

A Roundtable on Lauren Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*

Andrew Preston, Darren Dochuk, Christopher Cannon Jones, Kelly J. Shannon,
Vanessa Walker, and Lauren F. Turek

Introduction to Roundtable on Lauren Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*

Andrew Preston

Historians of the United States and the world are getting religion, and our understanding of American foreign relations is becoming more rounded and more comprehensive as a result. Religion provides much of the ideological fuel that drives America forward in the world, which is the usual approach historians have taken in examining the religious influence on diplomacy; it has also sometimes provided the actual nuts-and-bolts of diplomacy, intelligence, and military strategy.¹ But historians have not always been able to blend these two approaches. Lauren Turek's *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is thus a landmark because it is both a study of cultural ideology and foreign policy. In tying the two together in clear and compelling ways, based on extensive digging in various archives, Turek sheds a huge amount of new light on America's mission in the last two decades of the Cold War and beyond.

Turek uses the concept of "evangelical internationalism" to explore the worldview of American Protestants who were both theologically and politically conservative, and how they came to wield enough power that they were able to help shape U.S. foreign policy from the 1970s into the twenty-first century. As the formerly dominant liberal Protestants faded in numbers and authority, and as the nation was gripped by the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, evangelicals became the vanguard of a new era in American Christianity. Evangelicals replaced liberal Protestants abroad, too, as the mainline churches mostly abandoned the mission field. The effects on U.S. foreign relations were lasting and profound.

One of Turek's main scholarly interventions is to demonstrate how evangelical internationalism did as much to shape the rise of Christian conservatives to cultural and political prominence in the age of Reagan. The conventional understanding of "the rise of the Religious Right" is that it was essentially a domestic story, aside from knee-jerk anti-communism, but Turek illustrates just how central global engagement was to the changing face of American evangelicalism.² And though she doesn't emphasize this as much as she could, another of the book's significant contributions is to place Protestant evangelicals within a religiously inflected human rights tradition, in which

religious liberty was central, that was started by liberal Protestants and conservative Catholics during World War II and reflected in Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms of 1941, the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950.³

The reviewers in this roundtable are in agreement that Turek has produced a special book. To Darren Dochuk, it is "crisply written," "a pleasure to read," and "a masterful piece of history...that achieves—spectacularly—what it set out to achieve." Christopher Jones says that Turek "provides important historical perspective" on a little-known but important topic. Kelly Shannon calls *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* "an impressively researched, well-written, persuasively argued book that makes a significant contribution to the field of U.S. foreign relations history." And Vanessa Walker praises it as "a thoughtful, lucidly written study in how activist networks are built and exert influence at the nexus of international and domestic politics."

Walker's comment hits on how challenging Turek's task must have been, for she had to engage with, but also complicate, several subfields of both religious history and diplomatic history on multiple levels, including the rise of the Religious Right in the United States, the history of human rights, the crisis and eventual collapse of détente, missiology, the growth of Christianity in the global South, globalization, and the end of the Cold War. In addition, Turek grounds her analysis in three relevant but loosely unconnected cases studies of American diplomacy from the 1970s to the 1990s: support for right-wing anti-communism in Guatemala, the crisis of Soviet communism in the 1980s, and the decline and fall of apartheid in South Africa. But the greater the challenge, the greater the reward, and *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* delivers. "Turek brings these disparate literatures together in exciting and important new ways," notes Walker, while other reviewers point out that the book adds to the historiographies of both religious and diplomatic history. Dochuk calls Turek's work an act of "academic bridge building." Jones recognizes that readers of this roundtable will likely center *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* in the literature on the U.S. and the world, but he rightly calls attention to the possibly even greater contribution the book makes to modern American religious history.

As with any ambitious book, the reviewers are filled with praise but also seek more. As Walker puts it, there are many more fascinating questions "that Turek's work

invites us to explore." Shannon, for example, wonders how evangelical internationalism fits within contemporaneous human rights discourses; similarly, Jones would like to know more about how Turek's evangelical Protestants fit with other contemporaneous faith-based movements in the United States, such as Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and Mormons. Shannon observes that gender is largely absent, on which Dochuk provides a possible lead by asking Turek to reflect more on "why evangelicals are so friendly to authoritarian regimes" and why "they act out of enchantment with anointed (masculine, muscular) authority." Walker wonders why evangelicals could be so focused on certain human rights but allow gross violations of other human rights go unnoticed, and Shannon asks a similar question about white supremacy. I'll let Turek's fulsome response speak for itself, but suffice it to say the result is an immensely productive historiographical discussion that will be of interest to a wide array of scholars.

Shannon and Jones reference former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to illustrate that *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is, as Shannon puts it, "very timely." Pompeo is an evangelical Presbyterian whose faith helped guide his way as the nation's top diplomat. Jones begins his review with the July 2020 release of a report by the Commission on Unalienable Rights, a Pompeo creation designed to promote the evangelical worldview by centering its policy priorities, especially international religious liberty, in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Other foreign policymakers in the past had been religious, noted the *New York Times* in a profile on Pompeo, but "no secretary of state in recent decades has been as open and fervent as Mr. Pompeo about discussing Christianity and foreign policy in the same breath. That has increasingly raised questions about the extent to which evangelical beliefs are influencing American diplomacy," especially on issues relating to Israel, abortion, and religious liberty, "one of his favorite themes."⁴ From the tenor of that *Times* article, along with others,⁵ it's clear that the establishment newspaper of record didn't quite know what to make of a born-again secretary of state. But all they need to do now is read *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, which will help make sense not only of the past, but also the present and future of U.S. foreign relations.

Notes:

1. For a brilliant recent example, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *Double Crossed: The Missionaries Who Spied for the United States During the Second World War* (New York: Basic, 2019).
2. Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
3. See John S. Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 44-83; Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); and Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
4. "The Rapture and the Real World: Mike Pompeo Blends Beliefs and Policy," *New York Times*, March 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/30/us/politics/pompeo-christian-policy.html>
5. Mattathias Schwartz, "The Messenger," *New York Times Magazine*, March 3, 2019, p. 42.

Review of Lauren Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*

Darren Dochuk

While reading Lauren Turek's *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, I found myself awed by the vast operations of global evangelicalism that she so brilliantly tracks and explains. I was drawn to this material not just academically, however, but also because of my family history. It is not my usual practice to reference my forebears when evaluating a scholarly text, but Turek's account resonates with me in a way that justifies this alternative approach.

I grew up in an extended clan of Ukrainian (also some Russian) immigrants whose migration to central Alberta, Canada, during the early twentieth century helped ensure that the province's small farming communities and capital, Edmonton, around which they clustered, would—by the second half of the century—represent one of the largest Ukrainian settlements in North America. My family's faith, as well as its roots, informed its outlook on politics and the world in the late 1970s and 1980s, a time when I was growing old enough to sense the urgency that drove the religious and political advocacy of my parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

Although my father's family remained Ukrainian Orthodox, his conversion to evangelical Christianity placed him in a large circle of churchgoing Ukrainians and Russians who worshipped, sang, and sought to spread their faith in their native tongues. My mother's family was part of that community, which is why my father's assimilation into it was easy—that and the fact that he was a charismatic teacher and a talented preacher who could command the pulpit in a way that appealed to young and old alike. He was so skilled, in fact, that he once contemplated an offer from the Slavic Gospel Association (SGA) to become a radio preacher for outreach over the airwaves to the Soviet Union. (The new post would have placed us at a station in the South Pacific, something for which I earnestly prayed.) Alas, he turned it down, but the hum at church and at huge family gatherings remained attuned to the type of evangelization SGA and other agencies such as the Far Eastern Broadcasting Company and Christian radio station HJCB were trying to do behind the Iron Curtain, as well as to the political challenges that they faced along the way.

Over scrumptious varenyky (dumplings) and holubtsi (stuffed cabbage), talk inevitably turned to the latest news out of the "old country" about religious persecution and communist oppression. But more encouraging talk also turned to the secret work being done to smuggle Bibles into this dark realm and to the heroism of pastors of underground Soviet churches and missionaries (there were several in my extended family) who were sharing their gospel and helping Christians in the Communist bloc. And there were the regular updates from the SGA, which under Peter Deyneka's leadership served as a clearinghouse for Christian ministry and advocacy in Eastern Europe and as a liaison between Slavic and mainstream evangelicalism in North America. Deyneka was a household name for us, an acquaintance, as well as an occasional visitor to my relatives' church; people from my grandparents' and parents' generations revered him and opened their pocketbooks to support his ministry.

That is a heavier dose of personal information than is

needed, perhaps, but I offer it as a way to thank Lauren Turek for providing such a richly detailed, generous, and long-overdue analysis (see particularly chapters 2 and 4) of a religious and political phenomenon that animated my childhood. In part because of my inability to follow my forebears' foreign dialects, but also because of my impatience with talk about the old country, I never fully appreciated the extent to which they believed they were immersed in a global struggle with high-stakes political consequences, a struggle that they approached in life-or-death, good-versus-evil terms. But thanks to Turek's scholarship, that is no longer the case.

Of course, that is hardly reason to celebrate a book of this magnitude. Speaking now as a historian of modern American evangelicalism and religion and politics, let me get to the heart of the matter and praise this text for what it offers those of us who work in my field(s). I will begin by echoing Melani McAllister's back-cover blurb, which rightly describes *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* as "wonderfully researched," "utterly convincing," and quite simply an "impressive achievement."

Wonderfully researched indeed: Turek traveled the globe to gather the sources needed to write an exhaustive book and consulted dozens and dozens of collections on multiple continents.

As exhaustive as the research and the book are, however, at no point does the text exhaust its reader. It is crisply written and a pleasure to read, and the structure of the book is sharp and accessible as well. After opening with three big-picture chapters that chart the rise and development of international Protestant engagement in defense of human and religious rights, Turek shifts to a lower altitude to reveal the workings of evangelical internationalism at the ground level. Her case studies of the Soviet Union, Guatemala, and South Africa add texture and depth to her analysis and contribute to the larger narrative in a book that is smartly layered in its chronology and thematic probes.

Finally, the book's tone is notable as well. Turek deals with apartheid and dictatorships, structural racism and bloody violence, escalating Cold War tensions and the suppression of post-colonial reform—all of which American evangelicals were engaged in or with between the 1970s and 1990s. These are highly sensitive subjects, which might have led other, less patient historians to offer blank and harsh judgments where evangelicalism was concerned. Yet Turek practices patience and sensitivity at the highest level, always choosing to let a range of black and white evangelicals speak for themselves and to give her subjects the benefit of the doubt.

Her chapter on South Africa and apartheid is a perfect example of that approach. In answer to less forgiving scholars, she writes that "in spite of reductive treatments of the evangelical response to apartheid during the Reagan years that focus exclusively on Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, evangelicals evinced relatively diverse views about how to best confront apartheid" (180). While some championed civil rights and called for an immediate end to apartheid, others only gradually "came to embrace the need for justice as well as for reconciliation and salvation" (180). The fundamentalists of Falwell's and Robertson's ilk remained determined to shore up South Africa's white Cold War order. Mostly, though, evangelicals in the United States and South Africa tried to navigate the knotty political middle in a way that would best allow them to achieve their

priority: "global evangelistic mission" (180).

Beyond its appealing structure and style, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is also remarkable as a substantive model of academic bridge-building. Because of her training in U.S. diplomatic history, Turek is able to offer religious historians much that is fresh and new. Thanks to her keen eye for subtle and significant developments in U.S. foreign policy, international engagement, and state-level machinations, she is able to demonstrate how and why evangelical missionary and humanitarian efforts in the 1970s and 1980s assumed such political import.

Much exciting work is being done these days on evangelical humanitarianism in global contexts (in addition to the works of Melani McAllister, see, for instance, recent books by Heather Curtis, David Swartz, and David King), most of which emphasize its impact outside the corridors of political power. In part, this reassessment of modern evangelicalism seeks to reorient our histories away from sole focus on the religious right and its maneuvers in the domestic sphere. In fact, and as this scholarship shows,

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Turek's book reinforces that broadened view of modern evangelicals while still striving for a balanced picture of their interests. Evangelicals abroad may not have espoused the religious right's entire platform or worried as much about political activism, but they did remain political and generally conservative. By championing religious freedom and human rights initiatives, they were drawn into transnational networks of state and non-state actors and into lobbying that transcended the concerns of the church. They were also drawn into political alliances that entrenched them in right-wing causes and linked U.S. Republicans to foreign right-leaning dictators (see charismatic evangelicals and the Ríos Montt regime).

In that respect, Turek also has a lot to offer historians of U.S. foreign policy, who are in some regards her primary audience. *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* positions the author within a growing coterie of diplomatic historians led by Andrew Preston, William Inboden, Andrew Rotter, and others whose scholarship has integrated religious actors, ideas, and institutions in mainstream histories of U.S. foreign policy and international relations. More recently, historians such as Michael Thompson and Mark Edwards have focused on the role of ecumenical ideas and initiatives in the expansion of U.S. humanitarian outreach, liberal internationalism, and programs of economic development.

Turek's book represents yet another vital step forward in the quest to embed religion in our histories of U.S. policy, politics, and diplomacy. It proves that evangelicals at work in Latin America and Africa and on behalf of persecuted Christians in the Soviet bloc not only oversaw some of the most crucial projects of human rights and religious freedom but also forged a powerful lobby that

shaped political trajectories on foreign terrains and policymaking decisions in Congress. No mere outliers or voices on the margins, evangelicals were in other words at times trendsetters and powerbrokers, whose embrace and politicization of human rights discourse and activism and transnational connections forced Washington elites to take them seriously. Not that Turek overstates evangelical influence, however. As evidenced in her chapter on South Africa, evangelicals did not always succeed at pressing their wishes on Washington. Still, her book should further silence skeptics who downplay religion's substantive role in formal diplomacy.

As with any outstanding book of this sort, one leaves the last page with curiosities and ponderings about the next possible steps in our scholarship. Lauren Turek has created a masterful piece of history here, one that achieves—spectacularly—what it set out to achieve. Yet *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* also prompts us to think about American (and global) evangelicalism in new ways and to ponder pursuing other avenues of analysis when considering this sprawling religious movement's impact on modern political life. Turek carves out several possible avenues, but let me point to four, and prompt her to consider and, where relevant or possible, comment on where historians can go next.

The first two of my prompts are related, and they have to do with the relationship between evangelicals/evangelicalism and authoritarianism. As highlighted above, Turek always errs on the side of generosity when explaining and evaluating her subjects' dealings in the global arena. This is an admirable trait, and I want to honor it. At the same time, especially in light of our current political moment (both nationally and globally), I was left wanting a bit more explication (and sharper censure, perhaps) of evangelical affinities for authoritarian regimes (again, see José Ríos Montt of Guatemala), as well as more focus on what ends evangelicals had in mind where more recent American and global politics are concerned.

In its push to save the lost souls of individuals, build voluntary associations, defend religious liberty and the autonomy of churches and institutions, and generally resist Washington's heavy hand, evangelicalism has usually been deemed an agent of democratization and populist dissent (see Tocqueville in the nineteenth century, or historian Nathan Hatch in the twentieth). Yet what Turek points us toward is a tendency for evangelicalism to cozy up to dictators, strongmen who—in a quid pro quo type of arrangement—can ensure their access to the religious marketplace.

One former religious right organizer in the United States once quipped that evangelicals are “monarchists at heart”: as they are in the pews, so they are in politics, in that they act out of enchantment with anointed (masculine, muscular) authority and prefer on practical grounds to deal with fewer decision-makers when attacking their terrain. We see this tendency activated in the book, with evangelical activists such as National Association of Evangelicals' director Robert P. Dugan Jr. admitting that “evangelical recognition of man's sinful nature and its consequences compels acceptance of the view that the world political arena is a tough arena where coercive power counts more than good intentions” (101). I would ask Turek, then, simply to reflect further on evangelicalism's penchant for militaristic, authoritarian leadership and, if relevant, to ponder how she might bring her analysis to bear on current events, during which evangelicals at home and abroad have often been the ones clamoring for a pragmatic and strong-armed political leadership.

The related query—once again, and perhaps unfairly, drawing us away from Turek's chronology (1970s–1990s) and into the present—has to do with her subjects' role in forging the transnational connections and networks that have fueled and supported the rise of a fiercely nationalistic populism of the kind witnessed in the United States and Brazil (and elsewhere in South America and beyond). Turek rightfully stresses the world vision of her evangelical subjects in the 1970s and 1980s; they were, after all, a diverse lot whose shared priority was to bring souls to Christ, not win wars for a particular political group. Yet whether fundamentalist or progressive-leaning, charismatic Pentecostal or Baptist and Presbyterian, by virtue of their work abroad they got swept up in politics and had to choose sides.

Recent and forthcoming work (here I am anticipating the scholarship of Ben Cowan) is extending our knowledge of how the transnational flow of evangelical missionaries, preachers, and laymen and laywomen between the United States and Brazil in the second half of the twentieth century laid the foundation for the current presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. Preaching anti-communism, anti-ecumenism, anti-statism, authoritarianism, and militarism, and assuming the mantle of culture war warriors, evangelicals in the thick of these exchanges provided the energy as well as the institutional structures for such revolutionary postures in both societies. And joining them surprisingly early in this process were conservative Catholics, whose own antipathies towards communism and secularism made them the evangelicals' natural allies.

Again, Turek's commendable aim here is to look beyond the familiar religious-right politicking of one sector of American evangelicals in order to better understand the broad canopy of evangelical humanitarianism and global activism. Yet the extent to which she reveals such entanglements in places like Guatemala and maps out evangelicalism's political commitments begs the question of just how it is that evangelical internationalism paved the way for a global, anti-global right-wing insurgency. Did her evangelical subjects' attempts to “bring the good news to all nations,” in other words, contribute to a world in which backlash rules?

My final two prompts stem—predictably—from my own personal and scholarly interests. Turek's analysis makes plenty of room for two pillars of American global expansion: missionaries and government, the former serving as pathbreakers, the latter as protector. But in conventional renderings, the military would follow on the heels not just of missionaries but of businessmen when the United States was trying to shore up its influence abroad.

So what of business and businesspeople in all of this? How did the evangelical corporate type factor into evangelicalism's interests and encroachments abroad? Surely they were essential to Doug Coe's secret fellowship of powerbrokers in Washington, just as they were a core component of evangelicalism's lobbying efforts on behalf of foreign humanitarian causes. But they were also known to be the ones carrying the Bibles into restricted zones, opening up lines of communication between American and global evangelicals, and funding Billy Graham's ministry and the wider international evangelical community he wanted to help forge through Lausanne and parallel initiatives. And evangelical businessmen, both white and black, were often the ones joining the fight to keep Africa's and Latin America's markets and societies free and clear from left-wing reform for their Christian capitalist ventures. How, then, might we add this third pillar to the equation, and in the process further interrogate the motivations, intent, and outcomes of evangelicalism's quest to defend human rights

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and religious freedom and impress itself on global terrains?

Finally, I am curious to hear more about what Lauren Turek's study can do to open up new avenues for further reflection on the role of immigration and ethnicity in modern American evangelical life (and politics). Here I return to my own family history. For logical reasons, white and black American evangelicals center Turek's story, especially those who are attached to established denominations, missionary agencies, and parachurch/nonprofit ministries and occupy positions of leadership. I would welcome even more inquiry, though, into the multiple ricochets and avenues of exchange that shaped American evangelicalism from the 1970s forward—those that brought Latinos to the United States, for example, and with them additional lines of communication about human rights issues, religious freedom concerns, and political lobbying on national and international fronts.

And how did the desire of my own relatives, tucked away in the Canadian hinterlands, to fight for people of faith in Ukraine draw them into the North American evangelical "mainstream" and by extension inform and even alter that mainstream's cultural and political agenda in the ages of Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Trump? Put another way, by looking to evangelicalism's outreach and advocacy abroad, how might we reconsider the ethnic hues and priorities of evangelicalism on our recent domestic terrain? The journey toward personal salvation is, in evangelical discourse, often equated to the immigrant experience of having to remake oneself and find new purpose, meaning, and status in the face of dislocation. How, one might ask in reply, has the immigrant experience reoriented the discourse (political included), mission, and outlook of American evangelicalism in the late modern era?

With that—and with tasty varenyky, holubtsi, borscht, and nalisniki (cheese crepes) on the brain—I will close by once again saying thanks to Lauren Turek for writing such an important book. It is one that historians of American religion, foreign policy, and politics should wrestle with for quite some time.

Review of Lauren Frances Turek. *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*

Christopher Cannon Jones

In July 2020, the Commission on Unalienable Rights released its first report. The commission, established a year earlier under the direction of U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, was tasked with "furnish[ing] advice to the Secretary for the promotion of individual liberty, human equality, and democracy through U.S. foreign policy." Among other things, the commission identified "property rights and religious freedom" as "foremost among the unalienable rights that government is established to secure" and that the United States ought to promote in its foreign policy.¹

The history of how religious freedom came to be central to American understandings of human rights is the subject of Lauren Turek's new book, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*. Turek's book goes a long way toward making sense of the Commission on Unalienable Rights' report and of the existence of the commission itself. More broadly, it charts the evolution of evangelical thinking about human

rights during the final decades of the twentieth century and shows the ways in which conservative Protestants marshalled their burgeoning domestic political power to influence U.S. foreign policy.

Turek argues that American evangelicals in the 1970s and 1980s "evinced an enduring interest in foreign affairs rooted in their commitment to global evangelicalism" and formed an important political lobby that influenced U.S. foreign policy under the Carter and Reagan administrations. She positions her book as a complement and counterpart to much recent work in two seemingly disparate subfields: diplomatic history and American religious history. Readers of *Passport* will likely see her work as an extension of "the religious turn" in diplomatic history advanced by Andrew Rotter, Melani McAlister, Andrew Preston, and others.² Turek adds additional layers to that work, tracing the rise of an evangelical foreign policy lobby in the later years of the Cold War.

Her more important historiographical contribution might be to the subfield of American religious history, where much recent work on religion and politics has focused on the emergence of the Religious Right as a powerful force in domestic politics. But Turek focuses instead "on how foreign missionary work contributed to the creation of an influential evangelical lobby with distinct interests in the trajectory of U.S. foreign relations" (7). American evangelicals, she insists, were interested not only in social issues at home, but also in foreign policy and human rights abroad.

In tracing the activities of missionaries in Europe, Africa, and Latin America and the transnational ties those activities fostered between American and international evangelicals, Turek joins other recent scholars in locating American religious history beyond the geographical borders of the United States.³ She examines the role the international evangelical community played in fostering concern about religious oppression in totalitarian states. When combined with the "burgeoning domestic political power of the Christian right" in the 1970s and 80s, this growing international awareness gave rise to a new, distinctly evangelical understanding of human rights and, ultimately, a new Christian foreign policy.

To Bring the Good News to All Nations is relatively short and straightforward. The book has just 188 pages of text and is divided into six chapters. The first three chapters lay the groundwork for the latter three, tracing the global expansion of evangelical Christianity in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The book picks up where David Hollinger's 2017 *Protestants Abroad* leaves off, focusing on those evangelicals in the 1960s and 1970s who picked up where more liberal, mainline Protestants left off in postwar America.

As liberal theologians began retreating from the imperialist missions of earlier decades in the face of self-determination and decolonization movements around the globe, conservative evangelicals—"a pluralistic movement" Turek defines as including not only Southern Baptists and the Presbyterian Church of America, but also Pentecostal denominations and other charismatic Christian groups—reaffirmed their commitment to fulfilling Christ's Great Commission to preach the gospel to every nation. Though evangelicals sought to continue and expand the global missionary efforts abandoned by mainline Protestants, they also attempted to learn from the critiques leveled at and by their liberal counterparts. To that end, evangelical missionaries planted churches throughout the Global South

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not as “colonial extensions” of American churches, but as independent national denominations on an equal footing with American evangelicals. Allowing “indigenous” control of local churches around the world was central to the creation of an international evangelical community.

In one of the book’s strongest chapters, Turek explores evangelicals’ use of communications technology to nurture and sustain that global network of believers. Organizations like the International Congress on World Evangelization (ICOWE) utilized radio and television both to connect evangelicals in the United States with their coreligionists around the world and to circumvent the restrictions placed on Christian communities in the Soviet Union and other totalitarian states. The system worked both ways: evangelical radio and tape cassette ministries could relay messages to isolated Christian groups behind the Iron Curtain and could also learn more about the lives and experiences of those Christians living under repressive regimes that restricted their religious rights.

As they learned more about these Christians, American evangelicals grew increasingly concerned about a perceived increase in human rights violations in communist countries, especially regarding religious freedom. Taking advantage of the newfound political power of the religious right in the United States, these evangelicals began lobbying government officials and organizations to advocate for international religious liberty. In this way, a distinctly evangelical understanding of human rights and religious freedom emerged, one that ultimately found receptive audiences in the Carter and Reagan administrations.

The final three chapters of the book provide case studies of evangelical advocacy in three regions: Soviet Russia, Guatemala, and South Africa. In Ronald Reagan, evangelical Christians had finally found a president they believed supported their vision of human rights and foreign policy. As the Cold War waned during the 1980s, evangelicals publicized both “repression and revival in Russia and Eastern Europe” and advocated for Baptist and Pentecostal Christians living in the Soviet Union (97). Evangelical lobbyists and their allies in Congress pressured the Reagan administration to assist Soviet evangelical families seeking refuge at the U.S. Embassy and to prioritize religious freedom in the State Department’s foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration’s anticommunist agenda and the global evangelical network worked together to draw American support for the coup staged by José Ríos Efraín Montt in Guatemala. Ríos Montt was a member and leader of *el Verbo*, a neo-Pentecostal church first planted by California-based missionaries in the 1970s. Though he “pledged to bring Christian moral precepts to bear on the problems” of Guatemala, he ultimately proved to be a brutal dictator, authorizing the “disappearance” of thousands of political enemies. In spite of mounting evidence of these human rights abuses, U.S. evangelical leaders turned a blind eye and believed Ríos Montt when he insisted it was leftist guerillas in Guatemala who were actually responsible for continued violence in the Central American country. Turek uses this case study to highlight the ascendancy of “religious freedom” as *the* central human right, and to point out its sometimes deadly consequences.

The final chapter of Turek’s book focuses on U.S. evangelical responses to the problem of apartheid in South Africa. Though not without their own mixed record on race and civil rights, white U.S. evangelicals tended to support efforts to peacefully dismantle South African systems of segregation. But as a counter to the secular “Marxist”

position of those insisting on an immediate end to apartheid, evangelicals favored a more gradual approach, one that prioritized religious freedom and helped prevent a communist takeover of the nation. Collectively, the three case studies highlight the ways in which the evangelical vision of human rights intersected with the forces of secularism, race, and Cold War politics around the world.

Turek’s conclusion connects the developments of the 1970s and 80s to events in the 1990s and 2000s, including the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and Sudan Peace Act of 2002. In Turek’s telling, these legislative achievements of evangelical activism convincingly represent the culmination of the foreign policy lobbying that emerged in the final years of the Cold War. In light of even more recent events, including the creation of the Commission on Unalienable Rights in 2019, we might take those connections even further.

If Turek’s book provides important historical perspective on how the vision of religious freedom and foreign policy presented in the report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights came to be, it also leaves some questions unanswered. That Secretary of State Pompeo would embrace and advocate such a view makes sense. Pompeo is a devout member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and former deacon and Sunday school teacher. He fits the mold of earlier lobbyists and state officials described in *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*.

If Turek’s book provides important historical perspective on how the vision of religious freedom and foreign policy presented in the report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights came to be, it also leaves some questions unanswered. That Secretary of State Pompeo would embrace and advocate such a view makes sense. Pompeo is a devout member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and former deacon and Sunday school teacher.

What is perhaps more surprising is the involvement of those beyond the bounds of conservative evangelical Protestantism on the Commission. The Commission on Unalienable Rights is headed by chairperson Mary Ann Glendon, a Roman Catholic Harvard Law professor who briefly served as the United States Ambassador to the Holy See during the final years of George W. Bush’s administration. Other members include at least two other Catholics, as well as Jewish, Muslim, and Mormon scholars and activists. Turek’s book focuses exclusively on “modern U.S. evangelicals” and leaves unexplored what role, if any, those outside of that group may have played in advancing religious freedom as a central tenet of American foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s.

Several scholars have traced the tenuous ties nurtured by evangelical leaders of the Religious Right with Latter-day Saints and Catholics during this era. Historian Neil Young, for instance, has analyzed the common cause evangelicals found with Mormons and Catholics in opposing communism, denouncing secularism, and advocating against the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, and gay marriage. But these ecumenical coalition-building efforts by leaders of the Religious Right were often undermined by theological disagreement and deeply rooted anti-Mormonism and anti-Catholicism. Mutual distrust and hesitancy to embrace ecumenicalism, then, was balanced alongside a broadly shared social conservatism in the United States.⁴

Were these relationships also nurtured in overseas mission fields and foreign policy lobbying in Washington, DC? Turek offers hints that, at least in Latin America, Catholics were seen as foes of evangelical foreign policy. But what of Latter-day Saints, whose own expansive global growth occurred during the very same period covered in the book? Mormons, like their evangelical counterparts, expanded their missionary efforts and deployed humanitarian aid to Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa during the latter half of the twentieth century. Moreover, several Latter-day Saints served in the

Reagan administration and in the U.S. House and Senate, occupying positions of power and influence in shaping U.S. foreign policy.⁵

How did those evangelicals described in Turek's book respond to and engage with their Mormon colleagues? Did the competition for converts introduce additional strains, or did the two find common cause in advancing religious freedom both at home and abroad? To raise these questions is not to criticize what Lauren Turek has accomplished in her book. Rather, it is intended to highlight and praise the ground she has laid for future scholars. This is perhaps the signal accomplishment of the book: Turek not only advances what we know about religion and U.S. foreign policy, her research also provokes additional questions and suggests new lines of inquiry about American religion and politics at home and abroad.

Notes:

1. *Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights*, United States Department of State, 26 August 2020. Available online at <https://www.state.gov/report-of-the-commission-on-unalienable-rights/>.
2. Andrew Preston, "The Religious Turn in Diplomatic History," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed., ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge, UK, 2016), 284–303; Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947–1964* (Ithaca, NY, 2000); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2001); Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, 2012).
3. See, for instance, Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY, 2015); David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ, 2017); and Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (New York, 2018).
4. Neil J. Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (Oxford, UK, 2016).
5. On Mormon growth during this period and its expanding political and social influence, see Robert Lindsey, "The Mormons: Growth, Prosperity and Controversy," *New York Times*, January 12, 1986. For work that begins to answer some of the questions outlined above, see Nathan B. Oman, "International Legal Experience and the Mormon Theology of the State, 1945–2012," 17–36; and J.B. Haws, "The Romney Lens: A Bifocal Approach to Mormonism, American Religion, and Politics in the Past Half-Century," 81–103, both in *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism Since 1945*, ed. by Patrick Q. Mason and John G. Turner (Oxford, UK, 2016).

Review of Lauren Frances Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*

Kelly J. Shannon

Lauren Turek's *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is a deeply researched and persuasively argued book that makes a significant contribution to our understanding of American evangelicals' relationship with and influence on U.S. foreign relations since the 1970s. It is also very timely. In July 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that U.S. human rights policy henceforth would prioritize the rights to property and religious freedom—upending decades of American policy and flouting the international community's more capacious approach to human rights that dates back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹ That Pompeo is an evangelical Christian matters a great deal to how he defines human rights, and Turek's book explains why.²

To Bring the Good News to All Nations traces how American evangelicals' international evangelizing

activities in the late 1960s and 1970s ultimately led to their human rights activism, primarily on behalf of religious freedom, and foreign policy lobbying in the 1980s and beyond. Based on an impressive array of sources, including archives in the United States, Guatemala, and South Africa, the book argues persuasively that "pursuing global evangelism under the banner of human rights enabled U.S. evangelical Christian groups to exercise influence on U.S. foreign relations, including decisions on trade, aid, military assistance, diplomatic exchanges, and bilateral negotiations with allies and adversaries alike. In this way, internationalist evangelical groups transformed society, culture, and politics at home as well as abroad" (7).

While many historians have written about evangelicals' growing political influence in the United States since the 1970s, Turek breaks new ground by examining that influence through the lens of international affairs to explain exactly how it evolved. She explains that, as mainline Protestant churches stepped back from overseas missionary work in the wake of decolonization, evangelicals took up the missionary mantle. In response to anti-colonial nationalist movements, however, American and European evangelicals who wished to spread their religion developed new strategies so that local churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere could play a more central role in global evangelism. They simultaneously embraced communications technology and mass media to connect with "unreached" populations and fellow evangelicals in "hostile" nations, like those of the Eastern bloc.

Through these efforts, evangelicals in the United States and elsewhere created a transnational community of believers with an increasingly cohesive set of core values and a coordinated strategy for proselytizing. According to Turek, the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization and its resulting Lausanne Covenant—"a set of fourteen principles intended to guide the renewed crusade for world evangelization"—marked the key moment when this global evangelical mission coalesced (25–26).

United by shared principles and equipped with the tools of an increasingly sophisticated transnational media strategy, American evangelicals became increasingly drawn to foreign policy through their participation in global evangelism. Turek argues that communications with fellow evangelicals around the globe taught American evangelicals about the challenges their co-religionists faced in other countries, including persecution in communist countries. Meanwhile, the global human rights movement gained influence in the 1970s, and born-again Christian Jimmy Carter embraced human rights as a centerpiece of his successful 1976 presidential campaign. When President Carter's human rights policies failed to satisfy American evangelicals, they developed their own, biblically derived definition of human rights, as Turek demonstrates. Evangelicals recognized the utility of human rights rhetoric for their own cause and began to use the language of human rights to form a foreign policy lobby.

As Turek's book demonstrates, American evangelicals' approach to human rights differed significantly from that of the mainstream international human rights movement and human rights law. The book could do more to explain how evangelicals' human rights concepts diverged from the dominant concepts of universal human rights during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet those already familiar with the history of the international human rights movement will recognize in Turek's analysis that evangelicals' definition of human rights departed significantly from universalist concepts. The mainstream movement was largely secular and defined human rights as universal, deriving from the simple fact that a person is born human, not from any higher power. Starting with the UDHR in 1948 and continuing with additional international human rights

covenants and legal instruments developed in the 1960s and after, the mainstream international movement embraced a wide array of rights as human rights, ranging from civil and political rights to social, cultural, and economic rights. Neither the UDHR nor international human rights law elevated any single right to a position of primacy.

In contrast, according to Turek, evangelicals developed a Bible-based conception of human rights that asserted that all rights derived from God. To them, the most important human right was the right to religious freedom—not only freedom of conscience, but also freedom to practice religion, which in essence meant evangelicals’ right to proselytize. It was on this self-interested basis that evangelical groups began pushing the U.S. government to focus more forcefully on religious freedom. By the time Reagan became president, such lobbying efforts had become increasingly successful.

The first half of Turek’s book, chapters 1 through 3, traces the development of the global evangelical community, its mission, its media strategies, and its conception of human rights. The second half of the book, chapters 4 through 6, centers on particular foreign policy issues around which American evangelicals mobilized in the 1980s and early 1990s: religious freedom for evangelical Christians in the Soviet bloc, support for an evangelical dictator who took power in Guatemala, and divided evangelical opinion on South African apartheid.

Chapter 4 traces the evangelicals’ campaigns for religious freedom for Christians in the Soviet bloc in the late 1970s and 1980s, which was inspired by the successful Jewish American campaign for the rights of Soviet Jews. As Turek explains, the evangelical lobby not only found receptive policymakers in Congress, the State Department, and Ronald Reagan’s White House, but their efforts also emboldened evangelicals in the Eastern bloc to resist their persecution. When the communist governments of Eastern Europe fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union itself collapsed in 1991, American evangelicals’ earlier foreign policy activism and the communications networks they built in the region laid the groundwork for further evangelizing in Eastern Europe and Russia in the post-Cold War era.

Chapter 5 then takes the reader to Guatemala in the 1980s. This chapter is the one that clearly demonstrates just how much American evangelicals’ definition of human rights diverged from that used by the mainstream international human rights movement. In fact, one might argue that evangelicals’ use of the term “human rights” in this period did not really refer to human rights at all. In this chapter, Turek traces how American evangelicals supported the Reagan administration’s attempts to provide military aid to the Guatemalan dictator, José Efraín Ríos Montt, who seized power in a military coup in 1982.

Congress had blocked military funding to Guatemala in 1977 because of the country’s poor human rights record, and it resisted Reagan’s attempts to reinstate aid to Ríos Montt. His new government committed “rampant human rights abuses” against “leftist political activists, guerrillas, and Mayan civilians,” and his regime was considered a “particularly brutal episode” in Guatemala’s decades of civil conflict (125). While the Reagan administration saw Ríos Montt as a potential Cold War ally, Turek asserts that American evangelicals supported the dictator because he belonged to *el Verbo*, a “neo-Pentecostal church that missionaries from the Eureka, California-based Gospel Outreach Church had founded in 1976 and continued to direct” (124). Because Ríos Montt offered the global evangelical movement an opportunity to spread the gospel in Central America, American evangelicals hypocritically (this is my word, as Turek is remarkably evenhanded in

her analysis) ignored the dictator’s brutal human rights violations and instead, “aided his regime directly through public outreach, fundraising, and congressional lobbying” (126). Fortunately, Congress remained steadfast in its refusal to provide aid to Ríos Montt, and the dictator was overthrown in another coup in 1983.

Turek’s purpose in this chapter is to argue “that connections between evangelicals in the United States and in Guatemala influenced U.S. relations with the Ríos Montt regime and the response of the Guatemalan government to U.S. policies” (126). Despite the author’s intention, what this chapter really does is to illustrate how actors could co-opt the language of human rights in such a way that they actually supported the perpetuation of human rights abuses. Evangelicals insisted that only *one* human right—the right to evangelize—truly mattered, and that, coincidentally, was the one that benefitted “their most deeply cherished objectives” (150). This claim allowed them to justify to themselves overlooking or downplaying horrific violence directed against people who were not part of their religious community, but their actions only betray the hollowness of their human rights rhetoric and show how meaningless human rights can become when certain

groups co-opt human rights rhetoric for their own ends. The story in Turek’s book may offer a chilling preview of what is to come should Secretary Pompeo’s definition of human rights continue to dominate U.S. foreign policy into the 2020s.

Finally, chapter 6 traces American evangelicals’ divided opinion on the anti-apartheid movement. Some vehemently opposed the movement, while others supported it; but Turek argues that

“white U.S. evangelicals in the 1980s on the whole tended to support peaceful efforts to reform or dismantle apartheid, a stance that aligned them with the Reagan administration” (152). They understood apartheid “as a hindrance to their efforts to achieve the Great Commission,” but they also saw the African National Congress (ANC) and anti-apartheid activists as a Marxist threat to South Africa (152). Therefore, they used their connections with South African Baptists and Pentecostals, as well as moderate and conservative anticommunist leaders like Bishop Isaac Mokoena, to “provide moral backing to Republican leaders who voted against sanctions” (154). Although this stance ultimately put the evangelicals on the losing side of the sanctions debate, Turek’s chapter does much to illustrate the ways in which American evangelicals used their global religious connections and growing political clout to influence U.S. policy debates over apartheid. These activities formed the basis for continued evangelical policy engagement into the twenty-first century.

In all, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is an impressively researched, well-written, persuasively argued book that makes a significant contribution to the field of U.S. foreign relations history. Turek clearly demonstrates the importance of religion and non-state actors to U.S. foreign relations. She shows, particularly, how religiously oriented Americans engage with the wider world and how lobby groups influence the policymaking process. Turek also demonstrates the shifting, multiple definitions of human rights and how human rights language can be wielded by different groups, sometimes for purposes very much contrary to the spirit of human rights.

Some additional context would have made the book even stronger in a few areas. Analyzing the historical connection between white supremacy and white evangelical Christianity in the United States would have helped to unpack further white American evangelicals’ various stances on the anti-apartheid movement. Similarly, women

While many historians have written about evangelicals’ growing political influence in the United States since the 1970s, Turek breaks new ground by examining that influence through the lens of international affairs to explain exactly how it evolved.

and gender are absent from the book. One wonders what role, if any, evangelical women as a distinct group played in the story Turek tells, since they played a significant role in American domestic politics at the time.

It also would be helpful to know how American evangelicals' approach to human rights compared to other religious groups in the same period. Conservative Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, rejected universal human rights and instead declared that human rights derive from God and the Koran.³ One also wonders how the secular universal human rights movement at the time responded to evangelicals' human rights campaigns. But these are minor quibbles with what is an excellent book. Turek's fine analysis has done much to advance the study of global evangelism, the rise of the evangelical foreign policy lobby, and how Americans have dealt with the thorny issue of human rights since the 1970s.

Turek's work adds an important new dimension to religion's role in the politics of the New Right in the late Cold War. Scholars often examine the rise of conservative evangelism in U.S. politics as an almost exclusively domestic phenomenon, but Turek convincingly argues that it had a formative global context.

Notes:

1. Pranshu Verma, "Pompeo Says Human Rights Policy Must Prioritize Property Rights and Religion," *New York Times*, July 16, 2020, updated July 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/us/politics/pompeo-human-rights-policy.html>; and United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.
2. Edward Wong, "The Rapture and the Real World: Mike Pompeo Blends Beliefs and Policy," *New York Times*, March 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/30/us/politics/pompeo-christian-policy.html>.
3. Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, September 19, 1981, <http://www.alhewar.com/ISLAMDECL.html>; and The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, August 5, 1990, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instreet/cairodeclaration.html>.

Evangelical Internationalism in the Human Rights Moment

Vanessa Walker

The 1970s were a time of change and uncertainty for American society, a time that raised questions about America's place in the world. Much of the new scholarship on the decade has explored U.S. foreign policy through the tectonic shifts in the international system, from the splintering of the bipolar world and decolonization, to the revolution in global markets and finance, to the human rights revolution. There is also a robust literature on the New Right and on conservative ascendancy in U.S. domestic politics in the 1970s and 80s. Lauren Frances Turek brings these disparate literatures together in exciting and important new ways in *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, an examination of evangelical internationalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

The same forces that shaped the human rights moment of the 1970s—decolonization and the growing power of the Global South, globalization, and the erosion of a bipolar world order—also led to new evangelical engagement in international affairs. Turek argues that like many Americans, evangelical Christians entered the decades deeply ambivalent about the changes wrought by the tumultuous 1960s. Their anxieties, particularly about reaching the un-proselytized in a rapidly changing world, galvanized a global network of evangelicals dedicated to missionary work. Evangelical Christians were also early to recognize the utility of new human rights language to their international agenda, adopting and transforming it in the 1970s to reflect a conservative worldview.

Evangelical groups increasingly presented freedom of conscience—understood as the freedom to practice and profess one's religious beliefs—as the foundational human right. Their Christian faith led them to believe that salvation in the name of Jesus Christ was the only real basis for human rights. Thus, the freedom to worship and bear witness was the most urgent and vital aspect of any human rights policy. "When Christian interest groups blended their religious beliefs and conservative political ideology," Turek writes, "they added their new but powerful voice to the national discourse about U.S. foreign relations" (11). As she argues, evangelical networks influenced U.S. policies on trade, foreign military aid, and bilateral relations in the 1970s and 1980s, and ultimately shaped the United States' human rights policy to better fit conservative political objectives.

Evangelicals' growing engagement with international dynamics as a core aspect of their ability to proselytize resulted in a growing attentiveness to U.S. foreign policies among the Christian right. Mobilizing the emergent conservative lobby that took shape in the 1970s, they began to advocate for specific foreign policies that would advance their global mission. Turek reveals how evangelical actors carefully and deliberately cultivated relationships with politically influential co-religionists, encouraging them to develop their own faith networks. Evangelical groups hosted congressional prayer breakfasts, creating ties with and among policymakers and encouraging them in turn to create their own prayer groups and networks with politically influential people.

Congressional leaders then took similar approaches on overseas delegations or in diplomatic meetings, offering to pray together with foreign politicians and arranging for them to join the weekly congressional prayer breakfasts when they visited Washington. Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, after twice attending these breakfasts during visits to Washington, reportedly "started his own prayer breakfast in Ethiopia and appointed a committee 'to discuss how these links of friendship through the Spirit of Christ can be developed among the leaders of all Africa'" (41). These networks, which encompassed relationships among ordinary believers and political elites around the world, played a critical role in shaping evangelical activism in U.S. foreign policy.

Turek's work adds an important new dimension to religion's role in the politics of the New Right in the late Cold War. Scholars often examine the rise of conservative evangelism in U.S. politics as an almost exclusively domestic phenomenon, but Turek convincingly argues that it had a formative global context. She notes that "although domestic issues played a central role in mobilizing the Christian right—and as such, dominate the literature—international and foreign policy concerns also held significance for evangelicals and inspired them to greater involvement in politics" (73).

Turek goes beyond a narrow focus on anti-communism and resistance to détente. Her work reveals that concerns about evangelizing the decolonizing world and individual relationships with co-religionists resulting from missionary networks facilitated a strong internationalist outlook and mobilized grassroots evangelical activism that spurred increasing political engagement by the religious right. By the advent of the Reagan administration, this political engagement had transformed into a coherent and powerful religious lobby that shaped the Republican party's approach to both domestic cultural issues and foreign relations.

Indeed, Turek's work powerfully illustrates how global grassroots activism operates simultaneously on a domestic and international level. Adding to a literature

that has focused primarily on left-liberal activism, Turek meticulously traces the threads of interpersonal relationships, institutional collaborations, and technological innovations that served as nodes in a global network. Evangelicals from the United States and Western Europe were attentive to the fact that the locus of global Christianity was moving south and honed their efforts to connect with indigenous co-religionists and developed outreach that sought to mitigate perceptions of cultural chauvinism that had marred evangelizing efforts in the past. This approach, Turek shows, “greatly increased the knowledge about the lives of believers in other nations,” which “encouraged greater evangelical attention to international affairs and the domestic political climates of foreign countries, in as much as they effected [sic] missionary work or the freedom to practice Christianity” (70–71).

Despite their different agendas and motivations, conservative evangelicals’ strategies are remarkably familiar from the more frequently studied left-liberal human rights networks. The relationships between Congress and evangelical networks parallel those among liberal ecumenical organizations during the same period. Groups like the National Council of Churches, Christians and Laity Concerned, the Washington Office on Latin America, and the Friends National Legislative Committee all used global religious networks in similar ways to circulate information, build congressional alliances, and lobby for foreign policies rooted in faith-based visions of a moral foreign policy. Left-liberal religious groups were essential in drafting landmark human rights legislation, including the so-called Harkin Amendment to the 1975 Foreign Aid Act, which linked U.S. economic assistance to the human rights record of the recipient country.

Despite their very different political outlooks, liberal and conservative groups shared similar critiques of U.S. human rights policies and diplomacy. Advocates from both evangelical Christian networks and leftist solidarity networks, for example, were impatient with the quiet diplomacy often used by the Ford, Carter, and Reagan administrations in advocating on behalf of particular human rights cases. Government officials saw quiet, bilateral talks as effective at gently prodding for the release of specific religious or political prisoners. Advocates distrusted this approach, portraying it as an abandonment of human rights objectives in the face of power politics. That so many of the same debates and obstacles characterized nongovernment groups’ relations with Congress and presidential administrations regardless of their political alignments shows us the persistent challenges of instrumentalizing human rights in foreign policy. Advocate discontents with human rights policy were not purely partisan, but rather point to deeper dilemmas in the political mobilization of rights language and policy—dilemmas involving consistency, priorities, and strategies.

At its core, this work raises important questions about the relationship between religion and human rights. One of the more compelling threads that Turek reveals is that of evangelical concern with cultural chauvinism in the late Cold War, which echoed broader debates about human rights as cultural imperialism or Western hegemony. This awareness among evangelicals stemmed from the realization that the decolonizing world and the global South were shifting the Christian world southward, and American evangelicals needed new strategies and messages to connect with them. Turek documents how evangelical leaders reflected on the harmful legacies of Western missionaries and the barriers to

evangelizing that this legacy posed. Much like the concept of human rights itself, the universality of the Christian gospel was laden with the cultural baggage of centuries of Western domination and colonial rule.

Even with their newfound sensitivity to cultural hegemony and efforts to empower and amplify indigenous voices in their global networks, however, evangelicals’ concern for religious liberty often came at the expense of other essential freedoms and rights. Turek reveals that conservative evangelicals focused their human rights efforts almost exclusively on freedom of conscience, developing a “limited and particularistic perspective on human rights abuses in the Soviet bloc and the Global South, which they used to marshal support for their foreign policy positions” (8). The foundation of evangelical engagement with human rights was their belief that all rights were derived from God. “Evangelicals believed religious liberty—freedom to evangelize—was the core human right because they saw salvation as the basis for human freedom and the truest cure for man’s suffering” (150).

While taking their activism and intentions seriously, Turek conscientiously details the limits of their advocacy based on this premise. She argues, for example, that Guatemalan dictator José Ríos Montt’s Christian faith and anti-communism allowed U.S. evangelicals to imagine him as part of their mission of bringing salvation to the un-proselytized. Yet it also allowed them to turn a blind eye to the gross violations of rights perpetrated by his government, particularly the massacre of the Mayan people. “In their view, defeating communism ensured universal religious freedom; universal religious freedom provided the cornerstone for all other human rights” (187). Thus, their elevation of religious liberty not only subordinated other human rights, it actively supported state violence resulting in brutal human rights violations.

Similarly, in South Africa, Turek details the diversity of perspectives among evangelicals about apartheid. Even as conservative evangelicals increasingly moved against apartheid, they focused their criticism on the racial regime as a hindrance to the Great Commission rather than a basic denial of human dignity and freedom (152). “The evangelistic mission, rather than the pursuit of social justice, defined U.S. evangelical engagement with South Africa between 1970 and 1994,” Turek concludes (180).

The narrow focus of evangelical human rights advocacy raises an important question about when and how to separate human rights from faith-based moralism. Turek herself is cautious in calling these evangelical networks a “human rights movement” or “human rights activism.” She instead emphasizes the utility of human rights language and rhetoric to the conservative Christians at the center of her work. She notes that it was precisely the “fluidity” of human rights “in concept and praxis” in the 1970s that allowed evangelicals to mold it effectively to their purposes as they fashioned a “conservative Christian foreign policy agenda” (10).

Human rights movements are often selective in their concerns and targets—it would be impossible (and ineffective) to focus equally on every rights violation everywhere. The relative importance of different types of rights is a perennial debate among activists and policymakers alike. Further, religious motivations and worldviews are not mutually exclusive to human rights activism or thinking. It is precisely the resonance that the modern language of human rights has with many world religions that gives it legitimacy and coherence in a diverse

Evangelicals’ growing engagement with international dynamics as a core aspect of their ability to proselytize resulted in a growing attentiveness to U.S. foreign policies among the Christian right. Mobilizing the emergent conservative lobby that took shape in the 1970s, they began to advocate for specific foreign policies that would advance their global mission.

world. Yet Turek's work also seems to suggest that a vision of rights can become so narrow and tied to a specific creed or faith that it ceases to advance human rights in any meaningful way.

To Bring the Good News to All Nations is a thoughtful, lucidly written study of how activist networks are built and exert influence at the nexus of international and domestic politics. The book adeptly treats conservative evangelicals and their beliefs with sensitivity even while still evaluating them critically, providing a model for other scholars interested in similar topics. Moreover, her work powerfully argues for the importance of religious institutions and actors in U.S. foreign and domestic politics.

This work will no doubt serve as a point of departure for other works exploring the relationship between religion and human rights in U.S. and international politics. What would the 1970s human rights moment look like, for example, if we explored the synergies and tensions of liberal and conservative religious organizations together? What might a closer look at Jimmy Carter's Baptist faith in the context of his foreign policy reveal about the potentials and limits of a Christian foundation to human rights policy? How did evangelicals in the Global South harness human rights for their own political ends? These are just some of the questions that Turek's work invites us to explore. Ultimately, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* makes a compelling case that you cannot tell the story of conservative ascendancy in the United States or explain Reagan-era U.S. foreign policy without including evangelical internationalism.

Author's Response

Lauren F. Turek

Let me first extend my appreciation to the roundtable participants for reading my work and responding to it with such thoughtful, insightful reviews. It is gratifying to have my book discussed by this particular group of scholars, all of whom have made such significant contributions to their fields of expertise. I am especially thankful that each reviewer encapsulated my argument so cogently while also raising a range of thought-provoking questions that speak to the many intersecting thematic threads that connect our areas of research and offering such a wealth of suggestions for the direction that future research might take. Given the breadth of their reviews, most of my comments here will simply attempt to answer some of the questions raised and to point to exciting published work and work-in-progress of relevance to the themes in the book.

First, one of my core goals in researching and writing this book was to demonstrate that evangelical foreign policy engagement mattered, which is to say that it had a discernible influence on U.S. foreign relations. In making this case, I sought to convey a larger message about the potential power of motivated interest group activism as a force for shaping the trajectory of U.S. policies abroad. We may or may not approve of the goals of the activist groups in question or the outcomes of that activism, but we should not discount their ability to impel change.

Although domestic interest groups and amorphous factors such as religion and culture are generally not the sole determinative factor in any given policy (indeed, it is rare that we could identify one single causal factor for any policy or strategy), we should still seek to account for such factors as we study official policymaking and the manner in which these factors can and have shaped foreign relations

more broadly. These are the busy intersections of domestic politics and foreign policy that offer so many exciting and vibrant avenues for research.

A second goal was to move beyond studies of evangelicalism that focus entirely on the domestic context or that consider evangelical interests abroad only through a narrow lens. I write about evangelical Christians as an outsider to their faith tradition, and even though I do not share their beliefs, I cannot escape the tremendous influence that evangelical culture and evangelicalism has had in shaping our contemporary political world. Thus it seems crucial to me to try to understand this movement and to take note of which populations within it exercise the most power without downplaying its genuine ideological, theological, racial and ethnic, and gender diversity.

Indeed, work on evangelicalism and evangelical internationalism from Melani McAlister, David Swartz, David Kirkpatrick, Brantley Gasaway, and Anthea Butler reminds us that the movement, both historically and in our present moment, is more complex and varied than our current media-inflected impressions might indicate.¹ At the same time, the evidence makes it clear that despite the racial diversity of evangelicalism, especially globally, and despite the role that evangelical women played as activists, the main powerbrokers and opinion leaders in the

events that I discuss in the book were predominately (though not exclusively) politically conservative white men.

Still, by focusing on the changes that decolonization and globalization wrought and on U.S. relations in the Global South, the book does, I hope, shed light on how this demographic slice of evangelicals contended with questions of social justice, race, and imperialism. In so doing, I believe it complements the work I noted above

by contributing to scholarship that expands our focus beyond just domestic culture war issues or the foreign policy implications of Christian Zionism.

I would also note that while there are certainly connections that we might draw between the policy preferences of politically conservative white evangelicals in the period I wrote about (the 1970s through the 1990s) and the policy preferences of politically conservative white evangelicals today, much has also changed in the intervening decades. It may seem glib to say that, but if we are looking for explanations that more fully account for the share of the white evangelical vote that turned out for Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020, we would do well to consider the recent efflorescence of literature on white supremacy and evangelicalism in the United States, as well as writings on evangelicalism and the culture wars since 1994.

I was also eager for the book to contribute to recent scholarship examining and re-examining the international human rights movement of the 1970s and the human rights policies of the Reagan administration in the 1980s. It is here that I do notice particularly consistent and strong links between the evangelicals whom I discuss in the book and the evangelicals who have occupied positions of power in the Trump administration. The book sets out in part to demonstrate how political conservatives—evangelical and otherwise—fashioned human rights language to pursue their foreign policy agenda. I contend that, starting with the Reagan administration, they managed very effectively to reorient the country's human rights policies so that they aligned with politically conservative foreign and domestic policy objectives.

Several of the reviewers noted that Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, has frequently and explicitly conflated "human rights" with "religious freedom" in his speeches

and policy statements. Indeed, in its July 2020 draft report, the State Department Commission on Unalienable Rights (which Pompeo established in 2019) asserted that religious liberty, along with property rights, was “foremost among the unalienable rights that government is established to secure.”² In discussing the report at a release ceremony, and in other speeches on human rights, Pompeo affirmed this perspective and asserted the primacy of religious liberty, suggesting that he and the commission elevated it above other rights.³ This is a narrow interpretation of human rights and, as a policy statement, obviously suggests a desire to greatly diminish the range of rights that U.S. foreign policymakers might seek to protect and promote globally. It is also very much in line with the evangelical vision for human rights, also focused primarily on religious liberty, that the evangelicals I discuss in my book sought to achieve.

In his review, Christopher Jones makes note of this connection, but he also highlights the involvement of Roman Catholics, as well as Muslims, Jews, and Mormons, on the Commission on Unalienable Rights. He asks about the role members of these other faiths played in this project of promoting religious liberty. Although my book focuses on evangelical activism on this issue, I allude to evangelical collaboration with conservative Catholics and other politically conservative faith-based organizations that advocated for religious freedom as part of a narrow human rights agenda for the United States. The Institute on Religion and Democracy, Puebla Institute, and Freedom House all had either Catholic leadership or prominent Catholics on their boards, and representatives of these organizations often testified in Congress or worked alongside evangelical leaders advocating for religious liberty and against totalitarianism.⁴

These connections grew increasingly important by the late 1990s, when evangelicals joined with these other politically conservative faith groups to lobby for the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act. Allen Hertzke’s *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* provides a wonderfully in-depth account of this development.⁵ In her review, Kelly Shannon notes that conservative Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s embraced an understanding of human rights that was similar in some ways to evangelical beliefs (in the sense that they viewed rights as granted by God and not the state). I did not come across evidence of evangelicals engaging with Muslim perspectives on this issue, but it certainly is intriguing to me that political and theological conservatives from a diverse range of faith traditions held similar interpretations of human rights—interpretations that, as I note in the book, politically liberal Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, not to mention many secular Americans, rejected.⁶

I also fully agree with Shannon’s comment that the vision for human rights that evangelicals articulated and pursued in countries such as Guatemala offers a “chilling preview” of what we might see if Mike Pompeo or others of his ilk set U.S. policy. Prioritizing religious liberty above all other rights, as Pompeo has advocated, would in effect degrade all other rights and send a signal to abusive regimes that the United States will not intervene to protect or promote other rights.

Shannon also raises incredibly important questions about gender and white supremacy as they relate to evangelicalism. While I do include a number of evangelical women in the book, such as those who testified in Congress as members of advocacy organizations, wrote letters home from their families’ missionary posts, wrote articles in their denominational magazines, and wrote to their elected

officials, I do not specifically address evangelical gender roles. Few evangelical women occupied official leadership positions, though the book does show that women were involved in a variety of ways in organizing on the issue of religious liberty and in evangelizing abroad (even if not as pastors or ministers). The history of how evangelical women negotiated the gendered and patriarchal dynamics of their faith at this time in different denominations and different parts of the world is fascinating and complex, and there is much wonderful scholarship on gender, evangelicalism, and domestic politics.⁷

Similarly, while the book does address race and conflicts over racism in evangelicalism, particularly with regard to apartheid South Africa, it does not provide a full contextualization of the relationship and long history between evangelicalism and white supremacy in the United States. There is much writing on this topic as well, including some very recent work that sheds great light on our current moment; and surely there is much more to come, given the role conservative white evangelicals played in electing Donald Trump and in supporting white supremacist policies.⁸ Gender and race are both inextricably bound up in the history of evangelicalism, and I am deeply appreciative that Shannon highlights them.

Turning to Darren Dochuk’s review, I will first note that it was particularly gratifying to read about his personal connections with this topic, as it confirms that the trends that I attempt to illuminate in the book were active at the individual and familial level and not just something evangelical elites were discussing. I think Dochuk is very right to point out the penchant that many white U.S. evangelicals have had and do have for authoritarian leadership and to make links between the political and ideological commitments that I describe in the book and the emergence of “a global, anti-global right-wing insurgency” and backlash. Christian nationalism is part of this broader story that I am telling.

Dochuk’s questions about business and businesspeople are also intriguing and important, again, especially in light of our current moment. Pompeo’s version of human rights centers religious liberty and free enterprise as the primary rights. I think there is much room to bring the histories of organizations such as the International Fellowship of Christian Businessmen and the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International to our understanding and analysis of religion and foreign policy (to say nothing of the gendered language and orientation of such groups!). I also agree that examining immigration and ethnicity in more depth would add tremendously to our understanding of contemporary evangelicalism.

Finally, Vanessa Walker helpfully situates the evangelicals I cover within the much larger context of human rights activist organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. Walker, like Shannon, raises the concern that “a vision of rights can become so narrow and tied to a specific creed or faith that it ceases to advance human rights in any meaningful way,” which is exactly why so many of us have responded to the current direction of the State Department’s human rights orientation with alarm. This is also very much how liberal and secular human rights organizations have framed their opposition to conservative and evangelical human rights language since the 1970s.

Walker closes her review with a series of compelling questions. I would be especially interested to explore how Global South evangelicals “sought to harness human rights for their own political ends” and to see works on the history of religion and human rights that encompass the full spectrum of political orientations and faith traditions.

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