

AMERICAN EVANGELICALS: THE OVERLOOKED GLOBALIZERS AND THEIR UNINTENDED GOSPEL OF MODERNITY¹

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Introduction

WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THE AMERICAN dimensions of contemporary globalization, they generally speak about the spread of American popular culture, financial markets, multinational corporations, and political ideals. The images they evoke come effortlessly to mind: McDonald's, Nike sneakers, MTV and hip-hop music,

¹ The general argument and much of the data summarized in this article are taken from James Davison Hunter and Joshua Yates, "In the Vanguard of Globalization: The World of the American Globalizers," in Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). In this previous work, interviews were conducted with senior management and executives of twenty-three leading transnational organizations and corporations. These included executives from the world of multinational business and international finance such as Merrill Lynch, Archer Daniels Midland, Porter Novelli, and AT&T; global purveyors of popular culture such as Nike, McDonald's, MTV, Twentieth Century Fox, Coca-Cola, and CNN; international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) representing a vast array of special interests including the Aspen Institute, International Center for Research on Women, the Ford Foundation, Carter Center, Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood, and

Disneyland, Levi's jeans, the New York Stock Exchange, and American-style democracy, to name but a few. More astute observers are quick to note, however, that such examples are simply the more noticeable expressions of a seemingly endless array of other less culturally-identifiable, but no less American "products," including skyscrapers, greeting cards, chewing gum, microwaves, modern passenger airplanes, basketball, snowboards, the ATM, cell phones, computer hackers, and so on.² Taken together, these familiar, and often bemoaned, instances of the diffusion of American "goods," "ideas," and "styles" provide a certain warrant for the claim that the U.S. is the primary source and symbol of most of what passes as "globalization" in the planetary popular imagination.

Missing from this typical listing of dominant American cultural diffusions, however, are those emanating from American religion. Indeed, even the more sophisticated academic accounts of the so-called "modern global circumstance"—those charting the "flows" and "networks" of people, images, ideologies, technologies, disease, and the like—often ignore what may be one of the most significant aspects of globalization in the contemporary period: the worldwide spread of a peculiarly American brand (in both origin and form) of Christianity—that is, Evangelical Protestantism.

This essay briefly explores the world of these neglected globalizers, understood here as consisting of American-based, para-church, mission, and humanitarian organizations. It brings this world into relief by examining the ideological commitments informing both the programmatic and organizational missions of the American Evangelical

Greenburg Quinlan Research, Inc.; and worldwide Evangelical organizations including Campus Crusade for Christ, Compassion International, World Vision, The Jesus Film, Focus on the Family, Christian Coalition International, and the Christian Broadcasting Network. Given the present article's focus on the American Evangelical globalizers, I have supplemented this earlier data with analysis of additional Evangelical organizations—including Fuller Seminary's World School of Missions, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Navigators, Youth with a Mission, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, the Trinity Broadcasting Network, Kenneth Copeland Ministries, *Christianity Today* magazine, and the International Justice Mission.

² Claudio Veliz, *The New World of the Gothic Fox: Culture and Economy in English and Spanish America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

globalizers, as well as the primary institutional practices by which they put those missions into action. Comparison between American Evangelicals and their secular counterparts—the more well-known American globalizers of international business and finance, popular culture, foundations, think tanks, and the like—allows us to make crucial conceptual distinctions and comparisons about the character of contemporary globalization in its current American dispensation. Such an examination provides a profile of the American forces at large in the world that does justice to the ways such forces are neither monolithic nor fully independent. It illuminates the nature of religious belief and practice American Evangelicals “carry” around the world and raises for future research the question of whether more than the “good news” of the Christian gospel is being spread everywhere Evangelicalism is on the rise. In these ways, the American Evangelical globalizers serve as an important prism through which we can understand the monumental social and cultural transformations we call “globalization.”

Religion and Globalization

Where religion and religious people *are* included in treatments of contemporary globalization, most analyses raise them only to explain what is, for many secular academic elites, the rather unsettling rise of religious fundamentalism alongside other forms of cultural traditionalism in the late modern world. Such analyses explain religious revitalization by suggesting that, like ethno-nationalism, religion is a system of practice, belief, and belonging that people cling to in the face of the many dislocations of a now global and globalizing modernity (or, if one prefers, “global modernities”).

Surely one of the keys to the present power of religion is its ability to provide its adherents reasons for the contingencies of life, as well as narratives by which people can root their identities, find moral clarity, and orient the manifold decisions of everyday life. Understandably, religion must have a particularly strong attraction for people whose lives have been, under conditions of globalization, penetrated by forces originating a world away that have unmoored them from traditional structures of authority and social order. Such a view, however, typically

conceives of religion as one of the most recalcitrant and reactionary forces at large in the world today—religion *qua* fundamentalism.³

But conceiving religion *primarily* in terms of its resistance to, and by its capacity to provide safe-harbor from, the ill winds of a global, modern existence underestimates the ways religion is also thoroughly implicated in the very conditions it is perceived to be resisting. That the fifteenth-century Jesuits and Dominicans were the harbingers not just of Catholic Christianity, but of European Christendom and its Conquistadors, or that nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries did not just take up their bibles, but also their pith helmets and Victorian manners as they traveled to the far edges of the earth under the shadow of the omnipresent Union Jack, is indisputable. Yet for all the ink spilled detailing these historic relationships between Christianity and Western cultural imposition (imperialism?), surprisingly little has been said regarding American Evangelicals as the vanguard of American military, economic, and cultural power across the planet. Meanwhile, the popular imagery of “jihad versus McWorld” dominates many accounts of religion in the global modern world. While rightly highlighting how religious traditionalism often provides the cultural footing for meaningful resistance to the aggressive spread of American business and media culture, in the words of one group of scholars, this perspective, “neglects the ways in which religious cultures are also enmeshed in the process of modernizing and globalizing themselves.”⁴

In some of the more historically informed theoretical treatments of religion and globalization, one can find a decidedly different view. Here, the various historical periods of regional and ultimately worldwide expansion of many of the major world religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Islam, and Hinduism—are often cited as

³ For influential renderings of such a view, one need only recall two immensely popular and successful works on the subject: Benjamin Barber’s *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times, 1995) and Thomas L. Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor, 2000).

⁴ Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (London: Routledge, 1996) 3.

examples of the earliest and most enduring instances of cultural globalization.⁵ More recently, there has been a growing interest among various scholars in the idea that religion has not only played a crucial *historical* role in the cultural process of globalization but in fact continues to be an essential component of *contemporary* globalization. Arguing against the once conventional social scientific wisdom that secularization goes hand in hand with the spread of modernity, these scholars point to the staggering scope of religious rebirth, resurgence, and relocation across the globe.⁶ For some religionists this resurgence is evidence that religion—especially in certain American Evangelical forms—is ultimately as consequential for the daily lives of billions of humans as the globality of, say, American corporations, political ideas, or popular culture.⁷

American Evangelicalism: Vanguard of a Transnational Religious Movement

Of all the instances of religious resurgence, nothing can match the global explosion of Evangelical Protestantism.⁸ Not even renascent

⁵ See Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, vol. 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); David Held, et al., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁶ The notable and somewhat ironic exceptions are European and Western universities. See, especially, Peter L. Berger, ed., "Introduction," *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC / Grand Rapids: Ethics and Public Policy Center / Eerdmans, 1999).

⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁸ "Evangelicalism," as used throughout this article, refers to an expression of theologically conservative Protestantism originating out of an Anglo-American provenance, but which is lately becoming a truly global faith. It is an umbrella term describing a wide range of belief and practice—including Pietistic, Confessional, Baptist, Anabaptist, and Holiness-Pentecostal traditions. As the name suggests, besides a commitment to conservative Protestant theology, Evangelicals typically share both a belief that God intervenes directly in everyday life and a driving commitment to world evangelization. They are, in the religious demographer David Barrett's apt phrase, "Great Commission Christians." See David Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, "Annual Statistical Table of Global Mission: 2000," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24 (January 2000): 24.

Islam matches Evangelicalism's spectacular growth: "By 2050," asserts historian Philip Jenkins, "there should be still about three Christians for every two Muslims worldwide."⁹ Evangelical Protestantism (especially in its Pentecostal manifestations) is arguably the most consequential religious movement in the world today. Its growth around the world has been nothing short of stunning. In Latin America, for example, Protestants numbered around 15 million in the 1960s; in less than two decades, that number grew to at least 40 million.¹⁰ The growth of Pentecostalism has been particularly noteworthy, growing from only 10,000 in the early 1900s to over 150 million by 2000.¹¹

Beyond Latin America, the expansion of Christianity in its Evangelical and Pentecostal forms is as remarkable. The number of Christians on the African continent rose from around 9 million in 1900 to over 330 million by 2000—over a 120 million of whom are Pentecostal.¹² In Asia, the story is no different. In 1900, the number of Christians figured around 20 million; by the year 2000, it had grown to over 300 million—130 million of whom are Pentecostal.¹³ Currently about a third of the world population has some affiliation with Christianity. Estimates of total world population of Evangelicals figure around 700 million, half of whom are charismatic or Pentecostal.¹⁴

Unlike the upsurge in the number of Muslims worldwide,¹⁵ what makes the growth in Evangelical Christianity even more astounding is that, with the exception of Latin America, a significant amount of the

⁹ Jenkins 5.

¹⁰ Martin 50.

¹¹ See David B. Barrett, George M. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol. 1, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 20.

¹² Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 20.

¹³ Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 20.

¹⁴ Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 4.

¹⁵ "Of Islam's global growth in the 1990s, 96 percent was by natural increase (high birth rate) and only 4 percent by conversion. The corresponding figures for Christianity were 90 percent and 10 percent" (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, as cited in *Christianity Today* [22 April 2002]: 76).

growth has taken place in societies traditionally uncongenial to Christianity in any of its forms.¹⁶ In 1900, 83 percent of the world's Christian population lived in Europe and North America; by the late 1980s, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific accounted for 56 percent of Christians worldwide.¹⁷ If current trends hold course, it can be expected that the net effect of this new "Christianization" will revolutionize how the world thinks of Christianity. No longer will it be considered the religion of the North and West, but of the global South (indeed, save perhaps for the U.S., Ireland, and Poland, practicing Christians number among minorities in nations most associated with Christendom historically).¹⁸ Likewise, it will be increasingly a religion of non-white Africans, Latin Americans, and Asians. "If we want to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian," explains Philip Jenkins, "we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*."¹⁹

Although the evidence appears to support the claim that Evangelical Protestantism is a thoroughly indigenized global phenomenon,²⁰ Western (predominantly American) missionary and para-church organizations, operating in a manner similar to that of multinational, non-governmental organizations and corporations, continue to constitute a primary source of material resources; technical, educational, and

¹⁶ This is not to say that there haven't been significant past inroads, as Philip Jenkins is right to point out, but, it is to acknowledge that such inroads were not well traveled. See Jenkins, chapter two.

¹⁷ See Andrew F. Walls, "World Christianity, the Missionary Movement and the Ugly American," in *World Order and Religion*, ed. Wade Clark Roof (Albany: State University of New York, 1991) 148.

¹⁸ Jehu Hanciles, a Sierra Leonean theologian, argues that Christianity became a non-Western religion over a hundred years ago—see Alex Duval Smith, "Christianity Finds Strength in Africa Due to Adaptability," *Christianity Today* (16 July 2001). In a slightly different take, Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako contends current trends are better thought of as "the renewal of a non-Western religion" (*Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press/Orbis, 1995] 173).

¹⁹ Jenkins 2.

²⁰ See Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*; Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: Orbis, 1996); and Berger and Huntington, *Many Globalizations*.

professional assistance; as well as evangelistic, ecclesiastical, and theological models to Christians the world over. In this way, the centers of American Evangelicalism, while by no means the center of worldwide Evangelicalism, nevertheless continue to form the backbone of a transnational religious movement. As Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan Rose point out:

When believers enter a church in Africa, Asia, or Latin America they participate in a form of worship that can be found in Memphis or Portland or New York City. Perhaps it will be Pentecostal, Southern Baptist, or a ubiquitous charismatic product marketed by Bible schools in places like Tulsa and Pasadena.²¹

Organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth with a Mission, World Vision, Focus on the Family, Compassion International, the Fuller School of World Mission, and the Christian Broadcasting Network are some of the largest and most visible of the American Evangelical organizations.²² Campus Crusade for Christ, for instance, employs 20,000 full-time staff, has offices in over 150 countries, and has chapters at nearly 700 universities worldwide. *The Jesus Film*, a project launched by Campus Crusade for Christ, has reportedly been shown in over 236 countries and territories, translated into 745 languages, and presented throughout the world to an estimated 4 billion people—two-thirds of the human race! Youth with a Mission averages a predominantly volunteer staff of 10,000 people in over 650 locations in 130 countries. World Vision, the largest Christian relief and development organization in the world, has an annual budget of \$460 million and serves around 73 million people a year in 92 countries. The “global influence for Christ” of Fuller Theological Seminary’s

²¹ Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, 2. It is interesting to note that even among those taking this explosion of Evangelical Christianity seriously, there is a tendency to downplay the role played by American Evangelicals. Emphasis is intentionally (and to some extent understandably) given to the reception and indigenization of Christian forms in various locales. Again, serious consideration of the American Evangelical globalizers remains neglected.

²² The statistics in this paragraph can be found at these organizations’ websites.

School of World Mission (the largest missions school in the world) comes through its vocational training of men and women from all around the globe; its graduates are now ministering in 110 countries as directors of local seminaries, churches, and organizations. The second largest international religious cable network in the world (behind the Trinity Broadcasting Network), the Christian Broadcasting Network airs its “700 Club” in more than 90 countries and in 46 different languages. Likewise, Focus on the Family boasts that its flagship radio program hosted by Dr. James Dobson is heard daily by more than 660 million people in 95 countries. Finally, the total number of American missionaries reportedly at large in the world today ranges from 67,000²³ to 118,000.²⁴ With such global reach, it is rather surprising that American Evangelicals are so often overlooked in the popular and scholarly accounts of contemporary global change.²⁵

American Evangelicals and Their Secular Counterparts

What strikes the observer at first glance is just how varied the world of the American globalizers happens to be. Despite the frequent equation of “Americanization” with the “homogenization” of local cultures, the reality is far more complex. After all, what possible commonalities can exist among organizations as dissimilar as MTV, the Sierra Club, the Ford Foundation, McDonald’s, Merrill Lynch, and Campus Crusade for Christ? Their administrative structures, the “goods” and “services” they offer, the beneficiaries of those goods, their various institutional motivations and mandates, as well as their corporate bottom lines, vary

²³ Wilson and Stewart as cited by Walls, “World Christianity, the Missionary Movement and the Ugly American,” 151.

²⁴ As reported in Rich Poll, “The Heavyweights of Religion Research,” *Christianity Today* (22 April 2002): 76.

²⁵ While a discussion of Mormonism falls outside the scope of this article, it is another homegrown religion with increasing global appeal. There are only an estimated 10 million Mormons in the world today, but there are a reported 56,530 Mormon missionaries in 162 countries, inducing some scholars to believe that Mormonism may very well be the next major world religion with a membership projected at 267 million by 2080. See sociologist Rodney Stark quoted in John W. Kennedy, “Southern Baptists Take Up the MORMON Challenge,” *Christianity Today* (15 June 1998).

widely. What's more, they often confront, challenge, and contradict one another, clashing over ideology and the leadership and direction of globalization itself. Let us explore some of the main vectors of tension.

Exporting American Culture Wars

Promoting abroad many of the controversial issues American Evangelical organizations champion at home, they actively export social and political agendas regarding abortion, the family, sexuality, education, and the like. The conflict over abortion is especially emblematic. Progressive and traditionalist special interest groups have established offices and staffs around the world to lobby foreign governments on behalf of their respective causes. The President of Focus on the Family's International and Marketing Division candidly admits that American-style culture wars are being fought on foreign soil: "I think most people from the West—Western Europe and the United States—are playing out these battles in places like Peru and Guatemala and Costa Rica. At root, we're confronting one another over our respective philosophies."²⁶ The acting director of International Programs for Planned Parenthood of America concedes the point. "It's a reality," she says, "These anti-choice groups have gone global and, thus, so have pro-choice groups."

The tactics are oriented toward influencing the legal, political, and educational institutions and the elite who run them in different societies. What counts in this battle for the hearts and minds of other societies, according to the president of International Programs and Marketing at Focus on the Family, is "who's getting to those key decisions makers." Typically, they go after a head of state, a first lady, or a minister of education. "The anti-choice people of the United States," the executive from Planned Parenthood explains,

have a very targeted campaign influencing and reforming laws around the world. In Poland, for instance, amniocen-

²⁶ As noted above, the quotations in this and the following sections are taken from interviews conducted by the author between March 1999 and May 2000.

tesis has just been made illegal, because it's considered to be a precursor to the possibility that a woman will choose to have an abortion.... This is directly financed by anti-abortion movements in the United States. You see these initiatives happening in Ireland and South Africa as well. They're very active. Where abortion is legal, they're working very hard to make sure that access is qualified.

Not surprisingly, Focus on the Family characterizes Planned Parenthood's activity similarly: "They pull together global conferences to talk about overpopulation. Then, they argue the case for abortion services as a response to overpopulation. They're very aggressive."

The race to win-over key decision-makers is seen most clearly as opposing groups attempt to gain access to the public schools in other societies. At the time of the interview, Focus on the Family had been very successful in lobbying the Guatemalan First Lady and thereby getting their "Sex, Lies, and the Truth" curriculum into Guatemala's public schools, educating some 80,000 children about abstinence. However, their President for International Programs and Marketing voiced some concern about the First Lady's continued support of their curriculum because Planned Parenthood had gone to meet with her a number of times and had presented her with both a humanitarian award and grant money in order to promote Planned Parenthood's curricula in the Guatemalan schools.

The Consequences of Global Capitalism

Another issue of growing controversy has been how American-based global organizations and elites differ over the consequences of global capitalism. Perhaps nothing has symbolized the contested nature of global capitalism more than the recent protests against global financial institutions, including the December 1999 protests of the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle; the April 2000 World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in Washington, DC; the UN millennium summit in 2000; and a host of other more recent protests held around the world. At the heart of such criticism is the belief that

global financial institutions are complicit in creating and maintaining a “hegemonic global economic order” that only serves the interests of powerful multinational corporations and wealthy Northern societies. As one movement pamphlet states, “The IMF and the WTO are the first and foremost instruments of Corporate USA’s drive to dominate the world and maximize its profits at the expense of the workers and oppressed peoples.”²⁷ Indeed, from the activists’ point of view, the present global economic and political context is no different from that present at the height of Western colonialism. In their view, the bottom line for these world financial organizations and the multinational corporations that rule them is profit—without concern for the well-being of humanity, cultural traditions, or the planet’s ecosystems.

Although not an active player among activist groups that took part in the Seattle protests, the Evangelical humanitarian organization World Vision shares many of the activists’ concerns. World Vision’s Senior Vice President for International Programs asks:

If you took the profit motive away from Coca-Cola, would they exist? If you took the profit motive away from McDonald’s would they exist? They’re not out there for value transformation, or for building a better society.... The bottom line is to make profit.

The greatest concern about the long-term impact of global capitalism is its potential to exacerbate the gap between rich and poor throughout the world. “A billion people in the world live on \$1.00 or less,” the Senior Vice Present for World Vision notes.

We are saying that perhaps the values that are driving this system are not the most equitable and the best for us overall because they are going to ruin our environment.... People are not getting along in this world. Why is it? Because of this huge divide [between the rich and poor].

²⁷ A tract from the International Action Center (no author or date given).

In the end, he fears that “we’re headed for a collision between rich and poor.” The Director of Strategic Leadership for Compassion International, another Evangelical humanitarian organization, speaks to this problem as it plays out in South America:

In terms of economic globalization, that’s a two-headed dragon. While it leaves people more free from the burdens and drudgeries of daily life, it has also created slums in many cities. Just go across the border to Mexico. We wouldn’t pay Americans that way and get away with it.

It will come as no surprise that elites within American financial and business institutions do not share this sentiment. On the contrary, they believe the current process of economic globalization—the relative deregulation of national economies, the near universal attraction of free market ideology, and the expanding scope of consumer markets—to be full of opportunity and promise, not only for their respective organizations, but for humanity as well. Indeed, they share an opinion that it is those who actively resist the progress of the international financial institutions who are responsible for causing greater harm to the very people and environment that the protestors claim to champion. A long time executive at Archer Daniels Midland contends:

Those against liberalized trade fail to realize that a free market system is the best way to ensure that people are fed at affordable prices and in environmentally sustainable ways. Some labor unions oppose trade liberalization but ignore the ways in which free trade increases exports, which in turn create[s] jobs, and jobs associated with exports are higher paying jobs.

The lens through which these executives see the positive benefits of globalization is the market itself, where the average person is regarded as a global consumer whose economic choices are expanding due to liberated, interconnected markets and whose social and political freedoms are expanding due to the democratization of information. From this point of view, one executive explains that the future is a

place of massive consumer choice when the global capital markets make fabulous product choices available, the accessibility of technology and information, virtual travel, and it's a place where the consumer as king is extraordinary. There'll still be a few places where the consumers are denied by backward states who try to deny access...[but overall] I think the incomes for world populations will be better fifty years from now and the relative costs of services will go down. I think it will be a better world by virtue of information accessibility. There will be more appreciation for differences than there will be for similarities.

On the issue of capitalism's putative benefits, however, the Evangelicals themselves appear divided. Unlike Evangelical humanitarian organizations, those concerned with missions work and evangelism appear no less enthusiastic about the prospects for their faith under the conditions of globalization than the captains of international finance and business do about the prospects for economic growth under the same conditions. "I think it's awesome," says the Vice President from Focus on the Family. "I think that Christian faith in the context of globalization has a tremendous opportunity." Indeed, he states further: "I think God has a plan in using all this technology in a very forceful way to liberate the human spirit in a way that [people] can find Him."

The capabilities of technology have generated tremendous optimism and energy for the completion of their organizational—and even world—missions. World Evangelical Federation President, Augustin B. Vancer, Jr., boasts that thanks to the internet, "we are able [for the first time in history] to become the church worldwide responding as a church to issues around the world."²⁸ This sentiment is echoed by the Executive Director of Wycliffe Bible Translators-USA:

God is doing a great thing, enabling His people to do His work through new partnerships, technology, and opportuni-

²⁸ As quoted in Kim A. Lawton, "Faith Without Borders," *Christianity Today* (19 May 1997): 49.

ties. What a privilege to be involved! I want to help provide the prayer, people, and resources that will get the Word out. God is giving us a unique opportunity, right here and now.

The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International even more enthusiastically proclaims that through their global communications system they can "see a global pattern of the Holy Spirit's activity." Similarly, Trinity Broadcasting Network founder Paul Crouch proclaims on the TBN website that the

good news we bring today is a new satellite [that] is bringing the Light to millions of new souls in Africa. In America, we call it DBS (direct broadcast satellite); in Europe, they call it DTH (direct-to-home); in Africa, it's DSTV (direct satellite TV). I still call them all—DEVIL BUSTIN' SATELLITE!

Crouch goes on to claim:

For years, I wondered how we would get the Gospel into every home, billions of them, from mud huts in Africa, to mansions in Beverly Hills. God had it figured out before the world was framed—technological "angels" in mid-heaven, beaming Jesus into homes and hearts around the world!

As important as the disputes between (and among) Evangelicals and their secular counterparts are over their respective aims and ambitions, it is difficult to know how consequential these disputes will be ultimately. The differences that animate these disputes are somewhat qualified by all that the American globalizers culturally have in common, particularly at the level of practice. Describing the curious confluence between the flows of transnational religion and capital, sociologist David Martin contends:

The religious traffic moves alongside the economic traffic, sometimes with the religious slightly ahead of the economic, sometimes vice-versa.... The two kinds of traffic will have a family likeness: perhaps similar economic and

political assumptions, certainly similar ideas, ideals, language, techniques, know-how and forms of communication and self-presentation.²⁹

It is in the dimensions of institutional routine and discourse (that is to say, in technique and idiom) that the Evangelical globalizers mirror their secular counterparts step for step.

The Vocabularies of Global Speak

A good deal of scholarly attention is paid to the spread of English, specifically American English, as the new *koiné* of the contemporary world.³⁰ To be sure, speaking only English is a luxury enjoyed by most of the American globalizers, but it is a difficult necessity for others involved in the process of globalization. Yet, other, less obvious linguistic practices provide for a common structure of experience and imagination among the American globalizers, particularly through the use of vocabularies derived from the social sciences, human rights, the market, and multiculturalism. These vocabularies provide the terms by which the authority of global agendas and their respective instrumental ends are established and legitimated, and it is within these vocabularies that the deepest normative commitments take shape and become meaningful. In the words of one especially reflective executive at World Vision, “our words make our worlds, and as you begin to use language, you begin to mold mind-sets and ideals and mental models; that is to say, worldviews.”

The Language of Social Science

Whether it is Coca-Cola conducting its “presearch”; Nike using numerous marketing focus groups; Planned Parenthood of America and Greenburg Quinlan Research, Inc., conducting public opinion polls

²⁹ Martin 280–1.

³⁰ See David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

and surveys; the International Center for Research on Women employing statistical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of UN, USAID, and World Bank programs; or Prison Fellowship conducting surveys on the recidivism rates of prisoners who have completed their Christian-based reform programs, the quantifying, organizing, and evaluating techniques of social science not only provide the authority by which action is justified but also supply an idiom by which “the work” is accomplished on a day-to-day basis. The employment of the language and techniques of social science are as frequent among the Evangelical globalizers as among anyone else.

Recall the ideological tensions between Focus on the Family and Planned Parenthood. Ironically, both turn to the same rationalizing techniques in order to make their case. When asked how they persuaded foreign governments to use their abstinence curriculum, Focus on the Family responds:

We share with them the data on the rising rates of teen pregnancy in the U.S. We show, over the last thirty years since the inception of liberal programs of social re-engineering, how teen pregnancy has gone up hundreds of percent. Our message is that you don't want to go in this direction. At the same time, we can show how we're having great success in pockets of the United States where abstinence is taught; that substantial decreases in teen pregnancy and promiscuity are taking place. With the data, the conclusion is just common sense.

Planned Parenthood likewise shares empirical evidence with the foreign governments that they are trying to persuade. “Look at the statistics on what happens when a woman is educated,” the Planned Parenthood executive explains. “There's a direct correlation between level of education and number of children.”

Perhaps the greatest reliance on quantitative data is found among those Evangelical organizations most directly engaged in evangelization and world missions. The emphasis on numbers is manifested nowhere more dramatically than with *The Jesus Film*. Prominently displayed on the

film's website and publications is a running tally of everything from the number of people who have seen and heard the film, to the number of languages into which it has been translated, to the number of distributions of the film in circulation in all its various versions—i.e., audio-cassettes, video, DVD, and film—to, of course, the number of people who have “indicated decisions to accept Christ as their personal Savior and Lord” (the current tally is 153 million).³¹ If this reported data is even somewhat accurate, *The Jesus Film* is now a truly world-historical event: it is the most widely shared media spectacle in human history, and the reliance on statistics is central to reinforcing this impression.

Likewise, Youth with a Mission (YWAM) provides another telling illustration. Recently this missions agency, one of the world's largest, developed an internal survey based on submissions from each of the agency's 630 ministry centers around the world. The survey's purpose was to examine empirically what impact YWAM was having on what they call “frontier” missions, that is, on people groups as yet “unreached” by Christianity. The survey concluded that YWAM had increased its percentage of “frontier” missionaries, making it a committed leader in this field of mission work. “It is encouraging,” their Director of International Networks says, “to see the commitment we made to a greater focus on frontier missions a few years ago being translated into action.” Likely even more encouraging is the reported 148,313 conversions (i.e., “decisions for Christ”) for the year, as well as 243 new ministry centers established and 669 churches or fellowship groups started since 1991.³²

The Language of Universal Rights and Needs

If epistemological authority for these American elites is grounded in the language of social science, moral authority is grounded in the language of universal individual rights and needs. Whether promoting hybrid crop fertilizers, running shoes, or biblically-based principles for a strong family, the American globalizers all contend that their “goods”

³¹ <<<http://www.jesusfilm.org>>>

³² <<<http://ywam.org>>>

satisfy fundamental rights and needs of human existence, as excerpts from the interviews with them suggest. Archer Daniels Midland and McDonald's market their products and franchise their brands around the world because people have "the right to be well fed." Merrill Lynch peddles financial investment opportunities to foreign governments because those governments have a "right to be able to meet the basic human needs" of their citizenry. Nike markets shoes globally because people everywhere have "a universal need for athletic footwear." Twentieth Century Fox distributes film in response to "the need for quality entertainment." American Evangelical organizations are no different. The appeal by Planned Parenthood to women's rights and particular needs resembles in form if not substance the appeal of Focus on the Family to the "universal needs" of people, especially children, to sound familial environments.

Some Evangelical humanitarian organizations explicitly appeal to the importance of human rights. The International Justice Mission (IJM), for example, describes itself as "a Christian ministry, led by human rights professionals, that helps people suffering injustice and oppression who cannot rely on local authorities for relief." According to its website, IJM's stated method is "to establish factual records of human rights abuse." Others spiritualize the very idea of rights. During his internationally broadcast radio program, "Voice of Victory," evangelist Kenneth Copeland proclaimed that "...there are certain rights, certain liberties, which you have as a Son of God..."³³ The mission statement of his worldwide ministry puts this view more formally:

The mission of Kenneth Copeland Ministries and Eagle Mountain International Church is to teach Christians worldwide who they are in Christ Jesus and how to live a victorious life in their covenant rights and privileges. The fulfillment of that mission takes place when those believers become rooted and grounded enough in God's Word to reach out and teach others these same principles.³⁴

³³ Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose 2.

³⁴ <<<http://www.kcm.org>>>

Likewise, whether CNN, AT&T, or the Christian Coalition International, all favor the spread of democracy and human rights as welcomed progress. The Christian Coalition, for example, describes their international political activities euphemistically as “citizen education” or “civic training.” In this way, when asked about the non-spiritual impact of Christianity’s spread across the world, most of the American Evangelicals contend that Protestant principles are also “carriers” of freedom. “I think the ability to make choices about your own family, about your own future, about your own government,” says the press secretary for Christian Coalition International, “all of those things, are founded on Judeo-Christian principles.”

Beyond the merely functional role that many Evangelicals see the Christian faith playing in societies around the world, they are also quick to speak of a universal right of people to hear the gospel. “The Christian gospel is unique,” says Robert T. Coote of the Overseas Ministries Studies Center, “and needs to be known, and everyone has a right to hear it.”³⁵ By definition, Evangelical organizations justify their own global existence in terms of “humanity’s need to hear the gospel of Christ.”

Underlying all such claims about the universality of human rights and needs, and the freedom of the individual for self-determination, is a common anthropology that understands the individual as autonomous, rational, resourceful, and acquisitive. Reinforcing this anthropology is the idiom of the market.

The Language of the Market

Surprisingly, most Evangelical organizations express their mission and work in terms more typical of multinational corporations than religious organizations. One Evangelical leader declares, “We want to do business with the world and in so doing put ourselves out into the market. It’s just how it works.” All of the American globalizers, including the Evangelicals, describe their operations as taking place in a world char-

³⁵ Robert T. Coote as cited in Richard Osting, “Protestant Foreign Legions,” *Time* (16 February 1987): 62.

acterized by “expanding markets,” the need for “competitive advantage,” “efficiency,” “cost-effectiveness,” “maximizing benefits and minimizing costs,” “niche markets,” “profitability,” and the “bottom-line.” Nowhere is this view articulated more dramatically among the Evangelicals than when Campus Crusade for Christ’s President Bill Bright tells potential investors in a promotional video that for every New Life Training Center established around the world, 100,000 people will hear the gospel and at least 10,000 souls will be saved in the very first year of operation. As he puts it, “I have never heard of an investment with greater spiritual return.” With similar dynamism, Paul Crouch, of the Trinity Broadcasting Network, proclaims:

God promised to give you “EVERY PLACE where you SET YOUR FOOT...” (Josh. 1:3 NIV). With 21 SATELLITES carrying TBN, the WORLD is almost COVERED with your “FOOTPRINTS” spreading the Gospel everywhere! Every SOUL saved through TBN is going to YOUR account in heaven because you GAVE. Praise God, the account is GROWING! [capitalized words in original] ³⁶

Another component of the market idiom appears in the frequent equation of the believer with consumer. Not surprisingly, this is most explicit among Evangelical broadcasting organizations for which listeners and viewers are, quite literally, consuming their religious media “products.” “Not only has your TBN grown to 3,309 stations, and is carried on 21 satellites and thousands of cable systems around the world,” exclaims Crouch, “but no matter where you are, day or night, you can watch TBN via the Internet. It is literally available to anyone, anywhere who can access the Internet!”³⁷ The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) is somewhat more strategic in its appeal to religious consumers using the most cutting-edge advertising tactics. Describing the global success of CBN’s WorldReach program, one promoter says,

³⁶ <<<http://www.tbn.org>>> In all historical fairness, Bright and Crouch are tapping into a long strain of American Evangelical practice dating back to the great American evangelists Dwight Moody and John Mott.

³⁷ <<<http://www.tbn.org>>>

When the secular world wants to really grab the attention of the consumers of a country, they “four-wall-market” a product. We want nations to know of Jesus’ love and His plan for each of us, therefore CBN uses the “four-wall-marketing” concept in the form of media blitzes to spread the Gospel. CBN’s creation of the media blitz has proven to be an effective and entertaining outreach tool to share Christian, family-oriented programming using various forms of media: television, radio, videotapes, literature, etc.

The Language of Multiculturalism

Needless to say, this conception of the individual framed by the logic of the market has consequences. In each realm of globalizing activity, it universalizes specific notions of organizational progress and, more generally, human progress. However, the desire to globalize a brand or a message or a service by appeal to these culturally specific, if globally attractive, notions cannot be made without qualification. The elites in the vanguard of globalization are aware of the historical heavy-handedness of American or Western organizations and are eager to temper both the image and reality of their work as a form of cultural imperialism. Balancing the moral appeal to universal rights and needs, then, is a tendency to indigenize their brands, organizational identities, and constituencies. It is here where we see a common recourse to an idiom rooted in multiculturalism, one that focuses on sensitivity to local cultures.

Coca-Cola is paradigmatic in this regard. As the vice president at Coca-Cola puts it, “our business is fundamentally local, our principles are global.” To explain he uses the metaphor of architecture:

Think about the architecture as a blueprint of your house. We operate with a “global brand architecture” in positioning our brands that are essentially the same everywhere. Depending on where we are, the roof shingles might be tile in one place and asphalt in another.

A Vice President for Marketing and Research at MTV articulates the same view of his company, “We’re one of the few brands who have nailed the notion of being able to be global and local at the same time.”

Evangelicals echo the views of Coca-Cola and MTV in this regard. As the Vice President for World Vision explains,

The business of an NGO is about trust. Local communities won't trust us if we're not local. So we have to be local. Thus, we have a World Vision-New Zealand, World Vision-Taiwan, World Vision-UK, etc. But, on the other hand, if you're truly only local, you may not be trusted by donors and therefore will not be able to get the resources necessary to accomplish your mission.

Similarly, the Vice President for Focus on the Family describes how his organization maintains their global-local structure for radio by contracting with local, indigenous offices that have their own legal status, but "we license the use of the Focus on the Family name." He continues:

Our local partners have a desire to help families in their regions and we stand behind them. We bring to the table radio expertise as well as resource assistance. However, we do not feel it is our place to control what is aired. We emphasize basic biblical principles; our partners contextualize it so that it will connect and communicate with the local person.

The Campus Crusade for Christ Vice President is as quick to emphasize how most of their international staff are recruited from the societies in which they work: "Most of all our work is directed by nationals. We have only 700 Americans [out of 20,000] serving outside the U.S." Indeed, nearly all of the Evangelicals claim that they work hand-in-hand with partners from the places they are engaging.

Conclusion: An Unintended Gospel of Modernity

What should be apparent from the foregoing examination of the American Evangelical globalizers is that they do in fact share a family resemblance with their secular counterparts, despite their disagreements. There are important disputes between Evangelicals and their secular counterparts over certain moral issues, representing deeply

divided ideological commitments, and these disputes could take on greater global importance if they become politically charged for Evangelicals in other societies. The extent to which such battles are fought abroad is at present, however, limited to the exports of the American globalizers. More significant at present are the commonalities found at the level of institutional and organizational practice. What counts as “success,” “progress,” “opportunity,” and the like is for the American Evangelicals managed according to the same rationalizing techniques as for their secular counterparts and, by and large, accounted for in the same cultural languages.³⁸ This modern rationalizing orientation, as Weber pointed out, undercuts any moral authority based upon tradition, personality, or status. Sociologist James Davison Hunter underscores the point; moral authority in the modern sense, he observes, “is defined by and based upon the technical competence, empirical adequacy, and linguistic precision of the positions taken.”³⁹

Thus, it is safe to say that the Evangelical globalizers have endorsed an intensely modern (and modernizing) cultural orientation, if unwitting of its implications for their work and message. Taken individually, there will no doubt be significant differences in the extent to which Evangelical groups reject or embrace the various logics of modernity. Taken as a whole, however, Evangelicals do demonstrate a certain symmetry of engagement at the level of practice both among themselves and with their secular counterparts. Given their access to the most advanced technologies of transportation and communication, moreover, they cannot help but be some of the leading apologists for Western (American) modernity, even if unintentionally. In the words of Salomon Nahmad of the National Indigenist Institute of Mexico, “Those Americans are the Franciscans and the Dominicans of our time. They may not see it that way, but they are the religious arm of an economic, political, and cultural system.”⁴⁰

³⁸ See, also, Frank Lechner, “Religion, Law, and Global Order,” *Religion and Global Order*, ed. Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

³⁹ James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 195.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, 11.

Of course, the countless men and women around the world on whose behalf American Evangelical globalizers are busily engaged are not unaware of the impact of global modernity. Phenomenologically, at least, the relativizing processes and contingencies of globalization increasingly penetrate the daily experience of humans across the planet and the entire range of globalizers, like the all-too-often overlooked American Evangelicals featured here, do confirm, extend, and institutionalize that experience in consequential ways. What the worldwide inheritors of American Evangelicalism, in all its varieties, do with this cultural baggage is, of course, still to be seen. In the meantime, it is clear that they are receiving more than they bargained for. Indeed, such inheritors are receiving more than even many of their evangelizers ever intended. In attempting to fulfill the great biblical injunctive to “go into all the world” the American Evangelicals cannot help bestowing more than the teachings of their founder; they are carrying into the world an unintended gospel of modernity—the institutional and normative structure of the present world order.