

Article

“Vibrating between Hope and Fear”: The European War and American Presbyterian Foreign Missions

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Abstract: Scholars have argued that World War I and its aftermath caused a rapid transformation in American global philanthropy. The decline of the American “moral empire” coincided with the rise of professional, bureaucratic, and secular philanthropy. The reasons for this transformation appear almost self-evident: the crisis greatly exceeded the capabilities of all private organizations, leading to the growth of state-supported, public, and semi-public organizations like the American Red Cross. In fact, though, mainline foreign missions grew rapidly after the war and did not decline until the Great Depression. In 1920, for instance, they combined to receive over 80 percent of Red Cross receipts. Even amid the decline of the “moral empire”, therefore, mainline foreign missions remained major sources of philanthropic aid and primary representatives of American interests abroad. This article looks at the hopes and fears of Presbyterian (USA) foreign missions in the years before American entry into the (imprecisely named) European War, in order to understand the resilience of foreign missions during a period of crisis. The war created numerous practical, financial, and conceptual challenges. But, it also inspired the mission boards to seek greater sacrifices among donors, to coordinate with other boards and the federal government, and to find alternative methods to achieve its goals. These efforts in the first half of the 1910s prefigured a nationwide transformation in ideas about service and voluntary giving. After the United States entered the war, these “social goods” became nearly obligatory in the minds of many Americans.

Keywords: foreign missions; Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; World War I; humanitarianism; philanthropy; fundraising

1. Introduction

As Europe spiraled toward war in the summer of 1914, Protestant mission boards in the United States were nearly as ill-prepared as everyone else, but not quite. Americans quickly named it the European War, but the boards knew that to be a misnomer.¹ Their stations covered the globe and the conflict had direct consequences for missions from the South Pacific to the Middle East to Africa. They also had experience in many of the philanthropic problems, if not the military ones, that the war greatly exacerbated, including fundraising, mobilizing the home front, and organizing a global workforce. The American Red Cross (ARC), for instance, quickly joined in the charitable effort in 1914, but it had no personnel in place, had a paid staff of twenty-five, and a membership of under 17,000. Doctors and nurses had to sail from New York, a process that took time and, given the American

¹ Which is not to say missionaries or missionary officials used a different term even when discussing “critical” situations in Africa and the “most serious situation” in China. “Presbyterian Missions and the European War”, Bulletin No. 7, September 1914, [United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records](#), RG 81, box 6, folder 23, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records).

characterization of the war, initially focused on Europe. Much of the ARC's international work in 1914–1916, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean, relied on foreign missionaries to carry out its on-the-ground work (Syria 1915). When the United States entered the war three years later, the ARC lacked the cash to succeed in its much-expanded mission. It launched a campaign to raise \$100 million in a week, an extraordinary sum and in an extraordinarily brief period of time. Foreign mission boards again came to the ARC's aid, as missionary societies across the country quickly reoriented their agendas to Red Cross needs. Historians have noted that American entry into the war created social obligations to serve one's country and to contribute one's wealth (Capozzola 2008; Hitchcock 2014, pp. 150–55; Irwin 2013, chp. 3–4; Zunz 2012, p. 66). Those were ideas that mission boards had been advocating for many years, a fact that historians frequently acknowledge but rarely explore.²

The Presbyterian (USA) Board of Foreign Missions (BFM), as the wealthiest American mission board by annual donations, exemplified the ways mission boards used their extensive experience in overseas philanthropy during the war. It evolved as a result of the conflict. The BFM came out of the war wealthier, and more committed than ever, to both foreign missions and non-sectarian philanthropy. That commitment is surprising, given the BFM repeatedly raised concerns about losing money and talented personnel to non-sectarian organizations. At the same time, it reflected broader trends within American philanthropy in the postwar era, where the division between religious and secular organizations was not always clear.

In August 1914, any hopeful outlook for the BFM would have seemed Panglossian. The initial weeks and months of the war sent mission boards scrambling. In the Ottoman Empire, the transnational financial system changed too quickly for the mission boards to keep up. Banks throughout the empire refused to honor the drafts on London banks that had been funding both BFM stations and those of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational). London had entered financial chaos in late July as troops moved toward borders and war became increasingly inevitable. Similar to the financial crisis in 2007–2008, banks immediately sought to protect themselves. They held on to their cash reserves, particularly gold, and ceased to lend. In London, they closed for a week. Markets froze as well. To avoid further calamity, the London and New York Stock Exchanges closed on 31 July. The New York Stock Exchange remained closed for a month. The London exchange did not reopen until 4 January 1915 (Roberts 2013, pp. 3–6). Mission boards mainly faulted banks in Constantinople for not honoring their British or American drafts, but in any event, missionaries still lacked cash.

Similar problems arose around the world. In some regions, the BFM could do no better than ask Standard Oil for help. The Board paid the company's treasurer in New York, who then directed operatives in Asia to distribute gold to the Presbyterian missionaries.³ In India, the missionaries were forced to pay skyrocketing rates of exchange.⁴ The boards circulated a call for additional contributions to pay for this "new peril to our finances arising from the war". Donors responded with mixed results. "So it goes," the American Board's Cornelius Patton wrote, "vibrating between hope and fear".⁵

Still, the situation in Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt attracted special concern. Within days of the banks closing, Charles A. Dana (unrelated to the nineteenth-century *New York Tribune* journalist) wrote

² Julia Irwin (2013, p. 14), for instance, notes that Evangelical Christianity had been a "mobilizing impulse for . . . humanitarian activities, at home and abroad" in the nineteenth century and lumps missions together with "charitable assistance" and "social reform" as "humanitarian activities". She makes this point while claiming that "American humanitarians increasingly defined their work in non-sectarian and social scientific terms". What is left unsaid is that sectarian organizations themselves also promoted non-sectarianism and social scientific approaches.

³ In numerous instances where the global banking structure temporarily halted, Standard Oil provided American transnational nonprofits with a source of money. It was one of the few American corporations whose reach extended almost as far as foreign missions and whose wealth vastly exceeded any charitable society. Arthur Brown to "friends", 23 September 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴ Arthur Brown, "Bulletin No. 1", 24 August 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁵ Cornelius Patton to E. L. Smith, 17 August 1914, *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archives 1810–1961* (ABC 4.1, vol. 20) Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter ABCFM Archives).

to Russell Carter in desperation. Dana held a critical role for American Presbyterian missions in the Ottoman Empire. As the head of the American Mission Press in Beirut and the treasurer of the Syrian mission, practically every important transaction went through him. The financial crisis left Dana powerless. The Presbyterian mission had money and drafts on banks in London and New York as well as the Ottoman Bank and the Deutsche Palestine Bank, but his notes were “not worth the paper they are printed on”, because the banks were failing, and no one would honor the drafts.⁶ W. W. Peet, the American Board’s veteran treasurer in Constantinople faced the same problem and wired foreign secretary James Barton. “We are all suffering terribly for gold”, he complained. He wanted Barton to make a direct plea to President Woodrow Wilson for assistance. Barton contacted Arthur Brown of the BFM. He hoped that presenting a joint appeal with one of the wealthiest mission boards would bolster their case.⁷

On August 26, Barton met with Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan along with A. Woodruff Halsey of the Presbyterian board. Bryan asked them not to say anything except that “the government has this whole matter well in hand”.⁸ He then dispatched the *USS North Carolina*, a cruiser, to Constantinople from Falmouth in southwest England. It carried \$150,000 in gold for the American Board, the BFM, and other missionary enterprises in the region, as well as for American tourists. The various boards reimbursed Washington, making deposits with the Treasury for the gold and for a previous loan of \$17,800 that Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr. had personally offered for immediate assistance.⁹ Washington provided this aid at no expense to the mission boards.¹⁰

In hindsight, the emergency offers a window into the state of religious philanthropy at a moment of great change. In part, it demonstrated the federal government’s willingness to further the missionary project, both on an individual level and an institutional one. In an age of American global presence and nearly instant communication, through telegraph wires deep in the Atlantic, Peet’s frantic search for cash found quick resolution. Ambassador Morgenthau provided the initial loan. His position had been created only thirteen years prior. Then, less than a month after the start of the financial crisis, the federal government was already ordering ships thousands of miles away on a relief mission. Many Americans opposed foreign missions for various reasons, but the coming changes in American philanthropy would not result from any governmental antipathy for missions.

At the same time, the start of the war also highlighted the weakness of mission movement financing. The boards endured the volatility of the markets and the caprice of federal politics. Nothing obligated Morgenthau to lend his money or Bryan to dispatch the *North Carolina*; a different ambassador or secretary of state might not have taken any action. Indeed, a few years earlier, Morgenthau probably would have refused such a request, having felt disdain for “over-zealous advance agents of sectarian religion”. A transatlantic journey with some mission board administrators had convinced him to view missions as “a magnificent work of social service, education, philanthropy, sanitation, medical healing, and moral uplift” (Morgenthau and Strother 1922, p. 176). Also, the mission boards appeared to think that individually they might not have held enough clout to sway even the “godly hero”, William Jennings Bryan (Kazin 2006).

Regardless of these individual actors, though, the crisis demonstrated the limits of American power in the region. The US government certainly did *not* have “this whole matter well in hand”. The Turks prevented the *North Carolina* from entering the Dardanelles (with the excuse that mines made entry too dangerous) and the naval yacht *Scorpion* was forced to retrieve the gold on September 23. The gold remained in Constantinople, though, and would not get to other cities in the Ottoman

⁶ C. A. Dana to Russell Carter, 8 August 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷ James Barton to Arthur Brown, 21 August 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁸ A. Woodruff Halsey to D. Stuart Dodge, 27 August 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁹ Circular from James Barton, 28 August 1914, ABC 9.5.1, box 8, folder 12, and Cornelius Patton to Brewer Eddy, 27 August 1914, ABC 4.1, vol. 20, ABCFM Archives; Correspondence between Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and the US State Department, August–September 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

¹⁰ A. Woodruff Halsey to Cleveland Dodge, 2 September 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

Empire for some time. By mid-October, Beirut and Jerusalem in particular still needed funds. At that point, though, the bank restrictions had eased and the *North Carolina's* "gold did us no good and was not accepted", according to Katherine Jessup. Instead, it was sent back to Constantinople and mainly benefited the missionaries insofar as it showed their *independence*, not their reliance, on the American government. The advent of rapid communication had done nothing to expedite sea travel, and two or three months without cash could have caused serious damage to the missions. Nevertheless, Jessup felt relieved by the presence of US Navy vessels in the eastern Mediterranean (the *North Carolina*, as well as the *Tennessee*, which had been dispatched from the United States, both remained in the region). The American moral empire sometimes required a show of force.¹¹

While the cash crunch ended quite quickly, other problems arose as the Great War spread and grew in intensity.¹² The war impacted almost every aspect of missions work, both for missionaries abroad and organizers at home. For decades, the mission movement had tried to convince the public of its need for nationwide support. Interdenominational organizations, like the Laymen's Missionary Movement or the Missionary Education Movement, had bolstered the non-sectarian claims of the movement. Fundraising campaigns and local missionary societies consciously created social obligations for support. The war, therefore, did not create the ideal of nationwide cooperation in philanthropy, but it did fuel it. Foreign missions benefited from a windfall in giving to war-related charities, and they capitalized on the added publicity for humanitarianism. As reflected in the case of the gold shortage in Constantinople, the mission boards expanded their preexisting cooperation with the federal government. Beyond that internal expansion, though, mission boards came to realize the great potential of non-sectarian philanthropy for accomplishing goals that missionaries had previously taken on themselves. That a sectarian organization like the BFM would encourage non-sectarianism was surprising, even to the BFM itself, as reflected in its periodic ambivalence about organizations like the ARC. The years preceding and during the European War nevertheless show that the ground had been prepared for this confluence of interests.

2. The Great War: A Turning Point for Philanthropy and Humanitarianism?

The classic timeline of World War I begins on 28 June 1914, the day Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, the Duchess of Hohenberg. It ends in 1918, when the Allies and Central Powers ceased hostilities, or 1919, when those adversaries signed the Treaty of Versailles. That chronology, however, minimizes global interconnections and the violent encounters that extended beyond the main period of conflict. The Italian invasion of North Africa in 1911 and the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 foreshadowed the worldwide conflagration. Conflicts in Egypt, India, Syria, and elsewhere after 1918 fed off dashed hopes of self-determination that the world war had sparked. The traditional narrative also emphasizes the nation-state instead of either the multi-ethnic empires that constituted much of the world in the 1910s or the nongovernmental organizations that were already starting to proliferate by 1914 (Gerwarth and Manela 2014; Iriye 2002, pp. 4–7, 18–21; Irwin 2013; Little 2009; Manela 2007). For these reasons and others, it makes sense to adopt an expansive periodization of missions in the World War I era, beginning in the early 1910s, with efforts to improve the effectiveness of mission movement financing, and ending in the 1920s, with non-sectarian philanthropies that employed the resources of foreign missions, such as the American Committee on Armenian and Syrian Relief.

¹¹ "U.S. Cruisers to Remain in Europe", *New York Tribune*, 24 September 1914; "Syrian Ports Fear Attack by French", *New York Tribune*, 19 October 1914; "U.S. Ready to Aid Americans in East", *New York Tribune*, 31 October 1914; Katherine Jessup to Ralph E. Prime, 20 December 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; Russell Carter to the BFM secretaries, quoting a letter from Charles Dana, 4 March 1915, box 6, folder 24, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

¹² By the following summer, the American Board was using its ability to get funds to mission stations throughout Turkey as a fundraising method. James Barton, "Bulletin on the Turkish Situation", 3 July 1915, box 6, folder 24, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

The impact and consequences of World War I on voluntarism, humanitarianism, and philanthropy in the United States (and elsewhere) is undeniable, as recent historiography has underlined (Cabanès 2014; Hitchcock 2014; Irwin 2013; Little 2009; Watenpaugh 2010). Charitable organizations expanded, politicians and the press devoted more attention to the callousness of war, and philanthropy became more secular and scientific. Although the American state had played a role in these efforts since before the Civil War (McCarthy 2003), religion had continued to provide the main impetus for humanitarianism and proponents always identified this work as charitable. But the immense scale of World War I, as well as the events that surrounded it, forced a dramatic transformation in the resources devoted to humanitarianism, the role of the state, and the motivations for actions (Barnett 2011, pp. 1–5). Part of that transformation grew out of state demands of its citizens, as reflected in the draft, urban vice control organizations, and the quasi-public American Red Cross, each of which blurred distinctions between voluntarism and obligation (Capozzola 2008; Fronc 2009, chp. 6; Irwin 2013). Some historians argue that these developments formed a “key moment” in the history of modern human rights (Cabanès 2014, p. 10; see also Hitchcock 2014; cf. Moyn 2010, 2015).

The foreign mission movement adds a different perspective to the history of humanitarianism. Foreign missions bridged the war and evolved as a result of it, facilitating an analysis of both change and continuity.¹³ Both the quest for the “origins” of human rights and the confined examination of the war period predispose historians to emphasize change at this particular moment. Much of the continuity within American philanthropy consequently gets lost. Historians of Protestant foreign missions have done surprisingly little to address this lacuna. Several important works select 1914 or 1915 as an end date (Porter 2004; Robert 2008; Shenk 2004) or devote little attention to the impact of the war itself (Bays and Wacker 2003; Hutchison 1987; Robert 1997). Ian Tyrrell (2010) has argued that the war signaled the declining influence of leaders of the “moral empire”. There are certainly notable exceptions (Mislin 2015; Showalter 1998; Walther 2016), but it remains a topic worthy of greater attention.

To explore continuities in the 1910s is not to ignore the many changes that the war caused. It undoubtedly influenced philanthropies and humanitarian movements in profound ways, particularly through organizations, such as the League of Nations, Save the Children, and the American Red Cross. Many leaders in the postwar humanitarian movement, nevertheless, saw their work as a continuation of and elaboration on what they had been doing both during and before the war. Mission movement leaders had long encouraged the state to take a more active role in the moral empire (although they also wanted to maintain their own independence) and debated the benefits and drawbacks of social welfare programs (Hutchison 1987, chp. 4–6). That they hoped these efforts would eventually result in conversion to Christianity only further connects their prewar efforts with the postwar period’s views on the possibilities that European and American domination would promote “civilization”.

By any measure, missionaries played a bit part in the conflict and I am not arguing for a reinterpretation of the war itself. Missionaries and mission boards remained vitally important to millions of Americans, however, as demonstrated by the thousands of missionary societies and tens of millions of dollars donated each year. That was true before, during, and after the war, but is missing or minimized in histories that focus on the rise of non-sectarian philanthropy during and after World War I (Irwin 2013; Watenpaugh 2010, 2015; Zunz 2012, chp. 2). By overemphasizing change, we misrepresent the complexity of the American philanthropic landscape and the diverse interests of the American people. We also reinforce the truism that war is the major force behind historical change.

¹³ John Branden Little and Akira Iriye have drawn opposite conclusions about the history of World War I nonprofit work, but each emphasizes rupture rather than continuity and evolution. Little notes that “few relief organizations founded in World War I remained active internationally in the 1920s and 1930s” (2009, p. 7). Focusing on other groups, Iriye emphasizes that, “with a few exceptions . . . both intergovernmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations stopped functioning during the war. . . . The growth of international organizations in the aftermath of the Great War was not so much a reaction against the brutal and senseless fighting as a resumption of an earlier trend that had been momentarily suspended” (Iriye 2002, pp. 19–20).

The evolution of mission boards during and after the war points to the gradual and complicated transformation of American global philanthropy from predominantly, or at least supposedly, religious and missionary in nature to non-sectarian and “humanitarian”. In the end, the bit part played by missionaries did little to influence the war and the mission boards could hardly be called war victims. They did, however, prepare the way for the larger organizations like the American Red Cross, through organizational structures both within the United States and abroad. The boards, in turn, took advantage of the war to raise additional capital and to grow. The BFM and other mission boards thus succeeded in their aims of both expanding their own international footprint and promoting a nationwide, non-sectarian humanitarian agenda.

3. Presbyterians and Foreign Missions

The cooperation between the American Board and the BFM at the start of the war was hardly coincidental. They were two of the largest and wealthiest mission boards, each headquartered in the northeast (the BFM in New York and the American Board in Boston).¹⁴ Over a century earlier, in 1801, the common Reform Church background of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism had led to the Plan of Union, in which the two churches had decided to cooperate in their evangelistic endeavors. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church consequently urged churches to support the American Board when it began operations about a decade later. The union never appealed to many Presbyterians and “Old School” Presbyterians formed the Board of Foreign Missions in 1837. In 1870, with the reunion of the “Old School” and “New School”, the BFM became the primary Presbyterian foreign missions board outside the former Confederacy. The American Board transferred numerous missions to the BFM to reflect the new circumstances. By World War I, the BFM had grown wealthier than the American Board,¹⁵ but each could claim a degree of importance within foreign missions circles in the United States. The prestige of each board was underlined by the prominence of its administrators, including Robert Speer, Stanley White, and A. Woodruff Halsey of the Presbyterian Board and James Barton, Cornelius Patton, Enoch Bell, and Harry Hicks of the American Board. All held important positions of leadership within the global mission movement and occasionally outside of it as well.

Presbyterian governance of foreign missions was relatively similar to the American Board. Each had a small executive committee of secretaries charged with overseeing missions abroad and promoting them at home, as well as a treasurer to oversee the finances.¹⁶ For both boards, the secretaries had pastoral and missionary backgrounds, while the treasurers were lawyers and businessmen. Women in each denomination formed their own organizations in the years after the Civil War. Larger and smaller bodies, comprised of leading members of each domination, supervised the executive committees in various ways.

Polity had always separated Congregationalists and Presbyterians and that distinction had major implications for fundraising. While the American Board passed budgets and expected contributions from churches, church authority ultimately rested with the congregation. The more hierarchical structure within Presbyterianism, with its sessions, presbyteries, and synods, allowed for more top-down decision making. If the General Assembly (the highest body within the church structure) established a fundraising campaign, it came as more authoritative, in some ways, than what a mission board might propose on its own. That is not to ignore the wide diversity within Presbyterianism (or the

¹⁴ The American Board also had a major office in New York, which it sought to expand in the years before the war. Cornelius Patton to the Corporate Members of the American Board, 12 June 1912, box 27, folder 8, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

¹⁵ Indeed, about twice as wealthy (as measured by annual donations) and twice as large. The BFM was the largest foreign mission board in the United States. The American Board was comparable in size to the boards of other large denominations outside the former Confederacy (e.g., Adventists, American Baptists, and Methodists).

¹⁶ Though one could equally say that the American Board was an outlier in that it had six executive officers, while the BFM and almost every other American foreign mission board employed four. Fred C. Klein, “Report of Committee on Credentials”, in “Report of the Committee on Home Base”, [1912], box 27, folder 5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

national bodies within Congregationalism) and the conservative-modernist debates that divided the Presbyterian Church in the early twentieth century, profoundly influenced fundraising and foreign missions.

4. Apportionments and the Every Member Canvass: Balancing Financial Goals with Donor Empowerment

Wartime and interwar philanthropic fundraising sought to instill a sense of social obligation to give.¹⁷ Although the historiography of fundraising has tended to emphasize non-sectarian precursors to that monetary mobilization, religious groups provide an equally useful example.¹⁸ In the case of the BFM and the Presbyterian (USA) Church more generally, it is a history of trial and error. These trials and errors helped prepare mission boards, congregants, and fundraisers for future changes. Mission boards adapted to or resisted forced cooperation within and outside their denominations. Meanwhile, fundraisers began delegating their responsibilities to congregants. Donating had ceased to be about anonymously putting money into an envelope. Neighbor was soliciting contributions from neighbor and even the charitable organizations themselves had lost some control over the fundraising drive. This dynamic, which Olivier Zunz (2012, p. 44) associates with a growing “culture of giving”, intensified the social obligation to donate, and it only grew in intensity with the start of the war as both religious and non-religious organizations employed similar tactics.

The fundraising errors within the Presbyterian Church derived largely from attempts to coerce individuals or groups to act more efficiently, instead of offering, at least, the illusory control implied by the “culture of giving”. For example, in 1912, the General Assembly proposed a centralized treasurer to oversee the budgets and fundraising of all Presbyterian benevolent associations, including the BFM, Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, home mission board, and others. The proposal failed, partly due to the strong opposition from the BFM. Secretary Robert Speer argued that the BFM’s treasurer had an extremely complicated job, managing donations, disbursement, investments, and overseas real estate, work that a centralized treasurer could not have handled alone. In more general terms, though, Speer lamented the growing tendency “to separate still further the donors from the actual work which their gifts support. Such a Treasurer . . . would have no living touch with the work which the money passing through his hands was doing. The palsy of a purely banking officialism would fall upon the administration of the benevolent accounts”.¹⁹

While the centralized treasurer scheme never came to fruition, centralized or cooperative fundraising did become a reality. By allowing donors to give to benevolences in general (not unlike a community chest), rather than to foreign missions one week, home missions the next, perhaps church erection the following, etc., these plans simplified church collections for both ministers and parishioners. Within the Presbyterian Church, it took several forms in the years before the war: the “cooperating plan”, apportionment, and the Every Member Canvass. The American Board adopted versions of each around the same time.²⁰

¹⁷ Regarding the federal government’s efforts to increase charitable giving during the war, Olivier Zunz writes, “The intensity of the effort reinforced the perception that giving was part of being an American” (2012, p. 56, see also pp. 56–66).

¹⁸ Zunz, exemplifying a tendency among many scholars, briefly notes the history of giving through churches before turning to focus on “occasions . . . when fundraisers . . . bypassed the church and lodge” (Zunz 2012, p. 44, see also pp. 44–55; Cutlip 1965, chp. 1–3).

¹⁹ Robert Speer to David G. Wylie, 23 December 1912, box 50, folder 15, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

²⁰ While this section focuses on centralized giving within the Presbyterian Church, other bodies (including the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, the Laymen’s Missionary Movement, and the Missionary Education Movement) were promoting interdenominational fundraising campaigns. In the case of an interdenominational campaign, the funds would go to denominational church bodies, but participating denominations would all adopt the same themes, promotional texts, and timelines. In 1914–1915, for instance, the theme was to be “the social force of Christian missions” and William Faunce’s *The Social Aspect of Foreign Missions* (1914) was to be the key text for church groups to read. See, for example, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of Twenty-Eight” and “Report of the Committee of Twenty-Eight”, 1914–1916, *Foreign Missions Conference of North America Records*, NCC RG 27, box 3, folder 11, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A year before the centralized treasurer plan, in 1911, the General Assembly had created a “Joint Executive Committee” as part of its “cooperating plan” (later called the Presbyterian United Movement). The Joint Committee oversaw apportionments and budgets for the various benevolent organizations of the church. By centralizing money-management, the committee would supposedly increase efficiency. Fundraisers had “been working each for his own Board; hereafter, they are to work each for all the Boards”. More to the point, though, “the Boards [would] be relieved of the responsibility of seeking money from church organizations”, since that responsibility would rest on the new committee. It immediately suggested changing apportionments/allotments, the amount each church was asked to raise, and launched an “every-member-weekly-pledge system” (*Minutes of the General Assembly 1911*, p. 179, 181). To clarify the bureaucratic overhaul, the *Assembly Herald* eventually diagrammed the United Movement’s structure (Figure 1).

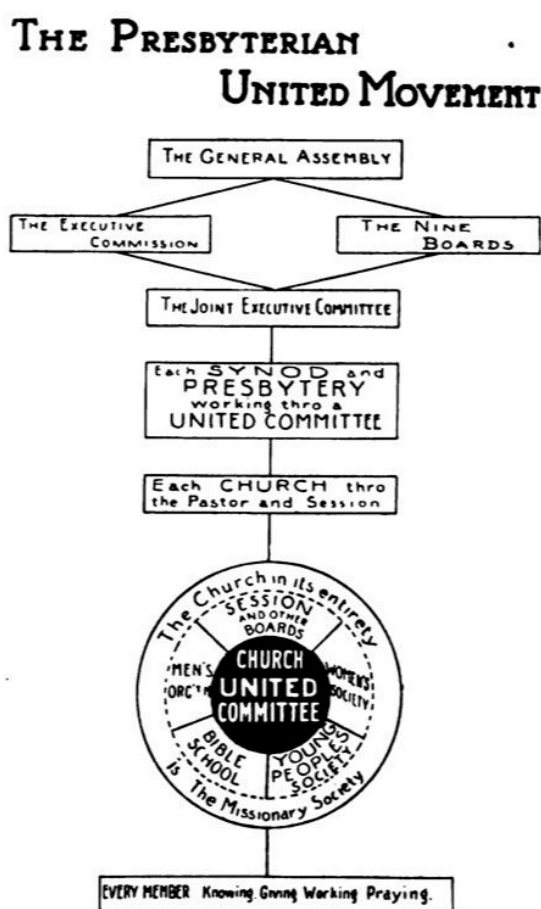


Figure 1. Presbyterian United Movement chart. The chart was meant to clarify the relationship between parishioners, benevolences, and the church hierarchy. This structure appealed to the Board of Foreign Mission’s desire for every member to give, but the Board expressed concerns that missions would lose its particular appeal to parishioners. Source: *Assembly Herald* 20, no. 1 (January 1914): 7.

These concerns were not misplaced. Problems arose from the start. First, the Joint Committee had little control over many factors related to the boards’ budgets, like the rate of return on their investments. Second, this added hierarchy could quickly interfere with local church structures, producing counterproductive tension. Of particular concern was whether women would be allowed to direct their donations to the allotment of their women’s societies (they could) and whether allotments as such would “evaporate the genuine spirit of scriptural giving, and transform the generous and gladsome giver into a reluctant and unwilling taxpayer”. The scheme also seemed to encourage

frugality by reducing allotments to churches that gave less and increasing allotments to the generous (*Minutes of the General Assembly 1912*, pp. 251–55).

The BFM had some trepidation about centralized giving. So did the American Board for that matter. Both boards (staffed only by men) had recently used the same arguments about efficiency to promote more centralized financial control, specifically as it applied to their own control over the women's boards.²¹ Clearly indifferent to the double-standard, they were loath to let church-wide bodies determine what percentage foreign missions deserved among all the donations for benevolences. Part of this concern was undoubtedly the natural response to a loss of power. In addition, though, both boards claimed their work appealed to the public more than, say, relief funds for retired ministers.²² Their missionaries traveled the wide world, risked their lives, and brought back stories and foreign goods that congregations consumed with enthusiasm (Hasinoff 2011). While the United Movement offered "great possibilities for good, . . . it is imperative . . . [to] keep our churches informed on Foreign Missions", A. Woodruff Halsey warned his colleagues.²³

Robert Speer led the opposition to the apportionment plan. Speer correctly noted that despite all the praise given to "systematic benevolence", the concept was hardly new. He specifically referenced the American Systematic Beneficence Society, founded in 1856. Speer, like almost every church official, admonished parishioners for failing to support missions to a sufficient degree, but he also identified the problem as one of knowledge and a sense of proportion, not of systematization. Those who were giving too little did so because they required "objective information about the definite work to be done and . . . presentation of sufficiently distinct and concrete tasks". Cooperative plans not only did nothing to help educate parishioners, but they also encouraged them to think of benevolences as "undifferentiated". Speer argued that donors ought to be required to indicate exactly how money should be divided. He feared the "new plans instead of enlarging the giving of the Church are drying it up at its springs" (Speer 1914, pp. 302–3; *Minutes of the General Assembly 1912*, p. 260).

The BFM initially challenged coordinated giving by asking the General Assembly for more of the donations. When that failed, they protested the entire concept of apportionment. By 1915, the Every Member Canvass (EMC) had apparently made the system unnecessary and, after similar complaints from the various benevolence boards, the General Assembly abolished the Joint Executive Committee. It replaced it with a new committee, focused exclusively on the EMC, that had a slightly larger makeup and representation from each of the boards.²⁴ Although the Church began the apportionment scheme with high hopes, by the time it abandoned it, apportionment was being described as "a mechanical and quite subordinate feature of the Budget Plan which has only served to divert attention from what is really primary, essential and vital, viz.: the application of Scriptural principle of enlisting every member to give as an integral part of the weekly worship" (*The Presbyterian United Movement 1914*, p. 183).

By 1916, nearly 80 percent of Presbyterian churches were participating in the EMC.²⁵ Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and others similarly adopted the approach quickly. Lyman Pierce, the developer of the EMC, had previously partnered with Charles Sumner Ward to raise money for the YMCA by employing a "whirlwind" method. The EMC grew out of that work. Rather than extended campaigns that lasted until a goal was met, whirlwind campaigns sought huge sums of money in very brief periods of time after "bombarding the public with surefire appeals".

²¹ Control over women's fundraising was a longstanding issue that had originally quashed women's efforts to create their own interdenominational boards. Only a few years after World War I, the male-dominated denominational boards would force the women's boards into mergers, further asserting their control of women's financial resources (Robert 1997, pp. 129, 302–7).

²² Indeed, that was precisely the point of cooperative plans. The plans overcame the greater appeal of some endeavors over others, permitting a more systematic budgeting process without impacting the methods of raising money.

²³ A. Woodruff Halsey to Members of the Executive Committee, 12 October 1914, box 50, folder 17, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records. The American Board felt similarly, as Home Secretary Cornelius Patton underlined, "We cannot afford to have this work merged in their minds with that of the other denominational agencies, simply one more thing that Congregationalists are doing". Cornelius Patton to James Barton, 18 September 1915, ABC 4.1, vol. 23, ABCFM Archives.

²⁴ Abolition of the Joint Executive Committee, 1913–1915, box 50, folder 17, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

²⁵ "Sixth Annual Report", [1917], box 51, folder 4, Ecumenical and Relations Records.

Between 1850 and 1905, the Y had raised \$35 million; in the decade after the first whirlwind campaign in 1905, they raised \$60 million (Cutlip 1965, pp. 38–50, quote on 38; Pierce 1938, pp. 140–45).

Not surprisingly, when Pierce joined the Laymen's Missionary Movement in 1908 and developed the EMC, churches and mission boards had great hopes. Unlike earlier schemes that had produced similar optimism, such as the double-envelope system, the EMC required parishioner participation (a "personal touch") in addition to ministerial and administrative leadership. Like whirlwind campaigns, the EMC emphasized preparatory work. Ministers preached about missions while organized groups of parishioners spread information through publications and discussions. Canvassing committees divided up congregations so that small teams could visit each member at home within a short period of time (often one day) to solicit a pledge to give. The method intentionally encouraged competition, both among the solicitors and the donors. Donors then fulfilled their pledges on a weekly basis. Proponents of the EMC hoped the method would increase commitments, broaden the pool of donors, and particularly encourage greater giving from "nominal givers" ("paradoxical people who believe with their intellects, but not . . . their check-books"). For most denominations, the EMC covered both church expenses, including the pastor's salary and building upkeep, as well as benevolences, such as foreign and home missions (The Why and How 1913, p. 14; Methods that Win 1913; Weber 1932; Hudnut-Beumler 2007, pp. 102–10).

While other fundraising schemes had previously employed elements of the EMC, the EMC distinguished itself in the manner of the canvass. The canvass forced each congregant to make a pledge of support to fellow members of the congregation, turning voluntary giving into a sort of social coercion. As a later director of the EMC for the Presbyterian Church (USA) noted, only somewhat disingenuously, "The canvass rightly conceived is a problem in human relations and not a plan for raising money" (Weber 1932, p. 11). The strategy sought to improve the image of fundraising by deemphasizing monetary conversations and underlining the role of the canvass in bringing people together.

A case from 1913–1914 illustrates the impact of the EMC. The White Plains, New York, congregation of the Westchester Congregational Church was facing a shortfall in giving to foreign missions. Coincidentally, a conference on the EMC was passing through town and so the congregation debated whether to hold a local canvass. The officers of the church unanimously approved, but they took no action until all the men of the church voted in favor. As a result of this "democratic" process, "the men naturally felt that this was their own idea". Next, forty men formed a committee to perform the canvass and the church sent letters about the canvass to every church member. In this instance, men did not represent their wives and women received separate letters, urging their participation in the giving, if not in the soliciting. The men on the canvassing committee were told which families to visit and "were instructed to learn what they could about the families before making the visits". On the morning of the canvass, the pastor preached about giving and the EMC, and then the men made their rounds. "In their eagerness to have some part in the campaign", the women of the congregation prepared a supper for the canvassers. In the end, local support rose 20 percent and giving to benevolences rose 60 percent.

As evidenced by this case, the EMC claimed to promote greater personal investment in church and community. Indeed, church treasurer Crescens Hubbard argued that the "collective" decision-making reflected a "democratic" process. While that initial decision may have resulted from male suffrage, everything else suggested a hierarchy. Most significantly, the Westchester's EMC sidelined the women in the church, who traditionally had gained power through their fundraising abilities (Gordon 1998; Bergland 2010, pp. 177–78; Beaver 1968, chp. 1; Robert 1997, pp. 188, 305). Church leaders appointed male canvassers and told them whom to visit. The church then sent donations for benevolences to the various boards, including the American Board. Hubbard clearly interpreted the campaign as a success, and the church did go from a shortfall to a surplus, but to identify the process as democratic mistakes nominal collective action for actual democratic power.²⁶

²⁶ The methods that Hubbard described only continued to expand in complexity and systematization (Leach 1958, pp. 219–28).

The EMC succeeded in raising more money by converting voluntary actions (contributions to benevolence) into social demands. The “personal touch” of parishioner canvassing additionally created tiers of participation and the illusion of community control. The interdenominationalism of the EMC reflected trends against sectarianism. While Westchester sidelined women to a greater degree than other churches, the response of the women in the congregation was not unusual (Reeves-Ellington et al. 2010). They organized themselves and found a way to make their presence felt. Each of these aspects of the EMC matched developments that would occur during and after World War I, though on a much greater scale. Indeed, the possibility of philanthropic responses to the war depended upon the preexistence of structures that could raise money efficiently and organize large groups of “volunteers”.

5. Neutral “in Speech and Writing”, Though Perhaps Not in Deed

The value of those prewar experiences would take some time to bear fruit. In the first few months of the war, missionaries operating within the warring nations or their colonies faced certain immediate and pressing dangers, which preoccupied officials and supporters at home. Their challenges demonstrated that, unlike the philanthropies that grew out of the war, mission boards had an existing infrastructure at the start of the conflict. They were ready for what they called “the new internationalism”.²⁷

In the early months of the war, channels of communication closed in parts of the Ottoman Empire, China, and in German colonies in Africa. The African colonies saw fighting particularly early in the war. French and British forces captured Togoland (roughly present-day Togo) within weeks of the declarations of war and on 15 August, the countries decided on a coordinated attack against German Kamerun (roughly present-day Cameroon). The fighting in Kamerun, which contained a significant missionary presence of American Presbyterians, lasted far longer and resulted in many more casualties than in Togoland (Farwell 1986, chp. 1–5). In September 1914, the English navy captured the German postal steamer *Germania*, which had been the American Board’s “only means of communication that our missionaries in [Micronesia] have with the outside world. It means that mail and provisions are cut off and they are dependent upon the native foods”.²⁸ Only fourteen years after the Boxer Uprising, when mission boards similarly lost contact with their missionaries, the lack of word troubled missionary supporters within the United States.

In addition to freezing communication, the start of the war froze exchange markets, making it virtually impossible for the boards to send money to foreign missionaries. “Letters of credit, bills of exchange, bank checks, nearly everything in that line is held up these days”, American Board Home Secretary Cornelius Patton told his main fundraisers.²⁹ The boards felt forced to consider costly alternatives, given the dire financial condition. Brown Brothers, for example, offered to send one thousand Turkish pounds to Constantinople at an exorbitant interest rate.³⁰ The American Board also considered taking out insurance at rates as high as 25 percent to protect deliveries. While American Board officials preferred to temporarily halt all shipments, the Board already had \$13,000 worth of goods on English and German ships at the start of the war and seriously considered spending \$3000 to insure those assets.³¹

Frozen exchange markets proved especially problematic because some of the missions felt they needed to increase their workload at the start of the war. Some 140 British and Irish missionaries (both Protestant and Catholic), representing fourteen denominations, were operating in Ottoman Syria

²⁷ “Tentative Rough Outline of a Report on the Missionary Outlook in the Light of the War”, n.d., box 30, folder 14, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

²⁸ Mabel E. Emerson to Theodore H. Wilson, 28 September 1914, ABC 4.2, vol. 11, ABCFM Archives. The ship would remain in Sydney harbor for the duration of the war.

²⁹ Cornelius Patton to Edward Lincoln Smith, 4 August 1914, ABC 4.1, vol. 20, ABCFM Archives.

³⁰ Patton to Eddy, 27 August 1914.

³¹ Patton to Smith, 4 August 1914.

at the start of the war. With the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire on opposing sides, all of these British subjects returned home. The remaining missionaries, mostly American Presbyterians, felt they needed to fill the void while at the same time the lack of currency forced them to cease their own publications (*The Syrian Situation 1914*, pp. 643–44; *War News from Workers 1915*, p. 113).

The dangers of missionary work during war went beyond life and property. From the perspective of the denominational boards, the need to appear neutral was paramount. Mission boards faced a particular complication due to the independence of each missionary or, at least, each mission field. The interests of a mission in Kamerun, which had cooperated with the German colonial government and German missionaries for many years, differed greatly from the interests of a mission in British India. Mission boards could only respond tardily to missionaries' comments or publications that seemed to promote one side of the war. Self-preservation frequently conflicted with collective goals.

In the opening months of the war, the Presbyterian BFM sent several circulars to all missionary fields encouraging them to remain neutral "in speech and writing".³² The need to reiterate the directive and to specify the ways in which missionaries could appear partisan reflected the officials' challenges. It also reflected the public value of missionary perspectives. By the end of 1914, the press had already received and published extracts of missionary letters, angering Arthur J. Brown. "We beg you", he wrote the missionaries, "to be exceedingly careful when you write to your relatives. Please caution them not to print your letters even in their local papers. . . . It would be lamentable if the cause of Foreign Missions were to be identified with this strife".³³

To maintain total neutrality and to play the role of humanitarians, the missionaries were told to offer assistance to fellow missionaries from both sides of the conflict. Assistance came in many forms and often appeared to contravene the goal of neutrality. Basel Evangelical Missionary Society Secretary H. Dipper asked the Presbyterian board to send money to China on his behalf. Though Swiss, the Basel Society employed numerous Germans, relied on Swiss and German donations, and had offices across the border in German Alsace.³⁴ Since the Basel Society's treasurer was headquartered in Hong Kong, Dipper feared the British would cut off its flow of money. The most neutral course would have seemed to be for the BFM to refuse such requests. Otherwise, it placed itself in a position of negating a British action clearly designed to harm German interests. While Dipper eventually found an alternative solution, depositing money in the Deutsche-Asiatische Bank in Berlin and Canton, the Presbyterian board also agreed to help in any way it could.³⁵

A similar arrangement arose in the German colony of Kamerun. At the very start of the battle for Kamerun, even before the capture of the coastal city of Douala, Karl Foertsch of the Gossner Missionary Society (headquartered in Berlin) was requesting that the Presbyterian board transmit its funds to its missionaries in the region. Following the capture of Douala and Allied advances in the region, the BFM agreed to supply the German missionaries with any money they needed and also agreed to forward German correspondence with its own. Throughout the battle in Kamerun in 1915, A. Woodruff Halsey sent Foertsch updates and called on Presbyterian missionaries in West Africa to aid local French, Swiss, and German missionaries.³⁶

³² Arthur Brown "to the Missions", 27 August 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

³³ Arthur Brown to [Presbyterian missionaries], 30 December 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

³⁴ It should also be noted that nationality sometimes mattered less than one's native language. Despite "emphasizing that Dr. Haeberlin and myself were Swiss", Karl Wittwer complained, "the treatment we received [from the British] was disgraceful and brutal. . . . We Swiss were treated just like th[e] Germans". "Report of Missionary Karl Wittwer, A Swiss, Picturing his Experiences during his English Imprisonment", [1915], box 7, folder 1, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

³⁵ Correspondence between H. Dipper and the Board of Foreign Missions, 12 November 1914 to 22 January 1915, box 6, folders 22 and 24, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records. The American Board also loaned money to a German missionary society in Canton, China. Cornelius Patton to Henry Oliver Hanman, 2 February 1915, ABC 4.1, vol. 22, ABCFM Archives.

³⁶ [A. Woodruff Halsey] to the West Africa Mission, 17 November 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; correspondence between A. Woodruff Halsey and Karl Foertsch, 1914–1915, box 6, folders 22 and 24, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records. Both Foertsch's original German letters and their translations are included in the archive. I base my analysis only on the translated text, which I presume Halsey was responding to.

As the war stretched into 1916 and beyond, the goals of maintaining abandoned mission stations continued. Karl Foertsch continued to ask that the BFM maintain the missions in “Kamerun” (already renamed Cameroon/Cameroun by the French), care for missionaries if possible, and send information from the field.³⁷ The Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris (SMEP) also required financial assistance, partly as a result of taking over German stations, and A. Woodruff Halsey assured them of “the desire and aim of our Board in every way to cooperate with you”.³⁸

The extended nature of the war, however, also made clear that no *status quo ante* would be possible. The West Africa Mission needed to adjust to French rule and repeatedly asked the BFM to send more French-speaking missionaries.³⁹ The Board put off such a request until the French government could comment. When word came, indirectly via the SMEP, the message was clear: American missionaries were welcome only insofar as they would further colonization endeavors. Their main role would be to teach French and act “as auxiliaries of the French influence”.⁴⁰ This dependence on the SMEP would help repay some of the SMEP’s debt to the BFM, as the SMEP extended its presence in West Africa and helped install BFM missionaries.⁴¹ “We trust that, if the Cameroons or some part of it become definitely french [*sic*]”, a SMEP official wrote to Halsey, “one of the happy results of our dear franco-american [*sic*] alliance will be that a greater liberty will be given in all our Colonies to American missionaries and we hope to see the day where several of the American Societies will come and occupy some of our large unoccupied fields in french [*sic*] Africa”.⁴²

Though willing to offer both information and material support for German and French missionaries, A. Woodruff Halsey refused to express opinions about the war itself. In Karl Foertsch’s initial request for assistance, he mentioned the “great successes” of the German army to which “we can thank God” and “the entire German populus [*sic*] glows with intense enthusiasm”.⁴³ Halsey immediately put an end to the conversation, noting, “We absolutely refuse to take any part even in discussion of matters relating to the War”.⁴⁴ Halsey overstated the collective views of the BFM. A few months later, Julius Richter (a close associate of many American mission movement leaders and an organizer of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910) complained at length of American arm sales to the Allies, claiming that “American Christianity” itself was “hopelessly discredited. . . . I hear now from day to day more doubtful remarks on the sincinerity [*sic*] and the seriousness of American Christianity”. Unlike Halsey, Arthur Brown was willing to engage the topic, sympathizing with Richter’s complaints about arm sales and emphasizing that “the Christian leaders of this country . . . are advocating peace and neutrality [and] have no more connection with the manufacture and sale of ‘guns and bullets’ than you have and no more influence over them”.⁴⁵

In addition to creating difficulties relating to neutrality and transmitting goods, money, and information between the United States and the mission fields, the war created a more abstract problem in the minds of foreign missions administrators. Mission boards feared the idea of a conflict among Christian nations would make both evangelism and fundraising more difficult. The BFM told missionaries to emphasize that “this war is not due to Christianity nor to a failure of Christianity, but to

³⁷ Correspondence between A. Woodruff Halsey and Karl Foertsch, January–July 1916, box 7, folder 3, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

³⁸ Quote in A. Woodruff Halsey to Jean Bianquis, 8 January 1918, box 7, folder 5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; see also other correspondence between A. Woodruff Halsey and the Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris, 1917–1918, box 7, folders 4–5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

³⁹ A. Woodruff Halsey to the West Africa Mission, 20 June 1916, box 7, folder 3, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴⁰ Jean Bianquis to [A. Woodruff Halsey?], 20 October 1916, box 7, folder 3, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴¹ For example, A. Woodruff Halsey to Jean Bianquis and reply, 8 October 1917 and 8 December 1917, box 7, folder 4, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴² Daniel Couve to A. Woodruff Halsey, 11 December 1918, box 7, folder 5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴³ K. Foertsch to A. Woodruff Halsey, 17 September 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴⁴ A. Woodruff Halsey to K. Foertsch, 21 October 1914, box 6, folder 22, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴⁵ Julius Richter to Arthur Brown and reply, 19 February 1915 and 20 March 1915, box 7, folder 1, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

a disregard to its precepts and the failure of men to obey its principles".⁴⁶ Paradoxically, the BFM argued that the war pointed to both the failure of Christianity and the possibility of the same. For believers in the "Gospel of Peace" to be "at each other's throats" was a "horrible incongruity", but the only solution to "end such monstrous incongruities" was to see Christianity as a "world opportunity" ([Christmas is a World Opportunity 1914](#), p. 642). "Christianity will have to become Christian", wrote a missionary in China ([The European War 1915](#), p. 17). Cornelius Patton described "this war of horror and shame" as having "embarrassed" the American Board.⁴⁷

These fears that non-Christian peoples would begin "misinterpreting Christianity" as a belligerent religion belied the colonialist mentality of mission board officials.⁴⁸ The BFM expressed particular concern that "the war may leave the Chinese to interpret western civilization in terms of force and violence, rather than in terms of peace and good-will" ([The Effect of the War 1915](#), p. 16). It is doubtful that anyone in China would have had trouble thinking of western civilization in terms of force and violence after a century of occupation and intervention by "western civilizations".

Fears that non-Christians would see the war as an outgrowth of Christianity helps explain the mission boards' near universal preference for neutrality and peace, rather than siding with the Allies or Central Powers. It also points to a reason mission movement officials had for decoupling their religious and national projects.

The challenges that mission boards faced with the outbreak of the war point both to broader American dilemmas regarding the meaning of neutrality and to the particular agendas of foreign missions. Although most Americans supported neutrality in the early years of the war, appearing neutral posed greater challenges for American organizations operating around the world. The Presbyterian board chose to enact its version of neutrality by confining assistance, whether for the benefit of Allies or Central Powers, to the realm of missions-related activities. They were willing to go to almost any lengths to help any missionaries, regardless of nationality, continue their work, but would not comment on the war itself beyond their hopes for peace.

6. Warlike in Speech and Writing

The Presbyterian board's prohibition on war commentary did not inhibit its use of the war for fundraising purposes. Like almost every wartime organization, when it came to the quest for money, the war and American nationalism were front and center. The ARC pictured the American flag and the Red Cross flag side by side. The Commission for Relief in Belgium urged wartime thrift to help Belgian children. Both the American Board and Presbyterian BFM were actually somewhat surprised to discover that the war benefited their finances. Many of the concerns that the war elicited were immediately apparent with the start of hostilities, but how congregants would respond remained unclear for several months. At the same time, mission boards recognized that overseas conflicts had helped bring their work into the public consciousness in the past and, as it turned out, the Great War was no different. Giving to foreign mission societies appeared to be one of the most rapid means of offering support for the victims of the war, facilitating those fundraising efforts.

Both the American Board and the BFM compared the European War with the Civil War. Northern foreign mission boards had survived the Civil War with relatively little change. If such a large domestic conflagration could not stop the mission movement, surely congregants could answer the contemporary crisis with equal vigor. Robert Speer of the Presbyterian board viewed the war as a test, and quoted the General Assembly report of 1862, which called for "onward movement in the

⁴⁶ Stanley White to Robert Speer, 2 October 1914, box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records. See also Brown "to the Missions", 27 August 1914; and Brown to the Foreign Missions Boards of the United States and Canada, 1 September 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁴⁷ Cornelius Patton to H. W. Luce, 27 August 1914, ABC 4.1, vol. 20, ABCFM Archives.

⁴⁸ Committee of Reference and Counsel, "The American Churches and the Great War", 18 September 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Reference Records.

missionary work”.⁴⁹ His colleague, Arthur Brown, expanded the comparison to include examples of mission boards succeeding amid other conflicts, particularly British mission boards founded during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, and missionary achievements during the Crimean War and Boer Wars. “Without question, American Christians of to-day can equal the devotion and self-sacrifice of Christians of former days,” he challenged donors.⁵⁰

After addressing their concerns about frozen markets, the American Board quickly transitioned to a more optimistic attitude regarding the consequences of the war on missions financing. As Cornelius Patton wrote in September 1914, “We do not take war very much into account. The Board has lived through a great many political crises in Turkey, and the work grows apace. We seem to thrive on difficulties in this work. In fact, we try to make difficulties become opportunities”.⁵¹ By February of 1915, Cornelius Patton was feeling good about the financial position of the American Board. “I find that the Boards are not suffering in their finances in any marked way, and in several instances, the gifts are running ahead of last year. This general situation is true of all the leading Boards”. The war, according to Patton, was promoting a spirit of self-sacrifice, “a splendid test of the quality of the faith of our church members”.⁵² The *Missionary Herald* remarked that “it would be strange indeed if every individual was not moved to increase his contribution in times like these” (*A Worthy Gain* 1916, p. 23).

Initially, the Presbyterians seemed to face very different circumstances. The war could not have arisen at a worse possible moment for the BFM. With the close of fiscal year 1913–1914 on 31 March, the Presbyterian board found itself with a deficit of \$292,000. It was one of the largest deficits in the board’s history. The war seemed to compound the problem, and the fact that both the home missionary society and publication society faced similar deficits made the situation even worse. In a fortuitous decision, the board had decided, months before the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, to name the campaign to close the deficit, the No Retreat Fund.

The debt frayed nerves. The BFM asked the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society to help fill the gap, claiming the general board was paying the salaries of many missionary women and, therefore, deserved the women’s support to close the debt. The women balked at the demand. They had more than exceeded their goals and argued that issuing emergency requests would be counterproductive.⁵³ If the women would not participate collectively in the No Retreat Fund, the BFM asked them to assume the support of more missionary women. They also demanded that focus remain on “the emergency that is upon us. . . . There can be no question that the primary urgency is that we should meet this budget and avert the disaster of another deficit”.⁵⁴ Whatever the interests of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, whatever success they might have been achieving, the men prioritized the needs of the BFM.

Not helping the situation, the two groups disputed how the BFM calculated giving. Since the BFM issued the official publications of giving, the woman’s societies had to continually battle to get their statistics printed as they desired. In 1914, Mary Wood and Henrietta Hubbard wrote repeatedly to Robert Speer to complain about the BFM’s calculations of giving. Among the disagreements, would giving to Christian Endeavor Societies, when submitted through the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, be included in the receipts? How was the BFM calculating donations of the Young People’s Societies? Depending on what was included in annual giving, the disparity totaled between one and

⁴⁹ Robert Speer to S. G. Monfort, 28 September 1914, box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; see also Officers of the BFM to the missions, 1 October 1914, box 6, folder 23, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁵⁰ Arthur Judson Brown, “Why Foreign Missions Cannot Retrench on Account of the War”, 1 December 1914, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records. See also, Committee of Reference and Counsel, “The American Churches and the Great War”.

⁵¹ Cornelius Patton to A. Amelia Wales, 9 September 1914, ABC 4.1, vol. 20, ABCFM Archives.

⁵² Cornelius Patton to Henry Oliver Hanman, 2 February 1915, ABC 4.1, vol. 22, ABCFM Archives.

⁵³ Margaret Hodge to Robert Speer, 26 May 1914, box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁵⁴ Circular to Women’s Boards’ Presidents, 7 October 1914, box 50, folder 10, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; See also Officers of the BFM to the missions, 1 October 1914.

two hundred thousand dollars.⁵⁵ The women had little desire to contribute to a No Retreat Fund anyway, but the fact that they might not even receive recognition for their work certainly did not make them more eager to help.

War metaphors had infused missionary rhetoric for decades, so it was not prophecy that led the Presbyterian board to reference “retreat” in their debt-raising scheme.⁵⁶ The cover of the January 1914 edition of *The Assembly Herald* (the Presbyterian monthly covering all benevolent societies, Figure 2) epitomized these war metaphors. It featured a woman as a Roman soldier with a banner reading, “Presbyterians all together . . . in simultaneous effort for all boards and causes”. The gray background and the woman’s cloak (a Roman *paludamentum*) blowing through the air suggested a mighty storm. Within the gray clouds, though, appeared to be rays of light and the woman’s strength and steadiness made clear that no storm would dislodge her. In front of her stood a Roman shield with the word “Presbyterian”, implying the protection of the church. She is, one assumes, the personification of the church itself.⁵⁷

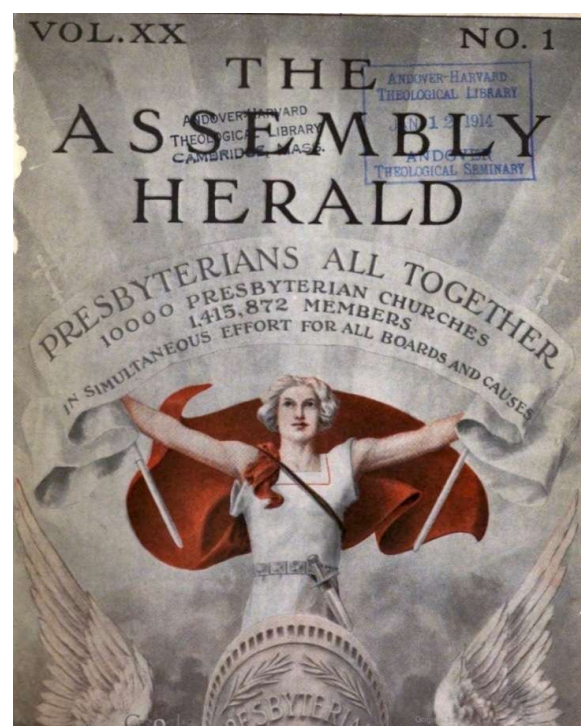


Figure 2. *Assembly Herald* January 1914 cover. The main publication of the Presbyterian benevolent boards opened 1914 with an image of the church militant. Following the outbreak of World War I months later, the use of military imagery and rhetoric would help the Board of Foreign Missions close its debt and raise additional capital. Source: *Assembly Herald* 10, no. 1 (January 1914): cover.

⁵⁵ Mary Wood to Robert Speer, 18 May 1914, and Henrietta Hubbard to Robert Speer, 22 May 1914, box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁵⁶ In fact, a controversy arose shortly after the start of the campaign because the Presbyterian General Assembly adopted the same name for its own debt-raising scheme, also before the start of hostilities and apparently, somehow, unaware that the BFM was already using the name. Stanley White to Maitland Alexander, 25 June 1914, box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁵⁷ Though the cover offers a particularly graphic example of the use of militarism, the rhetoric used within the issue could equally prove the point. Encouraging participation in the EMC, Robert Francis Coyle identified the church as an army with “every member on the firing line”. “Close up the ranks, Presbyterians! Should to shoulder, heart to heart, hand to hand for our great Captain! Be it our glory to be soldiers in that army that will never lower its colors until the whole world swings into the train of Jesus. Forward, the whole company! Forward, with Christ!” (Coyle 1914, p. 5). Militarism was, in fact, so ubiquitous within missionary rhetoric that an exhaustive analysis could fill a book. The point here is to underline how seamlessly the Presbyterian BFM could integrate the European War into its fundraising appeals.

Once the war actually began, the use of war metaphors increased markedly. For many Americans, the European War seemed both very distant and yet ever-present, creating a prime opportunity for the mission boards. To capitalize on that sentiment, the Presbyterians launched a campaign for a week of “self-denial” to close their debt. Like the “No Retreat Fund”, the “self-denial” week reminded congregants of the actual suffering resulting from the war. The BFM emphasized the “solemn duty” of everyone to contribute, and that this was an “extra emergency fund” that did not count toward the budget generally. Repeated use of the word “emergency” (e.g., “The Boards of Home and Foreign Missions are facing a great emergency”, “The emergency is now accentuated . . . by the War”, “Present the emergency on 3rd January”) also reminded congregants of the war, which was regularly described as an “emergency”.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Robert Speer used a fundraising appeal to ask the Shadyside Presbyterian Church for “courageous and sacrificial loyalty”.⁵⁹ Although war metaphors were not uncommon, the usage here undoubtedly reminded congregants of the European War and, for those who believed the rhetoric, donations to foreign missions appeared to offer a means of participating in the self-sacrifice of soldiers without endangering oneself or abandoning neutrality.

If congregants failed to connect the BFM’s war metaphors with the Great War, the board made its point explicit with direct references to the war in its fundraising appeals. In a list of “examples of self-denial” to be used in potential advertisements, first on the list was the Canadian Pacific Railway, whose employees collectively sacrificed a day’s wages to give to the government for the war effort.⁶⁰ The war had disproven that the imperial powers of “Great Britain and Germany and France were the true representatives of Christianity” and given missionaries, whether American, British, or German “an opportunity of moral advantage”. “This is our opportunity”, A. Woodruff Halsey told pastors in Pittsburgh, and they needed to close the deficit to take advantage.⁶¹ Noting that the war had added additional costs both to “care for its own missionaries” and “to relieve the suffering and distress of missionaries of Continental Societies who have been entirely cut off from their support”, the BFM asked for increased giving.⁶² In addition to the cost of helping other missionaries, specific causes for the increased expenses included the cost of transportation, rising costs to exchange money, and the cost of drugs and other goods.⁶³ Elsewhere the board asked for “sacrificial” giving in response to the war.⁶⁴

The BFM’s rhetoric allowed congregants to imagine themselves as participants in the efforts to alleviate suffering. In launching the “Sacrificial Emergency Call”, Maitland Alexander issued a call to arms, on behalf of God, he seemed to say. The “tremendous sorrows and sufferings of the war” and “the favor enjoyed by our own land through the blessings of Peace” created an opportunity that demanded a response. Thus far, the Church had built a “great machine” for “world-wide influence”. The war demanded humanitarian actions and the fact that Europe stood at the center meant that Americans would need to be the ones to respond. It needed “to meet the splendid opportunity with splendid gifts”, though, to exert its power at this moment of opportunity. Alexander called on “every one of our 10,000 churches [to] resolve that their full resources should be thrown to the help of the armies of the living God”. Preaching, praying, and giving, according to Alexander, were the weapons of God’s army (Alexander 1915, pp. 1–2).

The givers themselves were only part of the “army”. Missionaries stood at the frontlines and the BFM made sure supporters knew of the bravery of these “soldiers”. In January 1915, a special

⁵⁸ “Sacrificial Emergency Call of the Presbyterian Church”, [December 1914], box 50, folder 10, and Maitland Alexander, “Sacrificial Emergency Call”, 1 December 1914, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records; (Alexander 1915, p. 14).

⁵⁹ Robert E. Speer to the Members of the Shadyside Presbyterian Church, 13 February 1915, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶⁰ “Examples of Self Denial”, [1915], box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶¹ A. Woodruff Halsey to the Pastors of the Pittsburgh Presbytery, 25 February 1915, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶² Circular to the New York Presbytery, 28 November 1914, box 50, folder 10, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶³ “War Emergency”, [October 1914], box 50, folder 10, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶⁴ Unsigned circular letter, [November 1914], box 50, folder 11, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

edition of the BFM's regular Bulletin pamphlet announced that "not one of the 1226 missionaries has asked to come home on account of the war", that none had suffered bodily harm or lost property, and that the missionaries mainly complained that new missionaries were not being sent to the field. Indeed, missionaries were interpreting the war not "merely as a great EMERGENCY, but a GREAT OPPORTUNITY for setting forth as never before the '*truth as it is in Jesus*.'" The Bulletin closed by noting, "The WAR EMERGENCY has brought into clear relief the SACRIFICIAL spirit of missionary and native Christian in non-Christian lands. It is a noble CHALLENGE to the home Church", thus bringing together the war with the fundraising schemes.⁶⁵

The excerpted letters in promotional materials emphasized the connections between missions and the war. Missionaries in West Africa reported on the movement of troops and German missionaries. In China, "life in the war zone continues to be full of excitement". Introducing the letters from Syria, the Bulletin described the situation as a "storm center". "In no one of the Missions is the condition of the people more pitiful, the work of the missionary more arduous, and the Christian spirit more manifest." The Bulletin made clear that the war had not in the least diminished the work for missions and indeed, giving to foreign missions directly helped those suffering from the war without being partisan.⁶⁶

The overall message of both the excerpted letters and the fundraising campaign in general was that missions represented a third alliance in the war, fighting for peace. Arthur Brown went even further, calling "foreign missions . . . the antithesis of war, standing for everything in the relations of different peoples which would make war between them impossible". God, according to Brown, identified "only one race and that is the human race". Brown acknowledged the many noble charities that provided immediate relief for Europeans suffering directly from the war, but he emphasized that donors needed to help him expand giving to foreign missions if they wanted to put an end to war for good. He even accused donors of dishonesty if they chose to give to war charities instead of missions. "The conjoint exhibit of moral failure, moral need and moral opportunity in the military tragedy to-day convulsing humanity calls Christians to a supreme test of how much they . . . will dare and do to make [Christ] King and Peacemaker over this distracted earth."⁶⁷

Brown's message reflected a conception of Christianity as peace-loving and mission boards certainly saw their work as promoting spiritual, social, and transnational harmony. That message translated into one of bringing together the warring nations. Writing from Bata in Spanish Guinea (modern-day Equatorial Guinea), a missionary referred to the English and Germans "get[ting] on well together". Missionaries in India were taking collections from both English officials and Indians for the preservation of the German missionaries. In China, the story was of a German missionary taking the hands of a British missionary to say, "Brother were our nations bound together in love as you and I are, this terrible slaughter could not occur". The Bulletin described missionaries in China as one "body, German, English, American". While German and British armies fought in Europe, Africa, and Asia, the Bulletin suggested, peace reigned over the mission movement.⁶⁸

War rhetoric facilitated the BFM's argument that it presented a "great opportunity" to participate in the war effort in support of peace. The Presbyterian board's "No Retreat Fund" ended up being highly successful, and the BFM significantly reduced its deficit by the end of the fiscal year on 31 March 1915. Advertising, which regularly used war metaphors, proved particularly effective. "Many [donors] said frankly, that the only reason they were sending the contributions was because of

⁶⁵ "Extra War Emergency Bulletin", January 1915, box 7, folder 1, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Arthur Judson Brown, "Why Foreign Missions Cannot Retrench on Account of the War", 1 December 1914, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁶⁸ "Extra War Emergency Bulletin".

the advertisements.”⁶⁹ The board praised congregants for their “unselfish service” and “self-denial”, especially amid financial unrest and the “titanic war”.⁷⁰

7. American Entry into the War

When the United States joined the war as an active combatant in 1917, it impacted American missionaries in many ways. Some, particularly those in the Turkish territories, feared they would find themselves in enemy territory. More abstractly, American entry into the war challenged ideas about service and the degree to which missions could be considered a noble endeavor during wartime. Practical implications stemmed from such questions, such as whether missionaries would need to register for the draft.

Even before the United States formally declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, mission boards contemplated the ramifications of a war with Turkey. Dozens of American missionaries were stationed in the region and acted as the primary American response to the ongoing genocide of Armenians. They feared that war would prevent further relief work.⁷¹ The American Board and BFM worked together, as they had at the start of the war, to convince the US government that its quarrel was with Germany and not Turkey. In February, the American Board’s James Barton and the BFM exchanged letters, encouraging each other that war with the Ottoman Empire was not inevitable and would be greatly undesirable. They enlisted Henry Morgenthau and Charles Crane to persuade the State Department and Woodrow Wilson of their views and they coordinated their letter-writing to Secretary of State Robert Lansing. By the middle of the month, the State Department had told Morgenthau that it would heed the advice of “Crane, Cleveland Dodge and representatives of the Presbyterian and American Boards”.⁷²

While American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire faced the greatest anxiety, missionaries around the world suddenly found themselves to be belligerents. How that new status would impact missions was an open question and one mission boards quickly sought to answer. The ideas that they presented to their missionaries and to the US government provide useful insight into the value they perceived in the foreign mission movement.

On 18 May 1917, a little over a month after the war declaration, President Wilson signed the Selective Service Act into law. Over the following week, the BFM’s Arthur Brown traveled to Washington on behalf of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, met with General Enoch Crowder (who was overseeing the draft), and submitted a lengthy explanation to Crowder of the mission movement’s perspective on the draft. Crowder had asked Brown to provide facts about foreign missionaries and to express his views on missionary exemptions. The government required most men aged twenty-one to thirty to register for the draft, but clergy and seminarians were among the few classes of people that the draft had exempted from the start. That criteria alone exempted nine-tenths of foreign missionaries (men and women), but still left over a thousand missionaries potentially subject to the draft. Brown urged Crowder to grant them an exemption too. He believed, based on his conversation with Crowder, that Americans living outside the United States or its territories would not need to register in any case. That seemed to be a misreading of the statute, but it nevertheless raised several interesting questions. The Philippines, for instance, were not included on the list of the territories. Furloughed missionaries were in the United States at the time, but only briefly.⁷³ Even if Brown had a misread the legislation (it required “registration by mail” for men “temporarily absen[t]

⁶⁹ William P. Schell and A. Woodruff Halsey to the Executive Council and the Assistant Secretaries, 26 March 1915, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷⁰ A. Woodruff Halsey and Russell Carter, Circular “To the Members of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.”, 15 May 1915, box 50, folder 12, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷¹ E. M. Dodd to Robert Speer, 30 June 1917, box 7, folder 4, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷² James Barton to Arthur Brown, 1 February 1917; Barton to Stanley White, 8 February 1917; Barton, Bulletin on Turkish Situation, 10 February 1917, box 7, folder 4, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷³ Arthur Brown to Enoch Crowder, 24 May 1917, box 27, folder 2, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

from actual place of legal residence”), the law did not seem to account for the global presence of Americans. What was an American missionary’s legal residence? How would registration by mail work if one were registering from Tokyo or Douala?

The Selective Service Act prompted these interesting questions about the status of missionaries, but Brown had no interest in basing his argument for exemptions on legal ambiguities or oversights. Instead, he argued that missionaries rendered a service to the United States akin to, possibly even greater than, that of a soldier in war. In writing to Crowder, whom Chris Capozzola has described as a “snippy martinet who had little interest in taking orders from civilians” (2008, p. 27), Brown emphasized the desire of mission boards “to carry out the wishes of the Government”. That said, he subtly urged Crowder to understand missions work as itself in line with the wishes of the government.

Missionary work . . . is of indispensable value as a humanitarian as well as a Christian enterprise. . . . Indeed missionary work is one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful influence in creating and strengthening the bonds of sympathy and good feeling between the United States and other nations. . . . It is not a question whether foreign missionaries are to serve their country; of course they are to do this. The question is whether they are not doing so to better advantage in their missionary work than if they were to enter the ranks in the army or navy.⁷⁴

Forwarding the letter to several of his colleagues, Brown stressed the point even further, identifying the continuing service of missionaries as “absolutely essential to the cause of humanity and righteousness and liberty”.⁷⁵ Foreign missionaries ought to be exempted from selective service, Brown argued, because they had already volunteered to serve God *and* country.

Although Brown’s letter remained private, mission boards made the argument publicly. Presbyterian publicity identified missionaries as being “in the Great War . . . [as] accredited agent[s] for the distribution of world famine relief in non-Christian lands”. The deaths of wartime missionaries, it called “heroic” sacrifices in the line of “duty”.⁷⁶ To missionaries in the field, the BFM and American Board urged that they remain at their stations and not volunteer for the military. “The war is a conflict between forces of evil and forces of righteousness and everyone who has consecrated himself to the eternal warfare of humanity must feel the pull of the conflict and long to have a personal share in it.” By framing it as a “conflict between . . . evil and . . . righteousness”, James Barton could claim the missionaries had no need to take up arms; they were already fighting for the side of righteousness.⁷⁷

8. The American Red Cross: Non-Sectarian, State-Supported Philanthropy as a Better Way?

In the United States, the American Red Cross (ARC), and not a foreign mission board, was and continues to be the nonprofit most associated with World War I. From the start of the war, Red Cross societies had far more visible roles than missionaries. The ARC had access to resources unlike other American humanitarian organizations, particularly the overt support of the federal government. After assisting in the aftermath of the Charleston, SC, earthquake of 1886; the Johnstown, PA, floods of 1889; and other domestic disasters, Clara Barton had taken the organization abroad in early 1896 to aid Armenian Christians. Though the campaign had not been entirely successful, the government still granted the organization official status to assist Cubans in the aftermath of the American invasion

⁷⁴ Brown to Crowder, 24 May 1917.

⁷⁵ Arthur Brown to the Secretaries of Boards and Societies of Foreign Missions in the United States, 27 May 1917, box 27, folder 2, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷⁶ “The World War and Presbyterian Foreign Missions”, October 1917, box 7, folder 4, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷⁷ James Barton “to the Missionaries of the American Board at Home and on the Field”, 4 October 1918, ABC 11.4, box 2, folder 5, ABCFM Archives; Arthur Brown to the Colombia Mission, 16 October 1918, box 7, folder 5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

of that island in 1898. Barton was then ousted from the organization and the ARC became more scientifically oriented and more closely aligned with the federal government, developments that would continue until the start of World War I (Irwin 2013, chp. 1–2). It should come as no surprise that mission boards were forced to define their wartime work in relation to the ARC. Equally expected, mission boards publicized their cooperation with the ARC far more frequently than the ARC noted its reliance on foreign missionaries. This fact may explain why missionaries stand in the background, if they appear at all, in the literature on World War I.

Near the start of the war, the Syrian Protestant College (which was independent of any mission board, but closely aligned with the movement) volunteered to support the Red Crescent, offering an American surgeon, a missionary, nurses, and students. “It ought to be of tremendous service,” wrote Bayard Dodge, son-in-law of the college president, Howard Bliss. They were to “work under the regular symbol of the Red Cross, which will give prestige to the mission work and popularity to the American interests. . . . The opportunities for Red Cross work for the soldiers is tremendous and the needs of the army challenge us to exert ourselves to the utmost”.⁷⁸ Elsewhere in the city, missionaries made bread and distributed it where needed using Red Cross funds (*Echoes from the War Zone* 1915, pp. 500–1; *War and Missions* 1915, p. 550). Several months later, the Turkish government officially accepted the aid of the American Red Cross (ARC), working alongside the Red Crescent. The Constantinople chapter of the ARC quickly asked for fundraising help from mission movement leaders, as well as the Rockefeller Foundation, Ambassador Morgenthau, and others.⁷⁹

The Presbyterian BFM and the ARC also coordinated efforts to serve as banking agents for Syrians living within the United States. When the war broke out, the immigrants sought ways to send money to their relatives in Syria. Syrian Societies of the United States, the ARC, and the BFM jointly provided that service. By the end of 1915, the BFM alone had helped transmit close to \$500,000 to individuals in Syria (*War Relief Work* 1915, pp. 691–92) and “the Red Cross Chapter in Beirut is made up almost entirely of American missionaries”, the *Assembly Herald* proudly proclaimed (*Syria* 1915, p. 500).

The American Board and the ARC shared resources as well. In Constantinople, American Board medical missionary Alden R. Hoover served as the director of ARC work (Ambassador Henry Morgenthau held the title of president, reflecting the official support of the federal government). Hoover oversaw seven hundred beds in various hospitals across the city during the winter of 1915–1916. He performed his ARC work alongside another American Board medical missionary, Frederick D. Shepard, who had been stationed in Aintab (present-day Gaziantep, near the Turkish border with Syria). Shepard worked for several months in Constantinople but died in early 1916. Hoover and Shepard are pictured in Figure 3, a photo of the Red Cross hospital, alongside many American Board missionaries (Shepard is directly behind the seated woman at center and Hoover is the mustachioed man to his left). Yet another American Board medical missionary took over Red Cross relief work in the city of Adana (west of Gaziantep).

⁷⁸ Bayard Dodge, “Personal Report of the Needs for Red Cross Work in Syria”, [1915], box 6, folder 24, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

⁷⁹ “Cablegrams from Constantinople Regarding Red Cross and Red Crescent Relief”, 23 March 1916, box 7, folder 3, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

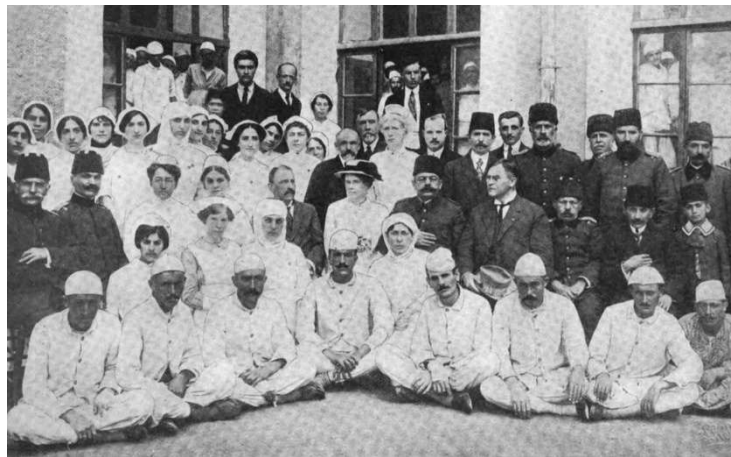


Figure 3. Photograph of Red Cross hospital workers in Constantinople (1915 or 1916). The American Red Cross and mission boards collaborated during World War I. While the Red Cross had far more funds and political access than the American Board or BFM, it paled in comparison to the mission boards' on-the-ground overseas resources in the Ottoman Empire. Source: *Missionary Herald* 112, no. 3 (March 1916): 104.

With its public–private partnership, the ARC should have been well positioned to respond to the outbreak of the war in Europe. In fact, though, they only had \$200,000 in working funds in 1917 and a disorganized structure. Knowing they would need far more money, Woodrow Wilson created the Red Cross War Council, which hired Charles Sumner Ward and famed Rockefeller publicist Ivy Lee to build the organization's coffers. Ward, the former partner of Lyman Pierce (discussed above in relation to the Every Member Canvass) essentially created another whirlwind campaign. With assistance from the president and the leading publicist in the country, as well as the nation's rapt attention, the drive succeeded like nothing before. The 1917 drive achieved its seemingly impossible goal of \$100 million in a single week only to repeat the feat again the next year (Cutlip 1965, pp. 110–35).

Although the BFM and American Board cooperated and coordinated with the ARC, the mission boards did so with some trepidation. Cooperation had mutual benefits, but the BFM and its supporters also feared the power, popularity, and prestige of the ARC. Some clergy worried about their ability to meet expenses in light of the ARC's successful fundraisers. As this view fell outside the official position of the BFM, E. Fred Eastman (1917, pp. 544–47) printed a strong response in praise of the Red Cross in the *Assembly Herald*. Associating the ARC with the Good Samaritan (even renaming it the “American Society of Good Samaritans”), Eastman compared ARC opponents with those who had heard Jesus tell the parable and nonetheless disapproved of the Samaritan. Elsewhere in the same issue, Warren H. Wilson (1917, p. 538–39) called on “every minister of Christ [to] champion this organization of mercy”. At the same time, though, he urged those ministers not to join the ARC or the military. Their service at home, he claimed, was “equal to that of a captain in the Army”. Similarly, in writing to missionaries, Arthur Brown argued for staying put. Noting that many potential missionaries had already chosen to work for the ARC, he feared the value of missions was being ignored. “Without foreign missionaries in Syria and Persia, the Armenian and Syrian Relief Committee and the Red Cross could not do their work”, he wrote.⁸⁰ In other ways, the dominance of the ARC cast a long shadow on other organizations. The Bureau of Enemy Trade refused to let the BFM send aid directly to Syria, because unlike the ARC and several other non-sectarian organizations, the BFM was not an “approved society”.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Arthur Brown to the Colombia Mission, 16 October 1918.

⁸¹ Vance C. McCormick to William Schell, 3 January 1918, box 7, folder 5, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

Even if the BFM sometimes perceived non-sectarian philanthropy as a foe, their allied interests made them friends far more frequently. Their goals abroad, of course, frequently overlapped, but so did their interests at home. They were mutually invested in getting Americans to feel obligated to give their time and money, and also in rewarding those who did give. Soon after the passage of the Selective Service Act, Congress looked for additional funds to pay for the war and passed the War Revenue Act of 1917. The Act greatly increased taxation on income and initially offered no deductions for charitable giving. The proposal set off alarm bells, with nonprofit administrators warning of dire consequences. The uproar again aligned the interests of the ARC and mission boards. Senator Henry Hollis (D-NH) proposed an amendment to allow for charitable deductions up to 20 percent of income, an amount that was seen “as very modest”, but acceptable. ARC “campaign agencies throughout the country are being enlisted in support of the movement”, Edwin Bulkley wrote happily to BFM Secretary George Scott.⁸² The board was perfectly satisfied to ride on ARC coattails from time to time. In the end, a 15 percent deduction passed, which the BFM praised as a demonstration of “the importance our Government puts upon maintaining the work of the Church”, comparing it favorably with the concept of tithing (*The Presbyterian United Movement 1917*, p. 571). Whereas government assistance in the first days of the war had come through personal solicitation, the Hollis Amendment solidified the financial foundation that would allow church benevolence to flourish in the decade after the war.

9. Conclusions

By 1919, the war was over, but mission boards were holding out hopes that the wartime gains would continue into the future. Certainly, the passage of the Hollis Amendment made the future look more promising. Their prewar fundraising attempts to create a social obligation to give had only strengthened during the war and had been replicated by larger philanthropies like the ARC. Unlike wartime aid societies, such as the ARC or the Committee for Relief in Belgium, the mission boards had no intention of demobilizing and their financial needs continued to grow. Donations to fifteen of the largest Protestant mission boards more than tripled in the 1910s, growing from a cumulative \$9.6 million in 1910 to \$29.7 million in 1920. Much of that advance occurred during the war itself, with growth jumping from an average of 5.6 percent in the first five years of the decade to almost 20 percent in the last five years. Giving largely held steady during the 1920s (Fahs 1929, p. 46).

It certainly did not seem like Christian philanthropy was on the wane. Instead, it was the ARC that faced internal conflict and “a rapid decline in American enthusiasm for the ARC and its foreign relief projects” (Irwin 2013, p. 143). The various philanthropic war agencies disbanded altogether. Meanwhile, missionaries attempted to use what influence they had (some, but not much) to help define geopolitics in peacetime. The American Board’s James Barton attended the Lausanne Conference in 1922/23 that resolved ongoing conflicts between the Republic of Turkey and western European nations. He not only lent his expertise, having worked in and with the Ottoman Empire for many years, but he also provided a commentary on the conference for supporters at home. The countries and issues were different, but missionaries had played similar roles in other contexts in the decades before the war. Indeed, in contrast with much of the literature on philanthropy that emphasizes great change resulting from World War I, the mission movement suggests a large degree of continuity.

At the same time, the collaborative work of the mission boards during the war seemed to point toward a future of Christian philanthropy less rooted in denominations. The prewar missionary activities could have also predicted that outcome, particularly in the form of numerous interdenominational associations and world missionary conferences, but the prominence of non-sectarian or interdenominational organizations had grown as a result of the war. While the American Board and BFM had approached Secretary Bryan on their own at the start of the conflict, by the end, interdenominational groups like the Foreign Missions Conference of North America

⁸² Edwin Bulkley to George Scott, 26 June 1917, box 7, folder 18, Ecumenical Mission and Relations Records.

(still led by the same BFM and American Board secretaries, among others) had largely taken over those conversations. They concluded that the war had allowed foreign missions to demonstrate its social value and that the “new internationalism” that they anticipated in the 1920s was, to a great degree, something that missionaries already practiced. Not surprisingly, their conclusions were infused with a belief in the ultimate necessity of Christianity, but they were also able to articulate a value in non-evangelical work, particularly relief efforts in response to the Armenian Genocide. Those interests would later translate into support for non-sectarian philanthropy in the 1920s and 1930s.

As foreign missions vibrated between hope and fear during the European War, the movement evolved. Its transformation was not radical, but it was profound. It reminds historians that as revolutionary as war might be, change can occur slowly even in war. When Cornelius Patton wrote, “so it goes, vibrating between hopes and fears”, he was speaking of money. Receipts were good one week, bad the next. That simple logic, hoping for money and fearing its absence, explains much of the history of American philanthropy, religious, secular, and everything in-between. Protestant foreign missions continued, in large part, because donors continued to give the boards money. They changed as a result of global circumstances and in an effort to tip the balance toward hope and away from fear. World War I, unlike the Great Depression, left open those possibilities.

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