

“For the Relief of Human Suffering”: The Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief in the Context of Cold War Initiatives in Development, 1940–1968

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Abstract

The Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR) was one of the first and largest denominational relief and development agencies in the nation from 1940 to 1968. Its ecumenical engagement was robust from the start; it was one of the largest donors to United China Relief, Church World Service, and other ecumenical overseas relief organizations during this time. This article provides a decade by decade assessment of MCOR’s work with particular attention to (1) its ecumenical engagement in relief and development efforts; (2) the relationship of MCOR’s work to the wider context of overseas relief and development efforts by nongovernmental, bilateral, and multilateral agencies; (3) the stated theological justification of MCOR’s work as it related to the wider mission of the church and specifically the Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension. The article concludes with reflections on the implications of this study for the future work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.¹

¹ I would like to thank my research assistant at Palmer Theological Seminary, Landon Eckhardt, for his generous assistance with this project and Emily Onorato and Glen Messer for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the article.

Introduction

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is frequently praised today as a shining example of the denomination's longstanding commitment to alleviating poverty and promoting justice around the world. Much of this praise is surely warranted. When the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR) began in the 1940s it was one of the first and largest overseas relief agencies in the United States.² It also strongly influenced—perhaps more than any other US denomination—the Church World Service (CWS) organization. The CWS began in 1946 and shortly thereafter became the relief agency arm of the National Council of Churches of Christ.³ Popular programs of CWS, such as the donations of grain by US farmers through the Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP), sometimes received twice the contributions from Methodist donors as from any other denomination.⁴ Few United Methodists, however, are aware of the history of MCOR, which became UMCOR in 1968 at the time of denominational merger. This history is important for reasons which extend beyond mere denominational pride; the history of MCOR illustrates how Methodists—for better and worse—understood and enacted mission with the poor around the world.

The purpose of this article is to trace the development of MCOR's work in overseas relief by examining how MCOR operated in the wider context of US foreign aid practices and engaged church constituencies and other relief organizations—both ecumenical and secular. It highlights the politically and

² MCOR was not the very first denominational relief agency in the United States, although MCOR executives sometimes claimed it had that status. The American Friends Service Committee and the Mennonite Central Committee both preceded MCOR in their founding by more than a decade. Helen Buckler papers, Folder 2041-3-7:08. MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-6. Records of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey. Hereafter, all folder numbers may be assumed to refer to holdings of the General Commission on Archives and History in Madison, NJ. Also, I have chosen to not use the definite article when referring to the MCOR and simply call it MCOR. This is both less cumbersome and more similar to the way UMCOR is referred to today.

³ Gaither Warfield paper on the history of MCOR, 1960, Helen Buckler papers, Folder 2041-3-7:08. In this twenty year retrospective MCOR is referred to as the second highest donor to CWS (behind that of the United Presbyterian Church). As the largest Protestant denomination in the US at the time, Methodists had political influence which exceeded its still sizable financial contribution.

⁴ "Statement on CROP by the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief," Folder 2041-3-1:08.

theologically contested nature of how and why aid was given around the world. Although MCOR was engaged in dozens of countries and activities between 1940 and 1968, I concentrate on those countries and relief programs which received the most attention and funding from MCOR and its ecumenical partners during this time.⁵ The article proceeds first by setting this study in the wider context of similar research efforts in the fields of transnational history, development studies, and Methodist studies. The second and most substantive part of this study analyzes MCOR's work as it responded to an assortment of internal and external pressures such as Methodist and ecumenical agency policy, the developing field of international relief and development as it was shaped by governmental and nongovernmental actors, and world crises themselves. The third part of the article is an assessment of the missiological motives that appear to be most salient during MCOR's history. I conclude with several questions for normative reflection on the current and future shape of United Methodist involvement in international development as a dimension of its missional identity.⁶

Historiographical Context

There are at least three areas of research within which this project is situated and seeks to make a contribution. Most generally, this article is part of the growing scholarly literature on non-state actors in US diplomacy and what is known as transnational history. After decades of focus on governmental sources, historians in the past fifteen years have increasingly recognized that the work of nonprofit agencies, foundations, and even tourist organizations are important for the way they too influenced diplomatic decisions.⁷ Only somewhat more narrowly, this project makes a contribution to the research on religion as an

⁵ Latin America, for example, is almost wholly excluded from consideration in this article. MCOR was involved in Latin America, but the region did not receive as much attention by MCOR as other parts of the world.

⁶ The sources utilized in this paper are such that few conclusions can be drawn regarding MCOR's work "on the ground" in dozens of countries around the world during this period. Doubtless MCOR positively affected thousands of peoples' lives during its first thirty years in many different ways, but a study of how that occurred is beyond the scope of this article.

⁷ C. A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* 111/5 (2006): 1141–64; Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963* (New

important factor in international development efforts. Bilateral and multilateral aid agencies including the US Agency for International Development and the World Bank now recognize the importance of religion for poverty alleviation efforts around the world.⁸ Theological seminaries and Christian colleges in the US are also paying increased attention to international development. Courses on the subject and, in a few cases, joint degree programs in development and divinity are offered at Asbury Theological Seminary, Boston University School of Theology, Eastern University, Emory University's Candler School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Yale University. Faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like World Vision and others have been the subject of ethnographic and historical research projects.⁹ Few, however, have

York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Joshua J. Yates, "To Save the World: Humanitarianism and World Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2006).

⁸ The World Faiths Development Dialogue, founded in 1998, is one product of former World Bank president James Wolfensohn's interest in religion and development. See World Faiths Development Dialogue, <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd> (accessed 2 February 2014). A revealing example of USAID engagement on this topic is USAID, "Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding: An Introductory Programming Guide" (Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development, 2009). The theme of "religion and development" was first seriously engaged in the field of development studies in a 1980 volume of the journal *World Development*, but little follow-up treatment of the topic was done until the late 1990s. See also Kurt Alan Ver Beek, "Spirituality: A Development Taboo," *Development in Practice* 10/1 (2000): 31–43; D. G. R. Belshaw, Robert Calderisi, and Chris Sugden, *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001); Gerard Clarke, "Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organisations and International Development," *Third World Quarterly* 28/1 (2007): 77–96; Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings, eds., *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Severine Deneulin and Carole Rakodi, "Revisiting Religion: Development Studies Thirty Years On," *World Development* 39/1 (2011): 45–54; Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁹ Recent work on World Vision includes: Gary F. Vanderpol, "The Least of These: American Evangelical Para-church Missions to the Poor, 1947–2005" (Th.D. diss., Boston University, 2010); David P. King, "Seeking a Global Vision: The Evolution of World Vision and American Evangelicalism" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2012); Erica Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development: Protestant NGOs, Morality, and Economics in Zimbabwe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). For a review of the history of the Christian Commission on Development in Honduras see F. David Bronkema, "Development as a Political

researched MCOR in spite of its early leadership among denominational relief agencies in the United States.¹⁰

This article is also pertinent as part of the continued effort by world Methodist leaders to discern how best to be in relationship with one another in transnational ecclesial structures, such as the World Methodist Council, the United Methodist Church, or other Methodist denominations comprised of members in multiple countries. From a theological standpoint it is important to reflect upon MCOR's work for what it reveals about the marks of Methodist ecclesial practice and mission historically as well as in the present day.¹¹ Such normative considerations receive special attention at the end of this article.¹²

MCOR Begins, 1940–1949

MCOR had its genesis at the April 1940 General Conference when the newly-formed Methodist Church declared the following June 2nd "a day of prayer, fasting and self-denial" in the Methodist Church. On this day, an offering "for the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color or creed" was to be collected "as a preparation for further sacrifices to be made" by the

Gift: Donor/Recipient Relationships, Religion, Knowledge and Praxis in a Religious Development NGO in Honduras" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005).

¹⁰ Among historical studies of MCOR I am only aware of former UMCOR executive director Norma Kehrberg's work on the United Methodist Committee on Relief written to celebrate the 50th anniversary of MCOR/UMCOR. Norma Kehrberg, *Love in Action: UMCOR: 50 Years of Service* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989). For Church World Service and World Council of Churches development agencies see Kenneth Slack, ed., *Hope in the Desert: The Churches' United Response to Human Need, 1944–1984* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986); Ronald E. Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope* (New York: Friendship Press, 1996); Michael H. Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies: The Ecumenical Response to Poverty—A Primer* (London: SCM, 1995).

¹¹ The MCOR archive appears to have been wholly excluded from consideration in Linda Gesling's history of the Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension. Linda Gesling, *Mirror and Beacon: The History of Mission of the Methodist Church, 1939–1968* (New York: General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 2005). Russell E. Richey, Dennis M. Campbell, and William B. Lawrence, *Marks of Methodism: Theology in Ecclesial Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005). I am aware of the difficulty of completely separating out MCOR's work from the wider Board of Missions and Church Extension. These two entities were closely interrelated with one another.

¹² The extent to which a Christian identity ought to be explicit has been a vexing question in World Council of Churches circles for decades as outlined in chapter five of Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies*.

Church during this time of war in Europe and Asia. The General Conference approved the eight agencies to receive Methodist overseas relief donations which had been selected by the ecumenical Committee on Foreign Relief Appeals.¹³ A subsequent amendment proposed that a “Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief” be created to allocate funds to approved agencies or to send funds “directly to the field.”¹⁴ Twenty-eight years later MCOR had received and spent a total of \$29 million dollars “for the relief of human suffering.”¹⁵ Few persons in 1940 would have anticipated MCOR persisting for more than a few years after its inauguration; indeed plans were underway in the late 1940s to dismantle MCOR.

The above description of the General Conference decision to institute MCOR illustrates two constituent aspects of MCOR’s identity which remained important for subsequent decades. The initial motion which created MCOR placed the organization squarely in the context of the devotional life of the Methodist Church; the founding of MCOR took place with the simultaneous call for prayer, fasting, and sacrifice in the face of suffering. MCOR continued both to claim proudly its Methodist identity and struggle with that same identity as it sought to influence and court the favor of other relief agencies and governmental bureaucracies. Second, the General Conference action in 1940 exhibited the strong ecumenical impulse MCOR had throughout its history. The General Conference first approved the agencies selected by the ecumenical Committee on Foreign Relief appeals. Between 1940 and 1968, MCOR gave fifty-nine percent of its income to other agencies—both religious and secular (see Figure 1).¹⁶

¹³ The approved ecumenical agencies eventually included the American Bible Society, Church Committee for China Relief, American Committee for Christian Refugees, American Friends Service Committee, the Central Bureau for Relief of the Evangelical Churches of Europe, World’s Student Christian Federation, International Missionary Council, the YMCA, and the YWCA.

¹⁴ Herbert Welch of the Methodist Committee on China Relief, missionary statesman John R. Mott, Bishop Arthur J. Moore of Georgia, and Ralph Diffendorfer of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the newly-constituted Methodist Church (and others) proposed an amendment to General Conference to create the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief. Gaither Warfield address, Helen Buckler Papers, Folder 2041-3-7:08.

¹⁵ December 1940 Annual Meeting, Folder 2041-3-1:01; Fall 1968 meeting reports, Folder 2041-3-4:04.

¹⁶ The data analyzed for the creation of Figure 1 was derived from financial audit records of MCOR, Folder 2041-5-2:02-03.

MCOR Giving Patterns 1940 - 1968

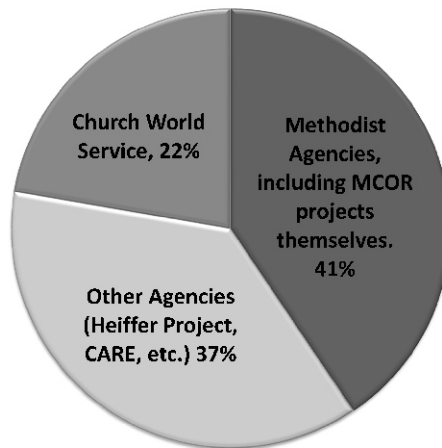


Figure 1

Several dimensions of MCOR's "organizational culture" in the 1940s—such as its early focus on China, ecumenical breadth, and theological and political conservatism toward global social welfare concerns—are best illustrated by examining the work of MCOR's first executive secretary, Bishop Herbert Welch (1862–1969), who served as head of MCOR from 1940 until 1948.¹⁷ Welch had led the Methodist Committee for China Relief since its founding in 1937 and, in 1939, merged this organization into the ecumenical Church Committee for China Relief. Ecumenical enthusiasm fired the imaginations of church leaders like Herbert Welch who saw the possibility of a new "Christendom" in China and elsewhere.¹⁸ The organization bore the imprint of Welch's influence for decades after he formally left MCOR. For some time

¹⁷ Herbert Welch, "Methodism and War Relief," *Western Christian Advocate*, 3 October 1940 in MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-5.

¹⁸ On the changing meaning of the term "Christendom" among some Christian leaders at this time see J. Nurser, *For all Peoples and Nations: Christian Churches and Human Rights* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 18. For further background on this period see Dana L. Robert, "The First Globalization: The Internationalization of the Protestant Foreign Missionary Movement Between the World Wars," *International Bulletin of Missionary*

Welch occasionally appeared as an honored guest at MCOR meetings until his death in 1969 at the age of 107.

Welch was a political and theological moderate who tended to be most sympathetic with persons of a similar disposition. For example, Welch's assessment of the Methodist Chinese bishops in a 1941 *World Outlook* article notes approvingly of their moderate political disposition: "The average I should estimate to be a sane progressivism in the spirit of the old adage, 'Be not the first by whom the new are tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside.'" ¹⁹ His moderate stance on a number of issues helped MCOR have wide appeal to a newly and not entirely united Methodist Church in the years after 1939. Welch thus helped MCOR avoid charges of being sympathetic to communism, something that distracted donors and organizational personnel in the National Council of Churches of Christ and the Methodist Federation for Social Service. ²⁰ Even though Welch was one of the founders of the Methodist Federation for Social Service in 1907, in 1942 he criticized the MFSS as no longer serving as a "reconciling agent" between liberals and conservatives. In a letter to the MFSS executive Welch noted that "when you call the conservatives to come in and share, I think you are asking them in reality to come in and submit." ²¹

Welch's moderate stance was also clear in his position on race relations in the early 1940s. In letters to his friend Lewis Oliver Hartman in Boston (where Welch had served for some years), he expressed frustration with Ernest Fremont Tittle's call at the 1940 General Conference to prohibit subsequent

Research 26/2 (2002): 50–66. Unlike many relief agencies which had their genesis in the American response to World War II in Europe, MCOR traces its origins and its greatest share of financial allocations to the ravages brought on by the civil war and Sino-Japanese War in China in the late 1930s. Such a financial commitment and concern for China in the late 1930s stemmed from China having been the focus of the Methodist Board of Mission and Church Extension's work for decades previously. There were over 100,000 Methodists in China by the late 1930s and Methodists held out hope for a bright future in spite of the conflicts unfolding in that country. See Gesling, *Mirror and Beacon: The History of Mission of the Methodist Church, 1939–1968*, 49. In 1942 Herbert Welch wrote an eighteen-page paper on "The New Day in China" brimming with optimism about China's future under the direction of Chiang Kai Shek. Herbert Welch Papers, Folder 2127-7-5:15.

¹⁹ Herbert Welch papers, Folder 2127-7-7:07.

²⁰ The suspicion raised toward the Methodist Federation for Social Service as having communist sympathies is well-known. See National Council of Churches Criticisms, Folder 2041-4-2:10.

²¹ Letter to Charles C. Webber, MFSS, 12 March 1942, Herbert Welch Papers, Folder 2127-7-6:25.

conferences to be held at hotels which were segregated on the basis of race. In these letters he also criticized Hartman's own call to end the Central Jurisdiction (a racially segregated ecclesial structure in The Methodist Church from 1939 until the early 1970s), saying that such a structure would probably be necessary for more than a century!²²

Theologically, Welch's published writings reflect a popular Methodist piety that stressed holiness of heart and life noting that "[t]he Gospel is as wide as humanity and as deep as human need, and the true Methodist accepts it in its fulness[sic]." ²³ Nowhere in his papers did he expound on the recent theological developments of Boston Personalism or neo-Orthodoxy. Nor did he have much sympathy with persons of a more fundamentalist ilk.²⁴ At times, Welch wrote with the fiery passion of an evangelist when, for example, he condemned the "strange reluctance" in Methodist colleges and elsewhere "to make open avowal of allegiance to Jesus Christ." As a former president of Ohio Wesleyan College, Welch sought after a kind of Christian holism in the church as well as other institutions including Methodist colleges and MCOR.

The personality of MCOR's founding executive secretary shaped MCOR considerably in its first decades of existence, but Welch was far from the only influence. Methodist Episcopal involvement in other foreign relief appeals prior to the late 1930s was also significant through such ecumenical relief organizations as the Near East Relief, European Student Relief, and others.²⁵ MCOR Board member and 1946 Nobel Peace Prize laureate John R. Mott worked with relief agencies during and after WWI and WWII, frequently corresponded with Welch, and shared insights on these organizations with leaders

²² Letter to Lewis Hartman, 24 June 1942. Herbert Welch Papers, Folder 2127-7-6:25. The Central Jurisdiction was officially eliminated at the 1968 General Conference, but Central Jurisdiction structures lingered for a few more years in some Annual Conferences.

²³ Herbert Welch, "Seven Marks of a True Methodist," Herbert Welch papers, Folder 2127-7-7:08.

²⁴ On one occasion he even chastised a more conservative Methodist who wrote to Welch criticizing him for saying in a public forum that the author of Hebrews was unknown. Welch responded with a terse letter of criticism of his own. Herbert Welch Correspondence, Folder 2127-7-6:25.

²⁵ I have previously written about the European Student Relief in "Missiological Contributions from the 1920s for the Contemporary Transformational Development Movement." Paper presentation, Transformational Development Conference, 2009, Eastern University, St. David's, Pennsylvania.

of MCOR.²⁶ The work of the wider Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension was, as we shall see, also profound in its influence upon MCOR.

These various influences on MCOR's work, however significant, paled in comparison to the coming of the Second World War when the demands upon MCOR's energy and resources became legion. Aid to refugees in China and Europe, famine in India, and desperate missionaries and Methodist church workers in conflict zones all competed for attention. Such severe needs in the world propelled MCOR toward greater ecumenical cooperation as well. Financial reports indicate that in the first four years of existence MCOR distributed \$779,000 to approved ecumenical agencies and spent \$550,000 under its own auspices, most of the latter amount going to work in China (see Figure 2).²⁷ Over four times more money was spent in China relief (\$279,000) than in Europe from 1940 to 1944. Although expenditures for European relief grew significantly at the end of the European war in 1946, MCOR's focus on China remained dominant. Relief appeals to Methodists often noted how there were more refugees in China than in all of Europe and that their situation was more desperate.²⁸

The close interrelationship between MCOR and the Board of Missions and Church Extension is also evident in the way MCOR funds were utilized in

²⁶ Report of the Chairman, October 1941, Folder 2041-3-1:03; 7–8 April 1943 reports, Folder 2041-3-1:05. See also Herbert Welch correspondence in the John R. Mott papers at the Day Missions Library, Yale University Divinity School, New Haven, CT: RG 45, Box 98, Folder 1727–28; Benjamin L. Hartley, "That they All May be One': John R. Mott's Contribution to Methodism, Inter-religious Dialogue, and Racial Reconciliation," *Methodist Review* 4 (2012): 1–30.

²⁷ For 1940 and 1941, there were gaps in the financial record to the point that an estimate was difficult to ascertain. For the most part, the rest of the 1940s were accurate, but in some cases a rough estimate had to be made due to the changes in MCOR's financial accounting. Other destinations of MCOR funding are not included in this graph. They included Malaysia, other European countries, and Japan. The amount given to "other European countries" prior to 1948 also included Germany but the amount going to Germany was not specified in the MCOR financial audit reports. Total amount of expenditure to "other European countries" reached a peak in 1947 of \$356,798. This category was not included in the above graph because the countries which comprised this category changed during this decade.

²⁸ Even in 1946 the amount of funds being dispersed through MCOR (not including ecumenical agencies) was going to China and India at an amount nearly double that being spent in all of European relief (\$612,784 vs. \$381,363). MCOR Scrapbook 2045-4-6. On the situation of Europe and China compared see 1940 MCOR Annual Meeting, Folder 2041-3-1:01; MCOR Scrapbook 2045-4-6.

MCOR Country Disbursements 1940 - 1949

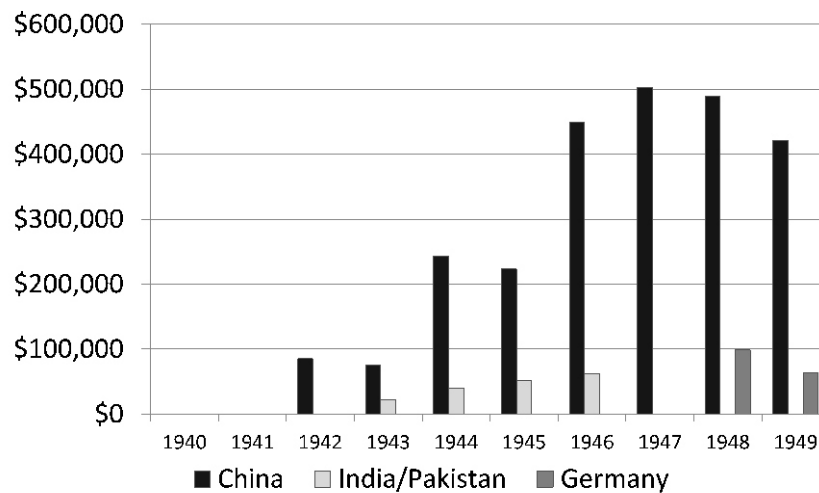


Figure 2

these early years. Much of MCOR expenditures were focused on caring for Methodist pastors and their families in China, India, and Europe as well as for Methodist missionaries, schools, and clinics. This was done in spite of the fact that early on, in 1943, a set of "Guiding Principles" had explicitly noted that MCOR funds were not to be used for "the support or emergency needs of missionaries or the meeting of deficits in the work budgets of the several divisions of the Board of Missions."²⁹ In practice, however, this is what occurred. The records show that MCOR decision-makers felt they had little choice in light of the horrible situation of many Methodist church workers in Europe and Asia.³⁰ MCOR was praised in news bulletins for having "saved the Church in China" as well as in India and parts of Europe because of its support of pastors and their families.³¹ MCOR had learned that although they were given a mandate in 1940 to help others "without distinction of race, color, or creed" this was not

²⁹ Statement of Discussion of Post-War Work, April 1943, Folder 2041-3-1:05.

³⁰ Annual Meeting, February 1944, Folder 2041-3-1:06.

³¹ 1947 MCOR News Bulletin. MCOR Scrapbook 2045-5-6.

easy to put into practice. This continued to be a matter of tension for MCOR for years to come.³²

With the end of the war in 1946, ecumenical leaders in the US recognized the value of consolidating the number of ecumenical aid agencies working around the world and formed the Church World Service (CWS) from a merger in 1946 of two predecessor ecumenical agencies.³³ CWS became the lead voluntary organization in delivering supplies (clothing, blankets, food, tools, medicine) to Europe and Asia by the end of its first year. CWS grew to be one of the largest relief agencies in the world and accounted for eighty per cent of all the relief goods shipped from the US by voluntary organizations.³⁴ The Methodists were nearly always one of the top donors to the CWS and Methodists frequently held top administrative posts in the CWS.³⁵

The aspect of CWS's work which received the most enthusiastic Methodist support in the late 1940s was the institution of the Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP). Begun in 1947 as a "Wheat Relief Project," it invited Midwest farmers to provide gifts in kind of wheat and other grains. With attendant publicity these gifts went on a "Friendship Train" which delivered America's record 1947 wheat harvest to various port cities, where it was loaded onto ships for delivery to the hungry around the world.³⁶ Methodist farmers gave generously from their grain harvests to this effort. In fiscal year 1948-49, Methodist farmers' gifts of grain were valued at \$532,931. This estimate of the value of agricultural foodstuffs was nearly double the amount given by the next highest denominational group, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod and about half

³² This is mostly clearly seen in a July 1949 *Inasmuch* newsletter article summarizing the work of MCOR since 1940. MCOR Scrapbooks 2045-4-7. This challenge of prioritization was extensively discussed in a January 1963 meeting, Folder 2041-3-2:10. See also the 1964 MCOR Fall Meeting, Folder 2041-3-2:13; Gaither Warfield, "Report of the General Secretary," January 1966, Folder 2041-3-3:07.

³³ MCOR Scrapbooks 2045-4-6. The predecessor organizations were the Central Bureau for Interchurch Aid in Europe, the American Christian Committee for Refugees, and the American Commission for World Council Service.

³⁴ Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 3.

³⁵ Gaither Warfield paper on the history of MCOR, 1960, Helen Buckler Folders, Folder 2041-3-7:08. A number of CWS's leaders were also Methodists in subsequent years. One of those leaders in the 1950s was Gaither Warfield, the executive secretary of MCOR and a vice chairman of CWS. MCOR Scrapbook 2045-4-6. In 1971 fully 25% of CWS's budget was provided by the United Methodist Church. Gaither Warfield Paper, Folder 2167-3-3:98.

³⁶ Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 5-6.

of the total MCOR budget in real dollars.³⁷ Methodists continued this pattern of being the largest denominational donor to CROP for the next several years, in large part due to Methodism's large rural constituency.³⁸

For the most part, these donations of food to CROP and the CWS were destined for Europe, a place of greater familiarity to donors and the CWS than Asia, even though MCOR's own focus in the late 1940s was still primarily on Asia—with Europe being nonetheless a significant area of concern.³⁹ This was a source of friction between MCOR and the Church World Service in the 1950s as MCOR sought to steer CWS funds away from Europe and toward Asia. In a letter to CWS's executive director in 1957, Warfield wrote that

the people of my denomination think of Asia, especially Korea and India, when overseas relief is mentioned. . . . They have never been happy under the emphasis that the World Council of Churches has put into Europe. I do believe that any contemplated study should cover the main areas in all parts of the world.⁴⁰

Policy disagreements between MCOR and CWS did not seem to affect the CWS's CROP program. The CROP program was also an example of American Protestant relief efforts working in a synchronous relationship with US foreign and domestic policymakers. With bumper crops of grain in the American heartland after World War II (in part due to the increased use of nitrogen fertilizers which grew alongside the munitions industry) came depressed agricultural prices for farmers' harvests.⁴¹ CROP provided a way to solve the problem of agricultural surpluses while also promoting a humanitarian and Christian objective. In 1948 the US passed legislation such that the US government paid the costs of transportation of CROP grain.⁴² The passage of Public Law 480 in

³⁷ Annual Meeting, 1950, Folder 2041-3-1:08.

³⁸ February 1953 Annual Meeting, Folder 2041-3-1:10.

³⁹ Daniel Sack, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 143–44.

⁴⁰ Gaither Warfield letter to Norris Wilson on 25 November 1957. Folder 2042-3-1: 07–09. The first World Council of Churches gathering held outside of the Western world (in Lucknow, India) in 1952–53 spurred the WCC-related Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees to look beyond Europe as well. Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies*, 6.

⁴¹ Nitrogen was a vital ingredient in explosives manufactured during the war. Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, 61.

⁴² Vernon W. Ruttan, *Why Food Aid?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 4.

1954—a bill which Church World Service helped to draft—strengthened the ability of CROP to distribute agricultural commodities overseas.⁴³

The ulterior objective of the CROP program which US policymakers clearly were negotiating was not something communicated to Methodist donors on the farm or anywhere else. For rural Methodist donors it was billed as simply an opportunity to be generous, have compassion, and fight communism with food. Although not a Methodist program *per se*, MCOR leaders repeatedly stressed that CROP was “our program” among Methodists in the Midwest and sought to build a sense of pride among rural Methodists concerning all of the good work their generous donations were doing through CROP.⁴⁴ That it was also being used as part of US farm policy to maintain somewhat higher grain prices by getting rid of surpluses overseas was left unsaid. Criticism that emerged concerning PL 480 food aid resulting in depressed prices for farmers in poor countries was also not mentioned in MCOR publications.

Another case of MCOR’s involvement in governmental foreign aid policies also occurred in 1948 with the passage of the United States’ Displaced Persons Act. The plight of European refugees was well-known to the American public in the post-war years, but in 1948 the problem expanded even more with the creation of the state of Israel, which resulted in over 900,000 Palestinian refugees. The intensification of the Cold War during these years was also a factor and the connection between anti-communism and refugees was made explicit in the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.⁴⁵ In explaining MCOR’s engagement in helping displaced persons, one report noted that a number of Methodists were instrumental through petitioning the US government in the passage of the 1948 law. Church World Service had the responsibility of getting displaced persons to the United States and then member denominations were to each take responsibility for resettling a certain number of persons. MCOR took responsibility for the resettlement of 5,000 persons over the next four years at a cost of \$333,831. By 1960 MCOR had resettled 12,137 refugees in 47 different states.⁴⁶

⁴³ Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 15–16.

⁴⁴ Letter from Gaither Warfield to Fred Gaston, 25 September 1957, Church World Service-MCOR, Folder 2042-3-1:03. CARE, Folder 2041-3-7:10; CROP materials, Folder 2042-3-1:03.

⁴⁵ Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World’s Refugees, 1956–1963*, 16.

⁴⁶ Helen Buckler papers, Folder 2041-3-7:08.

MCOR's mandate changed in 1948 to include "rehabilitation" rather than just relief in the scope of its work.⁴⁷ There was little debate about this shift; it was becoming increasingly clear that MCOR's existence as an organization and the nature of its work needed to focus increasingly on "rehabilitation"—what others were then calling "development." MCOR was not using the term "development" in the late 1940s or even 1950s, but the term at this time did acquire a transitive function in foreign aid discourse.⁴⁸ "Development" in the late 1940s was becoming something that could be prescribed for another rather than just something that happened (intransitive).⁴⁹ As first and foremost a relief agency, it is understandable that MCOR's work now in "rehabilitation" carried a similar connotation of "development" as something given to another. "Rehabilitation" then and now refers to a kind of professional healing service one typically does not do on one's own. In contrast to "development," however, "rehabilitation" suggests a goal of returning a person or a society to a previously held state—as in, before a war—rather than to a longer period of "development" without a clear notion of when "being developed" would be achieved.⁵⁰

The end of the 1940s brought with it the continued struggle to assist refugees and devastated countries in Europe—most notably with the United

⁴⁷ The need to shift from relief to rehabilitation is mentioned only a few times in the MCOR records. Herbert Welch papers, Folder 2127-7-7:08; MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-6.

⁴⁸ MCOR did not begin to use the language of "development" *per se* until about 1966. "Rehabilitation" and "endemic circumstance" were close synonyms used earlier. MCOR was given a mandate at the 1964 annual conference to address endemic circumstances but Warfield noted how the agency was having a hard time finding a term to reflect their work. Within 2–3 years "development" began appearing frequently in MCOR's records and promotional material.

⁴⁹ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, third edition (New York: Zed Books, 2008), 73.

⁵⁰ Philanthropic foundations (Rockefeller, Ford, and others) crafted much of the discourse about development in the 1930s and 1940s. While MCOR's Herbert Welch appreciated the work of the Rockefeller Foundation in China in the early 1940s the extent to which these foundations directly influenced MCOR's work is difficult to discern. These foundations were vitally important as trend-setters in development during the 1940s, however, and their indirect influence upon MCOR is no doubt significant. See Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*; Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); "A New Day in China," Herbert Welch Papers. Folder 2127-7-5:15.

States' Marshall Plan in 1947—and also saw the beginning of a shift in focus for the US government to Asia as nationalist movements in India, Indonesia, and Vietnam overturned colonial regimes in the region.⁵¹ The communist takeover of China in 1949 led to the expulsion of thousands of missionaries back to their homes and hundreds of thousands of refugees to Hong Kong. In light of these developments and the worsening relations between the US and the Soviet Union, US policymakers began to reframe foreign policy to reflect their growing fear of communism's spread.⁵²

MCOR joined in with its own anti-communist rhetoric in the late 1940s, from time to time decrying the “sinister shadow of the hammer and sickle” spreading across Europe. In response, MCOR's work was described as “spiritual aid” which strengthened the churches of Europe. This aid was described as allowing churches

to do evangelistic work on an unprecedented scale, strengthening them as centers of spiritual enlightenment, enlarging their social welfare activities until the Russians clamp down, [creating] little islands of democratic thinking and living in the midst of totalitarianism. The Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief must continue to save men's bodies that their souls may be saved.⁵³

This anti-communist rhetoric and sincere evangelistic desire was matched by an equally impressive expression of deepening American confidence in the late 1940s “for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”⁵⁴ These words, from the opening paragraph of what became known as President Truman's “Point Four” inaugural speech in January of 1949, captured the imagination of the press and the Methodists in the following years. MCOR executives praised Point Four as “one of the wisest things which our nation has

⁵¹ Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*.

⁵² In 1950 Truman authorized the first wheat loan to India (made in 1951) in order to prevent it from possibly turning communist. \$50 million worth of “community development” assistance to India was also committed to India for similar reasons. *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵³ Report to MCOR by T. Otto Nall, 1947, MCOR Scrapbook, 2045-4-6. Refugee camps in the Middle East after 1948 were also seen as possible hotbeds for the nurture of communists. Report on Arab Refugees, 1952–53, Folder 2041-3-7:02.

⁵⁴ Harry S. Truman Inaugural Address in 1949, cited in Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, third edition, 71.

undertaken to fight communism and assist backward peoples."⁵⁵ The most extreme praise appeared in an article in the Methodist mission magazine *World Outlook*. William W. Clemes, a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ staff, wrote that "it may well be that the future of missions as well as the fate of the entire world is wrapped up in the success or failure of Point Four."⁵⁶ That such a remark could be made over two years after Truman's speech is a testimony to how deeply inspiring Point Four was to Methodists—and Protestants more broadly—and how closely "missions" could be paired with US foreign policy in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

MCOR Expands: 1950–1959

Such anti-communist sentiment and positive portrayals of modernization in Point Four rhetoric was part and parcel of much of the MCOR ethos in the early 1950s—and of Methodism more broadly. The war-time experiences of MCOR's new executive in 1952, Gaither Warfield, surely contributed to his own anti-communist feelings. He was captured by the Russians and imprisoned by the Germans for a brief time during his missionary service in Poland and married a Polish woman, Hania Maria Dropiowska. Warfield's anti-communism, however, was not extreme. He was a compassionate church leader and missionary in Poland where he was an effective evangelist, pastor, and Bible training school administrator. One of the most endearing aspects of his character is revealed in a secret arrangement he had with the treasurer of the National Council of Churches of Christ for the latter to serve as the intermediary for a "pension check" to Warfield's Polish father-in-law and retired pastor. Warfield regularly sent checks to the NCCC with instructions to provide his father-in-law with a fictitious pension and to never mention Warfield's role in providing this retirement benefit.⁵⁷

Warfield's appointment as MCOR's chief executive coincided with a 1952 General Conference decision to more closely align MCOR with the Board of

⁵⁵ Letter from Gaither Warfield to Dr. W. A. Cade of Raleigh North Carolina, 6 January 1953, Advance Special Reports 1948–1953, Folder 2041-3-6:04.

⁵⁶ William W. Clemes, "Point Four—Road to Peace," *World Outlook* (May 1951): 233–37.

⁵⁷ Gaither Warfield papers, Personal, Folder 2041-4-3:09. Warfield had worked as an Associate Secretary in MCOR since 1946 and was largely responsible for MCOR's work with refugees. *Inasmuch* 6 (October 1952).

Missions and otherwise tinker with the composition of its board.⁵⁸ (Plans to terminate MCOR had been scrapped when the Korean War began in 1950.) The solidifying of MCOR's status was accompanied by a call for missionary expansion by the Methodist mission board and the establishment of the Advance program as another permanent fundraising structure in the Methodist Church.⁵⁹ In the early 1950s, about half of MCOR's budget was raised through the Advance.⁶⁰

Because of the Communist Revolution in China in 1949, the high levels of MCOR-giving to that country dropped by \$50,000 to \$370,249 for 1950. The decline continued, and by May of 1952 China was not even listed in the MCOR treasurer's report.⁶¹ China never again received sustained funding from MCOR for the remaining thirty years of its existence, although some MCOR funds were sent to China in the early 1960s.

In contrast to China, India represents the most consistent and one of the three largest destinations of MCOR funds throughout the three decades under consideration and, along with Korea, was the focus of much of MCOR's work in the 1950s (see Figure 3).⁶² In the early 1950s the amount given to India increased significantly for at least three distinct reasons. First, India had been a major focus for Methodist missionaries for decades. As had been MCOR's pattern throughout the 1940s, most relief work in the 1950s was directed to Methodist leaders, institutions, and missionaries serving in India. At the end of the 1940s, Methodism in India had 10 Conferences, 300,000 members, 314 western missionaries, 350 Indian pastors, and hundreds of educational institutions.⁶³

⁵⁸ "Report of the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions and Church Extension" January 20–24, 1953, Folder 2041-3-6:02. The Board of Missions now had the responsibility of selecting six out of the eighteen board members of MCOR and also was one of the organizations which needed to sign off on any plan to terminate MCOR's work.

⁵⁹ Advance Committee 1951–53 Folder 2041-3-6:02. Goals for increasing the number of Methodist missionaries in the 1952–56 quadrennium (from 959 to 1,200) after a decade of decline are identified in Folder 2041-3-6:05. Legislation passed at the 1952 General Conference concerning MCOR is provided in MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-6.

⁶⁰ Other revenue generating programs in the Methodist Church for MCOR in the early 1950s included the Week of Dedication and the Fellowship of Suffering and Service.

⁶¹ *Inasmuch* 4 (August 1950); *Inasmuch* 6 (October 1952).

⁶² For 1951, the disbursement amount shown above going to Korea is an estimate due to a change in MCOR's method of financial accounting. Data for constructing the graph obtained from Folder 2041-5-2:2-3.

⁶³ Board of Missions and Church Extension, *Methodism and India* (New York: The Methodist Church, 1946), 27.

MCOR Country Disbursements 1950 - 1959

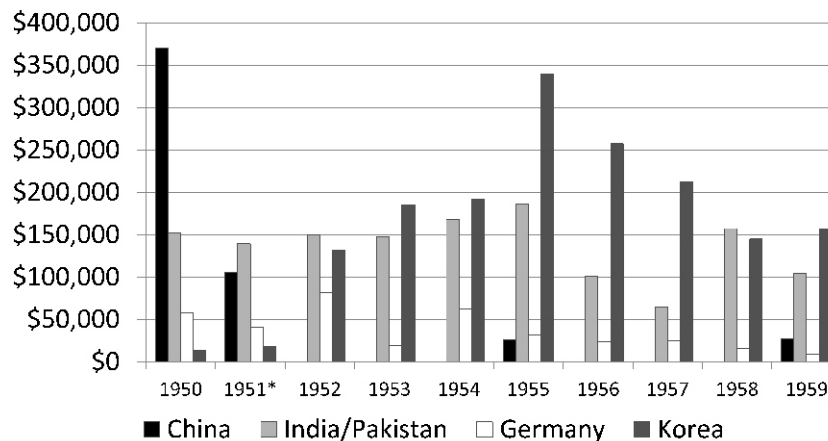


Figure 3

A second reason for MCOR's strong support of India during this time was the many different humanitarian crises which were unfolding in that country in the early 1950s. In the 1950s, the immediate need in India was to address famine, violence, and a refugee crisis caused by droughts, floods, and the separation of Pakistan and India.⁶⁴ The amelioration of tuberculosis was also a target of significant funding. MCOR sent over \$10,000 to India on a monthly basis in the late 1940s and early 50s mostly for the purpose of procuring food.⁶⁵

A third reason for MCOR involvement in India was that it was a major focus of US foreign policy in the early 1950s. Communism had spread in China and then Korea and the Truman administration was eager to provide assistance to India to ensure that it too did not fall to the communists. It was easier said than done, however, with India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru having some communist sympathies during these years. Nehru even sought to mimic the Soviet example of centrally-planned rapid industrialization while, at the

⁶⁴ Staff Report, 1952, Folder 2041-3-1:09.

⁶⁵ Report by Bishop J. Waskom Pickett in June 1954, Folder 2041-3-1:15.

same time, seeking food aid from the US.⁶⁶ The American press and foreign policy experts, however, mostly portrayed India in hopeful terms as a country engaged in a great contest between its own democratic capitalism and the communism of its even larger northern neighbor. The stakes were high in this contest, and America bet big. Truman authorized the first wheat loan to India in 1951 in the face of droughts in India in the north and south and also lobbied Congress for \$8.5 billion in aid and “community development” work.⁶⁷

MCOR supported the president and even criticized Congress in its slowness to approve the 1951 wheat loan and in other actions taken later by the US State Department. “The American government has lost a great opportunity to show its friendship for a democratic government which is fighting Communism by delaying consideration of the [Spring of 1951] request of the President to give two million tons of wheat to India.”⁶⁸ Criticism of the US was not limited to such brief, passing comments. In a June 1954 executive committee meeting, Bishop J. Waskom Pickett outlined four reasons for the deterioration of Indian/American relations. Topping his list was his accusation of the “constant talk of America leading the world.” “No new nation likes to be told that any other nation proposes to lead,” he observed. He also condemned State Department spokesperson remarks concerning America’s readiness to provide arms to other nations and American criticisms of India’s desire to remain neutral in the Cold War. While such condemnations were likely never widely shared among American Methodist donors, they well illustrate the extent to which MCOR leadership was engaged and even sometimes enraged by American foreign policy during this time.⁶⁹

Like India, Korea was also a major focus of Methodist missionary endeavor ever since Henry and Ella Appenzeller began the Methodist Episcopal work there in 1885. Unlike the situation in India, however, MCOR involvement in Korea began suddenly with the onset of war on the Korean peninsula. Once again, the focus of concern was providing assistance to Methodist pastors and missionaries in that country who, in turn, sought to aid their neighbors in

⁶⁶ Cullather, *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, 135–38.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁸ “Multi-Purpose Food for India,” *Inasmuch* 5 (June 1951). Multi-purpose Food was a kind of fortified granola bar which was developed at the California Institute of Technology as a versatile food to help in the battle against hunger. MCOR supported the Meals for Millions Foundation which distributed the food item.

⁶⁹ Report by Bishop J. Waskom Pickett in June 1954, Folder 2041-3-1:15.

need.⁷⁰ MCOR donations to Korea rose dramatically from \$13,000 in 1950 to over \$300,000 by 1955. Perhaps in part due to the rapid "scaling up" of MCOR's work in Korea, MCOR executive Gaither Warfield was quite displeased by the inefficiency of MCOR's work (as well as that of other Protestants) in reports he made to the MCOR board in 1953. A rare example of Warfield's frustration with missionaries in Korea for what he perceived as a lack of urgency and programmatic approach in the midst of the war is evident in his report:

The missionary point of view where one hundred years is taken as the approach to some problem rather than the brief decade which we have in Korea, seems to be a hindrance ... Our missionary leaders have rightly been careful not to start new institutions realizing the terrific drain this would be later on for the Korean Church. They have failed, however, to set up temporary shelters and organisations to help orphans and others. Somehow or another they have not grasped the right approach with regard to program.⁷¹

As the war came to a close in 1953, MCOR began working on what increasingly became known as "community development" efforts—in Korea and India as well as Hong Kong. "Community development" was a somewhat new approach in international development circles in the 1950s and at that time aimed at providing a kind of softer alternative to communism alongside the modernization efforts focused on increasing agricultural yields and industrialization. Community development had long referred to efforts in urban America, but only in the 1950s did it become a term to refer to international efforts aimed at rural villages. Community development efforts simultaneously held to a romantic ideal of the rural village and the power of outsiders to "facilitate" the transformation of those villages. It sought to "improve the people through improving the land, and to improve the land through improving the people."⁷²

⁷⁰ Letter from Gaither Warfield to Dr. W.A. Cade of Raleigh North Carolina, 6 January 1953, Folder 2041-3-6:04.

⁷¹ Gaither Warfield "Relief and Rehabilitation in Korea," 1953, Folder 2041-3-7:05. This kind of criticism of missionaries was unusual for Warfield. He was generally more willing to criticize the inflexibility of the Methodist Board of Missions than missionaries themselves.

⁷² Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, 77–78. For a good historical review of community development as a movement in foreign

“Model villages” were established in India and elsewhere and large philanthropic foundations threw their support behind the effort.

MCOR’s work in Korea in community development began around 1955 in the “tri-village project,” in which model villages were established along the 38th parallel separating North and South Korea. The first experiment with this form of community development was criticized in an MCOR report as being too closely tied with the Korean Methodist Church, but a subsequent effort “following closely the guidelines laid down” by Glen Leet of the Community Development Foundation was deemed more successful. MCOR described this work as “based on small (in a monetary sense) projects growing out of common community desires and efforts. The villagers get together to build a sadly needed dam, irrigation ditch or bridge.” By 1964 MCOR had over thirty projects like this in South Korea.⁷³

Similar efforts at creating model villages, although perhaps not so explicitly tied with the field of community development as in the above case, took place by the early 1960s in India by the CWS (with significant MCOR support) and in Hong Kong with the Wesley Village completed in 1959 during the World Refugee Year.⁷⁴ Warfield described this latter refugee resettlement “colony” in an idyllic tone that perhaps reminded his donors of their own recent transplantation in a rapidly suburbanizing America.

No Methodist who has been in this colony can ever forget Wesley Village, glistening white on a green hillside. There a visitor is apt to hear the singing of hymns from the community house, intermingled with the happy voices of children playing in the yard.⁷⁵

aid circles see Lane E. Holdcroft, “The Rise and Fall of Community Development, 1950–1965: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography,” MSU Rural Development Papers, 2 (1978).

⁷³ The specific reason for conflict with the Korean Methodist Church on this project was not identified. Gaither Warfield, Report of the General Secretary, September–October 1964, Folder 2041-3-2:13.

⁷⁴ “Project Daya,” *Inasmuch* 19 (May 1960). MCOR promotional materials frequently mentioned the importance of Methodist support of the United Nations’ World Refugee Year of 1959 as well. “Report of the Secretary for Refugee Resettlement,” February 1960, Folder 2041-3-2:01; *Inasmuch* 18 (October 1959); “Refugee Resettlement in W. R. Y.,” *Inasmuch* 19 (May 1960).

⁷⁵ Gaither Warfield, manuscript identified as intended for *World Outlook*, December, 1959, Folder 2042-3-7:06.

In addition to joining in the wider governmental and agency interest in community development, another foreign policy arena with which MCOR remained quite engaged just as they had in the 1940s was in food aid. In its leading role as a supporter of CROP, MCOR boasted that persons associated with CROP were influential in writing the legislation for what became Public Law 480, the Food for Peace bill.⁷⁶ The enthusiasm for this bill was palpable in the MCOR newsletter *Inasmuch* two months after its passage, calling the new Church World Service "Share our Surplus" program "[t]he greatest worldwide food relief program in the history of American churches" which will "at least quadruple the number of overseas hungry and undernourished currently being aided."⁷⁷

The Green Revolution had begun in the 1950s (even if the term was not coined until the 1960s) as new seed varieties, irrigation projects, and fertilizer inputs were increasingly utilized. Through CROP and Methodist involvement in "rural reconstruction" and community development projects in the 1950s American Methodists sought to play a role in this "revolution" as well. MCOR inspired Methodist donors by its vision of agricultural development in 1950s India which drew on rural Methodist pride toward their ancestors who settled on the American frontier:

The roar of tractors where no tractor had ever been, emerging fields replacing jungles and strong men thoroughly enjoying a job of muscle encourage, reminded me of the pioneer spirit that won the West in the United States. I am glad that I saw the first trees fall and three years later visited the modern 16,000 acre farm which was hewn from the wilderness. . . . Seventeen villages provide shelter. Fifteen to thirty acres of rich, black soil go to each family.⁷⁸

MCOR's work in resettling refugees continued much as it had in the 1940s, though the kinds of refugees receiving Methodist assistance were no longer

⁷⁶ Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 15. For the subsequent history of food aid legislation fifty years after the passage of PL 480 see Christopher B. Barrett and Daniel G. Maxwell, *Food Aid after Fifty Years: Recasting its Role* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁷⁷ *Inasmuch* 10 (September 1954).

⁷⁸ *Inasmuch* 8 (September 1953). The ideal of American yeoman agriculture was commonplace in the rhetoric of "rural reconstruction" in the 1950s. Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, 76. The community development efforts of CWS are also highlighted in "Project Daya," *Inasmuch* 19 (May 1960).

victims of World War II but increasingly of communism. In the 1950s the refugee situation which captured the most Methodist attention—and that of Americans more generally—was undoubtedly the Hungarian revolt against the communists in 1956. “For weeks, Methodists swamped the MCOR office with letters, telegrams and telephone calls, demanding a Hungarian for sponsorship.”⁷⁹ The sudden onset of the Soviet invasion and anti-communist feeling both played a role in the enthusiastic Methodist response. Gaither Warfield expressed gratitude for Methodists’ willingness to help out in resettling Hungarian refugees but was quick to encourage his *Inasmuch* readers “not to forget” refugee problems in Hong Kong, Korea, and elsewhere. MCOR also encouraged its donors to petition Congress to pass a new law for refugee assistance after the 1953 Refugee Relief Act expired in 1956.⁸⁰

MCOR Matures: 1960 to 1968

The United Nations declaration of the “Development Decade” in 1962 was preceded in 1960 by the Food and Agricultural Association’s “Freedom from Hunger” campaign. The campaign aimed to increase agricultural productivity and involved significant investment in community development efforts. The campaign received exuberant Methodist and World Council of Churches support. The WCC had been involved in the crafting of this UN program, and an MCOR press release in 1960 declared “Freedom from Hunger” a “bold compassionate effort—one that may well prove the most significant and far-reaching effort in church history.”⁸¹ The decade proceeded with MCOR indeed spending considerably more on agricultural development and community development projects by 1970 than they had in 1960 (see Figure 4).⁸² The CROP program of Church World Service continued with significant MCOR involvement even while that program was increasingly facing criticism for possibly supporting repressive regimes and for perhaps being an unhealthy merger

⁷⁹ *Inasmuch* 14 (May 1957).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “Methodists Join Battle for Freedom from Hunger,” Frances Brockman papers, 1960, Folder 2041-3-7:07.

⁸² In the original table constructed by MCOR staff the category identified here as “Family Planning” was recorded as “crowdedness.” The commentary in the MCOR report on what was meant by “crowdedness” seemed best represented by the phrase “Family Planning” used here. Data for graph obtained from MCOR Winter Meeting, January 17–18, 1972, Folder 2041-3-5:07.

MCOR Allocations by Aid Categories (1960 vs. 1970)

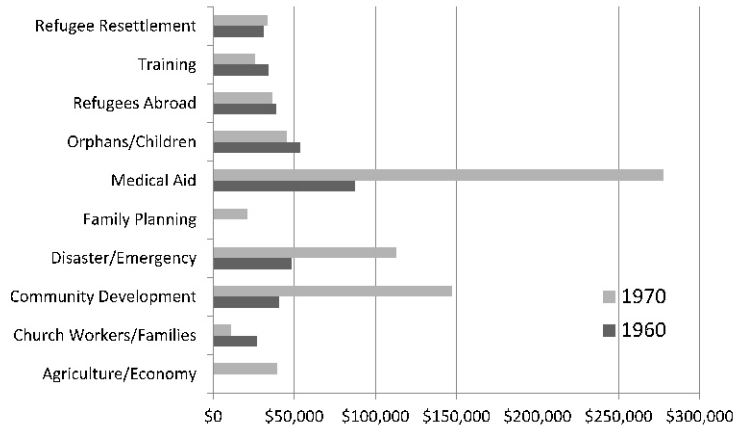


Figure 4

of church and state interests.⁸³ Refugee resettlement too remained an important way for Methodists in America to give hands-on help in providing hospitality for refugees but the program experienced little change in this decade.

In addition to increased funding going toward agricultural and community development, there are three additional conclusions about the decade of the sixties with regard to MCOR programs. First, in terms of the countries given most attention, the most striking difference in MCOR's activity was that most aid was given to India rather than Korea (see Figure 5).⁸⁴ India continued to suffer from devastating famines and refugee situations throughout the 1960s. However, instead of just continuing to focus on delivering food aid, there was a pronounced increase in attention to agricultural development and community development projects in India during the 1960s through MCOR's own work

⁸³ Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 35, 64.

⁸⁴ Grouping the entire continent of Africa with other individual countries is admittedly problematic in the Figure 5. However, in MCOR financial audits during this time period the numbers for particular African countries were not specified. Most MCOR work on the continent of Africa in this time period was in countries known today as Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Liberia.

MCOR Country Disbursements 1960 -1968

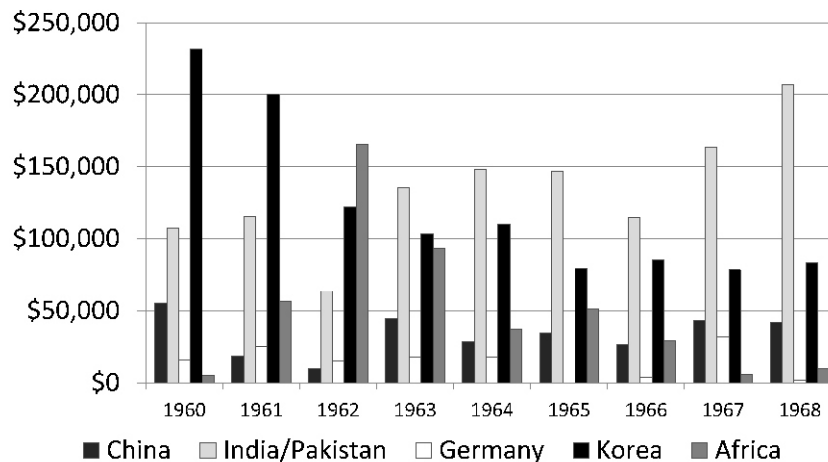


Figure 5

and its support of CWS programs and its subdivision, Agricultural Missions, which increasingly moved in this direction.⁸⁵

Second, when various programmatic areas are evaluated over the course of the 1960s, the areas of most significant growth and decline relative to expenditures in 1960 were, respectively, in the areas of medical relief and aid to Methodist church workers (see Figure 4). The growth in medical relief efforts can mostly be attributed to efforts to establish clinics and hospitals in Vietnam and to anti-tuberculosis programs in India alongside continued attention to medical institutions developed by Methodists in that country.⁸⁶ The reduction by more than half in aid to Methodist church workers, which had been a major mode of

⁸⁵ January 1966 meeting. Folder 2041-3-3:07. Starting in 1959 a growing percentage of CROP funds were being used for agricultural development and community development projects. By the mid-1960s the value of commodities and other items shipped by the CWS was in excess of \$32 million. Stenning, *Church World Service: Fifty Years of Help and Hope*, 35, 43.

⁸⁶ Medical aid was also an important aspect of MCOR's early work in Sub-Saharan Africa which began in the mid-1960s. Warfield regretted that medical and educational work

MCOR expenditures in the preceding two decades, is in large part due to the growing professionalization of MCOR in the 1960s and is reflective of sentiments shared by Gaither Warfield to de-emphasize relief to Methodist workers in a 1966 report.⁸⁷

Finally, the 1960s are noteworthy for the attention that MCOR began to pay to the continent of Africa as independence movements sweeping across the continent gained the world's—and the church's—attention. In 1961, in just a six month period, \$311,512 was received by MCOR through the Bishops' Appeal for Africa fundraising initiative and then spent in Africa over the next two years. Warfield reported that the "Blankets for Algeria" appeal in the aftermath of that country's war for independence late in 1962 received a greater sudden volume of funds (during Advent of 1962) than any other appeal in over a decade.⁸⁸ MCOR reported that the Methodists were the only US denomination which had ongoing work in Algeria at this time.⁸⁹

In 1965 Gaither Warfield visited Africa for the first time (which was also the first time any MCOR staff person had visited south central Africa) and wrote a mostly negative report of the Methodist work there as well as of the countries he visited.⁹⁰ He criticized Ghana for being excessively "anti-western"; in Rhodesia he was prescient in predicting the country would see future racial violence. He described African political leaders in Rhodesia as having "retain[ed] their faith, but their Christianity is built on an African interpretation of the Saviour."⁹¹ He did not elaborate on the latter remark, but it seems to imply at least some concern for what would soon be labeled theological "contextualization."⁹² Warfield noted with some embarrassment how American Methodism in the mid-1960s

was given as much attention as it was to the detriment of the church in several African countries. Report of the General Secretary, May 1965 meeting, Folder 2041-3-3:02.

⁸⁷ Gaither Warfield, "Report of the General Secretary," January 1966, Folder 2041-3-3:07. The trend toward professionalization is highlighted in a 1972 report as well. Folder 2041-3-5:03.

⁸⁸ Gaither Warfield report to the MCOR Annual Meeting, January 1963, Folder 2041-3-2:10.

⁸⁹ Gaither Warfield report, Folder 2041-3-2:10; Algeria was one of the few predominantly Muslim countries in the Near East / North Africa where Methodists have had a significant presence. Methodist work in Algeria began in 1910. For a six-page review of Methodist work in Algeria and Tunisia see Paul Neff Garber, "The Methodist Mission in North Africa," *World Outlook*, (April/May 1950): 5–10.

⁹⁰ Gaither Warfield Report. Folder 2041-3-3:01.

⁹¹ Gaither Warfield report, 1965, Folder 2041-3-3:02.

⁹² The term was first used at a World Council of Churches consultation in August of 1971. The report from this gathering is reprinted in David J. Hesselgrave and Edward

only had an established presence in one African country (Democratic Republic of Congo) of those twenty-nine which had recently become independent nations. In light of such a situation, however, Warfield was quick to note the importance of interdenominational cooperation in Africa.⁹³

In the 1960s there was growing conflict in MCOR's ecumenical relationships and a measure of frustration with relief agencies (secular and religious unaligned with CWS) for the ways they seem to be distracting Methodist donors away from MCOR. MCOR had a similar problem internally; leaders frequently noted that Methodist donors were giving to MCOR-supported projects which had "glamor," such as the Meals for Millions Foundation and the Share Our Surplus Appeal, resulting in insufficient funds for "projects that folks here do not always understand." Warfield lamented that

Multi-Purpose Food has very definite limitations and cannot help us in about 80 to 85% of our program. It is very much like the Share our Surplus Appeal, which would take nine-tenths of our income if we pushed it with any great emphasis.⁹⁴

With regard to secular relief agencies, MCOR had for some time experienced frustration with Methodists giving to secular agencies instead of MCOR. One sees this in promotional material as early as the mid-1940s.⁹⁵ As the number of relief agencies proliferated in subsequent years, this problem worsened. CARE, for example, was privately criticized by Warfield for being "a very expensive way of giving relief" as early as 1953, even though MCOR continued to give a substantial sum to the organization into the 1960s.⁹⁶ Beyond concerns about inefficiency, MCOR also had philosophical problems with the way relief

Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

⁹³ Report of the General Secretary, May 1965 meeting, Folder 2041-3-3:02.

⁹⁴ Letter from Gaither Warfield to George A. Rowland, 21 March 1960, Folder 2041-3-7:14.

⁹⁵ This problem has a much earlier heritage as well going back to the early 19th century with Jabez Bunting establishing the Methodist missionary society in part to lure Methodist dollars away from the London Missionary Society.

⁹⁶ Letter to Dr. Thomas Lugg from Gaither Warfield, 22 June 1953, Folder 2041-3-7:10. Letter to Edwin H. Haynard from Gaither Warfield, 2 March 1960, Folder 2041-3-7:14. A long letter of criticism from the National Council of Churches of Christ directed to "Operation Handclasp" also expresses frustration from NCCC member churches toward members of that relief agency on a number of issues. Letter to D. M. Hanson from R. Norris Wilson, 14 April 1960, Folder 2042-3-2:06.

was done by some groups claiming that, for example, child "adoption" programs (what today is called child sponsorship) were too individualistic an approach.

To encourage a Methodist group or individual in "adopting" specific persons is, we feel, not only unwise but even un-Christian. Such aid is, in a way, discriminatory... somewhat like giving one child a piece of chocolate candy where there are 20 other hungry children who must stand and watch him eat it.⁹⁷

Child sponsorship programs were a special focus for World Vision in the 1950s—especially in Korea.⁹⁸ While MCOR harbored a measure of disagreement with child sponsorship programs which World Vision focused on, it is also the case that in 1958–1959 MCOR gave World Vision nearly \$17,000 to support their work among orphans in Korea.⁹⁹

An Assessment of MCOR Motives

The motives for MCOR's work are surely far more complicated than the initial charter described them to be in 1940: "For the Relief of Human Suffering." This humanitarian and Christian expression was one of the motives for MCOR's work, but far from the only one. No doubt there were as many variations in the motives for MCOR's work as there were people who supported and worked for them. In this section, I will elaborate on two sets of motives for MCOR's work which appear to be most salient in the historical record. I focus on the ways MCOR sought to promote its work among Methodist donors and the missiological themes implicit in that promotion, as well as the ways MCOR leadership (and the ecumenical agencies with which MCOR was closely aligned)

⁹⁷ *Inasmuch* 11 (May 1955).

⁹⁸ The different approaches of World Vision and MCOR in the 1950s and 1960s are striking. In addition to its greater individualism, World Vision was much more focused on a single country (Korea) until the early 1970s and avoided governmental programs like PL 480. It was also not until 1974 that World Vision added "development" language to its personal statement—about a decade later than MCOR. See Vanderpol, "The Least of These: American Evangelical Para-church Missions to the Poor, 1947–2005," 75–76.

⁹⁹ "Financial Report for the Fiscal year June 1 1958 to May 31, 1959," Folder 2041-3-2: 01. In the mid-1960s Warfield also met with World Vision president Bob Pierce and was impressed by how quickly they were able to raise funds through a promotional film they had produced and expressed hope that MCOR's own film would be equally advantageous. Gaither Warfield Report of the General Secretary, Folder 2041-3-2:01

tended to privately reflect upon the nature of their work as it related to mission. These two dimensions of MCOR's motive—the public/promotional and the private/reflective—were not mutually exclusive.

Public/Promotional Motives: Compassion, Thanksgiving, Fellowship and Guilt

The most pervasive purpose for relief that MCOR promoted in its advertisements presented it as a way of expressing compassion toward those who are suffering, gratitude for one's own well-being, and fellowship with Christians and Methodists in distant regions. It is important both to take at face value the expressions of compassion and thanksgiving one observes in MCOR promotional materials while acknowledging that these most "pure" motives of compassion, thanksgiving, and Christian fellowship are also difficult to assess. What, for example, was the intention of the artist or the MCOR administrator who created or approved the promotional materials? How did donors interpret the promotional materials, and is that different from the way one perceives them today? One runs the risk of being excessively critical in describing the many ways such ostensibly pure motives of Christian compassion, thanksgiving, and fellowship might have been tainted by a myriad of other factors. And yet, so often they were.¹⁰⁰

The following image (Figure 6) from MCOR promotional materials which appeared near the American Thanksgiving holiday of 1947 was perhaps the most graphic appeal to compassion and thanksgiving mixed with a dose of guilt in the MCOR record.¹⁰¹ Other images—and sometimes photographs—which juxtaposed, for example, persons searching garbage for food with that of a full refrigerator were also used in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The following poem which MCOR suggested may be used for worship services in the late 1940s is illustrative of the close pairing of compassion, thanksgiving, and guilt found in the images as well.

¹⁰⁰For a review of the extensive literature in the anthropology of development and the analysis of motive in NGO development efforts see Alberto Arce and Norman Long, *Anthropology, Development and Modernities: Exploring Discourses, Counter-tendencies and Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Bronkema, "Development as a Political Gift: Donor/Recipient Relationships, Religion, Knowledge and Praxis in a Religious Development NGO in Honduras," 32–42, 55–61.

¹⁰¹MCOR Scrapbook, 2045-4-6.



Figure 6: MCOR Promotional Material, 1947

I have more food than I can eat—
They faint with hunger in the street.
I have more clothes than I can wear—
Their head, and hands, and feet are bare.
My walls are thick, and warm, and dry—
Their walls are rain, and wind, and sky.
My heart knows love of noble souls—
Their hearts are hungry, thirsty bowls.
These things let me remember when
Cries of the needy rise again.¹⁰²

¹⁰²MCOR Scrapbook, 2045-4-6.

The use of pictures of starving children to spur donors to give was not unique to MCOR. Scholars who have studied other relief organizations at this time have noted a similar tendency to portray the poor in situations of desperation in order to prompt a reaction among donors.¹⁰³

Poetic images and pictures evoking compassion mixed with guilt over abundance in the mid-twentieth century provide an intriguing theological contrast with John Wesley's own experience of poverty that spurred him to action. An article from the late 1940s about MCOR's work retold this story of Wesley's experience. After encountering a poor girl begging Wesley wrote,

Thou has adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold? O Justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor child? Everything about thee which cost more than Christian duty required thee to lay out is the blood of the poor.¹⁰⁴

While on the surface Wesley's reflection appears similar to the poem above, in fact it comprises a significantly more radical call to action. Rather than giving a bit to MCOR out of one's abundance to assuage one's guilt, Wesley declares that "everything... which cost more than Christian duty required" ought to be given to the poor. Although used on one occasion, such appeals to Wesley's concern for the poor are rare in MCOR's promotional materials.¹⁰⁵

The motive of relief donations as a way to express Christian fellowship in MCOR promotional materials was less intertwined with feelings of guilt than other portrayals invoked in MCOR publicity. Promotional materials in one case contained reprinted (and translated) "letters of thanks" from Methodist pastors and church workers from around the world.¹⁰⁶ Donors would have more easily made connections to people in these letters as being similar to themselves rather than an image of a starving child which stressed the differences in human experience. One sees a similar expression of Christian fellowship in an image

¹⁰³See Vanderpol, "The Least of These: American Evangelical Para-church Missions to the Poor, 1947–2005," 71.

¹⁰⁴H. H. Smith, "I Can't Bear to Look at It," *Arkansas Methodist* in MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-5-1.

¹⁰⁵Such neglect of Wesley's concern for the poor in MCOR promotional materials is unsurprising in light of the historiographical concerns of early to mid-twentieth century Methodist historians who tended to not frequently draw attention to these dimensions of Methodist history.

¹⁰⁶"Letters of thanks from across the seas to American Methodists," MCOR promotional brochure, 1946, Folder 2045-4-6.



Figure 7: MCOR Promotional Material, late 1940s

promoting MCOR among children as well (Figure 7).¹⁰⁷ The children in Europe after World War II are not depicted in a strikingly different way from those in the US. Both children in Europe are smiling and their hands reach equally far “across the sea” as their American counterparts suggesting a measure of (mostly imagined) reciprocity. A similar expression of Christian fellowship was also evident in the titles of fundraising campaigns like World Communion Sunday, the Fellowship of Suffering and Service, and One Great Hour of Sharing.

Theologians and church leaders beyond Methodism similarly emphasized relief as expressions of Christian fellowship. Renowned ecumenist and Anglican Bishop Stephen C. Neill noted that the WCC “makes possible corporate

¹⁰⁷“Children’s Hands Across the Sea,” MCOR promotional brochure, MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-7.

charitable action on a scale never previously considered possible, and unsurpassed as a means of creating genuine Christian fellowship.”¹⁰⁸ Neill’s sentiment was expressed by others as well. In the WCC’s *Ecumenical Review* journal Orthodox theologian Nikos Nissiotis made a compelling and theologically intricate argument about the ecclesiological significance of inter-church aid as being intertwined with the church’s self-expression or *koinonia* rather than being a mere expression of politeness or goodwill. No other scholarly contribution in the early 1960s matches Nissiotis’s theological depth and nuance with respect to the ecclesiological significance of relief efforts.¹⁰⁹

Private/Reflective Motives: Relief is Somehow Related to Mission

MCOR’s motive for its work was clearly related somehow to a belief that mission is a constitutive aspect of what it means to be Christian and Methodist. Getting clarity on this theological motive was difficult for MCOR over the years; MCOR began with an awkward but fruitful relationship with the Methodist Board of Missions and Church Extension. As noted above, from the outset MCOR established “Guiding Principles” which were to prevent it from being used to supplement shortfalls in the Board of Missions’ budget – principles which it shortly violated. Far from being something MCOR leadership was embarrassed by, promotional material for MCOR in the 1940s and 50s highlighted for donors the ways their financial contributions helped to promote the evangelistic mission of the church and Methodism in particular.¹¹⁰ There was not a concerted effort, however, on MCOR’s part to clarify how precisely MCOR simultaneously was a way for Methodists to provide “for the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color or creed” and how it was also related to the Board of Missions and Church Extension which had an evangelistic motive such that the promotion of creed mattered.

¹⁰⁸Cited in Geoffrey Murray, “Joint Service as an Instrument of Renewal,” in *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2, 1948–1968*, ed. Harold E. Fey (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986).

¹⁰⁹Nikos A. Nissiotis, “The Ecclesiological Significance of Inter-Church Diakonia,” *The Ecumenical Review* 13/2 (1961): 191–202.

¹¹⁰1952 General Conference legislation even gave MCOR an explicit mandate to “give special attention and assistance to the national workers and the people of our Methodist churches overseas who are in need because of war or other disasters.” MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-7.

A desire to clarify how mission, service, and relief ought to be interrelated did gradually emerge in the early 1950s both for MCOR and the circle of ecumenical relief agencies MCOR supported. MCOR and the Board of Missions and Church Extension first sought clarification of these terms in a gathering of mission secretaries early in 1953 in Philadelphia. At this meeting MCOR leaders and Annual Conference mission secretaries discussed how to promote Methodist mission work at upcoming Annual Conference sessions. The following explanation of the "Difference between Relief and Missions" was shared at this gathering:

The primary aim of missions is the declaration of the gospel with the intent of inviting all who hear it to become disciples of Jesus Christ. A further aim is to organize such individuals into churches in every land so that by their words and works these disciples may continue to proclaim this message to all mankind. Relief is considered a natural expression of love of Christ for those who are in need, and undergirds and supplements the preaching of the gospel. . . . Aid is given to all who are in need irrespective of race, nation, or creed. Of course the Methodist Church has always felt a definite responsibility for members of our own denomination in lands overseas and gives special consideration to them in this program.¹¹¹

This statement summarizes two dimensions of mission. It describes it as first a verbal "declaration of the gospel" and second as the establishment of churches. Relief, on the other hand, "undergirds and supplements" these activities described as mission. The tension between relief for Methodist workers and relief for persons irrespective of creed is noted but not resolved in these guidelines.

In the early years it seems MCOR did not have as much difficulty facing this tension between relief and missions since it was clearly a denominational relief agency with ties to the Board of Missions and Church Extension. MCOR itself described its work as "spiritual aid" enabling evangelism to take place and the Advance was described as making possible "our missionary expansion." Appeals for MCOR were sometimes found within articles which highlighted Methodist evangelistic work.¹¹² Warfield also affirmed participants at a CROP meeting noting that CROP "achieves its purpose only as it fits into and assists the

¹¹¹"Advance Specials Presentations to Area and Annual Conferences," Folder 2041-3-6:05.

¹¹²George S. Reamey, "A Fertile Field for Evangelism," *The Arkansas Methodist*, 25, (September 1947); MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-7. In the Korean context MCOR noted the necessity of having its staff be fully accepted by the Korean church as missionaries

total relief, rehabilitation and *missions* program of the churches as they attempt to function as “The Church.” (emphasis in the original)¹¹³ As MCOR increasingly got involved in “rehabilitation” efforts, however, the distinctions between what it should do and what the Board of Missions and Church Extension should do became less clear.¹¹⁴

By the mid-1950s one observes that connections and integration were not so easily made between relief and evangelism in promotional materials. The clearest example of this occurred in September 1953 where Warfield resisted a request by Korean Bishop Lew asking MCOR to pay for several thousand pamphlets to be distributed to prisoners of war in Korea. Bishop Lew wrote:

I agree with you on the school desks and POW suits. They are *things* anyway. In the way of relief of the POW’s, can’t you consider pamphlets to give out to them? They are sent to an island for training and we provide pamphlets of 20 pages on religious themes. . . . They have to be given out free and therefore are “relief.”¹¹⁵

Warfield clearly struggled—as did the World Council of Churches more broadly—with maintaining an appropriate interrelationship between “mission” and “relief.”¹¹⁶ Over time, it appears as though MCOR (under the leadership of Warfield) created more firm barriers against the possibility of evangelism

so that the “entire program will be the natural expression of our Methodist Church to live and grow in the spirit of Christ.” 1954 Annual Meeting, Folder 2041-3-1:14.

¹¹³Letter from Warfield to “a variety of interested people,” Office of the General Secretary, Folder 2042-3-1:04.

¹¹⁴This is well-illustrated in a description of different types of aid categories in Korea and the respective involvement of MCOR and the Board of Missions in those activities. Rehabilitation projects were more likely to have both MCOR and Board of Missions involvement. MCOR January 1963 meeting. Folder 2041-3-2:10.

¹¹⁵Letter from Hyunki Lew to Gaither Warfield, Folder 2041-3-1:12 (emphasis in original). Warfield’s letter to Lew appears to have not been preserved in the MCOR archive so the particular nature of Warfield’s argument against funding pamphlets is unknown. An appeal of MCOR’s to provide “Hymnbooks for Japan” does not appear to have experienced similar questioning as to its appropriateness for relief. MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-6. Gaither Warfield, Report of the General Secretary, September-October 1964, Folder 2041-3-2:13

¹¹⁶This remains a challenge for many nongovernmental organizations today. See Ingie Hovland, “Who’s Afraid of Religion? Tensions between ‘Mission’ and ‘Development’ in the Norwegian Mission Society,” in Clarke and Jennings, *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*. For an explanation on how the evangelical NGO World Vision seeks to maintain this holism see Bryant L. Myers,

being related to relief or rehabilitation work. Late in 1954 he described his hope that relief will "succor the needy" and also "create a desire to learn more about the Lord whom we serve."¹¹⁷ Early in 1966, he questioned the Methodist tendency to provide first for the needs of Methodist workers— something MCOR had done from the beginning—and also noted that "[m]aterial relief should never be used as an instrument for evangelism."¹¹⁸ The extent to which these comments represent a discernible policy shift within MCOR is difficult to ascertain.

Theological reflection on the interrelationship of mission and relief became more common in the 1960s for MCOR as well as in wider ecumenical circles. This was especially the case after 1967. The 1960s was clearly the most fertile decade for Methodist reflection on the meaning of mission in this period. Gerald Anderson, Ralph Dodge, Helen Johnson, Tracy Jones, D.T. Niles, and Eugene Stockwell all authored or edited books about Methodism and mission between 1960 and 1967.¹¹⁹ Needless to say these authors did not all agree with one another. The theological ferment related to the Second Vatican Council, the papal encyclical on development, *Populorum Progressio*, and two important World Council of Churches gatherings (Geneva 1966 and Uppsala 1968) all contributed to a significant increase in reflection on the nature of development in Protestant circles.

One sees evidence of this theological ferment within an MCOR meeting in January of 1963. MCOR had a custom of reviewing its policies and asking philosophical questions about the nature of its work once each quadrennium, but their 1963 gathering discussed theology much more than previous ones. Future head of the Division of Overseas Ministries for the National Council of Churches of Christ Eugene Stockwell gave a presentation on the

Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development, Revised and Expanded ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011).

¹¹⁷Gaither Warfield Report, September 1955, Folder 2041-3-1:16.

¹¹⁸Gaither Warfield, "Report of the General Secretary," January 1966, Folder 2041-3-3:07. This eight page report is very thoughtfully written and reveals a seasoned denominational bureaucrat reflecting upon his twenty years of service and the increasing complexity of his work as the years have gone by.

¹¹⁹Ralph Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (Westwood, NJ: Revel, 1964); Daniel T. Niles, *The Message and its Messengers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966); Gerald H. Anderson, *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective: An Inquiry by Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967); Helen L. Johnson et al., eds., *The Christian Mission Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960); Eugene L. Stockwell, *Claimed by God for Mission: The Congregation Seeks New Forms* (New York: World Outlook Press, 1965).

interrelationship of “mission” and “service” in which the two were more inter-related than they were described to be at a 1953 gathering. Stockwell spoke, for example, on mission theologian Lesslie Newbigin’s distinction between “missionary dimension” and “missionary intention” whereby all activity in which MCOR engages has a missionary dimension as the mission of God is widely encompassing. “Missionary intention” is a smaller subset of “missionary dimension” and includes such activities as evangelism. Such theological reflection was directly related to a more programmatic challenge of crafting a proper interrelationship between MCOR and the Division for World Missions and the Women’s Division for Christian Service.¹²⁰

The Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (DICARWS) of the World Council of Churches in 1955 also crafted a statement entitled “Mission and Service: Their Theological Unity and Its Consequences.” The document sought to clarify how the DICARWS should best work in a context of multiple churches’ missionary efforts and specifically with the work of the International Missionary Council (IMC). Called the Herrenalb categories after the town in Germany where it was crafted, this statement was operative in WCC/IMC circles until the mid-1960s. It clarified the respective responsibilities of the DICARWS and the IMC but also raised questions about the extent to which a division of labor organizationally negatively affected the holistic expression of mission practically in particular contexts.¹²¹

The theological nature and scope of mission and relief was a contentious but critical dimension of MCOR’s motive for doing its work. Early in its history, the political nature of this motive extended well beyond the Methodist Church. Beginning in the mid-1940s, MCOR and the wider Board of Missions and Church Extension viewed the post-World War II period as an opportunity to create a “New World Order.” The partnership with and pressure placed upon the US government in promoting this new world order is evident in the several governmental and UN programs in which MCOR participated and in the Methodist appeal called the “Crusade for Christ” from 1944 to 1948. By the early 1960s this enthusiasm had been tempered considerably as MCOR debated the problem of providing relief in countries which were hostile to the US government or to Christianity. The extent to which overseas relief was the “first

¹²⁰January 1963 Annual Meeting reports, Folder 2041-3-2:10.

¹²¹A list of the Herrenalb categories is provided in Murray, “Joint Service as an Instrument of Renewal,” 217–18. See also Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies*, 36, 40. Taylor discusses the challenges of “holism” in the World Council of Churches’ work extensively in two chapters in this text; January 1963 Annual Meeting reports, Folder 2041-3-2:10.

step in the new world order" was surely not as clear in the 1960s as it had been in the 1940s.¹²²

Conclusion

MCOR's work was politically, theologically, and programmatically contested throughout its history. But in the midst of this ferment—and perhaps because of it—they accomplished a great deal as a leader in mid-twentieth century relief efforts. The financial commitments MCOR made in China, India, Korea, and dozens of other countries from 1940 to 1968 is alone impressive, to say nothing of the countless lives saved because of MCOR's relief work (Figure 8).¹²³ MCOR's work in countries around the world also influenced the development of the church in those countries—likely in both positive and negative ways. The extent to which MCOR garnered Methodist support for a host of ecumenical, US governmental, and UN initiatives in relief efforts well-illustrates the extent to which Methodists understood themselves as a leading denomination in America.

MCOR's ecumenical commitment to Church World Service as well as secular NGOs was an important dimension of Methodist relief work from the time of CWS's establishment in 1946 through 1968. As Figure 9 shows, the share of funding MCOR gave to CWS versus the amount MCOR disbursed under its own auspices increased significantly in the 1960s, a time of significant enthusiasm for the ecumenical movement. MCOR maintained their commitment to these ecumenical and secular organizations in spite of their occasional disagreements with these groups. In an age where the number of NGOs has proliferated in ways far greater than in the 1950s and 60s, MCOR's early impulse to coordinate relief efforts is more needed now than ever. The way UMCOR will engage with new ecumenical partners as old ecumenical organizations such as the US National Council of Churches of Christ shrinks and perhaps continues to become less representative of American Christianity is an important question which must be addressed. How UMCOR will continue to be engaged ecumenically in an age of dramatic changes in ecumenism globally is also critical. For example, it is not at all clear how older ecumenical networks

¹²²Crusade for Christ: Church Members' Manual" MCOR Scrapbook, 1946–53, Folder 2045-5-1; Floyd Shacklock, "Overseas Relief: The First Step in the New World Order," *Southern Christian Advocate*, 2, (March 1944) in MCOR Scrapbook, Folder 2045-4-2.

¹²³Disbursements to Church World Service and other agencies beyond the Methodist Church are not identified in this graph.

Total MCOR Disbursements by Country, 1940 - 1968

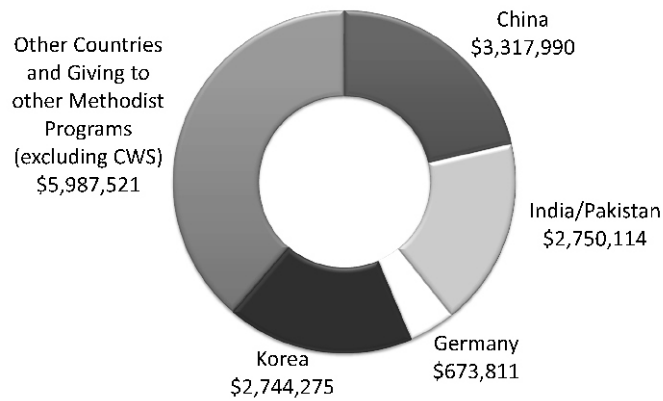


Figure 8

MCOR expenses versus amount given to CWS, 1940 - 1968

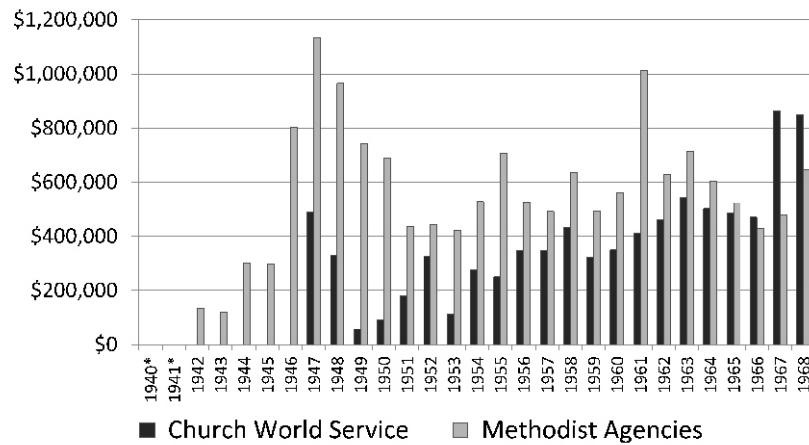


Figure 9

such as the World Council of Churches will change and relate to newer networks such as the Global Christian Forum.

Similarly, the extent to which MCOR from the very beginning sought to influence governmental foreign aid policy in the US is a valuable example to many current NGOs which are increasingly realizing the importance of working in advocacy for good government policies in addition to direct service. There is a long history of NGO involvement in advocacy in such groups like Bread for the World, but other NGOs are—relatively speaking—just getting started in this work.¹²⁴ Because of the newness of this work for many NGOs, they are approaching the question of advocacy in fresh ways by asking important theological questions about how advocacy might best be done.¹²⁵

In 2015 UMCOR will celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary. Organizational anniversaries provide an opportune time for reflection about the past and future. Questions for a fruitful future include issues of a programmatic as well as a theological and philosophical nature. With the continued proliferation of NGOs which make appeals to Methodists around the world, what is the role of a denominational relief agency? Since Christians have a distinctive understanding of the human person (theological anthropology) ought such beliefs make a difference in how development work takes place in human communities. Is UMCOR more than merely "Oxfam with Hymns?"¹²⁶ Should it be? What would this look like? As this article made clear, these are not new questions. But questions such as these are rarely discussed in congregations which are nonetheless heartfelt supporters of UMCOR's work. Posing these and similar questions to congregations in fresh ways could help to invigorate

¹²⁴For a good assessment of the state of NGO advocacy see Alan Whaites, "NGOs, disaster, and advocacy: caught between the Prophet and the Shepherd Boy" in *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, edited by Deborah Eade and Ernst Ligteringen (London: Oxfam GB, 2001), 306–21.

¹²⁵See, for example, Robert Davis, "What about Justice? Toward an Evangelical Perspective on Advocacy in Development," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 26/2 (2009): 89–103.

¹²⁶Taylor, *Not Angels but Agencies*, 101–36. These suggestions are not new even among Wesleyans. See David W. Wright, "The Pitfalls of the International Aid Rationale: Comparisons Between Missionary Aid and the International Aid Network," *Missiology: An International Review* 22/2 (April 1994): 187–201. An analagous study of the implications of theological anthropology for cultural anthropology are explored in Eloise Meneses, Lindy Backues, David Bronkema, Eric Flett, and Benjamin L. Hartley, "Engaging the Religiously Committed Other: Anthropologists and Theologians in Dialogue," *Current Anthropology* 55/1 (February 2014): 82–89.

an understanding of and enthusiasm for not only development but United Methodist mission theology as a whole.¹²⁷ MCOR's mandate to lead the Methodist denomination in the compassionate "relief of human suffering" seventy-five years ago remains a vital calling for all Christians today who seek to grow in faithfulness, compassion, and joyful generosity in the promotion of justice and alleviation of poverty around the world.

About the Author

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¹²⁷The United Methodist Professors of Mission of which I am a part are engaged in such a task together in a blog at www.umglobal.org. We are currently engaged in a discussion of the United Methodist statement on mission which was approved by the 1988 General Conference but has received precious little attention by United Methodists in the past twenty-five years.