lines of race and class to support low-income families in becoming home owners, guided by an explicit religious vision expressed by founders Clarence Jordan and Millard Fuller.³³ Baggett provides evidence of how, over time, the very structure of Habitat for Humanity has come to institutionalize a self-generating divide between two classes of permanent beneficiaries and permanent benefactors. This structure puts the lives, values, and finances of the former under constant scrutiny by the latter, not only without reciprocity, but in a way that justifies the goodness and charity of benefactors whose lives go unexamined. This has eroded the vision of creating a new social space that renews all involved (the kind of distinctive vision the third sector should provide), via means expressed in the name of the organization which itself founded Habitat—*Koinonia*.

³¹ Barnett and Stein (2012: 23).

³² Ibid.

³³ Baggett (2001: 49-50).

Moreover, this gradual but substantive change has enabled Habitat to grow fast, favoring the short-term goal of house-building over the long-term goal of altering classified and racialized relationships. For Baggett, Habitat's four decades of astounding organizational growth has come with considerable trade-offs:

Habitat for Humanity provides an institutional space for a distinctly pragmatic, nondoctrinal, and individual-based kind of religiosity that is well suited to the secular climate of modernity and, consequently, is tremendously attractive to the growing numbers of Americans involved in its ministry. Adaptation has its costs, though. Ironically, the kind of religiosity largely responsible for Habitat's growth appears to be less able to sustain the shared religious language and values that can marshal an ideological resistance to the market's problematic effects on the organization.³⁴

For some, the remarkable rise of Habitat may be an indicator that religion has gained strength and influence within humanitarianism. Yet when that growth is described as trading shared religious language and values for a "pragmatic, nondoctrinal, and individual-based" approach, gaining wider societal affirmation *can* mean that the terms for *how* and *what kind* of religion matters (and doesn't) is now set according to a captivity to the "profane." The irony is that while FBOs now ignite arguably more mission activity from the U.S. than ever before in history, the characteristics that support growth are not the same as those that can resist the powers of secularization.

3.3 The Aid Challenge

The internal engine of the FBO as bureaucratically-designed makes unprecedented results its *raison d'être*. This provides no distinctive presence to correct, enlarge, and expand the vision of the common good that the third sector is understood to offer. With regard to

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

the third sector itself, then, what forces are at play as the voluntary sector’s FBO’s fellow actors and peers on the contemporary landscape?

In their cultural anthropological account, Bornstein and Redfield consider the FBO to be part of what they term an “aid sector” within the larger third sector. This offers an important lens of analysis for the FBO in relationship to three distinct “aid” fields described as Development, Human Rights, and Humanitarianism. With each of the three Bornstein and Redfield demarcate a distinctive emphasis, lineage, official language, vision of well-being, and fundamental problem addressed, as summarized in the diagram below.

Table 2: Aid Sector as described by Bornstein and Redfield³⁵

	Emphasis	Historic professional expertise	Lineage	Official language	A defining institution	Vision of well being	Fundamental problem addressed	Temporal terms
Development	Economic end of political economy	Economists	European colonial empire and Cold War aftermath; staple of international relations	Filters through statistical and technocratic measures	World Bank	Conceived through livelihood	Poverty understood as material lack	Inherently progressive; things will improve into an open and potentially infinite future
Human Rights	Political/legal end of political economy	Lawyers	European liberal political theory	Legalistic and philosophical; political liberties	United Nations	Conceived through justice	Injustice, understood as specific violations	Potentially transcendent and cumulative; a right is thought to be inviolable
Humanitarianism	Physical and psychological condition of suffering people	Doctors, nurses, military	Christian charity, shifting sensibilities about misfortune of others	Moral, and broadly medical	Red Cross	Conceived through species level needs and health	Suffering of needy victims, their bodily and psychological anguish	Inherently presentist, urgency of life-saving here and now

Several patterns can be extracted from Bornstein and Redfield’s matrix that suggest characteristics of an “aid model” that is related yet distinct from the bureaucratic model.

³⁵ Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 3-5).

This aid model bears great influence on the landscape of the third sector, and on the shared contemporary organizational “aid” field with FBOs as so-called peers and competitors. Sociological categories suggest problems with regard to each characteristic.

The first pattern is made up of explicitly-stated differences and tensions within the aid sector itself in terms of associations with particular forms of social power, knowledge, and competence. For example, the field of development is said to be connected to economics and a proximity to the market sector, while human rights is said to be linked to the legal and proximity to the state sector.³⁶ Yet this suggests that development and human rights are especially susceptible to the isomorphic pressures of, respectively, the market and the state, especially when defining institutions are said to include the World Bank and the United Nations.

A second pattern to the aid model suggested by Bornstein and Redfield’s analysis is that all these aid fields share an explicit understanding of time as inherently progressive. For example, development imagines a “potentially infinite future” and humanitarianism imagines that life-saving must happen in the urgent here and now — a presentist assumption about time and change as demanding constant and immediate response.³⁷ These assumptions about time as inherently presentist undergird an assumption that things will improve; indeed, this is what the aid sector “does.”³⁸ Within this organizational field, the aid model provides no check against but only intensifies FBOs emerging from a Protestant history of missions marked by intensifying immediatistic visions of here and now progress.

³⁶ Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 5).

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

A third pattern that suggests the form of a coherent aid model is what appears to be a shared, yet implicit, assumption that experts are the subject and chief agents of each respective field, and those with the problem are recipients who are acted upon. The language and categories of a donor-recipient dichotomy is pervasive from the professional economists with respect to the materially lacking poor, to the professional lawyers with respect to the unjustly violated, to the doctors and military with respect to the “needy victims” of humanitarianism.³⁹ Such a model lacks categories to answer Baggett’s critique of Habitat for Humanity’s de facto divide between permanent beneficiaries and benefactors. In contrast, Baggett draws a clear relationship uniting ends and means, proposing that overcoming such divides is a special task for the third sector and FBOs within in; such a task requires “considerable in-depth reflection upon the people whose needs they are attempting to meet. Those people are also more likely to be treated not only as full persons but as persons with actual voices capable of directing the specific voluntary association or nonprofit in question.”⁴⁰ The aid model exacerbates the historical Protestant problem of the voluntary society whereby the form itself is designed for “one-way” traffic and creates permanent donors and recipients.

A final characteristic of an aid model that can be traced from Bornstein and Redfield’s matrix is implicit: the non-governmental or NGO form provides the organizational vehicle and means for the aid sector’s service. Given that the institutions that bear these practices can run into the billions of dollars in terms of annual budget and the tens of thousands in terms of employees and people served, such NGOs are bearers of enormous power. In the

³⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰ Baggett (2001: 5).

account given by Bornstein and Redfield, the powers of presentist imagination and action and professional intervention on behalf of victims are assumed to be a force for good.

But as suggested in Protestant missions history, unexamined power is rarely simply that. In her analysis of World Vision Zimbabwe, Bornstein contends that the primary paradigm for mission and a source of funding is child sponsorship undergirded by a theology of personal relationships grounded in an evangelical understanding of personal relationship with Jesus Christ.⁴¹ This provides World Vision a highly-developed structure toward its organizational aim, a structure that brings the donor, the child, and World Vision as mediator into mutual dependence: “Through personal relationships, as in child sponsorship, the poverty constituting the ‘need’ for development becomes manageable and pragmatic, something to be solved with a monthly financial commitment.”⁴² The primary link between donor and child is “relationship” built through correspondence, which World Vision describes as intimate and transformative in both directions. Yet Bornstein contends that this individualistic discourse often serves to undermine family relationships and the authority of parents as well as kinship structures.⁴³ Thus the “double-edge” of child sponsorship: “The transcendent aspirations of philanthropic practice not only fail to transcend difference—they may magnify and reconstitute economic disparity.”⁴⁴ By this account, World Vision institutionalizes and legitimates as “personal relationship” a donor and recipient divided by a literal and economic ocean, a model wherein all the risk is carried by the recipient. This re-capitulates the aid model rather than resisting it, for example, via

⁴¹ Bornstein (2001: 596, 605, 614).

⁴² Bornstein (2001: 602).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 614.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the kind of long-term relationships Dana Robert describes in early twentieth-century Protestant missions.⁴⁵

3.4 The Faith Challenge

The contemporary FBO faces significant isomorphic pressures in the technological institutional practices of the bureaucratic model and the presentist institutional disciplines of the aid model. Yet this cannot be resisted by retreating from institutional life and practice. Instead, different forms of institutional practices and disciplines are required. Yet what is the proper reference point for the FBO in seeking resources of resistance?

Macintyre's understanding of the relationship between practices and institutions provides categories for an evaluative reference point. As I noted earlier, for Macintyre, "Chess, physics, and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities, and hospitals are institutions."⁴⁶ Regarding the history in chapter one, by this description the voluntary society, parachurch, FBO, and Christian NGO are institutions. Yet for Macintyre institutions do not exist for their own sake. They are bearers of practices, and the ultimate goal is the flourishing of the practices. If the FBO as a social institution is therefore a bearer of practices, and if the ultimate goal is the flourishing of the practice at stake (of chess, physics, medicine, and so forth), a critical question emerges: What is the practice of which the institution of the faith-based organization is a steward and bearer? The historical account given in chapter one argues that the FBO did not emerge from nowhere, but in a particular

⁴⁵ Robert (2011).

⁴⁶ Macintyre (1984: 194).

shape and time and social and influence through the evolution of Protestant Christian missions. My claim, then, is this: It is the practice of *Christian missions* that is ultimately at stake in analysis of the FBO.

Taking the flourishing of the practice of Christian missions as reference point for evaluating and renewing the FBO as captive to powerful bureaucratic and aid models, it must be brought alongside another understanding drawn from Macintyre. As stated above, practices require institutions. Yet the challenge is institutions are inherently acquisitive, concerned with and structured in terms of what Macintyre terms “external goods” – money, power, status. Macintyre is clear that this is not inherently bad but rather the necessary role of institutions, and he narrates the rationality and complexity:

For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions – and consequently of the good external to the good internal to the practices in question – that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution.⁴⁷

At the very same time, practices both *require* institutions and their external goods to be sustained, and must *resist* their corrupting power. With this in view, what kind of FBO institutions are required in order to both sustain the goods of the practice of Christian missions, and to resist the tendencies of the very same FBOs toward acquisitiveness, effectiveness as bureaucratic power, and the instrumentalization of beneficiaries?

⁴⁷ Ibid.

3.5. Exegeting the Special Nature of FBOs through Typologies

One source for a response to this question is provided in a growing body of sociological scholarship regarding FBOs. As described in chapter one, part of the U.S. rise in the terminology and form of the FBO in the 1990s was due to “Charitable Choice” federal legislation that cleared the way for many religious organizations to receive government funding. This involved enormous debates around church-state separation, which organizations could receive funding, and the differences and relationship between “faith,” “religion,” and “secular.”

One prominent sociological typology for FBOs is offered by Ron Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh regarding social service and educational organizations and programs in the U.S.⁴⁸ The typology proposes six types of FBOs on a range from “faith-permeated” to secular. At the “more faith” end are “faith-permeated” organizations where “the connection with religion is evident at all levels” and the “religious dimension is believed to be essential to the program’s effectiveness.” At the other end of the typology are “secular” organizations for whom “faith commitment is considered not only irrelevant but also improper.” Three of the types are “more secular,” and three are “more faith,” where the “religious founding is still a part of the organization’s identity.”⁴⁹ The proposal was that while government funding for “faith-permeated” organizations crossed a line between separation of church and

⁴⁸ For Sider and Unruh, “The term ‘*social service*’ is meant to encompass efforts to provide goods and services to individuals or improve the general quality of life of a community: food pantries, elder care, substance, abuse counseling, job training, immigration assistance, day care, housing, rehabilitation, GED instruction, after-school tutoring, private colleges, and so on.” Sider and Unruh (2004: 119).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 119-120.

state, organizations in the other five categories were not only acceptable, but offered important contributions to the common good because of their faith relationship.

One benefit of analyzing FBOs through this typology is it properly changes the question from “is *x* or *y* organization a FBO or not” to “to what *extent* does ‘faith’ characterize this FBO with regard to who it hires and serves and what its programs and daily practices are?” This helps to analyze FBOs with regard to their organizational history moving between different types, and to wrestle with what is at stake between mission, “faith,” and form in organizational judgments around strategic direction, hiring policies, programming, and funding. The typology creates room for distinctive vocations of both intense particularity and intense hybridity, ranging from faith-permeated entities of worship such as churches, synagogues, and mosques to what are termed “faith-secular partnerships” as represented in the powerful mixture of constituencies within the U.S. civil rights movement. This creates space for necessary analysis about not only the vocations but the limits of each type, and the need for interdependence and alliances that release new vocations to resist the powers of the wider social ecology and the bureaucratic and aid models.

Yet there are also limits to the typology. The typology assumes the existence of “the FBO” in a way that is challenged by Thomas Jeavons, who asks why the term “faith” versus “religious” organizations?⁵⁰ To deepen this critique, why “faith” versus “Christian”? Indeed, the organizations surveyed were entirely Christian and Protestant, and many evangelical; does “faith” sufficiently describe their internal logic of reasoning? Luke Bretherton notes that in contemporary times FBOs have been claimed by the state as such for

⁵⁰ Jeavons observes that all of the organizations surveyed were not only Protestant, they were evangelical; see Jeavons (2004: 141).

their social welfare value, and are therefore in danger of being co-opted.⁵¹ Even the widely-used term “faith-based organization” as deployed by state and market exerts expectations on how the FBO is to imagine its reason for existence. Thus rather than taking the terminology for granted, Bretherton argues that “faith” connotes a Christian or Protestant understanding that is not inclusive of other religions. Yet he also contends that “faith” also loses the particularity without which different religions lose their logic for existence and for right judgment. In choosing the term “faith-designated” instead, Bretherton describes the reality of how the FBO is being acted upon by being designated as “faith-based” by external actors, and with this term both refuses the terms of isomorphic powers and opens debate to how to best describe the special nature of the FBO:

The refusal to take the particularity of different religious traditions seriously is problematic because it fails to evaluate these traditions in terms of their own frames of reference and thereby repeatedly misinterprets and misunderstands what is going on within them.⁵²

This is where Macintyre’s question about what practice is at stake is critical. If the practice at stake for the FBO is the flourishing of Christian mission, how does the FBO stay true to its particular “frame of reference” rather than become co-opted by the homogenizing power of the aid industry and the emergence of the profane within it, or the technological understandings of practice that undergird, and the permanent classes of benefactors and beneficiaries that come with each of them?

This raises another critical issue about the Sider and Unruh model concerning their study being funded and organized by a Congressional committee developing criteria for

⁵¹ Bretherton (2010: 33, 34, 38).

⁵² Ibid., 38.

government funding of FBOs. Regarding FBOs for whom being “Christian” matters, will those FBOs make internal and external shifts due to coercive isomorphic pressures related to “faith” being re-shaped by the state’s own terms? For example, there is significant debate about whether receiving government funding necessarily changes the “faith” of FBOs. According to Sider and Unruh, their typology is not designed to “grade” FBOs on a religious scale, but to describe the range of ways faith is claimed by different organizations. Yet this can also have the effect of relativizing the different types in a way that hides the powers of isomorphism. Jeavons rightly suggests that much is at stake in the choice of vocabulary. This relates not only to choices about “faith” versus “religious” but the pervasive language in Sider and Unruh’s article of “service beneficiaries,” “service provision,” and types of “benevolence.” This is the terminology of the aid model and its underlying assumption that experts are the subject and recipients are the object, of permanent benefactors and beneficiaries. The key point is there is ample evidence to indicate that many FBOs have and do make substantive changes that mark qualitative transformations in mission and form, and the reasons why some FBOs do not is a matter of important inquiry.⁵³ From the standpoint of the FBO wrestling within a wider social ecology, this raises the question of isomorphic pressures upon the study itself and the typology’s resulting limits.⁵⁴

Jeavons provides another typology of evaluative sociological categories for the FBO. Similar to Sider and Unruh, his categories run a useful spectrum from profoundly or purely religious to secular. Yet Jeavons poses several criteria for evaluating the FBO that

⁵³ See Scheitle (2010:159) and Vanderwoerd (2004).

⁵⁴ A possible irony is that, as more types of FBOs are allowed to seek and receive government funding, this releases new isomorphic pressures.

differentiate more qualitatively between religious and secular and are striking when contrasted to the internal designs of the bureaucratic and aid models described above. Three of his most provocative criteria are especially significant for distinguishing the special nature of the FBO.

First, unlike Sider and Unruh for whom “faith” is a self-evident category, Jeavons provides a vibrant account of his preference for “religion.”⁵⁵ Jeavons contends that the ultimate reference point for religious organizations is belief in God and a “system of faith or worship.”⁵⁶ With this ultimate reference point in mind, Jeavons asks whether the organization processes information and decisions in a way that takes account of God in contrast to “standard management literature” which has no understanding of “the potential for Divine intervention or God’s providence affecting organizational performance.” As examples of organizations that do account for God’s agency, he mentions ones that make consensus decisions, assuming “God will make the true or best decision knowable to everyone” Jeavons also mentions consultative processes that assume each person has a gift in the “body of Christ.”⁵⁷ If the state sector imagines the citizen in relationship to national interest, the market sector the consumer in relationship to profit, and the voluntary sector the humanitarian in relationship to aid, then Jeavons presents terms for FBOs which imagine the disciple in relationship to worship and to service in love of neighbor. Here Jeavons’ criteria

⁵⁵ Jeavons (1994: 79).

⁵⁶ Jeavons draws on the Oxford American Dictionary, which defines “religion” as “belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially of a God or gods ... [and] the particular system of faith and worship” deriving from that belief. Therefore, for Jeavons, congregations are taken to be “prima facie, religious” and “the ideal case of the congregation provides a beginning point” (87).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 89.

point to a distinctive *telos* for the FBO. Naming “worship” as determinative for a FBO requires an account of divine agency within its organizational disciplines and practices.

A second provocative criteria offered by Jeavons regarding the special nature of FBOs is whether or not the organization’s religious identity carries a real cost.⁵⁸ While Scheitle’s terms display a FBO at once pervasively bureaucratic and religious without ever losing its “faith,” Jeavons questions whether any organization is religious that is not put at a *disadvantage* by being so. On the one hand he highlights organizations whose Christian identity benefits as a kind of “spiritual capital”⁵⁹ with fundraising constituencies, but where that identity is insignificant and even explicitly ignored in practice. For some so-called FBOs, being “faith-based” brings only advantages. By making real cost a serious indicator, Jeavons tests whether and how “faith” really matters.⁶⁰ This is one of the greatest isomorphic pressures for the FBO with regard to the state and the vast amount of funding now available in the U.S. because of Charitable Choice, and globally via agencies such as USAID.

Scheitle himself provides an astonishing account of one FBO which has benefitted greatly by taking advantage of IRS codes. Until recently Young Life was a historic and vibrant 501(c)3 non-profit parachurch ministry primarily serving high school students. With an annual budget of \$169 million, Young Life’s stated goal has traditionally been to complement and not bypass local churches. But in 2004 Young Life applied to the IRS to be named as a *church*, and succeeded. By its own logic, the IRS determined that Young Life met the criteria of a church, with its *own* creed, *own* form of worship (in form, weekly club

⁵⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁰ Jeavons offers the example of Grove City College’s refusal to accept federal loans for students (Ibid., 82).

meetings of high school students), and *own* formal doctrine. Young Life clubs were considered churches, and the national organization was the association. “In other words,” writes Scheitle matter-of-factly, “Young Life is the equivalent of a denomination.”⁶¹ In the history of Protestant missions, this appears to be another reformulation of Christianity: the FBO that was first needed because of the lethargy of the church has now become a new form of non-profit church, in effect replacing what it was said to come alongside and service. The reasoning which judges Young Life to be a church (or denomination) has been provided by the IRS.⁶² From an ecclesial standpoint, such a definition is to allow a church to be one without sacraments (for Young Life does not practice them). Furthermore, Young Life did not change significantly in organizational means and form over these years. The story erodes Scheitle’s own binary categories between church and Christian non-profit; the specialized, highly-rational, bureaucratic (his terms) FBOs he celebrates can somehow smoothly metamorphose into churches—and be rewarded by federal tax codes in doing so. This presses Jeavons’ question about whether an FBO like Young Life carries a real cost in being Christian.

A third set of criteria for Jeavons in distinguishing FBOs from bureaucratic and aid models can be found in the way services are delivered: *how* such services are delivered is at least as important as *what* is being delivered, and how decisions are made is as important as the decision itself.⁶³ Jeavons’ terms challenge purely “rational choice” models of strategic

⁶¹ Scheitle (2010: 144).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 88.

planning in distinguishing between pragmatic and theological information, as well as pervasive donor-recipient model in his criteria of meaningful relationship.⁶⁴

A textured display of what Jeavons might term as meaningful relationships is given in *Moral Ambition*, Omri Elisha's account of socially engaged white evangelicals in Knoxville, Tennessee. On the one hand, Elisha observes signs of an evangelical captivity to personal and individualistic approaches that are blind to institutional patterns and powers such as racism.⁶⁵ But Elisha also describes a unique brand of "relationalism" as a powerful resource in its evangelical culture. In a textured account of relationalism, he describes people willing to immerse themselves so fully into the lives of others (including across social divides) that human social relationships become "vehicles of redemption" —intimately-felt relationships with God imitated in expectations for relationship with others inside and outside their community:

Religious conversions are understood to be triggered by relational interventions of one kind or another, and the 'fruits' that follow one's spiritual rebirth as a Christian are substantiated by interactions—real and envisioned—with spouses, friends, coworkers, and believers and unbelievers alike both at home and abroad.⁶⁶

Elisha develops the concept of "moral ambition" to examine the interplay between individualist and relationalist power in evangelicalism. "My general point is that American evangelicalism cannot and should not be reduced categorically to notions of individualism ... Evangelicals go to great lengths to encourage (and enforce) relationalism as a collective ethos that complements and at times complicates individualism rather than merely receding under

⁶⁴ Ibid., 89-90.

⁶⁵ Elisha describes in the Knoxville church community an incommensurability between those with institutional power to give on their terms, and those who are constantly put in a position only to receive (2011:181).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 20.

its hegemonic force.”⁶⁷ The fundamental concept of “relationship” is an organizational principle, a collective ethos, a redemptive power. “The concept of ‘relationship’ is so fundamental in evangelical churches that it also serves as an organizational principle suited to institutional as well as ritual functions” (such as small groups, methods of ministry, and so on).⁶⁸

In identifying relationalism within the evangelical Christian tradition, connecting it to an intimately-felt relationship with God, and re-envisioning its power to provide “vehicles of redemption,” Elisha provides the kind of necessary language and logic that FBOs require to provide a special nature within a wide social ecology. In Elisha’s terms, relationalism becomes a complementary resource to resist racism, alongside a capacity for structural accounts of power and history. In other words, neither the structural nor the relational is sufficient to resist the powers that racially divide church and society; only when held together can racism be met with an integrative force toward an authentic social alternative.

Here is a display of Jeavons’ account of both meaningful relationships and theological (versus practical) information to process decisions (intimacy with God extended to intimacy with neighbor) that enables some evangelicals in Knoxville to resist the powers of division. Jeavons’ criteria—of organizations paying a real cost to be “religious”; the reference point to worship that reminds the FBO that it is not self-sufficient and needs the church; making organizational judgments drawing on theological reflection—together provide the shape of resistance to the four problems emerging out of the history of Protestant missions:

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

unexamined power, managerial model, donor-recipient, and underlying breach between mission and church.

In seeking resources to resist what they term a “secularized narrative of transformation” growing within humanitarianism, Bornstein and Redfield contend that religion has been a gap in study, and call upon the anthropological tradition of accounting for “supposedly illogical (anti-utilitarian, and irrational) aspects of social engagement” as “forms of social life [that] are logical.”⁶⁹ Their account of Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in India suggests what is at stake in “illogically logical” organizational disciplines that have power to resist the technological and presentist practices driving the bureaucratic and aid models.

In contrast to NGO and “aid sector” peer Medecin San Frontiers, the Sisters of Charity are “not oriented toward a presentist conception of life.”⁷⁰ Rather they are formed as a religious community seeking to “save souls” and attend to suffering bodies by means of proximity—by touching the diseased and by an “approach of simplicity” that (importantly) includes washing dishes by hand and rejecting washing machines.⁷¹ How did Mother Teresa understand the vision of well-being? Distinguishing her work from social work or government agencies, “She believed there was a hunger for food as well as a hunger for love and kindness and that this second type of hunger was what created such human suffering.” In response to such suffering, she said, “We must offer something else: Christ’s love.” Yet she goes further, naming an even deeper *telos*: “Love for my neighbor will lead me to true

⁶⁹ Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 11).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷¹ The authors note severe criticisms of Mother Teresa’s work by those who claim her order ignores structural injustices and valorizes poverty. See Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 11).

love for God.” A final statement subverts the imaginary of the poor as beneficiaries: “those who have the greatest capacity to give and receive love [are] the poorest of the poor.”⁷²

Bornstein and Redfield proceed to describe the Christian theology (what Jeavons might term the salience of theological information) behind the method as follows:

The focus on love, and not rehabilitation, marks a sharp contrast to welfare and development programs which rely on a secularized narrative of transformation, from destitute to self-sufficient ... there is no assumption that those who she ‘saves’ will become productive or even re-integrated into society. They are, instead, souls to be loved and given care.⁷³

The reality of corporately-held and practiced disciplines described here—day-to-day presence with the poor, nothing presumed about progress happening at the end of the day or year, a common vision of love for neighbor leading the organization toward true love for God, a corporate contentment around a mission of “souls to be loved and given care”—together has the look of organizational disciplines that can resist the bureaucratic and aid models described in this chapter. Language, imagination, and organizational means are suggested that provide what Baggett calls for in Habitat for Humanity, namely, the kind of religiosity that can “sustain the shared religious language and values that can marshal an ideological resistance to the market’s problematic effects on the organization”⁷⁴

3.6 Institutional Imagination

The historical tendency for FBOs to be blind to matters of their own power emerged as a significant problem in chapter one. The sociological analysis of this chapter extends this

⁷² Ibid., 13.

⁷³ Bornstein and Redfield (2007: 14).

⁷⁴ Baggett (2001: xii).

“peril of power” from the FBO itself to the peril of the *powers*, the potencies of the surrounding institutions, sectors, and social ecology with their prevailing assumptions about ends and means. In light of the isomorphic pressures of an organizational field featuring bureaucratic and aid models and their deforming organizational practices, the task of forming what Elisha terms “vehicles of redemption” is a great challenge for the FBO in being true to its nature as a bearer of the practice of Christian missions. The historical and sociological accounts of the FBO together suggest an inextricable relationship between mission and means, between how mission is imagined and how mission is formed. We have seen how the “use of means” itself even becomes a carrier of isomorphic pressures—the voluntary society, the parachurch, the FBO, the humanitarian NGO, all releasing influences for good, and yet increasingly captive to deforming organizational practices. To be blind to these powers is to become captive to them.

This challenge is not primarily technological but regards both imagination and organization. Only a proper marriage between imagination and polity, between mission and means, can provide the FBO a place to stand against isomorphic pressures. The category of “institutional imagination” has been deployed in various disciplines to suggest that certain solutions cannot be found in approaches that are solely focused on individual organizations or institutions (in the MacIntyrean sense).⁷⁵ Likewise with the historical and sociological accounts offered here: to think organizationally is too narrow. When thinking about the historical challenge of the secularization of Protestant missions in the cleavage between

⁷⁵ References to institutional imagination occur in several academic disciplines. This includes the work of legal theorist Roberto Unger (Unger: 1996), with his influence on Ivan Petrella’s understanding of liberation theology and institutional imagination (Petrella: 2004).

mission and ecclesiology, in engaging the wide social ecology and organizational field of the FBO, we are naming challenges about thinking institutionally, with the full ecology and account of forces, sectors, and prevailing patterns of institutional forms in view. The FBO must learn to reason and judge imaginatively not only with regard to its internal world and external constituencies as an organization, but with reference to the wider social ecology of isomorphic pressures. This wider social ecology is what I mean by “institutional.”

These problems all arose from what Winter termed “the second Protestant schism,” the breach between mission and ecclesiology originating with the Protestant voluntary society as a new missional imagination and organizational form. The lesson here is that we cannot think about mission without thinking about means and polity. These are *institutional* problems that concern a dichotomy between mission and polity.

With regard to “imagination,” sociologist John Paul Lederach has argued extensively about the power of “moral imagination,” describing imagination as having a power of transcendence to interrupt what is assumed to be normal and to release new creative possibilities: “[Imagination] breaks out of what appear to be narrow, shortsighted, or structurally determined dead-ends ... [whether] the capacity of a character in a fairy tale to transcend what appears as predetermined disaster or the need to open a wider range of possible actions in decisions facing the NASA space program.”⁷⁶ Reflecting on the fiction of Flannery O’Connor, Walter Brueggemann has written of the power of “prophetic imagination” to resist reigning ideologies: “I am sure ... that the joining of ‘prophetic’ to ‘imagination’ leads inescapably in an artistic direction in which truth is told in a way and at

⁷⁶ Lederach (2005: 27).

an angle that assures it will not be readily co-opted or domesticated by hegemonic interpretive power."⁷⁷

What I mean by an institutional imagination is the communion of imagination, form, and language that can both resist the social ecology as needed, and release unique public goods. As a distinctive entity emerging from Protestant missions history and pressures of isomorphism, the FBO requires a theological understanding in order think and work imaginatively within a wide social ecology. We turn now to the field of missiology for build on the historical and sociological analysis.

⁷⁷ Brueggemann (2001: xiv).

4. Assessing the Faith-Based Organization on the Missiological Landscape

With Macintyre's distinction between institutions and practices in view, if what is at stake in the faithful life and witness of the institution of the FBO is the flourishing of the practice of Christian missions, what immediately comes into view is two millennia of Christian missions tradition to draw from for theological resources to analyze the FBO. For John Howard Yoder, the existence of such a tradition and its wealth of history, practice, and argument illuminates the Christian community as "a sociological entity in its own right,"¹ with a central task of Christian theology being to attend to the "cultural productivity" of Christians throughout the centuries.² This provides deep resources to care for the goods that constitute the practice of Christian missions. Those deep resources are rooted in what Christian theology has called *missiology*.

Given that the FBO has become a dominant force in both church and society leading even to reformulations of Christianity itself, this chapter builds on the history and sociology to bring theological and missiological analysis into conversation with the FBO. A missiological account of institutional imagination provides the framework for analyzing the FBO in this chapter, engaging three interdependent dimensions that are required to care for the practice of Christian missions: how Christian mission is *imagined* (guiding mission), how Christian mission is *formed* (use of means), and how Christian mission is *proclaimed* (language). The quest for an interweaving of mission, means, and language is the challenge

¹ Yoder (1996: 75).

² *Ibid.*, 56.

of the FBO developing an institutional imagination. Using this lenses, four critical areas are engaged with respect to the FBO: the social ecology, agency and God, the world and the “other,” and time and duty.

4.1 The FBO and How Christian Mission is Imagined

4.1.1 How the Social Ecology is Imagined: The Cosmic and Eschatological

The historical absence of an account of power in U.S. Protestant missions history is problematic given the isomorphic pressures of the social ecology described in chapter two. Adding to the challenge are further pressures that theology reveals on the landscape. The story of Scripture from creation to fall to redemption is in part a story of the navigation of particular polities and powers: Garden, Egypt, Wilderness, Monarchy, Exile, Empire and Occupation, the New Jerusalem. Yet in the Scriptural imagination, the ecology surrounding these polities and powers is not only personal, social, and institutional—it is cosmic and eschatological, with the Kingdom of God as ultimate reference point, and all else as penultimate. A theological account of this wider landscape of powers is critical for analyzing the challenges facing the FBO.

James Smith’s category of “cultural liturgies” adds depth and breadth to the critical social ecology provided by sociology, re-interpreting in theological terms the power of isomorphisms to pressure people and institutions into certain images. For Smith, human beings are fundamentally desiring (versus thinking) creatures.³ As such, deeply embedded social sites—for example, the mall, the professional football field, and the public university—

³ Yoder (1996: 46-47).

are not neutral sites but are cultural institutions that *in their very design and structure* carry powerful “pedagogies of desire” — desires such as accumulation, entertainment, secularization, and so forth.⁴ These desires amount to nothing less than forms of worship (thus cultural *liturgies*) because they contend with what the social space of the church demands: the worship of Jesus Christ as Lord (Smith understands the church and its embodied design as a contending pedagogy of desire).⁵ One crucial element to the inherent power of cultural liturgies (NFL football, university curriculum, Episcopal worship) is that they are carriers of assumptions about how reality is imagined. For example, we might say that the mall is a deeply-textured world designed to pull one in, to desire more and more, and to eventually imagine that there is no such thing as “enough.” Smith builds here on the work of Charles Taylor’s understanding of the “social imaginary.” Writes Taylor:

By social imaginary I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellow, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.⁶

Unlike social theory, social imaginaries are not the vision of an elite, but have become embedded into common understanding as natural, inevitable, and self-evident.⁷ In Taylor’s terms, the Western notion of progress has a history (things could have been otherwise); yet “progress” as inherently progressive has widely-shared and unquestioned social legitimacy. The significance of social imaginaries such as this presentist assumption (described in

⁴ Smith (2009: 23-24).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-214.

⁶ Taylor (1984: 23).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

chapter two) becomes clear for the FBO in John Howard Yoder's analysis of H. Richard Niebuhr's process of reasoning. Yoder traces a subtle logic whereby "transformation" of "culture" becomes the obvious Christian task and priority. This includes the way Niebuhr's very method of writing makes implicit assumptions such as the nation-state being pre-eminently representative of the culture that must be transformed; that society is best managed from the top;⁸ and that culture itself is "the *majority* position of any given society"⁹ (versus a minority position such as the Sisters of Charity in chapter two). Yoder understands a critical task of theology is to show that "culture" as a self-evident reality is not at all inevitable or natural, and draws upon the scriptural category of powers and principalities to describe insidious powers at work seeking to claim hearts and minds. As Yoder puts it, "our world is characterized by racism, by the punitive exercise of authority from the home to the state, by genocide, by pornography, by the glorification of violence in commercial entertainment . . . These are authentically 'culture,' but they are what an older reformation theology called fallen."¹⁰ A crucial task of the FBO as it negotiates its proper mission is to understand where and how culture is created and creative, and where and how it is fallen, oppressive, and in rebellion.

In a biblical exegesis, Lesslie Newbigin adds to this analysis in describing the "illusion of our individualistic post-Enlightenment Western culture" that the gospel is addressed to individuals.¹¹ He argues that the New Testament has been misread in this respect, and engages Pauline literature with reference to principalities and powers, focusing

⁸ Yoder (1996: 66).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹ Newbigin (1989: 199).

especially on the Greek plural *stoicheia* in the Letter of Colossians. The letter's readers are warned about becoming captive to "philosophy and empty deceit, according to human traditions, according to the *stoicheia* of the universe and not according to Christ."¹² While the powers have been disarmed by Christ, they have not been destroyed and have to be wrestled with. Newbigin then argues that life in this world does not begin *ex nihilo*; there is an existing order and structure of *stoicheia*, namely "elements [that] are necessary to guide and protect human life. They serve God's purpose; they are created for Christ and to serve Christ, and to provide for human flourishing. But they can also become demonic," and absolutized.¹³ "The power ordained by God of Romans 13," writes Newbigin, "becomes the Beast of Revelation. The Torah, that loving instruction which God gives his people . . . becomes a tyrant."¹⁴ Newbigin then applies this scriptural imagination of *stoicheia* to powers of modernity. He names Number as a *stoicheia*, which "enables us to measure and quantify" and is an "element of order in the universe," yet "can become a tyrant when it is absolutized and nothing is valued except what can be measured and quantified."¹⁵ Another *stoicheia* is Chance, whereby "the chance workings of the free market become the 'Invisible Hand' of Adam Smith which mysteriously converts private selfishness into public good."¹⁶ Whereas the ties of family, friendships, and kinship communities are critical human flourishing, "when this good provision was given an absolute status as part of the order of creation, not

¹² Ibid., 203-207. Newbigin notes that *stoicheia* is variously translated "rudiments," "elements," "elementary spirits," and "ruling spirits of the universe." Another representative text is Galatians 4:8-9: "Formerly you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no longer gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by God, how can turn back again to the weak and beggarly *stoicheia* of the universe and not according to Christ?"

¹³ Ibid., 205.

¹⁴ Ibid., 206.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

subject to Christ, it became the demonic power of apartheid” in the form of the *stoicheia* of Race.¹⁷ Money, “a useful means for facilitating exchange, has become a power in itself, so that we do not measure human wealth in terms of real goodness and happiness but in terms of cash” and a “power which demands and receives absolute devotion.” Number, Chance, Race, Money: while invisible and not located in space, they encounter us “in visible and tangible realities—people, nations, and institutions. And they are powerful.”¹⁸

Theologically-shaped categories such as *stoicheia*, cultural liturgies, and principalities and powers provide terms for a deeper analysis of the breaches between mission, worship, and reflection which have impoverished the missiological imagination of the FBO as emerging from the voluntary society. John Flett is unflinching in his critique of a theological academy where “mission is not understood to be a matter of first-order theological reflection.”¹⁹ He describes “an egregious blind spot” in the breach between missions and theology (that I name in chapter one) emerging from the evolution of Protestant mission. Given the significance of this problem for the contemporary FBO, Flett is worth quoting at length:

Mission, it would seem, is unessential when articulating the fundamentals of the Christian faith. The problem here is not simply one of failing to treat one particular ecclesiastical practice. It indicates an omission that is deleterious to the whole dogmatic task: many of the contemporary challenges with theology stem from the absence of mission as a theological category. How it is possible to read the New Testament without reference to the missionary outpouring of the resurrection and Pentecost is a curio difficult to reconcile with even a basic reading of Scripture. To conceive of Christian witness primarily in terms internal to the life of the community has material consequences for, as representative examples, pneumatology, baptism and the Lord's Supper, liturgy, homiletics, and ethics—and thus for the nature of

¹⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹⁸ Ibid., 206-207.

¹⁹ Flett (2010: 379, Kindle).

Christian worship. In short, the absence of mission has deleterious consequences for the doctrine of God. There are, however, equally significant and immediate practical consequences. If the community is Christian only insofar as she is missionary, if the missionary act is the concrete form of divine and human fellowship here and now, then the lack of reference to mission at every level of the teaching ministry of the church is a frightful abrogation of theological responsibility.²⁰

The theological academy's acute disinterest poses an enormous challenge in developing the missiological imagination required to sustain the FBO in the practice of Christian missions. Instead of missions, church, and theological reflection properly sharing an interdependent "organizational field," theology has become institutionalized and isolated within the academy, missions within the FBO, and worship within the congregation. But this is exactly the treacherous nature of institutions subject to the grip of isomorphic and cosmic powers. In Barth's understanding, the theological problem of a breach between God's being and God's doing led to a breach between church and mission with the tragic result that voluntary missionary societies emerged because "the ecclesiologies of the period proved insufficient for the missionary task," impoverished by a church which was too "static."²¹ What followed was a breach between distinctive entities and, gradually, of church from mission and mission from worship. "Missions occurred apart from the church. While the church could not exist without worship, the same did not hold for missionary activity. A church could exist without reference to mission. Worship was an act demanded of all the faithful; mission was the exclusive responsibility of special individuals called and equipped

²⁰ Ibid., 3198. Flett begins his book countering what he calls an incorrect assumption: "Barth and mission are like oil and water; this perception trades on a tacit suspicion that, to a greater or lesser degree, the missionary act demands some liaison with natural theology. Barth's unrelenting rejection of natural theology and avowed affirmation of divine subjectivity produces a position that appears, at best, indifferent toward mission" (location 1663). For Flett the false interpretation of Barth marks the impoverishment of the theological academy's missiology.

²¹ Flett (2010: 697, Kindle).

for the task.”²² The result of this breach was a stunted missionary witness, a witness based on “a bare theoretical and abstract churchliness” that turned the church inward and apart, and the “ghastly specter” of missionary societies “prolonging their existence by relying on the longevity natural to institutions.”²³ The trajectory of such churchliness is captivity to ecclesio-centrism, a “blind alley of Christian self-satisfaction.”²⁴ The trajectory for the specialist mission society (such as the FBO) is captivity to “an account of institutional growth.”²⁵ Where ecclesiology becomes narrowly defined by the churchly church into an ecclesial docetism, missiology by the FBO into missio-pelagianism, and theology by the university into academic gnosticism, all is in need of serious renovation.

Macintyre provides terms for analyzing this breach with an account of redemptive power that both *requires* and must *resist* the power of institutions. For Macintyre, on the one hand, “no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions.”²⁶ Within this understanding, the practice of Christian missions cannot survive without spaces of renewing all three institutions (FBOs, academy, and congregation) and an integration of mission, reflection, and worship. All are needed to care for the cooperative good of the practice. Yet even if practices cannot survive without institutions, these very institutions are themselves compromised, having an inherent fallenness to their nature. Macintyre understands institutions as primarily concerned with “external goods,” such that “[they acquire] money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status,

²² *Ibid.*, 694.

²³ *Ibid.*, 697.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2653.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2878.

²⁶ Macintyre (1984: 194).

and they distribute money, power, and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves but also the practices of which they are the bearers.”²⁷

The problem is, the external goods that institutions are inclined toward are different from the “internal goods” that extend the cooperative care of the practice. Writes Macintyre:

Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions—and consequently of the good external to the good internal to the practices in question—that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution.²⁸

In these terms, the dominant institutions of the FBO, academy, and church have gradually become independent via the inherent “acquisitiveness and competitiveness” that is the fallen nature of institutions. A crucial task for each is to see where and how their institutional world is created and creative, and where and how it is fallen, oppressive, and in rebellion (Yoder’s terms). Flett describes the “egregious blind spot” of the academy with respect to mission and an ecclesiocentric church life that regards mission as immaterial, and Noll and Walls describe the historical blind spot of the voluntary society and “Missions Incorporated” to theological reflection. Yet seeing the wider social, institutional, and cosmic landscape illuminates how differences in imagination, form, and language have been *institutionalized* into fragmented worlds, thereby separating mission action, worship, and study.

²⁷ Ibid., 194-195.

²⁸ Ibid., 194.

4.1.2 How Agency and God is Imagined: Apostolicity

Having extended the social ecology of the FBO to identify the dangers within this cosmic dimension of powers, the second critical area of analyzing the FBO via missiological categories concerns agency and God. This extends the ecology to the eschatological.

Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver, in a critique of humanitarianism in terms of the what they call both a refusal to engage the other and a self-deception at work in humanitarianism, offer a counter imaginary by which the Christian FBO can contend with its landscape: to “participate in the *missio Dei*, in the movement of God’s Spirit in the world, a mission that can’t be captured exclusively by the discourse of humanitarianism.”²⁹ *Missio Dei* (the “mission” or “sending” “of God”) provides terms for working out a missiological imagination for the FBO different from humanitarianism.

First is the significance of *missio Dei* for subverting the implicit assumption within the “aid” sector that experts are the chief agents and subjects of each respective field, and those with problems (the material poor, the violated, the suffering victims) are the recipients who are acted upon. *Missio Dei* names God as the sole subject, as the “I” who sends. *Missio Dei* also names the prophetic office of Jesus Christ carried into the world with the Holy Spirit as the primary agent of mission. *Missio Dei* holds together the being of God and the action of God, two dimensions that have undergone a theological breach, which Flett describes as having created the false dichotomy between church (worship) and mission (action).³⁰ Yet

²⁹ Dula and Weaver (2005: 95).

³⁰ Flett (2010: 214, Kindle).

God also “sends,” thus inviting human participation in the *missio Dei*. In this regard, apostolicity is one of the four classical defining marks of the church along with unity, catholicity, and holiness.³¹ Apostolicity affirms that mission is constitutive of Christian faith. Yet apostolicity’s continuous reference point is *Dei*, “of God,” God as author, subject, and initiator of mission. Thus how the FBO gives an account of God’s agency in its service and its organizational structure and polity, of God as subject—of apostolicity—is critical to caring for the common good of the practice of Christian mission.

According to Kirsteen Kim, “Apostolic has a dynamic meaning” and a peculiar shape.³² One source of identifying this shape is to examine three “types” emerging within two millennia of Christian mission described by Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder. Over these tumultuous centuries, two “constants” provide “an essential continuity” to defining Christianity in its missionary nature: the constant of Christology, and the constant of ecclesiology. “The content of these constants is not the same,” Bevans and Schroeder write, “but Christianity is never without faith in and theology of Jesus as Christ and never without a commitment to and understanding of the community it names church.”³³ What might this “essential continuity” look like for the FBO, for example, with reference to the “constant” of a theology of Jesus Christ? The question matters greatly for the FBO in light of Yoder’s contention about certain processes of reasoning that gradually marginalize Jesus into irrelevance for understanding culture and the goal of human existence. For Yoder, Niebuhr’s

³¹ Kim (2012: 757, Kindle).

³² Ibid., 759. Kim also notes the five marks of apostolicity named by the Anglican Church in 2000: proclaim good news; teach, baptize, and nurture new believers, respond to human need in loving service; transform unjust structures of society; safeguard creation.

³³ Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 1078, Kindle).

critique of a “unitarianism of the Son”³⁴ (which Niebuhr describes as an over-attention to the teachings of Jesus which unnecessarily pits Christ against culture) moves to what Yoder calls Niebuhr’s “unitarianism of the Father”³⁵ (which in Yoder’s view cuts Niebuhr from true obedience to Christ’s lordship over culture), a precept that undergirds Niebuhr’s ultimate moral imperative: the Western doctrine of progress.³⁶ According to Yoder, what is at stake for the FBO is enormous, namely “the whether and how of Christ’s being Lord.”³⁷ In Yoder’s logic, the task of missiology and the FBO is to illuminate the “Gospel imperative.” In Niebuhr’s terms, progress is necessarily highly visible and wide-scale; we might conclude this imaginary requires a managerial form. But Yoder argues that Christian theology reveals this to be an illusion. “For Augustine,” writes Yoder, “the locus of the newness which faith in Christ brings is not easily verifiable in the objective world, and does not lend itself to being built upon by succeeding higher levels of achievement as other generations in their turn find yet other conversions in the face of yet other challenges.”³⁸ Yoder claims that Niebuhr’s reasoning belittles the so-called smallness of stories such as Francis of Assisi’s society of beggars, who should be claimed as a sign that the way things are is not the way things have to be, that greed and distance from the poor can be repented of and new patterns of social life created. Francis’ imaginary requires a different means from the managerial.

Within Yoder’s reasoning, the two constants of Christ and church suggest that the language of “faith-based organization” holds inadequate particularity to sustain the practice

³⁴ Yoder (1996: 35).

³⁵ Ibid., 84.

³⁶ Ibid., 53.

³⁷ Ibid., 43.

³⁸ Ibid., 53.

of missions as Christian. Regarding faith, we must ask faith in what, in who? Without understanding and working out its mission and life with explicit reference to the two constants of Christ and church, the FBO is easily captive to the “constants” of other isomorphic visions. The constants also illuminate the limits of imagining the apostolic means of the God-sent FBO as an “organization.” In the Pauline terms of 2 Corinthians, God’s good news of new creation is initiated in Jesus Christ, enfleshed in “ministry” (the ministry of reconciliation), and entrusted by God to “ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). The prevailing Pauline images are (in translation) “ministry” and “body.” More provocatively and mysteriously, the only vessels capable of carrying the precious gospel God puts into them are “fragile jars of clay” (2 Corinthian 4:7). This is a far cry from the language and metaphors of the rational bureaucratic form of technological power.

4.1.3 How the World and the Other is Imagined: The Neighbor

Having given theological terms to describe a landscape at once social and cosmic, and having named the gift of apostolicity that re-narrates “faith” and “organization” via the *missio Dei*, a third critical area of missiological analysis regards captivities concerning how the “other” is imagined and engaged in the world the FBO serves. The problem that first emerged from Protestant missions history in the “one-way traffic” of the voluntary society continues in accounts of permanent benefactors and beneficiaries (the Habitat story told by Baggett); donors and recipients (the World Vision child sponsorship story told by Bornstein); and the subject-object of the aid sector (as told by Bornstein and Redfield).

One source for a missiological imaginary of the “other” to counter these social imaginaries and their underlying assumptions is Dana Robert’s account of cross-cultural friendship in the creation of twentieth-century world Christianity. Echoing the 1910 appeal of V.S. Azariah at the World Missionary conference (“Give us FRIENDS!”), Robert decries an age of globalization characterized by short-term mission service that reifies inequities:

Is true friendship of equals possible across widening economic divides, or is it a self-deluding rationalization that makes the wealthy feel good about their charitable activities? A century after Azariah’s heart-felt cry, do today’s young people going into missions commit themselves to specific persons from other cultures? Do they learn the languages or develop reciprocity with the ‘other’?³⁹

Robert argues that the history of missions provides an alternative: “lifetime cross-cultural friendships” that had potency to resist social and institutional inequities in the colonial era of Protestant missions. Robert’s account uses the term “friendship” both within the church and between church and society, enveloping both unlikely cross-cultural relationships of intimacy and common mission both in the “brother-sister” modality within the Christian community, and between Christians and neighbors who were not Christian. She provides a textured historical account of such friendships as a “hidden component” of missions that struggled against hierarchies of racism and paternalism. What Elisha described in the power of progressive evangelical relationalism in Knoxville, Robert extends and qualifies by locating relationalism’s power as necessarily cross-racial, cross-cultural, cross-class, and incarnational in lifestyle, within a missiological imagination of “witness to Christlike love.” Friendships with these marks are a sign (“of the inbreaking reign of God”), a source of revelation (“reveal[ing] the image of the Lord”), a vehicle of redemption (to resist

³⁹ Robert (2011: 106).

pressures of inequity and instrumentalization) and a means of good news (“the spread of Christianity across culture”). Long-term cross-cultural friendship within the church and between church and neighbor is both a “means of mission and an end in itself.”⁴⁰ Without such friendships, claims Robert, the inequities and racism of the colonial era “might have prevented the spread of Christianity across cultures.”⁴¹

Further flesh for a missiological imaginary of relational solidarity is provided by Bretherton in his account of how Christian mission envisions the other through the lens of the Good Samaritan parable:

The Good Samaritan responds to one he finds nearby, not some generalized ‘Other’ who exists nowhere and everywhere. The one in distress is presented as a fleshly body to be hosted through costly personal involvement. To abstract or objectify this particular body and so pass on by without encountering them is a sin . . . The parable explicates, among all its hearers, both ancient and modern, precisely how someone from another place can renew our false constructions of what neighbor love consists of. As the parable suggests, while the church must uphold the worth of place as intrinsic to personal relations, it must also recognize that all our human constructions of place are under judgment.⁴²

Bretherton’s concrete details of context, body, care, and relationship are a striking departure from the anonymous beneficiaries and abstract humanity in the discourse of humanitarianism. He narrates the story not as one of helper and helped, but of a “solidarity” that is person to person and where proximity and location matter. This is no letter exchange across oceans between sponsor and child. Through these details of place, person, and time, and intimacy, hierarchical categories of beneficiary, helped, and recipient are transformed into *neighbor*. Furthermore, Bretherton depicts the story not in the typical fashion of a call to do good works, but as a judgment upon the hearers ourselves and, for our purposes, the FBO

⁴⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁴¹ Ibid., 105.

⁴² Bretherton (2010: 148).

itself. For we prefer abstract and anonymous humanity and helping, not the costly solidarity and messy bodily intimacy and involvement through which strangers and enemies may eventually become companions. This textured missiological imaginary of neighbor love as costly proximity provides a lens for analysis of the FBO subject to the isomorphic pressures of commercialization and instrumentalism.

4.1.4 How Time and Duty is Imagined: Eschatological

The “immediatistic” impulses within Protestant evangelical missions and the dominance of presentism have shaped pragmatic assumptions about time. According to Bosch, this was due to the Enlightenment and its secular eschatology that “discarded teleology and operated only in terms of cause and effect, not of purpose.” The bureaucratic model is profoundly shaped by pragmatic and activist assumption about duty. Progress—as assumed to be linear, sure, and capable of systematized control—issues in the mass production of bureaucratic structures that presume to manage constant growth and scale. Secular eschatology—which has a very close horizon—thus destroys the category of hope with regard to the future that God has promised, the time when there is no more suffering.⁴³

But the FBO should care for the practice of Christian missions not in terms of technological triumphalism but in what James Smith calls “liturgical time.”⁴⁴ Liturgical time is between resurrection and eschaton. It is time within a historical existence that is fallen and is interrupted by God’s new creation in Christ. This strange imaginary of time holds together the mystery of intensifying both the call to responsibility and the call to rest in God.

⁴³ Bosch (1996: 499).

⁴⁴ Smith (2009: 155-159).

The theological reality is that progress is never inevitable. This names the difference between what Bretherton terms a remedial versus a revolutionary approach to politics. The remedial approach is described as follows:

History does not bear within itself its own resolution and so while the order of things can be improved in incremental ways, there is no inherent direction to history: things will not always get better (or worse). The non-progressive nature of history means that a perfect or true order of things is not realizable within history, so any human system or ideology that claims to provide the means of bringing about this order is a denial of the fallen and contingent nature of historical existence.⁴⁵

Mission is carried out in provisional time, in between time, time as contingency and fragility and as God's kingdom pressing into the here and now. In between time is the time of the *saceculum*, which Bretherton describes as "open, ambivalent, and undetermined."⁴⁶ He draws on an Augustinian framework to describe faithful political witness as pursuing a "tolerable earthly peace "in which the Gospel can be preached and which the city of God makes use of for a time." In other words political witness "is not an end in itself, but serves an end—communion with God—beyond itself."⁴⁷

An understanding of social change in relationship to the eschatological and the liturgical transforms the tonality of duty from harsh demand to gentle doxology. Understanding social change as remedial and time as liturgical calls the FBO into the renewal of its activism through what Flett terms "the kinetic outpouring characteristic of Pentecost."⁴⁸ This is a Christian institutional imagination with the capacity to embrace joy at the organization's core as part of its apostolic nature as missionary and "sent":

⁴⁵ Bretherton (2010: 85).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁸ Flett (2010: 3215, Kindle).

Joy is the wellspring of the missionary act. It is an involuntary cry that results from finding that pearl of great price . . . [the basis of the] community's missionary existence is as the "primitive response to Jesus' presence and proclamation: 'They were all amazed' (Mark 1:27). This dissonance of delight, this excitement of praise, leaves aside apparent givens for a vulnerable existence in the world without a place to lay one's head. The proper posture of the Christian community is as a supplicant, listening to her Lord, and praying for the Spirit, that is, assuming the pose of the apostles in and with the realism and promise of Easter. Witness, fellowship, and joy are of a piece (1 John 1:1-5). Mission is the abundant fellowship of active participation in the very glory that is the life of God from and to all eternity. It is life in the community of reconciliation moving out in solidarity with the world in the active knowledge that God died for it, too. It is the response of doxology as we follow the Spirit's lead as captives in the train of the living glorious Lord, the lamb that was slain.⁴⁹

How the FBO is marked by joy as an involuntary "response of doxology" as it "follows the Spirit's lead as captives in the train of the living glorious Lord" is an acute challenge. Given the tragic dichotomies between mission and church, the danger of what we might call missio-pelaganism is of particular concern for the FBO. Presentism imagines activism as the surety of social change, seen in the immediatistic vision of William Carey whereby duty is understood as "obligation" to use means for conversion of the heathen. For Rufus Anderson, because the "fullness of time" has come in new American innovations in organization, commerce, and government, duty is understood as ambitious expansion.

4.2 The FBO and How Christian Mission is Formed

We have named critical marks of how Christian mission is imagined: the social ecology and organizational field in the cosmic and eschatological; agency and God in the apostolic, the world and the other in the neighbor; and a teleological understanding of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3216.

mission and change not as an end in itself but serving an end beyond itself, communion with God . We now turn to the second part of the institutional imagination, how Christian mission is formed in interdependence with how it is imagined.

4.2.1 How the FBO Embraces Divine Agency and Human Participation: Apostolic Visibility and the Missionary Community

The heart of apostolicity is the understanding that God as three-in-one is the subject and agent of mission, and that human beings, as Barth puts it, “participate in Jesus Christ's own humanity by conforming to his mission.”⁵⁰ Active participation in Jesus Christ’s mission is not abstract theological or pseudo-spiritual talk. Understanding the FBO’s identity as apostolic requires an account of its very form and polity of service and witness as *participation*. Otherwise the FBO is a form of what Barth calls “propaganda,” which in Barth’s terms is mission as “only a human activity, reliant on the range of human capacities, [so that] then it is untrue and an impediment to the proclamation of the gospel.”⁵¹ Flett describes Barth’s understanding of Christian mission as apostolic in form as follows:

The relationship of the divine to the human in this event is mutual and asymmetrical. Both parties act in accordance with their respective natures: God gives and the human receives. This proper human passivity in relation to God—a being determined—takes an active form.⁵²

What is this “active form” of mission received in relationship to God, versus the false forms of human capacities? It is not a form “confused with religious propaganda, power politics, or the general functioning of a social club, even to the extent of the community

⁵⁰ Flett (2010: 3112, Kindle).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3112.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3115.

confusing her own visibility in these ways.”⁵³ Or, we might add, the bureaucratic and managerial model of the FBO. All these forms have public visibility, yet are fashioned by human power and means. But the visibility and growth and wide-scale of outreach projects and of the organizations, publicity, and budgets behind them is hardly what Barth means by “a very special visibility.”⁵⁴ Rather, this special visibility is an “apostolic visibility,” or a visibility characterized by the stated participation in “Jesus Christ’s own humanity,” a “conforming to his mission.”

Barth’s understanding of mission as being conformed into Christ’s mission has a peculiar form in what he calls “the missionary community.” To be a form that is apostolic requires a design that is at the same time capable of being “active” and in engagement with the world and society, and is one which “God gives and the human receives.” What marks the missionary community as a form of both action and reception?

First, Barth’s understanding of “community” is not vague but can be understood as a kind of *koinonia*, a community of multiple forms of deep sharing and communion across various divides or fragments. One form of *koinonia* the missionary community of action and reception holds is tearing down the wall between two classes of “called” and “not called,” specialized and churchly.⁵⁵ Here Barth seeks to overcome the breach in the being and doing of God that has resulted in the breach between mission and church. On the one hand, the missionary task is not ceded to the society while the self-satisfied church circles the wagons in worship. On the other hand, the specialist FBO is not the vehicle for mission. Rather,

⁵³ Ibid., 2897.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Flett (2010: 2896, Kindle).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4777.

mission is integral to the very life of the entire missionary church. Barth states: "Missionary societies may continue to be necessary, but only as representations of the missionary community."⁵⁶ The missionary community and the missionary task are thus marked by catholicity.

A second mark of the missionary community is that its *koinonia* transcends both mission societies *and* church. Barth's reference point is *community*, not church. The word "community" is carefully chosen to signify neither mission societies as such, nor church as such, and to include a generous embrace of the stranger in the world. As stated earlier, the church cannot be true to its nature without "her counterpart in the world." In other words, Barth's understanding of missionary community brings church, missionary society, and the stranger as neighbor into shared space of mutual life and mutual correction.

A third mark of the missionary community is being a community of renewal "as the listeners themselves become 'apostolic' and, as new disciples, begin to proclaim the good news."⁵⁷ Becoming disciples of Christ and proclaiming good news in the form of the missionary community is not only the "active form" of apostolicity, but is a *means of becoming apostolic*, of becoming human participants "in Jesus Christ's own humanity by conforming to his mission."⁵⁸ Barth identifies distinctive practices of "becoming apostolic" in relationship with the world and the stranger. One such practice is solidarity with the afflicted, because living in fellowship with God means standing with God "at the side of those in affliction."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2523.

⁵⁷ Flett (2010: 2986, Kindle).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3112.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 2911.

Solidarity with the afflicted also keeps the church itself from turning inward; its encounter with the world is renewing.

A fourth critical mark of the missionary community is how it becomes apostolic in *public worship* that overcomes the historical cleavage in the community's activities between church and society. Barth states that "[w]orship is paramount in the life of this integrating community." The visibility of worship "leaves no doubt as to the one she [the church] serves," and in this worship "the entire community is to hear of the commission of her being and the declarative nature of Christian fellowship, to repent and intentionally move into the world developing missionary forms as she learns the obedience required by the Spirit."⁶⁰ In other words, while the missionary community does not consist only of the church as such (but as church, society, and world together) public worship is paramount for the life of the *entire missionary community*.

A fifth and final mark of the missionary community is the effect on those within it (church, mission society or FBO, world). The multiple dimensions of the *koinonia* that is the defining mark of the missionary community holds together dichotomies: "specialized and churchly"; mission societies and church; disciple and stranger; solidarity with the afflicted and renewal of the church; worship and world. The missionary community is fundamentally inter-relational and dialogical. This communion of gift-exchange has a transformational influence on its participants: "the unavoidable, necessary act of the continued reformation and renovation of the Church herself, and of Christians themselves, because there is never a

⁶⁰ Quoted in Flett (2010: 3210, Kindle).

complete Christian, a complete Church, a complete Christianity.”⁶¹ The missionary *koinonia* is a space of deep transformation, a space of *semper reformanda* or “continued reformation and renovation of the Church herself.” What is that transformation for Barth? The Christian self-deception is that God or mission can be bottled up into a tidy institution, doctrine, method; into a voluntary society or highly-influential FBO; a campaign against poverty or crusade for Christ. No, says Barth. All are “propaganda.” The churchly church, the autonomous FBO, the world left to its humanitarian impulses about time as progress—these are all fragments that falsely imagine they are the whole. The dialogical and multi-dimensional missionary community or *koinonia* extends church, mission society, and stranger beyond themselves into new space not only of reciprocity, but of repentance for the self-deception and hubris by which each imagines itself to be the whole and easily succumbs to the acquisitiveness and competitiveness that is the fallen nature of institutions. The theological academy can be added as another dimension of the missionary community in repentance, given the “egregious blind spot” Flett names. This dialogical community of witness and renewal is the “active form” in which God gives and the human receives.

As such, it has potency within the social, cosmic, and eschatological ecology where the *stoicheia* of Number, Chance, Race, and Money seek to absolutize themselves. Yet potency requires a form, a form with sufficient power to resist the reigning institutional, cosmic powers. The concrete social and political design for such a form is displayed in what Bretherton terms an “institutional plurality” that builds “trust and stable relationships” between those who are excluded “by the existing hegemony.” Writes Bretherton:

⁶¹ Quoted in Flett, 3190.

Non-pecuniary institutions that are not wholly subject to logics of instrumentalization or commodification are key for creating space amidst political, economic, social, and technological pressures that militate against developing such relationships. These institutions represent a legal, organizational, financial, and physical place to stand. Congregations represent institutions of this kind and are places constituted by gathered and mobilized people who do not come together for either commercial or state-directed transactions, but who instead come together to worship and care for each other. Without such places there are few real places through which to resist the process of commodification by the market and the processes of instrumentalization by the state.⁶²

By this account, given the fragmented worlds of mission, church, and academy, key to the missiological task of the FBO is to seek “legal, organizational, financial, and physical place(s)” on which it can stand within an institutional plurality that joins mission action in solidarity with the afflicted, liturgical time, and theological reflection. Unfortunately the story of Habitat for Humanity is movement from such a form of institutional plurality to a pragmatically-driven FBO. In Habitat for Humanity the original solidarity with the afflicted (in the concrete place of neighbors in the red clay of Americus, Georgia), liturgical time (in relationship to Koinonia Community), and theological reflection (in the “Cotton Patch” theology of Clarence Jordan) have been put further and further in the rear view mirror of growth, while “mission action” has moved rapidly forward.

4.2.2 How the FBO Unlearns Captivity: The Polity of the Reconciled and Reconciling Community

Barth goes further, offering yet another innovation which can contain God’s giving and humanity’s receiving. If institutions are the necessary yet fragile and fallen bearers of practices, a different kind of institution is needed, one that is a new wineskin that both holds

⁶² Bretherton (2010: 215).

new wine and enables it to become tastier. Here is the wineskin that Barth describes:

“Missionary activity receives a definite form: it is active participation in reconciled and reconciling communities.”⁶³ To put it more strongly, “In creating the one new humanity in his own body through the cross, Jesus Christ is our peace.” Then comes the declarative climax: “*This community of Jew and Gentile, of the new creation, is the missionary community.*”⁶⁴

That missionary community thus embodies a teleological imagination. For Barth the reconciled and reconciling community can be understood as the ultimate *telos* toward which the missionary community moves and is directed, with God as the agent:

Reconciliation's reality means movement out in its dynamic to those estranged from God. The community called in God's reconciliation of the world exists in the movement of reconciliation to those who would live as enemies of God. Every aspect of Christian existence is to be defined in the light of this movement, for it is the nature of God's own history. God liberates the human by the Spirit to participate in Jesus Christ's mission. This forces the community in a movement of "self-transcendence" beyond her own enclosed history and so beyond the comfort of her apparent forms.⁶⁵

Again, this is ultimately *God's* movement, constantly pressing fragmented worlds of mission, church, and stranger into living fellowship of solidarity with the afflicted, renewing encounter with counterparts in the world, telling the story of Jesus Christ, and public worship. Yet it is crucial to see that the movement of the reconciled and reconciling community is a cross-cultural movement, yet not in the modern sentimental sense of celebrating diversity. Rather the reconciling community as a cross-cultural movement is not tame, disturbs and interrupts, and in doing so becomes the very ground of exposing isomorphic captivities. This is precisely why the pervasive donor-recipient model of

⁶³ Flett (2010: 2650).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3710.

⁶⁵ Flett (2010: 3006).

humanitarianism and the managerial is so impoverished: they prevent the conversion of the benefactor organization. As Flett writes,

Cross-cultural movement unveils how a particular community domesticates the gospel, how a community considers her necessary particular expression to be normative for the whole. At stake in this cross-cultural movement is the renewal of the Church herself, engaged with the stranger and enemy it seeks as neighbor. Taking on the task of becoming part of God's reconciling community is to learn that the church is a missionary church, not a cultural church. As the community moves across natural boundaries, the naturalism that limits her missionary witness becomes apparent.⁶⁶

Permanent benefactors and beneficiaries, sponsor and sponsored, one-way traffic, self-congratulating humanitarianism's refusal to engage the other: these are "naturalisms" that limit missionary witness and require *means* to become apparent. We begin to see how much is at stake in how distinctive communal and organizational forms become schools for unlearning captivity and learning virtue.

If there is the revelation of word and sacrament there is also the revelation of the encounter with the strange body. This takes concrete shape in the life and work of the FBO L'Arche International. In his work with L'Arche, theologian John Swinton has described a process of "transvaluation" in relationship to support people working with the disabled:

As we have spent time with carers and support workers, one of the things that has struck us is the way in which people's lives and worldviews have been radically transformed through their encounters with people who have profound developmental disabilities. In encountering people with profound developmental disabilities in friendship, people's lives are changed, their priorities are reshaped and their vision of God and humanness are altered at their very core. What we are discovering is the occurrence of a process of transvaluation within which personal encounter with people with profound developmental disabilities initiates a movement towards a radically new system of valuing.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3178.

⁶⁷ Swinton (2003: 67).

Here Swinton gives us an image of the reconciled and reconciling community at work in particularity of place and time, where details matter: houses, meals, washing bodies. Swinton illuminates the possibility that if institutions are inherently fallen, the wisdom by which they become “vehicles of redemption” is itself a practice, and the good of this practice depends on what Macintyre terms the “essential function of the virtues.” Without such virtues, “justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.” Macintyre continues:

Yet if institutions do have corrupting power, the making and sustaining of forms of human community—and therefore of institutions—itsself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues in two important ways. The exercise of the virtues is itself apt to require a highly determinate attitude to social and political issues; and it is always within some particular community with its own specific institutional forms that we learn or fail to learn to exercise the virtues.⁶⁸

Transvaluation describes nothing less than a journey of deep transformation that occurs through a profound new encounter across a line of deep difference, with an openness to hope and surprise. The reconciled and reconciling community that Swinton describes is a community that at once stands in solidarity with the afflicted, reaches outward to the strange counterpart in the world and sees God differently as a result. A missiological imaginary of friendship as mission is given explicit form in friendship built into polity, organizational policy, and day-to-day practices.

4.3 The FBO and How Christian Mission is Proclaimed

⁶⁸ Macintyre (1984: 194).

A divide between missions and theological reflection is a familiar theme in the Protestant missions history that created the FBO. We see the problem in the story of Carey's commercially-imagined model, separated from theological reflection and ignored by the theological elites. The pattern continued over the next century as missionaries returned from India, Africa, and Asia and started new academic disciplines in language and science but not in theology, scripture, and missiology.⁶⁹ In the twentieth century, contends Walls, missiology continued to be ignored as a field worthy of academic reflection.⁷⁰ The "second Protestant schism" that Ralph Winter named in the cleavage between voluntary society and church extended into a breach between academy, church, and mission. The landscape of social and cosmic powers of the *stoicheia*—of Number, Chance, Money, Race—affects not only the way mission is imagined and formed but how it is proclaimed and spoken of. Those powers put different language on the lips of mission, the language of counting projects and people reached and Bibles distributed and houses built, of budget and employee size, of "us" and "them." As the poet Czeslaw Milosz writes:

To know and not to speak.
In that way one forgets.
What is pronounced strengthens itself.
What is not pronounced tends to nonexistence.⁷¹

To imagine and form Christian mission rightly is insufficient. The care of the practice of Christian mission requires proclaiming. Yet before we can proclaim we must learn to pronounce. At the heart of proclamation and pronunciation is the task of missiological reflection, of speaking in the terminology of the *missio Dei* of being sent, of witness. For

⁶⁹ Walls (1996: 147-148).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 149-152.

⁷¹ From "Reading the Japanese Poet Issa," <http://naturalwisdom.blogspot.com/2011/03/reading-japanese-poet-issa.html>

Bosch, learning “witness terminology” is critical to mission as participation with God. Drawing from the Lukan paradigm for mission in Acts, Bosch argues that “witness” (the *martyria*) “becomes *the* appropriate term for ‘mission.’ To some extent the terms ‘apostle’ and ‘witness’ are synonymous.”⁷² According to Bosch, the reference is to witness as the “church’s proclamation of the gospel.” This proclaiming, this witness, this new language, flows out of the time between the times, between Christ’s first and his second coming, which is “the time of the Spirit.”⁷³ In a time captive to technological understandings of practice, connecting proclamation to pneumatology is critical for the FBO. For “witness terminology” grew out of a community where the good news “was entrusted to very fallible human beings who can do nothing in their own power, but are continuously dependent upon empowerment by the Spirit.”⁷⁴ The challenge of pronouncing is the challenge of missiological reflection. This requires learning to speak a language with respect to God, Christian community, and the world or neighbor, all at once. The FBO must learn to exegete contextual matters with the mind of apostolicity, of reconciled and reconciling community, of solidarity in proximity with the afflicted, of the remedial and the liturgical.

What does missiological reflection look like as “witness terminology”? The following vignette regarding one FBO indicates that when missiological reflection is done with excellence, courage, and faith it serves not only to correct, enlarge, and expand the practice of Christian mission, but illuminates and redeems the distinctive *charism* of the FBO.

⁷² Bosch (1991: 116).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 503.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

In the early 2000s the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) grappled with the so-called “responsibility to protect” stated in the field of international relations and the question of whether MCC workers should cooperate with military forces. Two MCC stakeholders—Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver—produced an article for a Mennonite publication titled “MCC, Intervention, and Humanitarianism” with a unique blend of theological, contextual, and organizational discernment.

After laying out the context, Dula and Weaver engaged a theological analysis. Raising caution about the discourse of humanitarianism, they drew on Karl Barth’s reflection on philanthropy via the theological category of “sloth,” understood as sins of omission and indifference. Essentially sloth was approaching human life at once too actively and too casually, such that potent forms of well-intended activism carried an indifference to their actual destructive and deforming effects. The power of philanthropy’s activism was to transform unique persons and social contexts into an “abstract humanity” being helped; in doing so philanthropy imagines itself as helper.⁷⁵ For Dula and Weaver, “two evils at work” were at work in humanitarianism: a refusal to engage the other, and self-deception. Self-deception concerned blindness to how the taken-for-granted humanitarian imaginary of “helping” was indifferent to the reality that power is not shared and that separate worlds of donors and recipient are created. Humanitarianism proceeds with indifference to these effects. Imagining itself as “helper” masked the dual reality that humanitarianism was inherently a refusal to share power, as well as the creation of a population of permanent donors and recipients. This was further perpetuated by humanitarianism’s predominant

⁷⁵ Dula and Weaver (2005: 69-72).

personnel means, namely, NGOs being staffed by younger employees on short term contracts.

Dula and Weaver argued that the “individual humanity of the recipients [is] erased as individuals are turned into ‘beneficiaries,’ into objects to be counted and managed rather than individuals to be engaged.” At the heart of this was the question of power, “how we share it, how we are accountable to partners, how our partners are accountable to ‘beneficiaries,’ that is, the people with whom they work.” At stake was a fundamentally theological question: “‘Helping’ as opposed to sharing power: this, we would argue, is *the* crucial issue.”⁷⁶ This challenge went to the heart of MCC’s identity: “Raising the question of power raises the question . . . of what type of organization MCC is, or should strive to be. Is MCC a humanitarian organization . . . Should it be? Determining MCC’s relationship to the discourse and practice of humanitarianism [is the fundamental question].”⁷⁷

The alternative to “helping” was to re-imagine mission as what Dula and Weaver called “dialogical partnership,” understood as sharing life and power. Dialogical partnership required “extended presence,” stability within and fidelity to local communities over a long period of time. Such a practice had been a hallmark of MCC’s work, they said. It had enabled the organization to resist the temptation to “instrumentalize” local people and local initiatives, to “reduce them to anonymous ‘beneficiaries,’ to turn, in other words, from concrete men and women toward anonymous ‘humanity.’”⁷⁸ Such a marriage between dialogical partnership (how mission was imagined) and extended presence (how mission

⁷⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 73-74.

⁷⁸ Dula and Weaver (2005: 75).

was formed) called for a renewed understanding of MCC's unique organizational form and methodology: "at its best MCC has been a cross between a religious order and a professional humanitarian organization, a hybrid of the missionary and NGO worlds . . . This hybrid nature is, we think, as it should be. As a Christian organization, we should be looking to participate in the *missio Dei*, in the movement of God's Spirit in the world, a mission that can't be captured exclusively by the discourse of humanitarianism."⁷⁹

This work of missiological reflection offered a corrective to MCC, naming a world of difference between dialogical partnership, sharing power, and the need to pay attention to "the movement of God's Spirit" versus aid, helping and helped, and the religious assumptions of humanitarianism. The hybridity of religious order and professional humanitarian organization, of missionary and NGO, points to fresh possibilities for imagining the peculiar charism of the FBO. The final chapter explores the charism of the FBO through a constructive methodology drawing from the missiological analysis.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 75.

5. Toward a Constructive Methodology

*“The prophetic must be imaginative because
it is urgently out beyond the ordinary and the reasonable”
Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*¹*

This thesis has made a two-fold argument. First, in light of the origins of the FBO in the history of Protestant missions and the resulting possibilities and problems, the critical standpoint for evaluating the FBO must be within the practice of Christian missions. Second, that the FBO must undertake the development of a missiological institutional imagination; namely, the three-dimensional challenge of how Christian mission is imagined, formed, and pronounced such as to participate in the *missio Dei* and provide organizational resistance to the isomorphic captivities in the social and cosmological ecology where the FBO stands. An interdisciplinary engagement of history, sociology, and missiology provides fresh resources for this evaluation of the FBO.

Chapter three described a *charism* for the FBO marked by means of God giving and human receiving; working within an eschatological (versus presentist) understanding of time; solidarity with the afflicted neighbor (versus a donor-recipient divide); and cross-cultural, reconciling community. To display these marks of the special nature of FBO, this final chapter provides a constructive methodology for FBOs via five organizational disciplines: missiological reflection, institutional lament, extended proximity with affliction, cross-cultural polity, and ecclesial hybridity. I conclude with a reflection on the possible movement of institutional imagination to institutional holiness. Throughout the chapter I

¹ Brueggemann (2001: xv).

display the organizational disciplines through vignettes from three FBOs: L'Arche International, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Baltimore's New Song Urban Ministries. These three share classic marks of the FBO: autonomous of denomination; ecumenical in staffing and audience; self-governing, self-sustaining, self-funded. Yet they differ greatly as respectively international, national, and neighborhood-based; as inter-religious, evangelical, and congregation-affiliated; as diverse missions focusing on disabled, campus, and local community development; as decentralized and broad global federation, large complex non-profit, and singles and families sharing life and ministry in a neighborhood. Similarly, however, each defies historical FBO problems to illuminate a unique *charism* for the FBO within the wider body of Christian mission. They are imaginative in the sense described by Walter Brueggemann above, at once "beyond the ordinary and reasonable" and yet capable of correcting and expanding the missiological imagination of the FBO.

5.1 The First Organizational Discipline: Missiological Reflection

One problem rising out of the historical development of the FBO is an increasingly managerial culture. This is due to isomorphic pressures as well as a divide between theology and mission whereby questions about scale, need, and growth have been answered through the assumptions of a commercial imagination. Being one part of the missionary *koinonia* described in chapter three locates the FBO in proper perspective to and humility within both the Christian tradition and the "counterpart in the world" in four critical respects: with primary and ultimate respect to God as the subject and the FBO as participant in the *missio*

Dei of Jesus Christ, and, as one part of a wider “missionary community, in three-fold relationship to the communion of saints, to the neighbor and world, and with the Christian community today. Being part of this *koinonia* marks the FBO within the proper organizational, cosmological, and eschatological “field,” enabling the organization to properly discern the nature of “faith,” “organization,” and *charism* within the *kairos* of the intersection of God’s time with temporal time.

It is from this reference point that the FBO wrestles with its mission and purpose, its *telos* and peculiar *raison d’être* that takes seriously its historical and social context. An account of God’s agency is required from the FBO in its service and organizational structure and polity. This account of God as subject—of mission as witness—is critical to caring for the common good of the practice of Christian mission. As we have seen, “mission” primarily concerns God. In the terms of Ivan Illich, mission is the “social dawning of the mystery.”² This means the FBO must learn to reason and judge *missiologically*. This departs dramatically from strategic planning. It is, rather, reasoning grounded in the understanding of missiology described by Illich:

Missiology studies the growth of the Church into new peoples, the birth of the Church beyond its social boundaries; beyond the linguistic barriers within which she feels at home; beyond the poetic images in which she taught her children . . . Missiology is therefore the study of the Church as surprise.³

As characterized by Illich, missiology pursues knowledge about the work of the Holy Spirit that blows wherever it pleases (John 3:8). This is knowledge in pursuit of epiphany, seeking to identify, illuminate, and describe in a way that is constantly open to surprise.

² Quoted in Bosch (1991: 493).

³ *Ibid.*

Missiological reflection is thus itself apostolic in character, seeking the knowledge that comes in being “sent.” Just as mission goes beyond the church in the missionary *koinonia* of church, mission society, and world, the same applies to missiological reflection. As Bosch argues, “Missiology’s task is not a purely pragmatic one. Its task is not simply the maintenance of the missionary operation,”⁴ nor is it “proclamation of the message,” but rather is “reflection on that message and on its proclamation. It does not in itself mediate the missionary vision; it critically examines it.”⁵

One organizational discipline for the FBO to acquire the skills of such examination is *missiological reflection*. Beginning with “reflection” versus “action” provides a corrective to the impoverished theological reflection throughout the activist-oriented history of Protestant missions. The first question the FBO must learn to ask is “what’s going on?” That analysis meets the challenges posed in the previous chapter, with a three-dimensional analysis: in seeing the larger social, cosmic, and eschatological ecology of its organizational field (including principalities and powers); with reference to the world as both stranger and neighbor; with reference to the stream of the communion of saints and Christian mission. The history of Protestant missions demonstrates the continual challenge of giving a truthful account of the signs of the times, one’s context, and the *kairos* intersection between human time and God’s time—the moment of truth, opportunity, and grace, the favorable time and call to decisive action within the *missio Dei*.

The analysis provided by Dula and Weaver in chapter three is a display of missiological reflection and why it matters for the FBO as an organizational discipline.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 497.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 498.

Between traditionally fragmented worlds of academy and mission—Dula as theologian at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Weaver as MCC administrator and practitioner—the two reason together toward an arguably better organizational form for bearing MCC’s *charism* of “extended presence”—a hybrid between missionary and humanitarian, religious order and professional service organization.

At the end of the day, the FBO must make a judgment concerning the “yes” and “no” of its *charism*. *Charism* is a reference to what Yoder describes as “universality of *charisma*,” of gifts given by God to people that provide for “a specific working of God in the spirit, present in, with, and under a particular pattern of social process.⁶ Yoder attributes this understanding of *charism* to a Pauline understanding of body that is “a new mode of group relationships in which every member of a body (it is to him that we owe the currency of the noun ‘body’ to describe a social group) has a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated, and empowered role . . . First Corinthians says literally that *every* member is a bearer of such a ‘manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’” For the FBO to discern and embrace its “distinctly identifiable” role or *charism* here is to say a bold “yes” toward the gift within the movement of the *missio Dei*. The FBO must be as clear about what its *charism* is *not* as what it is, both its proper service and its insufficiency and corresponding need for intimate corporate arrangements with other institutional *charisms*. Its *charism* is not intended for its own sake or self-aggrandizement, but for the sake of service within the wider community and world. Each FBO and each member of the missionary *koinonia* has a *charism* to offer. But the *charism* of L’Arche is not the *charism* of InterVarsity, which is not the *charism* of New Song. There is a

⁶ Yoder (1996: 34).

close relationship between *charism* and mission (or what is commonly called the FBO's "mission statement"). The discernment of organizational charism is the question of its peculiar participation in the *missio Dei*, as qualified in relationship to *telos*: mission *toward what?*"

L'Arche displays missiological reflection as an *organizational* discipline. In terms strikingly different from the usual FBO mission statement, L'Arche understands the heart of its vocation as different from getting equal access for the disabled within society (though understanding this as a worthy goal). The vocation of L'Arche is for the disabled and not disabled to live as families, to eat at the same table together. One church leader described L'Arche's innovation to founder Jean Vanier as a "Copernican revolution," as "until now we used to say that we should do good to the poor but you are saying that the poor are doing good to you!"⁷ This *charism* of what L'Arche terms "friendship" has textured meaning and structure in disabled and assistants sharing long-term daily life, and leads L'Arche to imagine its work not as creating asylums, hospitals, or projects but "homes." The relationship between mission and means is intimate: Vanier's vision requires a form that is necessarily small, intimate, local, and able to nurture commitments of stability between core members (the disabled) and long-term assistants. While L'Arche is a complex entity with 130 residential communities across the world, it is not easy to start a L'Arche community. "Homes" cannot be "scaled" quickly or in cookie-cutter fashion. The account David Ford provides of L'Arche's broad international process of renewing its mission after forty years

⁷ Spink (2006: 10).

displays the details of apostolic reflection at work that is different from a SWOT analysis.⁸ This “Identity and Mission” process took place from 2002-2005 and involved more than 100 “reflection groups.” Stage one was called “Once Upon a Time” and focused on story-telling between members as well as naming identity-shaping stories from Scripture (especially the Beatitudes, John’s gospel, and stories of Jesus). Out of this, “essential elements” of L’Arche were refined into a consensus statement with three essentials: “People with development disabilities and others sharing life together; relationships that are a source of mutual transformation; faith life and trust in God.” Stage two was called “Welcoming Our Shadows,” to name and wrestle with the negative aspects of L’Arche that have continuing influence. The third stage was “Go Out Into the Deep” and concerned how to live out L’Arche’s vision in a new time. Ford states that the entire process was carried out “within earshot” of the cries of the disabled: “By attending to such cries in a community that seeks ways of wise loving, L’Arche is committed to the continual discernment of cries” as well as “prophetic attention to the pathologies of societies in which such affliction happens and where many of us turn away and close our eyes to disability.” The Identity and Mission process concluded with a provisional mission statement and priorities.⁹

The attention to affliction and cries, the fresh and playful categories, the focus on narrative form, the willingness to face versus flee from or suppress pitfalls and distortions, the naming of miracles and of Scriptural influence, the “messiness” in L’Arche’s processes that “can be a threat to many people”¹⁰; this “Identity and Mission” process *itself* embodies

⁸ This refers to the strategic planning paradigm of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

⁹ Ford (2007: 354-356) describes the Identity and Mission process in detail.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 365.

cross-cultural polity, proximity with affliction, a remedial and liturgical understanding of time, and an institutional plurality attuned to God as the primary actor in its story. This is a display of a complex global organization engaging apostolic reflection while engaging *kairos*, context, and *charism* in imagination, form, and language. L'Arche does this in a form different from either the voluntary society or the managerial model, via two primary polities: residential homes that are necessarily small, and a federation weaving them into a coherent and potent global community, thus necessarily large. As such, it provides a response to Andrew Wall's call for a "better instrument" for a new Christian world: "Instruments are now needed for *two-way* traffic: for sharing and for receiving."¹¹

5.2 The Second Organizational Discipline: Institutional Lament

A problem arising out of story of the FBO is increasing pressures to adopt forms of humanitarianism and their underlying assumptions about social change as inherently progressive, verifiable, and under the control of the organizational agency (whether human rights, development, or aid for suffering victims). How does the FBO effectively live within the limits of the *saeculum* and resist the powers on its social and cosmological landscape? The FBO—indeed, every organization—is always prodigal in some respects, under constant temptation and deformation in ways of which it is both conscious and unconscious.

One organizational discipline that counters this is *institutional lament*. Nancy Duffy argues that the minimal attention in the church to embracing negativity as well as the "self-deceptive refusal to acknowledge things for how they really are" calls for the recovery of

¹¹ Walls (1997: 254).

lament as a practice in Christian liturgy.¹² Lament draws upon biblical literary and liturgical forms and expressions of sorrow, anger, and regret to name situations with an honesty that requires specificity.¹³ Such specificity is heard in the cry of Rachel weeping for her children, Rachel as one who “refused to be consoled” (Jer 31:15; Matt 2:18). Lament is thus a refusal to be consoled or to accept easy explanations. In the biblical account this is to “testify that only God can proclaim hope for the future . . . This means that the church refuses any offer of false hope as well as any cynical claim that there is no hope.”¹⁴ Similarly, Clifton Black contends that “the spine of lament is hope.”¹⁵

In one respect, lament as an organizational discipline grounds the FBO in what David Ford describes as “cries.” He describes L’Arche International as a FBO rooted not in strategy but in listening and “response to the cries of those with disabilities.” He argues this has endowed L’Arche with a “distinctive wisdom [that] comes through being gripped by those cries in learning their meaning, and judging what response is appropriate to them.”¹⁶ Echoing Duff’s claim about the power of specificity, a mark of L’Arche’s listening is its “radical particularity.” Yet while L’Arche seeks to listen to the cry of each person with his or her name and story and journey, the cries are meant to be heard by the entire community: “To grasp the particular reality of these events of crying out and responding above all requires testimony.”¹⁷ The second stage of L’Arche’s international “Identity and Mission” process was called “Welcoming Our Shadows.” Rather than fleeing from organizational

¹² Brown and Miller (2005: 4).

¹³ Ibid., 3, 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12, reflecting on Christopher Morse.

¹⁵ Ibid., 54.

¹⁶ Ford (2007: 357).

¹⁷ Ibid., 357.

brokenness, the corporate process invited L'Arche staff and members to see, name, and feel the brokenness *as an organization*. This “shadow side” of L'Arche was incorporated into a final distillation process naming several critical areas of future work.¹⁸

Lament as public and corporal testimony, as listening to cries, as refusing to be consoled, as hope being grounded in truthfulness, as both refusing false hope and expecting that God will proclaim hope—this is the gift of the organizational discipline of institutional lament. As with institutional imagination, to say “institutional” instead of “organizational” lament is to think beyond the FBO as such to the wider social, cosmic, and eschatological ecology as the lens for seeing how the organization itself is captive.

As one of the 400 largest U.S. non-profits and with an annual budget of \$100 million, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IV) has the marks of an ambitious and entrepreneurial evangelical FBO: over one thousand U.S. campus staff and 400 more at the Madison, Wisconsin headquarters; presence on 600 U.S. campuses, with 900 chapters serving 35,000 students; an Urbana conference drawing 20,000 students. This requires a highly professional organization. Yet IV's seventy-year organizational journey from white organization to multi-ethnicity has required becoming far more than that. Over these decades, multi-ethnic mission moved from non-existent, to the margins, and into the mainstream. Along the way were dramatic policy shifts about campus ministry, staff hiring, fundraising, and governance. InterVarsity became increasingly willing to pay a higher and price in order to gain a new reality, including losing alienated donors and board members.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 355.

¹⁹ The account of IV has been drawn from Byassee (2010), Rendall (2007), Swartz (2012), and author interview with Steve Hayner in February 2013.

These decisions have been based in a capacity unusual for an organization of its size. As stated by former IV president Steve Hayner, “IV is very self-reflective. They are constantly asking a series of questions about how are we doing, what’s going on here. So they become reflective of money, structure, things that really reflect whether you’re doing things well.”²⁰ He confessed how hard this is, slowing down decisions. Yet the underlying logic is what Hayner describes as IV’s “theory of change”: a commitment to Jesus’ Lordship, mediated by Scripture. This has included a capacity for self-criticism by creating public platforms for outside prophetic voices.²¹

At times the conflict has been public and embarrassing. Around 2000 a dispute occurred at the national staff conference, flaring tensions between Asian-American and African-American staff and sending ripples throughout the organization. For ten years, the wounds lingered yet were not ignored, revealing a pastoral capacity within IV’s large structure to take relationships seriously, even if this “slowed” down the organization. Paula Fuller, IV vice-president for multi-ethnic ministry explained: “If we’re going to create witnessing communities on campus that are growing in love for every ethnicity, we can’t do that if we’re not living out that commitment as an organization.” She also named the significance of an IV tradition that engaged organizational sins. “Following Christ is difficult. You’re crucifying your flesh,” Fuller said. “This mantle has been passed by those who came before.” In 2010 the IV president and his cabinet traveled for five days to Duke

²⁰ Author interview with Steve Hayner in February 2013. Hayner is now president of Columbia Theological Seminary.

²¹ African-Americans like Tom Skinner and Latin Americans like Samuel Escobar used their Urbana missions conference platform to speak about exclusion, social justice, and the Bible, and made direct critiques of IV. Writes Byassee, “In his address Skinner said: ‘If you have any illusions that America was founded on godly principles, abandon them.’ Because white evangelicals had been silent on racism, he said, God had to raise up non-Christian leaders such as Malcolm X to tell blacks that their skin and culture are beautiful” (2010).

University with two goals: a fresh way to address the wounds between Asian-American and African-American staff, and a new theological paradigm for taking multi-ethnic ministry into deeper maturity. The breakthrough occurred for the team via an understanding of the biblical discipline of lament as a way of owning the brokenness, without the expectation that it can be immediately solved or fixed.²² Fuller described this experience of personal and organizational wrestling with painful things at the top leadership level of IV as a “gift” that enabled IV to acknowledge that it was crippled and to heed the warning of Jeremiah: “They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14). Fuller named the problem of a lack of a theology of failure that lies within many FBOs, a conditioning “to only think of success, of things going right. When things are bad the most we do is sing a praise song through clenched teeth.” Lament, she said, was a “gift” that opened up a new avenue of healing for IV.²³

InterVarsity is no longer the white organization it was forty years ago. Key to this has been an unusual hybridity of professional, prophetic, and pastoral form different from a model of efficiency and control. This form has made institutional lament possible in the story of change.²⁴ This required an organizational capacity for what Jean Vanier has called *a spirituality of loss*: “What are we willing to lose for the sake of gaining the new creation in Christ?”

²² First-hand account from author.

²³ Paula Fuller, 2011 Summer Institute, <http://vimeo.com/14248639>

²⁴ According to Byassee, “In 1990, about 16 percent of IV’s students were people of color; in 2008 that figure was about 26 percent. The organization counts some 250 people of color among its 1,400 or so paid staff, including two of seven senior staff. The demographics are growing closer to matching those of college campuses, where 31 percent of students are non-white, according to figures on IV’s website. 48% are ethnic minority or international students” (2010).

Contingency marks the institution as confined and limited while being true to its vocation; this provides an important counterpart to *charism*. Related to, yet distinct from, contingency is *captivity*, namely, the unique ways in which the organization and its landscape is captive to powers that hinder or resist the *missio Dei*. Institutional lament is a means through which the FBO learns to resist self-deception. By embracing its contingency and acknowledging its captivities, the FBO recognizes its insufficiency, its need for other *charisms* within the wider body of the “missionary *koinonia*” (including its “counterpart in the world”), and is thereby able boldly and courageously to claim and contribute its peculiar *charism* as one part of the larger body of humanity, church, and *missio Dei*.

5.3 The Third Organizational Discipline: Extended Proximity to the Afflicted

The captivity of FBOs to the instrumentalism of beneficiaries runs from the voluntary society’s built-in problem of “one-way traffic” diagnosed by Walls, to Baggett’s critique of permanent benefactors and beneficiaries in Habitat for Humanity’s structure, to Bornstein’s account of World Vision’s child sponsorship model. The deformed missiological pattern is distance and hierarchy—the beneficiary under scrutiny and the benefactor as subject. The missiological pattern that interrupts this instrumentalism is *solidarity and liberation with the afflicted*. The scriptural imagination is provided not only by the kind of account given of the Good Samaritan in chapter three, but earlier in the gospel of Luke, in Jesus’ inaugural address, reading from Isaiah: “For the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:14-28).

How does the FBO resist the refusal to share power and to engage the other, and participate in Jesus' work that sets the oppressed free? One organizational discipline with potency for solidarity and liberation with the afflicted is *extended proximity*, displayed in the life of New Song Urban Ministries.

The difference is stark between west Baltimore's Sandtown community and the continued deterioration and boarded-up row houses in surrounding neighborhoods. Sandtown's fifteen blocks include a health center, arts center, jobs program, recovery home for mothers in addiction, and a first-class neighborhood school. Dozens of school graduates from Sandtown have been the first members of their families to attend college. Sandtown's Habitat for Humanity chapter defies the dominant picture of the organization described by Baggett: it enjoys high ownership from a board of neighborhood residents; has developed over 300 houses in Sandtown; and is one piece of a wider ecology of interdependent economic, educational, health, and spiritual initiatives called New Song Ministries, including the loosely-affiliated New Song Community Church where most of Habitat's staff worship.²⁵

The heart of this change is visible in what the African-American and white Habitat co-directors share: living in Sandtown as Habitat homeowners themselves, seeing fellow Habitat homeowners as soon as they walk out their doors, sending their children to the same school, a visceral daily accountability. The eventual African-American co-founders of New Song were inspired by a vision that led them as neighborhood residents to stay put when poverty and drugs ransacked their beloved fifteen blocks. A similar vision inspired white Baltimoreans to join them, crossing the tracks of race and class to make their home in

²⁵ This account is drawn from Gornik (2002) plus field research.

Sandtown. Together they felt the cries of neighbors, the devastating interruption of crack cocaine and crime, and the power of city political and economic forces to create and be satisfied with excluded neighborhoods. Together they also received language for a shared vision of Sandtown as a land of *shalom* in the “Three Rs” practices of “Christian community development”: *relocation* at the socio-economic margins between “remainers” and “relocaters”; *reconciliation* in a shared life across divides; and *redistribution* as the release of God’s resources to bring liberty to the captives.²⁶

Yet learning to share this vision and life in Sandtown was not easy, nor was navigating the different trajectories of their histories—privilege and pain, ethnocentric inclinations to stick with “my people,” de fault modes of violence, and common desire to ascend the ladders of success. But the commitment to extended proximity mattered. Eventually they came to believe that Three Rs were not enough. A fourth “R” was needed, *repentance*, and that this “R” should precede the others. The commitment to proximity with affliction released not only signs of neighborhood shalom, but they were being saved in the process.

Perkin’s Three Rs are not best understood as a strategy of discipleship and witness, or even a philosophy of community development. What Perkins is driving at is ecclesiology, or better, what drives Perkins is ecclesiology . . . seeking after justice and reconciliation is constitutive of ecclesial life in union with Christ and in action in the world. This is Perkins’ challenge to the church.²⁷

²⁶ Gornik narrates the Three Rs as drawn from New Song mentor John Perkins (2010: 167-169).

²⁷ Gornik (2002: 169).

The Three Rs plus One is both a means of shalom for the fifteen blocks of Sandtown, and for residents being renewed there; as such New Song's polity of solidarity with affliction has the markings of an embodied soteriology.²⁸

5.4 The Fourth Organizational Discipline: Cross-Cultural Polity

As argued in chapter three and signified in the New Song story, the reconciled and reconciling community holds the turbulence of God's cross-cultural movement, creating a new reality bearing witness to Christ overcoming the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14). One organizational discipline for the FBO is learning to develop a *cross-cultural polity* that puts the FBO at risk, placing it appropriately out of control. As Flett states, "Cross-cultural movement unveils how a particular community domesticates the gospel, how a community considers her necessary particular expression to be normative for the whole." This polity is a kind of "new wineskin" (Matt 9:17) for the conversion of the Christian community itself.

According to Robert, lifetime cross-cultural friendships have "furthered the goal of Christian solidarity across cultural differences."²⁹ And according to Walls, a new global time has emerged in Christianity where a polity that can hold such friendships matters greatly, a "crossroads in Christian history" with the growth of Christianity to the east and south.

Naming this new twenty-first century time an "Ephesian Moment" Walls writes:

Only in Christ does completion, fullness, dwell. And Christ's completion, as we have seen, comes from all humanity, from the translation of the life of Jesus into the lifeways of all the world's cultures and subcultures through history. None of us can

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Robert (2011: 101).

reach Christ's completeness on our own. We need each other's vision to correct, enlarge, and focus our own; only together are we complete in Christ.³⁰

While these claims test the polity of the FBO, much is at stake: without a polity that can stretch out to those who have been left out, the FBO cannot be corrected and enlarged to make more room for Christ. "The very height of Christ's full stature" (Eph. 4:13), writes Walls, "is reached only by the coming together of the different cultural entities into the body of Christ. Only 'together,' not on our own, can we reach his full stature."³¹

Emerson and Smith argue in *Divided by Faith* that due to its individualistic, ahistorical, and anti-institutional captivity, white evangelicalism does not have the resources to engage the institutional reality of racialization. To act otherwise, they wrote "would challenge the very basis of their world, both their faith and the American way of life."³² While IV's journey to multi-ethnicity has been turbulent, at some point in IV's decades-long journey from ethnocentric whiteness to what it is today, IV came to understand its *charism* was not merely to organize multi-ethnic campus chapters, but to *become a cross-cultural and cross-ethnic organization itself*.

The ingredients in this cross-cultural polity are instructive. First, there was an organizational capacity for what I have called apostolic reflection, as reflected in this comment when IV learned in 1991 that UC Berkeley had become a university without an ethnic majority: "We had to ask what God was doing in the world," said then-IV president Steve Hayner. "And if God was moving to the Southern Hemisphere and changing color in leadership, [IV] had to reflect that." A second ingredient was a capacity to hold meaningful

³⁰ Walls (2002: 79).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

³² Emerson and Smith (2000: 89).

differences in Scriptural and missional discernment. For example, IV has had a long interplay between two seemingly competing models: some campus chapters are intentionally “ethnic-specific” (focused on African-American tradition, or Asian-American tradition for example) and some are intentionally “multi-ethnic.” Each was regarded as offering unique gifts on a complex racial landscape whereby “multi-ethnic” often became de facto control of white culture and power. A third ingredient was a capacity to adopt policy changes in the name of redemption. For example, financial resources were re-directed to assist ethnic-minority staff in raising support. A fourth ingredient in IV’s cross-cultural polity is stubbornness to move forward even when the numbers shift. For white students unaccustomed to sharing power, true multi-ethnicity carries high a cost. Unfortunately, as more and more campus chapters become multi-ethnic, more white students have left IV to join other campus groups. Fifth, the story about IV’s ethnic wounds demonstrates the power of relationalism whereby both policy and relationships are taken seriously, and cross-racial friendships are common. A final ingredient has been indispensable in the cross-cultural polity. Hayner said he turned to Scripture to refute accusations that IV was simply being politically correct. He points to Acts’ description of the Holy Spirit driving the church in mission across cultures. “This is not just a casual theme in Scripture,” Hayner said. InterVarsity was driven by a missiological imagination of multi-ethnicity that gave their FBO courage to keep stretching out in risk, testifying that somehow IV was becoming more complete in Christ along the way.³³

³³ The account of IV has been drawn from Byassee (2010), Rendall (2007), Swartz (2012), and author interview with Steve Hayner in February 2013.

5.5 *The Fifth Organizational Discipline: Ecclesial Hybridity*

The FBO that emerged out of Protestant missions history—capable of rapid and immense organizational growth and requiring an activist, professionalized, and managerial means to do so—resists a Christian eschatology of hope in its very form. Its self-understanding is as a vehicle of great competence, not a jar of clay whose treasure shows that “this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor 4:7). This is not only a temptation but a built-in isomorphic pressure within the form itself, a design both consciously and unconsciously inclined toward being (in Barth’s terms) “only a human activity, reliant on the range of human capacities, [which] then is untrue and an impediment to the proclamation of the gospel.”³⁴ Jerome Baggett quotes a key Habitat leader:

I could argue from five different perspectives as to why you should participate with the food bank. Either as a Christian, as an American, as a businessman, as a Houstonian—pick the subject and I’ll tell you why you should become involved with it. And I think the same is true of Habitat. Now, the danger from a Christian perspective is that, since Habitat makes so much sense from so many different perspectives, it is easy to take the Christian aspect completely out. It’s a concept that makes so much sense without the Christian aspect. It’s absolutely not needed.³⁵

For not only Habitat, but all three of the FBOs exhibited in this chapter, missio-pelagianism is perhaps the greatest vulnerability of the FBO in relationship to the practice of Christian mission as participation in the *missio Dei*. L’Arche is a remarkable hybrid form that illuminates new possibilities for the *charism* of the FBO. Its international federation is something like an image of Barth’s missionary *koinonia* of church, neighbor, and mission society; it unites in one global fellowship local residential communities, some of which are

³⁴ Flett (2010: 186, Kindle).

³⁵ Baggett (2001: 201).

profoundly Christian, others profoundly Muslim, and still others profoundly multi-religious. Yet the vision for all this emerges from founder Jean Vanier's spirituality rooted in deeply Christian convictions and Scriptural reasoning. When Vanier and his deeply liturgical life is gone, will theological reasoning still sustain L'Arche? After thirty years, New Song is undergoing a major transition in succession from its original generation of interracial leadership and the loss (through death or departure) of several key leaders.³⁶ While New Song Community Church has always anchored the relational and liturgical ecology of New Song, transition there has created fragility, whereas the Habitat for Humanity initiative continues to grow. For IV, one challenge is stated by a vice-president who said that the organization's growth in the mission of justice has now become mainstream. As more and more IV students have experienced service projects in marginalized contexts, "Many of them return more committed to justice but less committed to Jesus."³⁷

For Andrew Walls, if voluntary Protestant Christianity was as revolutionary for the reformulation of Christian life and mission as the monasteries were in their own time, a new historical challenge of "sharing and receiving" requires new instruments that "may prove equally disturbing."³⁸ Yet if historic mission agencies are said to be "admirably designed" in a way that precluded an ecclesial vision of sharing and receiving within the growing body of Christ over the 300-plus years since Carey's historic pamphlet, what deficiencies or "secular ideals" does this reveal in the underlying imagination of the ends in mind? Indeed, the

³⁶ In the summer of 2013, one leader, a lifetime resident of Sandtown, told a Duke Divinity student that while the transitions were difficult, the thirty years of ministry had given Sandtown a deeply-embedded new trajectory. "Things have turned in Sandtown," he said.

³⁷ Author interview, 2008.

³⁸ Walls (1996: 254).

trajectory of “one-way traffic” has only intensified in the new age of an imagination of mission shaped by powerful humanitarian NGOs (some that count by the millions in people served and by billions in budgets).

Here I conclude with lament. The “second Protestant schism” that Ralph Winter named was indeed the de facto and the de jure (in polity) split between mission and church. This schism had damaging effects, namely, ecclesio-centrism in the church and a pragmatism in voluntary Christianity undisciplined by an eschatological understanding of hope. This schism continues to haunt the FBO, which easily imagines itself as “successful” without a connection to the liturgical and remedial. Yet according to Smith, the deeply-embedded countercultural liturgy of Christian worship is the *only* polity in which these charisms are released. This is why I have named *ecclesial hybridity* as an organizational discipline. The FBO never stands alone in the *missio Dei* but exists within the missionary community. The FBO needs constant reminders of its need for the liturgical world of worship to correct and enlarge its *charism*. If the spine of lament is hope, that hope begins in naming the tragic effects of the Protestant missions history on the very forms it has passed down—and which in turn keeps the FBO continually aware of its impoverishment, its need for the wider missionary community, and its need to seek meaningful connections of hybridity to the liturgical world of doxological joy.

5.6 From Institutional Imagination to Institutional Holiness

People with an imaginary of mission action matched with a distinct “use of means” (the voluntary society, the parachurch, the FBO, the humanitarian NGO) adapted in unique

economic, political, and ecclesial times to give that mission organizational power. Yet the “use of means” *itself* comes under, and can even be a carrier of, isomorphic pressures in ways the FBO is often unconscious of. This is why the development of institutional imagination is required, the weaving together of how mission is imagined, formed, and pronounced as an *organization*.

Yet within a missiological understanding of the organization as receiver and participant, an account of institutional imagination is insufficient. To “pronounce” well with respect to the practice of Christian missions, the institutional imagination benefits from a missiological *telos* in answer to “Institutional imagination toward what?” The organizational accounts given through the narrative vignettes of the FBOs L’Arche, New Song, and IVCF reveal patterns that echo Swinton’s claim about transvaluation: “in encountering people with profound developmental disabilities in friendship, people’s lives are changed, their priorities are reshaped and their vision of God and humanness are altered at their very core. What we are discovering is the occurrence of a process of transvaluation within which personal encounter with people with profound developmental disabilities initiates a movement towards a radically new system of valuing.”³⁹

The question thus arises: If there is such a thing as exemplary lives that the church has learned to call holy, is there such a thing as exemplary communities and organizations within which lives have been found to be profoundly altered at their core in ways the Christian tradition would describe as holiness? Beavans and Schroeder identify several understandings of holiness drawn from the Christian tradition:

³⁹ Swinton (2003: 67).

- “holiness draws the church to constant conversion”
- “The church’s holiness is not for itself but for the world, as ‘bearers—not exclusive beneficiaries’”
- “Within the inevitably multicultural reality of the church today, not the uniformity of monarchy but the unity of diversity of the Trinity is to be the goal. In the same way, the church participates in God’s holiness and is called to make itself holy—both in the sense of being set apart, different from the world in which it lives, and in the sense of reflecting God’s excellence in the community of its members”⁴⁰

What is the significance of holiness as the “constant conversion” spoken of herein relationship to the call to institutional conversion? The *semper reformanda* described by Flett as “the unavoidable, necessary act of the continued reformation and renovation of the Church herself, and of Christians themselves,”⁴¹ Is not L’Arche a place of such reformation and renovation? Does not New Song’s naming of relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution as an ecclesiology, and its *telos* of repentance and joy within fifteen blocks of Baltimore bear testimony to a redemptive life form? “Bearers, not exclusive beneficiaries” — is this not seen in IV’s tarrying with its wounds in the name of embodying the kind of beloved community as a national organization it desires to see on the local campus? A “multicultural reality” that “sets apart, different from the world in which it lives” — is this not a description of the ordinary people of New Song in their small fifteen blocks, defying the racial and class stratifications of Baltimore’s history? Are not all these signs of what Craig Dykstra calls “practices of a form of life that claims to bear intimacy with God as well as world-transforming power”?⁴² In his book *Servant Leadership*, Robert Greenleaf writes that

⁴⁰ Bevans and Schroeder (2004: Kindle 7091, 7116, 7479).

⁴¹ Quoted in Flett, 3190.

⁴² Dykstra (1991: 48).

institutions “lift people up to nobler stature and greater effectiveness than they are likely to achieve on their own or with a less demanding discipline.”⁴³ Detached from the account in this thesis, it is an optimistic claim. Yet the stories of L’Arche, IV, and New Song suggest the truth that not only *can* a FBO become ground for “lifting people up to nobler stature” but that without the unique forms those organizations take such alterations would not be possible. In being marked by cross-cultural polity, proximity with the afflicted, apostolic reflection, the form itself is prophetically imaginative in being “urgently out beyond the ordinary and the reasonable.” In the terms of transvaluation, such disciplines practiced organizationally constitute a pedagogy of desire, a “cultural liturgy.” As such they are vehicles not only of transvaluation but a means of grace and of conversion.

The story of the evolution of Protestant missions is a story of the loss of the link between mission and ecclesiology. We have seen the significance of how that loss has hampered the FBO’s capacity to participate in the *semper reformanda* of the renewal of the church herself. But if this is where we began, we have ended with stories of the possibilities of FBOs being saved from that trajectory. This is to end in hope.

⁴³ Greenleaf (1977: 240). Greenleaf also writes that institutions unite people in “a common purpose, and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through *servicing and being served* by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship” (237).

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