BEYOND THE BORDERS: RADICALIZED EVANGELICAL MISSIONARIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA FROM THE 1950S THROUGH THE 1980S

By

Rodney A. Coeller

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree

of Doctor of Philosophy

In

History

Chair: _____
Dr. Eileen Findlay

_____
Dr. Max Paul Friedman

_____
Dr. Doug Frank

_____
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

April 6, 2012
_____
Date

2012

American University

Washington, D.C. 20016

To Nathalie,
for all her support

BEYOND THE BORDERS: RADICALIZED EVANGELICAL MISSIONARIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA FROM THE 1950S THROUGH THE 1980S

BY

Rodney A. Coeller

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the complicated relationship between radicalized evangelical missionaries in Central America and their sending communities in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. This was a volatile period in Central America, with the success of socialist revolutionaries in Nicaragua, severe repression in Guatemala and El Salvador, and the increasingly powerful presence of liberation theology in religious institutions and the communities they served. These potent forces deeply affected some evangelical missionaries and they grew more sympathetic to leftist movements in Central America. Missionaries sent out as representatives of these evangelical groups, with the goal of converting others into the fold, were thus converted theologically or politically themselves and no longer "fit" within their home communities.

It was also a period of rapid change for American evangelicals. During the 1970s and 1980s, evangelicals grew more deeply committed to U.S. foreign policy, supporting Ronald Reagan's rise to the presidency, his vehement anti-communism, and his foreign policy goals throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. American missionaries in Central America were caught between these changing realities. When missionaries adapted their political and theological perspectives to adapt to transformative experiences

in Central America, sending groups became uncomfortable sponsoring these radicalized missionaries who seemed to have forgotten what they were sent to Central America to do.

This dissertation analyzes the ensuing conflicts between evangelical sending groups and these radicalized missionaries, which reveal several important things about the nature of missionary life as well as the nature of the evangelical community. First, there were specific, if often unspoken, beliefs about what it meant to be a missionary—this was part of the power of the missionary narrative within the evangelical community. And second, the boundaries of evangelical identity, while often unspoken, were clarified by radicalized missionaries' violations of those boundaries. Evangelical identity turned out to be more all-encompassing than one might perceive at first glance. Theological boundaries were important, of course, but transformed missionaries soon discovered that there were political and cultural boundaries as well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have accrued a great number of debts in the course of researching and writing this dissertation. More thanks are necessary than I can repay in the course of this short note. Thank you, first, to each of the missionaries that allowed me to interview them for this dissertation. Their stories inspired this project and none of it would have been possible without them and their willingness to open their lives to me. Many, many thanks to each of them.

I am indebted to several important institutions for travel grants and funding that made this project possible as well. American University, the College of Arts and Sciences, the History Department, the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, and the Cosmos Club all provided generous financial support at key moments. I owe my gratitude to helpful archivists at each of the archives I visited. Special thanks to Álvaro Pérez Guzman, librarian at the Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana in Costa Rica for his enthusiasm about my project and helpful guidance through the seminary's archives. I am indebted to Anthony Chamberlain and the Latin American Studies Program in Costa Rica as well. Not only did they introduce me to Central American history and the missionaries who inspired this study, they also provided lodging, direction, and helpful advice when I returned years later to research.

Thank you to the many family members and friends who have provided support that sustained me through this lengthy project as well. I could not have made it through the process without you. My parents have been wonderfully encouraging throughout this

endeavor. I owe them thanks for so many things. Special thanks to Nate Howard, Pete Harkema, and Phil Mast for being great travel companions through Central America and to Mark Hamilton for my first introduction to the history of the 1954 coup in Guatemala while standing in line for a Rubén Blades concert in San José nearly fifteen years ago. To each of the people who read portions or all of my dissertation in various states of disarray: Eleanor Gease, Adam Zarakov, Allen Mikaelian, Aaron Bell, Adam Fenner, Leanne Rinne, and James Findlay. Your thoughtful comments vastly improved this dissertation.

The history faculty at American University has been wonderfully supportive over the past several years. Special thanks to Bob Griffith who welcomed me to the history department with his cheerful smile and provided thoughtful guidance during my first years in the department. You will always be remembered.

Max Friedman has been a great support over the past few years. His helpful advice at many key points has helped me navigate my entry into the historical profession. He provided insightful feedback and encouraging words at important points in the dissertation-writing process. Thank you for your astute reading and thoughtful comments.

I met Doug Frank up in the mountains of southern Oregon a little over ten years ago. Along with many other students, I owe him an immense debt of gratitude for investing so many years of his life into the wonderful program known as the Oregon Extension. My semester there still inspires my vision of what education can be. Getting to have Doug join my committee has been a pleasure. His careful reading, compelling

questions, and concern for the “felicity of language” have profoundly enriched this work. Thanks for your invaluable help.

Eileen Findlay is simply a wonderful human being. Her enthusiastic practice of doing history has inspired me from the first moment I met her. Eileen has made this dissertation possible. From pushing me to refine my research questions to clarifying my arguments while writing to encouraging me when I considered quitting, she has been there for me throughout the process. I could not have asked for a better advisor, mentor, and friend. Thank you for everything Eileen.

Finally, thanks to my son Kai for sharing his dad with a writing project this past year and for reminding me what is most meaningful in life. And most importantly, thanks to my wife Nathalie. Her support at every point and in so many ways has sustained me and made it all worth it. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE OF MISSIONARIES IN HISTORY

John Stam is a magnificent storyteller. Sitting in a small open-air building, built by visiting church members from the U.S., next to his house on the outskirts of San José, Costa Rica, John spills out a cascade of stories accented by bellowing laughter and a few mischevious grins. Just one more quick story, he adds, before heading out to pick coffee beans that will join others drying in the sun around his house. "Have I told you about my theology class with Fidel Castro?"[1] Who could turn down such a story?

And the stories keep rolling—he tells of arguing with Jeane Kirkpatrick, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, losing his pastoral credentials when a boy wrapping soap in the supermarket found his editorial against President Reagan printed in the communist newspaper, and on and on. Before long it becomes clear though that he really has to get back to writing and other tasks and it is time for me to move along. He is working on his third volume of commentary on the book of Revelation, preaching in several different churches in the next few months, and speaking at rallies protesting the latest free trade agreement with the United States. He just got back from Cuba and Nicaragua and will be traveling through North, Central, and South America in the coming months—quite a schedule for a man who is about to turn 79. But before I go, he shares a glimpse of the historian's gold mine that he has tucked away in his office closet. He has

[1] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

boxes of thousands of letters, notes, and pictures that he has written and collected over the last seventy years, starting from the time he was as young as six.[2] He sends me off with a cheerful goodbye and tells me to call him the next time I am in town.

John and his wife Doris went to Costa Rica in 1954 describing themselves as typical evangelical Christian missionaries of a Republican bent, true to the spirit of their alma mater Wheaton College. But in the late 1950s they began working in northern Costa Rica with refugees fleeing the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, an experience that would transform their lives.[3] By the 1970s, the Costa Rican evangelical seminary where John taught was under investigation for teaching liberation theology—anathema to North American evangelicals who claimed that liberation theology was simply Marxist socialism taking over Christianity. In the 1980s John and Doris fully supported the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and again ended up on the opposite side of what seemed to be a clear-cut issue for most North American evangelicals.

After sending an investigatory team to Costa Rica in the early 1980s to see what the Stams were up to, their main supporting church in the U.S., Black Rock Congregational Church, in Fairfield, Connecticut, decided to stop funding them. Black Rock had fully embraced John and Doris as missionaries in 1954, but something had changed over the course of thirty years, and the church no longer wanted to be affiliated with them. John and Doris were eventually able to convince Black Rock to reinstate

---

[2] The oldest letter in John's archives is one from his dad, Jacob Stam, to the family with a drawing from John of a man "who didn't love the Lord." In the letter, his father told the extended family about how John enjoyed arranging special meetings for Sunday evenings modeled after church services, 4 February 1935, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 1, Folder 2, "Familia Stam."

[3] Robert Oscar Bakke, interview with John and Doris Stam, located in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL, Collection 8, Box 43, Folder 1.

them as missionaries, but not without intense negotiation about the nature of their work in Central America.[4]

The 1970s and 1980s are a uniquely important time for analyzing complicated and strained relationships between evangelical missionaries in Central America, like the Stams, and their sending communities in the United States. It was a volatile period in Central America, with the success of socialist revolutionaries in Nicaragua, severe repression in Guatemala and El Salvador, and the increasingly powerful presence of liberation theology in religious institutions and the communities they served. It was also a period of rapid change for American evangelicals. During the 1970s and 1980s, evangelicals grew more deeply committed to U.S. foreign policy, supporting Ronald Reagan's rise to the presidency, his vehement anti-communism, and his foreign policy goals throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. American missionaries in Central America were caught between these changing realities. Many, like John and Doris Stam, were shaped by their experiences in Central America and relationships with people there, and grew more sympathetic to leftist movements throughout the region. Missionaries sent out as representatives of these evangelical groups, with the goal of converting others into the fold, were thus converted theologically or politically themselves and no longer "fit" within their home communities. Sending groups became uncomfortable sponsoring these radicalized missionaries who seemed to have forgotten what they were sent to Central America to do. My project will not only analyze how these transformations occurred, but also what conflicts resulted from them, whether the missionaries were able to maintain relationships with their sending groups, and if so, on what terms.

---

[4] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

In this dissertation I will trace the story of these contentious missionaries and their sending communities. Who were they when they first became missionaries? What were their theological and political views? What became of those views? What experiences generated these changes? How did they explain these changes to themselves and their sending communities? Did radicalized missionaries reshape evangelical communities? Or did they eventually flee into more accepting groups on the fringes of evangelicalism or leave the evangelical fold entirely? Did they help create more flexible ideologies within evangelical groups or ironically increase the rigidity of their sending institutions through their complicated departures?

This chapter will begin by describing the purposes and contributions of this dissertation. Then it will review the scholarship surrounding missionaries, foreign relations, and U.S. evangelicals during this era. Finally, it will explore some of the unique research questions posed by the project, before outlining how the study will proceed through subsequent chapters.

My project explores how missionaries changed their theological and political perspectives through powerful transformative experiences in Central America. As it follows them back to the U.S. and analyzes their complicated negotiations with their evangelical sending communities, readers will see the hidden layers and boundaries of evangelical identity in the 1970s and 1980s. Conservative evangelical identity is often thought of as being primarily based on theological criteria. Intense negotiations between U.S. evangelicals and their radicalized missionaries revealed growing political affiliations that came to be an integral part of evangelical identity as well.

Missionaries are an important, yet often overlooked, element of foreign relations. Many diplomatic historians write about the role of the military and state-to-state negotiations, but missionaries remain obscured in our historical vision. And yet, missionaries enact foreign relations on a much more intimate level than any of the more traditionally recognized actors. My research will contribute to the ways that historians understand U.S. relations with Central America during this era by revealing how evangelical missionaries both enacted and complicated the United States' goals in the region. Ultimately, my project will examine how missionaries formed community with people in Central America, maintained or severed connections with their sending communities, and created new transnational networks of fellow radicalized missionaries throughout Central America and beyond.

My work will also add to our understanding of the Religious Right's connections to U.S. foreign policy by revealing how it is linked in nuanced ways to missionaries in Central America. The 1970s and 1980s were a unique time for evangelicals in the U.S., as many experienced the new political power of the Religious Right. The Religious Right is commonly identified as a block of conservative evangelical Protestant groups throughout the U.S. with several important goals: to make abortion illegal, to fight the "homosexual agenda," to maintain strict biblical guidelines for society, and to fight communism around the world. This antipathy to communism made Latin America particularly important to them in the 1970s and 1980s, as they identified liberation theology and many leftist movements as being manipulated by the Soviet Union and "atheistic communism."

The Religious Right's roots lay in the anti-communism of the 1950s and 1960s. As evangelicals consolidated their power during the 1970s through radio programs such as the Christian Broadcasting Network and Focus on the Family, they continually harkened back to anti-communist themes. Despite Jimmy Carter's evangelical background, the Religious Right vehemently opposed him and supported the candidacy of Ronald Reagan to replace Carter. They identified with Reagan's revival of anti-communist sentiment, his Manichean worldview, and his foreign policy goals that attempted to reverse the tide of communism in Central America and around the world.[5]

While several scholars have traced the rise of the Religious Right within the U.S., none have yet fully analyzed its missionaries spread around the world. Much of the U.S. evangelical community was closely connected to Reagan's Central American foreign policy, as they preached sermons and wrote articles exhorting political leaders of the era. But how missionaries carried and enacted this perspective, and how it may have shifted over time has yet to be fully deciphered. My work demonstrates that their encounters with Central Americans during the 1970s and 1980s pushed many evangelical missionaries into a much more complex understanding of the world, their faith, their political allegiances, and their own individual and familial identities.

Until recently many foreign relations historians viewed missionary history as outside of the realm of foreign relations. They generally emphasized the actions of official state actors, diplomats, presidents, and militaries; they worked in official state

---

[5] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Samuel S. Hill and Dennis E. Owen, *The New Religious Political Right in America* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982); Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995); Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000).

archives and were less likely to adopt cultural approaches to the study of history. But in the 1980s and 1990s, foreign relations historians began to see the value in cultural analysis and the actions of informal agents of foreign relations. Over the last fifteen years these methodologies have come to the forefront of foreign relations history and now missionaries are among a broader range of actors who are considered important participants in foreign relations.

One of the first important historiographical developments in opening up the field of foreign relations was to look at official state actors in more intimate ways and through different lenses. Many historians have done this by examining American soldiers, not just as military forces but as personal actors. Katherine Moon and Maria Höhn focused on soldiers' sexual relations with women in South Korea and Germany.[6] Moon examined the "Camptown Clean-Up Campaign" of the early 1970s, demonstrating that both countries' efforts in this campaign were vital to maintaining amicable relationships. Höhn looked at the social and cultural impact of American GIs in West Germany. She discovered a conservative German backlash against perceived Americanization, primarily directed against the women who dated American GIs. Interestingly, she also found that this backlash was enacted along lines of race. Conservative Germans attempted to control the Jewish bar and club owners where the GIs spent time and vociferously attempted to contain German women who dated black GIs, more than those who dated white ones.

Petra Goedde and Mary Renda focused more directly on the soldiers themselves and how their perceptions of the countries they occupied both embodied and transformed

---

[6] Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

foreign policy.[7] In *GIs and Germans*, Goedde traced the transition between wartime images of the Germans as vicious, animalistic Nazis to the soldiers' perspective during the occupation of the Germans as a feminized nation who had lost the will to fight. In this context, they played a traditionally masculine role and attempted to care for and build up the German people. Renda focused on U.S. Marines during the nineteen-year occupation of Haiti early in the twentieth century. She began with the question, "How does a man imagine himself when he is about to pull a trigger?"[8] Though she never fully answered that question, she provided an intimate examination of how Marines felt about their relationships to Haitians. She concluded that both their attempts to nurture and their tendency towards violence were paradoxical elements of their paternalistic attitudes, which were held by most Americans as well.

Other foreign relations historians have turned to non-traditional actors in recent historical work. Mary Louise Pratt examined the writings of explorers and naturalists, among others, who shaped European perceptions of non-European people through their travel writings.[9] Katharine Moon, who wrote about American soldiers and prostitutes in South Korea, emphasized not only the role of soldiers in foreign relations, but also that of sex workers in maintaining some control over their working conditions.[10] Penny Von Eschen explored jazz artists, commissioned by the State Department to be informal

---

[7] Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[8] Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[9] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[10] Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

ambassadors to countries in the Eastern bloc and decolonizing countries around the world.[11] She clearly portrayed the agency of jazz musicians and their audiences to interpret music (and its politics) according to their own agendas, rather than following the goals of the State Department. Christopher Endy investigated American tourism in France and found foreign relations being acted out by both American tourists and French service industry workers.[12] Endy showed that tourists were part of a larger American project of "consumer diplomacy," but that they did not always follow the government's desired path of promoting America abroad. Ultimately, Endy argued that even during this era, which contained the rise of interdependence and informal exchanges between America and France (and other nations as well), it was also a time of "entrenched national identity," as each country's citizens took pride in their part of the bargain. In my own work, I also hope to focus on how radicalized missionaries both enacted and transformed Americans' vision of who "we" are versus who "they" are. As Endy implicitly argued, these changing perceptions of national identity are deeply connected to how countries interact with each other.

Other historians have brought additional new elements to the history of American foreign relations. Many have applied the lens of gender to their analysis to examine hidden elements of how nations perceived each other, how decisions were made during different eras, and how feminized or masculinized images of foreign interactions conveyed nuanced, yet powerful perceptions of international relations. Renda, Goedde, and Kristin Hoganson, among others, each examined their subjects through a gendered

---

[11] Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[12] Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

lens and found previously obscured elements of foreign interactions that revealed deep motivations in establishing American and foreign mindsets.[13] Frank Costigliola has taken this approach one step further by analyzing gender as well as emotional and relational language. In his meticulous examination of George Kennan's "Long Telegram," he revealed why Kennan's document was so persuasive by examining the relational metaphors that Kennan used. Emotional language portraying the Soviet government as a rapist exerting "insistent, unceasing pressure for penetration and command" over Western societies set the tone for the American people and carried great weight in convincing them to endorse a strategy of containment.[14]

Finally, Emily Rosenberg has been involved in each of these types of analysis mentioned in the cultural turn of foreign relations historiography. In her latest work, *A Date Which Will Live*, she focused on Americans' thoughts about Pearl Harbor over the past sixty years and emphasized the importance of memory in foreign relations as well.[15] Rather than attempting to discover what "really happened" by stabilizing the historical event, she focused instead on how our perception and memory of Pearl Harbor has changed and how those changes have been connected to alterations in foreign policy towards Japan. With these many transformations in foreign relations historiography,

---

[13] Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[14] Frank Costigliola, "'Unceasing Pressure for Penetration:' Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan's Formation of the Cold War," *The Journal of American History* 83:4 (March 1997).

[15] Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

missionaries have become one of many groups that are seen as playing a role in foreign relations.

State-to-state relations are mediated through hierarchical and distancing structures that allow states to maintain "official" relationships with each other. While missionaries live within hierarchical structures as well, their relationships with foreigners are both a personal exchange of "foreign relations" and also a setting in which missionaries and missionized potentially deeply affect one another. At a fundamental level, missionaries are sent to convert and transform others into the mold of their sending groups, but they are often deeply changed by their experiences. Thus, by examining missionary relationships with their host cultures, we find an intimate laboratory of cultural exchange that can expand our conceptions of the nature of foreign relations and enlighten our understandings of more formalized state-to-state relations.

Missionary history has also changed in many ways over the last fifty years. Into the 1960s most of the writing about missionaries tended to be written by missionary theorists or missionaries themselves, often tracing their work or the work of their mission society. Starting in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, historians began to think of missionaries primarily as a part of the United States' larger national mission, which revolved around spreading democracy and expanding markets (seen as Protestant and white by nature). Paul H. Varg and Kenneth MacKenzie were two of the earliest historians to link American missionary history to the history of foreign policy directly, as Varg demonstrated how missionaries to China affected American relations with China and MacKenzie showed how foreign missions were a key reason that President William

McKinley chose to keep the Philippines as a colony in 1898.[16] These historians saw missionaries as a fundamental part of America's informal empire.

After William Appleman Williams published *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, historians increasingly emphasized the detrimental aspects of the American empire. In the context of the Vietnam War and as missionaries were viewed as a part of this negative perspective of American empire, historical treatments of them went from the hagiographical approaches from the first half of the twentieth century to viewing them either as pawns of the American government or as the first wave of American empire, controlling converts through religion.[17] Within this context, exploration of missionary history stagnated.

In John Fairbank's 1968 presidential address to the American Historical Association he called for historians to investigate missionaries throughout American history, whom he called "the invisible man of American history."[18] He went on to say that missions history could be a great research laboratory of "cultural stimulus and response in both directions."[19] This call to move beyond simplistic visions of missionaries remained largely unheeded (other than Fairbank's own work) throughout the 1970s.[20] However, by the 1980s historians began to investigate missionaries in a variety

---

[16] Paul H. Varg, *Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958); Kenneth M. MacKenzie, *The Robe and the Sword; the Methodist Church and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

[17] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1959).

[18] John K. Fairbank, "Assignment for the '70's," *American Historical Review* 74:3 (Feb. 1969), 877.

[19] Ibid., 878.

of new ways. Recognizing the often-overlooked fact that by 1900 female missionaries composed more than 60 percent of all foreign missionaries, Jane Hunter and Patricia Hill focused on U.S. women missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Hill provided a larger context for women's missionary societies and Hunter more closely examined women missionaries' lives in China, both argued that missions provided women expanded public opportunities without offending their allegiances and sensibilities attached to their religious traditions.[21] James Reed and William Hutchison focused in on the missionary mind in their work. Reed argued that missionaries were able to control the nature of American foreign policy towards China in the early twentieth century, as they were seen as the "unbiased" experts on China at that point. Hutchison examined missionary ideology in his work and showed how missionaries battled for years over how best to carry out missions activities. He also closely examined John Rockefeller's 1932 Report of the Laymen's Inquiry and argued that this was key in breaking down the missionary consensus and setting the foundation for the ecumenist versus evangelical debate that raged throughout the second half of the twentieth century.[22]

In the 1990s missionary historiography continued to diversify. In her work, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*, Amanda Porterfield studied the women's

---

[20] John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[21] Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

[22] James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy, 1911-1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

missions movement of the early twentieth century and argued that education was the key mobilizing factor in many of these women's lives.[23] By exploring the educational work of Mary Lyon, she demonstrated that education expanded women's opportunities to include a more public role in missions. Missionary life was also portrayed as a sacrificial and exotic life, which resembles the way that Patricia Hill linked women missionaries to Protestant women in the U.S., by revealing how they often read letters from female missionaries and dreamt about their exotic lifestyles. This was just one of many ways that historians began to highlight linkages between missionaries abroad and people at home.

Another major question in missionary history that scholars began to deal with more directly in the 1990s was the extent to which missionaries were shaped by their experiences in host cultures. Lian Xi's *The Conversion of Missionaries* analyzed how liberal missionaries to China in the 1920s and 1930s suffered a crisis of faith resulting from their interactions with Chinese people. Xi examined three specific missionaries and traced their transition from evangelistic endeavors through meaningful connection with Chinese people and culture to eventual disillusionment with more strict conceptions of conversion. As they discovered validity in Chinese religious thought they found it increasingly difficult to put the majority of their time into evangelistic efforts. In the end they essentially were converted themselves, and became reverse missionaries to their constituencies in the United States, attempting to teach them the importance of integrating Chinese thought into Christianity.[24] Historians Jun Xing and Jon Thares

---

[23] Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Davidann did similar work focusing on the YMCA during the same time period. They both demonstrated how the YMCA transformed from an evangelistic endeavor into a more socially-oriented venture. Xing explored this phenomenon in China while Davidann looked at the YMCA in Japan. Davidann went one step further by portraying how Japanese people adopted elements of Christianity from the YMCA missionaries but turned it to their own nationalistic means and eventually challenged and marginalized the American Protestant enterprise.[25]

More recently several collections of essays have attempted to return the focus to sending cultures and their connections to missionaries. Alvyn Austin and Jamie Scott's recent edited work *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples*, tackled this issue for Canadian missionaries. Gail Edwards's essay in the book explored the nature of sending agencies' identification with their missionaries by examining one missionary, William Henry Pierce, and his interactions with his missions sending agency. After encouraging Pierce to write an autobiography, the missions agency refused to print it because it did not fit the heroic Methodist story they wanted to tell; essentially Pierce was not white enough to be a "real" missionary.[26] This was an important issue for radicalized missionaries in the 1970s and 1980 as well, since they rarely fit their sending groups' conceptions of what they should be.

---

[24] Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

[25] Jun Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919-1937* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1996); Jon Thares Davidann, *A World of Crisis and Progress: The American YMCA in Japan, 1890-1930* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998).

[26] Alvyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott, eds., *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

Daniel Bays and Grant Wacker's collection *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home* focused directly on the interactions between missionaries and their sending communities. The articles in this work emphasized a variety of ways in which missionaries simultaneously revealed and complicated larger American cultural themes.[27] It is important to note the influence and symbolic value of missionaries in their sending communities, as many congregations are tied to churches throughout the world via their connections to missionaries. These relationships often broaden church members' perspective and connect them to other parts of the world. Several of the essays in Bays and Wacker's work demonstrated how missionaries returned with new information and their sending groups adopted their perspective to push for changes in American foreign policy. William Svelmoe's essay in the book, showed how missionary W. Cameron Townsend came to support the socialist Mexican President, Lazaro Cardenas, in the 1930s and convinced his socially conservative, fundamentalist supporters in the U.S. to support Cardenas as well. Svelmoe argued that Townsend's story revealed how he was able to transform public opinion within his sending community in the U.S.

My work will combine several trends within missionary historiography and analyze missionaries in Central America, who are not as prominent within existing missionary history. Much of the interesting theoretical analysis of missionaries who are transformed by their experiences focuses on mainline denominations' missionaries to China in the early twentieth century. These early 20th century missionaries were returning to a very different context than evangelical missionaries of the 1970s and 1980s. Mainline denominations were in the midst of a theological crisis and more open

---

[27] Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, eds., *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003).

to transforming along with their missionaries. In fact, as these scholars prove, missionaries were a vital part of liberal mainline denominations' conversion to the social gospel. While it was difficult for these groups to accept the changes in their missionaries, they still contributed to serious debates within the American church in informative ways. Conservative evangelicals of the 1970s and 1980s found it far more difficult to engage and incorporate the critiques of their transformed missionaries.

Several scholars have recently focused on missionaries in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s, but have again focused on liberal mainline denominations and Catholic groups. Attempts to relate new missionary perspectives back to sending groups were quite different for missionaries attached to more liberal denominations. Christian Smith and Sharon Erickson Nepstad both emphasized how liberal missionaries led their denominations into radically different responses to Reagan's foreign policy in Central America during the 1980s.[28] While they did not focus as directly on missionaries' conceptions of themselves, they portrayed how missionaries from mainline Protestant and Catholic groups developed a movement opposing U.S. foreign policy in the region in response to the atrocities they found in Central America during this time period. Nepstad went even further by analyzing how missionaries framed new perspectives using the metaphors of their religious communities to communicate their radicalization effectively without alienating their sending communities. But evangelical missionaries dealt with a very different context and were far less successful in convincing their sending groups to shift their political positions.

---

[28] Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Conservative evangelical missionaries in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s were in a unique position for several reasons. First of all, they spent years in a tumultuous region in Central America, where they encountered deep repression and popular radicalization that often profoundly affected their understandings of the world. Second, their sending groups were intimately tied to specific elements of U.S. foreign policy, including a passionate abhorrence of communism and its perceived subversion of conservative Christianity through liberation theology. Finally, these missionaries related to people within the U.S. evangelical community at multiple levels. They were beholden to the overarching evangelical community, individual denominations and missions sending boards, and individual "home" churches that took on most direct responsibility for their support, as well as their own friends and families. Within this context, when missionaries were affected and changed by their host cultures, the results could be quite severe—especially if missionaries began to sympathize with revolutionaries or began to see some validity in liberation theology.

In this dissertation, I will begin by analyzing missionaries' starting points in their own evangelical communities—what were their perceptions of foreign countries, their connections to patriotism and their own country, as well as their theological and political ideologies? Then I will examine their radicalizing experiences in Central America. What were the experiences that most deeply affected them? In what ways did they structure their relationships with Central American people differently from other missionaries who were not as shaped by conflicts in Central America? Many of the most deeply transformed missionaries went to Latin America with the idea that they would live with

and train indigenous leaders, rather than living in isolated missionary compounds and maintaining distanced authority over Central American congregants.

Finally, I will carefully examine the types of conflicts in which missionaries found themselves with their sending groups and the larger evangelical community in the U.S. One major conflict was the initial clash when missionaries challenged their sending groups' patriotism, revealing how U.S. foreign policy had negatively affected Central American people. Secondly, some missionaries began to question theological understandings fundamental to the evangelical faith. Each of the missionaries that I have researched noted experiences that forced them to question their original conceptions of God and Christianity. Relating these theological and intellectual shifts back to people within their sending communities resulted in complicated misunderstandings and accusations that missionaries were diluting evangelical beliefs. Missionaries also frequently modified their perceptions of gender and family through their experiences in Central America. Women missionaries stepped into leadership roles and challenged traditional evangelical gender roles in ways that were foreign to their sending groups. My work will trace the effects of each of these types of transformations, as missionaries related back to family and friends in the United States.

This dissertation will follow evangelical missionaries as they either returned to the evangelical community as changed people or decided they no longer fit within that camp and moved into other organizations. I will also examine their effects on the evangelical community itself. How were evangelicals changed by their interactions with radicalized missionaries? Were they sympathetic and open to change in their own attitudes? Or did they actually become more rigid in defining their theological and

political ideology, becoming more stringent about who fit within their standards and who did not?

In attempting to ascertain how missionaries understood their changing conceptions of themselves and their shifting relationships with sending communities I am utilizing a variety of written sources and oral histories. I analyze archival and personal collections of missionaries' correspondence with their sending organizations, family, and friends, as well as newsletters that report on their activities to financial supporters. Within these sources readers can see not only how missionaries understood and enacted their relationships with each of these groups of people, but also how they represented Central American people, events, and issues, as well as their own work within those venues. Internal letters and memos within missions organizations and churches are important as well for understanding how leaders of sending organizations understood their missionaries, especially those who were deeply affected by their host cultures. Church, denominational, and other evangelical publications and magazines will illuminate the broad political and theological contexts within which missionaries were formed and with which they negotiated their evolving worldviews.

I conducted oral histories of several radicalized missionaries while researching to gain a greater sense of how they understood themselves and their relationships with sending groups and host communities. Oral history provides unique insights into realms of history that are often overlooked, but also produces potential stumbling blocks due to the fact that it is by nature perspectival and sometimes inaccurate. Historians must bring a critical approach to oral history—realizing their role in the structure of interviews, exploring potential inaccuracies by comparing information with archival sources, and

investigating the various ways that individual personalities shape stories. With a critical perspective oral history can reveal new stories from often unheard voices. It also provides a rich source for historical analysis as interviews reveal layers of how their subjects understand the world at that point in time. Sometimes two people who went through an experience together will frame that experience quite differently in an interview. The way they frame important events reveals how they understand themselves in light of their past experiences.

Within the oral histories I conducted, I will analyze the way in which radicalized missionaries frame the narratives of their lives as missionaries. This will follow the methodological mold of Tina Campt, in her excellent work *Other Germans*, as she attempts to understand how black Germans conceptualized their identity within the context of Nazi Germany and the Hitler Youth.[29] In both her material and my own, subjects straddled the dividing lines between communities and were in the process of constructing their identities in relationship to various groups—for Campt, black Germans who were sometimes accepted into white communities; for me, missionaries who left their sending groups and merged with host cultures, but often seemed to be lost somewhere in between. Closely analyzing how missionaries frame their trajectories as they cross lines of identity can alert readers to transitions in individual and group identification. This interdisciplinary use of sources, bringing the insights of literature analysis and the construction of narrative, will allow me to understand historical occurrences through the lens of memory.

---

[29] Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

The radicalized missionaries at the heart of this dissertation are part of a distinct type of missionary who, by their very nature, is less likely to exist in the formal archives of their sending organizations. Sometimes missions agencies cut financial ties or organizational ties to radicalized missionaries—a sort of official shunning. Other times, conflicts between missionaries and their sending communities were not so explicit in their consequences, but still ended painfully. These missionaries were less likely to place their collections of letters, diaries, and photos in the mission organization's archives. This created a unique research dilemma. While traces of these missionaries appeared in archival settings, it was essential to find more substantial information about them outside of formal historical archives. In the course of research, I found that radicalized missionaries formed an informal network that, while it lacked institutional structure, still provided and continues to provide very real support for them. These informal relationships with other radicalized missionaries sustained each of their members and provided a means of identifying with a new group outside of mainstream experience; they offered a way of creating community within marginalized spaces. These networks of radicalized missionaries were invaluable in my research; each individual or couple I contacted led me to others.

There are fourteen missionaries who form the core of this study. Most of them I interviewed, and each of them appears frequently throughout the dissertation. I will quickly introduce them here so that readers can reference this section if they need a reminder of who a particular missionary is.

John and Doris Stam went to Costa Rica as missionaries with the Latin America Mission in 1954. They both taught at various seminaries over the years and John has

preached in many churches as well. They lost the support of their primary supporting congregation in the United States, Black Rock Congregational Church, in 1989, but were reinstated and continue on as missionaries still living in Costa Rica.

Dick and Irene Foulkes worked in Costa Rica with the Latin America Mission starting in 1954 as well. Dick began in 1954, Irene joined him one year later. They both taught at the Latin America Biblical Seminary in San José. In the early 1980s, they switched their mission affiliation from the Latin America Mission to the Presbyterian Church. Irene still lives in Costa Rica and remains connected to the seminary. Dick died in 2006.

Amzie and Elena Yoder grew up Amish and Beachy Amish. Amzie first went to Mennonite Voluntary Service in Honduras in 1958. After returning to the United States and finishing college, he and Elena got married and moved to Honduras as missionaries with the Eastern Board of Mennonite Missions from 1964 to 1981. After living in Indiana for two years from 1981 to 1983, they returned to Central America—this time living in Guatemala until 1993. There they helped develop a Mennonite seminary in Guatemala City called SEMILLA. They now live in New Mexico.

Cliff and Linda Holland moved to Costa Rica as missionaries with the Latin America Mission in 1972. They were slightly older than most beginning missionaries, as they were in their thirties already and had two children, ages nine and ten. Through the 1980s they lost the support of each of their sending churches and eventually ended their affiliation with the Latin America Mission. They continue living in San José today.

Dennis and Rachel Smith first went to Guatemala as volunteers for the Presbyterian Church in 1974. They then spent two years in Chicago before returning to

Guatemala as missionaries with the Presbyterian Church in 1977. They divorced in the late 1980s. Dennis still lives in Guatemala City and remains a missionary for the Presbyterian Church.

Rick and Janice Waldrop moved to Central America as missionaries with the Church of God in 1976. After language study in Costa Rica, they moved to Guatemala in 1977. Between 1982 and 1985, their mission moved them first to Costa Rica and then to Honduras, before they moved back to Guatemala in 1985. In 1994, they moved to Cleveland, Tennessee where Rick began teaching at the Church of God Theological Seminary.

Mark and Lynn Baker were missionaries in Honduras in multiple stints through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Mark moved to Honduras to teach at an international school in 1979. In 1983, he returned to the United States. After marrying his wife Lynn, they returned to Honduras as missionaries from 1989 to 1992. After Mark completed a doctoral program at Duke University, they returned to Honduras from 1996 to 1998. They now live in Fresno, California.

Several other missionaries play more peripheral roles in this study. Charles and Lois Troutman and Tom and Joyce Hanks were all missionaries with the Latin America Mission in Costa Rica during the 1980s. Other missionaries will be introduced as they are mentioned in the text.

This dissertation will follow missionaries through their individual radicalizations, explore the significant changes among evangelicals in the United States, and then examine the ensuing conflicts between the two groups and what their complex negotiations reveal about the nature of transformation and how that functioned in

evangelical identity during the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter two examines evangelical history in the first half of the twentieth century and the special place of missionaries as well as the construction of a missionary narrative among these evangelicals. Chapter three introduces readers to the Central American region and scrutinizes how missionaries chose to move to countries within Central America, as well as examining their initial experiences in the region. Chapter four explores radicalized missionaries' transformations in Central America, as they begin to change their understandings of faith, politics, and cultural identity. Chapter five returns to the United States and assesses the development of an evangelical identity that became much more politically affiliated with conservative politicians and an anti-communist agenda in Central America. Chapter six closely analyzes the ensuing conflicts between these divergent groups—missionaries who grew more sympathetic to leftist movements, ecumenical endeavors, and social issues in Central America and U.S. evangelicals who increasingly saw conflicts in Central America as a stark battle between good and evil and believed their missionaries were on the wrong side of these conflicts. The conclusion explores where radicalized missionaries ended up, how they understood their religious and cultural identities, and how they shaped their narratives to help make sense of the transformations they underwent.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVANGELICAL MISSIONARY NARRATIVE

The missionaries who are the subjects of this dissertation were all part of the evangelical missionary community at some point in their lives. Many grew up in evangelical churches or were part of evangelical youth groups. Others were sponsored by evangelical missionary agencies. Each of them was connected to evangelicals in the United States in a variety of ways during their missionary careers. Missionaries also exerted powerful influence on how religion was practiced at home. They shaped U.S. evangelicals' beliefs about the world as they related stories from the regions where they worked back to church members. These stories produced a facilitated view of the world, as Christians in the U.S. heard missionaries' formulated perspectives on those regions, rather than from nationals of those countries themselves. Understanding the evangelical context within which missionaries were raised and related back to once they were in other countries provides insight into missionaries' original cultural framework as well as a glimpse of the trajectory of the evangelical church.

This chapter will examine the beginnings of the evangelical culture in which these radicalized missionaries were raised before moving onto an examination of the evangelical missionary narrative and how it was engrained in young evangelicals from an early age. Stories from the missionaries whom I interviewed demonstrate individual aspects of the missionary narrative throughout the second half of the chapter.

Evangelicalism has deep historical roots. During the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the term "evangelicals" denoted Protestants who placed renewed emphasis on the authority of the Bible and salvation by "faith alone," in contrast to what they believed to be Roman Catholicism's teaching of "salvation by good works." In nineteenth-century America, most of American Protestantism would have identified gladly with the word "evangelical." In the late nineteenth century, however, American Protestantism began to divide over questions raised, for biblical interpretation, by Enlightenment influences, particularly rationalism, secular science and literary criticism. In each of the major denominations, those who tempered their view of biblical inerrancy, questioned the factuality of Jesus' miracles or the Virgin Birth, and minimized the centrality of the crucifixion and the necessity of converting to Christianity in order to gain access to heaven, were called "modernists" or "theological liberals."[1] Many of those who resisted modern scholarship and held the line on what they considered to be the "fundamentals" of evangelical Protestantism took the name "Fundamentalists."[2]

During the period after the First World War, the so-called "fundamentalist-modernist controversy" split several of the largest, or "mainline" Protestant denominations, with many "fundamentalist" churches separating to form their own

---

[1] Barry Hankins, ed., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). Historian Lian Xi has argued that missionaries with sharp critical intellects, like Edward Hume, Frank Rawlinson and Pearl S. Buck, played an important role in "liberalizing" Protestant Christianity. Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

[2] The "fundamentals" most often cited are: the inerrancy and authority of Scripture; the virgin birth of Christ; the crucifixion of Jesus as a 'substitutionary atonement;' the bodily resurrection of Jesus; and the authenticity of Jesus' miracles. Barry Hankins, ed., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 5.

denominations, Bible colleges and missionary agencies.[3] Fundamentalists were much ridiculed by the secular press for their dogmatism, anti-intellectualism, moral rigidity, and separatism. They believed that the larger American society was unredeemable, and that their job was to "win souls to Christ" before the end of the world, when Jesus would rescue the "saved" and condemn the "lost" to hell forever. They shunned any association with individuals or groups, like the mainline denominations, that they considered a perverted form of Christianity.

In the 1930s and 1940s, a younger group of conservative Christians, many of them scholars and youth evangelists, began to criticize the dogmatism, anti-intellectualism, and separatism of the fundamentalist churches. They were as eager to "save souls" as their fundamentalist forebears, but they also believed Christians had a duty to exert their influence in the wider social context, helping to shape a more "godly" American society. During the 1940s, these innovators gradually settled on the label of "evangelical," sometimes "neo-evangelical," to indicate their ancestry in nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Gradually, these two terms became useful terms for identifying rather small differences among conservative American Protestants. Evangelicals and fundamentalists swore allegiance to the same doctrinal positions – both adhered to the five "fundamentals," for instance, although evangelicals tended to offer their beliefs a bit less dogmatically and made more effort to justify their beliefs by reference to the canons and procedures of scholarship. Evangelicals tended to be less separatist, many of them remaining within mainline denominations so as to exert influence. Evangelicals also turned their attention from fighting other Christians—they called their cousins "Fightin'

---

[3] Robert D. Woodberry and Christian S. Smith, "Fundamentalism et al: Conservative Protestants in America," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 27-28.

Fundamentalists"—to beginning to struggle, quite modestly at first, for some influence in shaping wider American social policy. It is a very slippery matter to distinguish fundamentalists from evangelicals. Many conservative Christians would still gladly use both labels, although many evangelicals shy away from the term "fundamentalist" because of its stigma in the wider society. For a time, in the 1950s, an evangelical was anyone who supported Billy Graham, and a fundamentalist was someone who thought him apostate or heretical. Jerry Falwell offered a simple (although less precise) definition: "A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something."[4]

In the 1940s and 1950s, then, the newly-named evangelicals began to re-engage with mainstream culture and lay out a positive vision for social change. Their first common efforts were to found the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, Fuller Seminary in 1947, and the flagship magazine of this new evangelicalism, *Christianity Today*, in 1956.[5] These three institutions, along with Billy Graham's rise to international fame, gave the evangelical movement its impetus and, in many ways, formed the seed-bed for evangelicalism's substantial influence in national affairs today.[6] This influential coalition has morphed over the years and included a wide variety of voices. One of the best analyses of this diversity of evangelical identity came from historian Jon Stone. He argued that the idea of an evangelical consensus is a fiction. Even descriptions such as "kaleidoscope" or "mosaic" fail to capture the dynamic diversity of evangelicals. Stone

---

[4] George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 1.

[5] Barry Hankins, ed., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 6; George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 62-82.

[6] Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 4-7.

prefers the term "coalition" to explain evangelical grouping, arguing that the boundaries used to define evangelicalism changed over time.[7]

As noted above, the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942 gave this new coalition of evangelicals important impetus and definition.[8] At its second gathering, in 1943, interim president Harold Ockenga delivered his presidential address, titled "Christ for America." This speech expressed concerns for evangelical unity while vividly portraying what evangelicals viewed as the downfall of America.[9] Ockenga was convinced that "the United States of America has been assigned a destiny comparable to that of ancient Israel." An essential part of that destiny was his belief that America was called to evangelize the rest of the world, a calling which the nation had so far failed to complete. He saw two paths—one led back "to the Dark Ages of heathendom," but the other led to the "rescue of western civilization by a… revival of evangelical Christianity."[10]

Ockenga and others at the conference viewed the National Association of Evangelicals as a vital force that would unite evangelicals in their quest to rebuild a better world. Within five years the NAE had nearly a million members and had spawned many collaborative ventures that gave evangelicals a place to find group support and identification, such as the National Religious Broadcasters, the Evangelical Theological

---

[7] Ibid., 4-7.

[8] Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16-17; Charles E. Van Engen, "A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946-1986," in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 208-209.

[9] Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

[10] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 149.

Society, the Evangelical Press Association, and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association. It also served as a "convener, catalyst, and confidence-builder," in the words of historian Joel Carpenter for evangelical groups like Youth for Christ, *Christianity Today*, Wheaton College, Fuller Theological Seminary, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.[11] These groups would begin to form a powerful cultural, theological, and political identity for those who embraced evangelicalism over the coming years.

The magazine *Christianity Today* in particular attempted to create a positive culture of evangelical Christianity, differentiating itself carefully from what it saw as the perversions of theological liberalism and the reactionary separatism of fundamentalism. Carl F.H. Henry was the first editor of *Christianity Today*, and is aptly described by Jon Stone as a man "whose pen seemed to never run dry."[12] Henry stated *Christianity Today's* motivations clearly in an editorial titled "Why 'Christianity Today'?" in the first issue of the magazine from October 15, 1956. He began the article with this: "Christianity Today has its origin in a deepfelt desire to express historical Christianity to the present generation. Neglected, slighted, misrepresented—evangelical Christianity needs a clear voice, to speak with conviction and love, and to state its true position and its relevance to the world crisis."[13] From this positive statement of direction, he quickly turned to differentiating the magazine from those on the left stating, "Theological Liberalism has failed to meet the moral and spiritual needs of the people." Henry then

---

[11] Ibid., 147-150, cited in David R. Swartz, "Left Behind: The Evangelical Left and the Limits of Evangelical Politics, 1965-1988," (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008), 14.

[12] Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 154.

[13] Carl Henry, "Why 'Christianity Today'?," *Christianity Today*, 15 October 1956, 20-21.

distinguished between the evangelicals behind *Christianity Today* and fundamentalists on the right by declaring the magazine's desire to connect biblical Christianity with every aspect of life and "the contemporary social crisis," which he pointed out is something that "Fundamentalism has often failed to do."[14] Unlike fundamentalists, evangelicals wanted to act in the world rather than withdrawing from it. *Christianity Today* would continue to carefully delineate differences between itself and theological dissenters on both the left and right throughout the ensuing years, marking a political, theological, and cultural space for what they considered to be true evangelicals.

The editors of *Christianity Today* also embraced political discussion from its inception. This seemed to be one of the areas that the magazine was reclaiming for biblical evaluation, left behind by the separatist fundamentalists. They affirmed their anti-communist sentiments and jumped into the international political fray with another article by Carl Henry in the first issue titled, "The Fragility of Freedom in the West." Here Henry began by saying, "The west distinguishes itself from the Soviet bloc especially as the champion of human freedoms. In contrast with the totalitarian enslavement of man, and the disregard for human dignity and rights in the Soviet sphere…"[15] In this and many other early articles it is clear that the Cold War shaped these evangelical writers in much the same way that it shaped public opinion throughout the U.S. during this time. Anti-communism was a given for conservative, orthodox Protestants; Billy Graham's evangelistic revivals not only called people to individual repentance—he also decried communists at nearly every turn, often arguing that the

---

[14] Ibid., 20-21.

[15] Carl Henry, "The Fragility of Freedom in the West," *Christianity Today*, 15 October 1956, 8-11, 17-18.

"American government was engaged in the work of the Lord when it opposed the Soviet Union."[16] Evangelical writers for *Christianity Today* definitely fit within the same mold. The magazine would continue to engage in political discussion about both global and national politics throughout the coming years, and become even more overtly political along with other conservative evangelicals by the 1970s and 1980s.

While many evangelical readers quickly embraced *Christianity Today*, some readers questioned the magazine's relevance and importance. Early letters to the editor questioning the magazine's relevance raised a variety of challenges. One reader seemed to take issue with the naming of the magazine, arguing that if *Christianity Today's* version of Christianity differed from the Christianity of the apostles in A.D. 30, he had no use for it. Another reader stated, "A good five cent cigar would do as much good for the politico-economic situation in the U.S. as your proposed . . . *Christianity Today* will do for the kingdom of God…" He went on to note that he would be praying that God would frustrate their plans.[17] Another letter to the editor accused the new magazine of intellectual dishonesty and said, "Why do you fundamentalist-literalists feel that you and everyone else must swallow a rotten egg every morning before breakfast in order to prove religious faith?"[18]

Christianity Today soon found their target audience, however, and started receiving a stream of more congratulatory letters. Some simply noted their admiration, while others commented on specific issues they wanted to hear the editors of the

---

[16] Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

[17] Frances Lincoln Cook, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 15 October 1956, 36; H. D. Hammer, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 15 October 1956, 36.

[18] David D. Paul, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 26 November 1956, 17.

magazine write about for their edification. One letter seemed to echo the sentiments of the editors themselves when the writer called the magazine, "A welcome corrective to the idea that true conservatism is obscurantism…. Hand in hand with the upsurge in Biblical evangelism, your periodical will contribute to a renewed and scholarly orthodoxy."[19]

Christianity Today and the multitude of other evangelical organizations that arose in the 1940s and 1950s began to create a newly cohesive evangelical cultural identity. These institutions united them around specific theological and political ideas, and also contributed to an emerging group identity. The magazine created a space in its pages where evangelicals could connect with other believers and become part of a larger evangelical movement. With the growing strength of *Christianity Today* and other like-minded publications and organizations, historians can begin to speak of a coherent evangelical cultural outlook in the post-war United States. Evangelicals not only held similar beliefs, but they also read the same magazines, attended evangelical schools and seminaries, went to conferences together, and listened to the same radio programs.

Part of the growing evangelical culture was a renewed focus on missions. The growth of the evangelical missionary force was part of a major shift in missions during the 20th century. Mainline denominations accounted for sixty percent of North American Protestant missionaries during the 1930s. But conservative evangelicals slowly caught up with their more liberal counterparts and by the early 1950s approximately half of North America's 18,500 foreign missionaries were from mainline denominations and half were from conservative evangelical groups. This slow trend rapidly accelerated in the following years and by 1980 over ninety percent of North American Protestant

[19] Elvin L. Clark, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 26 November 1956, 17.

missionaries were conservative evangelicals.[20] Part of this substantial shift came from declining numbers of mainline Protestant missionaries, due to a waning interest in evangelism in the wake of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the early 20th century. As mainline Protestants questioned the exclusivity of Christian faith, it became harder to recruit missionaries to travel around the world converting others to Christianity. At the same time, evangelical missions experienced dramatic growth. Reinvigorating missions was part of the unifying vision of new evangelical organizations. When mainline denominations added social concerns to missions, evangelical scholar and future *Christianity Today* editor, Harold Lindsell, clarified that for evangelicals the essential goal of missions was simply the salvation of individual souls.[21] Lindsell's statement was part of a larger evangelical movement reasserting the importance of evangelism as it waned among mainline Protestants. The National Association of Evangelicals, *Christianity Today*, the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, and others united followers around the goal of proselytizing the world. Fuller Seminary opened its doors in 1947 and was developed specifically to train young evangelicals in missions and evangelism. Charles E. Fuller, a famous radio evangelist, was integral in this project and was joined by a variety of faculty pushing for a "new age of evangelicalism," including

---

[20] Robert T. Coote, "The Uneven Growth of Conservative Evangelical Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6:3 (1982): 118-123; Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), xii-xiv.

[21] Harold Lindsell, *Missionary Practice and Principles* (Westwood, NJ: Revell Books, 1955); Harold Lindsell, "Fundamentals for a Philosophy of the Christian Mission," in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), cited in Charles E. Van Engen, "A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946-1986," in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 210.

two future editors of *Christianity Today*, Carl Henry and Harold Lindsell.[22] Fuller Seminary would quickly become one of the most powerful driving forces in the explosive growth of evangelical missions after World War II.

The missionaries who would eventually become the radicalized missionaries that are the subject of this study grew up within this evangelical subculture as well, and learned how to be evangelical Christians within these institutions and organizations. Most of the missionaries in this study grew up in Protestant Christian, and often evangelical, families. Of those who did not, they often had their first experiences with evangelicalism as children visiting or attending evangelical churches with other families. Like other children in these settings, they acquired their conceptions of missionaries and missionary life through a wide variety of forms and experiences in the evangelical world. They completed Sunday school lessons, listened to sermons, and heard presentations from missionaries home on furlough in churches around the country along with millions of other evangelicals.

While the sources of the message about missionaries varied widely, the significance was clear—as missionary Irene Foulkes said of the message she received from her evangelical youth group, "Mission work was the ultimate step in consecrating your life to God."[23] Most of the missionaries that I interviewed mentioned feeling similar sentiments as children and young adults, though they came to this understanding via different experiences. John Stam came from a missionary family. His uncle and aunt, John and Betty Stam, were two of the most famous missionary martyrs of the first half of

---

[22] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987); Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 194-195.

[23] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

the twentieth century. They were killed in China in 1934 and evangelicals in the United States heard the story repeated in their churches for many years.[24] John's future wife, Doris Emanuelson, specifically mentioned reading *The Triumph of John and Betty Stam* as a teenager after finding the book in her church's library.[25] John's father was also president of the board of the Latin America Mission, with whom John and Doris would later become missionaries themselves. This meant that John was essentially born into an understanding of the importance of ministry and missions within evangelical Christianity. John's grandfather established the Star of Hope Mission in Paterson, New Jersey and another of his uncles was a missionary in Africa. His family's deep connection to missions meant that missionaries continually stayed at their house while on furlough or just traveling through. He also traveled to Central and South America with his father when he was in high school, visiting missionaries in several countries throughout the region. Thus, from an early age, John intimately understood the role of missionaries within his faith tradition and began modeling missionary work and preaching from an early age.[26]

Other missionaries I interviewed had similar experiences, even if they were not always surrounded by missionaries growing up. Irene Foulkes grew up in a Presbyterian church, but actually got much of her education about missionaries through her involvement in fundamentalist youth groups that she joined in high school.[27] Like

---

[24] Joel A. Carpenter, ed., *Sacrificial Lives: Young Martyrs and Fundamentalist Idealism* (New York: Garland, 1988). In the introduction Carpenter notes that the first printing of *The Triumph of John and Betty Stam* was 60,000 copies.

[25] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[26] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

[27] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

several others in this study, Lynn Baker recalled missionaries staying at her house quite often during her childhood because her parents were on the church's missions committee. She remembered being fascinated by missionaries as a child because, in her words, they seemed somehow more "alive" to her. Lynn also recalled being deeply affected as a young person when she heard the famous Romanian anti-Communist missionary, Richard Wurmbrand, speak about his life. After hearing him speak she sent twenty dollars to buy Bibles in Romania, a significant amount of money in her childhood.[28] Mark Baker commented in our conversations that he grew up "fully within the evangelical fold." His father studied at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana and was a pastor for the first few years of Mark's life before starting to work with the Christian Service Brigade, an evangelical version of the Boy Scouts. His parents also had close friends who were missionaries in Africa while he was growing up. The church he grew up in had church services on Sunday night as well as Sunday morning. These evening church services were sometimes even more missions focused, and whenever missionaries were traveling through they would show pictures or slides and talk about their work as missionaries.[29] It was in intimate settings like these where many evangelical children first glimpsed missionaries' lives among the "natives" of foreign lands.

Missionaries speaking in churches about their experiences in the mission field served multiple roles among evangelicals. It primarily functioned as a way for missionaries to raise and maintain financial support from churches to cover their living expenses. This was only essential for some missionaries however. Others were supported by a larger missions organization or their denomination's hierarchy and were

[28] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

[29] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

not really tied to raising support from individual churches. Speaking at churches played other important roles as well. It tied church members in the U.S. to a larger evangelistic movement spread around the world. Church members were able to join in the work of evangelizing the world through their financial donations. It also gave many church members glimpses of "exotic, far-away lands" and people very different from themselves.

Missionaries' presentations to U.S. church members took many forms, from magazine articles in evangelical publications and missions organizations' magazines, to monthly support letters that they sent to their financial supporters updating them on their work as missionaries, to presentations in churches. Missionaries' presentations in churches often provided the most vivid interaction for church members with their seemingly exotic lives and is an excellent place to view how a missionary narrative was created.

The missionary narrative among evangelicals often portrayed heroic Christian men and women giving up modern conveniences and a comfortable life in the U.S. to go and evangelize among savage, dangerous, and uncivilized people in foreign lands. The more stark the contrast between the comforts of living in the United States and the deprivations of missionary life, the more they seemed to grab the attention and support of church members in the United States. Missionaries sometimes utilized this narrative in letters, books, and presentations to churches. For their presentations they would often dress in the traditional fashion of the countries where they worked; difference from the American mainstream was the important element in this sense. Some missionaries even brought groups of "natives" with them to travel around to churches in the U.S. These

presentations often included tribal dances, followed by the "natives'" testimonies of conversion. These dramatic displays were quite different from the usual church experience for attendees and often produced vivid memories for children, giving them their first glimpse of what it meant to be a missionary, living in an exotic country, and converting "lost souls" to Christianity. Their presentations also affirmed their mission to the world, allowing evangelicals to see and learn from other cultures on their own terms. It confirmed to them U.S. Protestant Christianity as a benevolent power, swaying foreigners to the truthful way.

Another important element of the missionary narrative was the possibility of martyrdom, or dying for one's religious convictions. Martyrdom has played an important role throughout Christian history as the ultimate test of one's faith, and martyrs were remembered and revered for their commitment and dedication, even to the point of death. Martyrs provided a very different component of the missionary narrative than presentations of converted "natives" in churches. Martyrs were created by violent and "dangerous" resistance of "savages" in their refusal of Christianity. The more savage and brutal the attack on their missionaries, the more convinced evangelicals were of the necessity of their civilizing religious mission.

There are many examples of martyrs throughout Christian history, but some of the most prominent martyrs were missionaries. John Stam's uncle and aunt, who were killed in China in 1934, were two of the early 20th century's most well known martyrs.[30] But the most famous Christian martyrs of the century were undoubtedly the "Auca martyrs,"

---

[30] John and Betty Stam were missionaries with the China Inland Mission and were killed in China in 1934. Several books were written about their martyrdom, including Mary Geraldine Taylor's (Mrs. Howard Taylor), *The Triumph of John and Betty Stam* (Philadelphia: The China Inland Mission, 1935).

five Christian men killed in 1956 by the Huaorani in the Ecuadorian jungle.[31] These five men made contact with the Huaorani on January 6, 1956 and took the first pictures of Huaorani people on their own territory. Thought of as savage and primitive, the Huaorani were allegedly entirely disconnected from the surrounding world. Two days later, several Huaorani people killed the five missionaries, sending shockwaves through the U.S. evangelical community. The story was covered in secular U.S. publications such as *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*.[32] A widow of one of the victims, Elisabeth Elliot, wrote a best-selling book-length account of the "Auca martyrs," and spent years speaking to evangelicals around the U.S. about her husband's martyrdom. She eventually returned to live with the Huaorani herself as a missionary. Elliot's telling of the "Auca martyrs" story shaped the way that evangelicals in the U.S. understood the specific story and missionary sacrifice in general, and also contributed to an increasingly vivid missionary narrative.[33]

Elisabeth Elliot proactively shaped how evangelicals in the U.S. heard and interpreted the tragic story. In the first several months after the five missionaries' deaths, Elliot even attempted to join larger debates outside of evangelical circles over how to interpret the "Auca martyrs." *Time* magazine's article in January 1956 cast the missionaries as heroic Americans sacrificing their lives to save the savage Aucas who, it

---

[31] Many in the U.S. adopted the neighboring Quechua Indians pejorative term for the Huaorani, "auca," which means enemy in Quechua.

[32] "'Go Ye and Preach the Gospel': Five Do and Die," *Life*, 30 January 1956, 10-19; "Ecuador: Mission to the Aucas," *Time*, 23 January 1956; Abe C. Van Der Puy, "Through Gates of Splendor," *Reader's Digest*, August 1956, 71.

[33] Elisabeth Elliot, "The Prayer of the Five Widows," *Christianity Today*, 7 January 1957, 6-8; "Mrs. Elliot, Miss Saint Report from Auca Huts," *Christianity Today*, 10 November 1958, 27; "Three Years After Slayings – Auca Witness Renewed," *Christianity Today*, 5 January 1959, 25.

noted, one scientist had called "the worst people on earth."[34] Not all readers agreed: a few issues later *Time* printed several letters arguing that readers should think about the story from the Indians' point of view and that Americans should "improve our own country and stay out of the jungles of Ecuador."[35] A month later, a letter to the editor from Elisabeth Elliot in Shandia, Ecuador appeared and she rebutted the letter critical of the missionaries and gave a succinct explanation of why they felt called to preach the gospel.

> "Why go into Auca territory?" I answer in the words my husband wrote in his last letter to his parents: "Ours is to preach the gospel to every creature . . ." Mr. Leas is sure that the Lord must be interested in the Aucas "just as they are." God is interested in all mankind just as he is—so interested, in fact, that He sent His Son to die for him. The only trouble is that the Auca doesn't know that yet. The five men intended that they should. "Stay out of the jungles of Ecuador?" Not until every creature has had the chance to hear. I, for one, am staying.[36]

Her resolve to stay and share the gospel with the people who had killed her husband surely confounded many Americans, but it also served as inspiration and confirmation of the missionary narrative to many evangelicals.

The death of these five missionaries in 1956 came in the midst of renewed fervor among conservative evangelicals for foreign missions. In fact, the number of North American conservative evangelicals serving as career missionaries doubled from 9,216 in 1953 to 18,724 in 1960.[37] Several of the missionaries in this study were part of this boom. John and Doris Stam and Dick and Irene Foulkes began their missionary careers

---

[34] "Ecuador: Mission to the Aucas," *Time*, 23 January 1956.

[35] Inez Ware, letter to the editor, *Time*, 13 February 1956; David P. Leas, letter to the editor, *Time*, 13 February 1956.

[36] Elisabeth Elliot, letter to the editor, *Time*, 12 March 1956.

[37] Robert T. Coote, "The Uneven Growth of Conservative Evangelical Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6:3 (1982): 118-123.

in the mid-1950s. Others were deeply affected by the expanding influence of missions within evangelical churches they were growing up in. Pastors and Sunday school teachers used this vivid example of missionary sacrifice to demonstrate one powerful component of what it meant to be an evangelical Christian—missionaries were held up as exemplary people carrying the word of God, saving souls, and living amidst dangerous, exotic "otherness." Missionaries that those churches supported would also return and tell their stories of sacrifice and experiences with foreign, mysterious people around the globe.

Becoming a missionary was seen as the ultimate sacrifice, a dedication of one's life to Christianity and to poor, unconverted souls in remote parts of the world. Many appeals to missionary life were explicit about the deprivations attached to such a calling—missionaries lived far away from their families and friends in the United States, left behind the comforts of home, and went to live among people who were thought to be dangerous, ignorant, and frightening. Whether they worked boldly but quietly in a communist country or survived among "primitive" indigenous groups, missionaries were seen as those who had sacrificed their earthly aspirations in dedication to God and saving lost souls. Missionary biographies lauded the willingness and boldness of missionaries throughout the years with titles such as "No Guarantee but God," "A God-Filled Life," "Their Kind of Courage," and "By Life or By Death."[38] Stories about these missionaries

---

[38] Edward Erny and Esther Erny, *No Guarantee but God: The Story of the Founders of the Oriental Missionary Society* (Greenwood, IN: Oriental Missionary Society, 1969); Beth M. Lindberg, *A God-Filled Life: The Story of William Eugene Blackstone* (American Messianic Fellowship, 1952); Goldie M. Down, *Their Kind of Courage: Biography of Lily and Ethelbert Thorpe Pioneer Missionaries to The Islands* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973); James C. Hefley, *By Life or by Death: The Dramatic Story of the Valiant Missionary Martyrs Who Have Lived and Died for Christ in War-Torn Viet Nam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969).

inspired evangelicals at home in the United States as they saw Christians living up to the Great Commission from the Bible to go and evangelize to the whole world.[39]

Another vital component of the missionary narrative was the belief that God personally called individual people to be missionaries. Within evangelical groups ministers and Sunday school teachers often exhorted listeners to be open to becoming missionaries. As scholar Jeffrey Swanson notes, evangelicals generally recognized two kinds of calling. One is a general calling that all evangelicals should proselytize to other people. The other is a more specific calling, being singled out by God for a religious career of evangelism. He elaborates further on the nature of missionary calling, noting that in his interviews with missionaries, they often told him about "recoiling in fear from the calling, yet feeling irresistibly attracted to it," and they often invoked themes of sacrifice, strangerhood, and the imitation of Christ even to the point of death.[40]

Many of the missionaries I interviewed also spoke of the experience of feeling personally called to preach the gospel in foreign lands. For some the experience of "calling" was a distinct spiritual experience in which they committed their lives to Christian ministry. For others it was a more vague, but still quite powerful, belief that they should be involved in missionary work. Rick and Janice Waldrop both felt a calling to missions at young ages, before they were married. Rick described the experience this way: "At 10 years of age, I sensed a specific calling to missions, as I understood it. But I

---

[39] The Great Commission comes from Matthew 28:16-20 (New International Version): "[16] Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. [17] When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. [18] Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

[40] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 68, 87-88.

didn't have any real personal contact with people that were doing it, I just had this kind of image of, there were missionaries out there preaching. I had one of those mystical, spiritual kinds of experiences in the Pentecostal worship service, which I felt were clearly, strongly, that God was speaking to me."[41] Growing up in a Pentecostal denomination, he was surrounded by charismatic displays of spiritual experiences in church. Seeing people in his church engaged in physically manifested spiritual experiences gave Rick some idea of how to interpret his mystical experience of God speaking to him. He had been prepared through the ubiquitous culture of missionary stories to understand that was something he might be called to, despite his lack of personal connection with actual missionaries.

Other future missionaries grew up with more intimate connections to people involved in missions. John Stam, despite his wealth of connections to missionaries through his father's work with the Latin America Mission, originally wanted to be an historian rather than a missionary. However, his childhood was filled with modeling the preaching and public Christian teaching that surrounded him. When he was nine or ten years old, he formed the Joy Club, in which, he said later, he was imitating his grandfather's Star of Hope Gospel Mission.[42] John was the vice president and minister of the Joy Club and several documents in his files show that he held meetings almost every night of the week: an evening prayer meeting on Mondays, a Bible class on Tuesdays, an art class on Wednesdays, a time for testimony and singing on Thursdays, and a missionary meeting on Saturdays ("In remembrance of our missionarys [sic].")[43] When I

---

[41] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

[42] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 9 February 2008.

asked him about it in an interview, he even remembered the motto, "Bring your Bible, bring a friend—admission is free, but offering is welcome." Eventually however, John said, "I lost interest in the Joy Club and I spent the collected offerings on sports cards." When his mother found out about the misappropriated funds, that was the end of the Joy Club.[44] John started several clubs like the Joy Club throughout his childhood, shaped by his child-like understandings of the missionaries and their ministries that filled his life. However, he maintained that he wanted to be an historian until he took a class at Wheaton College and wrote a term paper on the epistemology of Saint Augustine. John said that the experience of exploring the religious thinker's theology in depth, "moved me, it shook me, and by the end of it I was called to the ministry."[45]

John also mentioned an experience a few years later when he was in graduate school and his father invited him to come listen to Kenneth Strachan (the president of the Latin America Mission) and Anton Marco (a missionary with the organization) speak about their experiences. This experience contained some of the mystical, emotional elements of a "calling" for John; he said the event, "moved me tremendously, and actually I had to leave to just keep from weeping in public, it was a shattering experience with God. Never really doubted it…"[46] John's experience revealed some of the layers of a "calling" to missions. It was both familial and communal, and often combined with an intense individual spiritual experience that led people to become missionaries.

---

[43] John Stam, "Joy Club Meetings," in John Stam's personal archives, Box 1, Folder 2, "Familia Stam."

[44] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 9 February 2008.

[45] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

[46] Ibid.

As mentioned earlier, Doris Stam grew up learning about and admiring missionaries. By the time she entered Wheaton College she seemed destined for missionary life. Her only remaining question was where she would go; she was aiming for the most exotic, far-away place she could find. Her "calling," however, was a bit more humorous. At a Christian youth camp in the mountains of Pennsylvania, at the summer's final campfire, the preacher gave an invitation to the children. Invitations were a common part of evangelical life; at the end of their sermons preachers would invite listeners to come forward to the altar and either become a Christian for the first time or renew their vows to Christianity. Sometimes these "altar calls" from ministers focused on more specific elements of Christian life: committing one's life to missions, renewing one's commitment to read the Bible regularly, praying more frequently, or focusing on a particularly problematic area of one's life. At this particular campfire invitation, Doris had not been paying full attention to the preacher, as she was busy whispering with one of her friends. When the preacher invited the children to come to the altar, Doris turned to her friend and asked what he had said, and her friend said that the preacher told them to come forward if you wanted to "get right with your mother." This sparked Doris's interest as she had been having some conflict with her mother and she only realized as she was walking towards the front that he had actually said to come forward if you wanted to go to the mission field.[47] This humorous moment remained important for Doris though. She still remembers it as the moment that she committed her life to missions. The distinct difference between her "calling" and John's revealed how diverse experiences of "calling" could be and still remain as important mobilizing moments in missionaries' minds.

[47] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

Amzie and Elena Yoder grew up in the Amish church in northern Indiana during the 1940s and 1950s. The Amish are a conservative subgroup of the Mennonites who maintain distinctive dress, do not drive cars, and have no electricity in their homes. They often live in Amish communities and maintain deep community connections, considering themselves separate from society at large. Most Amish churches were not missions-oriented, but Amzie and Elena both felt drawn to missions at an early age. Elena noted that she felt her "calling" during her first year of high school. Amzie described his experience of feeling "called" at the age of seventeen, on the day he was baptized: "I remember very much, I was desperate to have complete inner peace, and I finally said to God in my mind that I would do anything with my life, if God would lead me…. See, I had other ideas about what I was going to do in life, and I immediately got the sense that God wanted me to commit myself to full time service – I had no idea what that meant, or where or anything, at the time I was baptized."[48] Without knowing exactly what it meant, Amzie felt "called" and still remembers this as a mobilizing moment in his life. He and Elena were actually baptized on the same day by neighboring Amish communities in northern Indiana; she in a barn and he in a tool shed.[49]

These individual experiences of "calling" were important moments for each of these missionaries. Years later as they looked back over their decisions and choices, their sense of "calling" became the foundation for the life narratives they shaped for themselves, their families, and their sending congregations. Their individual narratives maintain some similarities to the larger missionary narrative that was dominant within the U.S. evangelical church. A distinct sense of calling to the mission field was one of the

---

[48] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

[49] Ibid.

important markers that placed them within that dominant narrative. In many of the great missionary stories that they grew up hearing, each missionary's sense of calling was important for the trials and tribulations that they would face through the years. But each of these missionaries would undergo changes through their interactions with people in Central America that would divert them from traditional missionary expectations, bringing the "good news" to exotic and dangerous people in uncivilized regions of the world. While their sense of calling was one of the ways that they matched the dominant missionary narrative, they would eventually find they diverged significantly from the expected trajectory of missionary life.

These missionaries' stories of growing up with varying degrees of interaction with and focus on missionaries in their churches and homes also reveal a significant way that evangelicals in the U.S. connected with the rest of the world. When most of these missionaries were growing up from the 1940s through the 1960s, much of evangelicals' perception of the world beyond their local communities came through missionary stories, their monthly letters about their work in various countries, and their presentations in churches. This unique vision of the world included some element of global awareness, in that evangelicals often knew individual people from their churches living in various countries around the world, but it was often a somewhat distorted picture as well. Missionaries would sometimes present the most foreign or exotic aspects of the people they worked with in order to attract interest to their work and subsequently raise funds for their ministries. It was also a mediated view of the world for evangelicals in the U.S., as they almost always heard about these regions of the world through one of their own.

Only rarely did they actually meet people from those places, and when they did it was usually someone who had converted to their brand of Christianity.

Some of the missionaries I interviewed mentioned increased global awareness that came through experiences with missionaries and shorter missions trips they were able to take as young people. Like many of these future missionaries, John Stam gained awareness of other countries around the world through the many missionaries that came to his church and stayed in his home as he was growing up. Since John's father was president of the board of the Latin America Mission, he was able to travel through Latin America as well. When he was in high school he traveled with his father to Costa Rica and Colombia.[50] This shaped John's perspective of the world, and gave him a bit of actual experience in another country, something rare at that time even among future missionaries. Dennis Smith, who grew up in a Conservative Baptist church during the 1950s and 1960s, was also able to travel with short-term missions groups in high school. He came from a very conservative church that held conferences every year to examine how news headlines from the past year were fulfilling biblical prophecy of the end of the world. His experiences in short-term missions changed his life. He said that these experiences gave him the opportunity to encounter people from other cultures and different social and economic strata. Not only did this give him a sense of growing up as part of a global community, but he also credited these experiences with forcing him to begin to ask questions about their different life circumstances that would eventually prepare him for more significant radicalization.[51]

---

[50] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 9 February 2008.

[51] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

Most of the missionaries in this study were not able to travel as much as John Stam or Dennis Smith though. Much of their perception of the rest of the world was shaped by missionaries visiting their churches and talking about their experiences in other countries. Thus, the missionary narrative deeply affected each of these future missionaries. It created a vision of what missionary life would be like, living amongst natives of exotic lands, converting them to Christianity. But this vision would change quite dramatically for each of them as they started their lives in missions, moving to countries throughout the Central American region.

CHAPTER 3

COMING TO CENTRAL AMERICA

Once evangelicals in the U.S. decided to become missionaries, they faced many important decisions. They had to choose what missions organization they should join and figure out where they should go. These were complicated decisions for many missionaries and based on a multitude of criteria. Some missionaries sensed a special calling from God to go to a specific region or country. Others chose a place they had been previously and to which they wanted to return. At times the missions organization they joined dictated the decision. Some people made these difficult choices deliberately over a long period of time, others simply signed up and went, seemingly without much thought about where they would spend the next years of their lives.

Each of the missionaries I interviewed spent a significant amount of time in Central America as missionaries. Some stayed in one Central American country for all of their years in missions; others moved around the region and eventually ended up returning to the United States or moved to Mexico or South America. But their lives were changed in Central America, sometimes living in Honduras and visiting El Salvador, sometimes living in a tiny town in rural Guatemala, sometimes visiting cities throughout the region teaching Bible courses to Central American people in Panama, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. The specific histories and contexts of each of these countries and individual communities shaped missionaries in unique ways. Missionaries also

helped shape the histories of each of these countries as they were part of long-standing U.S. economic, military, political, and religious influence in the region.

This chapter will begin by examining the Central American political context in which these missionaries were transformed. Then it will turn to some aspects of the religious contexts and the role of evangelical missionary growth within those settings. From there, readers will see missionaries' conceptions of Central America before they moved there and also how missions agencies oriented their new recruits as they traveled abroad. The chapter concludes with an investigation into how the missionaries in this study entered the mission field differently than many of their compatriots.

Central America as a region stretches from the southern border of Mexico to the northern border of Colombia. It includes seven countries: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. At various points throughout the last two hundred years, Belize and Panama have not been considered part of the region—when much of Latin America achieved independence from Spain in the early 1820s, Belize and Panama were not part of the newly formed Federal Republic of Central America.[1] Panama was a part of Colombia and thus originally joined a group of South American nations in forming Gran Colombia. It did not become a separate country until a U.S.-supported uprising in 1903. Belize, known then as British Honduras, remained under British control and did not gain full independence until 1981. It is also separated from the rest of the region at least in part by the fact that it still uses English as its official language. The Spanish language unites the rest of the region, although many indigenous groups and some people along the Caribbean speak other languages. Central America is quite diverse ecologically. Sometimes mountainous, sometimes flat, the entire region is

[1] The union was called the United Provinces of Central America when it was originally formed.

bordered by the Caribbean Sea on the east and the Pacific Ocean on the west. The region proclaimed independence from Spain in 1821, but would continue to see invasion and intervention from various countries, primarily the United States, throughout its history.[2]

The United States entered the imperialistic fray surrounding Central America in 1823 with the Monroe Doctrine, in which President James Monroe warned Europeans that any future attempts to colonize or interfere in the Americas would be seen as acts of aggression against the United States. This did not stop British investment in the region however, and many countries in Central America quickly found themselves heavily indebted to Great Britain. The U.S. signed a treaty with Colombia in 1846 gaining the right to build a canal across Panama, which was only the beginning of a series of canal-building attempts. Throughout the 1850s some U.S. citizens considered Central America to be their property to claim. A series of "filibusterers" or private adventurers attempted to control various parts of Central America throughout these years, the most famous being William Walker, who actually ruled Nicaragua between 1855 and 1857. In the end Walker's government was destroyed by another U.S. capitalist, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and the Honduran government executed Walker.[3] By the 1890s, North American investment in the region was rising rapidly and the U.S. government dedicated increasing attention to maintaining "friendly" governments throughout the region to sustain an advantageous business environment for American companies.

---

[2] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983); John E. Findling, *Close Neighbors, Distant Friends: United States-Central American Relations*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

[3] Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability, The United States and the Americas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991); Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 23-30; John E. Findling, *Close Neighbors, Distant Friends: United States-Central American Relations*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

20th century Nicaragua was shaped by several forces, including a U.S. military occupation that lasted from 1912-1933. The United States established a military institution called the *Guardia Nacional* and, with the recommendation of the U.S. minister to Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza was named the *Jefe Director* of the *Guardia Nacional* in 1933. Somoza became the president of Nicaragua in 1937 and he and his sons ruled until 1979.[4] During their long despotic rule, the Somozas continually enriched themselves at the expense of the Nicaraguan people, and by the early 1970s many Nicaraguans were beginning to oppose the regime. An earthquake on December 23, 1972 destroyed much of Managua and Anastasio Somoza stole massive amounts of the foreign aid that flowed in to help Nicaragua recover from the disaster. This blatant corruption in the face of Nicaraguan devastation prompted many citizens to join ranks in the coming years to oppose Somoza.

In 1978, Somoza unified the gathering forces against him by assassinating Joaquín Chamorro, publisher of a conservative opposition newspaper. A growing coalition of anti-Somoza groups, including peasants, students, middle class women, working class families, and Catholic church clergy and congregants influenced by liberation theology formed a broad political party called the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which finally overthrew Somoza's government in July 1979. The Sandinistas had the support of much of the country as they attempted to create a more equitable society, increasing access to education and health care, redistributing land, and supporting women's rights, among many other social reforms. The Sandinistas

---

[4] Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 4, 267; Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Anupama Gopal Mande, "The Somoza Regime: Internal Dynamics of Nicaraguan Politics, 1933-1979," (M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1994), 13-14; "Nicaragua: I'm the Champ," *Time* 15 November 1948.

were deeply religious, many of them were devout Catholics. They demonstrated to the world (including Fidel Castro) that radical Christianity and revolution were not incompatible. Their focus on social justice often sprang from their religious beliefs.

U.S. leaders viewed the situation differently however and soon came to believe that the Sandinistas were socialists and a dangerous element in the region. They cut off aid to Nicaragua and began funding and training a counterrevolutionary military force based in Honduras and northern Costa Rica called the Contras. With funding from the Reagan administration, the Contras continually attacked the Sandinistas and terrorized the civilian population, forcing them to spend increasing amounts of Nicaragua's budget on defense and taking much needed resources away from their social programs. The Sandinistas won elections held in 1984, but Violeta Chamorro and the National Opposition Union defeated the Sandinistas in the 1990 election and took power, effectively ending the standoff between the Contras and the Sandinistas.[5]

Nicaraguans' years of suffering under an oppressive regime that culminated in a powerful revolutionary excitement as they worked to build a more just society contrasted starkly with Guatemala. Missionaries living amidst the enthusiasm of experimenting with social justice along with a revolutionary government attempting to enact many of the same goals produced a completely different set of radicalizing circumstances than living amidst continuing violence in Guatemala.

Early 20th century Guatemala was shaped by a string of dictators who opened the country to U.S. and other foreign investment. One of the most important companies to

---

[5] Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas* (Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987); Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Revolution & Counterrevolution in Nicaragua* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991); Thomas Walker, ed., *Nicaragua in Revolution*, (New York: Praeger, 1982).

enter the fray was the United Fruit Company, often referred to as "the Octopus" in Central America because its tentacles spread around the world and reached deep into many aspects of the Central American economy. United Fruit formed as a merger between the Boston Fruit Company and a company that built railroads in Central America in 1899. They quickly gained holdings throughout Central America and the Caribbean, but their most substantial investment was in Guatemala. In 1904, the leader of Guatemala granted United Fruit the right to construct and operate the country's principal rail line. By the 1930s United Fruit was not only the largest employer and exporter in the country; it also owned more land than any other business in Guatemala. In 1936 Guatemalan dictator Jorge Ubico allowed the corporation to open another massive plantation on the Pacific coast with substantial concessions: duty-free imports, guarantees of low wages for workers, and total exemption from Guatemalan taxation.[6] The company had capitalized at $20 million when it was formed in 1899. By 1920 its worth had risen to $150 million and by 1950 it reported an annual profit of more than $65 million—more than double the annual revenues of the entire Guatemalan government.[7]

In 1944, revolutionaries overthrew the Ubico dictatorship and initiated Guatemala's "democratic spring." The following year, Guatemalans elected Juan José Arévalo, a university professor who focused on bringing social reforms to the impoverished country. In 1951, Guatemalans elected Jacobo Árbenz, who promised to bring much needed agrarian reform to a country in which two percent of the population owned 72 percent of the land. Agrarian reform was adopted in 1952 and before long the

---

[6] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2005, originally published in 1982), 70.

[7] Richard Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1982), 73.

Guatemalan government began to expropriate some of the United Fruit Company's holdings. By that time United Fruit owned approximately 550,000 acres of land in Guatemala, much of which was uncultivated. In fact, in 1953, 85 percent of the company's land was unused. The government only expropriated unused land and redistributed it to Guatemalan farmers.[8]

The expropriation of some of their holdings in Guatemala greatly angered the United Fruit Company and agrarian reform played into the United States' Cold War fears that Guatemala was under the control of communists. Partially due to United Fruit's powerful connections in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA Director Allen Dulles, both had ties to the company and the company employed several well connected lobbyists) and partially due to Cold War fears, the CIA financed the overthrow of Jacobo Árbenz and put Carlos Castillo Armas in power, who was much more amenable to U.S. interests in the region. The aftermath of this coup was a thirty-six year civil war. A long line of repressive leaders rolled back Árbenz's land reform program and brutally repressed impoverished families who attempted to hold onto their newly acquired land. Indigenous guerillas battled the government throughout this era. During the height of the conflicts, the Guatemalan army razed more than four hundred indigenous communities and horrifically murdered over one hundred thousand people. Over a million indigenous people became refugees. By the time the war ended in 1996, Guatemalan military and paramilitary groups had killed at least two hundred thousand people, "disappeared" forty thousand more, and tortured an unknown number of others. Some of the most vicious repression occurred under

---

[8] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2005, originally published in 1982), 38, 75.

Guatemala's first evangelical Protestant president, Efraín Ríos Montt.[9] Guatemala continues to live with the enduring legacy of the tragic war and many indigenous people still only survive as second-class citizens.

The horrifying atrocities of a thirty-six year civil war traumatized the Guatemalan population and many missionaries living there witnessed this suffering directly. Neighboring El Salvador endured a similar history, as guerrillas and repressive dictatorships scorched much of the countryside. U.S. involvement in both countries exacerbated the terrible violence.

El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. 20th century El Salvador has been shaped by appalling violence. One of the most infamous moments in Salvadoran history was La Matanza ("the slaughter") in 1932. A communist leader named Farabundo Martí led a peasant revolt demanding land reform and the military government responded by killing some 30,000 people throughout the country. This bloody massacre would live on in the memory of Salvadorans throughout the century. Over the years various groups attempted to put more progressive leaders in power, but the military continually regained control and reinforced repressive measures. The situation worsened in the late 1970s as guerilla movements challenged military control and the military turned to utilizing death squads and other vicious counterrevolutionary tactics. During the 1970s and 1980s the oligarchy printed statements in national newspapers, harkening back to the massacre of 1932, stating that

---

[9] Richard Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1982); Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2005, originally published in 1982); Victor Perera, *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991); Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

something like La Matanza "might be necessary again."[10] In 1980, five guerilla groups formed the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and civil war raged throughout the country until the FMLN and the government signed peace accords in 1992. The twelve-year civil war claimed the lives of some 70,000 people and witnessed atrocious repression through death squads.[11]

Missionaries living in and visiting El Salvador witnessed some small part of the toll of violence and squalor of refugee camps endured by Salvadoran people. The country of Panama had a different feel for missionaries there due to the continuous and substantial presence of the U.S. military surrounding the Panama Canal.

Panama is the southernmost country in Central America. It achieved its independence from Colombia in 1903. In that year, Colombia opposed a treaty that would have granted the United States control over the area surrounding the future Panama Canal. In response, U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt embraced a Panamanian rebellion which achieved independence. The United States quickly granted diplomatic recognition. A French engineer who had been working on the Panama Canal project during the French effort, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, then negotiated the terms of a Panama Canal treaty with Secretary of State John Hay giving the United States perpetual sovereignty in a 10-mile strip of land in the center of Panama, later to be known as the Canal Zone. No Panamanians had been involved in writing or signing the treaty, but

---

[10] Phillip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 95, cited in Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41.

[11] Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution,* 2nd Edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995, originally published in 1982).

their dependence on U.S. diplomatic recognition (and protection from any potential Colombian attempts to put down the revolution) forced them to accept the treaty terms.[12]

According to the treaty, the Canal Zone was to be occupied by Americans in perpetuity. However, in the 1960s Panamanians began agitating to regain sovereignty over the 10-mile strip running across their country. In 1977, just two years before the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua, Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos and Jimmy Carter signed treaties which would grant Panama control of the canal on December 31, 1999.

The United States maintained a continuous military presence in Panama to protect the canal and also operated the infamous School of the Americas in the Canal Zone from 1949 to 1984, training many of the military and political leaders who would go on to become some of Latin America's most egregious human-rights violators. In December 1989, the United States invaded Panama, removing Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega, a former U.S. protégé turned nationalist, from power, claiming that it was protecting the lives of Americans in the Canal Zone.[13] In a rapid invasion the United States sent in thousands of soldiers and twenty-three lost their lives. The Panamanians did not fare nearly as well; estimates of how many Panamanians were killed ranged from five hundred to five thousand, including many civilians. After keeping the press away from

---

[12] Richard L. Lael, *Arrogant Diplomacy: U.S. Policy toward Colombia 1903-1922* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 1-24; Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 1-3; Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 53-54.

[13] Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 204-205; Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 250-259.

the fighting, the U.S. military claimed 100-200 Panamanian civilians had been killed, but eventually mass graves were found that suggested thousands of civilians were killed.[14]

While U.S. military presence in Panama lasted almost the entire 20th century, military incursions into Honduras were a bit more sporadic. However, the few instances of military involvement combined with significant economic ties made Honduras a volatile location for U.S. missionaries. Profound poverty in Honduras violated American missionaries' sense of justice and when the United States used Honduras for launching part of their attack on the Sandinistas in Nicaragua some missionaries felt they were in the middle of a battle zone.

Honduras was the original "Banana Republic" and shares borders with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Like Guatemala, it was the subject of significant U.S. investment and was essentially run by U.S. fruit companies during portions of its history. In 1892 bananas comprised eleven percent of Honduran exports, but by 1929 they were 84 percent.[15] American banana companies "bought up land, built railroads, established their own banking systems, and bribed government officials at a dizzying pace."[16] The United States has also used the country as a base for counterrevolutionary operations, such as during the 1954 CIA-led coup in Guatemala and again as the U.S.-supported Contras destabilized Nicaragua during the 1980s.[17] Honduran governments

---

[14] Marie Gottschalk, "Operation Desert Cloud: The Media and the Gulf War," *World Policy Journal* 9:3 (Summer 1992): 457-458.

[15] Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 9.

[16] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 43.

[17] Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

have frequently been an ally of both the U.S. government and U.S. business. During the early 1960s, Honduras drafted an agrarian reform law that threatened the holdings of the United Fruit Company, essentially warning large landowners that unless they started utilizing their uncultivated land they could potentially lose it. U.S. senators threatened to revoke U.S. aid to Honduras if the law was not amended and the U.S. ambassador in Honduras, Charles R. Burrows, attempted to convince the Honduran president not to pass the law until the U.S. State Department gave its approval. The president signed the legislation anyway, but United Fruit summoned the Honduran president to Miami and there worked out a deal to limit the agrarian reform's effect on the company.[18] Thus, throughout the past century Honduras has been at the whim of U.S. interests, while also being deeply affected by crises in neighboring countries.

Honduras and Costa Rica both served as launching grounds for U.S.-supported forces to attack the Sandinistas. While missionaries in Honduras often faced poverty firsthand, Costa Rica was much more stable politically and economically. It was also one of the most important areas of theological innovation through the second half of the twentieth century.

Costa Rica is the wealthiest country in Central America and has the longest democratic tradition. U.S. fruit companies also invested heavily in Costa Rica. Minor Keith, of the United Fruit Company, finished the first railroad in the country in the 1880s, refinanced the country's debt to the British, and even married the former Costa Rican president's daughter. After a revolution in 1948, the Costa Rican government outlawed the military and has had a fairly stable democratic process without much violence since

---

[18] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 9, 178; Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 28-30.

then.[19] During the middle of the 20th century, Costa Rica received many Nicaraguan refugees fleeing the Somoza regime.

Costa Rica was also important for other reasons. Since it has been a fairly stable country for most of the 20th century, many missionaries to Central America have done their language studies in Costa Rica before moving to other countries in the region. Thus, many missionaries have some experience living in Costa Rica. The capital, San José, is also home to one of the most influential seminaries in Central America: The Latin American Biblical Seminary (formerly known as the Costa Rican Bible Institute), established by the Latin America Mission in 1923. This seminary was embroiled in controversy in the 1970s and 1980s, when administrators hired more Latin American professors and developed a more open posture towards liberation theology.[20]

Liberation theology, sometimes referred to as theologies of liberation, swept through both Catholic and Protestant circles in Latin America during this time. Started primarily in Catholic circles, liberation theology grew out of the changes to Catholicism through Vatican II and the bishops' conference in Medellín in 1968 combined with increasing awareness of oppressed communities throughout Latin America reading the Bible in their individual volatile contexts. Theologies of liberation essentially interpret the Christian faith through the perspective of the poor and oppressed. The results vary widely—part of the reason that they are often referred to as theologies of liberation—and inherently challenged previous models of theology. In Latin America, liberation

---

[19] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 55.

[20] Bruce Warren Robbins, "Contextualization in Costa Rican Theological Education Today: A History of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, 1922-1990" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1991).

theology often provided a powerful means of support and inspiration to people within liberation movements in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Theology had often been thought of as various developed, systematic schools of thought, but theologies of liberation turned this concept upside down. In Christian base communities and rural villages throughout the region oppressed people rejected traditional theology and started developing their own theologies "on the move." Constantly reforming their interpretations as they read the Bible in the context of their individual struggles, these communities found courage to continue on in their inventive readings of theology.[21]

Missionaries living in each of the Central American countries faced a variety of transformative experiences. Some of these were shared experiences that tied the region together. For example, many missionaries throughout Central America realized the negative effects of U.S. involvement in the region as they saw a range of engagement from military aid and support that often fueled violence to economic investment that frequently bred inequality. On the other hand, missionaries' daily lives and radicalization processes were shaped differently in relatively stable situations such as Costa Rica as opposed to the upheaval of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua in the 1980s. Even in the midst of violent upheavals their experiences were quite different. Living amid the excitement of the Sandinistas' social-justice oriented revolution was quite unlike the pervasive fear and oppression of Guatemala and El Salvador.

Central America, and Latin America in general, were regions of growing Protestant missionary interest during the middle of the 20th century. In 1937, 2,298

---

[21] Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America--and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Gordon Spykman, Guillermo Cook, Michael Dodson, Lance Grahn, Sidney Rooy, and John Stam, *Let My People Live: Faith and Struggle in Central America* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 225-227.

American and Canadian missionaries worked in Latin America; by 1961, that number had more than tripled to 7,565. The number of U.S. and Canadian missionaries in Latin America continued to grow through the 1960s and between 1959 and 1969, Latin America became the region with the most U.S. and Canadian missionaries in the world, surpassing Asia. By 1969, 34,650 North American Protestants served around the world and 32% of them were stationed in Latin America. In that year, missionaries and missions agencies raised nearly $350 million with expenditures overseas consuming nearly two-thirds of that income.[22]

Central America was part of this larger growth trend in Latin America. In 1937, each country had a relatively small U.S. and Canadian Protestant missionary population. Only Panama and Guatemala had more than fifty Protestant missionaries at that point (Panama – 55, Guatemala – 70). By 1969, only El Salvador had fewer than 100 Protestant missionaries. The other countries ranged from Nicaragua with 120 up to Guatemala, which by 1969 hosted 272 U.S. and Canadian Protestant missionaries. Missionary populations in each of these countries continued growing through the 1980s, except in Nicaragua where many missionaries left during the Sandinista revolution and the ensuing war with the Contras. There, the number of U.S. and Canadian Protestant missionaries dropped drastically from 314 in 1979 to 45 in 1989.[23]

---

[22] Exact numbers of missionaries are difficult to ascertain as many missionaries are not officially registered with sending organizations as such, even though they live in foreign countries and function as missionaries. Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 9th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1970), 2-4; Clyde W. Taylor and Wade T. Coggins, *Protestant Missions in Latin America: A Statistical Survey* (Washington, DC: Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, 1961).

[23] Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 12th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1979); Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, *Mission*

Each of the missionaries whose stories appear in this dissertation was part of this larger trend of missionary growth in Latin America. But each of them made their decision about where, when, and with what organization to enter missions differently. Some missionaries chose to apply through their denominational missions boards, making the decision about organizational affiliation much simpler. Those who did not could turn to faith missions organizations, which were independent from any individual denominations and proliferating rapidly during the middle of the century. Some missionaries chose their organizational affiliation first, which limited potential countries for service, as most missions organizations sent missionaries to only a few countries around the world or in a specific region. Most missionaries had little experience visiting the countries they would end up in. Many were shaped by the missionary narrative of their childhoods and hoped to go to the most exotic, primitive, and dangerous places on the planet. Others' decisions were made on a whim.

Rick Waldrop had only been out of the country one time before starting a life of missions, to a Church of God conference in Mexico City. Those few short days gave him a lasting feeling that he wanted to live in Latin America; however the final decision of where he and his wife Janice would be placed was up to the Church of God denominational mission board. They ended up in Guatemala.[24] After growing up in a conservative evangelical church, Dennis Smith started attending a Presbyterian church when the campus pastor at Wheaton told him the minister there was a fellow Wheaton

---

Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas, 14th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1989).

[24] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, Tennessee, 24 April 2008.

alumnus and gave "good pastoral care from an evangelical background."[25] Though he entered the Presbyterian Church as an evangelical, the denomination would eventually introduce him to more diverse perspectives from mainline churches. His new Presbyterian church supported two missionaries in Guatemala. Through those missionaries, the National Presbyterian Church of Guatemala requested that Dennis and his wife Rachel spend a year volunteering in Guatemala. So, in 1974-1975, Dennis spent much of the year traveling around Guatemala doing photo documentaries and other communications work for the church, while Rachel did administrative work for a school begun by missionaries in Guatemala City. After that year, the National Presbyterian Church of Guatemala invited them back again in 1977 to start their missionary career in Guatemala. Neither Dennis nor Rachel had ever been to Central America before spending the year there volunteering.[26]

For John Stam, the decision of where to go felt natural. As mentioned earlier, his father had been on the board of the Latin America Mission for many years and had even taken John on a trip through Latin America when he was in high school. John had just finished a master's degree in Biblical Literature at Wheaton and a seminary degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and was able to choose between Colombia and Costa Rica with the Latin America Mission. Costa Rica felt like an obvious choice for him at the time because he could teach at the Latin American Biblical Seminary.[27]

---

[25] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

[26] Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 9 October 1974, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala;" Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 12 November 1974, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala;" Dennis Smith, email to author, 17 November 2010; Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

[27] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

The Latin America Mission was an interdenominational mission agency to which many of the missionaries in this study were connected at some point in their missionary careers. Harry and Susan Strachan founded the mission in Costa Rica in 1921 under the name Latin America Evangelization Crusade. It expanded over the course of the 20th century into many countries throughout Latin America focusing on a wide variety of assignments including church planting, evangelism, Christian education, theological training, medical care, and agricultural and community development, among other ministries. One of their most influential creations, as mentioned earlier, was the Latin American Biblical Seminary, originally called the Costa Rican Bible Institute, and known for years as the *Seminario Biblico Latinamericano*. By 1941, the Bible Institute became a seminary, and in 1997 it became a full-fledged university when it was recognized by the Costa Rican Ministry of Education. The seminary was an important center of Protestant Latin American theological development throughout its history and became a focal point of North American evangelical criticism when it began hiring more Latin American faculty and developing a more open stance towards liberation theology in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1971, the Latin America Mission gave the seminary more autonomy, and in the late 1970s, the mission withdrew its public endorsement of the seminary fearing that it had conceded too much ground to liberation theology.[28]

Amzie Yoder was a student at Eastern Mennonite College when an interesting set of circumstances sent him to Honduras for a year of voluntary service. In their classroom, the students sat in alphabetical order and the young woman who sat next to

[28] Bruce Warren Robbins, "Contextualization in Costa Rican Theological Education Today: A History of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, 1922-1990" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1991), 9-10; "Records of the Latin America Mission," in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 236.

him recommended him to a person named Paul Kraybill who was looking for students to start a voluntary service program in Honduras. Amzie had wanted to go to Switzerland to get in touch with his Swiss roots, but soon found himself headed to Honduras. His relatively short time of voluntary service in Honduras from 1958-1960 eventually turned into fifteen years there starting in 1964, before spending ten more years in Guatemala.[29]

Mark Baker's entry into missions appeared to come as a surprise, even to him. As he was graduating from Wheaton College with a teaching degree, the thought crossed his mind to check out short-term missions, but he thought only doctors and engineers were asked to join such groups. When he saw there were openings for teachers as well, he applied to several agencies and ended up deciding between a Wycliffe school in the southern part of Peru and another school in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Having spent the past several years in the Midwest he was tired of the flat landscape and without much knowledge of either country he simply looked them both up in the atlas and chose the place that he thought looked more mountainous. Though he was incorrect about which country was actually more mountainous, in 1979, he signed on for a three-year term in Honduras without ever having visited the country.[30]

These few glimpses demonstrate that choices about where these missionaries would spend significant portions of their lives were often made with little information, and sometimes on a whim. Each of the above stories highlights the choices of male missionaries in this study. As historian Jeffrey Swanson pointed out in his work on missionaries in Ecuador, many missionaries did not make their decisions as "isolated individual actors," but rather as "couples or families or members of extended social

---

[29] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 November 2007.

[30] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

networks."[31] That means that for married couples both needed to sense some call to a similar place or they needed to negotiate how to make that decision as a couple. Often married women missionaries' decisions about destination were dictated by marriage. Sometimes they felt specifically called to the countries they ended up in, but quite frequently they made the choice to join their husbands in their "place of calling."

Doris Stam had always dreamt of being a missionary in India as a child. She had long been planning on becoming a missionary and was in awe of women like Amy Carmichael, a famous missionary to India during the first half of the 20th century. She was one of many single women missionaries and inspired many others through her prolific writing. Doris admired Amy Carmichael's willingness to live in the midst of extreme poverty in India, and planned to follow in her footsteps. When Doris met John Stam and considered marrying him, she made the choice to give up her dream of India to be with him in Costa Rica.[32] Doris even remembered being interviewed by one of the leaders of their mission agency, the Latin America Mission, and asking about what courses she should take to prepare for missions. She recalled him saying, "Well, just remember, Doris, that you're going as John's wife. Don't worry too much about it." While she noted that the leadership's position changed over the years, they often focused primarily on the man's decision and abilities at that time.[33]

Irene Foulkes faced a similar decision. She met her future husband, Dick Foulkes, when he was already a missionary in Costa Rica. She had been planning on

---

[31] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 99-100.

[32] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[33] John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

going into missions in Latin America, but had been unsure about what mission organization to join and which country to go to. When she decided to marry Dick in 1955, part of her choice was to join him with the Latin America Mission in Costa Rica, where they both taught at the seminary for many years.[34] Clearly, there was a tension for many of these future missionary women that intertwined the complex decisions of where to go into missions and whether or not they married. During the 1950s and 1960s, married women often had to deal with the fact that men's call to missions and specific destinations were prioritized.

Elena Yoder confirmed this pattern. Her future husband, Amzie Yoder, had gone to voluntary service for two years in Honduras and returned to the United States to finish college and get married. Amzie said when he left Honduras after his initial period of voluntary service, an older missionary there told him to "go home, get your wife and come back." Within four years he and Elena were back in Honduras, with seemingly little conflict about where they would end up.[35]

By the early 1980s, the situation had changed for some women. Mark Baker spent four years teaching at a school in Tegucigalpa, Honduras before returning to the United States for a few years where he met Lynn Miller. When Lynn and Mark met at the Oregon Extension (a small college program operated by several evangelical colleges), he had already been through some transformative experiences in Central America. Lynn noted that she had never even been out of the country at that point, other than to Niagara Falls. She remembered that she had not even known where Honduras was when she met Mark; so much of her education about the region came through him. While his

[34] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[35] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 November 2007.

experiences there inspired their later choice of where to go into missions, Lynn recounted that it was her impetus that took them back to Honduras after they both finished graduate school.[36]

Each of these stories illuminates the fact that a complex milieu of previous experience, language abilities, vague inklings, and chance went into the decisions that brought each of these missionaries to Central America. Few of them had any real conception of where they were moving, as even the most experienced had only been to the region once or twice for short periods of time. Factors such as political turmoil, violence, and poverty within the region did not seem to weigh too heavily into their choices about where they went, but these elements would often eventually lead to their most dramatic transformations.

Among the tools missions organizations sometimes used to help young people as they entered missions were orientations and training sessions. These trainings varied widely, from almost nothing at all to a few weeks somewhere in the United States, to sometimes as long as several months with language and cultural study somewhere in Central America. When Amzie Yoder initially went to Honduras for voluntary service in 1958 he had no significant language training and went without any kind of extensive orientation. He had little conception of what he was headed into and felt that lack of information deeply. In his words, "I felt extremely impacted, traumatized almost when I was flying out of Miami, and it just felt as though I would never see U.S. soil again."[37] He was only 21 years old when he went for the first time. He had grown up Amish,

---

[36] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

[37] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 November 2007.

recently sold his horse and buggy, and found himself flying to a strange country he knew little about.

Before Amzie and Elena returned to Honduras in 1964, the Eastern Board of Mennonite Missions provided them with what they considered a positive orientation to the country and Latin America in general. Looking back they felt that the mission did a good job of teaching them to join with Honduran culture rather than trying to take U.S. culture with them, as they saw so many other missionaries do. Even with this orientation Elena felt traumatized, as it was her first time out of the country. At the time she felt incredibly naïve and spoke hardly any Spanish. The most substantial problem Elena felt with their orientation from the Eastern Board of Mennonite Missions was that they focused primarily on preparing the men—women were considered "tag-alongs," essentially there to take care of the children and support their husbands.[38] This would continue to be a problem for Elena in relation to their mission over the coming years and be something she would later attempt to confront directly.

Neither Mark nor Lynn Baker had formal training with a missions organization before they went to Honduras. They knew a bit of Spanish but that was it.[39] Mark was shocked by the poverty that he encountered in Honduras, and started his first letter to friends and family in the U.S. with this sentence: "As I pushed open the door of the Tegucigalpa Airport, and stepped into the Honduran sunshine, I encountered a boy begging. That one thing tells you a lot…. I'm living with much less in the house that I share with two teachers, than I had last year, but I feel much richer."[40] Already by his

---

[38] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 November 2007.

[39] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

second letter readers can see him beginning to make the small, but necessary adjustments to life in another country and another language as he talked about achieving the ability to ask and pay for fifty bananas, and know how much change he should get back.[41]

A few years later Lynn joined Mark on her first trip to Honduras and described the experience of her first day in vivid detail. Mark took her to see one of the families he had known when he was there teaching in the school, and this is how she talked about the experience, "And walking in there… okay, I'd only seen *National Geographic*, and now all the sudden, my feet were on the floor and the chickens were running around in the kitchen around my ankles. And the girls were standing there next to this woodstove that they cooked in. It was really smoky in there and people were looking at me with their shining eyes and I was… I think I fell in love… with the realness of these people."[42] For some incoming missionaries this lack of preparation would not have been such a positive experience, but for Lynn it was the moment when she saw what she had only seen in magazines, and she found it to be a powerful, humanizing experience, suddenly experiencing what she had previously only imagined.

John and Doris Stam and Dick Foulkes all attended the same Latin America Mission orientation at Camp of the Woods in Speculator, New York in the summer of 1954. John and Doris were about to get married and Dick was John's best man. The three of them, plus several other missionary candidates, spent a little over a week in training at the camp, with various speakers giving sermons and lectures orienting them to the Latin America Mission (LAM) and the regions where they would soon be living.

---

[40] Mark Baker, support letter, 12 September 1979, in Mark Baker's personal archive.

[41] Mark Baker, support letter, October 1979, in Mark Baker's personal archive.

[42] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, California, 27 March 2008.

They saw photos from the region and one speaker even shared some "helpful instructions on how to deal with Roman Catholics."[43] An article in the mission's newsletter, the *LAM Evangelist*, detailed the group's orientation and had a picture of the new missionary recruits. One of the new missionaries wrote glowingly of the informational sessions and mentioned that the recruits spent time helping to clean the camp, preparing it for the summer's campers, "thus earning room and board."[44] Interestingly, their week of orientation in New York took place at the same time as the CIA-led coup in Guatemala, which overthrew Jacobo Árbenz.[45] The LAM said nothing to the new missionary recruits of this political turmoil in Central America, choosing to focus on other less political issues, which was later upsetting to John when he learned of the coup in subsequent years. As he said in one of our interviews, "I was very disappointed when I began learning of the '54 overthrow of the Árbenz government, and the very week we were up there in the mountains learning what color tie to wear and Doris what length skirt, and nothing shorter."[46]

On Friday, June 25th, 1954 John's father, who was on the board of the LAM, came and joined the dedication service for the new missionaries, concluding their orientation. Early the next morning, they woke and drove down to Bridgeport, Connecticut where John and Doris would get married the following day. A letter from John's father to several other members of the family who could not make it to the

---

[43] Miriam Hornstra and Jacob Stam, letter to Ruth and Mary, 29 June 1954, in John Stam's personal archive in San José, Costa Rica, Box 1, Folder 15 – "1953-1954."

[44] Marilyn De Graff, "Orientation…," *LAM Evangelist* (August-October 1954), 79-80.

[45] Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 173.

[46] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

wedding described the tight schedule that allowed them to squeeze their dedication, rehearsal dinner, and wedding into three short days. He even mentioned that John and Doris drove down to Bridgeport in John's 1940 Plymouth named "Bessie," of which John's father said, "She doesn't move too fast but she's been quite reliable so far." Fortunately, it was reliable enough to get them to Bridgeport in time for a few last minute alterations to Doris's dress, a rehearsal dinner, and finally the rehearsal itself.[47]

The next day was the wedding and by that evening John and Doris left for their honeymoon, soon followed by their move to Costa Rica. In an interesting twist, Dick Foulkes met his future wife Irene Westling that night at John and Doris's wedding and just over a year later they were married on August 13, 1955 in Wheaton, Illinois. Dick had already been in Costa Rica for a year by the time of their wedding, and just two weeks after their wedding they returned to Costa Rica, teaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José. Straight out of graduate school, Irene spent the next eight months learning Spanish and then started teaching at the seminary as well.[48]

Rick and Janice Waldrop did most of their training in Costa Rica starting in 1976, before being placed in Guatemala for their first assignment. During their eight months in Costa Rica, they focused on learning Spanish, but also had a few people come and speak to their group about various aspects of Latin American culture and theology. One of the speakers who they brought in was Orlando Costas, who was connected to several other missionaries in this study. Costas was a Puerto Rican missionary with the Latin America

---

[47] Miriam Hornstra and Jacob Stam, letter to Ruth and Mary, 29 June 1954, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 1, Folder 15 – "1953-1954;" Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[48] Dick and Irene Foulkes, support letter, January 1986, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive; "Wheaton Weddings," *Wheaton Alumni Magazine* 22:10 (October 1955), 9.

Mission who worked hard throughout his life to bring a Latin American theological perspective to evangelicalism.[49] This was the first place that Rick had ever heard of liberation theology. During his years at Bethel Seminary he said it was never mentioned, or if it had been it was only an unmemorable footnote. But Rick said hearing Orlando Costas speak about liberation theology during their training in Costa Rica "struck a chord with me."[50] Costas, a Puerto Rican missionary introducing North Americans to Central American liberation theology, worked in a liminal space in this role, providing North Americans a less demonized version of liberation theology than was presented by U.S. evangelicals who were fully opposed to it and a possibly more acceptable variety of it than the stark vision of a committed Central American revolutionary. In Rick's case this allowed him to be introduced to the concept of liberation theology in a more palatable way that piqued his interest.

After training in Costa Rica, the Church of God placed Rick and Janice at the Church of God Bible Institute in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala in 1977. Rick took the place of the former director who had recently resigned. Rick described the move from peaceful Costa Rica into Guatemala as basically being thrown into a civil war. The Church of God and other Pentecostal churches were exploding in Guatemala during these years and Rick quickly felt that he had a lot of catching up to do with contextual theology in order to meaningfully interact with people at the seminary and others around the region. He started a doctoral program through Fuller Theological Seminary that allowed him to choose most of his own reading and do coursework within Guatemala rather than

---

[49] Samuel Escobar, "The Legacy of Orlando Costas," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:2 (April 2001): 50-56.

[50] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, Tennessee, 24 April 2008.

moving back to the United States. Amidst the violence of Guatemala that raged from 1960-1996, but really peaked in the early 1980s, Rick started his re-education. He read anthropology, cultural studies, books about Mayan culture, and Guatemalan history. He also stumbled across Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America*.[51] This was just the beginning for Rick and Janice. Living and working amidst the civil war in Guatemala would radically change them in the coming years.

Other missionaries in this study went through similar processes in their initial experiences in Central America. More traditional missionaries often separated themselves from daily, non-hierarchical interactions with national people of the countries they went to serve. This separation was sometimes subtly carried in a mindset of superiority. Other times it was overt: the missionaries lived in compounds and were friends with other missionaries, essentially living in an American bubble cut off from the country they were living in. Jeffrey Swanson gives some inkling of this perspective from the many missionaries that he spoke with in Ecuador. He interviewed missionaries with World Radio Missionary Fellowship, sometimes known as HCJB (Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings). Many of these missionaries attended English-speaking church, lived on missionary compounds, and were only friends with other missionaries on the compound. In the interviews some noted with concern their lack of relationships with Ecuadorians and others seemed to celebrate it. They spoke of experiences when the HCJB community provided support for them in times of need, starting dinner clubs with other missionaries, and focusing on working as a missionary team. Part of this was

[51] Ibid.

connected to the fact that they felt more at ease with people of their own culture.[52] The radicalized missionaries who I encountered in my research were quite different from this more traditional missionary stereotype from the beginning, and many felt that difference early on.

Amzie and Elena Yoder realized right away they were not like other missionaries when they saw their compatriots bringing down large trunks with all their belongings from their homes in the United States. The Yoders also made a choice to live side-by-side with Honduran people, rather than in a missionary compound with other missionaries. In church, they did not try to adapt American songs into Spanish, but rather learned Honduran songs and took those on as their own. Each of these small factors added up and Amzie and Elena noted that they never actually thought of themselves as career missionaries. Amzie said, "We never saw ourselves as professional missionaries…. We didn't fit the role very well…. Because a typical missionary was, I don't know what they were, we thought we were too human."[53]

Other radicalized missionaries echoed this sentiment. Dennis Smith spoke of not really relating to that many missionaries and connecting more with Guatemalans from the beginning.[54] John and Doris Stam seemed to fully embrace Costa Rican culture as their own, almost immediately. John remembered very little difficulty in leaving friends and family to become missionaries. He said, "There was really no sacrifice for us [in moving to Costa Rica], we were looking forward to this, the real hardship was coming back to the

---

[52] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 131-132.

[53] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 November 2007.

[54] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

States in 1960. That was a decade in the '50s, where the U.S. changed a lot, these terrible super highways came in and I got so confused trying to drive."[55] John also recalled a sermon that he had heard from one of the leaders of the Latin America Mission, Ken Strachan, when he was just sixteen or seventeen years old. Strachan told them to "make that decision; your people are the Costa Ricans, your people are the Latin Americans, you've adopted them, they've adopted you…"[56] This message clearly had an impact on John and he really seemed to embody that principle from the time he moved to Costa Rica. Doris also held this perspective from a young age, as she noted that even when she was growing up she found herself admiring the missionaries who would adopt the customs of their host cultures and who tried to learn first, rather than teaching first.[57] This starting point opened her to incredible transformation over her time in Costa Rica. One of the ways this became true for her, was that she remembered reading missionary biographies as a child in church. In most of those books she said missionary life was presented as a spiritual challenge of transmitting the gospel; only later did she realize that she would actually be dealing with human needs.[58]

These missionaries' openness to learning and change was unique. Many other missionaries lived their lives in the mission field and maintained the idea that their job was primarily a spiritual task quite distinct from physical needs and complicated political choices. But something about the missionaries in this study was different. Whether it was the unique experiences they had that led to future radical transformation or whether

---

[55] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 July 2008.

[58] John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

they were somehow individually more open to changes in their perspective, this disposition would lead to intense changes and unexpected conflict with their sending communities in the coming years. In their first experiences in Central America, we only see the beginnings of these transformations. Lynn Baker's first support letter back to her sending community gave just a hint of the changes to come. In the first sentence of her first letter, she shared with friends and family back in the United States these thoughts: "This summer I've done something I have never done before. I have wept and deeply questioned God because I saw so much unjust suffering."[59] And that was just the beginning.

[59] Mark and Lynn Baker, support letter, 16 July 1987, in Mark Baker's personal archive.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOUNTERS IN CENTRAL AMERICA: THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION

What "radicalizes" a missionary? Certainly missionaries had to be open to transformation, as discussed in the previous chapter. They had to leave their compounds and live among people in Central America, who were born into very different circumstances, before they could begin any potential radicalization process. Along with this openness to change, however, many of the missionaries I interviewed pointed to specific experiences that began their transformations. Sometimes it was clear how their experiences would lead to radicalization—they talked with people who were fleeing repression and violence funded by the United States or they worked in slums where people died of preventable diseases and starvation while their friends in the United States lived in relative luxury. Other times missionaries' initial radicalizing moments were not so straightforward, but through a complex process they came to view certain events as integral to beginning their transformation. These complicated experiences with pain, deprivation, violence, and poverty were vital to radicalized missionaries later in life. These pivotal foundational moments shaped their future radicalization and how they interpreted the multitude of transformations they underwent.

The contexts of their radicalizations were distinct from each other but also shared similarities. Radicalizing in the midst of the excitement of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua was significantly different from living in a state of fear and repression in

Guatemala during the 1980s. The differences of these contexts cannot be emphasized enough. On the other hand, these differing experiences sometimes overlapped as missionaries traveled through the region, connected with missionaries and nationals of other contexts, and represented Central America as a region to their sending communities in the U.S. While one missionary's primary context for radicalization may have been the slums of Costa Rica, she may have also experienced the excitement of the Sandinista revolution, and then attempted to open the eyes of North Americans to ongoing repression in El Salvador as well. Missionaries of different eras also add a level of complexity to this analysis, as older missionaries arriving in the 1950s and 1960s adjusted to life in Central America before such great upheaval, whereas younger missionaries were sometimes thrown directly into volatile situations in the 1970s and 1980s. In these overlapping contexts, many missionaries underwent specific dramatic transformational moments in one context and general radicalization by identifying with Central American perspectives across the region.

This chapter will explore how the radicalized missionaries in this study transformed theologically and politically over their years in Central America. It will examine the kinds of experiences that led to drastic changes in how they perceived the world and believed they should act as evangelical Christians and as missionaries. Readers will see both the diversity and the commonality of experiences that challenged their original ideological frameworks.

John and Doris Stam arrived in Costa Rica in 1954. After spending several months in language training in San José, John moved to the northwestern region of Costa Rica, called Guanacaste, to serve as a pastor for seven rural churches and as a co-pastor

for ten more. He commuted between all these churches by motorcycle and mule. Doris stayed in San José for two more months, giving birth to their first child Robert at the end of November 1955. In January of 1956, she and Robert joined John in Guanacaste. They only stayed in Guanacaste for a little over a year before returning to teach at the seminary in San José in March of 1957. However, this was a powerful moment in time for them, especially for John. Language study in San José had been quite difficult for him, in his words it consisted of, "drills and exercises and mistakes." He fell in love with the Spanish language as he learned it more fully among the people of Guanacaste however, where he described his language learning as, "people and smiles and help, in spite of the mistakes."[1] He also fell in love with the people themselves, many of them Costa Ricans, but also a significant number of Nicaraguan refugees fleeing the ravages of the Somoza dictatorship. When John described how important this time was to their radicalization, he spoke of absorbing some of the "Latin American personality." Coming from a society focused on efficiency, he found himself learning to love the slower pace of life in rural Costa Rica.

Another major component of John Stam's early transformation in Guanacaste was political. John described his upbringing as "very conservative and Republican," but among the people living in Northern Costa Rica he began to learn of the negative consequences of United States foreign policy in the region and began to develop what he called a "critical political consciousness."[2] It was the beginning of his opposition to imperialism. John believed he learned more from these *campesinos* than he had learned

---

[1] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

[2] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007; John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

from all of his professors throughout his years of education. The Stams' early connections with Nicaraguan refugees would eventually draw them into the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s, as they became intimately aware of the atrocities of the ruling Somoza regime soon after they arrived in Costa Rica.

Understanding how these transformative learning experiences occurred is sometimes difficult. Much of it seems to be connected to the pace and texture of daily life, the subtle differences that make a person realize that they were raised in a very specific context and that not everyone perceives the world in the same way that they do. Some missionaries seemed to be resistant to this kind of learning, but John Stam was ready for it. He described one telling moment working with a Nicaraguan man doing carpentry work at one of the pastor's houses. He worked beside the man all morning long and the man would not talk to him at all. Then at lunch John said it was like he was talking to a different man. He was effusive, telling John all kinds of stories and letting him into his world. John found out later that the pastor they were working for had spoken to the man before lunch, telling John, "he asked me about you and I told him you're young and innocent and dumb in effect, but he's somebody who will listen to you, and he's not a jingoist North American like so many."[3] Moments like this clarify the essential openness that John and Doris had towards people in Central America. The Nicaraguan man who worked with John would not talk to him about his experience at all until he knew that John was safe. Once he knew that John was open to listening and learning, he shared all kinds of interesting experiences with him. Once the Stams were known as people who were open, they heard more and more of the real experiences of these Nicaraguan refugees fleeing United States-supported repression under Somoza.

[3] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

Doris Stam's transformation began in Guanacaste as well, but really flourished in later years. When we spoke about her experience of Guanacaste it became clear that while John was out interacting with people as a pastor, she was busy taking care of the house and their newborn son Robert.[4] This task was made more difficult by sporadic electricity, lack of refrigeration or running water, and a house that let both rain and rats run through freely.[5] When Doris spoke of her transformation she focused more on their children and a later period in the early 1980s when she and John were very active with the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. Doris spoke about their increasing connection to leftist politics that occurred when their children were in high school and college. They put their children in Spanish-speaking schools throughout their growing-up years, which was somewhat rare among Protestant missionaries. By the time their daughter Becky was in high school and college during the mid to late 1970s, she was singing with a group of students who performed at leftist rallies and protests. Seeing their daughter perform with this group, Doris remembered becoming increasingly involved in leftist politics herself.

While John often spoke primarily of his radicalizing experiences with people he had come to convert in Central America, Doris more frequently connected her transformation to their children's involvements. To some extent this illuminates where they spent the majority of their time in their early years in Central America—John with fellow theologians, students, and the communities he pastored, Doris more with their children. But it also demonstrates that they shaped their radicalization narratives around different experiences. Some of their radicalization occurred together (as Doris was ready

---

[4] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[5] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

to join the Sandinista movement by the early 1980s), but they tie their understandings of their transformations to very different experiences that happened years apart.[6]

John pointed to several other radicalizing moments throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He joined a movement called *Exodo* after Vatican II, which was his first progressive ecumenical experience. In our conversations, he recounted being hesitant to join as the movement included some radical leftist religious leaders, Catholics, and liberation theologians, among others. He remembered one Eucharist service he attended early on in which he felt a real dilemma about whether or not he should take communion with this diverse group. This would have been a significant step for an evangelical missionary in the 1960s. For many U.S. evangelicals sent as missionaries to Central America, these were some of the people they were sent to convert. Many United States evangelicals believed that Catholic leaders and liberation theologians were leading people astray and working against the goals of conversion to evangelicalism. But after serious deliberation, John decided to take communion with them and join the group. It was a significant turning point for him. In his words, "you make a decision and it leads to a whole bunch of other decisions, or you refuse to make it and you just missed a whole bunch of possible open doors."[7] He had chosen to open himself to learning from the people he was sent to convert and they became some of his most significant friends in the ensuing years.

Decisions like the one of joining *Exodo* also led to other involvements in movements for social change, all small parts of a larger shift in John's theological and political orientation. John recalled participating in his first labor march after joining

---

[6] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[7] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

Exodo in the 1970s, a dramatic move for someone who was raised conservative Republican in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. He called this first labor march his "first public experience of identifying with the poor, with the suspicious left wing." He remembered that a Costa Rican person approached him at the march and said he had heard John speak at the *Templo Biblico* (one of the bigger evangelical churches in San José) but continued, "I'm much more impressed now that I see you on the streets with the poor and the workers…." This transformed John's mentality about marches and identifying with the poor and the "suspicious left wing" and he said that since that moment he has "hardly missed a march."[8]

Due to their involvement with Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica during the 1950s, the Stams were also interested in the Sandinista movement throughout the 1970s and became increasingly involved once the FSLN overthrew the Somoza government in 1979. The excitement that they felt in the early years of the Sandinista revolution reverberated throughout their narratives. Soon after the Sandinistas took over, John and Doris volunteered with labor movements in Nicaragua, digging ditches and picking cotton and coffee.[9] They basically lived in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica, spending a few weeks or months in Nicaragua then coming back to Costa Rica to teach another class. Sometimes they would switch back and forth almost weekly. They thoroughly enjoyed what they considered to be a cultural rebirth of music and festivals as well. John recalled their excitement, saying, "I'd drive up [from Costa Rica] dead tired from an 8, 10, 11 hour drive and borders… and Doris would say, 'Quick take a shower. There's a concert

---

[8] Ibid.

[9] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 23 February 2008; John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

in half an hour.'"[10] They formed deep relationships with Nicaraguans in this context. A friend and former student of theirs from the seminary in Costa Rica started a literacy program in Nicaragua that became a model for others of its kind. John and Doris helped out in the literacy campaigns and also attended the first funerals of literacy workers killed by the Contras.[11]

These relationships and their personal involvement in the revolution quickly began to have powerful effects on their political views and theological perspectives. John spoke of revolutionary Nicaragua as the place where his theology of imperialism began to develop. Already a scholar of the book of Revelation, John began to explore contextual theology, which was an increasingly popular way of reading the Bible within specific historical and social contexts that gained traction in many oppressed communities during the 1970s.[12] For John, this meant viewing the fall of the Roman Empire described in Revelation as a model for the battle between the United States empire and the Nicaraguan revolution. In 1979, he taught a new course at the Costa Rican seminary—"Introduction to the New Testament," and he decided to teach the course contextually. As he recounted how he structured the course he said, "What's the contextual meaning of each book of the New Testament? And Revelation is where I went wild, and I brought out the first article, '*Apocalipsis y el Imperialismo o el Imperio Romano*.' And I lived it experientially in the

---

[10] John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

[11] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 23 February 2008; John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009; Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[12] Sigurd Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003); Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Sandinista insurrection solidarity, and I gave talks on Revelation supporting the Sandinista uprising."[13]

When John was first invited to Nicaragua to teach, Doris was somewhat reluctant to move to Nicaragua because the weather was so much hotter than in Costa Rica. But she fell in love with the country and started teaching Greek at the Baptist seminary in Nicaragua. When John needed to return to Costa Rica to continue teaching at the seminary in San José, Doris stayed in Nicaragua teaching there. For several years in the early 1980s, John went back and forth between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, continuously teaching for short periods of time in both places.[14] He also became president of a Nicaragua-Costa Rica solidarity committee called the *Comite Costarricense de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Nicaragua*.[15]

Living amidst the revolutionary fervor of Nicaragua deeply affected the Stams' political orientation, theology, and understanding of themselves as missionaries. Some of their transformative moments, though, came before the powerful experiences of Nicaragua in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Especially for John, living and working with Nicaraguan refugees in Guanacaste in the 1950s and then teaching in the innovative Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José both gradually affected him over time. As John said years later, "it was a risk to listen to the Nicaraguan refugees and agree with them. So we've taken risks all along the way."[16] That risk would lead them down a path

---

[13] John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "Plan de Trabajo, Comité Costarricense de Solidaridad con Nicaragua," May 1983, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 14, "Comite;" John Stam, letter to the Nicaraguan Embassy, 15 February 1984, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 14, "Comite."

[16] John and Doris, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

of radicalization, gradual at some moments and quite dramatic at others. In 1985, in the midst of their pivotal experiences in Nicaragua, John wrote an article for the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* highlighting some of the transformation they were experiencing while working in Nicaragua. He wrote, "My own experience in Nicaragua during the five years since the overthrow of dictator Anastasio Somoza has confirmed my fundamental conviction that the gospel, if freed from cultural baggage, is explosive with radical significance for the people of Central America today." Later in the article he spoke more directly of his own transformation during his time in Central America, saying, "Thirty years of foreign-missionary service have now convinced me that my almost instinctive identification of the gospel with capitalism and Western-style democracy was anything but evangelical. In the third world I have found this view untenable and highly detrimental to Christian witness."[17]

Doris's radicalization was more gradual in the early years as she was busy raising their children and less active in the public arena. But still the relationships they formed in those early years in Costa Rica led to dramatic transformations by the late 1970s and early 1980s. Doris's transformation also seems to have been induced to some extent by her children, especially their daughter Rebecca and her involvement in musical groups that performed at leftist rallies. This highlights the varied ways in which male and female missionaries sometimes underwent radicalization through different means and at different paces. John was engaged with a diverse group of people from early on, working with ecumenical groups and sometimes lecturing or preaching about contextual theology. While Doris was also involved in the academic world to some extent, teaching at the

---

[17] John Stam, "The Challenge of the Gospel in Nicaragua," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1985, 5-8.

Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, her radicalization really came to fruition once their children were older and she no longer had as much responsibility for raising them. Both seemed to be headed in the same direction, towards radicalization, but their paths to get there consisted of quite different daily tasks and differences in pace. Several other missionary couples that are a part of this study also clarify the difficulty and complexity of radical individual transformation while being part of a married couple or a family unit.

Dick and Irene Foulkes were missionaries with the same organization as the Stams, the Latin America Mission, in Costa Rica. While both the Stams and Irene had become acquainted while doing undergraduate work at Wheaton College in Illinois, Dick had actually spent several years at the Julliard School of Music in New York (he was a piano player) before meeting John during graduate studies at Fuller Theological Seminary.[18]

Much of Dick and Irene's radicalization came through their work with Latin American theologies while teaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, Costa Rica, where John Stam taught for many years as well. From its founding, the seminary was focused intently on evangelization and its roots were in "enlightened fundamentalism." Its faculty embraced a more open perspective than many fundamentalists, but still vehemently rejected Roman Catholicism as an acceptable

[18] "List of Faculty Members, 1972," in the Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana Archives, San José, Costa Rica, Folder 365 RCT, "Cuerpo Docente: Documentos Varios, 1970-1982;" Dick and Irene Foulkes, support letter, January 1986, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive; "Wheaton Weddings," *Wheaton Alumni Magazine* 22:10 (October 1955), 9; Victorio Araya-Guillén, "UBL Says Farewell to Ricardo Foulkes," *Faces of the Latin American Biblical University*, 27 (November 2006), 2.

"religious option or salvific pathway."[19] As early as 1960, Dick and Irene Foulkes began to shift away from some of the fundamentalist connections that they had established in the United States in their years before becoming missionaries.[20] Through the 1960s they began to engage in an increasingly diverse theological conversation at the seminary.

When the Foulkes first arrived in Costa Rica in the 1950s they were concerned with the fact that only three percent of the Latin American population was Protestant and that so many Catholics did not read the Bible.[21] Like many Protestant missionaries of the 1950s, they were sent with the goal of converting Latin Americans to Protestant Christianity, whether they were non-believers or Catholics. In my interview with Irene she said,

> I wanted to be a Bible teacher and I wanted to be a missionary and Latin America was a place where the majority, the huge majority of the population although called Christian because they were Roman Catholic, did not have any knowledge of the Bible and had no Bibles available to them. So it's a vision that we all had in those days—was that the only way that the Bible would become available would be through Protestants.[22]

This sentiment would be greatly complicated in the ensuing years as the Foulkes worked more closely with Catholic theologians and the Vatican II council emphasized Bible-reading for Catholics.

Vatican II was significant in Latin America for many reasons as it modified the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church and inspired many Latin American

---

[19] Bruce Warren Robbins, "Contextualization in Costa Rican Theological Education Today: A History of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, 1922-1990" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1991), 9-10.

[20] Irene Foulkes, letter to Pastor Redpath, 24 October 1960, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive.

[21] Dick and Irene Foulkes, support letter, January 1986, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive.

[22] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

Catholics to revitalize their theology and its connection to society. This fundamental shift opened the way for more concrete and substantial change within the Catholic Church in Latin America. In 1968, 130 Catholic bishops gathered in Medellín, Colombia with the goal of applying Vatican II to Latin America. The bishops changed the nature of Catholicism throughout the Americas as they denounced institutionalized violence, praised revolutionaries, and spread the concept of Christian base communities often dedicated to the liberation of oppressed communities.[23] These developments, all stemming from Vatican II, had far-reaching effects throughout Latin America and the rest of the world.

Around the same time that Vatican II encouraged Catholics to read the Bible for themselves, Irene noted that the first readable version of the Bible in everyday Spanish was printed by the United Bible Societies and was soon endorsed by Catholic leaders. While Irene had been increasingly connected to Catholic scholars for several years, she remembered this as a specific moment where she united with Catholics in a powerful way. In a letter from 2005, she recounted the experience to friends and family:

> In the UBL [*Universidad Biblico*/Latin American Biblical Seminary] chapel that night, 50 Latin American biblical scholars were present, both Protestants and Catholics, all actively involved in making their scholarship available to the grassroots biblical movement among Catholics and to the many avenues for Bible teaching in Protestant communities. What a privilege it has been to be a part of this transformation![24]

And what an incredible transformation it was. Sent to evangelize and convert Catholics to Bible-reading Protestant Christianity, Irene and Dick were joining with Catholics in a

---

[23] Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America--and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 22-26.

[24] Irene Foulkes, letter to friends and family, August 2005, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive.

collaborative effort that was actively transforming their perspective, both theologically and politically.

Other evangelical missionaries also underwent this radical transformation in their perspective about Catholics. Joyce Hanks, who became a missionary in Costa Rica with the Latin America Mission in 1963, said she expected to find Roman Catholics there who had no experience of individual conversion and were "just going through the motions of worshiping God." However, she soon realized that many of the Catholic students she was working with held a very genuine faith, which she found to be quite similar to her own. As she and other Protestants increasingly mixed with Catholics she came to believe that, "One's affiliation and background no longer seemed to matter, at least to me and many of my colleagues."[25]

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the seminary where Dick and Irene taught was a vibrant center of theological innovation among Protestant theologians and biblical scholars with increasing input from Catholic thinkers. The Foulkes were part of this movement. The small acts of living in an ecumenical community, "where we work together, we study together, we pray together," captured both Dick and Irene.[26] In 1968, as the Catholic bishops gathered in Medellín to think about how Vatican II would reshape Catholicism throughout Latin America, the Foulkes spent a year-long furlough doing post-doctoral studies in France. John Stam had set a precedent for Latin America Mission missionaries to be able to spend their furloughs in Europe when he spent time at

[25] Joyce Hanks, email to author, 6 May 2009.

[26] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

the University of Basel studying under Karl Barth for his doctorate in the early 1960s.[27] Dick decided to do his doctoral studies in France in 1968 and the entire Foulkes family spent two years there with him.

Studying in France was another pivotal moment for the Foulkes family. Irene felt that it was a break from the polarity between United States and Latin American culture that they had begun to feel more acutely through the early 1960s. It was "culture shock all over again," in Irene's words, but they seemed to enjoy and embrace what they perceived as the French ability to see all the different sides of various cultural and theological issues.[28] As Dick studied Genesis motifs in the Gospel of John, the family lived for the first time without any real contact with other Americans. Even in Costa Rica, Irene felt they were "in the lap of a mission" and that "cradle" surrounded them with other Americans. In that context, Irene noted that they often felt lodged between a bipolar understanding of the world as North American or Latin American. In France, they saw new sides to many of the issues they had been dealing with. There was great tumult in France during their year there. A massive general strike stalled the economy and almost brought down the government. There was great upheaval as various groups reacted to western Capitalism, consumerism, and long-standing traditional institutions. The Foulkes were surprised to see such diverse groups of people, including communists, engaging the political process.[29]

---

[27] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 9 February 2008; John Stam, curriculum vitae, emailed to author, 28 June 2010; John Stam, letter to Jacob and Deana Stam, 23 September 1961, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 1, Folder 19, "1960-1961;" John was personally selected by Karl Barth, as Barth selected all of his foreign students, noted in letter from Robert Oscar Bakke to Gilbert Beers of *Christianity Today*, 16 August 1984, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL, Collection 8, Box 43, Folder 1.

[28] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

Even though they were part of a conservative theological fellowship in Strasbourg, Irene and Dick were shocked when they returned to Costa Rica at how much more theologically and politically conservative people at the seminary and in the mission seemed to them. They returned to Costa Rica soon after the Second Vatican Council and the theological community at the seminary was processing all of the changes it fomented within Catholicism as well as the ramifications it held for Protestants. Irene had studied sociology at Wheaton before focusing on biblical studies and that, combined with her recent broadening experiences in France, prepared her to receive Latin American liberation theology with a more open mind than many other Protestant missionaries. She said she arrived in Costa Rica and thought, "What I'm exorcised about is, what is the role of the poor countries… regarding social evil—infrastructure, superstructure, all of it."[30]

Through some of their early ecumenical experiences working with Catholics in the 1960s and their time in France, the Foulkes's perspective on Latin American theology was changing dramatically. While many evangelicals in the United States and throughout Central America considered liberation theology to be Christianity hijacked by Marxism, Irene felt differently. She said,

> I was thrilled at what I was hearing. I had certain reservations theologically because things were couched in terms that… [were] more oriented to… a Catholic development of faith and theology and scripture. But it was not something that shocked me. And as we were working in Latin American theology of course, there were theologians who were saying things that I did not agree with but it wasn't in the area of the perspective of the poor.[31]

---

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

This was a dramatic change for someone who had come to Central America fifteen years earlier with the implicit goal of converting Catholics to Protestantism. She had come to feel that some of the more exciting transformations in theology and theories of societal change were now taking place within Catholicism and began to invest much of her energy in bringing some of those changes into their evangelical seminary. The seminary was not only where she attempted to bring about change, but also where she was transformed in many ways as they began to hire more Latin American theologians during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Gauging the impact of working within such intense diversity is difficult to overestimate, as Irene noted, "what I learned was… not only from what I was reading and so forth, but just working side by side with colleagues from vastly different backgrounds."[32]

The seminary was in the midst of substantial change as they hired more Latin American faculty throughout the 1960s. Towards the end of the 1960s an increasing number of both Latin American and U.S. missionary faculty began to critique the paternalistic structures of the Latin America Mission in its relationship to the seminary. Some of the seminary's leaders' focus on social responsibility as part of Christian witness as well as increasing openness to ecumenical movements with Catholics and other mainline churches exacerbated conflict with the Latin America Mission and some of its evangelical base in the United States. New curricula in the late 1960s and early 1970s emphasized contextual theology, teaching students to apply theological study to the specific conflicts and context of Latin America. By the early 1970s, the seminary had become known as the "rebellious son" among the many ministries of the Latin America Mission. Partially due to calls for independence from leaders at the seminary and

[32] Ibid.

partially due to the Latin America Mission's growing desire to separate to some degree financially and ideologically from the seminary, the seminary and all the other ministries of the Latin America Mission became autonomous toward the end of 1971.[33]

The newfound independence at the seminary allowed for a much broader conversation between many different theological groups both among the faculty and also with Catholic and mainline Protestant groups outside the seminary. The Foulkes were both intimately involved in this growing ecumenical spirit. Having embraced some elements of liberation theology and being inspired by innovations within the Catholic Church after Vatican II, they both became increasingly interested in working with Catholics and learning from them. In 1975-1976, the family spent a year in Washington, DC while Irene completed her doctoral studies at Georgetown, and by 1983 their interest in Catholicism had grown so fully that they spent a year doing postdoctoral studies in Rome at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (part of the Gregorian University) which Irene noted was the top institution for biblical studies in the Roman Catholic Church.[34] Thus, the Foulkes' intense transformation over their first thirty years in Costa Rica was primarily due to their positive interactions and relationships with Catholics who were focused on reading the Bible in new and exciting ways. Their original goal to convert Catholics to evangelical Protestantism had fallen by the wayside as they lived, worked, and learned from them.

Another round of missionaries came to Central America a few years later. Amzie and Elena Yoder started off in Honduras in 1964, then moved to Guatemala in the early

---

[33]Bruce Warren Robbins, "Contextualization in Costa Rican Theological Education Today: A History of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, 1922-1990" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1991), 87-126.

[34] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

1980s. This change of context fundamentally altered their radicalization. Cliff and Linda Holland went to Costa Rica in 1972 and had some radicalizing moments early on, but dramatically transformed along with the Stams in the context of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Amzie and Elena Yoder were missionaries with the Eastern Board of Mennonite Missions in Honduras and Guatemala from 1964 to 1994. Their first assignment was in an extremely rural town in Honduras called Tocoa. They did not have electricity but they ran a diesel generator in the evenings sometimes, which gave them electricity for a few hours each night. After Tocoa, they moved to La Ceiba, and later to San Pedro Sula. They returned to the United States for two years in the early 1980s and then returned to Central America, living in Guatemala for about ten years before coming back to the U.S. in 1993. Amzie had spent two years in Honduras for Mennonite voluntary service in the late 1950s, but neither of them had much formal language training. Amzie immediately began working in several churches and Elena did some church work but also spent much of her time raising their children. Her Spanish was far behind Amzie's during the first few months and she remembered often trying to communicate with vendors and neighbors, but having a difficult time figuring out what they were saying.

Both Amzie and Elena were raised Amish and found themselves living in a very different culture in Central America. Amzie remembered one older missionary asking them how they could transition from their culture to one where the worship style included guitars, a pump organ, and all kinds of instruments, and Amzie responded, "Well, long before we left the U.S. for Central America we had to learn to distinguish what was

religious culture, [and] what were biblical principles."[35] Their mission board training with the Eastern Board of Mennonite Missions had taught them to embrace Latin American culture rather than imposing U.S. perspectives and sensibilities. These initial complexities with adapting to different musical styles in church than they had been raised with was only the first test among many they would undergo in trying to differentiate between cultural mores and biblical principles.

Another major transition for them in coming to Central America was choosing to leave behind the distinctive dress of their youth among the Amish and Beachy Amish. For both of those groups distinctive dress is a way of affirming community standards—an outward demonstration of religious and community beliefs. When they moved to Honduras in 1964, the elders of their church agreed that they could adopt Honduran dress, but this decision would become more complicated in their relationship with their home church in the ensuing years. Dressing in accordance with their home church's guidelines when they were home on furlough increasingly felt disingenuous to the Yoders and they began to feel that they were living two different lives accentuated by the alteration in style of dress.

Their beliefs underwent significant transformation during their early years in Honduras as well. Within a few years, the Yoders were working with Catholics and learning from them, not exactly the mission they had been sent to perform. Amzie recalled watching Salvadoran Archbishop Óscar Romero's sermons on a little black and white TV while they were living in San Pedro Sula. Romero was the archbishop of El Salvador for three tumultuous years, from 1977 until his assassination on March 24, 1980. When he was appointed archbishop many Salvadoran liberation theologians were

[35] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

disappointed due to his conservative reputation. Within a month of his appointment, a progressive priest and close friend of his, Rutilio Grande, was assassinated. His death had a profound effect on Romero, who soon began to show his radical side and increasingly spoke out in favor of the poor and oppressed in Salvadoran society. His words led to increasingly violent reprisals against the church from the Salvadoran military and eventually led to his own assassination.[36]

In many of his sermons Archbishop Romero spoke of God's "preferential option" for the poor and the political dimensions of the Christian faith.[37] Not only was it revolutionary for Amzie and Elena to learn from a Catholic speaking about Christian faith, but Romero's new emphasis on poverty and social concern also changed the way that the Yoders believed they should engage the world as Christians. They both spoke of developing a more holistic sense of the gospel during the 1970s. They developed a political conscience, even though they remained non-voters in accordance with their upbringing. Amzie also began developing what he referred to as an "alternative conscience to the typical 'evangelicalist' approach." He described the "evangelicalist" approach as wholly centered on a personal relationship with God, and "let the rest of the world go to hell mentality, where it's alright if you're alright with God but you don't get involved with anything that's going around."[38] Living among poverty and suffering with rural Hondurans changed their perspective of how Christians should relate to the world.

---

[36] Gordon Spykman, Guillermo Cook, Michael Dodson, Lance Grahn, Sidney Rooy, and John Stam, *Let My People Live: Faith and Struggle in Central America* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 3-10.

[37] Ibid., 10.

[38] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

Christian life was no longer solely focused on a right relationship with God, but also extended to their relationships with other people and the world.

Amzie and Elena's early ecumenical leanings in Honduras became even clearer in Guatemala, where they developed a Mennonite seminary called SEMILLA. Started in 1984, the seminary focused on providing religious training to rural pastors throughout Guatemala and eventually throughout all of Central America. They worked directly with Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Pentecostals, among others. Like several other radicalized missionaries, many of their transformative moments were connected to the development of new seminaries in Central America, as they became places of opening dialogue, critical inquiry, and social engagement. The people taking courses throughout Guatemala were of very diverse backgrounds, and they focused on embracing that diversity through their curriculum.[39] Within the seminary, Elena started a program called CASAS, or Central America Study and Service, which brought college students from the United States and Europe to live in Guatemala for a semester learning Spanish, Latin American culture and history, and living with Guatemalan families. In the mid-1980s this was a fairly revolutionary program for evangelical and Mennonite colleges, and rapidly advanced Elena's political and theological transformation as well, as she brought in people from all parts of Guatemalan society to speak to the students. Working with these people in the midst of violent guerrilla warfare in Guatemala deeply transformed both Amzie and Elena. They began to see the negative effects of United States policies in the region and saw the terrible violence among their friends and acquaintances. Before long they were taking part in public peace protests in Guatemala.[40]

---

[39] Ibid.

Another significant part of Elena's transformation during the 1980s dealt with feminism and gender equality. She and Amzie came of age in a subculture that enforced distinct roles for men and women, some of which carried through into their mission board's assignment of duties and roles for missionaries. Elena noted that the mission never gave her an official job and she and other married missionary women were seen primarily as helpers to their husbands' ministries, responsible for the raising of their children as well. In Guatemala, Elena broke out of this mold and developed CASAS as part of a master's program that she was able to complete via correspondence courses through Azusa Pacific University in California. This was an extremely powerful transition for her as a woman. It changed the ways she related to other women in Central America—for example, she began paying the mothers who hosted American students for the CASAS program rather than the fathers. It also affected her relationship with Amzie. In her words, developing CASAS and starting a master's program at Azusa was part of a mid-life crisis for her. She was not sure that her master's degree would ever get her a job, but it was a very important process to her as she said, "It helped me to define a new person that I wanted to be."[41] This new empowerment increased her desire to promote that for women in Guatemala as well. One of the elements of SEMILLA that both Amzie and Elena felt most proud of was that the seminary worked to empower the voiceless, many women leaders among them, training them and preparing them for more visible roles in church hierarchy.

Cliff and Linda Holland came to Central America just a few years after Amzie and Elena. The Hollands moved to Costa Rica as missionaries with the Latin America

---

[40] Ibid.

[41] Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

Mission in 1972.[42] Cliff had already served in the Air Force for four years, directed youth programs at two churches, and been an associate pastor at two others before they moved to Costa Rica.[43] They were married in 1958, while Cliff was still in the Air Force, then spent a few years in undergraduate studies at Moody Bible Institute and Biola College in California. Cliff got his master's degree at Fuller Seminary just a year before they moved to Costa Rica. When they first moved to Costa Rica, Cliff worked for the International Institute for In-Depth Evangelization, which was part of the Latin America Mission and Linda did administrative work for the Mission before becoming more actively involved with a group that published a magazine called *Mesoamerica* in the early 1980s. *Mesoamerica* was a magazine that tried to present a Latin American perspective of U.S. involvement in the region and often provoked U.S. evangelical ire by challenging dominant conservative voices in the U.S. By 1989, they left the Latin America Mission, but stayed in Costa Rica, with Cliff continuing research and work with evangelization and church growth throughout Central America and Linda running the Institute for Central American Studies that published *Mesoamerica*.[44]

Both Cliff and Linda grew up Baptist and were intimately involved in evangelical churches in California before they became missionaries in Costa Rica. Linda spoke of her experience growing up Baptist, gaining a very narrow sense of what it meant to be a Christian, saying, "All my life and before birth, I was in a Baptist church, and I had always heard and understood clearly that if you were really a Christian, you were a

---

[42] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

[43] Cliff Holland, curriculum vitae, PROLADES, http://www.prolades.com/clh-resume.htm (accessed October 26, 2011).

[44] Cliff Holland, curriculum vitae, PROLADES, http://www.prolades.com/clh-resume.htm (accessed October 26, 2011); Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

Baptist because Baptists were right and they really believed the Bible and had a correct interpretation."[45] Early on in their marriage they spent time at Moody Bible Institute, and the level of fundamentalist fervor there even surprised Linda. Even when they were in a Congregational church in California, much of their vision of Christianity remained fully evangelical and quite conservative, although Cliff mentioned that his work with the Civil Rights Movement and Latino rights in Southern California in the 1960s began to shift his political perspective to some degree.[46]

It did not take long for Cliff and Linda's political and theological transformation to deepen once they moved to Costa Rica in 1972. Linda's first experience that dramatically changed the way she perceived the world happened in the slums of San José. She said she had never been exposed to much poverty, working as a secretary for Price Waterhouse and then for Ralph Winter at Fuller Theological Seminary. But soon after she moved to San José, she heard a story about a six-month old baby that one of her friends had met in the slums that weighed only two and a half pounds. She did not believe it, and out of curiosity, more than anything, asked to go along to see the baby. She explained, "I went over and my heart was just touched, I mean here was this baby, and the mommy was happy because her baby didn't cry – this baby didn't have enough energy to cry."[47] Linda was so moved by the experience that she took the baby to the hospital instantly and over the next few weeks worked with the mother to try to save the baby's life. This was a story of two very different women working together. Linda found herself going back and forth in what became an increasingly divided life, between

---

[45] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

[46] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

[47] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

tennis at the racket club and then working with the mother on what she considered the most basic health issues from boiling water for the baby formula to understanding the ratio of formula to water. She found herself standing in lines to find government aid for the mother and the baby. Her world of tennis and government aid lines felt increasingly disparate.

Through her relationship to this woman and her family, her eyes were opened to stark poverty and inequality that she did not even know existed. Linda spoke of one aspect of her spiritual formation that was challenged by this situation by talking about learning the four spiritual laws in high school and how important they were to her understanding of the world. One of those laws (in her words) was "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." But when she saw the poverty and hopelessness among the women that she met in the slums of San José her thought was, "if God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life… this can't be it. The way you're living cannot be God's plan for anybody's life." But rather than blame these women for the difficulties they lived with, it made her question inequities among Christians, as she thought, "There's something wrong, if Christians over here are driving big snazzy cars and living in lovely, nice big homes, and Christians over here, are literally starving…. It just was so obvious to me."[48]

Cliff was also in the midst of theological and political transformation as he became more involved with ecumenical efforts and the charismatic renewal among Catholics. The charismatic renewal movement emphasized a spirituality embracing prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s among Catholics. It also spread into Protestant groups. His initial forays into this

[48] Ibid.

ecumenical world were part of his research on church growth and he thought of himself as a cultural anthropologist, but eventually he became involved enough that some of the people he worked with began to wonder if he had joined the movement and lost a strictly evangelical perspective. Linda also remembered beginning to appreciate interactions with Catholic Christians during these early years and both found themselves shifting their perspective about how evangelicals and Catholics should relate to each other.[49] During this time they became close friends with other missionaries at the Latin American Biblical Seminary who were in the midst of their own radicalizations, such as Dick and Irene Foulkes. Relating to the Foulkes and others helped change how the Hollands viewed the world.[50]

Another moment when Cliff and Linda became much more radicalized was through their experience seeing the devastating effects of the U.S.-funded Sandinista-Contra war in Nicaragua during the 1980s. They facilitated travel and itineraries for several Christian groups who came to Nicaragua to try to understand the situation better. Through these experiences they saw intimately how terrible war was for Nicaraguans. Linda noted that she had never really had any strong feelings for or against war because she had not had much experience with it. Cliff had been in the Air Force in the late 1950s, but that was during peacetime. But in the early 80s "after being in Nicaragua, and staying with Nicaraguan families, and listening to what was [going on] there," Linda soon became a pacifist.[51]

---

[49] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

[50] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

[51] Ibid.

Cliff not only saw the violence taking place in Nicaragua, but was also changed by the experience of seeing violence in El Salvador during the same period. He was traveling around Central America training local pastors and spoke of being in El Salvador just days after over 100 people were massacred during a big protest, being harassed by Salvadoran police, and finding dead bodies beside the road. Speaking of that time, he said, "You're in that context, and you share the pain and the turmoil of the local pastors who want to denounce injustice."[52] Once people knew he was sympathetic to their plight, he found more and more people approaching him when he conducted training courses for rural pastors. These people would pull him aside, telling him about how their families were killed by the military.

Each of these experiences deeply transformed Cliff and Linda. Their perspectives on politics and theology changed drastically during this time, but they did not feel the depth of their transformation until they returned to the United States on furlough. Linda especially did not really think of herself as changing much over their early years in Central America, but when she went back to Southern California and spoke with her friends there, she began to realize that she was significantly different than just a few years before when she had been fully part of this church and group of friends.[53]

A third group of missionaries entered Central America in the mid- to late-1970s and went to Guatemala. These missionaries, Rick and Janice Waldrop and Dennis and Rachel Smith, entered a very different context than their earlier predecessors who had started off in Costa Rica and Honduras which, although riven by great poverty, were relatively peaceful during the 1950s and 1960s. By the time these new missionaries

---

[52] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

[53] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

arrived in Guatemala, the country was in upheaval. Being thrown directly into such a volatile context changed the way that they connected with Central America and people there. Each of them had dramatic experiences in their first several years, seeing firsthand the potent effects of violence and repression.

Rick and Janice Waldrop were missionaries with the Church of God, a Pentecostal denomination, in Guatemala from 1976 to 1994. As noted previously, Rick's radicalization began in language study in Costa Rica, before they even went to Guatemala for their long-term placement. It was in Costa Rica that he first heard of liberation theology and began to feel some resonance with the movement. After they moved to Guatemala, he delved into contextual theology as he was working on his doctorate through Fuller Theological Seminary, studying theology within the Latin American context. His intellectual endeavors, combined with living amidst the violent civil war in Guatemala, began to change the way that Rick viewed theology and relations between Latin America and the United States.[54]

Then on November 11th, 1979, Rick was kidnapped by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, one of the main guerrilla groups fighting against the government in Guatemala's civil war. He was only kidnapped for a few hours and he described it as simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but it was clearly a traumatic experience. The kidnappers threatened to kill him and held a gun to his head while questioning him and berating him as an agent of imperialism. Rick remembered that the guerrillas were angry with him both as a representative of the United States government that was "funding the corrupt and oppressive government in Guatemala" and as a Christian missionary. Through their conversations Rick realized that they were not aware that leftist

[54] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

missionaries could actually support guerrilla movements, and they viewed him as part of a repressive Christian force. At one point in their conversation he told them that he was sympathetic to their cause and they began to listen to him a bit more. However, he followed that statement by saying that he did not agree with their methods. And then, he added another sentence, which he thought must have been "the conservative evangelical missionary coming out in me," as he said that he believed that the gospel had the power to change people's lives. This was not what the young guerrillas holding him hostage wanted to hear, as one of them walked up to Rick and, as Rick recounted it, "He had this short, sawed off shot-gun, he cocked it, he put it up to my head, said, 'You son of a bitch, one more word and I'm going to blow your fucking brains out.'"[55] Rick decided to stay quiet for a little while after that. Eventually, the guerrillas abandoned him, leaving because they heard the army was moving towards them, and Rick made it back home safely.

The next four or five months were difficult for Rick as he dealt with post-traumatic stress and continually had nightmares about people coming to kill him and his family. Around this time, the Waldrops almost decided to leave Guatemala because the post-traumatic stress was too great, but in the end they decided to stay. Rather than turning him against the guerrillas, Rick said this experience somehow made him even more sympathetic to the guerrillas' cause. He noted that some people considered this simply taking on his captors' ideological perspective, but in his mind it was part of a process that he was already working through. He had been working on contextual theology and teaching and learning from pastors at the Bible institute in ways that

[55] Ibid.

affected his perspective and made him more sympathetic to the guerrillas' cause in Guatemala.[56]

Not long after he was kidnapped, Rick and several other missionaries and Guatemalan pastors formed a group called Guatemalans for Peace and Justice. The group gathered periodically to write letters opposing government and military repression in Guatemala. They had to remain anonymous however, because it was so dangerous to publicly criticize the government during those years. Even with their attempts to maintain anonymity, Rick soon became known as a subversive. He started receiving death threats from anonymous callers that he assumed were connected to the Guatemalan government.[57] Then he found out that his name had made it into a military intelligence office and he was on a military hit list. The husband of one of the women at the Waldrops' church worked in the Guatemalan military intelligence office and talked to the pastor of the church, telling him that both Rick and the pastor were on a "watch list." As he explained it, there were two lists. The first was proven guerrilla fighters and sympathizers, collaborators, university professors who were Marxists, and they were all targeted for assassination. The second list, which both Rick and the pastor were on, was of people that the military believed were aiding the guerrillas, but they couldn't prove it. The military was monitoring these people, watching where they went and listening to what they said for proof that they were in league with the guerrillas.[58]

Eventually, Rick and Janice's mission board felt that they were in too much danger and moved them to Costa Rica and then onto Honduras for several years before

---

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

moving them back to Guatemala in 1986. Rick's radicalization continued through each of these places. In Honduras, he trained rural pastors and saw the difficulties they lived with every day attempting to interpret theology within their individual contexts. In Costa Rica, the Waldrops lived in San José and Rick took courses at the Latin American Biblical Seminary. This is where he first met John Stam and a more radical missionary community at the seminary. By the time they moved back to Guatemala, Rick had more fully explored what he considered to be the radical roots of Pentecostalism. He had continued moving ideologically toward pacifism and developed greater sympathy for liberation theology. This would lead him into increasing conflict with his sending community, church members in the United States, his missionary overseers, and other evangelical Christians in the United States.

Dennis and Rachel Smith first came to Guatemala for a year in 1974-1975 as volunteers sponsored by First Presbyterian Church in Evanston, Illinois, where Dennis had started attending after the Wheaton campus pastor recommended it as a place where Dennis would get evangelical pastoral care. During that year they worked in a school set up by missionaries in Guatemala City, and Dennis was also able to travel extensively around Guatemala and do some photo documentaries as well as other communications work. After that they were back in the United States for several years before becoming full-time missionaries starting in 1977. They spent a few months in language training and orientation in Mexico and then moved to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Dennis was part of a committee that distributed religious films and also trained Guatemalans in community radio, popular theater and popular journalism. Rachel spent their initial time

in Guatemala learning the indigenous language Quiche.[59] Through their connections with Guatemalans in these various tasks they began to change some of their theological and political perspectives.

Dennis had grown up Conservative Baptist and while he felt that this upbringing helped him understand that he was part of a global Christianity, it also gave him a conservative political and theological orientation. This began to change through some of his experiences with short-term missions when he was younger, but really came to fruition when they moved to Guatemala. As early as their first newsletter sent back to friends and family in the United States, just weeks after they had moved to Guatemala, readers can see an example of how deeply they were affected by the reality of living and working among Central American people, as they advocated that the United States grant sovereignty over the Panama Canal to Panama. This was a serious issue among evangelicals in the United States at the time, as many sided with more conservative U.S. politicians in arguing that the U.S. had built the Canal and therefore deserved to maintain control of it. Living in Central America made the Smiths feel that this was a clear-cut issue and said, "We exhort you as brothers and sisters in Christ to write your senators today, indicating your support for the new treaty as a step toward justice for Panama and better relations with all Latin America."[60]

---

[59] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009; Dennis Smith, letter to Hazel J. McGeary, 4 March 1978, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Fraternal Worker 1977-1988;" Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 9 October 1974, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala;" Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 12 November 1974, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala;" Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 22 February 1978, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala."

[60] Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 22 February 1978, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala."

One early event that was important to Dennis and Rachel's radicalization was the massacre of indigenous people in Panzos, Guatemala on May 29, 1978. Reports of the massacre varied widely. The Guatemalan army claimed that they were attacked by guerrilla-trained, armed *campesinos* and in their attempt to defend themselves, 34 *campesinos* were killed and 17 more were injured. Through stories from people they knew, the Smiths came to believe that the *campesinos* were unarmed and the army killed at least 100 people, injured 200 more, and quickly buried many of the bodies in unidentified graves to cover up the evidence.[61] While volunteering for a year in 1974-1975, Dennis had taken photos in Panzos and gotten to know many of the people in the village so he had a personal connection to the community affected by this massacre. He recounted that he had "stayed in some of these people's homes, and shared chili peppers and a cup of coffee and tortillas."[62] His connection to this community that had been destroyed deeply affected him and he wrote an emotional letter to his supporters back in the United States expressing his anger, sadness, and frustration at the atrocious repression and violence exemplified by the Panzos massacre. In the end he sent a much tamer letter, because an older missionary who read the more passionate version told him that not only would it not change people's minds in the U.S., but that "by providing testimonies and independent news about an army massacre, that there was the possibility of endangering the ministry of the church."[63]

---

[61] Dennis and Rachel Smith, support letter, 20 June 1978, in Dennis Smith's personal files, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala;" a full account of the massacre is in Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[62] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 29 February 2009.

[63] Ibid.

The Smiths' radicalization continued dramatically during their first year as missionaries in Guatemala, as they sent back many newsletters to friends and family talking about new issues they were grappling with, from poverty to contextual theology to some of the negative aspects of U.S. influence in the region. The Guatemalan military intensified its scorched earth campaign against indigenous Guatemalans, with such atrocious violence that the Panzos massacre paled in comparison. The Smiths were deeply connected to many people affected by the increasing violence and struggled to find ways to understand the immensity of the tragedy. It was during this time that Dennis met Rick Waldrop and helped start the Guatemalans for Peace and Justice group along with several others. Although Rick and Dennis were from very different missionary organizations, they shared some commonality in their perspective on the violence in Guatemala and were both in the midst of intense transformations.[64]

In 1983, the Smiths decided to spend a year traveling around the United States with a group of Central Americans presenting a Latin American perspective on issues in life and missions in Central America, among them imperialism, poverty, and contextual theology. Much of Dennis's perspective on topics such as these had changed through his first several years living and working in Central America. Growing up in his Conservative Baptist church he remembered being taught "a Christian is… a guy who doesn't dance or drink or chew, or go with girls that do."[65] This simplistic version of the theological perspective of his youth changed drastically through his years in Central America. In a support letter from 1989, Dennis spoke of some of his theological transformation. After talking about some of the questions raised in his mind as he related

[64] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

[65] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 29 February 2009.

to people throughout Central America, "a people plagued with poverty, oppression and death," he spoke of his more complicated theological perspective after those experiences, saying,

> I'm not a trained theologian. I've picked up most of my theology here, on the streets. Central American peasants and pastors have been very patient with me as we have read God's Word together. I am deeply grateful to them and to those few theologians… whose published work has been dedicated to systematizing the theological insights of those on the margins of society.

He went on to highlight a few of the components of his new theology saying that God "chooses to be identified especially with the poor, the abandoned, the marginated and the oppressed." And he continued, "I have learned that God is an extremist. God is radical. God takes sides. God chooses to challenge and punish the unrepentant oppressor. God chooses to defend the victims of sin, the broken, the excluded."[66] This was a radical theological and political transformation for a person born into a Conservative Baptist family in California. He summarized his transformation a bit less dramatically in our conversation nearly 20 years after he wrote that letter to his church supporters in the U.S., simply saying that his "experiences of encountering the other" throughout life had taught him that the world was "more complex… messier… and more profoundly human than one would have suspected at first blush."[67]

One final missionary couple, Mark and Lynn Baker, came to Honduras in the 1980s, later than the others in this study. They faced similar transformations in regards to poverty in the region, but only connected to the violent upheaval of Central America through visits to El Salvador. They also came of age in evangelical churches in the U.S.

---

[66] Dennis Smith, support letter, 14 April 1989, in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Monthly Letters from Guatemala."

[67] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 29 February 2009.

twenty to thirty years later than the other missionaries in this dissertation. By that time, evangelical churches in the U.S. had begun to change, but Mark and Lynn still held many similar ideas about what it meant to become missionaries. Like many others, they were shocked by the poverty of Central America and the negative effects of U.S. foreign policy in the region, but they also had a better sense of how evangelicals in the U.S. had changed over the years and how difficult it would be to translate their new insights back to their friends and family there.

Mark and Lynn Baker's radicalizations happened at different times over the course of their early years in Central America. Mark had taught at a school in Tegucigalpa, Honduras for four years, starting in 1979, before returning to the U.S. for a few years where he and Lynn met, married, and eventually moved back to Honduras as missionaries. Some of Lynn's radicalization came through learning about Mark's experience even before she came to Honduras, but her firsthand experience in Honduras when they moved back to Central America was even more powerful in her political and theological transformation.

Mark's experience teaching at the school in Tegucigalpa opened his eyes to a kind of poverty that he had never really experienced growing up. But what really shocked Mark and made him begin to re-think some aspects of his faith were his initial experiences traveling with other missionaries to meet Salvadoran refugees in Honduras, fleeing the brutal repression of the Salvadoran military in the summer of 1982. Mark had become interested in the worsening violence in El Salvador, but was somewhat confused by the situation. Growing up he had been taught that communists and Marxists were always the bad guys, but the stories he heard coming from El Salvador did not fit with

that belief, as he heard more about atrocities occurring at the hands of those who were fighting against the communists.

One day in August of 1982, Mark was walking through downtown Tegucigalpa and bumped into an old friend named Blake Ortman, who was working with the Mennonite Central Committee in El Salvador. Mark saw this as his chance to find out more about what was going on in El Salvador so he started asking Blake questions and Blake responded that he should join him to visit one of the Salvadoran refugee camps in Honduras, where he was headed the next day. Since school was not in session at that time, Mark joined Blake and spent several days at the Mesa Grande refugee camp in San Marcos de Ocotepeque, Honduras. He had heard second-hand stories of the violence and despair in El Salvador, but hearing stories from the people themselves, seeing their squalid living situation, and feeling the "air of frustration" in the refugee camp powerfully affected him. He spent much of his time sitting and talking with these people who had fled the violence and heard their individual stories.

In our interview he recalled one of the stories that was most powerful to him; he remembered talking with a boy who was nine or ten who had fled El Salvador with some of his family, but then mentioned that his father was in the Salvadoran military. Mark could not understand why this kid and his family would have to flee the country if his father was in the military, but the boy simply said, "Sometimes they [the Salvadoran military] don't ask questions [before they shoot people]." Mark was deeply affected as he came to realize the intense fear that Salvadoran people lived with, even those who seemingly would have been protected by having a relative within the military. Mark did not know how to compute all the stories he was hearing but said later, "In my guts I

became a pacifist in those days."[68] A few weeks later Mark was back in Tegucigalpa, still reeling from the intense stories that he had heard in the refugee camp, when he found a book on a fellow missionary's shelf called *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*.[69] This book by Jacques Ellul became an important tool as Mark tried to deal with this violence that he believed was wrong and yet was funded by the United States.

Soon Mark returned to teaching and was not able to find time to return fully to the Salvadoran situation until May of 1983. He was able to engage with current events in El Salvador some through his teaching since he was a social studies teacher. Also, like other radicalized missionaries in this study, Mark found that once his Central American friends found out that he had been to a refugee camp and was critical of the United States, they opened up their own stories to him more fully and each one seemed to confirm his political and theological transformations toward pacifism and becoming more critical of U.S. involvement in the region. Mark also remembered a moment when he felt that President Reagan was lying and this undermined his faith in the United States. The father of some of his students in Tegucigalpa was the manager of a luxury hotel in town and Mark would sometimes swim there. One day he remembered running into two American pilots at the hotel pool. They started talking and told Mark about working with the U.S. government to fly in aid to the Contras near the Nicaraguan border in Honduras. When President Reagan denied that the U.S. was giving any aid to the Contras a few weeks

---

[68] Mark Baker, journal entry, 21 August 1982, in Mark Baker's personal archive; Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

[69] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

later, Mark felt betrayed. He remembered thinking, "I'm a good evangelical kid. I don't expect my president to lie!"[70]

In May of 1983, Mark was able to go into El Salvador and visit with victims of the violence there, trying to understand the situation and decipher what his response should be as a Christian. What he found deepened his belief in pacifism and fueled his doubts about the role of the United States in Central America.[71] When he returned to the U.S. later that summer he was still dealing with the powerful thoughts and emotions stemming from his conversations with Central Americans in the midst of violence. He wrote a support letter to his friends and family around the United States and told them of his struggle to find a Christian response to the violence in Central America. He requested that they write letters to the editor and letters to their legislators in support of human rights. He recommended donating money to several projects that he had been involved with in Honduras, hoping to foster connection between U.S. church members and Christians in Honduras. And finally he asked people to go to Central America and learn to know people there. He said they "need to go. They need to live with the nationals so they can understand the problems first hand…."[72]

Mark also found himself in the midst of theological transformations. Living amongst crushing poverty and being connected with refugees fleeing intense violence, he found himself starting to read the Bible differently than he had before. He remembered for the first time, "reading my Bible and seeing all these verses about the poor, justice,

---

[70] Ibid.

[71] Mark Baker, journal entries, 14 and 17 May 1983, in Mark Baker's personal archive.

[72] Mark Baker, support letter, October 1983, in Mark Baker's personal archive.

and asking, 'Why have I never seen these before? Why don't we talk about those?'"[73] These questions demonstrated a fundamental transformation in the way that Mark thought about his spirituality.

In September of 1983, Mark decided to spend a semester at an evangelical academic program in the mountains of southern Oregon called the Oregon Extension. The Oregon Extension was started in the late 1970s by a few faculty members of evangelical colleges. They formed a small program where students from colleges around the country spend a semester with 20 to 30 other students living in community, re-thinking evangelical faith. Mark had met one of the faculty members from the Oregon Extension while he was back in the U.S. for a few months during the summer of 1982. He spent the fall semester of 1983 at the Oregon Extension and met Lynn Miller there. They got married a year later in October 1984. While at the Oregon Extension, Mark remembered being very focused on the crisis he had seen firsthand in Central America. Almost every issue they talked about at the Oregon Extension that semester he found himself turning back to the issues that were fresh on his mind. He said, "I was consumed with Central America."[74]

Lynn, on the other hand, had never been out of the country, save one short jaunt to Niagara Falls. She got most of her early education about Central America through Mark and soon after they were married they started taking groups of American students to Central America to learn about human rights violations and the United States' role in the region. Lynn remembered her early political and theological transformations as being uncomfortable in some ways. She said, "I fought the reality I was seeing. Our family

---

[73] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

[74] Ibid.

[growing up] was Republican and the United States was a wonderful country and we really cared about the rest of the world and I believed that. I had no reason to disbelieve that."[75] But it did not take long before Lynn's beliefs began changing. She found herself asking increasingly painful questions about God and suffering, faith and poverty, and what it meant to be a Christian in the midst of such terrible situations. Lynn also went to Salvadoran refugee camps and heard people's stories. She recalled being shocked at the lack of bitterness among the refugees. She was having a difficult time reconciling what she saw as her country's negative involvement in El Salvador and how these people were treated so brutally, yet remained so "full of life and joy and hope."[76]

Each of these missionaries' stories demonstrates the dramatic political and theological transformations they all went through. Not all of their transformations were exactly the same. Each had unique experiences that led them to think about their connection to the poor differently, or their belief that the U.S. was a positive force in Central America, or whether or not they should work with Catholics, mainline Protestant Christians, liberation theologians, or any of the many groups that most evangelicals in the U.S. believed they had sent their missionaries to Central America to convert.

The stories of transforming missionaries in this chapter are not comprehensive. They are merely a sampling of some of the kinds of transformations that some Christian missionaries went through in Central America during this time. Others include Howard and Peggy Heiner, who worked as Methodist missionaries in Nicaragua during the 1980s, aiding the Sandinista revolution through agricultural projects. Howard grew up Republican, was a fighter pilot in the Korean War, and then went to Latin America in

---

[75] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

[76] Ibid.

1969 and was shocked by the unjust living situations there. By the 1980s, he found himself in Nicaragua working with forestation programs in the midst of a war between the Sandinistas and the Contras.[77] Paul Jeffrey and Lida Pierce were missionaries in Nicaragua during the 1980s as well and ended up supporting the Sandinista revolution in many ways, as they found a new kind of revolutionary spirit among Nicaraguan Christians reading the Bible in their context. They also had friends who were caught up in the violence of the Sandinista-Contra war and these experiences changed how they understood their faith and their role as missionaries. In an interview with Bill Moyers in 1987, Paul Jeffrey spoke of their transformation as missionaries, saying, "We've come here to be converted by the people with whom we work. We've brought the gospel to them, but they're also people who already have the gospel and are sharing it back with us. And for us to come here is a conversion experience."[78]

George Baldwin was another person who was radically transformed by his experiences in Nicaragua during the 1980s. He had been an ordained pastor for 26 years and a respected theology professor at a United Methodist seminary for 14 years when he came to Nicaragua in 1984. When he went to Nicaragua, he left all of that behind. He resigned from his seminary, returned his credentials to the United Methodist Church, got rid of all of his belongings, and moved to Nicaragua to live among the poor and victims of violence of the war there. He started attending Catholic mass with the people he lived with, stopped preaching, and spent his time digging ditches and helping to raise cattle alongside poor Nicaraguans. He lived and worked in the village of Paiwas "with people who had been displaced by the terrorism of the Contras…." Through his experiences

---

[77] Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, VHS, Public Broadcasting Service, 1987.

[78] Ibid.

there he came to believe that God does take sides, and that he takes the side of the poor. In his book he wrote, "By sharing my life with these courageous and faithful people deep within the jungles of Nicaragua I learned firsthand about the importance of the Biblical theme of 'Liberation.'"[79]

Charles and Lois Troutman were missionaries with the Latin America Mission for many years in Costa Rica. They described one aspect of their transformation in Central America in an article titled, "We Don't Believe in Violence, but…" in *His* magazine published by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. They described how their work growing roses to help support about twenty Costa Rican families was destroyed when a wealthy cabinet minister dammed up the river in the mountains so that he could transport that water to his property. They explained that a furious neighbor had taken the cabinet minister to court and won the case against him, but that there was no way that Costa Rican officials would enforce the ruling against the cabinet minister because he was from a wealthy family and thus, "was above the law." Charles and Lois were incensed at the injustice of the situation but realized they were left with few options to regain the water for their rose-growing operation. They wrote, "The only thing left for those farmers—and us—to do was to blow up the dam. And the fact that we did not blow up the dam meant that twenty families no longer had their means of support…. By not being violent, we acquiesced to the destruction of twenty families."[80] Their story revealed one specific circumstance that could powerfully transform missionaries' understandings of right and wrong, of justice and Christian duty.

---

[79] George W. Baldwin, *A Political Reading of the Life of Jesus* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2006), xiii, 113; Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, VHS, Public Broadcasting Service, 1987.

[80] Charles and Lois Troutman, "We Don't Believe in Violence, but…," *His*, December 1983, 16-17.

Each of the missionaries in this study was transformed by their experiences living and working in Central America. Whether it was through working with pastors and theologians reading the Bible in the context of Central America or learning to know victims of violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, or Nicaragua, each of them changed their perspective on politics, patriotism, poverty, violence, and theology. These missionaries who had come to Central America with the goal of converting others were in fact converted themselves. Their transformations did not come easily. But unlike some of their fellow missionaries who remained unchanged, they opened themselves to learning from those they had been sent to teach. They did not know how these experiences would change them in the beginning and often found themselves looking at important issues very differently after years of living in Central America.

The Stams' gradual transformation over years in Costa Rica, culminating in the excitement of the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s surely felt radically different than Dennis and Rachel Smith's jolt into transformation as they experienced the potent effects of violence in their first years in Guatemala during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Experiencing the excitement of theological innovation amongst ecumenical groups in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s surely felt different for the Foulkes than the Bakers' experiences working with poor people in Honduras and hearing stories of families being torn apart by violence in El Salvador in the 1980s. Each of these missionaries' individual radicalizations came about in the midst of different daily experiences, but each of them also dealt with the same basic issue despite these differences: their theological understandings and political and cultural ideologies had to adapt to help them understand the powerful experiences that they underwent in Central America. Whether it was

violence, poverty, theological innovation, revolutionary fervor, or seeing the negative effects of U.S. foreign policy in the region, the beliefs that they held when they arrived in Central America did not account for Central American experience. Seeing the other side of what they had previously considered to be clear-cut issues, forced them to renegotiate their belief systems.

Radicalized missionaries often had a growing concern for social justice and began searching for an end to poverty and hunger, as well organizing for an end to war. They also developed openness to ecumenical work with other Christians—mainline Protestants and Catholics—seeing validity in others' theology. They grew more committed to education with goals of dignity and independence promoted through the expansion of seminaries they worked at in Central America and making them accessible to people who were not able to go to seminary under traditional circumstances. Their theology often shifted as well, as they placed more significance on relationships with people and less insistence on exclusive ownership of the truth.

These transformations were not only important to each of these missionaries themselves, however. After all, each of these missionaries had been sent by churches, mission boards, friends, family, and evangelicals around the United States. How would these sending communities respond to the changes in their missionaries? Would they listen to the experiences that they brought back and told them about on furloughs and in letters to their supporters in the U.S.? Or would they find other ways of marginalizing or silencing these newly radicalized missionaries? The story of the conflict between radicalized missionaries and their sending communities in the United States reveals much not only about the missionary enterprise, but also about the changing political and

theological frameworks of evangelical communities in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s.

CHAPTER 5

RECLAIMING CHRISTIAN AMERICA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVANGELICALS IN THE UNITED STATES

While some of their missionaries in Central America were in the midst of significant transformations, drifting leftward in their political and theological perspectives, evangelicals in the United States were going through important changes themselves. From the 1950s through the 1980s, evangelical churches in the U.S. became increasingly political, largely attached to conservative Republican ideology. Increasingly throughout these years, conservative evangelicals attempted legislative efforts and government involvement to spread their moral ideology throughout the United States. They asserted that the U.S. was founded on Christian principles and determined to "take back the country for God."

This chapter will examine the increasing politicization of United States evangelicals from the 1950s through the 1980s. Through the 1970s and especially in the 1980s, conservative evangelicals turned some of their newly politicized perspective to debates about leftist revolutionaries in Central America. Many organizations arose dedicated to eradicating communism throughout Central America during the 1980s, especially in opposition to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, leading to intense conflicts with their radicalized missionaries, which will be more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter.

Conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists had largely disengaged from politics after the Scopes Trial in 1925, when public opinion turned against fundamentalist opposition to teaching Darwinian evolution in public schools. Conservative evangelicals

still held to their moral ideology but were less focused on legislating their moral vision through the government.[1] As discussed in chapter one, in the 1940s and 1950s, evangelicals began to lay the foundations for a larger role in public life through the development of the National Association of Evangelicals, *Christianity Today*, several evangelical academic institutions, and a multitude of other evangelical organizations from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to the National Religious Broadcasters.[2] These organizations created a foundation that would later serve as a center of education, help establish a public evangelical identity, and form groups that would enable evangelicals to engage the U.S. public and political scene more fully. The development of *Christianity Today* will be used in this dissertation as a lens for analyzing the growing politicization of evangelicals from 1956, when the magazine began, through the 1970s and 1980s. The magazine was explicitly and publically evangelical from its beginning. In the first issue of the magazine its editor stated its goal to present historical Christianity and establish an evangelical voice in the world that avoided the pitfalls of mainline denominations on the left and fundamentalists on the right. Many other organizations took part in this movement to reassert evangelicalism, but *Christianity Today* played a special role in the creation of evangelical identity from the 1950s through the 1980s.

During the 1950s, in the early stages of the development of a larger evangelical engagement in both U.S. and global politics, evangelicals were strongly anti-communist and promoted strict morality among Christians. However, many still lived according to the belief that their "kingdom was not of this world, but rather in heaven." In its early

---

[1] Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 184-217.

[2] The NAE was founded in 1942, *Christianity Today* in 1956, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950, and the National Religious Broadcasters Association in 1944.

years, *Christianity Today* did voice opposition to communism, but the magazine was much more oriented towards pastors and ministers within the Protestant tradition. Evangelicals at *Christianity Today* were committed to forging a new path between what they saw as the limited public engagement of fundamentalists on their right and mainline Protestant denominations on their left who they believed had forsaken the fundamentals of the faith. They wanted to be involved in political life while still rejecting "secular values," which they believed liberal Protestants had succumbed to. During the 1950s, as the Stams and Foulkes left for Central America, most evangelicals were still uncertain about exactly what form their engagement with American society should take. Several missions agencies encouraged their missionaries to identify with Latin Americans and take on their concerns as their own, but possibly did not realize all that would entail as they still avoided some political issues such as the 1954 coup in Guatemala.

The 1960s brought new challenges for evangelicals. The radical countercultural movement of feminists, student activists, and others appalled evangelicals. They believed the nation's Christian heritage was under attack. Feminists and free-love advocates eroded the evangelical conception of marriage, while war protestors challenged the belief that the United States was a benevolent force in the world. The combination of these forces led many evangelicals to believe that their nation was crumbling. In this context, many conservative evangelicals attempted to rescue their culture from "the hands of the devil" and reassert Christian morality in the public realm. Evangelical organizations dedicated to the task of reclaiming America for God proliferated, focused on a variety of moral and political issues.

Christianity Today's writers spoke directly to these challenging issues. The cover story of the June 6th, 1969 issue was a defense of traditional, hierarchical marriage by Andre S. Bustanoby titled "Love, Honor, and Obey." Bustanoby argued that the removal of the concept of submission from marriage was unbiblical. Decrying the effects of the feminist movement on traditional marriage, he noted that women had become less likely to vow obedience to their husbands because they had been "deluged by books and magazine articles by advice-to-women experts." Rather than thinking of marriage as a partnership, he asserted that wives should submit to their husbands, as Eve did to Adam, and find their proper place as their husband's helper. He cited two other elements of the Genesis story as evidence, noting that Adam was God's priority (due to order of creation) and that Eve had been deceived by the devil in the Garden of Eden.[3] A letter to the editor from Paul J. Dollaske of the Open Door Bible Church in Bethany, Missouri that appeared in the magazine a month later praised the article, calling it superb and saying, "How refreshing to know that there are a few people left who adhere to the biblical concept of the marriage partnership and not the 50/50 partnership idea."[4]

Opposition to abortion was a slowly developing issue that would become an important evangelical rallying point by the 1980s. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, however, evangelicals showed little interest in opposing abortion. Historian George Marsden notes that strict anti-abortion views were often associated with Roman Catholics. *Christianity Today* published one issue of the magazine that contained several articles on abortion in 1968, but rarely mentioned the issue until the late 1970s. At their conventions in 1971, 1974, and 1976 the Southern Baptists actually argued for the

---

[3] Andre S. Bustanoby, "Love, Honor, and Obey," *Christianity Today*, 6 June 1969, 3-4.

[4] Paul J. Dollaske, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 4 July 1969, 25.

legalization of abortion. Not until the late 1970s did evangelicals start turning en masse against abortion. Historian Randall Balmer argues abortion hardly mattered to the Christian Right until leaders began looking for an issue to mobilize around in 1978. However, once conservative evangelicals swung towards opposition of abortion, it became one of their most powerful rallying points.[5] In their minds, abortion was caused by sexual permissiveness and a lack of responsibility, and soon came to be seen as yet another blow to the foundation of the Christian family.

Other important issues arose in the late 1960s, as *Christianity Today* articles fought back against the perceived decline of the country. In the July 4th, 1969 issue, editor Harold Lindsell wrote an editorial titled "Is Patriotism Dead?" decrying the lack of patriotism in the U.S. and blaming leftists and revolutionaries. Noting that loyal Americans would watch Independence Day parades with pride, he lamented the fact that others would not respond "because of indifference or calloused hearts." Even worse, he continued, "Others will be working to tear the fabric of our national life to shreds; to worsen, not heal, our sickness…." As he rallied Christians to honor and defend their country, he drew stark contrasts between the freedom of Americans living in a country where they could pledge their allegiance to "One nation under God," unlike millions of people "in Russia, Czechoslovakia, China, and Cuba."[6]

J. Edgar Hoover joined the backlash against leftists and revolutionaries in the pages of *Christianity Today* as well. Writing several guest articles for them over the years, his titles reveal the battle that evangelicals felt they were involved in to save the

---

[5] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 243; Randall Balmer, lecture, "Sheep Gone Astray: The Tragic History of the Religious Right," at American University, 27 April 2009.

[6] Harold Lindsell, editorial, "Is Patriotism Dead?" *Christianity Today*, 4 July 1969, 20-21.

country from imminent decline. In 1962, in an article titled "Spiritual Priorities: Guidelines for a Civilization in Peril," he spoke of the "gulf between the philosophies of the noncommunist and communist world" and argued that even "Here at home, alien forces strive to destroy the faith which forms the foundation of individual freedom…. atheistic materialism advances like an icecap, smothering all opposition, destroying freedom, 're-making' the human creature into a soulless 'communist man.'"[7] Another article in 1967 he titled, "An Analysis of the New Left: A Gospel of Nihilism."[8] Hoover's dire vision of the country in peril matched that of other writers in *Christianity Today*, as they attempted to rescue the country by invigorating evangelicals to engage the political scene returning the United States to its "Christian roots."

In 1970, Hal Lindsey published *The Late Great Planet Earth*, citing biblical prophecy that included America's moral decline among other apocalyptic occurrences—all of which were signs of the end of the world. Evangelicals made *The Late Great Planet Earth* a bestseller, buying millions of copies through the 1970s.[9] It became so popular that a film version narrated by Orson Welles was made in 1979. It was one of many apocalyptic narratives widely circulated among evangelicals during this time, which held specific political implications for those living in the United States. Many readers promoted Israel's territorial claims, while encouraging military growth to defend against the advances of atheistic communism. The book also made evangelicals leery of

---

[7] J. Edgar Hoover, "Spiritual Priorities: Guidelines for a Civilization in Peril," *Christianity Today*, 22 June 1962, 3-4.

[8] J. Edgar Hoover, "An Analysis of the New Left: A Gospel of Nihilism," *Christianity Today*, 18 August 1967, 3-6.

[9] By 1978, 9.8 million copies were in print and by 1990, 28 million copies had been printed. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 248, 269.

organizations such as the United Nations, which was depicted as a precursor to the Antichrist's coming.[10] The looming prospect of Armageddon added urgency to evangelicals' attempts to battle secularism, which they increasingly saw creeping into Christian circles. As they believed their freedoms were being infringed upon and might soon be eliminated altogether, they more fervently turned to the political arena to defend their interests.

Several important evangelical and fundamentalist leaders demonstrate this distinct turn towards significant right wing political involvement during the 1970s and into the 1980s. In 1965, a young minister from Lynchburg, Virginia named Jerry Falwell pleaded with ministers marching for civil rights to stop their political activities saying, "Preachers are not called to be politicians but to be soul winners." By the late 1970s, Falwell had become one of the most vocal leaders of the newly forming Christian Right and founded his powerful political rallying group, the Moral Majority, in 1979.[11] Dr. James Dobson was an evangelical child psychologist in California. His 1970 book *Dare to Discipline*, highlighted a culture of permissiveness and a lack of firm parental control in the American family, citing this as the fundamental cause of violence, illegal drugs, illegitimate pregnancies, and the moral decline of the country. As historian Matthew Lassiter points out, his campaign to reform the country remained primarily internal, focusing on changing the family throughout the early 1970s. However, as he continued his publishing career and started the media empire Focus on the Family, he began to more

---

[10] Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 224; Paul Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism," chapter in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 37-44.

[11] Quoted in Paul Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism," chapter in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 35.

fully enter the political realm. By the time he founded the political lobbying group the Family Research Council in 1983, promoting a return to family values, he had become one of the most powerful Christian lobbyists in the country.[12]

By 1980, conservative evangelical leaders had created a powerful coalition, setting in place the structures that would allow them to influence a substantial evangelical population around the country as well as making new inroads into national politics. This new connection to political power, combined with increasingly dire assessments of the country's moral downfall gave a sense of urgency and excitement to leaders of the movement. Ronald Reagan began capturing the hearts of many of these conservative evangelicals while campaigning in 1980, as he expressed some of the Christian right's desire to reclaim the country, often in biblical language. On August 22nd, 1980 Reagan appeared at the Religious Roundtable's National Affairs Briefing, with some 15,000 evangelical leaders in attendance, including pastors from 41 states. Several leaders at the meeting spoke of mobilizing the "pro-family movement" and taking back the public square from the "perverted goals" of feminists, gays, and lesbians. Reverend Jerry Falwell demonstrated a bit of his transformation into the political scene when he said, "We have a three-fold primary responsibility. Number one, get people saved. Number two, get them baptized. Number three, get them registered to vote." As Reagan stepped

---

[12] Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 81; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 253; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Inventing Family Values," chapter in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 20; Paul Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism," chapter in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 45.

up to the podium in front of the officially non-partisan group, he joined their movement saying, "I know you can't endorse me. But I want you to know that I endorse you."[13]

Just over two months later, Reagan won the election for president and many conservative evangelicals saw themselves as part of that victory. Some went even further, claiming God was on Reagan's side. Bobbie James, wife of Alabama Governor Forrest James, said, "It was Jesus that gave us victory. God in his mercy heard the prayers of Christians all over this country."[14] A reader of *Christianity Today* reacted to the magazine's claim that evangelicals should be careful of claiming too much credit for Reagan's victory and responded by saying, "Where then did this surprising victory come from? The evangelicals not only worked in this election for politically conservative candidates, they prayed hard, and expected God to lend them his Almighty aid."[15] Conservative evangelical leaders also included God in their understanding of Reagan's election. Tim LaHaye wrote of Reagan's victory in *Religious Broadcasting*, saying, "Our Heavenly Father looked down and saw our plight. He saw thousands of us working diligently to awaken his sleeping church to its political responsibilities and He gave us four more years to perpetuate religious freedom."[16]

Many other evangelicals felt similarly and the relationship between President Reagan and conservative evangelicals continued to grow through the early 1980s.

---

[13] Bruce Buursma, "Evangelicals Give Reagan a 'Non-Partisan' Stump," *Christianity Today*, 19 September 1980, 50; Matthew D. Lassiter, "Inventing Family Values," chapter in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13-14; Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (New York: Random House, 2001), 680.

[14] Michael Lienesch, "Right-Wing Religion: Christian Conservatism as a Political Movement," *Political Science Quarterly* 97:3 (1 October 1982): 404.

[15] J. G. Stowe, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 6 February 1981, 8.

[16] Beth Spring, "Republicans, Religion, and Reelection," *Christianity Today*, 5 October 1984, 54-58.

Reagan carefully built this relationship by speaking at evangelical conventions, playing on Christian themes, and using biblical language throughout many of his speeches. On January 31, 1983, Reagan spoke to the National Religious Broadcasters Convention, emphasizing the importance of reading the Bible and praying while also touching on abortion and government inefficiency. *Christianity Today* later reprinted excerpts of the speech for readers. Three days later, at the National Prayer Breakfast, Reagan further endeared himself to evangelicals as he signed a proclamation declaring 1983 the Year of the Bible.[17] Just a month later, Reagan spoke to the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals. His goal was to convince evangelicals to support his position against a nuclear weapon freeze. He did not limit himself to those matters solely, however, as his speech again covered the usual topics from abortion to prayer in schools to the forces of good and evil. He called Soviet totalitarianism "the focus of evil in the modern world" and said, "Let us pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness," before exiting the stage accompanied by the song "Onward Christian Soldiers." While *Christianity Today* attempted to present a picture that not all evangelicals were supporting Reagan (noting some that chafed at his choice of "Onward Christian Soldiers" and the ensuing debate at the convention over the nuclear freeze issue), the article also pointed out that applause from the enthusiastic audience interrupted the president's speech eighteen times.[18]

Reagan's relationship with evangelicals was not always easy, but even in the midst of this complex relationship conservative evangelicals often found it difficult to

---

[17] "President Reagan and the Bible," *Christianity Today*, 4 March 1983, 46-52.

[18] Beth Spring, "Reagan Courts Evangelical Clout Against Nuclear Freeze," *Christianity Today*, 8 April 1983, 44-48.

contain their glowing praise for a president who they believed was helping the country in a time of great need. An article in *Christianity Today* in September of 1983 assessed President Reagan's work as a president and how he had shifted the political landscape. While the author noted that the president had fallen short of many of his specific campaign promises to evangelicals, she argued that "in ways that cannot be precisely measured" his presidency might positively change the course of the nation. The primary way in which she saw that happening was his rhetoric, "with its God-centered world view, [that] helps counteract the rampant secularism that would shove religion to the margins of life."[19] Overall, the author believed that President Reagan had opened the government to more influence from evangelicals.

The day after Reagan commenced his reelection campaign in early 1984, he again spoke to the National Religious Broadcasters convention, an act that *Christianity Today* took as evidence that Reagan was "aligning himself more closely than ever before with conservative Christian moral causes." In a glowing article titled "Reagan Stirs the Broadcasters with an Evangelical Speech: Thunderous Applause for John 3:16," the author said, "He threw down the gauntlet against abortionists and against courts that have barred voluntary school prayer…."[20] In spite of the fact that Reagan had failed to effect many of the specific changes that evangelicals wanted in the first term of his presidency, many evangelicals still seemed enamored with his rhetoric and the increased access to power they felt in his administration's openness to conservative Christians. A book advertisement in *Christianity Today* just a few months later seemed to encapsulate the

---

[19] Beth Spring, "Rating Reagan," *Christianity Today*, 16 September 1983, 44-50.

[20] Tom Minnery, "Reagan Stirs the Broadcasters with an Evangelical Speech: Thunderous Applause for John 3:16," *Christianity Today*, 2 March 1984, 38-40.

glowing sentiments that some evangelicals had about Reagan. The advertisement for Bob Slosser's *Reagan: Inside Out*, started by declaring the book, "A spiritual portrait of power…" and continued, "Inside… discover the growing force of faith that is shaping Ronald Reagan's spiritual leadership and strengthening his ability to govern. Outside… encounter the fierce opposition of the powerful Elite Minority whose shadowy leadership is dedicated to the abolition of traditional American values." The stakes were high for conservative evangelicals and the sides were clear. Reagan's importance to the nation at that specific moment in history was underscored, as the advertisement concluded, "Bob Slosser examines the heart of a presidency that was founded in faith and that has spearheaded a return to America's fundamental source of strength in what could be history's most crucial moment."[21]

Clearly, the nature of evangelicals' relationship to government changed over the decades leading up to President Reagan's terms in office, when conservative evangelicals felt more intimately connected to political power than they had in many years. Alongside this rapidly changing relationship to political power, evangelicals also became increasingly interested in revolutionary movements around the world, especially in Latin America. Their new access to political power changed the tone of their interests around the world. Before, much of their connection to other regions of the world had been primarily through their missionaries. As they became more connected to conservative politicians in the United States, they also adopted conservative foreign policy goals.

As early as the late 1960s, evangelicals in the United States began to grapple with revolutionary sentiment in Latin America. An exchange in *Christianity Today* in 1968, illustrates the diversity of viewpoints on how evangelicals felt they should deal with

[21] Advertisement for Bob Slosser's *Reagan: Inside Out*, in *Christianity Today*, 18 May 1984, 3.

revolutionaries. A small news item appeared in the June 21st issue of the magazine that mentioned a United Presbyterian official who had recently spent several days with guerrilla forces in Guatemala. He argued that missionaries should sometimes be free to support guerrilla movements because they are often "the only humanizing force in developing countries."[22] A letter to the editor appeared a month later, decrying the magazine's lack of further comment on the issue. The letter writer declared all forms of guerrilla violence wrong in any and all circumstances and then argued that Christians "ought to take a good look at ministers of the Gospel who would encourage men to act in unlawful violence against their fellow man."[23]

The number of articles in *Christianity Today* dealing with guerrillas and revolution in Latin America rose dramatically in the early 1970s. Salvador Allende's election in Chile received a fair amount of coverage, as North American evangelicals were unsure how to handle the democratically elected atheist socialist. The first article reporting on Allende's election argued that "the future of democracy in Chile looks grim," as the author believed that true communists could never allow democracy once the proletariat was in control. Over the three years that Allende was in power, they sometimes praised his openness to religion in the country, but their final editorial after his death focused on how he reduced the economy to shambles in three years because he relied on man's plans rather than God's plans. Their final note on his death read, "We can only hope that before the end, in the ruin of his own ambitions, Salvador Allende

---

[22] "The Church for Guerrillas?" *Christianity Today*, 21 June 1968, 43.

[23] Stephen M. Reynolds, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 19 July 1968, 18-19.

knew not worldly despair but the sorrow that leads to repentance, and turned to the Saviour whose title he himself bore as a name."[24]

Even with their negative assessment of Allende's leadership, at least one reader of *Christianity Today* actually felt that the magazine was being too soft on Allende and said in a letter to the editor, "Some people seem to forget that however it comes to power Marxist Communism is still Marxist Communism—the very antithesis of the democratic way of life and the very opposite of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though honestly elected to power… the Antichrist would still be the Antichrist."[25]

Several months later a Latin American author, C. René Padilla, wrote an article on religious thought and politics for the magazine, speaking positively about the theological work that happened in Chile under Allende. The editors of the magazine felt they needed to comment on his article to soften the potential impact of his words. They worried that "his essay might serve to perpetuate certain misapprehensions and mistakes that are unfortunately becoming widely accepted, even among evangelicals."[26] These "apprehensions" consisted of rumors circulating that the United States had been involved in Allende's downfall, which U.S. citizens discovered years later to be precisely the case. One final news piece about Allende and Chile showed up in the magazine the following year, apparently putting a nail in Allende's coffin. It noted that Chilean evangelicals

---

[24] "Which Way Chile?" editorial, *Christianity Today*, 6 November 1970, 34; "Chile's New President Declares Attitude on Religion" editorial, *Christianity Today*, 1 January 1971, 44; "Repentance That Leads to Salvation," editorial, *Christianity Today*, 12 October 1973, 44.

[25] Theodore S. Smylie, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 7 December 1973, 20-22.

[26] "Allende's Venture," editorial, *Christianity Today*, 26 July 1974, 23.

embraced Chile's new leader after the coup, Augusto Pinochet, and denounced the "insidious communism" of the Allende period.[27]

Throughout the 1970s, readers of *Christianity Today* saw warnings of revolutionary ferment in Latin America and around the world. Several of these articles focused on mainline Christian denominations and their alleged support of revolutionary movements around the world. The magazine specifically spoke of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, two overarching structures of mainline Protestant denominations, accusing them of combining Marxist ideology and Christianity.[28] With these concerns in mind, evangelicals focused even more attention on Latin American revolutionary movements by the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, as Ronald Reagan became president and U.S. evangelicals felt a stronger connection to political power.

Readers of *Christianity Today* began to see more articles mentioning worsening violence in El Salvador and Guatemala, the revolutionary overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, treaties that would return sovereignty of the Panama Canal to the Panamanians, and liberation theology spreading throughout Latin America.[29] The magazine seemed unsure of how to assess the Nicaraguan revolution immediately after

---

[27] "Chile: Church and Caesar," *Christianity Today*, 17 January 1975, 34-38.

[28] "Jesus, Marx, & Co.?" editorial, *Christianity Today*, 8 June 1973, 28; "Liberating the Poor," *Christianity Today*, 3 January 1975, 30.

[29] John Maust, "The Zone Twilight," *Christianity Today*, 21 September 1979, 54; "From Somoza to Sandinists: Church Also Is Transformed by Nicaragua's Revolution," *Christianity Today*, 25 January 1980, 50+53; Gary Parker, "Evangelicals Blossom Brightly amid El Salvador's Wasteland of Violence," *Christianity Today*, 8 May 1981, 34-35; "Guatemalan Pastors: Between a Rock and a Hard Place," *Christianity Today*, 8 May 1981, 43; Kenneth Kantzer, editorial, "The Central American Powder Keg: How Can Christians Keep It from Exploding?," *Christianity Today*, 15 July 1983; Beth Spring, "Campus Crusade Director Describes Government Harassment of Evangelicals," *Christianity Today*, 7 February 1986, 52-53.

Somoza's fall from power, but soon began to report negatively on alleged Sandinista human rights abuses and restrictions of religious freedoms.

Christianity Today writers also began to attack liberation theology more directly as they perceived its spreading popularity throughout Latin America. Professor Walter W. Benjamin tackled the issue forcefully in his article, "Liberation Theology: European Hopelessness Exposes the Latin Hoax," in the March 5th, 1982 issue. He journeyed to Eastern Europe and within the communist countries there he found, "depression, resignation, alienation, anger, and suspicion," among the people. He noticed a marked difference between these "somber and dispirited people" and those across the borders in West Germany and Austria where a spirit of "enjoyment and gaiety" pervaded. He further described the free spirit of these non-communist countries saying, "There the beer halls, rathskellers, sidewalk cafes, band concerts, dances in the parks, window shopping, lovers openly necking, and guitar players in the city squares all testify to a basically happy people secure in the proper tension between freedom and order."[30] The article continued with ominous characterizations of a people dehumanized by communism and questioned how Latin American liberation theologians could think this was the answer to their theological questions.

Evangelicals in the U.S. were also quite excited by the first evangelical president of Guatemala during the early 1980s. In the midst of intense violence throughout the country, a coup brought General Efraín Ríos Montt to power. Ríos Montt was a "dedicated believer and leader" of the Verbo Church in Guatemala City, founded by a missions group called Gospel Outreach in the mid-1970s. *Christianity Today* kicked off

---

[30] Walter W. Benjamin, "Liberation Theology: European Hopelessness Exposes the Latin Hoax," *Christianity Today*, 5 March 1982, 21-23.

their article announcing the news of his rise to power by noting that the coup had been stalled for one hour while Ríos Montt gathered the elders of his church for their advice and prayers. "When they had given their blessing and laid their hands on him [in prayer], he proceeded to the National Palace," where he assumed control of the government.[31] Despite growing allegations of violent attacks carried out against indigenous people in Guatemala while he was in power, many evangelicals in the United States loved Ríos Montt. One Assemblies of God minister in Florida named Hap Brooks even called the coup that brought Ríos Montt to power, "the greatest miracle of the twentieth century, formed in heaven before it was formed on earth."[32]

Evangelicals' interest in Ríos Montt grew in the months following the coup and in early 1983, the editor of *Christianity Today*, V. Gilbert Beers, actually went to Guatemala and had dinner with the president and several of his advisers from the Verbo Church in Guatemala City. In a short piece about their meeting, Beers downplayed questions about Ríos Montt's responsibility for increasing violence in the country and chose to focus instead on Efraín as an evangelical Christian. He spoke of their informal conversation and Ríos Montt's personal faith, prayer life, and his work in the Verbo Church in Guatemala City. He even noted that Ríos Montt did not look much like the pictures he had seen of him. Rather than being the "tough, hard-looking man in a camouflage army suit," Beers was surprised to find "a warm, pleasant, smiling man who could walk into your own Sunday morning worship service almost unnoticed." Beers concluded by saying that he was aware of the accusations of violence attributed to Ríos Montt, but the

---

[31] Harry Genet with Stephen Sywulka, "You Heard It Right: The Dictator Is an Evangelical Christian," *Christianity Today*, 23 April 1982, 32-34.

[32] Deborah Huntington, "God's Saving Plan," *NACLA*, January/February 1984, 26.

important thing in his mind was that he was, "convinced that this man is an evangelical Christian and is anxious to share his faith among his people. That is a good starting place."[33]

In Guatemala, this was most likely not the most important question, as Ríos Montt's military enacted increasingly violent policies towards the indigenous people of Guatemala. Historian Virginia Garrard-Burnett even referred to Ríos Montt's rule as the "violent and bloody nadir" of Guatemala's thirty-six year civil war.[34] While in power, Ríos Montt spoke the language of evangelicals in the country. He delivered weekly "sermons" to his countrymen on the radio and often cited the Bible in his speeches. Some credited him for his anti-corruption stance, which he applied to members of the government and military as well. Anthropologist David Stoll pointed out that he was seen as an improvement to some in the ravaged Ixil area of Guatemala because he "replaced chaotic terror with a more predictable set of rewards and punishments."[35] However, shocking and horrific violence was rampant during Ríos Montt's rule. Under his leadership the military launched actions against some 4,000 villages and drove 1.2 million people into internal or external exile. Of the 200,000 people killed during the Guatemalan civil war, 43 percent died during Ríos Montt's time in office. Many referred

---

[33] V. Gilbert Beers, "Behind the Scenes," *Christianity Today*, 4 February 1983, 2. More evangelical support for Ríos Montt was outlined in Donna Eberwine, "To Ríos Montt, With Love Lift," *The Nation*, 26 February 1983, 238-240. In 1983, the National Religious Broadcasters gave Ríos Montt an award for meritorious Christian service, cited in David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 55.

[34] Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

[35] David Stoll, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 111.

to this era as "the Mayan holocaust," as more than 80 percent of the war's victims were Mayan.[36]

Ríos Montt's rule only lasted seventeen months. He was overthrown by another military coup as the country continued its traumatic journey through civil war. But evangelicals in the U.S. were unsure of how to deal with this evangelical leader's role in the violence. *Christianity Today* ran a special article on Ríos Montt's legacy. The article attempted to correct the "significant distortions" in the media that portrayed Ríos Montt negatively. Refocusing evangelicals' attention on Ríos Montt's commitment to Christianity, the author decried the way the former leader had been mistreated by U.S. media.[37]

As *Christianity Today* and other evangelical publications paid increasing attention to Central America, many evangelicals in the United States sided with established leaders and felt more afraid of leftist revolutions and guerrillas throughout the region. They turned to President Reagan and numerous conservative Christian lobbyists and political groups for answers to the communist scourge which evangelical publications and mainstream U.S. press alike claimed was running rampant throughout Central America. In the midst of these increasingly ominous signs spreading throughout the region, some conservative Christians began to form new groups dedicated to fighting against the perceived leftward drift in the region and several others popped up looking to turn back the tide around the world.

---

[36] Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6-7.

[37] Tom Minnery, "Why We Can't Always Trust the News Media: Reports on Guatemala's Former President Unmask the Effects of Bias," *Christianity Today*, 13 January 1984, 14-21.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) was one of the most important groups for conservative Christians looking to reverse what they perceived as a leftward political drift among Christian groups themselves. The IRD was founded in 1981 by several leaders within mainline churches in the United States who were becomingly increasingly concerned that their denominational governing bodies and overarching organizations were supporting leftist, Marxist-Leninist movements around the world. They believed that portions of their Sunday morning church offerings were being channeled through the National Council of Churches (NCC) to Marxist guerilla groups in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and El Salvador among other places.[38] Appalled that their donations to their churches would be used to support Marxist liberation movements around the globe, these leaders came together to try to find ways to turn back what they saw as the loss of true Christianity among mainline churches in the United States. Many conservative evangelicals identified with the IRD as they also believed that mainline denominations had forsaken biblical truth and worried about similar trends of secularization in their own churches.

For the first several years of their existence the Institute on Religion and Democracy gained some attention in the pages of *Christianity Today*, allowing one of their founders, Ed Robb, to publish a piece in August of 1981, and then writing two short pieces about the group's efforts in February of 1982.[39] In one of the February 1982 articles, the magazine shared news from the IRD who had just given Nicaraguan

---

[38] Leon Howell, "Old Wine, New Bottles: A Short History of the IRD," *Christianity and Crisis*, 21 March 1983, 74, 89-94; Steve Askin, "Institute Says It Reveals Threat—Others Say It Is Threat—to U.S. Church," *National Catholic Reporter*, 4 February 1983, 1, 7, 18-19.

[39] Edmund W. Robb, Jr., "Spiritual Sparks Ignite Some Mainstream Churches," *Christianity Today*, 7 August 1981, 29-31.

archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo their "Freedom and Democracy" award for criticizing the Sandinista leadership in Nicaragua. Obando y Bravo had been a supporter of the Sandinistas when they overthrew Somoza in 1979, but became disillusioned with their treatment of the Catholic Church and began speaking out against them. In its report *Christianity Today* stated that Obando y Bravo answered questions carefully as "It is now a crime in his country to criticize the government," and noted that he was trying to keep an open dialogue with the "Cuba-backed Sandinist leaders, who have been imposing restrictions on the population to shore up their Marxist positions."[40] The magazine's next article on the IRD was a glowing report titled "Theologians Stand for Democracy," with the subtitle, "They try to counter liberal churches that finance socialism overseas." The article spoke of the formation of the group and their leaders. Carl Henry, founder of *Christianity Today* and its first editor, was a top IRD backer and on its Board of Advisors. It noted that the group was primarily the brainchild of evangelist Edmund W. Robb of the United Methodist Church (the largest denomination in the NCC), but also included Lutheran theologian Richard John Neuhaus and Catholic scholar Michael Novak. After speaking of some of the group's efforts to turn back liberalism in mainline churches, the article finished by with a hint of happiness saying, "If liberals in the UMC [United Methodist Church] are nervously looking over their shoulders these days, people like Robb and his colleagues may be to blame."[41]

The Institute on Religion and Democracy really burst into the national political scene when *Reader's Digest* printed a story and *60 Minutes* aired a long segment

---

[40] Edward E. Plowman, "The Archbishop Calls for the Gospel, Not Marxism, in Nicaragua," *Christianity Today*, 5 February 1982, 72.

[41] Edward E. Plowman, "Theologians Stand for Democracy," *Christianity Today*, 19 February 1982, 34-35; "Pressing for Renewal in Mainline Churches," *Christianity Today*, 7 May 1982, 32-33.

following up on its claim that the National Council of Churches was using churchgoers' offerings to finance Marxist revolutionaries around the world.[42] These two pieces captured the attention of conservative Christians around the country with allegations about where their money was going. The *Reader's Digest* article, titled "Do You Know Where Your Church Offerings Go?," cited IRD co-founder David Jessup saying that church members' money was going to a number of political organizations including "groups supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization, the governments of Cuba and Vietnam, the pro-Soviet totalitarian movements of Latin America, Asia and Africa, and several violence-prone fringe groups in the United States." The article went on to describe the NCC's programs that were dispersing money to all kinds of Marxist-Leninist movements. It quoted a former minister within the NCC who had been dismissed from the organization offering his explanation for why the NCC was in league with these radical leftist groups, saying, "These [NCC people] are immensely romantic people, often quite naïve." The author continued aghast at the disconnect between NCC leadership and church members noting that the NCC had lost over three million members in the past decade, hypothesizing that "The obsession of the church leadership with advancing causes that contradict the basic beliefs of most churchgoers is felt by many to be an important factor." And finally the article concluded by citing Ed Robb, the leader of the IRD, bringing home the IRD's essential message, saying, "At the root of the problem is the secularization of the church. The NCC has substituted revolution for religion."[43] The *60 Minutes* segment further emphasized these accusations and was promoted by various

---

[42] "News Release: Controversy Mounts on the Nature of Church Political Involvement," 25 January 1983, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

[43] Rael Jean Isaac, "Do You Know Where Your Church Offerings Go?," *Reader's Digest*, January 1983, 120-125.

conservative organizations such as the National Center for Public Policy Research, who sent a press release to 188 of their "top activists" around the United States, who in turn activated phone trees, attempting to get people to watch the segment.[44]

The inflammatory *Reader's Digest* article along with the *60 Minutes* episode in the same month raised serious questions among many members of denominations under the National Council of Churches. The IRD instantly rose to the forefront of this battle as church members began calling their ministers and writing letters trying to find out more about these significant accusations. The National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches attempted to respond to the allegations, noting that it opposed tyranny in all forms and never provided weapons for revolutionaries and guerrillas—one of the wilder accusations of the IRD. Many accused the IRD of being too aggressive and hostile in their attempts to reform the NCC. Even right-wing columnist and broadcaster Pat Buchanan questioned the IRD's founders asking them if they honestly expected a dialogue after accusing the NCC of being "in bed with guerrillas and Communists."[45]

The IRD's bold claims about the NCC and WCC spread like wildfire among conservative church members who now thought their churches were being subverted by secularists and believed their money was being sent to fund revolutions around the world that they were opposed to. The accusations were reprinted in the *Washington Times* and the *Atlanta Journal* ran a story that spoke of a Methodist minister receiving twenty calls

---

[44] National Center for Public Policy Research release, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

[45] Leon Howell, "Old Wine, New Bottles: A Short History of the IRD," *Christianity and Crisis*, 21 March 1983, 92; Stephen Chapman, "The NCC Answers Its Critics," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 June 1983.

from concerned church members in the ten days following the *Reader's Digest* article.[46] Letters of concern and support flooded into the IRD, *Reader's Digest*, and *60 Minutes* as well. Several church members from Elkhart, Indiana sent a telegram to *60 Minutes* commending their "courageous and well researched segment," noting that they had been trying to convince other church members of such information for years. One man from Missouri simply noted his concern that his offering money "reach those in need and not help fund Marxist adventurers," while another church member from Tennessee wrote the IRD asking for advice in what he considered a "breach of trust." A woman from Iowa wrote the IRD to share her "appalling" story of confronting her minister about the accusations in the *Reader's Digest* article. She said that he argued there was nothing wrong with communism and even stated that he had "a copy of the Mao Doctrine lying along side of his Bible on his office desk." She continued, "At this point, we need not only ask what is happening to our church dollars, but what is happening to our pastors?"[47] Clearly, some conservative mainline church members were concerned that their donations might be going to support Marxist-Leninist causes and in raising these concerns the Institute on Religion and Democracy was rapidly boosted into the public light. Throughout the 1980s they would continue to raise issues among conservative Christians in the United States, often turning their ire upon Central America, especially at the Sandinistas and what they saw as a reduction of religious freedom in the country.

---

[46] William Murchison, "In-*Digest*-ible Truths," *Washington Times*, 31 March 1983, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy; Anne Cowles and Hal Straus, "Digest Story Upsets Atlanta Church Members," *Atlanta Journal*, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

[47] Roger Mitchell, telegram to *60 Minutes*, 25 January 1983; Leonard Hand, letter to the IRD, 16 December 1982; Joseph Norquist, letter to the IRD, 28 January 1983; Nora Doss, letter to Ed Robb, 24 January 1983; Ralph Edwards, letter to the IRD, 25 December 1982; Charles Watkins, letter to the IRD, 29 January 1983; Alberta Wagaman, letter to the IRD, 25 January 1983; all in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

They were one example of the kinds of powerful mobilizing forces for conservative Christians in how they perceived the complicated forces at play in Latin America.

Conservative evangelicals viewed leftists in Central America within a larger context of a possible communist takeover of not only Central America, but also as a global battle that was approaching their homeland as well as encroaching upon their faith. In this context, the simple act of not condemning leftist revolutionaries strongly enough was seen as a violation of both the evangelical faith and American safety. The Institute on Religion and Democracy and more conservative groups exhibited this reaction most clearly, but even the pages of the more-centrist *Christianity Today* demonstrated the growing disconnect between "good evangelicals" and anyone connected to Central American leftist revolutionaries.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, conservative evangelical groups became increasingly concerned about the rise of leftist revolutionaries. While some simply wrote letters to evangelicals around the U.S. warning of the encroaching communist menace, others took a more hands-on approach. This battle was most clear once the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua in 1979. Though many of the Sandinistas were devoutly religious Catholics attempting to transform their economy and society with social justice in mind, many evangelicals believed the Sandinistas were simply communists. They feared that if they did not stop them in Nicaragua they would have to deal with them on U.S. soil.

Soon after Ronald Reagan became president, he authorized the CIA to recruit and support the Contras in order to overthrow the Sandinista revolution. In the ensuing years, Congress approved funds to supply the Contras, train them, and fuel the

counterrevolution. In 1985, Congress ended funding for the Contras through the Boland Amendment, but the Reagan administration continued financing the Contras through covert means. National Security Council staff member Oliver North was put in charge of securing covert funding through outside sources—often either private organizations or military aid through other countries. This eventually culminated in the Iran-Contra affair, in which North facilitated Contra funding through arms sales to Iran. Throughout most of the 1980s, the U.S. fueled an increasingly violent war on Nicaraguan soil as the Contras engaged in systematic human rights abuses.

In the midst of this covert war, several evangelical organizations popped up to support the Contras, or "freedom-fighters" as they preferred to call them. Often located in Honduras, these organizations focused on giving aid to the Contras so that they could continue their fight against the Sandinistas. They also started refugee camps, giving aid to people they believed were fleeing the supposed oppression of the Sandinistas. Not long after starting World Gospel Outreach in Honduras, Reverend Allen Danforth spoke about the alleged fight between communists and Christians in that country. Noting that he believed it was important his organization was there aiding the Contras, both "as Christians and as Americans," he said, "Religion aside, Honduras is the front line between communism and Texas…. We can be a powerful tool to… head communism off at the pass, in the name of Jesus Christ."[48]

Other evangelicals agreed that Honduras was the focal point for resisting communism. Reverend Gerald Derstine of the Gospel Crusade rallied people to support his work in Honduras saying,

---

[48] Michael D'Antonio, "The Christian Right Abroad," *APF Reporter*, Fall 1987, 6-9.

> I believe Americans need to wake up to what is happening in nearby Nicaragua, and to the very real threat that even our peace here in the United States is in jeopardy. The Soviet communists in their vicious and relentless thirst for power won't stop with Nicaragua…. It's going to keep expanding. This is going to be the same story in El Salvador, in Guatemala, here in Honduras, Mexico – it's going to come right into the United States. We must stop it. We can stop it. I'm attempting to stop it with the gospel.

Gospel Crusade not only worked with Nicaraguan refugees, but also supported Contras in their camps. Bill Moyers's documentary called "The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics," had footage of Gerald Derstine and his son preaching to Contra troops and praying with wounded soldiers who they believed were "giving their lives for freedom," saying, "Lord, bless this man in a special way. Let your presence come over him. Let your presence come over this room here. Let these men have comfort, let them know that, Father, you are with them."[49]

Also working in the Contra military camps was Pat Robertson. In 1986 and 1987 alone, U.S. evangelicals sent more than ten million dollars in private aid to local churches, refugee camps, and relief organizations in Honduras.[50] Several million of that went through Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing.[51] Preaching to them in the camp, Robertson spoke of how moving it was to "see your faith, your desire for freedom and liberty… We want to help those who are victims of communism."[52] Joining Robertson in the camps was William Murray, who channeled aid to the Contras through his organization Freedom's Friends. He was well known in evangelical circles because he

---

[49] Transcript of Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 6, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid/Oliver North," 3-6.

[50] Ibid., 3.

[51] Michael D'Antonio, "The Christian Right Abroad," *APF Reporter*, Fall 1987, 6-9.

[52] Transcript of Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 6, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid/Oliver North," 7.

was the born-again son of famous atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair. Murray's group sent some three million dollars in aid to Nicaraguan refugees and Murray was even more explicit than many in citing why this was necessary.[53] He noted that "food is a political weapon, medicine is a political weapon."[54] He believed that these weapons should be used against "the evil of communism." Murray also demonstrated some of the usually unspoken connections between conservative evangelicalism and American patriotism, saying, "You can make a strong case for saying the American way is synonymous with Christianity."[55]

Other evangelical groups also closely identified with the Contras. The Christian Emergency Relief Teams (CERT) supplied 60,000 pounds of tools, medicines, and seeds to Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras, many of whom were Contras.[56] In fact, they even made several secretive aid trips across the border into Nicaragua, always with the protection of armed Contra escorts. CERT was started by David Courson and Gary Becks, both Vietnam War veterans, to provide aid to Nicaraguan refugees and support Contra efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas. Both Courson and Becks aligned themselves with President Reagan's foreign policy in the region and often spoke of the Contras as "freedom fighters." They raised support and gathered aid packages from evangelicals across the United States, taking them to Central America to "bring comfort to our fellow believers enduring Marxist/Leninist persecutions." They also trained Contras in

---

[53] Michael D'Antonio, "The Christian Right Abroad," *APF Reporter*, Fall 1987, 6-9.

[54] Transcript of Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 6, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid/Oliver North," 8.

[55] Michael D'Antonio, "The Christian Right Abroad," *APF Reporter*, Fall 1987, 6-9.

[56] Sara Diamond, "The Contras Chaplains," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, September/October 1988, 32-33.

paramedic skills and Courson recognized explicitly—"we are not training these young men to provide aid strictly for civilians. Most likely, they will be giving military aid."[57]

Courson and Becks also took American volunteers along on their "missions" with CERT. In their fundraising letters to evangelicals they spoke of their trips in exciting, militaristic fashion, highlighting the danger of a successful mission. One letter described a previous trip with seventeen volunteers, many of whom were "big, strapping men… firemen, construction workers, and the like…" who were moved to tears handing out Christmas cards to refugees from evangelicals in the United States. Courson recalled hearing many of the refugees reading their cards say, "God bless America." He then called on supporters to donate for their next trip which would be a "secret mission" to install a water pump in a village in Nicaragua. He wrote, "When CERT installs these pumps we are doing something for these people that their own government refuses to do. Children in the villages will grow up knowing that Americans are their friends. It will be clear that the pump was given to them by Christians who love them and who cherish freedom." He reiterated his request for money for the "secret mission" but added, "I can't tell you when CERT will leave for this mission. All of these details must remain confidential until we safely return to the U.S."[58] This kind of language inflamed the excitement of evangelical supporters in the United States as they joined the fight against "godless-communism" in Central America. Many of their supporters in the U.S. never realized that much of the Sandinista hierarchy as well as everyday Nicaraguans were

---

[57] Eric Bailey, "Aid from Carlsbad Group Furthers Cause of Contras," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1987, A1; Arthur Golden, "Carlsbad Group Will Train Contra Rebels in Paramedic Skills," *The San Diego Union*, 27 September 1986, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT;" CERT, newsletter, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

[58] David Courson, fundraising letter, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

dedicated Christians themselves, who saw the revolution as part of enacting their Christian faith.

By taking volunteers along on their exciting missions to Honduras and Nicaragua, CERT gained a group of passionate evangelists for their cause that spoke to church groups, wrote letters, and told friends and family about the "great work" that CERT was doing in Central America. They also returned with horrifying accusations of Sandinista atrocities "straight from the mouths of victims." These were strikingly effective ways of communicating their message back to evangelicals in the United States. One volunteer wrote a letter to the editor in the *Antelope Valley Press* after his trip with CERT. He passed along the appalling trumped-up allegations of Sandinista atrocities that they heard accounts of, "rape, torture, mutilation, villages full of civilians being indiscriminately bombed, mass executions and people being herded into churches to be firebombed." He concluded his letter requesting that people contact CERT to offer support, saying, "These exiles want Americans to understand their plight, and they desperately need America's help. They know that without our help they have no chance against Soviet might."[59] Tying the Sandinistas to the Soviet Union conjured images of a global battle between good and evil, in which the Soviets were meddling in Nicaragua and imposing communist atheism, rather than seeing the socialism of the Sandinistas as part of an autonomous local response to social concerns within their own country.

The president of the American Freedom Coalition, Robert Grant, also traveled to Central America with a CERT team. Like other volunteers, he told of traveling to Honduras and Nicaragua to find out the truth for himself, to see if the Contras were truly

---

[59] Carl Thomsen, letter to the editor, "They Need Help," *Antelope Valley Press*, 26 January 1988, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

"baby killers" and "rapists" as the "pro-Sandinista branches of western media" presented them. He insisted that the opposite was true. He painted a picture of the Contras as devoutly religious people gathering "in their little grassroofed church every day of the week at 5am and again at 4pm so that they can 'begin the day with God.'" He saw "freedom fighters in their camouflage uniforms, with their AK47 rifles and grenades, stand and bow their heads in a prayer of thanksgiving before receiving their common meal…" Like others he concluded his letter with a request that evangelicals in the U.S. support CERT, who he called "a marvelous group of Christian friends from California who bring supplies to those forgotten people who nobody else ever reaches."[60]

CERT also managed to recruit some politically connected volunteers for their trips. One article spoke of Matt Locke, a New Hampshire state legislator, joining CERT at the Nicaragua-Honduras border. Like others he condemned alleged Sandinista atrocities, but he was clearer in his suggestions for how Americans could help. He said, "They need arms. They'll do the fighting. If we don't give them arms now, Americans will be doing the fighting later."[61] A member of the U.S. House of Representatives, William E. Dannemeyer, also joined CERT for one of their "missions" in Honduras. He returned and entered testimony into the Congressional Record under the heading, "A Tribute to the Christian Emergency Relief Team." After reporting on his trip, he added a few words about one of CERT's founders, "Dave Courson is one of the finest human beings I've had the pleasure to meet with, a man who I saw give the very suit he was wearing to a minister who needed it more than he did. This is religion in action." He

---

[60] Robert Grant, "A Personal Appeal from Dr. Robert Grant," *American Freedom Journal*, December 1987, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

[61] "N.H. Christian Visits Nicaraguan Refugee Camps," in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

also entered a glowing article about CERT written by Laura Gilbert into the Congressional Record as well, which concluded by saying, "As long as the U.S.-backed contras and the Soviet-backed Sandinistas wage war in the jungles of Central America, CERT will quietly continue to minister to the medical and spiritual needs of the Nicaraguan refugees."[62]

The Christian Emergency Relief Teams went even further than letting their volunteers spread the word of alleged Sandinista atrocities however. One CERT update from Laura Gilbert noted that CERT teams often brought back a Nicaraguan refugee to "verify Sandinista activity." In a 1988 update Gary Becks spoke of bringing back a "very articulate, black, 28-year-old refugee" who had been schoolteacher in Nicaragua. Becks reported that the refugee would be "introduced to the American media in hopes of educating them 'about the brutal persecution of the Nicaraguan people.'"[63]

Here organizations like CERT were able to take advantage of an increasingly contentious situation that they were exacerbating. As the United States and these aggressive evangelical organizations fueled an increasingly violent war in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas locked down more civil liberties and made several missteps in attempting to control growing dissension from indigenous groups in the eastern part of Nicaragua. Some of the Sandinista leadership began to see their opponents as traitors who were selling out their country to U.S. interests. As the war intensified the Sandinistas' tolerance for internal opposition deteriorated and they began to crack down on those they

---

[62] William E. Dannemeyer, "A Tribute to the Christian Emergency Relief Team," Congressional Record, 10 September 1987, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

[63] Laura M. Gilbert, "Emergency: CERT Update," in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

believed were destroying any chance of peace and justice in Nicaragua. As they clamped down on dissent in civil society, they initiated the exodus of Nicaraguans who were opposed to the revolution. CERT and other conservative U.S. organizations then used these refugees to demonstrate that the Sandinistas were, in fact, as horrible as they had been claiming all along.[64] This served to intensify U.S. evangelical fusion with right-wing foreign policy in the region.

Other groups used similar language in raising support for the Contras and Nicaraguan refugees. At least one organization was even more direct in their support for the Contras and embraced the "dangerous" aspect of supporting their military ventures. A student journal called *Freedom Fighter* was published by the Coalition for Democracy in Central America. In their magazine they requested support and included a cutout that supporters could send in with their donation that read,

> YES! I want to contribute to *Freedom Fighter* so that college students will be able to have an alternative to the Sandinista propaganda that is monopolizing the debate on the campuses. I understand that if I send a contribution of $20 or more, I will receive a brass rifle cartridge from the Nicaraguan Democratic Force freedom fighters in their struggle against the Cuban and Soviet-backed Sandinista regime.[65]

It was also important for U.S. evangelicals to maintain that Christians were being persecuted in Nicaragua. It allowed them to make the argument that Nicaragua was just one country in a line of countries that would fall to communism leading up to the United States' doorstep. They used language that sounded similar to how other evangelicals spoke about the Soviet Union during the earlier Cold War with Bible-smuggling efforts

---

[64] William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 347-380.

[65] *Freedom Fighter*, January/February 1985, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 40, Folder 9, "Freedom Fighter – CODECA."

and with Cuba as an example in the hemisphere. This kind of language was powerful for evangelicals in the United States. Discussion about Nicaragua began to fit increasingly into the mold of how missionaries had spoken about earlier forays into communist Cuba—a bit of a stretch given Cuba's open hostility to organized religion as opposed to the Sandinistas' embrace of fervent religiosity.

Earlier missionaries visiting Cuba wrote in stark language of their encounters with the sadness, deprivation, and poverty they believed resulted from communist religious persecution. As an example, one missionary who visited Cuba for a week said that it changed his life forever. He set the tone for his letter by noting that the Marxists he met in Cuba boldly claimed, "Latin America has 3-5 years to capitulate to communism," and said, "only a bloody revolution is the answer to Latin America's ills." Claiming that the Soviet Union was pouring in ten million dollars a day he emphasized, "They are out to win the world! They will stop at nothing!" He wrote of his group's "harrowing journey" through customs at the airport, as they were smuggling in more than two hundred Bibles, forty religious cassette tapes, and sixty pounds of clothing. Afraid of being detected, the group split up; "We actually ignored one another as we dared not give any indication to the officials that we were travelling together." The other members of the group prayed as a "stern and unpleasant military woman" who "made chills run up my spine" checked his luggage. "Miraculously," they all made it through customs and only left behind six songbooks and two New Testaments.[66]

His description of what he perceived as the grim situation in Cuba continued, as he realized on the city bus that there was "little if any conversation among the passengers,

[66] Joe and Clara Pent, letter to Charles Troutman, November 1980, and Joe Pent, "A Cuban Report," support letter, 12 December 1980, both in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 5, "Personal Correspondence, November 1980-May 1981."

no expressions of joy, and no one would 'level' with me and give me what I felt were true answers to my questions." He continued, "It was apparent that there was very little cause for joy in Cuba." This missionary did manage to find a few solitary Christians in this oppressive land however. He spoke of how amazing it was that they could live through the "prison, privation, persecution and pressure" of the horrible Castro regime. They suffered immensely as they could only buy one pair of shoes, one pair of pants and two shirts per year, he claimed. When the few Christians he met gathered together, they made a circle to pray together. The missionary wrote, "Such praying is seldom heard!"[67] Stories like these from missionaries shaped how evangelicals in the United States understood life in communist Cuba. Many of the stories of sneaking Bibles in and the lack of happiness are reminiscent of earlier missionary endeavors into the Soviet Union. When U.S. evangelicals of listened to trumped-up stories of smuggling Bibles into Nicaragua and allegations of horrible religious persecution there, they were drawing on an earlier precedent of how Christian missionaries endeavored into other "dangerous" communist countries.

Christianity Today promoted this vision of sensational stories of missionaries amidst religious persecution in Cuba as well. In 1974, they carried a short news article from Cuba that sounded very similar to the letter above. They wrote of a missions team flying back from their work in Jamaica and Haiti, when two Russian-built MIGs intercepted their plane over Cuban airspace and forced them to land. The pilot showed his permit granting clearance over Cuba, but the officials demanded $7,000 in fines before they would allow the group to leave. Stuck there for 25 hours, the group considered it their "once-in-a-lifetime chance to witness to communist Cubans." The

[67] Ibid.

group was held under guard in a hotel in Camaguey, but they opened their windows and sang gospel songs "at the top of their voices." Later they conducted a service in a courtyard, where one participant said "We even sang 'God Bless America' with all our might as we stood between busts of Marx and Lenin."[68]

Conservative evangelical groups' calls for support in Honduras continually utilized the idea of a persecuted church in Nicaragua, harkening back to earlier fabricated visions of Cuba. They tried to do this through allegations of Sandinista atrocities—rape, murder, massacre, etc. Another essential component was claiming persecution of evangelical Protestant Christians there and a lack of religious freedom. Several groups reported on the difficulty of getting Bibles into Nicaragua, claiming that the Sandinistas destroyed Bibles and would not allow Nicaraguans to read them—a shocking and improbable accusation, as many Sandinista leaders and those within their ranks were fervent Catholics themselves who based their politics on grassroots interpretations of the Bible. Open Doors with Brother Andrew was probably one of the most important organizations to join this particular fray. Brother Andrew and his organization were famous for distributing Bibles to communist countries during the 1960s and 1970s. This earned him the nickname, "God's smuggler." In the 1980s he turned some of his attention to Nicaragua—ironic, considering that Nicaraguans on the whole were practicing Christians. One of his organization's people in Costa Rica became famous for smuggling Bibles into Nicaragua.

Conservative evangelical groups fabricated a false vision of how religious freedom and availability of Bibles had been obliterated by the Sandinistas, ignoring the Sandinistas' own religious convictions. CERT's David Courson portrayed a dramatic

---

[68] Dan Harman, "Twenty-Five Hours in Cuba," *Christianity Today*, 29 March 1974, 40-41.

vision of how Bible-deprived communists in Nicaragua were when he told of passing out Bibles in a Sandinista camp within Nicaragua. He wrote, "Through the grace of God—and the help of the Honduran military commander—I traveled by dug-out canoe across the Coco River to the Sandinista military headquarters in Nicaragua." Once there he asked the commander for permission to hand out Bibles to these Sandinista soldiers who he insisted were part of the system of religious persecution represented by the "scars of torture" and "weeping of widows and orphans" that he saw in Honduras. To his surprise, he was allowed to hand out Bibles. He wrote,

> The reason why I was allowed to do this I'll never know. Surely, it was the power of the Holy Spirit which softened the heart of this military commander. The soldiers, most of them young boys, accepted the Bibles eagerly. The closest comparison I can give you is this: What happened that night was like being in West Berlin, receiving permission to cross the Berlin Wall, distribute Bibles to East German troops and return safely across the border."[69]

To Courson, this was a shocking and miraculous event only made possible through divine intervention, given his assumption that all Sandinistas (especially military commanders) were godless communists. In reality, many Sandinistas were devout Christians themselves. In light of that fact, Courson's story simply portrayed Christians on the other side of the war being thankful for Bibles as well.

While these evangelical organizations' trope of Bible-deprived, godless communists destroying Nicaragua was incredibly effective in convincing evangelicals in the U.S. to support their cause, several sources pointed out that Bibles were actually readily available within Nicaragua, making Bible-smuggling unnecessary. Deborah

---

[69] Brother Andrew, support letter, 20 May 1981, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 30, Folder 5, "Open Doors – News Clips;" David Courson, fundraising letter, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT;" Deborah Huntington, "God's Saving Plan," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, January/February 1984, 30.

Huntington reported in *NACLA* that the Sandinista government had actually distributed 300,000 Bibles themselves as a follow-up to their literacy campaign.[70] John Stam also disputed trumped-up allegations that Sandinistas were not allowing shipments of Bibles into the country and destroying packages of Bibles saying,

> It was so ridiculous because the supermarkets sold thousands, if not millions of Bibles at the best prices in Central America and I'd bring Bibles [to Costa Rica] just because they were cheaper [in Nicaragua]. I went back to Nicaragua, back to Managua and I went to I think 5 bookstores, evangelical and Catholic and asked if they were having any problems getting Bibles in and they all said, "No. None at all. Look at these shelves. They're full of Bibles."[71]

Stories circulating in the U.S. about interrogation and torture of evangelicals in Nicaragua were widely disputed, even by those opposed to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. One Nicaraguan pastor, made famous by religious conservatives in the U.S. who continually claimed that he had been "severely tortured," himself denied the allegations.[72] Others were also aware that Christianity and the Bible were not in danger in Nicaragua. From 1979-1984, the number of evangelical churches in the country doubled. In 1983, even the U.S. ambassador there said that Christianity was in no danger in Nicaragua.[73]

Some of the evangelical organizations that popped up the 1980s decrying alleged "communist aggression" in Central America were part of a network intimately connected to President Reagan's foreign policy in the region. At times, President Reagan himself directly supported them. A 1984 television special showed President Reagan kicking off

---

[70] Deborah Huntington, "God's Saving Plan," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, January/February 1984, 30.

[71] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 14 February 2008.

[72] Paul Jeffrey, "Evangelicals: Facts and Fictions," *Christianity and Crisis*, 20 October 1986, 366-368.

[73] David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 257.

a fundraiser for Open Doors with Brother Andrew. Later this television special revealed that Brother Andrew believed revolutionaries in Central America were only proxies for the Russians, who they believed planned to "cut off North America from South America, then to engulf all of the southern hemisphere in revolution. And then, finally, to isolate North America from the rest of the world." Brother Andrew himself said, "Better go to them before they come to us…. If we do not go to the heathen with the gospel, they will come to us with revolutionaries and occupation armies."[74] Organizations sending back stories of Bible-smuggling and the dire need to support freedom fighters as a last barrier against communists coming to the United States were also sometimes actually supported, informed, and aided by Oliver North, the Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean within the State Department, and Outreach Working Group on Central America in the White House.[75]

While many of the connections were obscured, as the U.S. war against the Sandinistas remained covert, there are clear signs of this collusion and several organizations spoke publicly of Oliver North setting things up for them. On January 14, 1983, President Reagan issued National Security Directive 77, under the title, "Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security," that essentially created a propaganda ministry within the executive branch with special focus on Central America. Within this new initiative, Otto Reich set up the Office of Public Diplomacy to disseminate "white propaganda" to convince Congress and the American public to continue supporting the Contras' fight against the Sandinistas. Later investigations revealed that the group went even further than "white propaganda," fabricating and

[74] Ibid., 135-136.

[75] Ibid., 324.

distributing false stories about Sandinista atrocities and Russian involvement in Nicaragua.

In 1983, President Reagan named Faith Whittlesey Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and she soon set up the Outreach Working Group on Central America that held weekly "informational" meetings attempting to build support for the Contras and Reagan's foreign policy in Central America. High-ranking administration officials often spoke at the meetings, including President Reagan himself. They also placed advertisements, wrote editorials, and published "White House digests" focusing on the Sandinistas' alleged suppression of civil liberties and related issues in Central America, of course ignoring real atrocities in El Salvador and Guatemala. An October 1987 General Accounting Office report summarized some of their activities saying that the Reagan administration had "engaged in prohibited covert propaganda activities" to "favorably influence" the American public on the subject of Contra aid. During the Iran-Contra hearings, it was revealed that all of this propaganda was being run by Oliver North and it became clear later that North was in charge of an entire network of commercials, advertisements, and other forms of propaganda, as well as essentially selling access to President Reagan in exchange for contributions to the Contra aid network.[76]

The Office of Public Diplomacy and the Outreach Working Group on Central America worked closely with supportive conservative religious groups such as the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD). Representatives of the Office of Public

---

[76] Lou Cannon, "'Distortion' on Latin Policy Decried: Opposition to Latin Policy Laid to 'Distortion' by Media, Churches," *Washington Post*, 10 August 1983, A1-A2; Peter Kornbluh, "The Contra Lobby: How a Secret Propaganda Network Tipped the Scales on Contra Aid," *Voice*, 13 October 1987, 23-28.

Diplomacy attended IRD events, such as the award luncheon for Nicaraguan Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, that was attended by Otto Reich.[77] Part of their connection also included sharing information. For example, the archives of the IRD include one letter from the Office of Public Diplomacy outlining alleged Sandinista persecution of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua. The IRD ran a campaign to eliminate support of Presbyterian missionary Gustavo Parajón and his relief organization, CEPAD, because they believed that they were too closely affiliated with the Sandinistas' socialist project. In the midst of the IRD's attacks on missionary Gustavo Parajón and CEPAD, they received a letter from the a member of the Office of Public Diplomacy that included information from former Sandinista Miguel Bolanos Hunter claiming that Mr. Parajón was an informer to and agent of the Sandinista government. The included letter from Miguel Bolanos Hunter claimed that Parajón was involved in "the ideological project of subtly and slowly destroying the pure religious roots of the Nicaraguan people… [that] would enable them to carry out their Marxist-Leninist project in Nicaragua…" The letter also noted Parajón's "distinguished performance as an agent of influence with religious groups in the international field, including the U.S., which he manipulated with the intent of gaining support for the Sandinista revolution."[78] The IRD published an interview with

[77] Miguel Obando y Bravo was the archbishop of Nicaragua and was publically critical of the Sandinistas throughout the mid-1980s. "Guest List: Award Luncheon for Archbishop Obando y Bravo," in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy. Elliott Abrams, as well as representatives of the American Enterprise Institute, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the National Association of Evangelicals also attended the luncheon.

[78] Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Attack on the Church: Persecution of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua," 21 August 1986; Robert R. Reilly, Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, letter to Penn Kemble, 12 December 1984, both located in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

Miguel Bolanos Hunter expanding on his wild claims about Parajón.[79] Many human rights groups challenged the unproven allegations and an IRD representative later admitted, "I don't know if it's true [about Parajón], and I don't know how to find out."[80]

Collaboration between the IRD and the Office of Public Diplomacy allowed them both to continue their cynical campaign that caused terrible violence in Nicaragua. One of the founders of the IRD spoke candidly on the subject, saying that the suffering of the poor was a regrettable side effect of the necessary war in Nicaragua. He said, "Washington believes that Nicaragua must serve as a warning to the rest of Central America to never again challenge U.S. hegemony, because of the enormous economic and political costs. It's too bad that the [Nicaraguan] poor must suffer, but historically the poor have always suffered. Nicaragua must be a lesson to others."[81]

Members of the Institute on Religion and Democracy also participated in Faith Whittlesey's meetings of the Outreach Working Group on Central America. One meeting in September 1983 revealed the tenor of these assemblies. Faith Whittlesey had gathered seventy-five Hispanic evangelical pastors to persuade them to publicly support Reagan's Central American policies. The speakers that day were Faith Whittlesey, Otto Reich, Kerry Ptacek of the IRD, a National Security Council staff member, and several others. The National Security Council staff member was introduced with the caveat that no photographs or audio recordings were allowed due to the fact that he was appearing there "at great risk to his personal safety," having just returned from a three-week tour of

---

[79] Institute on Religion and Democracy, "The Subversion of the Church in Nicaragua: An Interview with Miguel Bolanos Hunter," Briefing Paper No. 1, December 1983, located in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

[80] Penny Lernoux, "The Struggle for Nicaragua's Soul: A Church in Revolution and War," *Sojourners*, 14 May 1989, 14-23.

[81] Ibid., 14-23.

Latin America. He described a dramatic rise in the amount of Soviet military aid pouring into Latin America and then showed a picture of several concrete buildings along a desolate road and told of his recent encounter with a man who had suffered for 25 years in a Siberian gulag. The man had seen the pictures and asked the NSC staffer how he had gotten pictures of the gulag. But the staffer responded that this was not the gulag, saying, "this picture is not from the Soviet Union. It is from Nicaragua." After this ominous introduction, the NSC staffer spoke of Sandinista abuses before ending his talk as he mentioned to the Hispanic pastors that he conducted a Bible study on Wednesday nights and cautioned them against "leftist appeals for the church in Latin America to promote revolution."[82]

Other speakers reinforced this dire picture of Nicaragua, drawing attention to Soviet influence in Nicaragua and cautioning against viewing leftists in Latin America as "Robin Hoods." In addition they handed out a briefing packet that contained Reagan's speech to the National Association of Evangelicals condemning the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," a picture of the president in front of the American flag, and a copy of an article declaring his opposition to abortion. Kerry Ptacek of the IRD spoke about the "communist corruption of our churches… most critically evident in Nicaragua." As evidence of this, she pointed out that CEPAD's director, Gustavo Parajón, "is introduced as a Conservative Baptist, but he's actually a Sandinista supporter." Clearly, these two identities were incompatible in her mind. In the same vein, she argued that several ecumenical organizations there brought theologians together to come up with "Christian-sounding excuses" for the Sandinista government. This corruption of the church could

[82] Juan Williams, "White House Pitches Latin Policy to Public," *Washington Post*, 24 September 1983, A5; Deborah Huntington, "God's Saving Plan," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, January/February 1984, 33.

not continue. They hoped their pitch to these Hispanic religious leaders would help convince them to make sure their followers did not support leftist movements in Central America.[83] This was just one example of how the IRD teamed up with the Office of Public Diplomacy and the Outreach Working Group on Central America to promote their vision of the supposed "atrocities" committed by leftists in Central America. Their efforts also aided in the construction of a consensus of U.S. evangelical opinion that returning radicalized missionaries found increasingly difficult to combat. In the face of such massive propaganda efforts, evangelicals simply dismissed radicalized missionaries' viewpoints because they were so different from almost all other information they were hearing.

After Congress cut off aid for the Contras in 1984, Oliver North began recruiting sympathetic evangelicals into a "private support network" authorized by the White House in violation of many laws. Trans World Missions, Gospel Crusade, Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing, Freedom's Friends, Christian Emergency Relief Teams (CERT), Freedom's Friends, and Oliver North's church, Church of the Apostles in Fairfax, Virginia, all appear to have been connected to Oliver North's "Contra support network."[84] Phil Derstine of Gospel Crusade said Oliver North had "set up" the logistics for him to bring tons of supplies to the Contras and confirmed that North had "made similar arrangements for other U.S. Christian Right groups," but noted that North kept

---

[83] Juan Williams, "White House Pitches Latin Policy to Public," *Washington Post*, 24 September 1983, A5; Deborah Huntington, "God's Saving Plan," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, January/February 1984, 33.

[84] David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 325.

that information compartmentalized.[85] One of the group's trips to minister to "freedom fighters" followed a personal invitation from Oliver North and a briefing session at the National Security Council.[86] When Bill Moyers interviewed Derstine for his 1987 documentary, he was a bit more restrained and simply said that Oliver North had "opened some doors" for them and helped them make contacts with the Contras.[87] Friends of the Americas, an organization formed by an evangelical state legislator from Louisiana, was part of North's network as well. They established a refugee camp near the headquarters of one of the Contra groups just seven kilometers from the Nicaraguan border, violating United Nations' guidelines and essentially having the effect of drawing some 4,000 refugees towards the Contra recruiting base. They were rewarded with a humanitarian award from President Reagan in 1985.[88]

The National Security Council advised Contra leaders on fundraising and many evangelical groups stepped in to provide basic necessities so that other funds could be diverted to the purchase of weapons. The Reagan administration encouraged this kind of private aid to the Contras by appearing at these organizations' fundraisers and also by not prosecuting them for potential violations of the Neutrality Act.[89] David Courson of the Christian Emergency Relief Team even received a supportive mailgram from President

---

[85] Sara Diamond, "The Contras' Chaplains," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, September/October 1988, 32.

[86] David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 252.

[87] Transcript of Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 6, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid/Oliver North," 6.

[88] David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 252.

[89] Nancy Conover and Bev Wilson, "White House Orchestrates 'Private' Aid: Contras Dance to Reagan's Tune," *Nicaraguan Perspectives*, Winter 1985-1986, 10-11, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 5, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid."

Reagan that read, "Your efforts to relieve the sufferings of the refugees are in the highest traditions of Christianity and of the American spirit of neighborliness." And concluded, "You have my congratulations along with my best wishes for continuing success. God bless you."[90]

The group Freedom's Friends sent a newsletter to their evangelical supporters illuminating their work with the "freedom fighters" in Honduras. Their letter began by claiming "the Nicaraguan people are now ruled by a cruel Marxist dictator by the name of Daniel Ortega. His troops have murdered thousands and raped the land. Local Indians have died by the thousands facing armed Soviet helicopters as well." The letter went on to report on the organization's efforts to disperse 20,000 pounds of badly needed supplies to these people "fighting to free their nation." The letter was interspersed with pictures of the mission's leader, William Murray, who had "followed the supplies every foot of the way into Nicaragua," with gun-wielding Contras as well as one picture of Murray with President Reagan with the caption, "William Murray and President Reagan discuss government support of Freedom Fighters in Nicaragua."[91] In each of these examples, groups' travels into restricted areas, bringing supplies to refugees and Contras, and the like, Oliver North seemed to have a hand in much of it, as the Reagan administration's promoter of private funding of the war. Many of the groups were even fortunate enough to have President Reagan's personal seal of approval for their efforts as they pointed out alleged Sandinista atrocities and rallied conservative evangelicals in the United States around the fear that communists were on the United States' doorstep.

---

[90] Ronald Reagan, mailgram to David Courson, 22 May 1986, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 28, Folder 4, "CERT."

[91] William Murray, letter to supporters, "Nicaragua, The Dilemma," in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 5, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid."

With such an organized campaign of questionable information about the situation in Central America in combination with conservative evangelicals' allegiance to President Reagan, the editors of magazines like *Christianity Today* had to find a way to understand what was going on in Central America. Like many U.S. evangelicals they seemed to find it difficult to disbelieve the Reagan administration's information about Central America. They often spoke glowingly of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, let IRD leaders write articles for them, and reported their information in the pages of *Christianity Today* as well.[92]

In line with the Institute on Religion and Democracy and other conservative evangelical organizations, *Christianity Today* often published articles emphasizing the religious persecution and suppression allegedly occurring in Nicaragua. Beth Spring's 1985 article was typical of their coverage insisting Sandinistas had cracked down on religious groups, ransacked Christian organizations' offices, and placed several religious leaders under house arrest. It even cited an unverified claim that the Sandinistas had killed thousands of Nicaraguan citizens who did not support the government. On the subject of these dubious allegations it cited the IRD, which argued that it "places a grave cloud of suspicion over the Sandinista government, which should be carefully

[92] Edmund W. Robb, Jr., "Spiritual Sparks Ignite Some Mainstream Churches," *Christianity Today*, 7 August 1981, 29-31; Edward Plowman, "Theologians Stand for Democracy," *Christianity Today*, 19 February 1982, 34-35; "Pressing for Renewal in Mainline Churches," 7 May 1982, 32-33; Beth Spring, "Mainline Protestants Organize to Challenge Their Churches' Positions on Public Policy," *Christianity Today*, 1 February 1985, 54-56; Interview with Kent R. Hill, "Is There a Link Between Christianity and Democracy?," 18 September 1987, *Christianity Today*, 42; Steve Wykstra, "Evangelical Leader Named to National Peace Commission," *Christianity Today*, 2 October 1987, 52; Randy Frame, "Striving for Peace," *Christianity Today*, 15 January 1988, 44, 46.

investigated. Until it is disproven, it should cause all Christians and other persons of good will to suspend any further cooperation with the Sandinistas."[93]

Christianity Today also closely followed the accusations of Jimmy Hassan, a Nicaraguan refugee and former leader of Campus Crusade for Christ in Nicaragua who traveled around the United States decrying alleged abuses of the Sandinistas—torture, interrogation, and harassment.[94] Later that year, the magazine glowingly highlighted the testimony of Humberto Belli, a former Sandinista who fled Nicaragua and railed against their abuses around the United States. The reviewer claimed that Belli's access to secret Sandinista documents showed that their "apparent openness toward democracy and Christianity was a temporary measure to mask their true intentions until they could consolidate their power, establish their Marxist dictatorship, and begin their moves to bring all of Central America into the orbit of Cuba and the USSR." However, the reviewer continued, Belli's book was not just a political tract, but rather, "He writes as a Christian for Christians who are often uninformed about Sandinista abuses of Christians."[95] Each of the Nicaraguan refugees who traveled around the United States talking about alleged Sandinista religious persecution seemed to receive significant attention within the pages of *Christianity Today*.

The magazine went one step further than simple one-sided reporting, however. In several of its articles about crises in Central America it made a point of trying to understand the situation by hearing from both sides of the debate, but when examined

---

[93] Beth Spring, "The Government's Heavy Hand Falls on Believers: The Sandinistas Crack Down on Protestant Activity," *Christianity Today*, 13 December 1985, 51-52.

[94] Beth Spring, "Campus Crusade Director Describes government Harassment of Evangelicals," *Christianity Today*, 7 February 1986, 52-53.

[95] Ronald Nash, "Condemned by Their Own Words," *Christianity Today*, 13 June 1986, 30-31.

closely, readers could easily see that it often undermined information that did not match its political and theological beliefs. In the wake of evangelical president Efraín Ríos Montt's demise in Guatemala, many evangelicals still felt that people had judged him too harshly on human rights abuses. In a lengthy 1984 article titled, "Why We Can't Always Trust the News Media: Reports on Guatemala's Former President Unmask the Effects of Bias," Tom Minnery argued that Ríos Montt had been unfairly cast as a "bloodthirsty killer who set out to exterminate the Mayan Indians of Guatemala." He went on to try to expose the media's purportedly unfair criticism and reveal the "truth" about what a great Christian Ríos Montt was. Minnery criticized groups like Amnesty International who condemned Ríos Montt, arguing that Amnesty International's sources of information were compromised, with the claim that many were just guerrillas and activists. When Amnesty International cited one of their sources as a Christian group called the Justice and Peace Committee, Minnery clarified that classification saying, "This is an organization of church activists in Guatemala who are in sympathy with Marxist revolution." Classifying groups like the Justice and Peace Committee as "church activists" rather than fellow Christians was an important distinction among evangelicals. They were obligated to listen to fellow Christians in a very different way than how they listened to politicized activists.

Minnery also cited information coming from several conservative evangelical missionaries who he noted worked directly with Indians in Guatemala and they claimed to have seen clear improvement in the treatment of indigenous people during Ríos Montt's time. These missionaries were clearly marked as fellow Christians and labeled as a believable source because of their work with the Indians. Unlike the activists of the

Justice and Peace Committee, these missionaries had moved to Guatemala years earlier to translate the Bible and Minnery argued that "because they have taken the trouble to learn Ixil and to befriend the Indians, they know the local people and customs better than any other outsider." After clearly casting these sources of information as having divergent levels of reliability, Minnery finished his article by saying that American news organizations often did not invest a lot of time or money in investigating Central America, and that "Occasionally, as in the case of Ríos Montt and Guatemala, great misunderstandings are the result, and the witness of the gospel itself may be damaged."[96]

Two other *Christianity Today* articles dealing with religious freedom and the war between the Sandinistas and the Contras in Nicaragua, also highlighted how differently *Christianity Today* and their readers viewed sources of information that matched their political and theological beliefs versus those that challenged them. One article titled, "Does the Sandinista Regime Promote Religious Freedom?," informed readers of ten pastors affiliated with CEPAD who were traveling around the United States talking about life in Nicaragua. The author noted that CEPAD was under scrutiny because of its close relationship with the Sandinistas. She went on to recount that one of the pastors had voiced "no hint of criticism" for the Sandinistas and claimed that Nicaraguans had the same religious freedoms as citizens of the United States. However, she continued, "Several cracks appeared in the veneer of his portrayal of Nicaraguan church life" when it became clear that he was not aware of a Pentecostal minister, Prudencio Baltodano, who had supposedly been tortured and left to die by Sandinista forces. In spite of the fact that the validity of Baltodano's story was widely questioned, the Nicaraguan pastor's

[96] Tom Minnery, "Why We Can't Always Trust the News Media: Reports on Guatemala's Former President Unmask the Effects of Bias," *Christianity Today*, 13 January 1984, 14-21.

ignorance of the accusations led the author to believe that he was not actually aware of what was truly happening in Nicaragua. The pastors also spoke with J. Douglas Holladay, who was a White House liaison to the U.S. Protestant community. Holladay reported that the pastors "were selectively informed," and continued saying, "I felt they were surrogates of the government…. What they said did not ring true."[97] Citing the White House liaison as more credible than Nicaraguan pastors demonstrated one of the ways that conservative evangelicals in the United States cast doubt on perspectives that did not fit with their understandings of the situation in Central America.

Another *Christianity Today* story utilized the same technique while again reporting on the two sides of the debate in Nicaragua. In her article titled, "Contras vs. Sandinistas: What Should the U.S. Do?," Beth Spring demonstrated the two vastly different visions of Nicaragua. She cited a former Sandinista supporter, Robert Leiken, visiting Nicaragua and reporting that there was an "intensifying [Sandinista] campaign of intimidation, harassment, coercion, and even assassination against religious groups, opposition parties, the independent press, and trade unions." From the other side, Gustavo Parajón, who worked with a major Christian relief organization in Nicaragua called CEPAD, responded to Leiken's comments saying, "He must have visited another country." Rather than taking both of these views seriously, Spring illuminated her leanings as she went on to say, "Virtually all observers say the Sandinistas are running a totalitarian, Marxist state," and cited the *Washington Post* saying, "the question is not whether the Sandinistas are Communists of the Cuban or Soviet school. All that is now

[97] Beth Spring, "Does the Sandinista Regime Promote Religious Freedom?," *Christianity Today*, 23 November 1984, 43-44.

given." As further reinforcement of that perspective she reminded readers that President Reagan often compared the Contras to America's Founding Fathers.

In a revealing segment of the article, Spring wrote about U.S. Representative Paul Henry (an evangelical Republican from Michigan and the son of former *Christianity Today* editor Carl Henry), who traveled to Nicaragua with a group of congressmen sympathetic to Reagan's views, but "broke away from the group to meet with three people he labeled 'representatives of the religious left,' all of them American missionaries." Henry reported on his visit with them saying the missionaries' assessment "suggested to me either a political naiveté, or a strongly left-of-center orientation to the political world," and that he was troubled by their "starkly contrasting assessment of the factual situation." He said the information these missionaries receive is "predominantly filtered through the government [Sandinista]-controlled press." Spring added weight to Henry's assessment noting that it was people like these missionaries who were largely responsible for shaping the views of their denominations in the U.S. and providing information to delegations visiting from the U.S., essentially casting doubt not only on the information that they imparted to visitors but on the missionaries themselves as credible sources of information for U.S. evangelicals.[98]

Many radicalized missionaries faced similar denunciations of their perspectives from evangelical supporters as well as administration officials in the United States. One Mennonite missionary couple, Jim and Ann Hershberger, returned from service in El Salvador in 1984 and their organization set up a meeting with a State Department official to inform them of the violence they had witnessed while working in El Salvador. They

---

[98] Beth Spring, "Contras vs. Sandinistas: What Should the U.S. Do?," *Christianity Today*, 18 April 1986, 36-40.

had previously spent time in Nicaragua and when they went to visit one of Jim's mentors there in 1983, they discovered he had been killed by the Contras and his daughter had been kidnapped several months before. When they went to the State Department to share their perspective with people there, the person they were supposed to meet with was not there and somehow they ended up in Oliver North's office. As they informed North about Jim's mentor being killed by the Contras and other atrocities they witnessed, North simply responded, "Oh that didn't happen. They don't do those sorts of things…. You poor misguided people. That's not what happens there."[99] This was an extreme example, but many conservative Christians and political leaders responded similarly by calling radicalized missionaries dupes who had been misled.

Rachel Smith spent time in 1983 traveling around the United States with her husband Dennis educating Christians in the U.S. about the crises in Central America. In 1987, Rachel and several other Presbyterian missionaries even had a chance to meet with President Reagan as well as other members of his administration, including George Bush, George Schultz, Elliott Abrams, and others. The Presbyterian missionaries shared their experiences in Central America, requesting that the administration cease their support of the Contras in Nicaragua. In the coming days they clearly realized that their meeting had not changed the President's mind as he continued his support of the Nicaraguan "freedom fighters." But his words to them in the meeting revealed again how he and others in the administration viewed the perspective of transformed missionaries in Central America. He began by saying, "You must realize that as a government we have far more access to information than any individual, or in this case, any church." He then went on to say that he believed these missionaries and others like them were victims of "the most

[99] Ann Hershberger, interview with author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 25 February 2009.

sophisticated disinformation campaign ever carried out in the history of the world."[100] Much like the examples from *Christianity Today*, many people, from their supporters in churches all the way up to the President himself, simply wrote these radicalized missionaries off as dupes who had been brainwashed and propagandized by communists.

The increased attention that evangelicals were focusing on Central America, leftist radicals, and revolutionary theologies through the 1970s and 1980s, inevitably led to conflicts with radicalized missionaries, some of whom were undergoing a completely different transformation among the people of Central America. With their growing connection to conservative domestic and foreign policies, conservative evangelicals became quite disgruntled when their missionaries ended up supporting leftist causes in Central America. As scholar Jeffrey Swanson points out, U.S. evangelicals' funding of missionaries set up a type of contractual relationship: "By accepting monetary pledges and gifts from these people (and churches) back home, the missionary tacitly incurs an obligation to perform on their behalf, and to use the money in a way that fulfills donors' intentions."[101] Radicalized evangelical missionaries in Central America challenged the boundaries of this contractual relationship as they underwent significant conversions and ended up supporting political and theological movements that were anathema to their sending communities in the United States.

---

[100] Rachel M. Smith, "Of People, Politics, and Presbyterians: A Meeting at the White House," in Dennis Smith's personal archive, Folder "Seventh Angel – Correspondence-Publications."

[101] Jeffrey Swanson, Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 132-133.

CHAPTER 6

NEGOTIATING TRANSFORMATION: RADICALIZED MISSIONARIES' CONFLICTS WITH THEIR SENDING COMMUNITIES

Evangelicals in the United States and their missionaries in Central America underwent dramatic concurrent transformations from the 1950s through the 1980s. As evangelicals in the U.S. became increasingly engaged in conservative politics and foreign policy, radicalized missionaries in Central America questioned many of the perspectives they had originally brought with them to the mission field. As these missionaries read the Bible through Latin American eyes, spoke with families affected by violence throughout the region, or participated in the excitement of the Nicaraguan revolution, they were forced to reevaluate their belief systems. Their experiences in Central America brought them to new perspectives and they questioned the benevolence of U.S. involvement in the region, worked and prayed with Catholics who they had been taught to believe were not "true Christians," and attended peace vigils protesting U.S.-funded violence. As they searched for answers to these new theological, sociological, and political questions, they also had to negotiate their new beliefs with their sending communities in the United States.

These dramatically different transformations led to intense conflict between sending communities and their missionaries. Radicalized missionaries endured tensions and controversies with family, friends, church members, and the larger evangelical community in the United States. Radicalized missionaries clashed with U.S. evangelicals

over the Sandinista-Contra war, ecumenical work with Catholics, and interpretations of what the United States' role in Central America should be.

Conflicts between radicalized missionaries and their sending communities often began with small cultural transitions that quickly revealed larger theological and ideological transformations. For Amzie and Elena Yoder this shift entailed no longer wearing distinctive Beachy Amish clothing and Elena cut her hair. Others, like Dick and Irene Foulkes, had to explain why they no longer followed strict fundamentalist ideology about how Christians should engage with society at large. These initial conflicts foreshadowed larger shifts in theology and politics in later years. Often sending communities began to question their missionaries' foundational theological commitments. Having sent them to convert a largely Catholic population, they were often concerned when their missionaries joined ecumenical movements or simply worked too closely with Catholics or sometimes even with other Protestants. These concerns often branched into questions about whether their missionaries had adopted Latin American theology, contextual theology, or even liberation theology. Each of these implied varying degrees of heresy for conservative sending communities in the United States.

Apprehensions about improper theology sometimes masked concern about ideological differences on socialism and poverty, gender and marriage, and pacifism and violence. As evangelicals in the U.S. questioned missionaries about their views on these larger ideological issues hidden within their changing theologies, they became increasingly explicit about political differences. Sending communities in the U.S. accused radicalized missionaries of not being good Americans and not loving their

country when they delved into specific issues such as the Panama Canal, U.S. support for repressive militaries in Guatemala and El Salvador, and the Nicaraguan revolution. In the specific contexts of these volatile issues, radicalized missionaries and their sending communities fleshed out their differences. Questions about missionaries' support for the Nicaraguan revolution originally stemmed from evangelicals' theological concerns, but once both sides started talking it became clear that a multitude of political and ideological issues were part of their complicated differences as well. As evangelicals in the U.S. were more explicit about these individual incongruences, it also became clear that there was a comprehensive political difference and that often when missionaries violated one specific evangelical political boundary they were labeled as suspicious and potentially subversive. Rather than talking about specific political differences at this point, many conservative evangelicals simply referred to them as being "too political." This shorthand removed U.S. evangelicals from the political fray, denying their own intense politicization, and attempted to reinforce the larger idea of what it meant to be a missionary, arguing that these radicalized missionaries had abdicated their original goal of evangelization and spiritual work. In the end, many radicalized missionaries spoke of not being able to find common language with their sending communities and began to look for new definitions of evangelicalism or simply moved into other religious groups with more open ideologies.

This chapter will follow this same arc in examining radicalized missionaries' changing conflicts with their sending communities over their years in Central America. It will begin by illuminating some of cultural conflicts that missionaries had with their sending communities when they first moved to Central America. Several radicalized

missionaries also ran into conflict with other evangelicals in Central America. Many of them felt the increasingly vitriolic tone of conservative theology and politics in the U.S. affected communities in Central America as well. When they were accused of heresy by missions overseers and fellow church members in Central America they often felt the influence of conservative evangelicals from the U.S. The chapter will then examine the variety of ideological conflicts that missionaries and their sending communities engaged in as theological concerns turned into more overtly political concerns. Sending communities' political questions then turned to accusations against their missionaries of being unpatriotic or "too political." The chapter will conclude with a case study of John and Doris Stam's relationship with Black Rock Congregational Church that highlights many of these transitions in the contentious relationship between sending communities and their radicalized missionaries. A short section at the end of the chapter will examine how each of the primary missionaries in this study resolved their conflicts with conservative evangelicals in the U.S. or chose to move into more accepting religious groups.

Missionaries endured conflicts with all levels of their sending communities including family, friends, supporting churches, mission organizations, the larger evangelical community in the U.S., and even Central American evangelicals who were sometimes influenced by the U.S. evangelical movement. When conflicts arose, missionaries often fought mightily to defend their new perspectives. The stakes were high. Radicalized missionaries could be cut off financially from their missions agencies and funding churches. If that happened it would have been difficult for them to remain in the countries where they had chosen to live. They also risked losing connection to many

important people in their lives. Friends, families, and support networks in the U.S. sometimes abandoned transformed missionaries when relationships became too complicated. Even when they were able to maintain relationship, the stress of ongoing conflicts weighed heavily on missionaries living far away from these older established relationships.

Missionaries arriving in Central America faced a multitude of small choices about whether to embrace Latin American culture as their own or to maintain deeper connection with their sending groups. Many of the radicalized missionaries in this dissertation chose to identify more fully with their host cultures. While many evangelicals in the U.S. admired their missionaries' choice to embrace Latin American culture it often quickly brought up complicated disagreements about how best to do that while maintaining the sending group's specific biblical interpretations about how to engage with society. These initial conflicts were a precursor to more significant transformations and conflicts that would arise in later years and often led directly into larger theological conflicts with sending communities.

Amzie and Elena Yoder portrayed this conflict most directly, as they both grew up in the Amish and Beachy Amish faith traditions and moved to Honduras as missionaries in 1964. In the early 1980s they spent two years back in the U.S. before returning to Central America, this time moving to Guatemala where they helped develop a Mennonite seminary called SEMILLA. Coming from their very conservative upbringing among the Amish, the Yoders both underwent significant transformation during their years in Central America. As noted previously, the Beachy Amish group that

supported Amzie and Elena had allowed them to conform to Honduran dress and music rather than maintaining the distinctive style of the Beachy Amish.

These changes in dress and their style of church eventually became tied to larger concerns about Amzie and Elena's critical perspective of the United States and evangelicals there. At first it was simply a point of concern for the Yoders themselves. They felt awkward when they returned to the U.S. making their children return to the distinctive dress of their supporting churches. Elena said, "I didn't feel comfortable doing what we did… I mean, I'd gotten really tired of that, trying to have two dress styles. I just did not like that, because it was like you were who you were and then you come back and you had to comply to this dress code that you didn't even believe in." Their decision to wear two different styles of dress also affected members of their home church in Indiana. Several of their close friends from the church visited them in Honduras and returned to Indiana asking their church leaders why they still had to wear Beachy Amish clothing if Amzie and Elena did not. Church leaders who had originally decided to let the Yoders adopt Honduran dress while abroad began to feel some of the dissension that it was causing in their own church.[1]

For both Amzie and Elena choices about clothing and cultural adaptation hinted at larger theological and ideological transformations as they worked in Honduras. Amzie noted that part of the tension they felt at their supporting church was connected to what he referred to as their "conscientization process." They were starting to believe that Christian faith also led them to specific political perspectives in the context of Latin America. The fundamental shift seemed to be that they no longer thought of the Christian faith as being only about a relationship with God, but now also began to think

[1] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

of what kind of relationship it implied with other people and the rest of the world. Working among impoverished Hondurans they increasingly embraced the importance of social justice rather than maintain a solitary focus on personal salvation. Amzie spoke of developing an "alternative conscience to the typical 'evangelicalist' approach." He described the "evangelicalist" approach as escapist and ignoring injustice, basically, "My God and I, let the rest of the world go to hell mentality. Where it's alright if you're alright with God but you don't get involved with anything that's going around."[2] Within the context of Central America, Amzie and Elena came to feel that this perspective did not fit their changing understanding of Christian faith and life.

People at their home church in Indiana sensed the changes taking place for Amzie and Elena. Elena's family was deeply involved in that church—several of her family members attended there and her father was one of the ministers of the church. Finally, one time when they were back on furlough, Elena's sister (who attended the church) and her father came to her and asked them to leave the church. Church leaders pointed to the dissension surrounding the change in style of dress, but it also seemed connected to ideological changes that the Yoders were undergoing. They still had influence among some of the younger members of the church and those people were beginning to raise questions as well due to their connection with Amzie and Elena. The Yoders felt that the church was becoming narrower in their focus, while they themselves were becoming more open to engaging the world. Even with the clear signs that they were headed in a different direction than their church, it was still a painful experience to be asked to leave

[2] Ibid.

and a difficult choice because they still had many great friends and a good support system there.[3]

Returning to Honduras, Amzie and Elena continued their conscientization, becoming increasingly involved in the local Honduran church. Amzie remembered a growing ecumenical spirit during these years as he began watching Óscar Romero preach on their little black and white television while they were living in Honduras. In their work in developing the seminary in Guatemala a few years later, they both became deeply involved with ecumenical movements, working with Catholics, Baptists, and Pentecostals among others. Amzie remembered being accused early on of being an ecumenist and realized that it was true in many ways. He said, "Anybody who knows Christ is our brother or sister no matter what their orientation or minor differences are. And that was taboo."[4]

Many radicalized missionaries faced their initial conflicts over theological issues, as they broadened their theologies and had meaningful ecumenical experiences with Catholics. Cliff and Linda Holland came to Costa Rica as missionaries with the Latin America Mission in 1972. They spent several years in Southern California before moving to Costa Rica and maintained many connections with evangelical friends there. Cliff and Linda's radicalizations took place fairly quickly during their first few years in Costa Rica. Their initial conflicts with sending communities seemed to center around Cliff's involvement in the charismatic renewal movement that was taking place in Latin America during the 1970s. Like other missionaries in this study, Cliff and Linda were originally sent to convert non-Christians and Catholics to evangelical Protestantism. So

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

when Cliff became deeply involved in the charismatic renewal movement, which many people thought of as a primarily Catholic movement, they began to question whether he was still focused on evangelizing these "lost souls." In Cliff's mind, he thought of himself as a cultural anthropologist and saw this as part of his work. Charismatic renewal was a religious phenomenon taking place in Latin America and he was there to research it and see what it was all about. Others saw it differently and warned him to be careful about "hobnobbing with Roman Catholics."[5]

John and Doris Stam underwent significant transformations starting almost immediately when they became missionaries to Costa Rica in 1954. While they did not immediately engage in ecumenical experiences with Catholics, in 1961, John started his doctoral work under the direction of one of the most influential Christian theologians of the 20th century, Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland. Karl Barth personally invited each of his foreign students to study with him and John was Barth's last foreign student before he died in 1968. Studying with Barth, who was a more liberal theologian than many evangelicals would have been comfortable with at the time, was problematic enough, but to make matters worse John had the option of applying for a World Council of Churches scholarship to help finance his doctoral studies. In the end, he decided not to apply for the scholarship because he believed his mission would be uncomfortable with any affiliation with the mainline World Council of Churches. In a letter he noted that the mission had not "forbidden" him to apply for the scholarship, but that they had cautioned him against applying.[6] A few years later, with the Latin America Mission's blessing,

[5] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

John joined the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, one of his first significant ecumenical experiences.[7] John also joined an ecumenical movement called Exodo after Vatican II where he shared communion with a diverse group of Christians. He carefully avoided discussing his ecumenical experiences with his missions sponsors in the U.S.

Dick and Irene Foulkes were missionaries in Costa Rica with the Latin America Mission starting in the mid-1950s, teaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary. As we have seen, Dick and Irene's radicalization was deeply connected to their ecumenical experiences with Catholics. Over their years in Costa Rica they transitioned away from their fundamentalist upbringing and redefined their understanding of evangelicalism as well.

One of their first conflicts with supporters in the U.S. was with the Moody Church in Chicago. In a letter to the pastor of the Moody Church in 1960 they outlined one of their small conflicts with the fundamentalist church that was symbolic of some of their more significant transitions. A conflict had arisen when they were back in the United States on furlough and attended several movies. Many fundamentalists at the time thought of watching movies as sinful engagement in the pleasures of the world. Irene wrote to the pastor of Moody Church explaining why she felt it was appropriate for her as a Christian to attend films such as *Ben-Hur*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Oedipus Rex*. In Irene's mind, the condemnation of movies by fundamentalists in the U.S. was not a biblical stance, but rather "pagan dualism" that had influenced fundamentalist thinking

---

[6] John Stam, letter to Reverend Philip Potter of the Methodist Missionary Society, 23 April 1961, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 1, Folder 19, "1960-1961;" John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 10 February 2008.

[7] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 14 February 2008.

and considered all "material things as inherently evil." In her mind the more biblical view was that God had created the world and it was "meant to be received with thanksgiving."[8] Though this issue came to a head surrounding their going to the theater while on furlough, the deeper issue of how they chose to engage the world differently than some of their fundamentalist supporters was also beginning to show.

Both the Foulkes and the Stams faced intense conflicts with their sending groups in the U.S. over their affiliation with the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, where accusations of faulty theology ran rampant during the 1970s and 1980s. As noted earlier, the seminary became independent of its founding organization, the Latin America Mission, in 1971 and began developing its contextual theology curricula. To many evangelicals in the United States, the seminary's transformation sounded ominously as if it would soon embrace liberation theology.

The Latin American Biblical Seminary went through several crises during this time surrounding its evolving theology, attempts to increase the number of Latin American faculty, and what some U.S. evangelicals saw as its leftward drift. In 1973, former editor of *Christianity Today*, Carl Henry, visited the seminary to investigate claims that the faculty had adopted liberation theology. In August of 1973, the *Evangelical Press News Service* ran an article summarizing the results of Carl Henry's investigation. The article cited Henry as saying that the seminary had been turned over to Latin American leaders and some of the faculty "currently espouses a compromise form of liberation theology." He continued noting that these professors "take a hard line critical of North American mission board influence and support socialism as a preferred

[8] Irene Foulkes, letter to Pastor Redpath, 24 October 1960, in Irene Foulkes's personal archive.

economic option and violence as a Christian possibility for social change."[9] This news spread like wildfire among evangelicals in the United States who supported the Latin America Mission and those missionaries who were connected with the seminary. The faculty wrote letters to many supporters in the U.S. and filed a press release signed by 18 members of the seminary faculty denying Henry's allegations in October of 1973. Attempting to reassert their evangelical credentials, they argued that Henry's analysis did not account for the complexity of the Latin American situation. Calling the report "irresponsible and distorted," they noted that all faculty members both believed and annually signed the doctrinal statement of the Latin America Mission, which they argued was "an organization whose theological orthodoxy and leadership in evangelism are well-known."[10] The seminary managed to make it through the controversy but suffered some lasting damage to its reputation through the exchange, and would be known by some in the evangelical community as a left-leaning "black sheep" in the ensuing years.

In 1981, *Christianity Today* ran a special article on the seminary after one of their assistant editors spent three months in Costa Rica investigating it. Editor Kenneth Kantzer introduced the article calling the Latin American Biblical Seminary "a school noted for its evangelical tradition, but which now faces compromise by liberation theology." The article author, John Maust, had gone to investigate a "recurring suspicion:" Was the seminary "caving in from liberal pressure around it to repudiate its evangelical and Protestant heritage? Or was this going to be another North American

---

[9] "Latin Americans Critical of North American Influence, Carl Henry Finds," *EP News Service*, 25 August 1973, 11, in the Latin American Biblical Seminary Archives, UBL 365 RCT, "Cuerpo Docente: Documentos Varios, 1970-1982."

[10] "Faculty of Seminary Takes Issue with Report of Dr. Henry," *Religious News Service*, 2 October 1973, 8-9, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, "Records of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA)," Collection 352, Box 34, Folder 15.

misinterpretation of a Latin church trying to be both evangelical and truly Latin?" Maust's article presented a complex picture in response to that driving question, but ended with a question itself wondering whether the seminary would return to its evangelical roots or continue its direction towards liberation theology.[11] The seminary never did fully convince the evangelical community in the U.S. that it was truly evangelical and continued to be an ecumenical community searching for a truly Latin American engagement with the Bible, theology, and spirituality. While John Stam eventually resigned from the faculty, Dick and Irene Foulkes thrived in that community for years, appreciating the diverse opinions and perspectives brought to the seminary, and this continued to raise questions for their evangelical supporters in the United States.

The Latin American Biblical Seminary eventually became such a hot topic among conservative evangelicals that many radicalized missionaries were considered guilty by association with the institution. Rick and Janice Waldrop were missionaries with Church of God World Missions in Guatemala from 1976 to 1994, with short stints in Costa Rica and Honduras during a few of those years. As we have seen, Rick's radicalization started almost immediately after moving to Guatemala and accelerated rapidly after he was kidnapped and held hostage by the Guerilla Army of the Poor in 1979. In 1981, the Waldrops' mission moved them to Costa Rica because they were concerned about violence in Guatemala. In Costa Rica, Rick's radicalization started becoming apparent to those he worked with and accelerated greatly as he took classes at the Latin American Biblical Seminary. Rick had a great deal of conflict with his missionary overseer in Costa Rica, who was much more conservative than him. His overseer could not believe

---

[11] Kenneth Kantzer, "Editor's Note," *Christianity Today*, 8 May 1981, 2; John Maust, "Seminary Crisis a Case Study in Political, Doctrinal Tensions," *Christianity Today*, 8 May 1981, 40-43.

that Rick was planning on taking classes at the Latin American Biblical Seminary and even referred to it as a "den of communists." Interestingly, the overseer also made Rick shave his beard. He viewed beards among missionary men as a sign that they were subversive and sympathetic to leftist movements.[12] Rick shaved his beard, then took classes at the seminary and continued his radicalization. In Costa Rica, the Waldrops became linked to a network of radicalized missionaries, including John and Doris Stam and Cliff Holland, among others. In my conversations with them, each remembers the other as good friends, and Rick spoke of how he thought of John as a significant role model.[13]

Sometimes conservative evangelical perspectives in the U.S. also manifested within local populations in Central America. Dick and Irene Foulkes ran into trouble at their church in Costa Rica, where Irene believed the leaders were under a lot of pressure to adopt conservative U.S.-centric perspectives. Irene was part of the pastoral team, but was removed when she came under investigation for being a communist and having questionable theology. Much of the conflict again surrounded the Latin American Biblical Seminary. They were seen as promoting liberation theology, feminism, and socialism, which several of the churches in Costa Rica joined the Foulkes' supporters in the U.S. in condemning. Linda Holland attended the same church where Irene was on the leadership team and remembered that the church was very clear about their relationship with the seminary at that time, referring to the seminary as "Satan's den," and stating that

---

[12] Interestingly, beards were often seen as a sign of being subversive. Cliff Holland told the story of his friend Roger Velasquez who was kicked out of El Salvador for being too critical of the government. A death squad came to his house and told him to leave the country or die, and added that he had to shave his beard before he left the country; Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008. John Stam also mentioned that he had a beard at one point; John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 10 February 2008.

[13] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

their people were not allowed to be associated with the seminary in any way. This was obviously complicated since several of their members, including Irene and Dick, were teaching there. Linda remembered one specific occasion in church after the Foulkes and several other professors at the seminary had written a statement of their beliefs about liberation theology. The pastor held up a copy of their statement in church and informed members of the congregation that they were not allowed to read the document because it had the Latin American Biblical Seminary seal printed on the back of it. Irene was there and Linda remembered her standing up after the announcement and saying she, "hoped they would be allowed to… read *La Nacion* [Costa Rican newspaper], because it was coming out in the newspaper the next day."[14]

Eventually the church held a meeting to decide whether or not to remove Irene from the pastoral team for her suspect theology and connections to the Latin American Biblical Seminary. At the meeting a man from the congregation got up and started talking about a sermon that she had preached nearly a year earlier on Palm Sunday. Irene was amazed that anybody could remember a sermon that she had preached a year earlier, but this man saw it as a visible point at which her theology was suspect. She had preached about Jesus entering Jerusalem in peace and facing his death as a way of referencing his political career, which she saw as operating in opposition to Rome. In her mind she saw Jesus as opposing the religious powers of his day, the Pharisees and their collusion with Rome, but that he "unmasked the evil of those powers" by going to his death peacefully. Because her fellow Costa Rican church members saw this as

[14] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

communist teaching and believed that her affiliation with the seminary also damaged her credibility, they decided to remove Irene from the pastoral team.[15]

Even in later years, conservative evangelicals still used the Latin American Biblical Seminary as a marker of potential theological heresy. Mark and Lynn Baker were missionaries in Honduras during the late 1970s and 1980s. Mark remembered running into some conflict at a seminary where he was teaching in Honduras. One of the other missionaries working at the seminary informed students that Mark was liberal and that they should "be careful" as they listened to Mark teach. When Mark dug further into the rumors, it turned out that he was guilty by association. He had chosen to use Dick Foulkes's book on Revelation and since Dick was a professor at the Latin American Biblical Seminary, which had supposedly embraced liberation theology, Mark was considered guilty of the same "sins."[16]

Other radicalized missionaries faced denunciations and accusations from conservative evangelicals that they had adopted liberation theology and were no longer "true evangelicals." One of Amzie and Elena Yoder's most direct conflicts with supporters in the United States came after they had started the seminary in Guatemala. A fellow missionary returned to the United States and went to one of their supporting missions agencies, Rosedale Mennonite Missions, accusing Amzie and Elena of teaching liberation theology and other "evil" ideologies at the seminary. Amzie had spoken with this missionary before and the other missionary had asked if he believed in everything that was being taught in the seminary and Amzie said no. The other missionary did not understand how Amzie could allow things he did not agree with to be taught at the

[15] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[16] Mark Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

seminary, but Amzie simply replied, "That's not our business to tell them what they've got to believe. They've got to learn to develop their own convictions, otherwise they're not theirs." Back in the United States, Amzie actually met with the board of Rosedale Mennonite Missions as well as the accusing missionary. They asked him many specific questions about what the seminary taught about liberation theology, women in leadership, and other issues they deemed questionable. Amzie remembered, "I told them that SEMILLA's whole philosophy is not to spoon-feed the people, not to tell them what they've got to think and accept but to help them with principles of interpretation of hermeneutics, as well as historical and an overall understanding of life, and an integration of faith and life, etc." Somehow his responses seemed to convince the missions board and he remembered the board chairman turning to Amzie's accuser at the end of the meeting and saying, "Well, Amzie doesn't seem to be such a bad person. Do you have anything else to say?" Amzie was very embarrassed and the meeting ended.[17] Not all of their meetings with supporting mission boards and church members in the United States always went so well, however.

Each of the radicalized missionaries in this study ran into questions about their transforming theologies during the 1970s and 1980s. In the mid-1970s, John Stam became embroiled in a controversy with the editor of *Christianity Today*, Harold Lindsell. The issue started in August of 1975, when *Christianity Today* published a scathing analysis of liberation theology by René de Visme Williamson, a professor of Political Science at Louisiana State University. Williamson critiqued the work of several important Latin American theologians.[18] His article instantly provoked a strong response

[17] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

from at least one of the theologians he cited in the piece, Ruben Alves, from Brazil. Alves's letter to the editor appeared two months later and stated flatly that Williamson had totally distorted Alves's work. Alves called Williamson "this liar of yours" and sarcastically, "this authority on what I think and write," as he vociferously denounced what he saw as misrepresentations of his writing and being unfairly placed in the "liberationist" camp. He finished by saying, "This article is totally irresponsible, has no concern for truth, is indifferent to the political implications of its lies on the lives of peoples whom he quotes."[19] Along with Alves's letter, the magazine also printed a short defense from Williamson, in which he apologized for misrepresenting one quote from Alves but defended his larger assertion that Alvez was a "liberationist."[20]

John Stam sprang into action almost immediately after seeing the initial article by René de Visme Williamson. On September 15, 1975, he wrote a letter to the editor, Harold Lindsell, who had been one of his professors at Wheaton College and Fuller Theological Seminary, strongly criticizing the article and pointing out two misquotations of the theologians that Williamson cited. He concluded his letter by saying,

> These gross misquotations are typical of the distortion throughout the article. Unfortunately, this kind of careless misrepresentation only serves to discredit conservative scholarship, short-circuits possibilities of serious theological discussion of the issues raised, and makes it harder for convinced evangelicals to get through to our 'liberationist' colleagues with more responsible criticism.[21]

---

[18] René de Visme Williamson, "The Theology of Liberation," *Christianity Today*, 8 August 1975, 7-13.

[19] Ruben Alves, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 24 October 1975, 20.

[20] René de Visme Williamson, letter to the editor, *Christianity Today*, 24 October 1975, 22.

[21] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 15 September 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976."

Lindsell replied a few weeks later, saying simply that they had already received a letter from Alves that they were planning on printing, so they would not be printing John's letter in the magazine. He did, however, comment on the "vitriolic" tone of Alves's letter saying, "His letter [Alves's] is a fascinating study that would be worthy of interpretation by the Fuller School of Psychology," derisively undermining Alvez's position by saying that had psychological issues.[22]

Unsatisfied with Lindsell's response and refusal to print his letter in the magazine, John Stam redoubled his efforts and fired off another letter calling Williamson's article "superficial and sloppy and inaccurate," asserting that it never would have been accepted as "a sophomore term-paper in any serious seminary." Arguing that his original letter should be published in the magazine, John also pointed out differences between his letter to the editor and Alves's, noting that Alves's response was coming from a very different perspective. Alves, he said, "does not pretend to be a 'conservative evangelical,' I and our seminary most definitely are, and we feel compelled to protest Williamson's article as evangelicals, from within a common context of biblical and evangelical commitment."[23] Lindsell defended Williamson's academic pedigree and attempted to defuse the situation by suggesting that John might write an article for *Christianity Today* critiquing the theology of revolution from the viewpoint of a conservative evangelical. However, he hastened to add "that there has been some degree of ferment concerning the appropriateness of the term evangelical for you and your colleagues [at the Latin

---

[22] Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 29 September 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

[23] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 8 October 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

American Biblical Seminary] as it relates to the question of biblical infallibility." He noted that he remembered Carl Henry having some "real reservations" about the question of how evangelical the faculty of the seminary was.[24]

John Stam attempted to re-focus the issue on the original article but Lindsell quickly returned to the more important issue in his mind, questioning John again about whether or not he was a true evangelical. Citing Carl Henry again as well as other unnamed sources, Lindsell noted that he had specific questions for John about his view of biblical infallibility, saying that he had "genuine reservations about labeling anyone as evangelical who does not adhere to an infallible scripture."[25] John was apparently so surprised by this continued line of questioning that he started off his next letter to Lindsell by attempting to address these concerns. Since Lindsell had cited Carl Henry's impressions, John also sent a copy of the letter to Henry. He started his defense by assuring the two, "most emphatically," that he had always held and still held the "high doctrine of plenary, verbal inspiration." He continued that in all of his writing and teaching he had never denied "the inspiration nor the infallibility of Holy Scripture." After several more clarifications of his position he said, "Let me add that I find the Scriptures more living, wonderful and delightful with each year, and I preach them with more delight, power and blessing (by God's mercy) with each passing year."

After clarifying his position, his tone changed as he once again argued that "journalistic responsibility" required publishing further discussion of this serious issue of

---

[24] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 8 October 1975 and Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 20 October 1975 and Richard A. Ray, editor of John Knox Press, letter to René de Visme Williamson, 11 September 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

[25] Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 21 November 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

evangelical perception of liberation theology within the pages of *Christianity Today* as they had published the original article that John believed contained such grievous misinformation. He took issue with the fact that Lindsell had refused to publish his letter to the editor and said,

> I am 100% unconvinced by your plea of lack of space to 'publish everybody and anybody's reaction;' I am an evangelical, former student of yours and Carl Henry's, with three advanced degrees in theology and over twenty years of teaching in Latin America. I read your letters' column from fortnight to fortnight, and I don't find such rigorous standards of selectivity that would have made it impossible to publish my three paragraphs!!

Following these strong words, John responded to Lindsell's suggestion that he write an article on revolutionary theology by laying out his idea for an article for the magazine called "Liberation Theology: Some Second Thoughts," that would correct some of the errors of Williamson's original article while illuminating a more Latin American evangelical perspective on liberation theology.[26]

Rather than responding to any of John's specific questions, Harold Lindsell spent the majority of his next letter arguing that he was unsatisfied with John's response to his questions about infallibility, stating, "I've read your letter and you have by no means answered the question I posed." He argued that the Latin America Mission statement of faith failed to address infallibility to a satisfactory degree, arguing that it did not deal with "the basic epistemological question of this generation." It only spoke of infallibility in matters of faith and practice, rather than speaking to the totality of biblical scripture. For Lindsell, it was clear that evangelicals must believe that all of biblical scripture was free

---

[26] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 2 December 1975, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive. John Stam, letter to Carl Henry, 2 December 1975, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 12, "Lindsell Theology-Ethics."

from error including "matters of fact, history, science, etc." He then turned the conversation to new accusations about the faculty of the seminary in Costa Rica. He spoke of a friend of his who had just visited the seminary and "brought back with him reports about the seminary that are at best disturbing." In the best possible scenario, that reports were "unfounded and unfactual," he noted that the seminary had "a real public relations job" to make sure people knew the truth about the seminary. However, he added somewhat ominously, if the reports were accurate, "then you have another kind of problem to deal with." Before closing his letter Lindsell added another line of questioning for John and the seminary faculty saying, "I certainly would be interested to know whether or not you accept socialism or free enterprise. I would be happy indeed to know how the total faculty of the seminary stand with respect to socialism…"[27]

John responded by attempting to return the argument to the issue of the Williamson article and Lindsell's "strange efforts to protect it and circumvent a serious debate about it," which he believed, in fact undermined the "theological integrity and credibility of evangelicals."[28] But Lindsell returned to what was clearly the more pressing issue in his mind as he spoke again about the seminary's public relations issues, arguing that the doctrinal statement of the seminary was too vague on what he considered important issues of inerrancy and infallibility of biblical scripture. He had spoken with Dick Foulkes and was convinced that the faculty believed in inerrancy, but was fully unsatisfied with the fact that many people who he did not consider true evangelicals

---

[27] Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 9 January 1976, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 21, Folder 2, "Correspondence, Editor – S, March 1972-January 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

[28] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 13 February 1976, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 26, Folder 21, "Correspondence: Editor – Sk-Sz; 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

could still sign the seminary's doctrinal statement. Then he moved on to what he seemed to consider a new ominous specter at the seminary; "Your colleagues did admit that you have socialists on the faculty." He continued, "Doubtedly [sic] you are aware that many Christians believe that socialism is wholly contradictory to the teachings of Scripture." In his mind, having socialists on the faculty could lead to the belief that the seminary was "not sound on Scripture…" He concluded by exhorting John and other members of the seminary's faculty to "make it widely known as possible among the mission family that all of your faculty members believe in an inerrant Scripture," but added "God knows what you can do about the socialism problem. I don't."[29]

At this point, it seems that John Stam and Harold Lindsell had nearly ceased responding to each other's questions. John had continued to focus on what he considered the ethical responsibilities of *Christianity Today* in regards to the original Williamson article and the damage to evangelical theological credibility. Lindsell seemed to not address these issues fully, while continuing to raise questions about John and the seminary faculty's evangelical theological orthodoxy and then adding in questions about socialists on the faculty. From February until May their correspondence dropped off, and when John's next letter appeared on May 28, 1976, he wrote simply to inform Lindsell that he and another missionary Paul Leggett had been working on an article for *Christianity Today*, which he attached for editorial review. Lindsell responded that they had received the article and would put it through the editorial process. Before he concluded, however, he pointed out that Orlando Costas, a Latin America Mission missionary and someone who had taught at the seminary, had recently come out in

[29] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 13 February 1976 and Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 27 February 1976, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 26, Folder 21, "Correspondence: Editor – Sk-Sz; 1976." Also in John Stam's personal archive.

support of socialism. Clearly, for Lindsell, this placed a black mark on the seminary and Latin American evangelicals. He added, "One is still left with the question why anyone who earns his money via the free enterprise system should contribute to an organization that endorses a kind of system which if adopted would make it impossible for him to support the agency any longer." Clearly, socialism was problematic for Lindsell as an evangelical on several levels. Their correspondence concluded on July 9, 1976.[30]

John Stam and Paul Leggett's article was published in *Christianity Today* on September 24, 1976 under the title, "Listening to Latin America—Communication Across Cultures."[31] Their article did not mention the Williamson article that sparked the controversy just over a year earlier. Rather the authors attempted to highlight a few lessons that the North American church could learn from Latin American evangelicals. It started off by noting that in the past, Latin American churches seemed to follow the lead of North Americans, as missionaries "ran the churches, taught in the Bible schools and seminaries, directed the evangelistic campaigns, and controlled the money that came from the north." Now, however, that day had passed, and they continued, "Now the missionary must adjust to the thinking of his Latin brothers." This important starting point would have been shocking for some evangelicals in the United States, but John Stam and many of his colleagues at the Latin American Biblical Seminary were living examples of this transition.

---

[30] John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 28 May 1976; Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 4 June 1976; John Stam, letter to Harold Lindsell, 24 June 1976; Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 9 July 1976, all in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 26, Folder 21, "Correspondence: Editor – Sk-Sz; 1976," also in John Stam's personal archive; Harold Lindsell, letter to John Stam, 16 June 1976, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 12, "Lindsell Theology-Ethics."

[31] Paul Leggett and John Stam, "Listening to Latin America—Communication Across Cultures," *Christianity Today*, 24 September 1976, 14-16.

Leggett and Stam then outlined three specific areas in which they believed U.S. evangelicals could learn from Latin American theological perspective. They argued that Latin Americans grasped incarnation differently, recognizing that Jesus had become fully human as well as fully God. This led them to deal with human suffering more directly. They noted that Latin Americans did not separate the nature of man into spiritual and human needs, and thus insisted that both spiritual salvation and alleviation of material needs were crucial Christian work. Their third point focused on justice and righteousness, noting that Latin Americans did not see these as primarily individualistic ventures, but rather society-wide efforts. And their last two paragraphs again attempted to invert the traditional hierarchy of Latin American churches learning from North American churches. They noted that no culture had a corner on correct biblical interpretation and concluded, "Our concern should be to listen carefully to our brothers in other cultures. We should be pursuing dialogue before we offer criticism of the theology emerging from younger churches."[32] While this article did not deal directly with the misinformation that John Stam had originally reacted to in René de Visme Williamson's article about the theology of liberation, readers can see that the authors were both trying to assert that Latin American theology should be taken more seriously and not be judged so intolerantly. Readers can also see the thorough transformations within these two missionary authors in their understanding of how missionaries should relate to those they were sent to evangelize.

Harold Lindsell and John Stam never fully reconciled the differences that arose during their year of correspondence, but their exchange provides insight into the kinds of

---

[32] Paul Leggett and John Stam, "Listening to Latin America—Communication Across Cultures," *Christianity Today*, 24 September 1976, 14-16.

issues that key U.S. evangelical thinkers believed to be important in analyzing who was a true evangelical. Lindsell's reluctance to print John Stam's letter could have stemmed from a variety of reasons from practical space issues to his belief that John and the seminary could not speak to the evangelical debate fully since they were not true evangelicals. His questioning started surrounding infallibility and theological issues, but quickly turned to the subject of socialism. This mishmash of theological, economic, and political concerns created increasingly complicated discussions.

In John Stam's correspondence with Harold Lindsell, readers can see the turn from questions about theological orthodoxy to concerns about ideological and political issues. When John answered questions about his orthodoxy, Lindsell turned to socialism. Many radicalized missionaries dealt with similar lines of questioning. Evangelicals cast doubt on these missionaries' credibility by questioning whether they had adopted liberation theology, but then quickly turned to pressing ideological and political issues. Questions about poverty and whether missionaries had adopted socialism, their experiences with violence and whether they had become pacifists, and differing perspectives on gender and what evangelicals considered biblical marriage were often right below the surface of these conversations.

One of the first major political issues that illuminated growing differences between radicalized missionaries and U.S. evangelicals was the Panama Canal Treaty. Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos and President Jimmy Carter signed the new Panama Canal Treaties on September 8, 1977, which promised to return sovereignty of the Canal Zone back to Panama on December 31, 1999. The rancor surrounding the issue lasted for months before and after the treaty signing while Carter was trying to get the treaty

ratified in the United States. In fact, as early as March of 1976, Ronald Reagan uttered his famous words about the Panama Canal on the campaign trail, "We bought it. We paid for it, and General Torrijos should be told we are going to keep it."[33] It became a rallying point for many conservatives in the U.S., evangelicals among them, through 1976 and 1977.

Linda Holland spoke about the issue by first noting that her and Cliff's real conflict with their sending community became clear when they started coming back for furloughs in the United States. In the midst of their lives in Costa Rica, they did not realize how much they were changing. It was only once they went back and spent time with their friends and family in the United States that they began to understand the degree of difference that had formed between them and their sending communities. On one of their furloughs to the U.S., she argued with her father about her support of the Panama Canal Treaty and her father became angrier than she had ever seen him. He was Conservative Baptist and it infuriated him to find out Cliff and Linda supported giving sovereignty of the canal to the Panamanians; she recalled the conversation ended when, "He got so angry with us, he had to get up and go to his bedroom."[34]

John and Doris Stam also got mixed up in conflict surrounding the Panama Canal Treaty when they decided to say just a few words about the issue in a September 1977 letter that they sent to supporters in the United States. They also included an "Open Letter to North American Christians," written by Latin American Christians affiliated with the Costa Rican chapter of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a major global

---

[33] Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 29, 51.

[34] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

evangelical organization. John and Doris simply said that they decided to attach the letter because of "its relevance to the delicate situation…." They continued, "It may come as a surprise to you that concerned Christians in these latitudes compare Uncle Sam to the Biblical villains! Perhaps the reproach seems too strong, but one can easily understand their dismay at hearing of opposition in the U.S.A. to a long-overdue reconsideration of the Canal treaty." In signing off, they requested reactions to the letter from their supporters to this crucial issue both for U.S.-Latin American relations and for the missionary enterprise itself. The attached letter contained some strong language from these Costa Rican evangelicals. The signers noted that they were shocked at U.S. opposition to the treaty, but rather than focus on rehashing the political issues involved they said, "since you have sent thousands of missionaries to Latin America, telling us to study and obey the Bible as God's Word, we would like to point out three passages of Scripture that we see as particularly relevant to the new treaty." Their letter examined several biblical passages that spoke of God's condemnation when the rich stole from the poor, drawing parallels to the current situation. In their concluding paragraph they wrote, "During the construction of the canal more than 25,000 poor laborers from the Third World laid down their lives on the alter [sic] of First World economic development—yet your politicians have the gall to boast 'we built it'!" Their final words were an exhortation to their North American "brothers in Christ" to write their senators, supporting the treaty.[35]

---

[35] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 23 February 2008; John and Doris Stam, support letter, September 1977; Agrupación Universitaria Cristiana, "Open Letter to North American Christians," 11 September 1977, all in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977." Ronald Reagan had eventually changed his mantra about keeping the Canal from "we bought it" to "we built it," as noted in Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 30.

The Stams received several supportive replies from friends, family, and church members in the United States. One friend sent along a supportive news article and a high school student asked for more information about the issue since he was writing a paper on the subject. Another lamented the fact that most conservative evangelicals in the United States were unable to hear negative perspectives about their "beautiful Christian America."[36]

On the other side, they received many more letters from their evangelical supporters who were dismayed that John and Doris could possibly be in favor of Panamanian sovereignty of the Canal. One response started off by saying that John and Doris's letter had been "crying out for a reply." Noting that his opinion was similar to many others in the United States, the author said, "The last paragraph of your letter both dismayed and disappointed me: dismayed because I found it difficult to believe an intelligent, educated American could be so unaware of the true historical facts concerning our American Canal and Zone in Panama. (Could the History text books be already so perverted in your school days?)" Clearly the letter attached to John and Doris's support letter had violated his patriotic and religious sensibilities as he continued, "I get so disgusted with both ignorant or malicious folks using the word "STOLE" in regard to our Canal and Zone, which is a complete untruth or what the Bible calls a LIE! I am sorry to say this, John, but I feel you did your fellow-Americans and esp. fellow Christians, a great disservice by sending (thereby approving) that most objectionable letter from so-called well-educated and prominent folks." The author told John his vision of the historical interaction between the United States and Panama, insisting that the

[36] Jerry and Judy, letter to John and Doris Stam, 9 October 1977; Dave Hutsebaut Jr., letter to John and Doris Stam, 15 October 1977; H. Cox, letter to John and Doris Stam, 9 January 1978, all in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977."

Panamanians had been unanimously willing to give sovereignty of the canal to the United States in exchange for them building and paying for it. His two-page historical tirade included a short history of Lenin's 1922 communist plan to take over the world and argued that giving up the Panama Canal would be "about the last link in the unswerving 'chain' to fulfill the communist plan and program…." Then he turned directly to Christian duty and said, "I am truly amazed at the number of Christian leaders and missionaries who are in almost total ignorance of communist goals and ideology…. It is a continuous battle between the God-hating, Christ-denying, Bible-mocking-and-destroying forces of Satan and his agents, against God, His Christ, His Word, and His children." Clearly, in this letter-writer's mind, the Panama Canal issue was about more than a strip of land in Central America, it was a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. Finally, the author concluded, "Our own security demands we hold what is rightfully ours by purchase and construction."[37]

While not all the letters that John and Doris received were so vitriolic, many offered similar arguments against the treaty. Several others also perceived a communist menace behind the treaty. One ominously pointed out that "as far back as 1927 Moscow wanted the U.S. out of Panama."[38] Another compared communists to termites undermining the foundations of both spiritual and secular life, noting that his 26 years working for the FBI had taught him one thing he would never forget, "that is, you can <u>not trust the Marxist-Leninists</u>…" For him, it was a simple issue to decipher when you stepped back and realized, "The conservative attitude in the U.S. is against ratifying the

---

[37] J.L. Roddy, letter to John and Doris Stam, 5 November 1977, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977."

[38] R. Spencer, letter to John and Doris Stam, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977."

Panama Canal Treaty. The Communist, liberal, socialist, activist, and some minority are for ratifying." With such groups supporting opposite sides, it was obvious to him which side was in the right. He also shared his belief that support for the Panama Canal Treaty had come out of the theology of liberation, which he noted was infiltrating his Christian denomination.[39] One other respondent simply included a letter that she had received from Ronald Reagan, whom she considered a "professing born-again Christian." Governor Reagan's letter, sent with "deep concern," requested its readers' help to "prevent our country from making one of the most serious mistakes in its 200 year history." This particular church member seemed deeply affected by Reagan's letter and sent it along to John and Doris in the hope that they would find the letter helpful.[40] In my interviews with John, when I asked about the negative responses that they received to the letter they attached to their support letter, he pointed out that it was not their usual practice to send overtly political letters along with their support letters and the negative response that they received about the Panama Canal might illuminate one reason why in the future they would try to avoid such an overtly political orientation.[41]

Along with overtly political issues such as the Panama Canal treaties, many transformed missionaries often clashed over differing gender ideologies as well. Elena Yoder had a conflicted relationship with her mission board in the U.S. about the role of women in the mission. Both Amzie and Elena appreciated much of their relationship with their mission board because it allowed them to be more autonomous and gave some

---

[39] Maurice Soudge, letter to John and Doris Stam, 10 December 1977, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977."

[40] Anne Garvin, letter to Doris Stam, 21 November 1977, with attached letter from Ronald Reagan to Mr. and Mrs. J. Philip Garvin, 19 October 1977, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 7, "1977."

[41] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 23 February 2008. (2nd, 4:300

good advice about how to embrace Latin American culture rather than trying to live as conservative Mennonites in Latin America. However, Elena noted that the mission board never actually gave her a job as a missionary. She said that she did not think the board "gave women their rightful place, because they just sort of assumed that women would want to be in charge of the kids." Elena felt somewhat like a "tag-along" in regards to the mission.[42]

Elena had grown up in a religious community which taught that women should be submissive to their husbands. She remembered really trying to be a "good" submissive wife through many years of her and Amzie's marriage, raising the kids in Honduras, and trying to support his work outside the home. When they moved to Guatemala in the early 1980s however, Elena began to try to define a new role for herself. When their mission board would not give her a job, she began working with the Mennonite Central Committee as a health promoter in the communities they were working in. She also got her master's degree through correspondence from Azusa Pacific University. It was through her master's program that she developed the CASAS program at the seminary in Guatemala. The CASAS program brought students from around the world to study in Guatemala, live with families, and learn a bit about life in Central America. Her master's program was a transformative moment in her life. She recalled thinking, "I don't care if I ever get a job with it or not, [but]… it helped me to define a new person that I wanted to be."[43]

---

[42] Amzie Yoder, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 24 February 2009; Elena Yoder, interview by author, 25 February 2009; Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

[43] Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

Elena was also very proud of how CASAS and her and Amzie's work at the seminary empowered women. While it caused some of their supporters to raise questions about whether they were following biblical gender guidelines, both Amzie and Elena valued the fact that many women were involved in their seminary classes. Elena recalled that many of the students who came to the seminary found a new kind of Christianity there, where they began thinking of Jesus as a revolutionary who came to transform the world, changing the role of the underdog and giving validity to marginalized people. Women were part of this transformation and Elena tried to carry that out in her relationships at the seminary and with CASAS as well. They hired female language teachers and when students stayed with families, Elena would pay the mother of the home directly rather than paying the father. She remembered some of the men getting angry about that, but she felt it was one small way that she could empower women in Guatemala.[44]

Cliff and Linda Holland also bumped up against the strict vision of gender hierarchy and conceptions of biblical marriage among evangelicals after a few years in Costa Rica. Linda mentioned their second furlough trip in the early 1980s as a time that forced them to see the vast political and theological differences forming between themselves and their friends. This trip took place soon after Linda had begun working with poor women in the slums of San José. Those experiences drastically changed the way she understood wealth and poverty as well as gender relations. Linda had never really understood the feminist movement in the United States, saying she generally thought of them as a "bunch of crazies."[45] Her friends and supporters in the United

[44] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

States largely agreed with this conception of the feminist movement. However, Linda did chafe at certain evangelical strains of thought surrounding gender hierarchy within marriage. Many evangelicals believed that there was a divine order of a husband's authority over his wife and believed that women should submit to their husband's authority. Linda specifically mentioned the teachings of Bill Gothard, the evangelical preacher and evangelist, who outlined a "chain of command" within marriage. While Linda did not believe that this fit her marriage she still did not embrace the feminist movement until her experience working with poor Costa Rican women living in the slums. Working there she said, "I saw a whole new perspective about women and women's lives and poor people," as she came to believe that many women were oppressed by systemic poverty.[46] During their furlough she realized that her friends in Southern California had some trouble with her new thoughts and she said, "They thought I was this ranting feminist… and it was obvious they considered me to be different than them."[47]

Another significant issue for many radicalized missionaries arose through their experiences with poverty. As Linda Holland worked in the slums with poor women and other missionaries felt the pain of poverty among friends they worked with in Honduras and Guatemala, they became much more critical of capitalism and the free market. To evangelical supporters in the U.S. this sounded like their missionaries had become socialists.

---

[45] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

[46] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

[47] Ibid.

Mark and Lynn Baker remembered several difficult conversations with evangelical family and friends as their perspective on poverty and wealth began to change. They both recalled tension-filled arguments about poverty in Central America and whether it was right that wealthy Central Americans were so much richer than the rest of the people. Mark's most intense conflict came when he was showing a slideshow at one of their supporting churches, called Leptondale Bible Church. During the slideshow he spoke of the poverty in El Salvador citing facts such as, "two percent of the population owns 60% of the land… these 13 families control 90% of the economy." This set off alarms for some of the church members. In the question and answer period following his presentation one of the church members asked him if he was a socialist, demanding that the rich people's land be redistributed to the poor. Mark tried to say that he was not a socialist but that he did believe that some redistribution would alleviate the inequality in El Salvador. The church member continued pressing the issue saying he believed it was un-Christian to take people's private property. Mark began to get frustrated because in his mind he was, "thinking of the people, you know, these are not just statistics." With that in mind he asked the man what he thought of the millions of people going hungry in El Salvador. When the church member replied, "Well I guess that's the way it needs to be," Mark remembered exploding, throwing his chair, and becoming visibly agitated.[48] This experience was an outward sign of the growing differences between the Bakers and their sending communities in the U.S.

While many radicalized missionaries realized that they were in the midst of transformation in regards to poverty, patriotism, and the negative effects of United States

---

[48] Mark Baker interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008; Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

involvement in Central America, Amzie Yoder believed that the U.S. evangelical church was changing as well. He remembered returning to one of their supporting churches and hearing what he considered to be a new kind of prayer that he had not heard before. It was basically a prayer thanking God for freedom of worship and for their government. Growing up among the Amish and Beachy Amish this was not a common prayer as they believed church and state were totally separate and focused nearly all of their energies within the church rather than being patriotic or identifying with U.S. society. He felt that it was the influence of the evangelical right entering into their supporting churches.[49]

Amzie's critical perspective on the United States also got him into trouble in Honduras where he felt some people had taken on the perspective of U.S. evangelicals. Once when Amzie was teaching a class at a seminary in La Ceiba, Honduras, he was trying to encourage students to think about what kind of food they ate and he brought up the example of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. Kellogg's had started advertising more widely and claiming how healthy corn flakes were. But Amzie argued that tortillas were healthier, saying that he had been to one of the Kellogg's processing plants in Michigan and seen the process of placing all the corn in a big vat with acid to shell the corn. Also, he had read about a chemist who analyzed the nutritional content of corn flakes in comparison with just shredding up the box itself and found not a lot of difference in their nutritional value. This led at least one person in the class to say that he was a communist, because he did not love his country.[50]

Many radicalized missionaries became concerned about U.S. involvement in the region as they witnessed the horrific violence sweeping over Central America in the

---

[49] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

[50] Ibid.

1970s and 1980s. Some became pacifists in these violent contexts. Rick Waldrop radicalized in the violent context of the Guatemalan civil war. After he was kidnapped and held hostage for a day by the Guerilla Army of the Poor in 1979, the post-traumatic stress almost convinced the Waldrops to leave Guatemala, but they decided to stay on as missionaries. Within a year of being kidnapped, Rick formed a group with fellow radicalized missionary Dennis Smith called Guatemalans for Peace and Justice. The group wrote letters opposing government and military repression in Guatemala during some of the worst years of violence in Guatemala. Rick remembered this was "considered subversive because at that point in the history of Guatemala, you could not talk about these things openly, you'd put yourself in danger."[51] However, in 1981, when the Waldrops were back in the U.S. on furlough, they were informed by the Church of God mission board that they would not be returning to Guatemala. Partly this decision was due to the increasingly dangerous conditions in Guatemala. But the mission board was also receiving pressure from Rick and Janice's overseer, who began sensing Rick's growing radicalization. When they returned to Central America, the Waldrops were sent to Costa Rica for two years and then spent two years after that in Honduras, before they finally returned to Guatemala.

Rick stated that he tried to keep relatively quiet about political leanings but spoke up often enough that his overseer continually heard negative feedback from people in the U.S. about Rick's new political and theological perspectives. Once, when he was back in the U.S. on furlough, he spoke at a symposium on the political situation in Central America. To his surprise the symposium was well-covered by the media and when he publicly stated that he was a Pentecostal missionary and had no sympathy for Reagan's

[51] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

foreign policy in the region, his overseer received many calls from Pentecostals in the U.S. decrying Rick's anti-American perspective. Rick recalled his exact words at the forum as being something like, "As a Church of God missionary, as a Pentecostal missionary – I have no sympathy for Reagan's foreign policy in Central America." The overseer called Rick into his office in Tennessee and told him that he was out of line, but this time Rick fought back and told him that he was one of the few Church of God missionaries in Central America that actually cared about the people. After exchanging some harsh words, the two parted ways and the overseer allowed Rick to continue his ministry as he saw fit.[52]

After a few more incidents in which people continued to call his overseer to report on Rick's behavior, the overseer finally decided to silence Rick for one year. He could continue preaching in Guatemala, but for one year he was not allowed to travel or say anything that could potentially offend his sending communities in the U.S. In Rick's remembrance, the overseer basically said, "I'm tired of all the rumors about you, about your political-ideological tendencies. I'm tired of dealing with you, going to Honduras and what you've done there… Word's out that you're hanging around these ecumenical types. I'm just tired of it. One year, I don't want to hear from you. I don't want you to go anywhere, stay right here." So Rick worked quietly for one year and then attempted to keep a lower profile, but his perspective never changed.[53] Here readers can see the complex milieu of charges that more conservative evangelicals used in condemning their radicalized missionaries' behavior, as his overseer cited Rick's political and ideological tendencies as well as hanging around "ecumenical types."

---

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

The situation that most clearly demonstrated the combination of charges that evangelicals brought against their radicalized missionaries came through their differing perspectives on the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. John and Doris Stam fully embraced the Sandinista Revolution. In fact, this may have been a more pivotal moment for Doris than her experience in Guanacaste in the mid-1950s. As she described the fervor and excitement that she and John felt in the wake of the revolution in Nicaragua, it was clear that this had been a very different phase of life for her. By this time, many of her responsibilities with children in the home had passed and she was able to travel between Costa Rica and Nicaragua to participate in the revolution. One of the seminaries in Nicaragua needed Greek teachers so she stayed and taught Greek, while John returned to Costa Rica to resume his teaching at the national university. She helped with literacy campaigns in Nicaragua and said, "there was a wonderful spirit, revolutionary spirit, but on practical matters, really living it out."[54]

John was also swept up the by the revolutionary spirit in Nicaragua. He helped form a Costa Rica-Nicaragua solidarity group and throughout the 1980s became more overt in his political criticism of the United States and President Ronald Reagan. John got into trouble when he wrote an article criticizing President Reagan that was picked up by one of the Communist newspapers in Costa Rica.[55] Leaders of the Association of Biblical Churches (AIBC) in Costa Rica, for whom John sometimes preached, discovered the article when a young church member on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica near Puntarenas was working in a grocery store and stumbled across the article while

---

[54] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[55] Juan Stam, "Importante dirigente cristiano critica política de Reagan," *Libertad*, 23-29 September 1983, 10, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 1, "AIBC," originally titled "Mercaderes de Muerte," ["Merchants of Death."]

wrapping soap in newspapers. He noticed the title about a Christian leader in Costa Rica criticizing Reagan and passed the article along to his pastor who was a member of the AIBC. With advice from several AIBC members who wanted John out of the organization the pastor wrote up a letter informing the conference's leaders of John's article and an investigation rapidly ensued. The leaders questioned John and eventually revoked his pastoral credentials.[56] John wrote many letters requesting time to defend his actions to the leaders of the AIBC, but was never able to do so. These damaged relationships would come back to haunt him in the coming years when some of his supporters in the United States took this conflict as a sign that the Costa Rican church did not support John.

While the Stams were deeply engaged in supporting the Sandinista revolution in the early 1980s, their evangelical sending communities in the U.S. were gradually moving in the other direction. Some evangelicals initially viewed the overthrow of Somoza as a positive turn, but they soon began to see the Sandinistas as dangerous socialists, fomenting revolution and bringing communism to the United States' doorstep. In spite of the committed Christian idealism that was often part of the Sandinista Revolution, in U.S. evangelicals' minds, supporting the Sandinistas meant empowering godless communism and opposing Christianity in the region. Several times in the mid-1980s, John traveled around the United States presenting his perspective on Nicaragua and evangelicalism in Central America. In June of 1984, he spoke at the Evangelical Round Table conference hosted at Eastern College in Philadelphia. This important

---

[56] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007; John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008; Wilton Nelson, President of Ministerial Relations Committee, letter to John Stam, 15 October 1983, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 1, "AIBC;" John Stam, letter to Wilton Nelson, President of Ministerial Relations Committee, 19 December 1983, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 1, "AIBC."

conference, titled "Christianity and Latin America," drew perspectives from all parts of the political spectrum, with presentations by John and other progressive evangelicals as well as by Michael Novak from the Institute on Religion and Democracy and Jeane Kirkpatrick, a prominent member of the Reagan administration and ambassador to the United Nations.[57] The talks delivered at the conference were later printed in an issue of *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Evangelical Social Ethics*.[58]

At the conference John and Jeane Kirkpatrick shared an exchange that illustrated the widely divergent perspectives represented. John's presentation was later in the conference and he planned to keep quiet until it was his turn to present. But then Kirkpatrick spoke and in John's recollection "she came through with a string of lies like you can't imagine." Among the items that John saw as lies were statements that all radio in Nicaragua was being censored and that the Sandinistas had recently expelled all the Mennonite missionaries from the country. Dr. Myron S. Augsburger of the Mennonite Washington Community Fellowship, who was moderating the session, asked what Kirkpatrick's source of information was since the Mennonites that he knew "had no knowledge of any Mennonite missionaries being expelled!"[59] He then saw John wanted to ask a question and introduced him as someone living in Nicaragua. John said that he "went furiously to the attack" and said that he spoke regularly on the radio and that there was no censorship at all. Kirkpatrick was a bit surprised by John's retort and simply said that she had spoken with Miguel Obando y Bravo and concluded, "You have your

---

[57] "The Evangelical Round Table: Christianity and Latin America," conference pamphlet, 6-8 June 1984, Eastern College, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 20, Folder 20, "1987."

[58] *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Evangelical Social Ethics*, 2:1 (January-March 1985).

[59] Raymond P. Jennings, "When President and Missionary Disagree: American Baptists Wrestle with a Basic Question," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 3:4 (1984), 306-314.

sources and I have mine." John was quite disappointed by what he considered to be a cynical response, but saved the rest of his comments for his own presentation the next day where he spoke about religious freedom in Central America.[60]

In the winter of 1985-1986, John traveled to many U.S. evangelical colleges, speaking about what he believed to be the best possible evangelical response to the conflict in Nicaragua. Named a Christian College Consortium speaker, he went to many of the most prominent evangelical colleges including Houghton College, Bethel College (Minnesota), George Fox College, Seattle Pacific University, and even his alma mater, Wheaton College.[61] In each of these universities, he spoke in chapel, lectured in individual classrooms, met with interested faculty and administration, and sometimes engaged in a public debate with someone at the university. At Seattle Pacific University, John debated Humberto Belli, a former Sandinista supporter who fled Nicaragua in 1982. John and Belli presented very different versions of Nicaragua. Belli claimed that the Sandinistas' "religious freedom" was simply a façade, calling them "wolves in sheep's clothing," and argued that the Nicaraguan church was the most persecuted in Latin America other than Cuba. John flatly denied this and pointed to his experience working

---

[60] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007; Raymond P. Jennings, "When President and Missionary Disagree: American Baptists Wrestle with a Basic Question," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 3:4 (1984), 306-314; Robert Oscar Bakke, letter to Gilbert Beers, editor of *Christianity Today*, 16 August 1984, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 8, Box 43, Folder 1, "*CT* Associate Editor Correspondence; 1984."

[61] He also went to Asbury College, Trinity College, Westmont College, Whitworth University, Fuller Theological Seminary, Greenville College, Taylor University, and Messiah College. John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009; W. Scott Nyborg, letter to John Stam, "Consortium Lectures – 1986," 20 December 1985, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 18, "Consortium."

in Nicaragua, being very open with his Christianity, and preaching and teaching in a seminary there.[62]

John was involved in several important debates at other colleges as well. At Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania, John spoke in chapel about the crisis in Nicaragua. The presentation so incensed at least one member of the faculty that the student newspaper published both of their views side by side on the front page. The first article reported on John's lecture in chapel and the second presented the views of Associate Professor of Political Science, Dr. Dean Curry. John's presentation covered three main themes: the roots of problems in Latin America, why Nicaragua is not a threat to the United States, and the current suffering of Nicaragua. He emphasized that students must try to discover the truth about Nicaragua in the midst of smear campaigns coming from the U.S., and asked that students pray for Nicaraguans who were in the midst of a massive attack from the U.S.-supported Contras, calling it a "human tragedy of the most profound dimensions."[63]

Dr. Curry's reaction in the student newspaper was directly critical of John and his presentation and refuted point by point what he saw as John's inaccuracies. Calling John's statements "obviously absurd" and "totally distorted," Dr. Curry expressed deep concern that the Christian College Consortium had named him a speaker, legitimizing such "an extreme point of view." Towards the end of the article his attacks turned from

---

[62] The debate was moderated by Kent R. Hill, a professor at Seattle Pacific University who would later become the Executive Director of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, cited in Kent R. Hill, letter to Dr. Gustavo Parajón, 12 January 1987, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy; Emmett Murray, "Some Have to Take Nicaragua on Faith," *The Seattle Times*, 13 February 1986, A10, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 2, Folder 18, "Consortium."

[63] Doug Habecker, "Consortium Speaker Arouses Questions: Dr. Stam's Presentation…," *The Swinging Bridge* [Messiah College student newspaper], 13 December 1985, 1, 4; Cliff Rick, "Evokes Dr. Curry's Reaction," *The Swinging Bridge*, 13 December 1985, 1, 4, both in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

John's arguments to John himself as he noted that "Dr. Stam's totally complete, unapologetic embrace of the Sandinista government represents a viewpoint that is not shared by any respected voices…" He questioned, "I don't pretend to know why or how someone can become so totally duped. I just don't fully understand the psycho-dynamics of this although there is a long history of this kind of thing."[64] Dr. Curry's questioning of whether John was a dupe for the Sandinistas was not an unusual line of questioning about radicalized missionaries. Evangelicals in the U.S. saw the situation in Central America so differently that they often had a difficult time understanding how their missionaries could have such a different perspective. Add in that many of them saw the "communist menace" in Central America as dangerous to themselves, their families, and their country and they quickly assumed that these missionaries had been indoctrinated and possibly lost their minds.

Cliff and Linda Holland also got caught up in the revolutionary fervor in Nicaragua. By the early 1980s, Linda had helped start a magazine called *Mesoamerica* that attempted to combat all the conservative propaganda about the crises in Latin America by contributing a perspective from Latin America. It very quickly came to be thought of as a leftist magazine among some evangelicals in the U.S. because the editors were critical of the United States; one editorial even directly called President Reagan a liar.[65] Cliff had also begun to travel widely in Central America, had seen the horrifying effects of U.S.-supported violence in the region, and was becoming more critical of U.S. involvement in Central America. Cliff was in the midst of writing a book for World

---

[64] Cliff Rick, "Evokes Dr. Curry's Reaction," *The Swinging Bridge* [Messiah College student newspaper], 13 December 1985, 1, 4, in the archives of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

[65] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

Vision, a major evangelical organization, and remembered running into some conflict with them when they made him tone down his critique of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua.[66] But the Hollands' real surprise came when they returned to Southern California on furlough. Cliff preached several sermons attempting to illuminate the difficulty of life in Central America and was quickly accused of being unpatriotic and was even reprimanded by the pastor at one of their churches.[67]

Before they went back to the U.S. on furlough Linda felt that she had not changed at all, but she quickly realized some significant differences in a discussion with her friends about Nicaragua. She remembered conversations with her friends going something like this: she would say, "You mean you would be willing to send boys down from this church, Christians from here to kill Christians in Nicaragua?" And they would respond, "No, they're not Christians. They're communists." But Linda knew better and responded, "No, no, I was up there last week. I was in a Baptist church in Managua, and they're Christians." But her friends simply did not believe her, and even if they did accept her statements, they would conclude, "Well, you know, even though there might be few who are not commies, you have to get rid of them."[68] Linda was shocked. She remembered another exchange on that trip when she went to a restaurant with her friends and the discussion turned to Nicaragua. Her friends kept saying that the U.S. should just send down the Marines and "clean up that problem." From there Linda remembered trying to say what she thought and the conversation became very tense. From that night

---

[66] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008; Clifton L. Holland, ed., *World Christianity: Central America and the Caribbean*, (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1981).

[67] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

[68] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

on, Linda felt that her evangelical friends in Southern California no longer just thought of her as a feminist (which they could almost deal with), but now they believed she was a communist as well.[69] This was a significant turn in their relationship and changed the way that they viewed her as a missionary.

In Linda's mind, the episode that really clarified the vast difference between herself and her U.S. evangelical friends came later in that furlough trip, however, when she was in one of her friend's homes and saw a picture on a friend's refrigerator of the woman's son-in-law shaking Oliver North's hand. She said, "I just looked at it and… froze." Her friend considered Oliver North a Christian hero. Linda recalled, "We're standing in front of her refrigerator looking at this picture and she says, 'Okay, now I know we don't agree on this but don't worry about it.' And I said, 'This isn't one of those don't worry about it things. This is a really, really serious issue, you know, thousands of people have been killed because of what this man has done.'" At that point, they realized some element of the depth of their differences. Her friend considered Oliver North a "wonderful Christian man," and Linda thought of him as, "this horrible monster responsible for killing thousands of people in Nicaragua."[70]

By the mid-1980s Cliff and Linda were becoming more involved in Nicaragua, facilitating trips for Christians who wanted to see what was happening in Nicaragua for themselves. These trips served to further the Hollands' own radicalization as well, as they were in continual contact with people deeply affected by the influx of U.S. weapons and military support for the Contras in the region. Mesoamerica, where Linda worked,

---

[69] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

[70] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008; Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

coordinated forty trips for interested Americans to visit Nicaragua between 1983 and 1991; Linda accompanied ten of them. The organization called them "reality seminars" and they tried to talk with as many different groups in Nicaragua as they could from Nicaraguan farmers to human rights groups to officials at the American embassy.[71] The trips deeply affected nearly all of the participants and Linda noted that they transformed her as well. She realized during that time that she had never really seen the effects of war, and said, "I never had strong feelings about war one way or the other." But after going on several trips, seeing the ravages of war, and meeting the people affected by the violence and staying in their homes, Linda became a pacifist. Before long she was participating in peace vigils hosted by the Quaker Peace Center in Costa Rica. Her evangelical supporters in the U.S. viewed this, along with her work at Mesoamerica, as her becoming too political. But that thought never seemed to cross Linda's mind at the time. She said, "For me… I went to this vigil and we sang Christian songs, we prayed that there would be no war. I didn't perceive of that as a political act, I just didn't."[72] In Linda's mind, she was not doing anything controversial, she was simply doing the Christian thing—praying at a vigil.

Several of the Hollands' supporting churches in Southern California viewed her activities very differently. When radicalized missionaries went to prayer vigils in Nicaragua or tried to illuminate a different perspective than what evangelicals were hearing in their churches and in mainstream media in the U.S., they were often accused of switching from spiritual to political work. This was not what U.S. evangelicals believed

---

[71] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

[72] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008; Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

they had sent these missionaries to Central America to do. When Cliff and Linda returned home for one of their furloughs, the missions committee from Trinity United Presbyterian Church decided it was time to meet with them and discuss their political activities. Linda was caught totally unaware, but Cliff tried to help the missions committee at the church understand that in the Central American context every act was political. That did not make sense to them. Meanwhile, Linda heard them asking her to stop her political activities and that seemed simple enough to her—she did not believe that she was involved in any kind of political activity. In her mind she thought they were asking her to stop doing something she was not doing, and she thought, "Okay, I won't make any more trips to the moon." That was how far she believed she was from engaging in political activities.[73]

Soon after that, another of their primary supporting churches, Lake Avenue Congregational Church, called the Hollands in to question them about their political involvement. By this time, Linda was beginning to understand that her pacifist activities were seen as out-of-line to their supporters in the U.S. Church leaders grilled her about her involvement in Quaker peace vigils and she remembered wondering, "What could possibly be wrong with that?" They explained to her that it was political and that it was with Quakers, who they did not include as true Christians. Some of her supporters had also heard that she had attended a Henri Nouwen seminar, who was Catholic, and associating with Catholics was even worse. So, she found herself, "sitting in a missions committee meeting, defending myself for being an anti-war activist, to me that's a biblical position, it's nuts." And she said to them, "I am not going to do this, I just said,

[73] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

look, I can't do this anymore, so whatever you guys decide, decide, but I can't defend myself."[74]

In this complicated context, many of the Hollands' supporters' concerns about political activities in support of leftist movements in Central America were masked as other concerns. They soon realized that their supporting churches also questioned Cliff and Linda's relationship. Their marriage did not fit the gender roles that conservative evangelicals believed to be appropriate or Christian. Like several other couples in this study, when they became missionaries, the Latin America Mission did not give Linda a separate position. She was expected to raise their children and support Cliff's work with Evangelism-in-Depth.[75] She did not necessarily follow those guidelines from the beginning as she picked up extra work doing administrative duties for various groups before joining the group that published *Mesoamerica* in 1982. Increasingly through the 1980s, Cliff traveled for his work, doing research on Christians throughout Latin America. With all of his travel, they ended up living apart a fair amount of each year and church members in the U.S. began to wonder if they were having marital problems. This behavior did not mesh with the evangelical understanding of Christian marriage. Linda was involved in what their supporters considered "political" work for *Mesoamerica*, while Cliff was still working with evangelization efforts. When Lake Avenue Congregational Church called the Hollands before the missions committee to investigate their increasingly political orientation, they requested that Linda stop her political work and simply support Cliff's work with evangelism. Linda balked at the thought of giving up her own work to appease the missions committee and said, "Are you trying to tell me

---

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

that if Cliff were a plumber, that I would need to be the plumber's assistant?" To which the committee responded that was, in fact, what they expected. At that point, Lake Avenue dropped Cliff and Linda's support.[76]

Before long, Trinity United Presbyterian Church also dropped the Hollands' support. Again the issue was what church members perceived as Cliff and Linda's increasingly political orientation and their non-traditional marriage. Linda noted that church members had concerns about their marriage, saying, "I think they really did believe that there was something wrong. Because I was off doing… my own thing, I'm sure they just thought I was this loose cannon, doing my own thing and not trying to cooperate with my own husband."[77] Here readers can see that the two issues were combined for church members in the U.S. They seemed to believe that if Cliff and Linda would have had a more traditional marriage, then Cliff could have kept Linda under control and they could have focused together on Cliff's work of evangelism rather than what was perceived as Linda's more political work.

Other radicalized missionaries were also accused of being "too political" and unpatriotic when they expressed viewpoints that were more critical of the United States' role in Central American conflicts during the 1980s. Amzie and Elena Yoder became increasingly critical of the United States' role in Central America during these years. They, of course, realized that this would be offensive to their evangelical supporters in the U.S. so they often tried to remain quiet about the atrocities and violence that they witnessed, which they felt were directly attributed to U.S. involvement. When I asked if it was difficult to translate their conscientization about U.S. foreign policy back to

---

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

supporters in the U.S., Amzie said that was the "understatement of the year," and Elena told a story about the difficulty of relating her more critical perspective to her sister in the U.S. She was trying to show her sister how the U.S. government's role in Central America had been negative for many people there and she remembered her sister saying, "Don't talk to me about that. I don't want to hear about it…. Our government has been very good to us. We live in a free land, a free country. I don't want to hear anything about it." This made Elena feel very alienated and lonely. She remembered, "When I couldn't even talk to [my sister], she was one of my best friends and I couldn't even talk to her about it and I thought… this is part of who I am, but I just had to shut up."[78] Elena's experience with her sister illuminated the growing difficulty for radicalized missionaries in communicating with all parts of their sending communities. It was difficult for conservative evangelicals in the U.S. to hear stories and perspectives from their missionaries that did not fit with all the other information they were hearing about U.S. benevolence in the region and the ominous communist menace creeping through Latin America.

Dick and Irene Foulkes spent several of their furloughs doing academic work in Europe and were therefore less connected to their supporters in the U.S. in the midst of their radicalization. But by the 1980s even their small interactions with their sending community began to reveal some of their transformations. Supporters in the U.S. began to have significant questions about the Foulkes' perspective. After a presentation at Moody Church in the early 1980s, at least one person (who Irene remembered as a fellow Wheaton College alumnus) questioned if they were still good missionaries, saying, "Irene

[78] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

doesn't sound like a very good American."[79] Around that same time, Irene remembered several people asking not to receive their support letters anymore because they viewed them as being unpatriotic. Irene noted that in the 1970s and 1980s it was really hard communicating with supporters in the U.S. as they felt they were living in a war zone sponsored by the U.S. That, combined with some of Dick and Irene's ideological and spiritual transformations, made them feel that, "We knew we couldn't speak their language any longer." This was a significant breaking point for two missionaries who had been sent to communicate the community's message. They had radicalized to an extent that they could no longer communicate effectively with the community that had sent them. Their supporters in the U.S. were receiving such vastly different information about the violent conflicts in Central America that contrary words from Dick and Irene simply did not compute. The Foulkes' belief that the U.S. was contributing to the violence in Central America went against American evangelicals' narrative that they were saving the region (and the world) from communism. Many within the evangelical community simply labeled Dick and Irene, as well as other radicalized missionaries, Marxists or revolutionaries.[80]

Dick and Irene managed to avoid much of the conflict that other radicalized missionaries went through because they did not go back to the United States very often. Since they were rarely in U.S. churches, Irene said, "We didn't have to face the firing squad personally."[81] They did run into some conflict with others though. Irene

---

[79] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[80] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009; Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[81] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

mentioned that one of her family members worked with a more conservative mission and this family member thought they had become too liberal, saying that Dick and Irene "weren't preaching the gospel anymore," and that they, "didn't really believe the gospel."[82]

Conservative evangelicals' accusations about being unpatriotic quickly transitioned into questions about whether or not their missionaries were still "true evangelicals" who believed in the gospel. Like Dick and Irene, many other radicalized missionaries found it difficult to communicate on this subject with evangelicals in the United States. Tom and Joyce Hanks were missionaries with the Latin America Mission who worked at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, Costa Rica. Their radicalization led them into serious conflict with both their family and at least one of their sending churches in the United States. In a letter to a fellow missionary, Tom described a dinner with family and some potential new supporters in which, "I managed to blow it by getting into a dumb argument with my brother-in-law about the death penalty (it was second in heatedness only to my infamous clash with Dad over the Panama Canal, which almost lost me the family inheritance 3 years ago)." This was after six weeks of traveling around the U.S. trying, with little success, to raise support from churches. Around the same time they had a complicated meeting with one of their supporting churches, where Joyce had been a member at one time, which was dropping their support. Tom described the meeting saying, "We met with the mission committee and other upset and irate members who felt we were unpatriotic, lacking in evangelistic zeal, heretical and giving

[82] Ibid.

aid and support to the communists."[83] He noted that these irate church members cited the Hanks's support letters as well as several articles in the Latin America Mission's periodical as evidence against them. He spoke of how difficult it was for them emotionally since they considered these supporters "dear, dedicated Christians," and went on to say, "Never have we felt so keenly the chasm that seems to be developing between Latin and N. American churches." With a profound sense of defeat, Tom wrote, "We tried to 'stand in the gap' but seem to have fallen into it instead."[84]

Other missionaries also spoke of feeling that they had fallen into the growing communication gap that was developing between radicalized missionaries and their sending communities. Charles and Lois Troutman were missionaries with the Latin America Mission for many years in Costa Rica. They were radicalized by their experiences working with poor people in Costa Rica who worked hard but were still not able to support themselves because of injustices in Costa Rica's economic system.[85] Charles tried to share his different perspective with American supporters over the years, but still attempted to maintain relationships with evangelicals in the U.S. so he was very careful about being too direct.

Once the Troutmans returned to the United States and settled down in Arizona, they began to realize how much both the U.S. evangelical community and they themselves had changed over the intervening years. Charles spoke in many letters to

---

[83] Tom Hanks, letter to Charles Troutman, 19 January 1980, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 3, "Personal: Correspondence; January-May 1980;" Joyce Hanks, email to author, 6 May 2009; Joyce Hanks, email to author, 21 May 2009

[84] Tom Hanks, letter to Charles Troutman, 19 January 1980, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 3, "Personal: Correspondence; January-May 1980;" Joyce Hanks, email to author, 6 May 2009; Joyce Hanks, email to author, 21 May 2009.

[85] Charles and Lois Troutman, "We Don't Believe in Violence, but…," *His*, December 1983, 16-17.

friends of how difficult it was to communicate with other evangelicals in the U.S. He wrote, "Lois and I still feel more foreign in our native land than we did in Costa Rica…. Some folk here are sure we are communists because we enjoyed living in Central America."[86] In another letter he expanded on their feelings of foreignness saying, "…we have lost the ability to communicate with North Americans. We seem to think differently, to express ourselves differently and to have an inverted list of priorities. We are unable to discover what makes our fellow citizens tick."[87] They recognized that their perspective on Latin America had changed during their time in Central America, but the U.S. evangelical community had changed as well and he noted specific political direction in regards to the upcoming election in 1980 saying, "…many evangelicals are saying openly that you cannot be a Christian if you do not vote for Reagan."[88]

Through the 1980s, Charles grew accustomed to accusations from North American evangelicals. In response to a request for information about Central America from David Jones of Walnut Creek, California he recorded some thoughts on a tape and sent them along with a short letter. In the letter he wrote, "I have been accused of being brainwashed in Central America. If that is true, you can blame Scriptures."[89] By this point, Charles was beginning to defend his beliefs against what he felt was a nearly hegemonic response from the U.S. evangelical community. In 1989, *Eternity* magazine

---

[86] Charles Troutman, letter to Howard and Marilyn, 29 May 1981, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 5, "Personal Correspondence, November 1980-May 1981."

[87] Charles Troutman, letter to Joe Bayly, 14 February 1980, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 3, "Personal: Correspondence; January-May 1980."

[88] Charles Troutman, letter to Allan and Elsie Bryson, 8 October 1980, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 22, Folder 4, "Personal Correspondence, June-October 1980."

[89] Charles Troutman, letter to David Jones, 30 May 1984, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 24, Folder 2, "Personal: Correspondence; October 1983-May 1984."

published an article that Charles felt stated all Christians do, and ought to, support Oliver North. In his journal he wrote that he worked on a well-reasoned letter to the editor then continued, "But since other similar protest letters have been ignored and never published, I decided to be blunt and direct." His new letter simply said that in his circle of friends he knew of "no one who supports a man who lies and steals and makes plans to kill. I have lived in Central America for 13 years and know he [Oliver North] has been dead wrong." His letter to the editor in the evangelical magazine did not go over well with all of his friends as he wrote in his journal, "Several of my friends have jumped all over me because of my criticism of North since, after all, he is a devout Christian…." But he continued on, recognizing that evangelicals in the U.S. had created a false dichotomy, "Just as the Evangelicals of the 1920s made [shows], tobacco, etc. the touchstone of true faithfulness to the Scriptures, so now North and the Flag are the marks to distinguish. I am beginning to see why so many of our [acquaintances] in Tucson think we are tinged with communism. We maintain our old friendships by agreeing not to mention the subject of the Third World."[90]

Another journal entry just a month later revealed how Charles thought of his political and theological transformations over the years as well as how he thought of transitions within the U.S. evangelical community. Charles referenced his 50th year class reunion at Wheaton College that had happened three years earlier. He said that since the reunion the question of how his mind had changed over the 50 years had been just below the surface. He said that some of his old friends had been indirectly asking him about it, believing that he had become a "theological liberal and a neo-Marxist." He began his

[90] Charles Troutman, journal entry, 4 April 1989, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 29, Folder 4, "Personal: Journals: #19; 1989-1990."

thoughts by saying, "I am not conscious of believing differently now than I did 50 years ago in the great doctrines of the Scriptures." He then wrote, "I understand my God to be far greater and infinitely more loving than I then dreamed of. The effects of this greater vision has been transforming." After describing several other small changes he mentioned that he had always thought that theology should not be based on philosophy and continued, "That is why I was so taken with the process of Liberation Theology, I questioned some of its contents, especially the more politically oriented, but its emphasis on God's preference of the poor and oppressed, turned my orientation…" He concluded by saying, "No doubt, others may be able to detect changes in my thinking and attitudes over the last 50 years."[91] He was clearly correct in his last statement as many of the transformations that he considered small changes were thought of as much more significant by many evangelicals in the United States. That was part of the reason that he and Lois found it so difficult and bewildering to return to their native land and try to figure out how to relate to other evangelicals.

Bill Moyers's 1987 documentary called "The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics," featured several other missionaries caught between differing conceptions of missionary goals held by churches in the United States and their missionaries in Central America. The documentary focused on what Moyers considered to be a growing problem within U.S. Christianity, as he put it, "missionaries sent forth from these churches serve a divided kingdom. A kingdom torn between God and politics." He pointed out that arguments between missionaries and Christians in the United States raised many questions, such as, "What is the main work of the church? To save souls or society?

---

[91] Charles Troutman, journal entry, 1 May 1989, in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 111, Box 29, Folder 4, "Personal: Journals: #19; 1989-1990."

Should missionaries preach Jesus only or seek justice? And what is Christ's word for the poor—redemption in heaven or revolution now?" From this starting point, Moyers examined conservative U.S. Christians' efforts in Honduras supporting the Contras before moving on to several radicalized missionaries in Nicaragua. After interviewing four radicalized Methodist missionaries—Howard Heiner, Peggy Heiner, Lyda Pierce, and Paul Jeffrey—he spoke with Dr. Paul Morell, the pastor of First United Methodist in Carrollton, Texas. Dr. Morell had recently signed a petition requesting the recall of these four Methodist missionaries. When Moyers asked Morell why he had signed a letter asking for the recall of the four missionaries, he responded that he was "convinced that they were there under an alien agenda to what was the agenda of the church of Jesus Christ." He explained his belief that these four missionaries were in Nicaragua serving and defending the "Marxist-type" government there, rather than "building the church of Jesus Christ." These missionaries were connected with a group called the Evangelical Committee for Aid to Development (CEPAD) in Nicaragua that had been formed in response to a devastating earthquake in 1972, but many conservative Christians believed that they were too closely affiliated with the Sandinistas after the 1979 revolution. Morell stated his belief that CEPAD was "a front organization for Christians and semi-Christians and persons who can be enticed through that organization to be supportive of Christian-Marxist analysis...," basically a front for "communism and socialism throughout Latin America."[92]

---

[92] Transcript of Bill Moyers, *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*, in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 38, Folder 6, "Nicaragua – Contra Aid/Oliver North," 16-17; Alan Wisdom, staff member of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, interview by author, Washington, DC, 9 July 2007.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy sponsored or aided several petition efforts like the one mentioned in Moyers's documentary. On July 6, 1984, the IRD announced that it was launching a petition campaign against U.S. church support of six organizations it considered to be pro-Sandinista. CEPAD was among these six organizations. Included in its press release was information documenting what it considered to be atrocious U.S. church support for these "pro-Sandinista" organizations.[93] In another example, in 1984, the American Baptists, who supported several missionaries working with CEPAD including the director Gustavo Parajón, received hundreds of pre-printed form post cards distributed by *The Christian Inquirer*, an anti-Communist news sheet aimed at discrediting the National Council of Churches. The postcards demanded that American Baptist leadership "immediately stop… treacherous support of the advance of world Communism," and repudiate "the wholesale sellout of America by irresponsible church leadership…"[94] Campaigns of this nature were not uncommon in some polarized Christian groups in the 1980s.

Each of these stories shows the increasingly complicated relationships between radicalized missionaries and their sending communities. Questions about changing theology and problematic ecumenical endeavors often led to more specific questions about their political affiliations in specific contexts of the Panama Canal Treaty, the Nicaraguan revolution, violence and pacifism, poverty and socialism. Before long,

---

[93] Alan Wisdom, staff member of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, interview by author, Washington, DC, 9 July 2007; Institute on Religion and Democracy, news release, "IRD Launches Petition Campaign Against U.S. Church Support to Pro-Sandinista Organizations," in the David Stoll Collection at the Hoover Institution, Box 39, Folder 3, "Nicaragua – Institute on Religion and Democracy;" Jim Wallis, "In Defense of CEPAD," *Sojourners*, November 1984, 4-5.

[94] Raymond P. Jennings, "When President and Missionary Disagree: American Baptists Wrestle with a Basic Question," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 3:4 (1984), 306-314

radicalized missionaries found themselves being accused of being unpatriotic and "too political."

John and Doris Stam's conflict with their primary sending church, Black Rock Congregational Church in Connecticut, demonstrated the layers of questioning with which missionaries often dealt. Starting in the early 1980s, Black Rock began questioning whether John and Doris had radicalized to an extent that the church could no longer support them financially. Initially congregational concerns, articulated in missions committee meetings, were vague. Some mentioned potential affiliation with liberation theology and others mentioned the increasingly political orientation of the Stams' ministry. The first mention in missions committee meeting minutes simply reads, "Concern was expressed about the emphasis that [the Stams'] ministry was taking. The [missions] board will draw up a letter to send them to gain more information about the situation."[95] This ambiguous allusion to the church's questions about John and Doris's ministry in November 1984 was the only documented concern in the church's files about the issue until early in 1987. It is difficult to guess what other kinds of conversations took place among church members about the Stams, or if any of this concern ever would have been alluded to in a sermon. It also remains unclear whether the missions board ever, in fact, sent any letters to the Stams to gain more information about the situation.

By early 1987, Black Rock's elders and mission board had become increasingly troubled by the Stams' ministry. In February 1987 the chairman of the missions board at Black Rock sent John and Doris a letter accusing them of basing their ministry on liberation theology. In this letter the chairman attempted to separate liberation theology

---

[95] Missions Board Meeting Minutes, 11 November 1984, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Missions Board '84-'85."

from political ideology, noting that their main concern was liberation theology, while "Political views, to the right or left, are not an issue."[96] Ignoring the vastly different political goals usually attached to liberation theology, they instead tried to focus on what they saw as a distortion of theological truth they believed was inherent within liberation theology. Liberation theology spoke of societal injustice and structural sin, which many evangelicals believed distracted from the primary importance of individual sin and personal salvation. On April 5th, John and Doris met with the elders and a few people from the missions board at Black Rock and explained their position, clarifying that they had not, in fact, adopted liberation theology. This meeting seemed to bridge some of the growing gaps between the Stams and Black Rock, at least for a time. The elders wrote a letter to the missions committee affirming the Stams' theological orthodoxy, and while questioning their political perspectives, stated that "unless there is documented evidence that the Stams' position has hurt the Evangelical cause in Latin America, we do not think that their political views should be a criteria for whether we support them or not."[97] During April, the missions committee interviewed several other missionaries about the Stams and came to the conclusion that the Stams were in line theologically, but were politically problematic. Clearly, Black Rock was concerned with the Stams' political expressions but did not feel that they could expel them as missionaries for political rather than theological issues at that time.

During these years, conservative evangelical churches in the United States like Black Rock were inundated with letters from more conservative missionaries in Central

---

[96] Letter from Hugh Lucas to John and Doris Stam, 18 February 1987, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

[97] Letter from Black Rock Board of Elders to Hugh Lucas, 15 April 1987, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

America elaborating the supposedly disastrous effects of communism sweeping through the region. Rumors abounded of the alleged torture of Christians carried out by the Sandinistas, many of whom were devout Christians themselves—even priests and nuns, as well as by other leftist groups throughout the region. A former Sandinista named Humberto Belli, whom John Stam had debated while speaking at evangelical colleges, traveled around the U.S. speaking to Christian groups about the Sandinistas' supposed torture of innocents and the evils of communism. The former Nicaraguan National Director of Campus Crusade for Christ, Jimmy Hassan, also traveled around the U.S. in the mid-1980s, accusing the Sandinistas of torturing him and other evangelical leaders in Nicaragua.[98] Many evangelicals were convinced by these claims.[99]

The parishioners of Black Rock seemed to be caught in the crossfire of this debate, not knowing whom to believe. In the same folder that contained the church's correspondence with the Stams were letters from other missionaries in the region. Some of the most inflammatory came from Bruce Woodman, executive director of a missions agency called South American Crusades. Woodman's letters to supporters and evangelicals in the U.S. were filled with dramatic allegations about the Sandinistas and how communists were threatening freedoms in Nicaragua. He asserted that evangelical pastors who refused to preach communist doctrine were kept in darkness for a month, only to have chemicals thrown in their eyes when released from the blinding darkness; that the Sandinistas put spies from the secret police in every evangelical congregation to

---

[98] John Stam, "Background Information and Comments Regarding Interrogation and Detention of Some Protestant Leaders," in the Evangelical Lutheran Archives, TALC 16/6/3/1, Box 4 of 5, Folder 22 "Nicaragua, General Correspondence, 1984-1988."

[99] "Nicaragua – Belli/Puebla Institute," in the David Stoll Collection, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Box 36, Folder 17.

make sure pastors were in line with communist teaching; and strangely, he also claimed that East German communists were in charge of Nicaragua's national police force and secret police.[100] Woodman's April 1988 newsletter entitled "News from the Spanish Speaking World," was even more extreme—claiming that the Sandinistas were now sending their soldiers to fight in El Salvador to help communist guerrillas there. These Sandinista soldiers were "given carte blanche permission to rape, kill, and plunder during their stint of 3 months [while fighting in El Salvador]."[101] With shocking claims like these pouring in from conservative missionaries in Central America, these issues became increasingly polarized and volatile for U.S.-based evangelicals as well.

Interestingly, both sides of the debate seemed to want to avoid the conception of being too attached to politics. Evangelicals have long maintained a complicated separation between earthly governments and the kingdom of heaven, with varying resulting political ideologies. But their missionaries were specifically taught to remain above the political fray, focused on saving souls rather than the dirty day-to-day of political battles. Evangelical missionaries who tended to be more leftist had the difficult task of attempting to incorporate a social gospel with some political ramifications into their theological perspectives. More conservative missionaries seemed to have an easier time, claiming to be apolitical while still railing about godless communism (and often placing that label on a wide array of leftist groups). Woodman's letters provide a compelling example of this phenomenon, as he sometimes finished his letters with a passionate plea to U.S. evangelicals such as this: "We are careful to stay out of politics,

---

[100] Letter from Bruce Woodman to Black Rock Congregational Church, 30 April 1987, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

[101] Bruce Woodman newsletter, April 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

but the simple truth is this. If the U.S.A. does not send money and arms to back the Contras who are willing to fight for us in Nicaragua for their own country, the day and year will come when we will be forced to send our own sons to shed their blood and give their lives in Central America."[102] Some letters were even more explicit in arguing that a communist takeover of Central America was imminent, and that the U.S. would soon be forced to fight the communist threat at its doorstep.

This was the volatile context that framed the debate over Black Rock's support of the Stams. Surprisingly, it seems that the growing dissension between the Stams and Black Rock actually moderated for a few months in mid-1987, until the church received an anonymous letter in November confirming its worst fears about the Stams' political and theological perspectives. The letter denounced John for espousing "leftist and communist positions," leading his seminary into liberation theology, and claimed that he "spends most of his time shuffling between Cuba and Nicaragua, working closely with both governments." It also accused Doris of "being more vocal even than John in her pro-Sandinista stand," and "leading a group of women protestors—placards and all—daily in front of the Managua U.S. Embassy to protest U.S. government decisions regarding Nicaragua."[103] Since the letter was anonymous, the church refused to discipline the Stams. But they quickly resumed their investigation.

A new Minister of Missions and Christian Education at the church was charged with the task of getting to the bottom of the Stam issue. He planned an investigatory trip to Costa Rica to speak with other missionaries and Costa Rican evangelicals. The

---

[102] Ibid.

[103] Anonymous letter, 19 November 1987, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

Missions Minister traveled with a group from the church who did some work in Costa Rica, but he spent his time meeting with the Stams' critics there, trying to ascertain whether or not the church should continue supporting them. His notes reveal that there were only four "pro-Stam" people that others had mentioned he should contact. One was related to the Stams, so they were ruled out; two were not able to talk with him because they were out of the country or unavailable during the Missions Minster's trip; and for some reason he did not contact the final one. The Missions Minister took thorough notes on his conversations with the Stams' critics and they highlight some of the church's concerns about continuing to support the Stams. Many of the interviewees criticized John for being too closely connected to liberation theology. One said that he had brought liberation theology to the Latin American Biblical Seminary where he worked, and then when it went too far, he resigned. One noted that John rejected the term "liberation theologian" for himself, but continued to teach liberation theology. Another agreed that he taught liberation theology without calling it by name.[104]

Others that the Missions Minister spoke with argued that the Stams' ministry was out of line with the majority of Costa Rican evangelicals. One said, "Almost all the Costa Rican churches have rejected the Stam ministry." Another claimed that only "2-4% of churches accept John's ministry." They also revealed other disconcerting accusations about John. In demonstrating that John was too open to liberation theology and leftist movements, one remembered that when there were "Viva Che" posters hanging around the seminary where John worked, he had not reacted to them. And one conversation contained the ominous note "Stam now works only in Nicaragua and

[104] Notes on Missions Minister's conversations with various informants in Costa Rica, 2-8 August 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

probably Cuba. No one knows exactly what he is doing." The informant went on to say there had been rumors that John had renounced his U.S. citizenship twenty-two days earlier. The Missions Minister noted, "Privacy laws make verification impossible. We called U.S. Embassy to seek verification of this report."[105] John and Doris had, in fact, become Costa Rican citizens years earlier, but maintained dual citizenship.[106] Clearly, though this carried great enough importance for the Missions Minister that he had actually attempted to contact the U.S. Embassy.

During his time in Costa Rica the Missions Minister also had several conversations with John and Doris. His notes after the first conversation reveal at least some of his perspective on the situation. "John is a pawn of left wing Governments and movements to placate the Evangelicals and to swing them towards a socialist liberation theology perspective…," he wrote, "My guess is that John thinks he's an agent of evangelicalism in the powerful leftist movement of Latin America, but I believe he is being used by them."[107] Four days later, on August 10, 1988, after returning from Costa Rica, the Missions Minister formally recommended that the church drop its support of the Stams, effective June 1, 1989.[108] He believed that the Stams no longer represented the church's philosophy.

When John and Doris learned of Black Rock's decision several months later, in October 1988, they were stunned. They were both nearing sixty years of age and knew

---

[105] Ibid.

[106] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007; Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[107] Notes from Missions Minister on social visit with John and Doris Stam, 6 August 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

[108] Missions Minister's notes on Stam situation, August 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

how difficult it would be for them to remain as missionaries in Costa Rica without Black Rock's financial support. They also realized that it would be very difficult for them to find new supporting churches at their age, after being officially cut off by one of their longest standing supporting churches. The Stams responded as quickly as they could, asking the Missions Committee and the Elders to reconsider. They even asked the church to consider supporting Doris but not John. They were floundering. Doris wrote in a letter to some friends at Black Rock, "At this stage in our lives it would be hard to be completely cut off by our spiritual community of so many decades…. I'm probably just thrashing around wildly for some sort of a lifesaver before going under!—but it really never occurred to me that Black Rock would actually feel they had grounds for such an action."[109]

The Stams did all they could to be reinstated by the church. They sent letters to their supporters in the church, they requested that leaders at their missions agency (the Latin America Mission) send letters to Black Rock's leaders, and they had many of their friends and allies in Costa Rica send letters to Black Rock as well. After months of consistent communication through letters and phone calls, the Stams were finally able to secure a meeting with the Board of Elders and the Missions Committee at Black Rock to defend themselves in person. Their support was extended until the meeting, which took place on July 30, 1989. Black Rock identified three basic conditions to be met before the Stams could be reinstated as missionaries. First, they needed to "admit that you have created certain situations instead of always insisting that it is a misunderstanding or a rumor or a distortion." Second, "A firm promise that you will abandon entirely your

[109] Letter from Doris Stam to Hugh and Shirley Lucas, 2 November 1988, in John Stam's personal archive, Box 4, Folder 6, "Black Rock."

political emphasis." And finally, they would have to be fully reinstated by the Association of Biblical Churches of Costa Rica, who had revoked John's pastoral credentials when he was too vocal in his criticism of President Reagan.[110]

Deciphering Black Rock's primary concerns is a complex process. Much of its criticism originally centered around liberation theology, so its primary concern seemed to be theological. However, as the investigation proceeded, many of the church's theological questions were answered and its political concerns became more pronounced. Liberation theology clearly contains political aspects, but many other theologies do as well. In the end, Black Rock seemed most concerned with the Stams' political views because they did not match their own political ideology. This phenomenon illuminates some of the hidden layers of what it meant to belong to the evangelical community in the United States. To some extent this can be understood as a transformation of conservative evangelicals in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s—they were becoming more overtly connected to conservative politics and thus, were increasingly alarmed by differing political ideologies espoused by their missionaries in other parts of the world. John and Doris's seemingly "glaring" political difference actually highlights growing conservative political ideology among U.S. evangelicals.

As the investigation progressed, Black Rock increasingly described the Stams as being "too political," but this appears to be shorthand for being too active in or supportive of leftist political movements. Those more conservative missionaries supported by Black Rock, such as Bruce Woodman, who was mentioned earlier, could be more overtly politically supportive of anti-leftist policies in the region and still not be accused of being

---

[110] Letter from the pastor of Black Rock Congregational Church to Doris Stam, 6 April 1989, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

too political like the Stams.[111] Some evangelicals connected to the Black Rock investigation also perceived John and Doris as being misinformed politically and of being dupes, used by the Sandinistas and communists throughout the region. They would often describe the Stams as being "politically naïve."[112] In the end, renouncing any political involvement in leftist causes became one of the essential conditions for the Stams to be reinstated.

At the Stams' meeting with Black Rock's leaders on July 30, 1989, John and Doris were able to fulfill the church's three conditions to some satisfaction. They took some responsibility and apologized for some of the activities that started rumors about their extremism in Costa Rica. They stated that they would cease any political elements of their ministry. And they spoke of their efforts to reconcile with the Association of Bible Churches of Costa Rica (AIBC).[113] Just a few days later the Board of Elders reinstated the Stams as official Black Rock missionaries. Black Rock's members were divided in their perspective of the Stams. Some seemed to want to continue supporting them because of their shared history and others favored ending the church's support because of their divergent political perspectives. It seems that one reason for the Stam's reinstatement was to avoid continuing controversy and a potential church split. John and Doris remembered that once their "trial" became a public issue in the church, some in

---

[111] Memo from the Missions Minister of Black Rock Congregational Church to the pastor, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris – Correspondence."

[112] Notes on conversation between Missions Minister of Black Rock Congregational Church and an anonymous Christian leader in Costa Rica, 5 August 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris – Correspondence;" Notes on conversation between the pastor of Black Rock Congregational Church and a former LAM missionary, 7 July 1988, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, Folder "Stam, John and Doris – Correspondence."

[113] Board of Elders Meeting Minutes, 30 July 1989, in the Black Rock Congregational Church archive, folder "Stam, John and Doris - Correspondence."

leadership quickly wanted to downplay it and move on to avoid continuing conflict. Doris recalled the pastor talking about their desire to put the issue behind them, saying, "In our family, once we've solved a problem we just don't talk about it anymore."[114] In the end, John was never officially reinstated by the AIBC and the Stams' political ideology remained further to the left than many evangelical leaders would have preferred, but the critical moment had passed. Over the years, John and Doris's relationship with the church has slowly been repaired. Concerns about support of the Sandinistas and leftists in Central America decreased for U.S. evangelicals during the 1990s, as concerns dwindled that communists would take over Central America and the Sandinistas were voted out of power.

In the end, each of these missionaries resolved or concluded their complicated relationships with their evangelical sending communities in various ways. By the late 1980s, Cliff and Linda Holland had lost the support of each of their original supporting churches. They had also separated from the Latin America Mission, although not for ideological reasons. This was a significant change from their first years as missionaries when they had been fully part of the evangelical community in the United States. In the year leading up to their move to Costa Rica, in 1971-1972, Cliff had even been the Associate Minister of Pastoral Visitation at Lake Avenue Congregational Church. Linda noted that when they became missionaries, many of their friends considered missionaries even better than other Christians. That all changed drastically in the ensuing years. In the years after they were cut off financially by their sending churches, they earned money from Cliff's work as a director of an independent ministry in Costa Rica and the institute where Linda worked started teaching Spanish to foreign students studying in Costa Rica.

[114] John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

They maintained some connection to their friends and family in the United States, but never regained the closeness of their original relationships with friends in Southern California and always felt that they were on a different wavelength than many U.S. evangelicals.[115]

Dick and Irene Foulkes eventually lost the support of Moody Church, which had been one of their original supporting churches, and they lost several other supporters as well. Finally, in the early 1980s, they switched from their original sending agency, the Latin America Mission, to the Presbyterian Church, which they felt was much more open to hearing from radicalized missionaries, even though there were still some conservative churches within the denomination. While Dick and Irene made the choice themselves to switch their mission affiliation, she remembered feeling that "some people were glad to see us go."[116] They both continued teaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica until Dick's death in 2006.[117] Irene's teaching has slowed down in the last few years, but she still maintains a deep connection to the seminary.

Amzie and Elena Yoder remember having to remain silent on many issues through the 1980s to avoid antagonizing their supporters in the U.S. Finally in 1993, Amzie and Elena returned to the United States and became involved with the more progressive Mennonite church, maintaining their critical view of both the United States and the "evangelicalist" perspective.

---

[115] Cliff Holland, curriculum vitae, PROLADES, http://www.prolades.com/clh-resume.htm (accessed October 26, 2011); Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

[116] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

[117] Victorio Araya-Guillén, "UBL Says Farewell to Ricardo Foulkes," *Faces of the Latin American Biblical University*, 27 (November 2006), 2.

Dennis and Rachel Smith endured several conflicts with evangelical friends and supporters through the 1980s, but also enjoyed a bit more freedom in their affiliation with the Presbyterian Church. They divorced in the late 1980s. Dennis married a Guatemalan woman named Maribel and they continued working as missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City.

Rick and Janice Waldrop remained as missionaries in Guatemala until 1994. As Rick reflected back on what caused problems between himself and evangelicals within his mission and elsewhere in the U.S., he said,

> I just, little by little, moved closer and closer to more of what I consider to be a more holistic and consistent theology. I never really… disavowed any community, any particular statement of faith, to adopt another statement of faith. I just moved a little bit closer to a kind of theology that embraced social justice as a real important issue in the life of the church. That was my major sin."[118]

It produced several years of intense conflict with the more conservative elements of his mission and a few sparks with family and other evangelicals in the U.S., but Rick and Janice remained within their mission until they returned from the mission field. In 1994, the Waldrops moved from Guatemala to Cleveland, Tennessee where Rick began teaching at the Church of God Theological Seminary. He still leads groups on trips to Latin America.

Mark and Lynn Baker worked in Honduras until 1992 and returned for two more years in the late 1990s. Both remembered being uncomfortable receiving money from Mark's home church because they realized that church members might disagree with their beliefs. Mark had grown up in the church and had been "one of their own," but now he felt distinct differences with the church as he and Lynn challenged the role of the

---

[118] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

United States in Central America, dealt differently with the poverty in Central America, and even became pacifists.[119]

Through the course of their transformations Mark and Lynn lost the support of several of their individual supporters as well as Mark's home church. They felt some relief when they returned from Central America and were no longer receiving financial support from people they knew were different from them in many ways. After returning to the U.S., they continued to feel out of sync with much of the U.S. evangelical community. Eventually, like the Yoders, they became Mennonites, joining a community they believed embodied their pacifist leanings and more progressive ideology. They moved to Fresno, California where Mark teaches at a Mennonite Brethren seminary called Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and Lynn does pastoral care in one of the Fresno hospitals.

In conclusion, many radicalized missionaries dealt with accusations, investigations, and increasing conflict with their sending communities during their years in Central America. Sometimes these conflicts were fights over political issues with family members or realizations of how different they were politically and theologically from their friends in the United States. Other times they had conflict with missionary overseers or even elements of national churches in Central America who were ideologically connected to other U.S. evangelicals. Often supporting churches in the United States began to wonder whether they were financing the kind of missionary work they believed in or if their missionaries had become "too political." Sometimes they investigated their missionaries by sending work groups, other times they just asked their questions when radicalized missionaries were back on furlough. Missionaries responded

[119] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

by questioning the fusing of evangelical faith with right-wing foreign policy and noting the hypocrisy of this right-wing politicization of evangelicalism while they were accused of being too political on the liberal side of the spectrum. Each of these conflicts highlights the borders of evangelical identity and what it meant to be a missionary for evangelical communities. These radicalized missionaries had crossed boundaries of evangelical identity. Sometimes these were stated elements of evangelical identity and other times they were unstated but still essential. The boundaries of evangelical identity are illuminated by these missionaries' "violation" of both explicit and implicit rules and mores of what it meant to be evangelical.

These missionaries' stories reveal the boundaries of evangelical identity while also remaining intensely personal. Not all of these missionaries responded in the same way. Some left their churches and joined new ones while others fought back and defended their beliefs, some managed to extend their support while others lost it. Some continued to define themselves as evangelicals and others chose new identities for themselves. Each of them struggled over these definitions in conversation with evangelical communities within the United States as well as in the countries where they worked as missionaries. These questions draw attention to how both personal and group identification function and are shaped in the midst of transformation and conflict.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVE AMONG RADICALIZED MISSIONARIES

Transformed missionaries clashed with their sending communities over cultural, political, and theological issues. In the midst of such a powerful campaign of misinformation and allusion to evangelical tropes about the religious persecution in communist countries, all against a backdrop of conscientized missionaries' own dramatic transformations, it was inevitable that radicalized missionaries would run into a multitude of conflicts with their sending communities. When missionaries were accused of not being patriotic, they argued that they had simply seen the negative effects of U.S. involvement in Central America. But supporters in the U.S. often believed that they had been brainwashed by their experiences in Central America, and that they were no longer good Americans or good Christians. They were accused of supporting the wrong side of violence in the region—whether that was the Sandinistas or leftist guerrillas in Guatemala or El Salvador. They were accused of failing to remember their primary religious goal of converting lost souls in Central America when they were too open to ecumenical movements with more liberal Protestants and Catholics, when they joined charismatic renewal movements, and sometimes when they embraced some aspects of liberation theology. At times their experiences with people living in poverty caused them to deeply question capitalism and economic relations between the United States and Central America. This led supporters to accuse them of becoming communists, which carried

serious theological consequences as well. Radicalized missionaries also broke out of traditional gender roles and violated evangelical gender mores. Friends and family in the U.S. sometimes believed they had become feminists, did not respect their spouses properly, and disobeyed biblical imperatives.

Radicalized missionaries also had conflicts with almost every segment of their sending communities. They fought with brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, aunts, and uncles over each of these issues. They found themselves in trouble with mission boards, individual sending churches, ministers, and sometimes fellow missionaries. They also ran into conflicts with larger evangelical organizations in the U.S. from magazines like *Christianity Today* to televangelists and right-wing political groups like the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

The multivariate types of conflicts in combination with such a variety of parts of their sending communities revealed several important things about the nature of missionary life as well as the nature of the evangelical community. One, there were specific, if often unspoken, beliefs about what it meant to be a missionary—this was part of the power of the missionary narrative within the evangelical community. Two, missionaries were deeply connected to the evangelical community through family ties, friendship bonds, and membership in churches and larger evangelical organizations. And three, the boundaries of evangelical identity, while often unspoken, were clarified by radicalized missionaries' violations of those boundaries. Evangelical identity turned out to be more all-encompassing than one might perceive at first glance. Theological boundaries were important, of course, but transformed missionaries soon discovered that

there were political and cultural boundaries as well. All of these elements were tied together and difficult to unravel from one another.

This chapter will begin by analyzing radicalized missionaries' starting point as pillars of the U.S. evangelical community, sent out to convert others into the fold. It will then move into an exploration of the kinds of narratives that each missionary built to help them understand the complex transformations and intense negotiations that they endured over the course of their lives. This section will include an analysis of how each missionary understood their identity as evangelical—some stopped identifying by that term, while others maintained that identity while developing new conceptions of what it meant to be evangelical. The chapter will conclude with an examination of what these complicated interactions between radicalized missionaries and their sending communities revealed about the nature of U.S. evangelicalism during the 1970s and 1980s.

It is important to remember that these same radicalized missionaries who would run into such intense conflicts with their sending groups started off as fully accepted members of their communities. In fact, they were often seen as pillars of the community, as potential church leaders and then as messengers sent out with the highest regard to convert others. Cliff Holland had been an associate minister at Lake Avenue Congregational Church the year before he went into missions. Just a few years later that same church would sever ties with Cliff and Linda over conflicts surrounding their radicalization in Costa Rica.[1] Black Rock Congregational Church asked John Stam to be the head pastor at one point. Doris also remembered that some of their friends at Black Rock had been disappointed when another organization took on some of their support

[1] Cliff Holland, curriculum vitae, PROLADES, http://www.prolades.com/clh-resume.htm (accessed October 26, 2011).

when they first went into missions, because these friends wanted Black Rock to fully support them. This was the same church that eventually terminated and later reinstated its support of the Stams.[2] Many of these missionaries were seen as the best kind of Christians when they initially became missionaries. Evangelical church members often thought of missionaries as a step above "regular" Christians. Irene Foulkes remembered the message that she received from her evangelical youth group was that "Mission work was the ultimate step in consecrating your life to God."[3] Linda Holland spoke several times of the special way that evangelicals in the United States thought of missionaries as some kind of super-Christians, noting that it even elevated one's status to some degree to be the parent of a missionary.[4]

All of these missionaries were thought of as good Christians when they went into missions and each one walked a line of trying to fulfill the missionary narrative while being true to their increasingly radicalized views. The predominant missionary narrative in evangelical churches had been built over many years and prescribed specific aspects of not only what it meant to be a missionary, but also how missionaries should relate back to their sending communities. Jeffrey Swanson fleshed out several of these elements in his book *Echoes of the Call*, both from his interviews with missionaries in Ecuador and from his own experience as a child of missionaries. Speaking of his own experience, he recalled being "exoticized" at school when he returned to the U.S. from Ecuador and showed other students a blowgun and a hunting spear, even though he had had little

---

[2] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008; John and Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 5 March 2009.

[3] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[4] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

interaction with Ecuadorian culture during the time he lived there. He also remembered his family's typical experience of reporting to churches on their work: "We children dressed up in Amazon Indian costumes and paraded on stage to sing gospel choruses in Spanish. Dad showed slides from his river trips, and Mother regaled the folk with spellbinding tales of what God was doing in Ecuador."[5]

When analyzing his interviews with missionaries for his book, Swanson pointed out the unwritten contract that required missionaries to also send prayer and support letters to their sending communities in the United States. These letters reported on their recent missionary activities and identified how church members' financial support was being used. Donations were not meant for the benefit of the missionary, but rather for the salvation of souls abroad. Thus, prayer letters did not focus on the missionaries themselves, instead focusing on soul-winning among the "unsaved." Swanson noted that prayer letters were more than informational however—they actually created a special type of reality to support the missionary narrative: "The prayer letter demands a selective way of seeing, and provides a genre for the writing and rewriting of life experience, specifically as *missionary* life experience." In fact, support letters spoke little of missionaries' actual day-to-day experiences but rather used a language that was "honed for specific resonance with evangelical donors' traditional images and expectations of missionary work."[6] Missionaries sometimes shared stories that highlighted some foreign concept of their host culture, but often quickly moved on to describe their evangelistic work and the spiritual battles they were fighting. Parts of daily life that did not fit that

---

[5] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 10-11.

[6] Ibid., 132-136.

narrative were omitted. One of the missionaries that Jeffrey Swanson interviewed about prayer letters even said, "I don't write anything about what I'm doing here except 'real missionary' work." Another missionary worked as a secretary in the organization's administration office and never felt like a "real missionary" because her activities did not directly involve soul-winning. She spoke of searching for information to put in her prayer letters that would "sound spiritual."[7] Often prayer letters revealed much more about the desires and goals of evangelicals in the U.S. who received them than the "natives" they were written about or even the missionaries who wrote them.

The missionaries that I interviewed felt the difficulty of writing prayer letters even more keenly as their transformative experiences raised issues that were difficult to fit into this prescriptive style of communication. This sometimes led to conflict with their sending communities when they did not live up to expected missionary behavior. Linda Holland remembered working as a typist of other missionaries' support letters and often being appalled at the way other missionaries reported their activities. When Linda visited her family in the United States, she felt that she never lived up to her mother's expectations of how she wanted her to report on their missionary work to her church, saying her mother always "want[ed] me to tell people how we suffered in the mission field, or how many people you led to the Lord last month."[8] Experiences such as these made radicalized missionaries realize that in many ways they simply did not fit the missionary narrative.

Through the course of their lives these radicalized missionaries underwent intense transitions in belief, ideology, political affiliation, and cultural identification. In light of

---

[7] Ibid., 137.

[8] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

their transformative experiences, each of these missionaries had to form their own narrative of their lives in order to find meaning and make sense of how they ended up where they did. These individual narratives carried great weight for the missionaries themselves, helping them to understand how they came to identify as a "radical evangelical" or non-evangelical, or changed their religious or political affiliation in some other way.

Each of these missionaries formed their own narrative to explain their transformations. Some stepped away from the missionary narrative by definition. Amzie and Elena Yoder said they never actually thought of themselves as career missionaries at all. They thought of career missionaries as people who moved to another country and lived on a compound, relating primarily with other missionaries. They, on the other hand, only committed to one term at a time and never lived on a compound, always relating to Hondurans and Guatemalans more than other missionaries.[9] Having this fundamental difference in identity established open space for them to not have to fit the traditional missionary narrative.

As the Yoders established their own narrative, they spoke frequently of conscientization—essentially moving away from a traditional evangelical conception of primary importance being in a "vertical" relationship between themselves and God and rather focusing more on how their spiritual beliefs should affect the way they related to the rest of the world. Amzie even created a word for theologically "vertical" evangelicals—"evangelicalists." By using this label, Amzie was able to more fully separate from that conception of what it meant to be a Christian and form his own beliefs

[9] Amzie and Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007; Amzie Yoder, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 24 February 2009.

in conversation with Central American Christians. The Yoders' focus on conscientization was more than simply personal as well. Elena's CASAS program brought students from around the world to study in Guatemala and encouraged them to be conscientized as the Yoders had been. Amzie and Elena's ongoing theme of conscientization helped them understand and explain how their beliefs and identities changed through their experiences in Central America.

Another telling transition revealed Elena's complex understanding of herself. When she and Amzie returned from Honduras and lived in Indiana for two years before moving to Guatemala, she used her new name, Elena, instead of her given name, Fanny Ellen. She used the name Elena in Honduras because she did not like the way Fanny sounded in Spanish. She assumed that when they returned to the United States she would once again use the name Fanny Ellen. But in Indiana she found herself working with Hispanic people and decided to stick with Elena. This change indicated some of her transformation in cultural identity.[10]

Many of the female missionaries in this dissertation spoke of how gender shaped their lives. Irene Foulkes grew up within the fundamentalist movement and knew she wanted to be a missionary from an early age. After getting her master's degree in Biblical Literature, she knew she wanted to teach Bible classes. It was only later, after feminist consciousness grew in the 1970s and 1980s, that she realized that the only place that she could have done that within her faith tradition was outside of the United States. Among fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals in the U.S., she realized that she had never had any models of women teaching and had never seen a woman preach. But she knew that as a missionary, this was a task she could undertake without violating the

[10] Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

gender rules of her sending community. She remembered that growing up in her faith community, women could sometimes teach Bible, but only for classes of all women, whereas, "missionary magazines were full of pictures of classes with women teaching" to both women and men. At the time she did not define it quite in those simple terms, but it was definitely in her mind that teaching Bible to both men and women was at least a possibility in the mission field.

While Irene was never too enamored with the U.S. feminist movement, which she saw as being too white and middle-class focused, she did note that feminism for her was part of a larger theology of liberation that she came to embrace in Costa Rica. A significant part of that transition is what made it possible for her to understand part of her thinking for becoming a missionary in the first place—to open new options for biblical teaching and preaching.[11] One of the later generation of missionaries, Lynn Baker, noted a similar feeling saying that she always wanted to be a pastor's wife when she was growing up because obviously women could not be pastors, "so that's [being a pastor's wife] what I always wanted to do because that was the closest I thought I could possibly get."[12] While this did not translate directly into missions work for her immediately, it demonstrated that women growing up in conservative evangelical and fundamentalist groups still had to find ways to become what they wanted to be through loopholes in strictly gendered communities.

Like Irene Foulkes, Doris Stam grew up knowing that she wanted to become a missionary. From an early age, she read missionary biographies and dreamed about their exotic and interesting lives. In fact, she idolized missionary Amy Carmichael and

---

[11] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[12] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

remembered planning to stay unmarried and go to India as a single female missionary. When she met John, she admired his missionary spirit as well, and knew some of his family history from reading the story of his aunt and uncle who were martyred missionaries in China in the 1930s. John was already planning on missions in Latin America, and she remembered thinking carefully about her decision to marry him because she felt that would she would have to give up her dream of going to India. In later years, she said they did actually get to spend a semester in India teaching about liberation theology in Latin America, but the choice of where to go into missions long term seemed to be made with her decision to marry John.[13] Irene Foulkes spoke of her decision of where to become a missionary in the same way. While she was at least thinking of becoming a missionary in Latin America, the specific location of Costa Rica was made in her mind when she decided to marry Dick who was already a missionary in San José.[14] In a later generation of missionaries, Lynn Baker's interest in Honduras was definitely caused initially by her husband Mark, but she remembered that it was her who voiced interest in going back to missions in Honduras after they were married.[15]

Linda Holland spoke of gender in her retelling of her story in several ways. While she never really identified with the U.S. feminist movement and seemed to think of them at some points as "crazies," she and Cliff never had a marriage that fit traditional evangelical gender rules. This came up when one of their supporting churches hoped to stop her work with the magazine *Mesoamerica*, which they thought was more politically-oriented than Cliff's, and requested that she simply join him in his work. This did not fit

---

[13] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[14] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

[15] Lynn Baker, interview by author, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

at all for her, as she had valued her own individual work for many years. Her friends in Southern California believed through the process that she had become a feminist and definitely did not follow Bill Gothard's "chain of command" defining a wife's submission to her husband within Christian marriage.

Elena Yoder also spoke of her transformation, which focused on empowering herself and other women as women. She and her husband Amzie talked about how important it was to them that they taught women at the seminary, but Elena also transitioned away from the concept of submission to her husband, an expectation she had been raised with. She noted that, growing up, she did not think her mother was appropriately submissive to her father according to their church's beliefs about submission. In reaction to this, she decided that she would be more submissive in her relationship with Amzie. She said she was "very critical of my mom for many, many years and I said I'm not going to be like her. I'm going to do it right. I'm going to be submissive." For many years she remembered playing that role, often not expressing her opinions, and just going along with what Amzie wanted. After they moved to Guatemala however, Elena began to feel increasingly constrained by the ideology of submission and began to take steps to find herself—as she said she did not feel like a complete person. It was such a significant transition for her that she remembered telling Amzie, "I'm not going to be the same person anymore. I'm going to be different." Her decision to pursue a master's degree and establish the CASAS program were part of this transformation as she began to define a new person that she wanted to be.[16]

Many of the missionaries that I interviewed also referenced a specific type of personality trait that helped them understand the course of their lives. While the

[16] Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007.

traditional missionary narrative described Christians who were willing to sacrifice everything to boldly go where no civilized human being had gone before, radicalized missionaries often took a very different stance. Rather than seeing themselves as valiant missionaries who suffered disease and danger among the uncivilized and treacherous natives, they sometimes saw themselves as learning about challenging political and theological issues from Latin Americans who had, in many respects, a more insightful understanding of the world than the U.S. evangelical perspective. Ultimately, their narrative turned the concept of traditional missionary heroism on its head. These radicalized evangelicals located their courageous journeys in their return to educate their sending communities about what they had learned in Central America.

Linda Holland described a specific kind of personality that helped her weather the storms that she faced in conflict with evangelical friends and church members in the United States. She thought of herself as somewhat "rebellious" and someone who said exactly what she was thinking. While she said she never really thought of herself as a questioning kind of person, it was clear that she challenged some of the conventional beliefs that were widespread among U.S. evangelicals, from their beliefs that the U.S. should stop the "communist threat" in Central America to Bill Gothard's gendered "chain of command." When they were told not to take classes at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica because it was "Satan's den," she and another missionary signed up for a class just to be "rebellious."[17] In the course of my interview with Linda, her husband Cliff also joined the conversation once or twice and noted that in the course of some of their conflicts with evangelical supporters Linda seemed to enjoy provoking

[17] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009; Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

them in some ways and was not "culturally sensitive" to their conservative evangelical culture. When she tried to claim she had been careful with them, he responded by saying, "like a bull in a china shop," and she laughingly conceded that she often said exactly what she thought even when trying to be sensitive to their perspectives.[18] Thinking of herself as someone who simply said what she believed enabled Linda to fight back when she felt that her new perspectives that she had gained as a missionary were being disregarded.

John Stam's personality came through clearly in our conversations about the intense conflicts he had with his sending community in the U.S., evangelical organizations such as *Christianity Today*, and sometimes with other evangelicals in Central America. When he believed something he fought hard to convince others of his perspective. This personality began to come out even at a very young age. John remembered having an argument with a friend at age eleven or twelve and saying to his friend, "I question your ethics."[19] This quote is almost comically similar to his heated letter exchange with Harold Lindsell, the editor of *Christianity Today*, many years later.

John also described himself as an "intra-systemic rebel." While several other members of his family rejected the systems that they grew up within, John said he never doubted the Bible or evangelical commitments, but that he often got into serious debates within those systems. As examples, he recalled conflicts in high school and at Fuller Theological Seminary, and even noted that he and several others tried to force Wheaton's

---

[18] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008.

[19] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

president to resign while they were students there.[20] Through his years as a missionary and working at the Latin American Biblical Seminary, John continued to engage in serious debate within those communities. He sometimes used formal resignation as a way of demonstrating his frustration or disagreement with these communities and recognized this fact. In our conversations, I mentioned that I had noticed he had resigned from the seminary in 1968 but that he continued working there, and John responded knowingly, "I have a history of resignations," he said, "and this was the only one that was never taken seriously."[21] He acknowledged this aspect of his personality saying, "I guess I was just born to fight."[22] John's perception of himself as boldly confrontational helped him steel himself for the intense conflicts that he and Doris faced with their sending communities throughout the 1970s and 1980s. John was clearly able to change, as he transformed drastically through his experiences in Central America, but he also continued to fight for what he believed in throughout his missionary career.

In the course of their complex missionary journeys, radicalized missionaries often transitioned in terms of group identification as well. Whether they shifted from fundamentalist groups to Presbyterians or from the Amish to more liberal Mennonite churches, nearly all of them underwent some form of transition from one religious community to another. Within these transitions, some continued to identify as evangelical, while others began identifying as something other than evangelical. Those that held onto evangelical identity often fought for a broader or more complex

---

[20] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 9 February 2008; John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

[21] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 23 February 2008.

[22] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 17 February 2008.

understanding of what it meant to be evangelical as they bumped up against a rather constrained vision of evangelicalism among their supporters in the United States.

Those radicalized missionaries that chose to no longer identify primarily as evangelical still clearly had ties to evangelical circles—through continuing relationships with family, friends, and churches in the United States. However, they often switched their religious identification to find more open communities that fit their changing belief systems. Rick Waldrop transitioned away from evangelical Pentecostalism into Anabaptist Pentecostalism. He believed that his identity as a Pentecostal had become even stronger over his years in Latin America and part of that was tied to finding the Anabaptist, rather than the evangelical, roots of Pentecostalism. During his years in Guatemala, he remembered facing the question of whether or not he wanted to remain a Pentecostal missionary and in the end he decided that he did but reconnected that with Anabaptist roots, finding egalitarianism, a peace witness, and racial equality in the early Pentecostal church instead of the staunchly conservative variety that he had grown up in. He thought of this new variety as Anabaptist or radical Pentecostalism. While some aspects of that tradition were evangelical in his mind, he came to think of himself primarily as outside of evangelicalism.[23]

Dennis Smith's transition away from his evangelical upbringing among the Conservative Baptists seemed to happen gradually. After attending Wheaton he went to a Presbyterian church, but one that still seemed to fit within evangelical circles. The Wheaton chaplain actually recommended the church to Dennis, saying that he would get good pastoral care there from an evangelical background. That seemingly small change before he actually became a missionary ended up giving him much more space to

[23] Rick Waldrop, interview by author, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

transform during his years as a missionary. Once he became a missionary of the Presbyterian Church he was connected with a larger network of mainline Protestant churchgoers who were more open than their evangelical counterparts to adapting to Dennis's radicalization. Though he still faced conflicts with some of the more evangelical components of the Presbyterian Church, as well as some friends and family, Dennis continued his work as a Presbyterian missionary and continues working in Guatemala. While he is appreciative of his evangelical upbringing and still holds some tenets of evangelical ideology, he pointed out that identity is not just about how you describe yourself, but also how others describe you. While he still maintained some evangelical beliefs, he realized that most evangelicals would no longer claim his as one of their own.[24]

Amzie and Elena Yoder moved to New Mexico after their last term in Guatemala and continued attending a Mennonite church, although it was much more liberal than the churches that had supported them when they first went into missions. When I asked Elena whether she still identified as an evangelical she said that she did when they first went into missions, but that by the end of their time in Guatemala she no longer did. By that time she identified primarily as a Protestant. As we talked about what this transition in identity meant to her, she spoke about not fitting the traditional evangelical mold. Once they were back in the United States she began working in hospice care, and felt that being evangelical would limit her ability to engage all the various religious beliefs that were most meaningful to the people she was working with.[25] Amzie and Elena now attend a more liberal Mennonite church in Albuquerque.

---

[24] Dennis Smith, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

Other radicalized missionaries maintained evangelical identity, but developed new visions of what it meant to be evangelical. Irene Foulkes realized that her definition of evangelicalism was very different than that of many of her supporters. She admitted that for many conservative evangelicals in the United States, part of evangelical identity is being part of the Religious Right. But she maintained that she had never wavered in her evangelical identity, even in the midst of all the conflict of the 1980s and the shift to being a Presbyterian missionary. She argued that conservative evangelicals who would try to push her out of the evangelical camp were not being true to scripture, saying, "Evangelical, comes from evangel, the gospel and I think the more we work with the gospels, the more we'll be transformed." With that definition, she was able to transform dramatically through her years in Central America and still maintain a deep personal connection to evangelical identity, even as she became increasingly frustrated with the narrowing definition of evangelicalism held by her supporters in the United States.[26]

Cliff and Linda Holland also maintained their evangelical identity throughout their years in Central America. When I asked Linda if she identified as an evangelical she said, "I am an evangelical and I never questioned that." While many of her political beliefs changed over her years in Central America and many of her supporters came to believe that those transitions moved her out of the realm of evangelicalism, Linda never doubted. She said she was often frustrated with the evangelical church, but never thought of giving up her own evangelical identity. She explained, "Through my process, I've never been tempted to say, or even think that Jesus isn't who he said he was, that the gospel isn't what I learned it was, and to throw it all away." In her mind, that meant she

---

[25] Elena Yoder, interview by author, Albuquerque, NM, 25 February 2009.

[26] Irene Foulkes, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008.

was evangelical no matter what others believed about her violating aspects of what they thought it meant to be an evangelical.[27] Cliff also identified as fully evangelical throughout their many transformations. He noted that he often felt that more conservative evangelicals attempted to push out evangelicals like himself, who he believed had more of a social consciousness. But Cliff made a conscious choice to remain in evangelical circles. When one of his co-workers argued that Cliff could work more effectively if he moved out of evangelical circles, Cliff argued the opposite and chose to stay within the evangelical camp. That way he felt that he could be a real catalyst for change within those groups. As he spoke to his friend who moved out of evangelical circles he said, "I can talk about social responsibility as an insider, whereas when you come, you're considered an outsider."[28]

John and Doris Stam also maintained a strong commitment to evangelical identity throughout their many political and cultural transformations. By the mid-1980s, John was often explaining to supporters and others that he was still evangelical and started calling himself a radical evangelical. In a 1985 article for *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, John declared himself a radical evangelical and said that by "radical" he simply meant "consistently." He explained, "I refer to Christian faith that takes the Scriptures and the Gospel with ultimate and unlimited seriousness." He spoke of Martin Luther's concept of "only scripture," with Luther's words, "unless I can be shown from Scripture, I retract nothing, here I stand, so help me God." Calling this concept a "liberating exclusivity," he explained that it meant

---

[27] Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008; Linda Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 4 March 2009.

[28] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

to him "that none of our traditions and none of our ideological apparatus, can take that place that only belongs to the Word of God."[29] This self-understanding of what it meant to be a radical evangelical allowed him to strip away all the cultural and political expectations of the conservative evangelical community in the U.S. and re-focus on what it meant for him to be an evangelical; in his mind, his political transformations were part of that identity. When I asked John if he identified as an evangelical he responded by saying,

> Theologically, nothing is really changed, a lot of things have deepened…. In theology I'm a conservative evangelical with the exception of the inerrancy argument which I think is mis-defined and not biblical. But inspiration, atonement, second coming, I'm very conservative. One of my convictions is that an evangelical theology is much more radical than liberation theology, but we misunderstand it or we don't appropriate its radical values, and that's practically the key concept or the main intention of most of my books. A book on creation ends up a call to political consciousness. And Revelation of course is that all the way through, and so on.[30]

Clearly, John and other radicalized missionaries who stayed within the evangelical community often had to argue over what true evangelical identity really was both in their own minds as well as in negotiation with their sending communities. Some of these radicalized missionaries ended up feeling more comfortable identifying outside of the evangelical community, but others tried to develop a different vision of what it meant to be an evangelical. Within these complex negotiations, readers can begin to see how unspoken boundaries of evangelical identity were quickly revealed. When a missionary sympathized with socialists and revolutionaries, their sending communities began to label them as outside of evangelical identity. When a missionary came to

---

[29] John Stam, "Christian Witness in Central America: A Radical Evangelical Perspective," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 2:1 (June 1985): 14-17.

[30] John Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007.

believe in pacifism or thought that the U.S. church was too wealthy and powerful, evangelicals in the U.S. believed they had changed so fundamentally that they considered cutting off financial support. And when missionaries critiqued U.S. involvement in Central America, their evangelical friends and families agreed with the Reagan administration that they had been brainwashed by a massive propaganda campaign run by atheistic communists.

While missionaries like those who form the core of this study radicalized, many others did not. Many did not undergo significant transformations and maintained their commitment to conservative evangelical identity, even as it became more closely connected to aggressive U.S. foreign policy in the region. Several missionaries highlight this fundamental difference. A missionary in Ecuador spoke of the danger of identifying too fully with Ecuadorian culture and losing your identity as an American missionary. He said, "I don't feel any great desire to be more integrated into Ecuadorian society. I am an American, and I really cannot become an Ecuadorian…. There are some missionaries who try to get totally involved in Latin culture, and before long they've lost their identity, of who they are, and what their real purpose is here."[31]

Another missionary named Ray Hundley, spoke of avoiding transformation for years before he finally opened himself up to change, and then changed drastically. He reflected on his early years as a missionary when he avoided transformation saying, "At the beginning of my missionary career in Colombia I lived among poor people, and saw what was going on around me, but it never got through to me. It's possible to isolate yourself from these things, even living with the people. It's possible to live in your own

---

[31] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148.

little world and never think about people around you who are dying of starvation, who are going through life unable to learn because of lack of nutrition…" But Hundley eventually did open himself to transformation and said,

> I have had to come before the Lord in recent years and say I'm sorry. And the thing that has affected me is the theology in Latin America called Liberation Theology. I began reading it several years ago in Colombia and I rejected it immediately, mainly because I felt it was Marxist and I felt that anything that came from Marxism probably couldn't be very good. The last three years of my life I've spent eight hours a day, five days a week, reading Liberation Theology. And in the course of those three years God has done some remarkable things in my own life. One of the things He has done is to sensitize me to His view of the poor. God cares about them. He's concerned about their poverty and suffering and He's willing to do something about it. All of this is to say that I believe we need to think seriously about the questions being asked by liberation theologians.[32]

Once Hundley opened the door to a new perspective, while living amidst poverty and oppression in Latin America, his perspective changed dramatically.

Once missionaries radicalized they soon found themselves at odds with their friends, family, and churchgoing supporters in the U.S. They discovered that some part of their transformation caused a visceral response among U.S. evangelicals, with a clear statement that their ideological, political, and theological developments made them no longer fit within evangelical circles. With their changes, they could no longer be "true Christians." In his article, "How Christians Become Socialists," Catholic scholar Philip Berryman wrote of an experience speaking to conservative Christians in the U.S. about the crises in Latin America. After the slideshow, one of the church members asked, "What can we do for those people down there—perhaps send clothes?" Instead, Berryman tried to explain "underdevelopment" and said that perhaps they should

---

[32] Ray Hundley, *A Primer on Liberation Theology* (Greenwood, IN: OMS International, 1983), 32-33.

examine U.S. foreign policy. But he was surprised at the change in the tone of the meeting as he answered the church member's question in a surprising way,

> I encountered an increasing hostility breaking through the surface cordiality. Obviously I had touched on something very deep—their own identity as Americans. It struck me that these people were much more offended by my criticism of the United States than they would have been if I suggested that the doctrine of the Trinity be revised to include a Fourth person. In other words, there was something "religious," something of ultimate value, in their attachment to their country. By the same token, the experience brought home to me how estranged I was becoming from mainstream America.[33]

While Berryman was speaking to a conservative Catholic audience, he described the feeling that many of the radicalized missionaries in this study faced countless times with evangelical supporters in the United States. These missionaries went to Central America and transformed dramatically in the midst of violence, oppression, revolutionary fervor, poverty, and new theological questions. They returned to their sending communities and realized that their transformations went the opposite direction of changes in the evangelical community in the United States during those years. They had left as beloved members of the community, representatives sent to convert others to the faith, and had returned and realized their own conversions violated the fundamental, if often unspoken, boundaries of evangelical identity.

Their sending communities labeled them outside of evangelical identity both as a visceral response—"they're not one of us anymore"—and also as a way of preserving their own identity as "true evangelicals." Part of being a "true evangelical" in the 1970s and 1980s, meant being patriotic, stopping the spread of communism, and ending theological heresies such as liberation theology. Once a missionary crossed any of these

---

[33] Philip Berryman, "How Christians Become Socialists," in *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 156-162.

lines, it was difficult for them to re-join their communities as full members. Many of these radicalized missionaries spoke of complicated negotiations surrounding the labels by which evangelicals held them at a distance. A story from Doris Stam encapsulated it well. In the midst of Black Rock Congregational Church's investigation of the Stams' activities in Central America, Doris returned to the church to defend herself. A man from the church pulled her aside and said, "You'll never be able to explain that you're not communist… forget about it, if that's what you're going to try."[34] For this church member, John and Doris could never convince "true evangelicals" that they were still evangelical.

Others, such as Cliff Holland, revealed how evangelicals' guidelines for judging who was a "true evangelical" had changed from their early formation in the 1940s to their hardened positions in the 1980s. Through the 1940s and 1950s, and even into the early 1960s, as evangelicals searched for a middle ground between fundamentalists and liberal mainline denominations, there was more space for evangelicals to experiment with various ways of engaging society. Some evangelicals felt the need to engage societal issues such as poverty and racism. During these early formative years evangelicals participated in a variety of movements as they explored responses that might fit with their Christian beliefs. Cliff Holland recalled working within the civil rights movement as well as the struggle for Latino rights in California. While working with these movements, he was still often considered to be an upstanding member of the evangelical church, even becoming an associate minister.[35] By the 1980s, after evangelical identity had fused more completely with conservative political ideology, actions such as these

[34] Doris Stam, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

[35] Cliff Holland, interview by author, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008.

were often cast as leftist or even communist and seen as a violation of what it meant to be evangelical. Once a church member or missionary was labeled as "suspicious" for engaging in these kinds of activities, their actions were more thoroughly scrutinized and it became increasingly difficult for them to be seen as legitimate evangelicals.

U.S. evangelicals' labeling of radicalized missionaries was both an immediate reaction and technique that allowed them to preserve homogeneity of evangelical identity. However, it not only functioned as a way of confirming a conservative vision of evangelical identity, but it actually propelled that vision even further. By labeling radicalized missionaries as outside of the evangelical fold, they censored a source of information that challenged their view of Central America, the United States, and what it meant to be a Christian in either place. Once they eliminated the voices that were telling them a different perspective on liberation theology, poverty, leftist revolutionary movements, and the negative effects of U.S. foreign policy in the region, they increasingly came to embrace the opposite perspective. This further enabled them to support Reagan's foreign policy in the region, seeing it not as a complex situation with real people on the other side, but simply as the only possible option defending "real Christians" and "true Americans" in an ideological, spiritual, and cosmic battle against the forces of evil.

In response, some radicalized missionaries moved into communities that were better able to accept their transformed perspectives. Those who remained evangelical rejected the rigidification and narrowing of evangelical identity during the1970s and 1980s, continually fighting for what they believed were more radical and biblical

interpretations of what it meant to be true evangelicals. In both cases, their lived experiences in Central America translated dramatically into new religious expressions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives

Elk Grove Village, IL—Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Archives

Fairfield, CT—Black Rock Congregational Church Archive

San José, Costa Rica—The Latin American Biblical Seminary Archive

Stanford, CA—Hoover Institution

Valley Forge, PA (now in Atlanta, GA)—American Baptist Historical Archives

Washington, DC—The Institute on Religion and Democracy Archive

Washington, DC—The National Security Archive

Wheaton, IL—Billy Graham Center Archives

Personal Archives:

Guatemala City, Guatemala—Dennis Smith's personal archive

San José, Costa Rica—John Stam's personal archive

Author's Interviews

Lynn Baker, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

Mark Baker, Fresno, CA, 27 March 2008.

Anthony Chamberlain, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008.

Irene Foulkes, San José, Costa Rica, 18 February 2008 and 5 March 2009.

Ann Hershberger, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 25 February 2009.

Jim Hershberger, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 24 February 2009.

Cliff Holland, San José, Costa Rica, 13 February 2008 and 4 March 2009.

Linda Holland, San José, Costa Rica, 15 February 2008 and 4 March 2009.

Dennis Smith, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 26 February 2009.

Doris Stam, San José, Costa Rica, 25 February 2008 and 5 March 2009.

John Stam, San José, Costa Rica, 30 July 2007, 10 February 2008, 11 February 2008, 14 February 2008, 17 February 2008, 23 February 2008, and 5 March 2009.

Rick Waldrop, Cleveland, TN, 24 April 2008.

Alan Wisdom, Washington, DC, 9 July 2007.

Amzie Yoder, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007 and Guatemala City, Guatemala, 24 February 2009.

Elena Yoder, Albuquerque, NM, 10 November 2007 and Guatemala City, Guatemala, 25 February 2009.

Books

Anfuso, Joseph. *Efraín Ríos Montt, Servant or Dictator?: The Real Story of Guatemala's Controversial Born-Again President*. Ventura, CA: Vision House, 1984.

Annis, Sheldon. *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

Arnson, Cynthia. *Crossroads: Congress, the Reagan Administration, and Central America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

Austin, Alvyn, and Jamie S. Scott, eds. *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Baldwin, George W. *A Political Reading of the Life of Jesus*. New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2006.

Baloyra, Enrique. *El Salvador in Transition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Bays, Daniel H., and Grant Wacker. *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003.

Berger, Mark T. *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas, 1898-1990*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Bergmann, Sigurd. *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.

Berryman, Phillip. *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America—and Beyond*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

_____. *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984.

Bickers, Robert, and Rosemary Seaton, eds. *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*. Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996.

Booth, John A., Christine J. Wade, and Thomas W. Walker. *Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change*, 4th Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006.

Bowie, Fiona, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds. *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*. Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1994.

Bradley, Mark. *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Brenneman, Robert. *Homies and Hermanos: God and Gangs in Central America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Brett, Edward Tracy. *The U.S. Catholic Press on Central America: From Cold War Anticommunism to Social Justice*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.

Brouwer, Steve, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose. *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Campt, Tina. *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Carpenter, Joel A., and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds. *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990.

_____. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

_____, ed. *Sacrificial Lives: Young Martyrs and Fundamentalist Idealism*. New York: Garland, 1988.

Clymer, Adam. *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008.

Coerver, Don M., and Linda B. Hall. *Tangled Destinies: Latin America & the United States*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

Costello, Gerald M. *Mission to Latin America: The Successes and Failures of a Twentieth-Century Crusade*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979.

Cottam, Martha L. *Images and Intervention: U.S. Policies in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994.

Cowan, Douglas E. *The Remnant Spirit: Conservative Reform in Mainline Protestantism*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Cromartie, Michael, ed. *No Longer Exiles: The Religious New Right in American Politics*. Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993.

Cullather, Nick. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.

D'Antonio, Michael. *Fall from Grace: The Failed Crusade of the Christian Right*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989.

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Davidann, Jon Thares. *A World of Crisis and Progress: The American YMCA in Japan, 1890-1930*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998.

Dayton, Donald W., and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

De Grazia, Victoria. *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Diamond, Sara. *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*. New York: Guilford Press, 2000.

_____. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press, 1995.

_____. *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989.

Dilger, Bonnie. *Guatemala: Blood in the Cornfields*. Baltimore: Publish America, 2005.

Dochuk, Darren. *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

Down, Goldie M. *Their Kind of Courage: Biography of Lily and Ethelbert Thorpe Pioneer Missionaries to The Islands*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973.

Dozier, Craig L. *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore: The Years of British and American Presence*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Ellul, Jacques. *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*. New York: Seabury, 1969.

Endy, Christopher. *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Erny, Edward, and Esther Erny. *No Guarantee but God: The Story of the Founders of the Oriental Missionary Society*. Greenwood, IN: Oriental Missionary Society, 1969.

Etherington, Norman, ed. *Missions and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Fairbank, John King, ed. *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Findlay, Eileen. *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

Findling, John E. *Close Neighbors, Distant Friends: United States-Central American Relations*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Flippen, J. Brooks. *Jimmy Carter, the Politics of Family, and the Rise of the Religious Right*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Flynt, Wayne, and Gerald W. Berkley. *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997.

Frank, Doug. *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986.

Freston, Paul. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Friedman, Max Paul. *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign Against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia. *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998.

_____, and David Stoll, eds. *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

_____. *Terror in the land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Garrett, Shirley S. *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Gilbert, James. *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Gleijeses, Piero. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Gobat, Michael. *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Goedde, Petra. *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Gould, Jeffrey. *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

_____. *To Lead As Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Grandin, Greg. *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

_____. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism.* New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006.

_____. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Grimshaw, Patricia. *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-century Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.

Grow, Michael. *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Hale, Charles R. *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Hallum, Anne Motley. *Beyond Missionaries: Toward an Understanding of the Protestant Movement in Central America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996.

Hamilton, Lee H., and Daniel K. Inouye. *Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran/Contra Affair*. DIANE Publishing, 1987.

Hankins, Barry, ed. *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Harding, Susan Friend. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Harrison, Brady. *Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

Hayward, Steven F. *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980*. New York: Random House, 2001.

Hefley, James C. *By Life or by Death: The Dramatic Story of the Valiant Missionary Martyrs Who Have Lived and Died for Christ in War-Torn Viet Nam*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969.

Hill, Patricia R. *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985.

Hill, Samuel S., and Dennis E. Owen. *The New Religious Political Right in America*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982.

Hogan, Michael J., and Thomas G. Paterson, eds. *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Hoganson, Kristin. *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American War and Philippine-American Wars*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Höhn, Maria. *GIs and Fraüleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Holland, Clifton L., ed. *World Christianity: Central America and the Caribbean*. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1981.

Hoover, Dorcas. *Awaiting the Dawn*. Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications, 1992.

Hulsether, Mark. *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.

_____. *Religion, Culture and Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Hundley, Ray. *A Primer on Liberation Theology*. Greenwood, IN: OMS International, 1983.

Hunter, Jane. *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

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

Immerman, Richard. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Inboden, William. *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Ingersoll, Julie. *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Jonas, Susanne. *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.

Joseph, Gilbert M., Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

Kagan, Robert. *Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977-1990*. New York: Free Press, 1996.

Kaplan, Amy, and Donald E. Pease, eds. *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.

Keane, Webb. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Kessler, Lawrence D. *The Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895-1951*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Kinzer, Stephen. *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. New York: Times Books, 2006.

Kornbluh, Peter. *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention: Reagan's Wars Against the Sandinistas*. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987.

Kramer, Paul A. *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Laats, Adam. *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America's Culture Wars*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Ladd, Tony, and James A. Mathisen. *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Lael, Richard L. *Arrogant Diplomacy: U.S. Policy toward Colombia 1903-1922*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1987.

LaFeber, Walter. *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*. New York: Norton, 1983.

Lambert, Frank. *Religion in American Politics: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Lancaster, Roger N. *Life Is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

_____. *Thanks to God and the Revolution: Popular Religion and Class Consciousness in the New Nicaragua*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Langley, Lester D. *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898-1934*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1985.

Leiken, Robert S, and Barry M Rubin, eds. *The Central American Crisis Reader*. New York: Summit Books, 1987.

LeoGrande, William M. *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Leonard, Thomas M. *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Levenson-Estrada, Deborah. *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Lichtman, Allan J. *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008.

Lienesch, Michael. *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Lindberg, Beth M. *A God-Filled Life: The Story of William Eugene Blackstone*. American Messianic Fellowship, 1952.

Lindsell, Harold. *Missionary Practice and Principles*. Westwood, NJ: Revell Books, 1955.

Linkogle, Stephanie. *Gender, Practice, and Faith in Nicaragua: Constructing the Popular and Making 'Common Sense.'* Brookefield, VT: Avebury, 1996.

MacKenzie, Kenneth M. *The Robe and the Sword: The Methodist Church and the Rise of American Imperialism*. Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961.

Marsden, George M., ed. *Evangelicalism and Modern America*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984.

_____. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

_____. *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987.

_____. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991.

Martin, David. *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990.

Martin, William C. *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*. New York: Broadway Books, 1996.

McDannell, Colleen. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

McPherson, Alan. *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006.

Meara, William R. *Contra Cross: Insurgency and Tyranny in Central America, 1979-1989*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006.

Menchú, Rigoberta. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Edited by Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. London: Verso Books, 1983.

Miller, Donald E., and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Miller, Steven P. *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center. *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*. 9th ed. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1970.

_____. *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*. 10th ed. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1973.

_____. *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*. 12th ed. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1979.

_____. *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*. 14th ed. Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1989.

Molieri, Jorge Jenkins. *El Desafio Indigena en Nicaragua: El Caso de los Miskitos*. Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1986.

Montgomery, Tommie Sue. *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution,* 2nd Edition. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995, originally published in 1982.

Moon, Katharine H. S. *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Moreton, Bethany. *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Musicant, Ivan. *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Grenada*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.

Nelson, Wilton M. *Protestantism in Central America*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984.

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Nichols, J. Bruce. *The Uneasy Alliance: Religion, Refugee Work, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Nietschmann, Bernard. *The Unknown War: The Miskito Nation, Nicaragua, and the United States*. New York: Freedom House, 1989.

Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Pastor, Robert A. *Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Pears, Angie. *Doing Contextual Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Penning, James M., and Corwin E. Smidt, eds. *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.

Perera, Victor. *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Piedra, Arturo, ed. *Haciendo Teologia En America Latina: Juan Stam, Un Teologo Del Camino*. Vol. 1. Guatemala: LAM, FTL, UBL, y Vision Mundial, 2004.

_____, ed. *Haciendo Teologia En America Latina: Juan Stam, Un Teologo Del Camino*. Vol. 2. San José, Costa Rica: Litografia Ipeca, 2005.

Portelli, Alessandro. *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Porterfield, Amanda. *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Rabe, Valentin H. *The Home Base of American China Missions, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Randall, Margaret. *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Reed, James. *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy, 1911-1915*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Reeves-Ellington, Barbara, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Anne Shemo, eds. *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Robb, Edmund W., and Julia Robb. *The Betrayal of the Church: Apostasy and Renewal in the Mainline Denominations*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986.

Robert, Dana Lee. *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*. Mercer University Press, 1997.

_____, ed. *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century*. Orbis Books, 2002.

Robinson, William I. *A Faustian Bargain: U.S. Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992.

Rosenberg, Emily S. *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

_____. *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

_____. *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1982.

Rutherdale, Myra. *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002.

Saldana-Portillo, Maria Josefina. *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Sandeen, Ernest Robert. *The Roots of Fundamentalism; British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, originally published in 1982.

Schoultz, Lars. *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Schulman, Bruce J., and Julian E Zelizer, eds. *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Schulz, Donald E., and Deborah Sundloff Schulz. *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Schulzinger, Robert D., ed. *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.

Semple, Rhonda Anne. *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2003.

Silva, Silvia de Lima, ed. *Ecce Mulier: Homenaje a Irene Foulkes*. San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana, 2005.

Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.

Smilde, David. *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

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

Spykman, Gordon, Guillermo Cook, Michael Dodson, Lance Grahn, Sidney Rooy, and John Stam. *Let My People Live: Faith and Struggle in Central America*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988.

Stoler, Ann Laura, ed. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Stoll, David. *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America*. London: Zed Press, 1982.

_____. *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

_____. *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Stone, Jon R. *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Stout, Harry S., and D. G. Hart, eds. *New Directions in American Religious History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Svelmoe, William Lawrence. *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, The Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1917-1945*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University Alabama Press, 2008.

Swanson, Jeffrey. *Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology Among American Missionaries in Ecuador*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Taber, Charles R. *The World Is Too Much with Us: "Culture" in Modern Protestant Missions*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991.

Taylor, Clyde W., and Wade T. Coggins. *Protestant Missions in Latin America: A Statistical Survey*. Washington, DC: Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, 1961.

Thorne, Susan. *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Varg, Paul H. *Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Von Eschen, Penny. *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Walker, Thomas W., ed. *Nicaragua in Revolution*. New York: Praeger, 1982.

_____, ed. *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.

_____, and Ariel C. Armony, eds. *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America*. Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2000.

_____, ed. *Revolution & Counterrevolution in Nicaragua*. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991.

Walter, Knut. *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

White, Richard Alan. *The Morass: United States Intervention in Central America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.

Williams, Daniel K. *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Williams, William Appleman. *Empire As a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament, Along with a Few Thoughts About an Alternative*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

_____. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York: World Publishing Company, 1959.

Winks, Robin W., ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Xi, Lian. *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Xing, Jun. *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919-1937*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1996.

Zaretsky, Natasha. *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Articles and Chapters

Barnhart, William C. "Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries in Late Georgian Britain, 1795-1820." *Historian* 67:4 (2005): 712-732.

Berryman, Philip. "How Christians Become Socialists." In *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb, 156-162. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Blanke, Svenja. "Civic Foreign Policy: Human Rights, Faith-Based Groups and U.S.-Salvadoran Relations in the 1970s." *Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* 61:2 (2004): 217-244.

Boyer, Paul. "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism." In *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, 37-44. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Conover, Nancy, and Bev Wilson. "White House Orchestrates 'Private' Aid: Contras Dance to Reagan's Tune." *Nicaraguan Perspectives* (Winter 1985-1986): 10-11.

Coote, Robert T. "The Uneven Growth of Conservative Evangelical Missions." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6:3 (1982): 118-123.

D'Antonio, Michael. "The Christian Right Abroad." *APF Reporter* 10:3 (Fall 1987).

Donovan, Mary S. "Women and Mission: Towards a More Inclusive Historiography." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 53:4 (1984): 297-305.

Dunch, Ryan. "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity." *History and Theory* 41:3 (October 2002): 301-325.

Escobar, Samuel. "Response to George Pixley, 'Missions in Central America Today under the Pressure of Imperialism.'" *American Baptist Quarterly* 11:2 (1992): 142-144.

_____. "The Legacy of Orlando Costas." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:2 (April 2001): 50-56.

Fairbank, John K. "Assignment for the '70's." *American Historical Review* 74:3 (February 1969): 861-879.

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia. "God and Revolution: Protestant Missions in Revolutionary Guatemala, 1944-1954." *The Americas* 46:2 (October 1989): 205-223.

_____. "Protestantism in Rural Guatemala, 1872-1954." *Latin American Research Review* 24:2 (1989): 127-142.

Gilderhaus, Mark T. "An Emerging Synthesis? U.S.-Latin American Relations since the Second World War." In *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, edited by Michael J. Hogan. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Gould, Jeffrey. "Notes on Peasant Consciousness and Revolutionary Politics in Nicaragua, 1955-1990." *Radical History Review* 48 (1990): 65-87.

Grabill, Joseph A. "The 'Invisible' Missionary: A Study in American Foreign Relations." *Church and State* 14 (Winter 1972): 93-105.

Graybill, Beth. "'Finding My Place as a Lady Missionary:' Mennonite Women Missionaries to Puerto Rico, 1945-1960." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 17 (1999): 152-173.

Hill, Patricia R. "Religion as a Category of Diplomatic Analysis." *Diplomatic History* 24:4 (Fall 2000): 593-613.

Hollinger, David A. "After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity." *Journal of American History* 98:1 (June 2011): 21-48.

Howard, David M. "My Pilgrimage in Mission." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21:3 (July 1997): 116-120.

Howlett, David. "Historians on Defining Hegemony in Missionary-Native Relations," *Fides et Historia* 37:1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 17-24.

Jennings, Raymond P. "When President and Missionary Disagree: American Baptists Wrestle with a Basic Question." *American Baptist Quarterly* 3:4 (1984): 306-314.

Kinsler, F. Ross. "Theological Education by Extension: Service or Subversion?" *Missiology: An International Review* 6:2 (April 1978): 181-196.

Koll, Karla Ann. "Presbyterians, the United States, and Central America: Background of the 1980s Debate." *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78:1 (Spring 2000): 87-102.

Lassiter, Matthew D. "Inventing Family Values." In *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, 13-28. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Lienesch, Michael. "Right-Wing Religion: Christian Conservatism as a Political Movement." *Political Science Quarterly* 97:3 (October 1982): 403-425.

Lindsell, Harold. "Fundamentals for a Philosophy of the Christian Mission." In *The Theology of Christian Mission*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson, 239-249. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961.

"Los Evangelicos en los Tres Anos de Revolucion." *Amanecer* (July 1982): 24-25.

Miller, Ruth A. "The Missionary Narrative as Coercive Interrogation: Seduction, Confession and Self-Presentation in Women's 'Letters Home.'" *Women's History Review* 15:5 (November 2006): 751-771.

Montoya, Rosario. "House, Street, Collective: Revolutionary Geographies and Gender Transformation in Nicaragua, 1979-99." *Latin American Research Review* 38:2 (2003): 61-93.

Munro, Doug, and Andrew Thornley. "Pacific Islander Pastors and Missionaries: Some Historiographical and Analytical Issues." *Pacific Studies* 23:3 (2000): 1-31.

Notarianni, Diane M. "Making Mennonites: Hopi Gender Roles and Christian Transformations." *Ethnohistory* 43:4 (1996): 593-611.

Pixley, George. "Missions in Central America Today under the Pressure of Imperialism." *American Baptist Quarterly* 11:2 (1992): 133-141.

_____. "Nicaragua Baptists: Reclaiming Repressed Cultures." *American Baptist Quarterly* 18:3 (1999): 293-297.

_____. "Baptists and Liberation Theology: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean." *Baptist History and Heritage* (Winter 2000): 55-71.

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. "The Changing Face of Diplomatic History: A Literature Review." *The History Teacher* 38:3 (May 2005): 385-400.

Preston, Andrew. "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations." *Diplomatic History* 30:5 (November 2006): 783-812.

Robert, Dana L. "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home." *Religion and American Culture* 12:1 (Winter 2002): 59-89.

Rowbotham, Judith. "'Soldiers of Christ?' Images of Female Missionaries in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain: Issues of Heroism and Martyrdom." *Gender & History* 12:1 (2000): 82-106.

Scotchmer, David. "Called for Life: The Literary Contribution of Edward M. Haymaker to an Ethnohistory of Guatemalan Protestant Missions, 1887-1947." *Studies in Third World Societies* 25 (1985): 323-368.

Smith, Dennis A. "The Gospel According to the United States: Evangelical Broadcasting in Central America." In *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*, edited by Quentin J. Schultze, 289-305. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990.

Stam, John. "The Challenge of the Gospel in Nicaragua." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1985): 5-8.

_____. "Christian Witness in Central America: A Radical Evangelical Perspective." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 2:1 (June 1985): 14-17.

_____. "La Misión Latinoamericana y el Imperialismo Norteamericano, 1926-1928." *Taller de Teologia* 9 (1981): 51-59.

Stanley, Brian. "Manliness and Mission: Frank Lenwood and the London Missionary Society." *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* 5:8 (1996): 458-477.

Van Engen, Charles E. "A Broadening Vision: Forty Years of Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946-1986. In *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, edited by Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, 203-232. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990.

Waldrop, Richard E. "The Social Consciousness and Involvement of the Full Gospel Church of God of Guatemala." *Cyber Journal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 2 (July 1997).

Woodberry, Robert D., and Christian S. Smith. "Fundamentalism et al: Conservative Protestants in America." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 25-56.

Newspapers and Magazines

Antelope Valley Press
APF Reporter
Atlanta Journal
Cattanooga News-Free Press
Christianity and Crisis
Christianity Today
EP News Service
Foreign Affairs
His
LAM Evangelist
Life
Los Angeles Times
NACLA: Report on the Americas
The Nation
National Catholic Reporter
New York Times
North County Blade-Tribune
Reader's Digest
Religious Broadcasting
Religious News Service
San Diego Union
Seattle Times
Sojourners
Spokesman-Review
The Swinging Bridge [Messiah College student newspaper]
Time
United Evangelical Action
Voice
Washington Post
Washington Times
Wheaton Alumni Magazine

Theses

Adams, Anna. "Moravian Missionaries in Nicaragua: The American Years, 1917-1974." Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1992.

Eaton, Helen-May. "The Impact of Archbishop Óscar Romero's Alliance with the Struggle for Liberation of the Salvadoran People: A Discussion of Church-State Relations." M.A. thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1991.

Koll, Karla. "Struggling for Solidarity: Changing Mission Relationships between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Christian Organizations in Central America during the 1980s." Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003.

Mande, Anupama Gopal. "The Somoza Regime: Internal Dynamics of Nicaraguan Politics, 1933-1979." M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1994.

Niebling, Howard V. "Self Concepts of Diocesan and Missionary Seminarians." M.A. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1960.

Notarianni, Diane Marie. "Making Mennonites: Kinship and Gender in Christian Transformation, Christian Mission and the Orayvi, 1890-1940." Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1997.

Robbins, Bruce Warren. "Contextualization in Costa Rican Theological Education Today: A History of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, 1922-1990." Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1991.

Svelmoe, William Lawrence. *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend in Guatemala and Mexico, 1917-1945*. Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001.

Swartz, David R. "Left Behind: The Evangelical Left and the Limits of Evangelical Politics, 1965-1988." Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008.

Wang, Hsiu-yun. "Stranger Bodies: Women, Gender, and Missionary Medicine in China, 1870s-1930s". Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2003.

Audiovisual Material

Moyers, Bill. *The Kingdom Divided: God and Politics*. VHS. Public Broadcasting Service, 1987.

Nelson, Rudolph, Shirley Nelson, Martin E. Marty, Dennis Smith, and Paul Jeffrey. *Precarious Peace: God and Guatemala*. VHS. Worcester, PA: Gateway Films/Vision Video, 2003.