



Global Faith
and Worldly Power



Global Faith and Worldly Power: Evangelical Encounters with American Empire

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ABSTRACTS

SESSION I:

EVANGELICALS AND DECOLONIZATION

Sarah Miller-Davenport (University of Sheffield): *“The Greatest Opportunity since the Birth of Christ”: American Evangelical Missionaries at the Dawn of Decolonization*

This paper examines the attitude of American evangelical missionaries toward decolonization in the immediate post-World War II period. It focuses in particular on the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade (FEGC), a group active at the moment of Philippine independence from the United States. Rather than viewing decolonization as a crisis or challenge to their expansionist ambitions, these missionaries understood the changing world order as providing unprecedented opportunity for evangelism. The weakened position of European imperial powers opened the way for both the US government and American missionaries to exert new forms of influence in the decolonizing world. Evangelical missionaries, once suspicious of the American state, increasingly came to identify with its global power.

David Kirkpatrick (James Madison University): *“A Child That Refuses to Recognize Her Mommy”:* Power, Paternalism, and the Latin American Evangelical Left

The importation of North American fundamentalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries begat an emerging generation of progressive evangelicals in Latin America. The history of Seminario Bíblica Latinoamericana constitutes the untold story of decolonization of religious institutions and ideologies in the shadow of the Cold War. These battles at the intersection of the United States and Latin America provide an alternative fundamentalist genealogy and disaggregate monolithic renderings of hemispheric evangelicalism. In the mid-1960s—a decade prior to the influential Lausanne Congress—the Latin American Evangelical Left arose as a formidable force against the managerial status quo of global evangelicalism. This eclectic and fragile coalition provided critical intellectual scaffolding for the Evangelical Left. In particular, key members of the American Evangelical Left drew inspiration from strategic gatherings in Latin America and the hybridized biographies of their Latin American counterparts.

Tom Smith (University of Cambridge): *American Protestant Missionaries, the Promise of Philippine Independence, and Visions of Philippine History in the 1920s*

When the United States first committed to Philippine independence in 1916, American Protestant missionaries scrambled to make sense of waning enthusiasm for an imperial project which they had, when America seized the islands in 1898, believed to be divinely ordained. The shift in missionaries' perspective precipitated by the prospect of decolonization is evident in the ways they narrated history. In the early years of U.S. occupation, missionaries described the Philippine past in terms of its era under Spanish Catholic rule, and conceived of American empire as breaking through to facilitate the rapid triumph of Protestantism. As independence loomed, however, missionaries turned to suggest that Filipinos had innate spiritual capacity, visible in their pre-colonial past, which equipped them for self-governance. In so doing, they appropriated a Filipino nationalist historiographical trope which they had previously suppressed, provided a platform for the survival of Philippine Protestantism, and reframed the purpose of American empire.

Daniel Geary (Trinity College Dublin): *From Belfast to Bob Jones: Ian Paisley, Protestant Fundamentalism, and the Transatlantic Far Right*

Fundamentalist preacher Ian Paisley was the leading opponent of extending full civil rights to Catholics in Northern Ireland. This paper explores the meaning of

the transatlantic connections that Paisley and other Ulster Unionists drew with white supremacist American fundamentalists. For example, in 1966 Paisley received an honorary doctorate from Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist South Carolina university that fought legal battles to remain racially segregated. This paper will argue that such connections reveal that Paisley's Unionism, a tradition with deep roots in British settler imperialism, had strong elective affinities with white nationalism in the U.S. As historians have traced links between those who backed civil rights and anti-colonial movements, including the religious dimension of such connections, so too were there strong links between those such as Paisley and his American allies who opposed civil rights and decolonization. This paper aims to highlight the role of Protestant fundamentalists to the transatlantic Far Right.

SESSION II:

GLOBAL EVANGELICALISM AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

John Corrigan (Florida State University): *Enemies of Commerce: American Evangelicals and their Global Opponents*

American evangelicals since the early nineteenth century have identified their religious opponents partly by accusing them of being enemies to commerce. Conceptualizing the United States as an exceptional nation, where conversionist religion and a bold capitalism together constituted national identity, evangelicals defined themselves by pushing off from opponents they characterized as enemies of an American "spirit of capitalism." Evangelicals depicted Catholic nations such as Spain, Portugal and their colonial empires as economic losers. Catholic superstition, priestcraft, and ignorance correlated with poverty and lack of enterprise. Jews were enemies of commerce because, as an international cabal of duplicitous hustlers, they endeavored to rig the rules of business in their favor. Communists, the atheistic arch-enemies of evangelicals during the Cold War, likewise ruined fair and free commerce. Post-Cold War evangelical efforts to identify international enemies as enemies of commerce provided deep support for Donald Trump's campaigns against immigrants and their nations of origin, a project that, again, joined religious opposition to caricatures of commercial practice.

Heather Curtis (Tufts University): *The Gospel of Grain: Evangelical Humanism & the Global Expansion of American Enterprise, 1890 – 1910*

At the turn of the twentieth century, the evangelical newspaper the *Christian Herald* transformed the way Americans responded to domestic crises and

foreign disasters. The narratives and images the publication employed to promote humanitarian engagement at home and abroad explicitly yoked theological injunctions to assist neighbors in need with appeals to nationalist aspirations, commercial ambitions, and imperial logics of racial and civilizational hierarchy. According to the editors, American missionary outreach, military intervention, colonialism, and economic enterprise were all expressions of Christian compassion. Analyzing the *Christian Herald's* aid campaigns exposes how American evangelicalism, empire, humanitarianism, and capitalism became inextricably entangled during this era of imperial expansion. Probing the intricacies of these entanglements also reveals important interstices where evangelicals made space to question and even contest the increasingly intimate connections among the advance of God's kingdom and the extension of American political, cultural, and economic power.

Darren Dochuk (Notre Dame): *Worlds of Wonder: Anticipating Next Steps in the Study of Evangelical Christianity and Capitalism, with Prompts from the Global Oil Patch*

This paper uses the career of independent oilman Jake Simmons as a lens through which to view and consider the development of American Christianity and petroleum in mid-twentieth century America. Simmons achieved prominence in the oil business during the 1930s, when his work in the booming East Texas field resulted in a flourishing corporate empire. The East Texas oil boom itself represented a crucial turning point in American religion and petroleum. It was through the mysterious and unexpected arrival and abundance of oil in this time of economic depression that a spirit of faith and capitalism I label "wildcat Christianity" became entrenched in American culture and political consciousness. Legitimated by oil's founding principle of the "rule of capture," strengthened over time by the boom-bust cycles of oil's corporate realm, wildcat Christianity espoused a theology premised on the power of personal encounter with an active Creator, the mysteries of an earth whose hidden riches enchanted and eluded reason, and the need to labor tirelessly—be it drilling or evangelizing—before time ran out. Unlike large-scale, major oil companies and their chief executives, independent oilmen—wildcatters—like Simmons embraced the speculative dimensions of oiling, and accepted the suffering that they often spawned. Godly people, they believed, were to ride the whims of oil rather than try to discipline them. Likewise, they were to spend more energy on saving people with their simple gospel than rebuilding society with complex man-made rationales. Simmons helped promote the religious, cultural, and political interests of his oil sector, and ultimately contributed to its steady rise in modern America. Yet as this paper shows, Simmons also pursued

several ventures at home and abroad that connected his spirit of capitalism to matters of civil and human rights, global development, and race reform within his corporate world. Simmons' wildcat faith and its multifaceted modes of outreach suggest a few fresh ways of appreciating Christianity and capitalism in regional and global contexts.

Darren Grem (University of Mississippi): *The South as Savior: Globalization, Place, and the Cultural Politics of Jimmy Carter*

Jimmy Carter's presidential run in 1976 remains an understudied episode in the historiography of evangelical encounters with global capitalism. The particular characteristics that troubled the U.S. and global economy from 1973 to 1975 set the stage for a cultural politics grounded in place, which Carter asserted, embodied, and linked to evangelical identity. Carter offered a potentially fresh mode of "moderation" for a new generation of Democrats, a party poised to refashion American life and politics, especially regarding what categories of "religion" were acceptable in an age of inflation, recession, and globalization. Carter set up "the South" as a saving place, interpreting it with evangelical tropes of redemption and linking various facets of the region's detachment from Jim Crow and white supremacy to his candidacy. Informed by a class-based religion of place, Carter recast "the South" not as a place that held the U.S. in recession but "redeemed" it at the very moment its status as a global power seemed uncertain.

SESSION III:

EVANGELICAL MEDIA, OUTREACH, AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Heather Hendershot (MIT): *Lost in Translation? The Evolution of the Christian Crusade's Jesus Film Project*

This paper examines the production, distribution, and exhibition of Campus Crusade for Christ's film Jesus. Jesus has been translated into over 1,000 languages and has been viewed by more people than any film ever made. While we are all aware of the tremendous evangelical engagement in media production, the vast majority of that production, on the international front, has centered on satellite TV and radio broadcasting. This short study brings an outlier into the picture: a film that is most often experienced as a presentation before large groups, projected by missionaries on short-term assignments. The film is deemed to be inherently moving and transformative, especially when shown to viewers who have never seen a film before, or who have never seen a film in their own language. The logistical, technological refrain dominates the discourse

surrounding the film. Screening Jesus internationally is thus a technological feat understood to be important as an accomplishment in and of itself.

Daniel Vaca (Brown University): *Commercial Technologies of Evangelical Expansion*

Recognizing that American evangelicals possess an unmatched influence on evangelical media cultures outside the US, this paper asks how to account for the global diffusion of American evangelical media. Rather than conceiving that diffusion simply as a matter of consumer demand conjuring commercial supply, I focus instead on examining "commercial technologies" that have determined whether and how US-based evangelical media companies have considered supplying the demand of particular constituencies. Devoting special attention to the logic and practice of niche market segmentation, I illustrate how that commercial technology inspired prominent evangelical media corporations to cultivate new consumer markets during the 1980s and 1990s, including Spanish-speaking evangelicals in the US and Latin America.

Anja-Maria Bassimir (University of Mainz): *Christianity Today and Its Self-Portrayal as a Global Media Ministry*

Christianity Today advertises itself as a "global media ministry." While the website attracts considerable traffic from abroad, Christianity Today's perspective in its magazines and online content is decidedly US-centered and the company's showcasing of a world map with voices from five or six diverse readers from around the world seems laughable. Nonetheless, the company evokes a history and mission of global concern that cannot be dismissed out of hand. This paper analyzes what role the label "global media ministry" plays in Christianity Today's self-presentation and representational aspirations.

John Maiden (Open University): *Jerusalem II: The Logos International Fellowship, charismatic media and the World Conference on the Holy Spirit*

As the charismatic 'renewal' emerged it was publishers who had a key role in bringing some sense of coherence and unity to a diverse, decentralised movement. Logos International Fellowship, based in Plainfield, New Jersey, was the most significant Protestant charismatic publisher of the 1970s, providing a platform, both nationally and globally, for many of the celebrity testimonies, and revered teachers, of the charismatic world. This paper discusses the ways in which LIF shaped the global sensibility of the American charismatic movement, looking specifically at the World Conference on the Holy Spirit of 1974 and its

accompanying film 'Jerusalem II'. In doing so it explores the intersections between charismatic media, this global sensibility, and the key theme of what Joseph Williams has called the 'pentecostalization of Christian Zionism.'

SESSION IV:

GLOBAL MISSIONS AND HOLY HUMANITARIANISM

Lydia Boyd (University of North Carolina): *Circuits of Compassion: The Affective Labor of Uganda's Christian AIDS Orphan Choirs*

In Uganda, Christian AIDS orphan choirs are high-profile, public spokespersons for a devastating humanitarian crisis: the country's more than one million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The choirs tour internationally to bring visibility to the plight of orphans, and to make personal connections with potential donors abroad. This form of charity is highly dependent on the mobility not only of money, but also of people, sentiments, and other forms of social and emotional capital. In particular, the success of choirs depends on the cultivation of long-term relationships of care, which in turn are dependent on the production of a shared ethical belief in the transformative possibilities of Christian compassion. This paper considers the moral economies that underlie this ongoing project of compassionate "circulation." If a key finding of much of this work on humanitarian affect has been how such "affective surpluses" tend to mask, and even perpetuate, inequalities between donors and recipients, this paper considers how participants in the orphan choir charity relationship conceived of dependency and indebtedness differently. These differences compel us to understand how moral sentiments and religious practices give shape to the inequalities inherent in dominant forms of global humanitarian "care."

Emily Conroy-Krutz (Michigan State University): *"What is a Missionary Good For, Anyway?": Reconsidering American Missionary Diplomacy after the Boxer Uprising*

The Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900 marked an important turning point in discussions about the relationship between foreign missions and American diplomacy. Through much of the nineteenth century, some American missionaries had worked with and for the American government in places like China. Now, it seemed to many observers, the missionaries were inspiring anti-Western resentment and dragging the United States into foreign relations crises. In the decade following the Uprising, missionary supporters developed defenses of missionary diplomacy in the face of sharp criticism. As they planned their future work, they looked to the missionary diplomats of the nineteenth century

as examples of an idealized partnership between missions and politics. These debates reflected ongoing concerns about the larger connections between religion and foreign relations and the respective roles of missionaries and diplomats.

David Swartz and Lisa Weaver Swartz (Asbury University): *Red-Light Rescue: The American Evangelical Campaign against Trafficking in Southeast Asia*

This paper explores the development of the American evangelical anti-trafficking movement in Southeast Asia. Projecting American power in the early 2000s, the movement has shifted toward indigeneity, cultural sensitivity, and attempts to address structural inequalities. Activists, it appears, are able to identify “structure” more easily because of global encounters. These new emphases, however, clash with supporters in the United States, who continue use a vocabulary and logic of the “heart.” They blame the individual sins of perpetrators for the trafficking problem and expect that brute force of love, displays of compassion, and heroic acts of rescue will free women from sexual bondage. A divide has emerged between movement veterans and evangelical constituents at home.

SESSION V:

EVANGELICAL RELIGION AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Jonathan Ebel (University of Illinois): *Fire From Heaven: What Weapons Tell Us About Evangelical Territoriality in the Age of American Empire*

This paper seeks to understand the relationship of evangelicals to American empire through the lens of military weaponry, specifically napalm and the drone. I will argue that each weapon operates on an imperial territorial assumption shared by evangelicalism and metes out death in line with notions of judgment familiar to evangelicals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In at least these ways, evangelical territorialities have shaped the logic of acceptance around two era-defining exercises of American imperial power: the Vietnam War and the Global War on Terror.

Gene Zubovich (University of Toronto): *Christian Nationalism and Christian Globalism in the 1940s*

WWII and the early Cold War were important moments for the rise of the modern evangelical movement. In the 1940s, evangelicals built new institutions and committed to a post-fundamentalist politics in both imitation of and

opposition to theologically-liberal, ecumenical Protestants. This paper considers this founding moment of evangelical identity in light of the massive political mobilization by ecumenical Protestants on behalf of the United Nations and human rights in this era. Understanding why ecumenical Protestants undertook this political mobilization—the largest since Prohibition—and how they understood human rights helps us better understand the contours of evangelicals' Christian nationalism.

Lauren Turek (Trinity University): *Evangelical Empire: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Post-Colonial World*

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, politically-conservative evangelicals became an increasingly powerful foreign policy constituency, one which helped to shape the role of the United States in the world as it negotiated the vicissitudes of the late Cold War and an era of increased globalization and decolonization. This paper argues that the sense of urgency surrounding the missionary imperative informed evangelical foreign policy objectives and illuminates the extent to which that policy advocacy helped the Reagan administration implement its vision for exporting U.S. influence and ideology abroad. The paper first explores how world evangelistic aims informed evangelical notions about religious liberty as well as foreign policy activism. It then uses evangelical messaging about the Contra War in Nicaragua as an example of evangelical influence on Congressional debates and opinion about U.S. support for covert operations and counterrevolutionary movements in sovereign states in Latin America and elsewhere in the Global South.

Lee Marsden (University of East Anglia): *Competing Evangelicalisms and US Foreign Policy in the Age of Trump*

Donald Trump's unexpected victory in 2016 has widely been attributed to white evangelicals. Although white evangelicals turned out record numbers in support of the Republican candidate his victory and presidency has not enjoyed universal support from a heterogeneous evangelical community. This paper examines the basis of support for the Trump presidency and analyses how this is manifest in US foreign policy between competing evangelicalisms. The paper argues that conservative evangelicals enjoy greater influence on US foreign policy than ever before but this has come at the expense of their evangelical witness.