To Russia With Fear: American Evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox Church

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues that ambitious American Evangelical leaders built a comprehensive political and religious global vision in the early 1980s that would ultimately lead them to forge strategic transnational connections with their Russian Orthodox counterparts. The secular Soviet Union had been feared as a mortal enemy by American Evangelical leaders; their response to the religious openness that followed its 1991 dissolution was to mobilize millions of dollars and thousands of American missionaries to save the souls of Russians. Initially, this missionizing incurred significant opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church which was seeking to reestablish itself as a cultural force in society. However, key American Evangelical and Russian Orthodox leaders have now set aside theological and cultural differences to work together in response to a new shared fear: saving their respective countries and the world from secularism by defeating the progressive human rights system which underpins liberal democracy.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has been a three-year journey at the University of Washington, but in truth it began in earnest eight years ago at the University of Cambridge in 2014. Yet the actual timeline began in 2002 when I decided to change the trajectory of my life. Numerous people have helped me on this road. I am grateful for a chance to acknowledge their belief in me.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Sarah, who helped me to see that learning to say No is also the best way to say Yes. To Joey, Jack, and Lizzie: I hope you've learned that you can do anything that you set your mind to and genuinely believe in.

Preface

In the waning years of the Soviet Union, and the first decade following its dissolution, American Evangelical missionaries went in great numbers to Russia. When they arrived in Russia, relationships formed between these missionaries and Russian locals. How have these relationships influenced the way American Evangelicals see and understand Russia?

I began to explore aspects of this question, at first unintentionally, when I visited Russia and Ukraine in August, 1992, at age thirteen on a trip with my preacher father and several Evangelical missionaries. We visited Baptist churches that had been heavily persecuted and were unaccustomed to the freedom to openly evangelize. As an American child who had never been outside of North America, the two weeks I spent traveling by rail, bus, and car from Moscow to Kiev and back again, could have been the trip of a lifetime.

This very foreign Russian environment would ultimately become a place of deep significance and conflict in my own life. I ended up living and working in Russia as a high school basketball coach, a missionary, and an ESL teacher. The contradictions, relationships, cultural complexities, and memories of Russia would change my life forever. However, little did I understand on that first trip at age thirteen, that Western-Russian relationships have historically been fraught with cultural difficulties. [1]

The Kievan Rus officially converted to Christianity over a millennium ago under the leadership of Prince Vladimir. Centuries of varying degrees of conflict would follow between Russia and its many neighbors.[2] The Orthodox Russians would fall at the hands of the

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[1] Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 217-231. Riasanovsky's observations here about early Russian-Western relationships still resonate powerfully with my own experience, particularly since I lived for four years in Peter I's, Western-inspired capital, Saint Petersburg. The late Riasanovsky's book is now in its ninth edition, and jointly authored by Mark Steinberg.

[2] Ibid., 17-39.

Mongolian Golden Horde under Genghis Khan and his successors. However, the Dukes of Muscovy rebuilt the Russian state and organized a new power center around Moscow, their so-called Third Rome. Church and state joined together to bind themselves deep into the consciousness of the Russian people.[3] The church itself took the Russian name, *Pravaslavnaya*, translated "Correct Worship."[4]

A Russian idea, *Nashi*, translated as "Ours," closely linked with the idea of both national identity and religious heritage would be sustained through the centuries. It was incarnated in contemporary times during Vladimir Putin's regime through a Kremlin backed nationalist youth organization of the same name. Nashi existed during the years 2004-2013. Its church backed successor youth group, *Network*, explicitly linked Orthodox values with nationalist identity.[5] These movements reflect the longstanding emotions and culture of a threatened, complex, and at times xenophobic nation.

Sixteen years after my first visit to Russia, in autumn 2008, I was in the Republic of Georgia working with a local NGO and Samaritan's Purse, a global humanitarian Christian nonprofit, to study the extent of suffering from the August war with Russia. Our delegation visited Gori, the home town of Josef Stalin, to survey damage from bombs dropped by Russian warplanes during the Ossetian conflict.[6] Close to the newly drawn border with Ossetia, we

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[3] Ibid., 118.

[4] "Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church," June 24, 2013, https://mospat.ru/en/.

[5] Maya Atwal, "Evaluating Nashi's Sustainability: Autonomy, Agency and Activism," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 5 (Jul., 2009): 743-58, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27752299; Tom Balmforth, "Network, Son of Nashi," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty (Network, Son Of Nashi, July 3, 2014), https://www.rferl.org/a/network-russian-youth-group-nashi-/25444358.html.

[6] "Russians Bomb Georgian Town Gori, Several Injured," *Reuters* (Thomson Reuters, August 12, 2008), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-gori/russians-bomb-georgian-town-gori-several-injured-idUSLC34462720080812.

crossed over the front lines to document the insufficiency of the village water supply. The Russians had capriciously moved their lines about fifty meters forward, and local Georgian villagers had to access the water supply under their military supervision. Armored Russian vehicles patrolled the hilltop above us. Somewhat nervous, we quickly held interviews with the village leaders, the local Samaritan's Purse coordinator who was hosting our visit, and the Georgian soldiers who guarded a checkpoint on their own side of the line. We set about taking pictures of the poverty, and the lack of easy access to water that the villagers endured in the aftermath of the brief Russian-Georgian August war.

Upon our return to the United States, we began to raise funds for the needy village. In a large church in the American South, a pastor approached us after our relief appeal was concluded and asked, "Now, why did the Russians name one of their own states, Georgia? Was that something the Communists did?" He was convinced that Georgia was a part of Russia, and that the "Communists" had stolen the name from the American state of the same name. Despite the pastor's lack of geographical and cultural awareness, we successfully raised several thousand dollars from this church.

In the hundreds of Evangelical churches that I have visited across America; Georgia, Armenia, the Baltic States, and Central Asia – even Ukraine, were routinely understood by congregants and their leaders, as a kind of "Russia Lite," if not an actual part of Russia itself. In my experience, Russia as a missionary destination stirs the romantic imagination of American Evangelicals, in ways that Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Latvia, for example, do not. For Evangelicals, Russia is more than a fixed geographical location or state. It can be an idea, a region of the world, even a malevolent or righteous power (depending on the issue and time) but always highly visible as a place to do missionary work. This American Evangelical culture in

which I grew up has now come into its own, rising to the highest levels of political and financial power. During the Trump Administration, its leaders gained ready access to the West Wing through the influence of senior staffers like Stephen Miller and Steve Bannon.[7]

Throughout the Trump years, Evangelicals had an outsized influence on American foreign policy, and created special access to the White House for nations like Hungary that represented "bastions of European white Christianity." In some sense, American Evangelicals have grown up and reached far beyond the boundaries of domestic policy and politics. Their missionary work has made them keenly aware of the world. They know both their transnational allies, and their transnational enemies. American Evangelicals have adopted a global calculative pragmatism.[8]

The embedded questions they have asked me, and the notions of Russia that they have shared, together with my own experiences, have led me to undertake an academic study of the subject. Indeed, this dissertation is in part, an attempt to better understand both the origins and implications of American Evangelical attitudes towards Russia.

This work has at times been a difficult journey for me. Given that as a child I had a front row seat to certain American Evangelical views and practices that as an adult, I would come to view as variously excessive, corrupt, or harmful, I have had to confront personal and difficult memories that have resurfaced while studying members of my own historic "tribe." I have also managed to confront and grapple with a second problem, which stems from the first, my instinctively non-scientific approach to religion, born from a deeply religious background. Since

[7] Interview with Fiona Hill. Personal, April 29, 2022.

[8] Ibid.

that first trip to Russia in 1992, as a thirteen-year-old, I have changed my own views in a variety of social, political, and religious ways.

The danger in these sort of internalized changes, can be a tendency to obscure the past with personal resentments disguised as scholarship. Academic research is not the place to treat such resentments. I am pleased for the reader to know that while aspects of my research have at times stirred shadows of unpleasant memories, they are nothing more than shadows. Rather, the emotional conclusion of this work, has been an immense sense of felt gratitude to have had such early-in-life ground level exposure to a fascinating time of global shift.

Without exception, every research encounter has been pleasant. I have avoided conversations and topics which could have raised political or social controversy. Instead, I have listened, in a quest to let people speak freely and openly about their missionary experiences. In so doing, I have discovered my greatest personal takeaway from this dissertation, that for all the supposed differences of humanity, humans are very similar. We seek lives of peace, fulfillment, and transcendent meaning. In so doing, we grapple with fears instilled at very young ages. The process by which we resolve those fears, is after all, one of the primary reasons for the near universal relevance of religion.

Therefore, it is in the spirit of 'Weberian' axiological neutrality that I have provided this brief glimpse at my past experiences and possible biases.[9] Max Weber famously argues that the researcher must be fully conscious of personal convictions, to avoid substituting these convictions for genuine scientific knowledge. While the acknowledgment of biases can never

[9] Freddy Raphael, "Interpretative Sociology and Axiological Neutrality in Max Weber and Werner Sombart." *Cultural Dynamics* 3, no. 2 (June 1990): 173–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/092137409000300204.

erase them, I do hope that by naming my own, the reader will receive the transparency needed to understand something about the emotions and perspectives inherent in this dissertation.

Two notes for the reader are in order. Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to capitalize "Evangelical," to distinguish my focus group from historic and mainline denominations that have used the word in a classic and theological sense. American Evangelicalism is very large and ethnically diverse. It incorporates many different faith groups, sects, and denominations. In the context of this work, American Evangelicalism is used to describe the theologically strict, socially conservative, and politically active fundamentalist Protestantism popularized across America and around the world by leaders such as Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell. Finally, throughout this work, Russian Orthodox Church will at times be abbreviated as (ROC). American Evangelicalism will at times be abbreviated as (EC).

Chapter 1

Introduction

Thank God for Russia[10]
– Iben Thranholm

American Evangelicals have a history of anti-Russian sentiment that can be traced back to the nineteenth century.[11] After the Bolsheviks toppled the Russian Empire, this sentiment grew. The Soviet Union was feared as a mortal enemy.[12] During the presidency of Donald Trump, approximately thirty years after the end of the Soviet Union, something noticeably changed.[13] Journalists have reported with surprise, that these Evangelicals, the people in America least likely to view any Russian government favorably, have increasingly warmed to Vladimir Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church.[14] Perhaps these sympathies towards Russia would not be a puzzle for journalists, if the cultural aims, political ambition, and missionary zeal of American Evangelicals were as well understood on the global level as they have been on the domestic one.[15]

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[10] Iben Thranholm, "Thank God for Russia Https://T.co/9uelwvivgb," Twitter (Twitter, April 28, 2020), https://twitter.com/IThranholm/status/1255162607104901123?cxt=HHwWhoC6vbbvnesiAAAA.

[11] Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 17-26.

[12] George Sirgiovanni, *An Undercurrent of Suspicion* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 27.

[13] By the mid 2000s, the pronounced anti-Russia tone of apocalyptic speech began to shift to an anti-Islamic narrative. Thomas S. Kidd, "American Christians and Islam After September 11, 2001," In *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*, 144-64 (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), Accessed May 31, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctv39x503.13.

[14] John Burgess, "The Unexpected Relationship between U.S. Evangelicals and Russian Orthodox," *The Christian Century*, August 2, 2018, https://www.christiancentury.org/article/features/unexpected-relationship-between-us-evangelicals-and-russian-orthodox.

[15] C. Stroop, "Russian Social Conservatism, the U.S.-based WCF [World Congress of Families], & the Global Culture Wars in Historical Context," *Political Research Associates*, Feb. 16, 2016.

This story of American Evangelical missionary initiatives in Russia draws on history, religious studies, and international relations theory, as well as original research to show how American Evangelical and Russian Orthodox leaders have set aside theological differences to work towards a shared political goal: saving their respective countries from the progressive human rights system. Kristina Stoeckl argues that American Evangelical and Russian Orthodox leaders are working together to uphold traditional values across the world. She describes these values in part, as opposition to all forms of LGBT rights, euthanasia, restrictions on women's rights, or "the conservative flipside of the progressive human rights system."[16]

In one sense, this means that the goal of any sort of a transnational alliance between American Evangelicals and Russian Orthodox clergy is at once both negative and positive. On the one hand, as Stoeckl points out, the goal is very much to defeat the progressive left. On the other hand, as this dissertation will show, Evangelical leaders and activists, like Scott Lively, whom Stoeckl references, have a much bigger agenda. For Lively, who wrote a letter to Vladimir Putin in which he compared the LGBT movement to the Nazis, it is also to secure and establish the "natural family" as the "essential foundation of all human civilization."[17]

Scott Lively is not well known in the United States. He is not a household name, and has very little domestic following. Yet obscure Evangelical missionaries like him can build significant global profiles and transnational religious influence.[18]

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[16] Kristina Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church as moral norm entrepreneur," *Religion, State and Society*, 44:2, (2016) 132-151, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2016.1194010

[17] Scott Lively, "An Open Letter to President Vladimir Putin," scottlively.net, August 30, 2013, https://www.scottlively.net/2013/08/30/an-open-letter-to-president-vladimir-putin/.

[18] Patsy McGarry, "Banned Anti-Gay Preacher Says Someone Coming to Ireland in His Place," *The Irish Times* (The Irish Times, May 14, 2019), https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/banned-anti-gay-preacher-says-someone-coming-to-ireland-in-his-place-1.3891960.

It is far from proven that missionaries can fundamentally alter historic cultural and religious local identities.[19] However, since local cultures are complex and fluid, their interactions with global forces, including missionary religions, can, at a minimum, produce varying deflections, or unintended shifts of direction, across "historical, legal, and political processes."[20]

One of the most notable of these deflections comes from the missionary encounters that took place between two "ecosystems" at the end of the Soviet Union: the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and American Evangelical missionaries (EC). This concept of "ecosystems" was first introduced as ecological systems theory (EST) by Urie Bronfenbrenner in his widely cited work from 1979.[21] Bronfenbrenner lays out four interdependent systems of child development: microsystem (family), mesosystem (parent-teacher), exosystem (education policy), and macrosystem (societal views on education). Later, the chronosystem would be added, a component of the theory which reflects development that occurs because of significant social interactions and life events (such as a marriage) that involve each of the other four systems. The key to Bronfenbrenner's system was the idea of nesting. Each of these systems is nested within the next higher one in the fashion of a Russian nesting doll.

The concept of ecosystems originates in the field of child psychology, but the application of the theory to network structures has growing relevance across other fields of study. Recent scholarship has adapted Bronfenbrenner's work to "operationalize his theory as a method of network analysis." Ecosystem theory, while not necessarily a holistic explanation for how

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[19] Veronique Altglas, "Introduction," in *Religion and Globalization*, edited by Veronique Altglas (London Routledge, 2010), 9.

[20] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 120-126.

[21] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

networks form relationships, can help us think about the process by which ideational systems collide with, deflect from, or connect to one another.[22]

While working on this PhD at the University of Washington, I personally found myself on the receiving end of just such an ideational deflection between ecosystems. I was given an invitation to speak at the European Leadership Forum on the intellectual origins of American and "Western" concepts of civil liberties.[23] I knew very little about the missionary work of the Forum. I did have friends who had attended, whom I knew during my time at Cambridge, where I had completed my Master's dissertation on the Enlightenment origins of progressive civil liberties. The Forum was to be in Poland, and brought together several thousand young European Christian intellectuals to think about social, religious, and political concerns.

The Covid-19 pandemic struck, and the conference, like so many others, was moved online. I wasn't going to Poland; I was going to Zoom! I gave my talk on a Sunday morning, in May 2020, from the comfort of my bedroom in Georgia. Only about fifty people of the several thousand chose to attend my session. Distracted by my doctoral studies, and everyday survival issues during the worst days of the pandemic, I quickly forgot about the Forum, and moved on. However, shortly after my talk, I was contacted via email by Merzamie Clark, a fellow Washington Husky. Clark had graduated from the UW, done a Fulbright, and started a PhD, before exiting the program. She asked for a Zoom appointment, and I agreed.

In the first five minutes of our meeting, she claimed to have left the UW over anti-Christian bias, and outright persecution. Then she rather abruptly asked me to serve on the board

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[22] Jennifer Watling Neal and Zachary P. Neal, "Nested or Networked?," *Social Development* 22: 722-737. doi:10.1111/sode.12018.

[23] "European Leadership Forum," Home | European Leadership Forum, https://euroleadership.org/.

of her organization, Trinicy, an invitation which I politely declined. Trinicy, she told me was set up recently to defend Christian students from persecution on college campuses. I quickly searched the Trinicy website, and saw that one of her advisors was (and at the time of this writing still is) radical, far right, Russophile, Iben Thranholm, the Danish journalist.[24] Thranholm is closely connected to the ROC, and functions as a Kremlin ally. Her writing is well-known and widespread across far-right ROC websites. [25] A few more questions to Merzamie Clark, revealed that she had been introduced to Thranholm through a network of Eastern European Christians who were closely tied to the European Leadership Forum.

Was this strange approach made to me out of seemingly nowhere done with an ulterior pro-Russia motive? I spoke to a few colleagues and friends who worked in the Department of Defense, who assured me that it was very possible. The Russian propaganda and intelligence machine is sophisticated and has sent agents to target other Christian networks similar to the Forum, such as the "Fellowship," the group which hosts the annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC.[26]

I discovered after further research, to my great surprise, that the Forum is financially underwritten by Scottsdale Bible Church, an Evangelical mega church located in the wealthiest part of the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area.[27] My wife's aunts, uncles, and cousins are long

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[24] "Advisors," TRINICY, http://www.trinicy.org/advisors.html.

[25] "Iben Thranholm Discusses the US and Russia's Role Reversal," The Mike Church Show, April 6, 2017, https://mikechurch.com/iben-thranholm-discusses-us-russias-role-reversal/.

[26] Katherine Stewart, "What Was Maria Butina Doing at the National Prayer Breakfast?," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, July 18, 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/opinion/maria-butina-putin-infiltration.html.

[27] Administrator, "Serve Globally," ScottsdaleBible.com, March 24, 2022, https://scottsdalebible.com/outreach.

time members of this church of more than 7000 weekly parishioners. My doctoral research came far too close to home with this discovery. This odd situation could have placed me directly into board meetings with Iben Thranholm!

The idea that a group influenced by Russia was somehow connected to the missionary outreach of an ordinary suburban church down the street from where our family have spent Christmas holidays was an intensely personal collision of what I had thought to be two self-contained worlds or "ecosystems:" American Evangelical Christianity (EC) and Russian Orthodoxy (ROC). This disconcerting experience with Merzamie Clark and the Forum led me to consider how scholars can understand and explain the phenomenon of EC-ROC collaboration, especially given the complexities of rising nationalisms and government connections on both sides.

This thought leads to a deeper consideration. How can two very different church groups, the EC and ROC find common cause, especially since the two rarely intersect? The EC and ROC have pronounced theological and practical differences. Their worship styles are dissimilar. Culturally, one is rooted in Orthodox Christianity; the other is based in the Western tradition. The roots of the EC are largely Roman Catholic, and flow out of the Protestant Reformation. The ROC traces its founding story to around 988 CE with the conversion and baptism of Prince Vladimir of the Kievan Rus, and to the earlier missionary work of Cyril and Methodius, the Eastern Orthodox saints. In short, in the context of global Christianity, there is little that the ROC and EC groups ostensibly have in common. And yet, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, leaders on both sides have steadily pulled the two ecosystems closer together.

I have written this dissertation by asking two questions. To better understand the present relationship between the EC and ROC, it is important to ask why, when the Soviet Union

dissolved, American Evangelical missionaries went with haste and in extraordinary numbers to Russia. This wave of missionary work led to the formation of deep relationships between leaders of the EC and ROC. Therefore, I have a second question. What are some of the current social and political implications of these relationships?

To answer these questions, I have surveyed appropriate literature in three major fields relative to this subject: Russian and Soviet history, transnational religious studies, and international relations theory. I have heard the stories of Evangelical missionaries who spent time in Russia. I have visited twenty American Evangelical churches or institutions as a participant observer. The groups represent a dynamic cross-section of American Evangelicalism, ranging in size from a few dozen people to thousands. What each group has in common is that each of them finances missionary activities in the former Soviet Union. I chose these groups based on three characteristics. The first was access. It is not simple to approach an Evangelical church or organizations as a scholar from a secular university. Each of these groups allowed me straightforward access without having to defend my research or personal beliefs. For this open attitude, I am grateful to each one. The second characteristic that I worked with was representative consistency. Each of these groups is consistent with mainstream Evangelical ideas such as inerrancy of the Scriptures and the need to support missionary work. Finally, the third characteristic was numerical and locational diversity. I visited groups of all sizes, among rural, semirural, suburban, and urban locations.

I have listened to many conversations about missionary work. I have conducted research in relevant files at the Keston Center of Baylor University, and the Falwell Papers, at the Liberty University Archives. To all of this, I can add a lifetime of personal observations, missionary

work in Russia of my own, and both professional and personal experiences deep inside Evangelical Christianity.

This research journey has brought me to two conclusions. First, and as something of an answer to my first question, elite driven Evangelical missionary activity has continued to shape American society since the decline of progressive mainline denominations in the 1970s. David Hollinger has shown that before the rise of American Evangelical control of religious institutions, Protestant missionaries had long influenced governments and states.[28] In the present era of Evangelical dominance in American Protestantism and conservative politics, the missionary influence continues. It has simply become Evangelical and conservative, rather than mainline and progressive.

It was the strategic vision, planning, and motivation of Evangelical leaders that produced the extraordinary post-Soviet wave of missionaries. The politicization of Evangelical religious work has been transformative, and is currently having global repercussions, as Melani McAlister has shown in the *Kingdom of God Has No Borders*.[29] Indeed, we should expect more values driven politicization from Evangelicals in the future.[30] Chapter Two reveals a secret meeting in the Washington DC area in 1982 whose participants included some of the most powerful American Evangelicals of the day. At this meeting, a manifesto for a vast global political alliance of Christendom was laid out.

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[28] David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton university press, 2017), 298-299.

[29] Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (New York, NY: Oxford university press, 2018), 190.

[30] Samuel L. Perry and Andrew L. Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Kindle, 160.

The American Evangelical-Russian Orthodox alliance that would flower decades later, is in part a product of the decisions taken in this meeting. The powerful people were in the room, the table was set, and the agenda was put forward. It was a moment when one of the most famous Christian leaders of his day, Jerry Falwell, made a final move away from his fundamentalist separatism, and joined consciously with his more collaborative Evangelical counterparts. He also began to push forward strongly towards engagement with historic, ancient churches. The goal of these Evangelical leaders was nothing less than to capture the world politically and socially. In other words, Evangelical missionaries have proven equal to the task of responding to economic, technological and cultural globalization, by also globalizing their religious ideas. Of course, the vision of a worldwide missionary faith is as old as Christianity itself.[31]

My second conclusion is that the missionaries who went to Russia, were largely a ground level cohort of American Evangelicals, committed to acting politically, religiously, and culturally to build a global Christian society. For some, that goal included working with the ROC. This collaboration is part of a global push towards a transnational, politically conservative, cross-denominational form of Christianity. Kristina Stoeckl has described this type of collaboration as "moral norm entrepreneurship," a potent term she uses to classify the increasingly powerful use of transnational, political institutions and organizations by conservative Christian groups such as the EC and the ROC.[32] She has also documented extensively, the increasing alignment and

[31] Andrew Finlay Walls, "The Missionary Movement in Christian History Studies in the Transmission of Faith," in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), Kindle, 108.

[32] Kristina Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur," *Religion, State and Society* 44, no. 2 (February 2016): pp. 132-151, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2016.1194010.

partnership between the ROC and the Russian state.[33]

This dissertation is cross-disciplinary. While it is not strictly an attempt to understand missionary experiences, a significant amount of its research is indeed drawn from missionary experiences. While it contains history, it is not strictly historical. I incorporate elements of three major academic fields: sociology, history, and international relations theory (IR).[34] My work draws on the sociological research of Kristina Stoeckl, which documents the growing transnational connections between Russian Orthodoxy and American Evangelicalism. Stoeckl's research notes that religious networks have used missionaries and clergy to increasingly influence international norms.

To understand the historical influence of transnational missionary work, I have drawn upon the already noted David Hollinger's book, *Protestants Abroad*. Hollinger shows that American missionaries have influenced American policy and politics for well over a century. His work ends in the 1970s with the decline of mainline Protestantism. However, I have found that with the rise of Evangelicals, the political power of missionaries has maintained and possibly even grown over the last half-century.

To understand how missionaries can influence the relationships between governments and states, I have turned to Alexander Wendt's work on the constructivist approach to international relations theory. Wendt shows that non-state actors, and the ideas that they disseminate are factors to consider in understanding the evolution of power dynamics across the world. His Hobbesian-Lockean-Kantian relationship development model is a way to understand how relationships between states might move beyond anarchy into cooperative and mutually

[33] For a near exhaustive treatise on the development of this Russian church-state partnership, see also Kristina Stoeckl, *Russian Orthodoxy and Secularism* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

productive alliances. The Hobbesian world is one of violence and enmity. The Lockean world is one of respect but rivalry. The Kantian world is one of mutually beneficial friendship. this dissertation argues that Wendt's framework can be extended to non-state transnational actors, such as religious organizations. I believe that this framework should become a valuable analytical tool for understanding how the American Evangelical-Russian Orthodox relationship gradually changed after the fall of the Soviet Union.[35]

The diverse strengths of my committee and the Jackson School have helped me lay the groundwork for writing a dissertation that is only an initial attempt at telling a small piece of a much bigger global story that needs to be told. The ultimate audiences for this dissertation are policy makers and scholars who need to know that religion matters. The relevant social science literature across history, IR theory, and religious studies, can, together with the case study of American Evangelical missionaries in post-Soviet Russia, show that there is a grave political cost to ignoring the money, influence, and power of transnational religion. Such ignorance is especially concerning when religious and political power is wielded consciously and strategically by Evangelical elites. In the very real present, in which American society is grappling with the aftermath of the Trump administration, and an ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, the largest war in Europe since WWII, there is also a very evident social and human cost to ignoring strategically wielded religious power.

Post-Communist Russia has become a laboratory to study the social effects of transnational religious connections.[36] In the years leading up to and immediately following the 1991 dissolution

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[35] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 309-312.

[36] Grace Davie, *Sociology of Religion*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 131.

of the USSR, American Evangelical missionaries spread rapidly across former Soviet lands, alongside a resurgence of local, historical religions, such as Russian Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Evangelical leaders prepared, strategized, funded, and mobilized millions of dollars and thousands of missionaries as part of a global effort to export and establish Christian social values in the former Soviet Union.

This dissertation tells a story of religious change and movement centered in a time of rapid globalization. It starts with the final years and ultimate dissolution of the Soviet Union, a moment of swift change for societies, institutions, and leaders across the world.[37] The Soviet Union, ostensibly secular, was meant to become the cultural hub of a global society constructed through ideological conquest built upon the dream of a worker's utopia.[38] It was universalist in vision.[39] An unsustainable economic model and crushing military funding burden, had, by the end of the Soviet period, brought the successor states into a period of economic stagnation accompanied by political uncertainty.[40]

Vladislav Zubok focuses on economic, personality, social models, and ideological factors to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union, but a thread also runs through his work which characterizes the entire Soviet experiment as a case study of strangeness.[41] In this sense, as an

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[37] Louis Sell, *From Washington to Moscow: US-Soviet Relations and the Collapse of the USSR* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 322-337. See also, Robert V. Daniels, *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 372-378.

[38] Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 11-12.

[39] John Lowenhardt, *The Reincarnation of Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 48-49.

[40] Stephen Holmes, "The State of the State in Putin's Russia," in *The State After Communism*, edited by Timothy J. Colton and Stephen Holmes (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 299-301.

[41] Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 343-344.

aberrant, possibly deviant society, the Soviet Union was bound or predestined to collapse. Richard Sakwa echoes this thinking by calling Soviet society "mismodernised."[42]

Some scholars have described the Soviet Union as the omnipotent state and social arbiter. They argue that its collapse and replacement by a re-emergent Kremlin has not led to liberal democracy but rather a steadily less liberal regime.[43] In the post-Communist period this erosion of civil participation has led to a social fatigue among Russians. This fatigue can almost be a pathological syndrome, a kind of participation deficit that springs from a mass loss of trust in society and institutions.[44]

This loss of trust has led to a fear based society. Since the fall of the Soviet Union the new Russian state has acted out of a perceived need for security, and a desire for regional and global power.[45] In the very early days of the Putin era, the Kremlin made a turn away from international conciliatory tendencies, towards a more realist and interest based foreign policy.[46] The wealth and stability gained by Moscow through consolidation of the nation's energy resources has brought about a domestic and foreign policy committed to holding and increasing power using a resurgent heritage and patriotic nationalism, including the use of religious and cultural symbolism.[47] Anita Orban describes Russia as a nation with a "Flat geography in a

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[42] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society* 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 3.

[43] Michael McFaul, Nikolay Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (New York, NY: Brookings Institution Press, 2010). 5

[44] Samuel Greene, *Moscow In Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 5.

[45] Olga Oliker et al., *Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications* (Arlington, VA: Rand Corp., 2009), 5-6.

[46] Allen C. Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), 7-31

[47] Natasha Kuhrt, "Introduction," in *Russia and the World*, ed. by Natasha Kuhrt (London: Routledge, 2013), 28-29.

Hobbesian environment, relative backwardness compared to its rivals, and a size that induced a bi-level deterrence strategy inward and outward."[48]

In his study of how traditions survive stigma and repression, David Gross writes that cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions which had endured on the boundaries of Soviet society, re-emerged in the wake of its collapse.[49] With the Kremlin harnessing these traditions to great effect, and to wield power, dissenting civil movements are under constant repression. Samuel Greene even argues that the current survivalist state of contemporary Russian civil society means that ordinary people see authoritarianism as "lived social experience."[50]

Vladimir Putin's victorious re-election campaign to a third term of the Russian Presidency in Spring of 2012, was a moment marked by mass protests and allegations of deep electoral corruption.[51] His return to formal presidential power was a moment of fundamental deterioration of the post-Cold War relationship between Russia and the West.[52] Putin harnessed ethno-nationalism to great effect. This dissertation ends in the present, in a world still under partial siege from the Covid-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and conflict looming between Russia, the United States, and China, all in the aftermath of what is, at least for the moment, the end of the Trump presidency. And as mentioned, at the time of this writing, Ukraine has been defending itself against a full-scale Russian invasion that launched on February 24th 2022.

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[48] Anita Orban, *Power, Energy, and the New Russian Imperialism* (London: PSI Reports, 2008), 22.

[49] David Gross, *The Past in Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 120-121.

[50] Greene, 226.

[51] Helge Blakkisrud, "Blurring the Boundary between Civic and Ethnic: The Kremlin's New Approach to National Identity under Putin's Third Term," In *The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–2015,* edited by Helge Blakkisrud and Kolstø Pål (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 259.

[52] Fiona, Hill and Clifford Gaddy, "Putin and the Uses of History," *The National Interest*, no. 117 (2012): 21-31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42896424.

Over these thirty years of change, American Evangelical religious engagement in Russia has changed too. As Russia adapted to its post-Communist reality, the initial missionary wave subsided. After the nineties, the missionaries largely went back to America, and the Russian Orthodox Church grew steadily in power and cultural prestige. American Evangelicals adapted, from seeing Russia as an enemy in need of destruction, to a poor friend in need of salvation, to finally a heroic Christian ally with which to collaborate.

American Evangelicals are politically sophisticated, globally connected, and understand the world far better than many scholars and policy makers realize.[53] The buffoonery of stories like the Jerry Falwell Jr. sex scandal, and subsequent fall from his leadership post at Liberty University, and the slapstick group of clergy who surrounded Donald Trump during his presidency, obscure the wealth, power, history, and social perspective of Evangelicals.[54] In other words, due to their wealth and increased global experience, Evangelicals have become cosmopolitan. The seeds of their global power were planted in the late 1970s and the 1980s through the work of groups like the Moral Majority, led by Jerry Falwell.[55] The post-Soviet moment was the flowering of the globalization of politically conservative, Evangelical Christianity, a process that began well before the dissolution of the USSR. This dissertation is a call to both policy makers and academics to better understand the global political significance of missionary work. To ignore religion is to miss a world changing in real time.[56]

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[53] McAlister, 7.

[54] Gabriel Sherman and Photography by Gillian Laub, "Inside Jerry Falwell Jr.'s Unlikely Rise and Precipitous Fall at Liberty University," *Vanity Fair*, January 24, 2022, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/01/inside-jerry-falwell-jr-unlikely-rise-and-precipitous-fall.

[55] Sarah Posner, *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump* (New York: Random House, 2020).

[56] Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, version Kindle (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 545.

Religious leaders are indeed moving rapidly to the change the world. They are strategic, well-funded, and keenly aware of global cultures and fault lines. Religious leaders understand the world both at the highest levels of power, and can match that knowledge with their biggest advantage: knowledge of the world at the ground level, where the masses of humanity live out their daily experiences.[57]

This dissertation also tells a story that was happening all around the economic, government, academic, and policy activity that was occurring in Russia in the nineties. Missionaries were on the same flights with the business leaders and government officials who were moving between Moscow, Washington, London, and New York. The story was happening below the surface but in plain view. Now, in a world in which American Evangelicalism and Russian Orthodoxy are institutionally and globally connected transnationally, it is important to understand how it got that way.

In the Gospel of Matthew's thirteenth chapter, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to yeast quietly working its way through a massive amount of dough. The message is clear; the yeast is invisible but it is working its effect. This story from the New Testament illustrates the power of intentional missionary work.[58]

Missionary work is not glamorous, but it has an effect over generations. Since the Second World War, Evangelical missionaries have been working with powerful elites to spread their religious yeast through the dough of global cultures.[59] They are not simply seeking to

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[57] McAlister, 260-267.

[58] R.C. Sproul, "Mustard Seed and Leaven: Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals at Ligonier.org: Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals at Ligonier.org," Ligonier Ministries, June 12, 2008, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/mustard-seed-and-leaven.

[59] Preston, 435.

change the world. They have already changed it, and again, this change has happened in plain view of anyone who knew how and where to look.[60]

The dissertation is comprised of six main sections. First, this introduction gives a survey of the purpose and research. The second chapter is closely linked to the first, and gives an overview of relevant themes from the three branches of academic theory on which this work is built: history, religious studies, and international relations. Core literature is presented that is necessary to fully grasp this story from across the three major fields of study. Chapter Two argues that no single branch of academic theory is sufficient to understand the complexity of American Evangelical-Russian Orthodox missionary-influenced convergence.

The third chapter is about the CoMission. This unique coalition of thousands of Evangelicals came together for missionary service behind the "former Iron Curtain," to make an "exponential impact for Jesus Christ."[61] As a missionary initiative it was unique in scale and scope. The CoMission is an illustrative case which highlights the strategic power and logistical ability of Evangelical elites. The chapter also opens with a background story of religious conspiracy from the early eighties, in which Jerry Falwell, and other leading figures from across Evangelicalism, met to develop a comprehensive plan for recapturing American society. This story of conspiracy and the CoMission argues that Evangelicals have a sophisticated plan to accomplish their missionary goals across all levels of society.

Chapter Four focuses on the world of American Evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity that produced missionaries to Russia. It historicizes the background of anti-

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[60] McAlister 12-13.

[61] Bruce Wilkinson, *The Comission: The Amazing Story of Eighty Ministry Groups Working Together to Take the Message of Christ's Love to the Russian People* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 11-12.

Communism in the evangelical world. I also spend more significant time on Jerry Falwell, analyzing his role as a catalyst and strategic leader for the integration of Evangelical Christianity and global political activism. In this chapter I also explore the work of David Hollinger, in *Protestant's Abroad*. Again, Hollinger argues that mainline liberal Protestant missionaries had a stealthy influence on America after they returned from overseas service back to the United States.[62] I argue that Hollinger is right, but that by stopping his survey in the 1970s, he misses that this missionary stealth influence continued and even grew after the decline of liberal Protestantism. It was simply taken up by an unprecedented global wave of Evangelical missionaries.[63]

In Chapter Five, I explore the depth and breadth of the number of missionaries that entered Russia. Jerry Falwell shows up again, this time in Moscow, for a joint-campaign with leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1994. This chapter shows the extraordinary amount of resources, people, and finances that were spent on Russian missionary work after the fall of the Soviet Union. I also show the global influence of Rev. Jim Vineyard, whose religious and political views are discussed earlier in the work. This chapter argues that American Evangelicals were in position to build and develop relationships with the ROC. They were strategic and intentional in doing so from the very beginning of their time in Russia.

Chapter Six focuses on the Purcell family as a frame by which to understand the lived experience of the ROC-EC relationship. This remarkable missionary family entered Russia with the Navigators as part of the CoMission initiative. The Navigators are a large Evangelical missionary organization which has been "creating spiritual generations," another way of

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[62] Hollinger, 297.

[63] Preston, 550.

describing proselytization, since 1933.[64] The Purcell missionary family is now in its third generation in Russia. They are some of the most influential Evangelical missionaries in the former USSR, having worked there for more than three decades. Their beliefs, linkages, and influence will provide a glimpse into the staying power and cultural impact of Evangelical missionaries in Russia. I argue that missionaries like this family are one of the key means by which the ROC-EC ecosystems have come together in a tangible lived way.

Simply put, no scholar has identified and connected how post-Soviet missionary efforts were driven by an Evangelical strategy that was and is intended to achieve global social transformation. The goals of this strategy were transnational from the beginning. The interactions that took place between American Evangelical and ROC elites have over time led to a growing fusion of religiously motivated global anti-pluralist thinking. Missionaries are a significant part of redeeming the world into a place more acceptable to Evangelicals.

Evangelical elites and ROC leaders desire the same thing. They seek a world that is dominated by a conservative, pro-family, Christian worldview. They are willing to join forces with one another to seek common political ends. And, to some degree, they have attracted substantial popular attention to their interactions.[65] A full understanding of these interactions and the cultures that produced them will ultimately be the work of many scholars. However, it is my hope that the next chapter will lay a foundation for others to begin to grasp the theoretical complexity of the story.

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[64] "About the Navigators - to Know Christ and to Make Him Known," The Navigators, March 28, 2022, https://www.navigators.org/about/.

[65] Brittany Pheiffer Noble Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, "Steve Bannon's Would-Be Coalition of Christian Traditionalists," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, March 24, 2017), https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/steve-bannon-american-evangelicals-russian-orthodox/519900/.

Chapter 2

Three Branches

The religion of a culture is inevitably webbed with the whole culture.[66]
– Maynard Adams

In the former Russian capital of Saint Petersburg, there are three main branches to the Neva River which flows from Lake Ladoga, arrives at its delta, and splits into three branches, just before it empties into the Baltic Sea. The spot where the Neva breaks into three is the very point where Peter I chose to build his idealized European city, modeled most closely on Amsterdam and Venice.[67] Like any work of research, this dissertation has a theoretical component. The inherent challenge of this dissertation is that much like the great river of Peter's namesake capital, it draws on three branches of theory that come together to provide the theoretical flow for a story that needs to be told.

As the Cold War came to an end, the Soviet Union lost control of the outcome.[68] Geraldine Finn describes this moment at the end of the Cold War, as the essential promise of postmodernism. In some sense, anything and everything was suddenly possible. When cultural environments, rules of behavior, and acceptable ideas are all changing or questioned at a mass level, momentary vacuums are created. In the fearful but hopeful faces of vast crowds gathered for demonstrations in the cities of Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War, Finn sees a moment to explore the "in-between spaces that link both national and religious identities."[69]

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[66] E. M. Adams, *Religion and Cultural Freedom* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 23.

[67] Renzo Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze In Early Modern Europe,* trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 65.

[68] Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 343-344.

[69] Geraldine Finn, "The Politics of Spirituality," in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, edited by Phillippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (London: Routledge, 1992), 120.

In a similar fashion, this dissertation explores the in-between space in which two distinct religious and cultural ecosystems, American Evangelicalism and Russian Orthodoxy, found linkages which have produced transnational social and political effects. Fundamentally, how and why did American Evangelical leaders set aside their long history of distrust of Russia and disagreement with Russian Orthodoxy, to become increasingly allies of Vladimir Putin's regime? The answer to this question, and the story behind it is set in an environment of rapid change. It draws on three fields of scholarship: history, international relations theory (IR), and religious studies.

These three academic fields: history, religious studies, and IR theory, can together help scholars understand how American Evangelical religious ambition has changed the world. Specifically, this dissertation draws on history to understand the evolution of American Evangelical engagement with Russia since the nineteenth century. The cultural context, social views, and lived experiences of American Evangelical missionaries in Russia are part of a larger narrative, in which Evangelical leaders strategized to reshape the world. Indeed, rank and file Evangelicals seem to have responded to the groundwork laid by people such as Francis Schaeffer and Jerry Falwell. Over time, ordinary Evangelicals seem to have shifted their views of Russia concurrently with the changing nature of conservative domestic politics and Evangelical doctrines.

As Evangelicals gained increasing social power, political access, technological prowess, and material wealth, their views about Russia have also gained currency throughout American society.[70] Furthermore, global Evangelical missionary movements have proven capable of moving transnationally in a variety of ways.[71] Of course, religious groups reflexively create and use their

[70] Corrina Laughlin, *Redeem All: How Digital Life Is Changing Evangelical Culture* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022), 23-30.

[71] McAlister, 286.

own constructions of globalization.[72] An example of this are American Evangelical missionaries in Japan, who started Baptist churches there in the 1950s and 1960s. These Japanese Baptist converts eventually created their own associations, and sent their own missionaries around the world. One of these Japanese missionaries, Yoko Sato, who will appear again later in this work, ended up in Russia working alongside American Evangelical partners to evangelize post-Soviet Russia.[73] The networks, links, and convergences of missionary work are highly complex and flow in a variety of directions.[74]

American Evangelical and Russian Orthodox convergence is also in some way a story of American and Russian convergence. Both nations are heavily influenced by historical religious nationalisms. The Soviet Union, ostensibly internationalist and secular, was meant to become the cultural hub of a global society constructed upon the dream of a worker's utopia.[75] It was universalist in vision.[76] An unsustainable economic model and crushing military funding burden, had, by the end of the Soviet period, brought the successor states into a period of economic stagnation accompanied by political uncertainty.[77] After the end of the Cold War, scholars recognized the need to move from a bipolar Washington vs. Moscow view of the world, to new

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[72] James Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196-197.

[73] Interview with Kevin and Tammy Plaster. Personal, August 19, 2021.

[74] McAlister, 101-102.

[75] Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 11-12.

[76] John Lowenhardt, *The Reincarnation of Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 48-49.

[77] Stephen Holmes, "The State of the State in Putin's Russia," in *The State After Communism*, edited by Timothy J. Colton and Stephen Holmes (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 299-301.

models which could incorporate the emergence of new national identities and social movements.[78]

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union the new Russian state has seemed to act out of a basic need for security, and a desire for regional and global power.[79] In the very early days of the Putin era, a shift occurred in 1993 shortly after the USSR's fall. The Kremlin made a turn away from international conciliatory tendencies, towards a more realist and interest based foreign policy.[80] In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, Anita Orban views this new Russia as a state with a social bias towards aggression and expansionism. She joins Wohlforth, in citing causal factors for this tendency, calling Russia a nation with a, "Flat geography in a Hobbesian environment, relative backwardness compared to its rivals, and a size that induced a bi-level deterrence strategy inward and outward."[81]

Natasha Kuhrt argues that the Putin era has brought Moscow wealth and relative stability gained through consolidation of the nation's energy resources. This period has also brought about a domestic and foreign policy committed to holding and increasing power using a

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[78] Ian Bremmer, "Post-Soviet Nationalities Theory: Past, Present, And Future," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, edited by Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12-13.

[79] Olga Oliker et al., *Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications* (Arlington, VA: Rand Corp., 2009), 5-6.

[80] Allen C. Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), 7-31

[81] Anita Orban, *Power, Energy, and the New Russian Imperialism* (London: PSI Reports, 2008), 22.

resurgent heritage and patriotic nationalism, including the use of religious and cultural symbolism.[82] The State has begun to creep back into arenas considered privatized earlier.[83]

In his study of how traditions survive authoritarianism, David Gross writes that cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions which had endured on the boundaries of Soviet society, re-emerged in the wake of its collapse.[84] When the Soviet Union began to collapse, global religious and missionary movement across Moscow's sphere of influence was suddenly possible. The fall of the Soviet Union, its rituals, and its symbols, gave way to a search for meaning, a condition that would open the door to religion for both Russians and the world beyond.

Irina Papkova concludes that most Russian people do not have much awareness of the "political interests and concerns" of the ROC to which they ostensibly belong. She focuses on the complexity of the ROC and the various official and unofficial elements of the church. An example of this is her lengthy documentation of apocalyptic fear related to an anti-Christ control conspiracy stemming from bar codes that were hidden in the electronic data recorded on modern passports. Fundamentalists in the ROC reacted in fear and anger against these passports, and built upon an initial protest movement which came out of the Greek Orthodox context. Papkova also highlights fundamentalist opposition to Western sexual imagery, and points out the vandalism of Coca Cola advertisements which featured a girl in a bathing suit. Papkova argues that the ROC is a highly complex and factional organization with competing narratives about the role of the church in Russian society. In fact, she argues that the 1997 Law on Religion is the

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[82] Natasha Kuhrt, "Introduction," in *Russia and the World*, ed. by Natasha Kuhrt (London: Routledge, 2013), 28-29.

[83] Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, "Introduction" in *Between Dictatorships and Democracy* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 20.

[84] David Gross, *The Past in Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 120-121.

only successful piece of legislation backed by the ROC through the next decade. However, this law was not a trivial success. Rather, as a groundbreaking law, it restricted new religions in Russia, and had a pronounced strengthening effect on the cultural position of the ROC.[85] This social and political prominence made it increasingly difficult for missionary groups to make headway in Russia.

Zoe Knox argues that the ROC is a type of unofficial state church, but rejects that conflict between the West and the East based upon religion alone is inevitable. Religion plus nationalism is necessary for this conflict to occur. While she agrees with Irina Papkova's assessment that the ROC's post-Soviet legacy is complex, she does this by distinguishing an official ROC from an unofficial ROC. The ROC is multilayered with a variety of competing interests and structures. The ROC today is an institution which is establishing itself as a nationalist, cultural power center closely integrated with Russian political elites.[86] The powerful currency of religious nationalisms is shaping the world we currently live in. Russia is using religious ethno-nationalism as fuel for its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. This invasion is changing the global economy, contributing to rising energy prices, and has created the largest refugee crisis in Europe since WWII.

Accordingly, another branch of study on which this dissertation draws is the sociology of religion. Finding its early origins in the work of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, the study of religion is an attempt to set up frameworks that will explain the effects of religion on human society.[87] During the early years of scientific religious studies, research focused on

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[85] Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russia Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 199-201. For discussion of the INN or the bar code controversy, as well as anti-Western sexual tropes, see 120-145.

[86] Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 184-191.

[87] Malcolm Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

explaining why people are religious, as well as providing detailed studies of the various characteristics of world religions. In recent years, the religious studies field has benefited from interdisciplinary work across history, IR, psychology, geography, law, and anthropology.[88]

The complex culture of American Evangelicalism, as well as its power, is a growing area of research within religious studies. One very recent popular example, is *Jesus and John Wayne*, by Kristin Kobes Du Mez. The Trump years in American politics have created a fresh awareness of the need for a cultural reckoning with the views, goals, and cultural undertones that flow from American Evangelical Christianity. Du Mez argues that there is a synthesis between American Christian patriotism, and American Christian masculinity. From this male dominated culture has emerged a specific way of seeing the world for American Evangelical Christians. It is anti-communist, anti-feminist, pro-god, pro-gun, pro-American. Perhaps most concerning is that the American Evangelical man is taught from an early age to see himself as the "good guy," in a life or death, existential struggle against evil. According to Du Mez, each generation of Evangelical men is taught to answer this call.[89]

In the days following Barack Obama's election in 2008, America seemed to many observers like it was becoming more progressive, more free, more tolerant, and more open to the world. Yet, Obama's election exacerbated and sparked a revelation of the true tensions, racial animus, and cultural divide across America.[90] The study of religion has critical relevance to the

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[88] Stacey Gutkowski, "Religion and security in IR theories," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security* ed. by Chris Seiple, Dennis Hoover, and Pauletta Otis (London: Routledge, 2013), 126.

[89] Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton et Company, 2021), 295-300.

[90] Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 581-619.

contemporary moment. The overwhelming support for the Republican Party and the growth of Evangelicals throughout the Donald Trump presidency is a statistical fact.[91] The access granted to Evangelical clergy, and the influence of these members of clergy over policy choices affecting society, national security, and the global economy, together the highlight the urgency for engagement with religion at the highest levels of government and scholarship. [92]

In the *Social Reality of Religion*, Peter Berger understands religion as primarily a defense against the human terror of finding oneself in a world devoid of meaning.[93] When Berger's argument is applied to the post-Soviet context, it means that American Evangelical missionaries and Russians interacted with one another at a moment when globalization related pressures were causing religious and social identities to break and shift in both Russia and the United States.[94]

Globalization and technological advances suddenly made rapid travel and communication possible everywhere. However, despite the upgraded technology and the missionary possibilities available in virtually every corner of the world, for Evangelical religion to sweep across the world a push still had to come from someplace. That place would be America, a nation with millions of wealthy and globally connected Evangelicals.[95]

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[91] Gregory A. Smith, "More White Americans Adopted than Shed Evangelical Label during Trump Presidency, Especially His Supporters," *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, September 15, 2021), https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/15/more-white-americans-adopted-than-shed-evangelical-label-during-trump-presidency-especially-his-supporters/.

[92] Robert O'Harrow Jr., "God, Trump and the Closed-Door World of the Council for National Policy," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, October 25, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/10/25/god-trump-closed-door-world-council-national-policy/.

[93] Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 31.

[94] Richard Price and Christian Reus - Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism", *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (Sep 1, 1998): 259-94.

[95] John Ragosta, *Religious Freedom* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 213-214.

Sociologist James Beckford recognizes the existence of this external religious pressure on Russian society.[96] In a broader argument on globalization, he writes, "Religions are simultaneously constructing their own images of the global and refracting the influences from global forces that they detect."[97] As an example, Beckford mentions ROC leaders who have blamed American driven globalization and religious competition for Orthodoxy's failure to change social behaviors despite high levels of cultural religious identification.[98]

What Beckford does not mention however, is that ROC leaders did not just criticize American religious methods. They ultimately copied them. Indeed, religion has supported the rise of American and Russian nationalism since the Cold War. It is shaping how states interact with one another. As a non-state actor, indeed a transnational network, the political power of allied American Evangelicalism and Russian Orthodoxy must be considered.

Therefore, the third branch critical to this dissertation is the field of IR theory. IR theory is the study of the nature of relations among states. Since the end of the Cold War, the study of international organizations and the relevance of non-state actors has grown. The rise of constructivism within the broader IR field opened aspects of theory which facilitated study of advocacy networks and non-state actors as potent international forces.

Viewed in the Russian context, religious forces, namely American Evangelical Christianity and traditional Russian Orthodoxy, have been allowed to spread in an ideological landscape previously dominated by Marxism-Leninism. Forces of global change interacted with groups that were already socially open to cultural change. These change structures are powerful

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[96] Beckford, 215.

[97] Ibid., 149

[98] Ibid., 116-117.

forces, but they cannot "exist independently of the knowledgeable practices of social agents." [99] These "ecosystems" are not unknowable forces that suddenly appear globally. Rather, and especially in the case of religious identity, they are built slowly over centuries, even millennia, and incorporate a self-awareness and global dynamism spread by real people. Concepts such as "national identity," and "national interest," are fluid. Even "the state" is not a given, "but is itself a social construct."[100]

Constructivism broke into the IR mainstream in the early nineties as a new generation of scholars found limitations with the prevailing rationalist neoliberal and neorealist schools.[101] Since the end of the Second World War, a positivist trend took hold across the IR field. The rapid growth and spreading influence of international organizations gave rise to a liberal outlook. However, with the global uncertainty that began in the late sixties and continued into the seventies, realists started to make gains. Kenneth Waltz's defining book, *Theory of International Politics*, introduced neorealism as a powerful explanatory alternative to classic realism and positivism. Focusing on the anarchy principle, security realities, and balance of power, neorealism argued that structural constraints form the behavioral limitations of states.

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye countered with the foundational neoliberal concept of complex interdependence. "This concept describes a hypothetical world with three channels between societies, with multiple actors, not just states; multiple issues, not arranged in any clear hierarchy; and the irrelevance of the threat or use of force among states linked by complex

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[99] Price and Reus - Smit, 259-94.

[100] Edward A. Kolodziejski, *Security and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261.

[101] Richard Price and Christian Reus - Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism", *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (Sep 1, 1998): 259-94.

interdependence.[102]" While neoliberalism and neorealism both sought to analyze a brave new world with updated versions of old arguments, a new constructivist school was eager to redefine IR theory altogether. Nicholas Onuf is generally credited with introducing the term constructivism to the IR discipline in 1989.[103] Three years later in the tumultuous days of the early post-Cold War period, Alexander Wendt brought constructivism into the mainstream of IR theory with his article 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It.'[104] Arguing that neither neorealism nor neoliberalism sufficiently accounted for state actions, he brought a new approach to those who find that sociology has something to add to IR theory.

Constructivism has become a critical part of IR theory for scholars who seek to explore ground floor social change movements outside of the more static realist and liberal camps. That constructivism so rapidly developed into a recognized IR school can be partially credited to the rapid change that swept the globe in the eighties and nineties. However, challenges put forward by neoliberal and neorealist scholars also forced the burgeoning constructivist movement to grow up quickly. Of note was Keohane's admission of rationalist limitations. He challenged thinkers to go beyond merely pointing out rationalist shortcomings, and work towards synthesis.[105]

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[102] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Globalization: What's New? What's Not? (and so What?)," *Foreign Policy*, Spring, 2000, 104-19, accessed July 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1149673.

[103] Nicholas Onuf, "The Strange Career of Constructivism in International Relations" (paper presented at the Workshop on "(Re)Constructing Constructivist IR Research," Center of International Studies, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, October 6, 2001), home.aubg.bg/faculty/mtzankova/ (google search autodownload).

[104] Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: the Politics of Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10-11.

[105] Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches", *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Dec., 1998): 379-96, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600589.

Keohane writes, "There was an unwillingness on the part of young constructivist scholars to concede the analytical high ground to the neoliberals and neorealists."[106]

Constructivists can generally be divided into modernist and postmodernist groups. The difference between these two groups seems to be more analytical than theoretical. The former is focused on the sociolinguistic construction of subjects and objects in world politics and the latter on the relationship between power and knowledge. Regardless of the constructivist groups and subgroups, there are three key principles that constructivists apply to IR theory.[107]

The first principle, propagated most clearly and strongly by Wendt, is that ideational structures are vital to understanding how actors view the world around them.[108] This principle becomes very important in any study dealing with non-state actors. Ideas breed action. The change motive finds its origin in ideas. Non-state actors are often powerful change agents, and Wendt's collective identity formation (ISC) goes beyond simple self-interest and argues for a kind of solidarity and identification with community. Non-state communities driven by a collective social identity, such as a missionary religion like Evangelical Christianity, can have strong influence over a state or even groups of states. Collective social identities can change through social mechanisms.[109] Mass social upheaval can cause a rise or a fall in change-seeking non-state actor groups.

The second key principle of constructivist theory is that socially constructed identities are inexorably related to interests and actions. This principle follows naturally from the first.[110] In

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[106] Price and Reus – Smit.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Zehfuss, 14-15.

[110] Price and Reus – Smit.

the case of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a rapid destabilization took place. Porfiriev and Simons find that, "All spheres of Russian life have undergone significant changes in the post-Soviet era, including the structures and policies steering crisis management."

In this sense, Russia has arguably been a transitional state for some time. The same authors find, "What is clear is that in the modern risk society, historical, cultural, and other social core factors determine the pace of post-crisis reflexive change and learning from crises to a much larger extent than the very process of transition itself."[111] If accurate, this assessment suggests that in the post-Cold War period of foundational crises, Russia had to grapple with the crisis of the Soviet regime's dissolution, while also having to deal with the abandonment of Marxist ideology. A cultural vacuum was formed, which opened a unique opportunity inside of Russia for local interests such as the Russian Orthodox Church to find it advantageous to collaborate with outsiders, like American Evangelical missionary groups.

The third feature of constructivist IR thought is that agents and structures are mutually constituted. Building on the first two propositions, this third point becomes especially important in an era of globalization. Worldwide cultural forces drive expansion and change, and are incorporated in people and organizations as constructed and legitimated actors. These actors, such as a missionary religion, can unknowingly fill critical roles as agents of global trade, universal laws, and broad value systems, even though the actors themselves often interpret their actions as based solely in self-interested rationality. Cultural forces, such as missionary religions, by defining the nature of the rationalized universe and the agency of human actors and operating under rationalized natural laws, play a major causal role in social dynamics by

[111] Boris Porfiriev and Greg Simons, *Crises in Russia*, New edition ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 271, 290.

interacting with systems of economic and political stratification and exchange to produce a highly expansionist culture.[112]

As mentioned, Alexander Wendt developed a unique framing of how ideas contribute to the evolution of relationships over time. He uses the philosophical work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant as the frame by which to analyze how states relate to one another. This framework can also be applied to understanding how ideational actors evolve from fearful "enmity" into a mutually beneficial friendship. In this case, the framework can be applied to the EC-ROC relationship.

Thomas Hobbes believed in a cautious political approach, a caution itself born from fear and war. He connected religion and politics, arguing that fear itself was a useful emotion born out of religious practice from a very young age.[113] The Hobbesian condition was a very natural place for American Evangelicals throughout the Cold War. Hobbes believed that the natural state of life is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."[114] The Hobbesian world is one of enmity: mistrust, intense competition, bitter dislike, and mutual suspicion. It is a world interwoven with anxiety.[115] In *Leviathan*, Hobbes describes the Kingdom of Darkness in a dualistic fashion as one that wars against the Kingdom of Light. His quote articulates the attitude that would prevail among American Evangelicals during the Cold War.

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[112] John W. Meyer et al., "World Society and the Nation-State", *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 1 (July 1997): 144-81, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/231174.

[113] Alan Ryan, "Hobbes Political Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. by Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 209.

[114] Thomas Hobbes, quoted in Ibid., 216.

[115] Ibid., 222.

> "The kingdom of darkness, as it is set forth in these and other places of the Scripture, is nothing else but a confederacy of deceivers that, to obtain dominion over men in this present world, endeavor by dark and erroneous doctrines to extinguish in them the light, both of nature and of the gospel, and so to dis-prepare them for the kingdom of God to come.[116]"

Evangelicals would maintain their "Hobbesian" apocalyptic fear of Russia right through the end of the Cold War.[117] Once again, the question can be posed, after well over a century of linking Russia to the antichrist, how can Putin's Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church now be seen by many American Evangelicals as a Christian ally?[118]

Alexander Wendt's relationship model has a potential answer by showing that it is possible to move from a Hobbesian state into a Lockean rivalry. The Lockean world is rooted in the power of ideas.[119] So long as the Soviet Union stood publicly resolute in Marxist dogma, the American Evangelical stood apart in a Hobbesian state of enmity and fear. When ideas began to change publicly through Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika, American Evangelicals began to shift into a subtler analysis of the USSR. For Evangelicals, when the USSR weakened its anti-religious posture, it was a providential, or God ordained opening to exploit.

Per the Wendt framework, John Locke revises the kill or be killed Hobbesian understanding of social relationships.[120] Using the scriptural Tower of Babel story to argue that early man was found in a kind of commonwealth of free people, Locke argues that from the

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[116] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 41.

[117] Ibid., 358.

[118] Pasquale Annicchino, "Winning the Battle by Losing the War: The Lautsi Case and the Holy Alliance between American Conservative Evangelicals, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican to Reshape European Identity." *Religion and Human Rights* 6, no. 3 (2011): 213-19.

[119] Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 79.

[120] Wendt, 279.

beginning, people have had the option of human cooperation around shared identity.[121] However, because of those he calls, "the degenerate men," corruption, mistrust, and violence has ensued. Locke argues that the Law of Nature allows a man to preserve himself and others, and secondly, to punish crimes committed against the Law of Nature. Locke believes in the existence of a fundamental code of ethics. Humanity has the right to maintain this order, and to violate those who offend it.[122]

While Hobbes sees a natural state of violence and chaos dominated by the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, Locke sees human beings as far more instrumental. He conceptualizes a society built to punish offenders, and to promote the universal civic good. Wendt finds in a Lockean framework a natural rivalry that forms between those who stand to preserve the good against those who seek to harm the natural order. Yet, a key difference between Hobbes and Locke is that for Locke, this rivalry can be mitigated through adherence to laws and behavioral changes. Locke argues that men naturally isolate themselves into societies that most favorably promise to safeguard their rights. When societies differ on methods and values, a rivalry between them is inevitable but not necessarily perpetual.[123]

The Lockean moment occurred between American Evangelicals and Russians after Gorbachev took power in Russia. A thawing of relationships between the Soviet Union and the United States made Evangelicals view Russia with suspicion, but with a kind of hopefulness sparked by change and a desire for even greater change. While the shift from Hobbesian enmity was gradual it nonetheless sparked a transnational movement of people and resources as the door

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[121] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 247-248.

[122] Locke, 352.

[123] Wendt, 296.

opened to exploration of cultural and national boundaries that had been fixed for so long. The seeds of the ROC-EC relationship were planted during the mass missionary movement of the nineties. After these seeds were planted, conditions were in place for a mutually beneficial "Kantian" friendship to form. Kristina Stoeckl's work on moral norm entrepreneurship reveals an intentional and learned ROC activism which was first modeled, and is now joined by US Evangelical elites globally.

The American Evangelical turn towards openness to Russia is representative Wendt's Kantian friendship model. The Kantian friendship is one of mutual support and friendship based upon shared goals and outcomes. In the United States, EC religious groups that historically were stern advocates of separation of church and state have changed. Under the influence of leaders like Francis Schaeffer and Jerry Falwell, Evangelicals have embraced a God and Country nationalist story that was foreign to the Evangelical leaders of generations that preceded them.[124]

Eric Hobsbawm argues that any national story constructed upon a local and narrow social identity is an insufficient history; one that ignores the complexity of an interconnected world.[125] In his own work on identity, Rogers Brubaker uses the Soviet Union as an example of a state that justifies Hobsbawm's argument, with its bureaucratic structures that fostered narrow nationalist identification among the many ethnicities of the USSR. This narrowing would play a significant role in the dissolution of the USSR.[126] Brubaker argues that the concept of "groupness," such as Margaret Keck's, "transnational issue network," which is an international alliance of people, connected by a shared cause such as climate change, anti-slavery, or indeed, a religious calling,

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[124] William Martin, *With God On Our Side* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 197.

[125] Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 276-277.

[126] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3108478.

can provide a broad political identity that is as strong or even stronger than traditional group identity.[127]

Yet, religious identity is still closely linked to national and cultural identity.[128] When a group feels its identity threatened by another group, whether internal or external, conflict can emerge. Since the end of the Cold War, both the EC and the ROC have fused national and religious identity. This process has led both towards politically conservative views, especially in areas of social behavior, as John Anderson has shown.

What neither Brubaker nor Hobsbawm question is this: what happens when one of these so-called transnational issue networks, or ecosystems, such as a missionary religion, like the EC, becomes connected to a nationalist religious identity, or second ecosystem, such as that of the ROC? We know that at least since the early days of Billy Graham's popularity, a Christian global identity has helped to shape American flows of religion into societies influenced by her Evangelical missionaries.[129]

John Anderson explores this transnational religious connectivity in his essay on similarities between the American and Russian political and religious right wings. He contends that shared interests between the two groups could lead to transnational connections. Anderson identifies commonalities between these groups by linking together ostensibly similar narratives

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia." *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/2501399.

[129] Uta Balbier, "Billy Graham's Cold War Crusades," in *Secularization and Religious Innovation in the North Atlantic World*, edited by David Hempton and Hugh McLeod (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 236.

based upon moral deficiencies that conservative Christians perceive as problematic in both Russian and American societies.[130]

Anderson identifies four areas that Russian and American conservatives view as challenges. First, he names the challenge of secularization as a struggle for religious conservatives in both countries. For Russia, it was the struggle of overcoming state sponsored secularization and now the difficulty of competing with secularized Western cultural forms which threaten traditional religion. Anderson argues that the Russian Orthodox Church faces a challenge like that of American churches. Rates of church attendance or affiliation do not accurately reflect the actual dedication or adherence to religious teachings among the public.

Second, Anderson describes the common challenge of pluralism faced by American and Russian conservatives. In the post-Soviet context, the ROC has had to struggle with new missionary religions. This influx of new religious groups has forced the ROC to fight for its own ground. In similar fashion, American conservative Christians have had to compete for souls and minds in an increasingly pluralistic American culture. Anderson finds that both groups do this through resistance and engagement.

Third, Anderson argues that liberalism is an ever-growing challenge for conservatives in both Russia and America. On the American side, he finds the enemy of secular humanism. On the Russian side, he argues that the liberal vision is viewed by conservatives on both sides as "morally impoverished." However, Anderson also states that conservative Christians in the United States often express their anti-liberalism within a "consumerist and individualistic" ethos which is a very different one from the traditionalist and communal ethos of the ROC.

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[130] John Anderson, "Dreaming of Christian nations in the USA and Russia: The Importance of History," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 10, no. 3, 201-221 (2012), DOI: 10.1080/14794012.2012.698546.

Finally, Anderson finds that both Russian and American conservatives struggle with the challenge of national identity. On both sides, conservatives argue that their religious heritage is bound up in the historical and current identity of their respective nations. The greatness of both countries is bound by what each side perceives to be as the right religion. For the American Evangelical, it is a politlcally powerful conservative Protestantism. For the Russian side, it is a robust Orthodoxy tethered to the Russian State. It is in this sense that both sides are afraid that modern changes in each country will see a valuable religious heritage fade away. Ultimately, Anderson argues that leaders on both sides believe that the very future of their countries is contingent upon the maintenance of a loud voice and influence in the public square.[131]

In her already mentioned 2016 work, Kristina Stoeckl is more explicit than Anderson, by identifying the ROC and American Evangelicals as intentional global players in what she describes again, as "moral norm entrepreneurship." She finds a ROC that is intentionally and aggressively moving into international moral conflicts over gay marriage, abortion, and gender equality to advance its own traditional views on these subjects.[132] Seeking to be a leader in global morality, the ROC, according to Stoeckl, can globally influence other conservative Christian groups, especially American Evangelicals.

While Anderson settles for the concept of potential connections and avoids making overt linkages between the ROC and American Evangelicals, Stoeckl argues that religious leaders on both sides believe that the very future of their countries is contingent upon the maintenance of a loud voice, cultural dominance, and overt political influence in the public square.[133]

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[131] See also, John Anderson, *Conservative Christian Politics in Russia and the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1-20.

[132] Kristina Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church as moral norm entrepreneur," *Religion, State and Society*, 44:2, (2016) 132-151, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2016.1194010

[133] Anderson, *Conservative Christian Politics in Russia and the United States*, 1-20.

Therefore, in a world that is increasingly influenced by advocacy networks and other non-state actors such as religious groups, it is useful to explore fresh applications for IR theory. The application of statecraft to the story of collaboration between two religious networks, or "ecosystems:" the EC and ROC, may help to spark further integration between history, religion, and IR theory.[134] Transnational religious exchanges may in some way shape how societies come together. E. M. Adams describes just such a linking concept.

> A religion cannot simply be a self-contained area of the culture that develops or maintains its own integrity independently of other areas. It cannot be indifferent to other cultural developments. The religion of a culture is inevitably webbed with the whole culture. A missionary religion that is transplanted into a foreign culture cannot be simply grafted on. For the religion to take hold and to succeed it must transform the culture. And no religion succeeds in transforming an alien culture without being transformed itself in the process.[135]

This dissertation will show that global religious groups, such as the ROC and the EC, are non-state actors with defined ecosystems that intentionally forge transformative relational networks. The seeds of the ROC-EC relationship were planted during the mass missionary movement of the nineties through alliances such as the CoMission. The CoMission, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, was an effort which brought together more than eighty EC agencies, millions of dollars, and thousands of missionaries.[136] The strategic intentionality of global religious actors has important implications across the social sciences. Simply put, these actors wish to defeat their secular enemies, capture entire states and even groups of states, and, in so doing, make the world a more religious place.

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[134] Kathryn Sikkink and Margaret E. Keck, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, version Kindle (London: Cornell University Press, 2014), https://read.amazon.com/reader?asin=B00HRS704W&ref_=dbs_t_r_kcr, 277.

[135] Adams, 23.

[136] Wilkinson, 50.

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Chapter 3

Conspiracy and CoMission

Confrontation is Necessary.
– Francis Schaeffer[137]

Jerry Falwell was brilliant at using world events as a chance to combine the full power of his prophetic sermons, fundraising, political maneuvering, as well as missionary work. As I studied his journeys in the archives of Liberty University, it became apparent that Falwell wanted nothing less than to remake the world to reflect Evangelical moral norms. Deeply afraid that liberals were destroying Christian values and that Communism would conquer the West, Jerry Falwell mobilized his ministry to engage in political and cultural activism, far beyond the local influence he held in Lynchburg, Virginia, as the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

It is a fortunate thing in archival work when a researcher discovers a conspiracy. Jerry Falwell has a popular image as a fool, or in the words of Christopher Hitchens, a fraud.[138] He was neither. In fact, Falwell had a coherent, strategic vision for transforming America, and then using America to transform the world. A rigid fundamentalist, who believed that his network of independent Baptist churches was the purest and most doctrinally sound way to practice Protestantism, Falwell was pragmatic enough to expand far beyond the views of his sect to employ technology and media in successful political and cultural activism.[139]

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[137] Kenneth Kantzer (Arlington, Virginia, March 30, 1982).

[138] Christopher Hitchens, "Jerry Falwell, Faith-Based Fraud.," *Slate Magazine* (Slate, May 16, 2007), https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2007/05/jerry-falwell-faith-based-fraud.html.

[139] Elmer Towns, "Digital Commons - Liberty University," accessed June 2, 2022, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=towns_books. See also, O. S. Hawkins, *In the Name of God: The Colliding Lives, Legends, and Legacies of J. Frank Norris and George W. Truett* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 19-56.

Jerry Falwell's background is colorful. He grew up in a family closely rooted to Lynchburg, Virginia. The son of the sheriff of Campbell County, Falwell's Father was connected to the bootlegging trade. During the Prohibition years law enforcement would confiscate illegal liquor and then it would be resold in the family owned nightclub, the largest in Lynchburg. Through his Mother's influence, he got "saved" or had a born again Evangelical conversion experience at a local church. Once he found religion, he left the city to study at the then unaccredited Baptist Bible College (BBC) in Springfield, Missouri.

This college is an independent fundamentalist institution which was set up to counter rivals within denominational Baptist life. Its origins date back to the work of Reverend J. Frank Norris, a separatist SBC pastor from Fort Worth, Texas, who spearheaded a dramatic schism in the SBC in the 1920s and 1930s helping to spawn a national movement of independent, fundamentalist churches. These churches broke with their denominations over a variety of doctrinal and lifestyle issues, such as the place of women in society. A notorious example was *Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers*, a famous anti-woman polemic by John R. Rice, the founder and long-time editor of the Sword of the Lord, which would be the leading fundamentalist periodical of the twentieth century.[140]

These fundamentalists would snipe at Evangelicals as compromisers. Billy Graham, who started his Bible training at Bob Jones University, and was heavily promoted by John R. Rice early in his ministry, moved away from the fundamentalists in the 1950s towards a more inclusive group of Evangelicals. Evangelicals and fundamentalists had identical doctrinal

[140] Andrew Himes, *The Sword of the Lord: The Roots of Fundamentalism in an American Family* (Seattle, WA: Chiara Press, 2011), 276-281. Himes gives a comprehensive overview of the background of fundamentalism. His work, together with the book by Hawkins provide a strong foundation of the history of division between fundamentalist, Evangelical, moderate, and liberal Protestants.

conservatism. However, they held to their sectarian idiosyncrasies with as much passion any Christian would hold to something like the Lord's Prayer or the Apostle's Creed. Fundamentalists loved to do "battle royal" with their less divisive brethren. When Billy Graham allowed Catholic leaders to sit on a stage at one of his "crusades" in New York City, it signaled to his original fundamentalists friends that he had left their tribe permanently.[141]

The independent, fundamentalist movement would incorporate institutions like BBC, Bob Jones University, Cedarville University, Hyles-Anderson College, Tennessee Temple University, and many other smaller schools. The main purpose of these places was to train young men to "plant" (found) new independent fundamentalist churches or convert existing ones to this polity. These fundamentalist churches were intentional about reaching out to the poorest and most vulnerable members of their community. Often derided as social outcasts by more established churches, these churches often established bus outreach ministries, and would pick up poor youth and transport them to church. Their use of sensational preaching, intentionally explosive rhetoric, incentives, and creative methodologies caused many of these churches to attract large diverse crowds, and to experience explosive growth. A young person who was converted through one of these churches and showed leadership potential was often directed to attend college at one of the new independent fundamentalist start-up colleges. Such was the case with Jerry Falwell.

After his four years in Missouri at Bible college, he returned to Lynchburg to lead a church. Thomas Road Baptist Church became one of the largest and fastest-growing churches in

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[141] Jeffrey Paul Straub and Tom J. Nettles, *The Making of a Battle Royal: The Rise of Liberalism in Northern Baptist Life, 1870-1920* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018). See also, Richard John Neuhaus, "The Preacher and the Popes," *Christianity Today*, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/billy-graham/billy-graham-catholics-preacher-and-popes.html.

the United States. Falwell was a standard speaker at the national Sword of the Lord conferences and other fundamentalist gatherings. His books were widely read, and he innovated by launching a dynamic TV program, the Old-Time Gospel Hour. When he launched Lynchburg Baptist College, he was following in the footsteps of many other fundamentalist leaders who saw a Bible college as the next logical step after building a large church and following. Quickly after launching however, Falwell changed the name to Liberty Baptist College, and then a few years later to Liberty University. His vision expanded from starting a Bible college for training preachers, to making Liberty the "Notre Dame of Baptist life."[142]

Such a vision was not exactly compatible with fundamentalist sensibilities. Fundamentalists built their religious empires on the power of individual brand and personality. Their independence from denominational bureaucracy and oversight was the key to both their successes and failures. However, building a Notre Dame level brand required Falwell to move beyond the separatist religious anarchy of his fundamentalist roots. Another point of change for Falwell was his eagerness to move into national political conversations. Fundamentalists loved to preach against what they viewed as social ills like consumption of alcohol, moral evils like non-submissive women, and even perhaps big vague problems like "Hollywood" and Communism." However, to actually get involved in politics and advocacy was uncommon. Fundamentalists spent most of their time building up brands that competed with mainline and Evangelical rivals, and trained their fire on fellow-Christians who cooperated or submitted to the secular world. Fundamentalists reveled in their subculture of being social outsiders. They often

[142] "How Liberty University Built a Billion-Dollar Empire Online," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, April 17, 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/17/magazine/how-liberty-university-built-a-billion-dollar-empire-online.html. Donald P. Baker, "Students Flock to Liberty University," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, May 7, 1985), https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1985/05/07/students-flock-to-liberty-university/350ee184-7427-4bed-8000-3f41de95e722/.

looked forward to the end of the world brought about by the visible return of Jesus Christ via the teaching of the Rapture. This teaching led to an urgency in their work and a passion in their messages which created waves of excitement. They built large churches very quickly. Jerry Falwell fit well in this group. He proselytized, preached sensational sermons, assisted the poor, built a large bus outreach, and started his own public brand, which included a Bible college.

He wanted more. Falwell's family background had shrewd businessmen in it. As his star grew, and his TV program brought in revenue and fame, Falwell was increasingly exposed to the leading Evangelicals of his generation. They courted him, recognizing his charismatic ability to communicate with their same target audience. He recruited them back, understanding that he had to break outside of the fundamentalist confines of his religious roots if his own influence and empire were to grown. The national demise of the 1970s provided him with the perfect opportunity. Falwell's rhetoric increasingly expanded beyond saving souls to saving America. In fact, his particular genius is that he managed to blur the lines between the two.

In the early part of the first Reagan administration, Jerry Falwell, along with Liberty University leaders, Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, attended a February 1, 1982, secret meeting.[143] It took place in Arlington, Virginia, hosted at the home of Carl F.H. Henry, president of *Christianity Today*. Henry was perhaps the most influential Evangelical of the post-World War Two era. At this meeting, Falwell convened a group of leading Evangelical thinkers and educators including early culture warrior, Francis Schaeffer, founder of L'Abri, Richard Chase, president of Wheaton College, and John Walvoord from Dallas Theological Seminary. At this meeting, Falwell established the ground rules for a final break with the isolating fundamentalist

[143] Quoted in Kantzer.

separatism from his past, and gave an uncanny blueprint for what would become the future of the religious right.

At this point, it is necessary to write a few words about religious fundamentalism. Religion is difficult to define and understand. Religious extremism is often ridiculed as the territory of the ignorant and the demagogue. Many cultural or nominal religious adherents simply practice religious ritual because they learned it as children or find social acceptance through conformity. It is wrong to depict Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, or any other major religion as either a religion of "violence" or a religion of "peace." Every religion offers a way to peace. However, given the right circumstances, any religion can also find within its own teachings powerful justification for violence, conflict, and war.[144]

> Within the religious marketplace there naturally arise different niches, not all of which provide equally intense experiences. Some religious traditions, notably Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have a much stronger communal orientation than others, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Within each religious tradition, moreover, some firms maintain rigorous systems of shared beliefs, and morality, whereas other firms demand very little. It is the former we label "extremists" (or "sects," "cults," and "fundamentalists"); the latter are more known as "moderates," "liberals," or "mainstream churches."
>
> Traditional academic theories or religion have no way to explain the persistence of extremist groups except to view their adherents as victims of ignorance, coercion, deception, and psychopathology. Economic theory does better. Without resort to irrationality, it explains on-going demand for supernaturalism, distinguishes magic from religion, predicts their chief differences, and, as we shall see, accounts for religious extremism (sects).
>
> To better understand the appeal of group-oriented religion, and to see how this leads in turn to religious extremism, let us return to the problem of religious risk. The dilemma confronting religious consumers is analogous to that which confronts used-car buyers. Product quality is difficult to assess, even after purchase and use, and this tempts sellers to overstate the value of their merchandise or disguise its flaws. Not wishing to be cheated, buyers demand guarantees, seek information from third parties, or investigate the seller's reputation. Sellers are thus motivated to provide, or at least appear to provide, proof that their claims are true. Because the logic of this argument applies quite

[144] Laurence R. Iannaccone and Eli Berman, "Religious Extremism: The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly" *Public Choice*, Vol. 128, No. 1/2, The Political Economy of Terrorism (Jul., 2006), pp. 109-129

> generally, we can predict the emergence of religions institutions and arrangements designed to reduce fraud and increase information.[145]

Even when holding a majority within most religions, nominalists and liberals may find it difficult to lead religious practice. Fundamentalists are usually more vocal about their faith. Liberals have been able to lead, dominate, or control a denominational group within a broader religious framework, such as Christianity. However, such a takeover is usually precipitated by or followed by a long-term decline in either numbers and/or influence.[146] The heat, passion, and practice of religion is preserved and maintained by believers who hold to the literal truth claims of their particular religious system. If the marketplace conditions are right - in today's fractured, uncertain, and globalized world, they seem to be ideal – fundamentalists will win the battle for religious control every time.

Religion carries within it the necessary ingredients for revival and radicalism. Every religion has fundamentalists who claim to hold the only true spiritual authority from God(s). Fundamentalists are dogmatic. They are apocalyptic, and they offer a divine view of the world characterized by a called for, hoped for, and worked for utopian goodness in which all people on earth will be at peace because of their adherence to a given religion. Tibi writes, "For fundamentalists, religion is the expression of a divine order, as schematically opposed to our secular order. In this perspective, God's rule replaces humanity's rule."[147]

While all religions offer hope for some kind of eternal peace, the fundamentalist offers a shortcut to the peace. Furthermore, a fundamentalist will denounce the world outside the religion

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[145] Ibid.

[146] N. J. Demerath III, Cultural Victory and Organizational Defeat in the Paradoxical Decline of Liberal Protestantism, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec. 1995), pp. 458-469.

[147] Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), 20.

and call for its conversion in an aggressive manner. For example, with their rhetoric and deeds, Islamic fundamentalists are, "disabling entirely the Islamic scholarly tradition, realizing all too well the threat that this tradition represents to fundamentalism's violent anti-Western ideology."[148] Christian fundamentalists do the same. Militaristic terms are often co-opted by the religion. The language of war and faith blend together. Complex emergencies and global crises are exploited by the fundamentalist as evidence of the growing need for religious revival. In a world dominated by the so-called 24-hour news cycle, there is no shortage of real or perceived adversaries and crises that can confirm a fundamentalist's fearful and prejudicial outlook.[149]

Extreme fundamentalists are often driven by a "siege mentality." They often distort history to create a false narrative. Historical errors, atrocities, and dark chapters in a religion will be ignored, explained away as bias, or revised to reflect a more positive interpretation.[150] They may place themselves into aggressive situations to force a response from their perceived opposition, and, when conflict occurs, claim persecution. Persecution often causes fundamentalist movements to grow. Marginalized people view the persecuted sympathetically. Fundamentalist movements can grow rapidly among the lower classes, and spread upward into the political class because these movements offer three things: social renewal, spiritual comfort, and unwavering values. By promising values and fairness they can appeal to both conservatives and liberals who are disaffected with slow political progress and/or high-level corruption.[151]

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[148] Tamara Albertini "The Seductiveness of Certainty: The Destruction of Islam's Intellectual Legacy by the Fundamentalists," *Philosophy East and West* 53, no. 4 (Oct., 2003): 455-70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1399978.

[149] Mark J. Brandt and Christina Reyna, "The Role of Prejudice and the Need for Closure in Religious Fundamentalism," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36, no. 5 (May 2010): 715-25.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Alistair E. McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 250-251.

Lina Khatib quotes Castells' reference to the Islamic fundamentalist identity, "As an expression of *'the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded.'* "[152] It is difficult for secularists to understand that an extreme fundamentalist views the world as totally corrupted. Negotiation, diplomacy, and exchange of ideas in a traditional sense are symptoms of compromise. When religion (used as an ideology) demands total adherence to God's way, there can be no room for alternatives.[153]

To return to Jerry Falwell's secret meeting in Virginia, Kenneth Kantzer, who was present as note taker, records that all present agreed Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals should set aside theological differences to work together for political and cultural victory. This is the moment when a preeminent fundamentalist leader, Jerry Falwell, decided to move into Evangelical circles, to bring his all or nothing approach to political conquest. Thirty percent of the Moral Majority were Roman Catholic at the time of the meeting. Falwell states that Mormons and Jews in the Moral Majority even outnumbered fundamentalist Christians, such as those at Bob Jones University. Therefore, in Falwell's thinking, fundamentalists were too focused on their own issues, and that for him to enjoy Christian political success he needed to abandon his fundamentalist roots for a much higher level of unity. Evangelicals had started to figure out cross-sectarian unity. During the eighties and nineties they came into their own as the work of the Co-Mission will reveal later in this chapter.

The meeting attendees agreed that they should cooperate across denominational lines on distribution of the Bible, cooperation on humanitarian aid, Biblical truth/inerrancy, and opposition to abortion. These issues represented areas where all parties could align without

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[152] Lina Khatib, "Communicating Islamic Fundamentalism as Global Citizenship," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (October 2003): 389-409, http://jci.sagepub.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/content/27/4/389.abstract.

[153] Monica Duffy Toft, "Religion, Terrorism, and Civil Wars," in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah et. al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 141-142.

controversy. Francis Schaeffer then took the meeting in a fresh direction by arguing that liberal Christians should be confronted. In a hostile culture, "confrontation is necessary," and "Civil disobedience should be practiced as a part of our evangelical confrontation." The meeting concluded with three additional concerns as voiced by Henry, and agreed to by the attendees. Religious liberty is primary, with a note added that Muslims are opposed to it.
Leadership in both main-line churches and Evangelical churches should be a common concern to all. It is imperative to learn from third-world churches, and collaborate in global missionary endeavors. Finally, they agreed that they would work together help reach the poor, but also to "reach modern and sophisticated people with the gospel."[154]

The tactics that would flow from this meeting would ultimately bring almost all parts of fractured Evangelical Christianity together. Jerry Falwell would be a recognized leader, rubbing shoulders with the elite of American society. In the late 1990s he would even be present at an exclusive Manhattan gala with Mikhail Gorbachev and Bill Clinton, recognized as one of the most influential leaders of his generation.[155] The many different sects, views, and denominations that make up American Evangelicalism obscure the fact that the leadership across these splinter groups remains almost totally united in three core areas: religious liberty, political vision, and proselytization of the world. It is a remarkable research moment indeed, when leaders of networks who do not always seem to get along at the public level, can be physically placed in a secret gathering agreeing to do what they ended up doing.

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Jim Yardley, "1,000 Unlikely Elbow-Rubbers Meet at a Time Gala," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 4, 1998), https://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/04/nyregion/1000-unlikely-elbow-rubbers-meet-at-a-time-gala.html.

However, is there anything especially remarkable about these modern American Evangelicals? They desire to spread their faith and values. Do not all missionary religions share a similar desire to transmit culture and religion to new or hostile lands?

American historian Emily Conroy-Krutz argues that the Evangelical missionary motive of converting the world to Christianity dates to the beginning of the republic. However, this global missionary call to proselytize was linked at a very early stage with the language of conquest and empire. In the 19th century favorable American Evangelical missionary attitudes towards imperialism helped to forge British and American global connections.[156]

Despite this observation, it is difficult for missionaries to separate culture and politics from so-called, "pure religion."[157] This problem applies not only to those who practice religion, but to those who study it too. James Beckford states that social scientists should avoid trying to separate so-called true religious belief or practice from humanly constructed forms of its meaning: "The everyday practice of giving meaning to religion is itself unclear." [158]

The very examples, like that of the early missionary, Adoniram Judson, that Conroy-Krutz uses to reveal the nexus of empire and religion show that it is likely impossible to fully disentangle government power from missionary proselytization. Judson, the pioneer American missionary to then Burma, is especially relevant since he is still often used as an inspirational

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[156] Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 207-208. For a broader history of American evangelicals, see also Randall Balmer, *Blessed Assurance: A History of Evangelicalism in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

[157] Ibid., 212-213.

[158] Beckford, 20-21.

and motivational hero for evangelical Baptist youth seeking to convert people in faraway lands.[159]

American Evangelical missionaries were driven from the beginning by a global imperative. Conroy-Kurtz's work shows just how hard it is to separate religion from its cultural and social environment. Her work also suggests that the American Evangelical missionary enterprise is part of a larger story of Anglo-American, or indeed global Christian imperialism.[160]

American Evangelical missionaries adopted imperialist strains learned in part through early nineteenth century British missionary partnerships. This connection between American-British Evangelicalism explains in part why American missionaries would many years later travel to post-Soviet Russia still carrying with them tones of a triumphalist, Anglo-American, or at least a Western sense of cultural superiority. It does not explain why those same American Evangelicals would ultimately collaborate with the ROC.

Far from overwhelming Russian society with Evangelical Christianity, ground level American missionaries mostly departed the country or kept a very low profile after the 1990s. Evangelical leaders, on the other hand, created increasingly close ties to high-ranking ROC clergy. To return to Wendt's constructivist framework, the missionary effort in Russia may have started as a sort of Hobbesian campaign of cultural and religious conversion. It ended with a Lockean acknowledgement of ROC global power and efforts to find partnership and has evolved into a Kantian friendship. To better understand the evolution of the EC and ROC relationship, we must look to one of the most unique missionary campaigns in modern times: The CoMission.

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[159] Ibid., 59. See also, Paige Patterson, "Introduction: From Judson's Prison to the Ends of the Earth," in *Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary*, edited by Jason Duesing (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2012), 1-5.

[160] Conroy-Kurtz, 212-213.

This network had characteristics which were rhetorically very similar to the persecution, fear, and resistance mindset revealed by the Falwell dinner in Virginia.

The CoMission brought together an executive committee made up of leaders from twelve major organizations, including influential Evangelicals, such as internationally known Christian author Bruce Wilkinson, author of the *Prayer of Jabez*, Joseph Stowell, then President of Moody Bible Institute, and Paul Eshleman, of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), and director of the *Jesus Film* Project.[161]

The group had no central financial system, employees, or central infrastructure. Rather it was made up of voluntary cooperation across scores of agencies whose leadership agreed to unite their efforts around fifteen "principles."[162] It was strategic. A "prayer committee rallied over 20,000 people across the United States to commit to daily prayer. The daily prayer inevitably led to other communal, unifying group activities, such as "prayer days, prayer seminars, and prayer walks."[163]

The Co-Mission spawned a variety of initiatives, that ranged from showing the *Jesus Film* to more than 40,000 school teachers in 116 cities across the Soviet Union, to a conference in Moscow for 1000 couples, teaching lessons on the theme, "A Biblical Portrait of Marriage."[164] Another initiative was sponsored by the Russian Ministry of Education, and focused on Christian values in the public schools.

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[161] Wilkinson, 7. See also, https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/74997/bruce-wilkinson/, and https://www.brucewilkinsoncourses.org, Wilkinson's leadership development missionary work is now based on a 2500 acre portion of a game park in South Africa. He claims to have trained over 400,000 people in the Bible at more than 5000 training centers around the world, with more than 3000 "deans" trained on his main campus.

[162] Ibid., 277

[163] Ibid., 287.

[164] Ibid., 29, 46.

In 1992, 1300 "Westerners" held 136 four-day long "convocations," teaching more than 41,000 teachers, who committed to perpetuating Christian values in hundreds of schools across Russia.[165] The Co-Mission strategy focused on working with leaders. Their gateway into Russia involved working with officials in Moscow, who "opened the doors to 65,000 schools and 278 teacher-training colleges" across Russia.[166]

The Co-Mission trained, funded, and deployed more than 1500 missionaries across the former USSR in less than five years.[167] Over 1994-1996, the Co-Mission humanitarian network raised almost twenty million dollars to meet a variety of needs, including the following: sending medical equipment to hospitals and clinics in Vladimir, providing relief supplies for Chechnya, and convincing British Airways, USAir, and medical institutions in Charlotte to assist with the transport and intensive medical needs of a Ukrainian orphan.[168]

Members of the CoMission met Mikhail Gorbachev, and worked closely with the Russian Ministry of Education. The meeting was facilitated through the ministry in early 1991 as part of a drive to bring new moral values to the Russian school system.[169] The CoMission worked intensively to build personal ties with education officials through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). ACSI is the largest Christian school association in the world, with 23,000 member schools in 100 countries. It serves more than 5.5 million students.[170] It is a

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[165] Ibid., 160.

[166] Ibid., 237.

[167] Ibid., 240.

[168] Ibid., 267.

[169] Ibid. 157-159.

[170] "Frequently Asked Questions," ACSI, https://www.acsi.org/about/about-the-association-of-christian-schools-international/faqs.

highly connected and globally relevant organization. A look at the front page of the ACSI website in late March, 2022, reveals a war-time donation appeal for the rebuilding of Kiev Christian Academy.

In 1992, Bruce Wilkinson, chairman of the Co-Mission, was the keynote speaker for the largest of the various national ACSI teacher conventions, the "42nd Annual Southern California Teachers Convention at the Anaheim Convention Center." More than eight thousand attendees were present.[171] The then head of ACSI, founder and president, Paul Kienel, invited four officials from the Russian Ministry of Education to speak. They were Deputy Minister of Education, Aleksandr Asmolov, Chairman of the Young Pioneers, Alexei Brudnov, Specialist for Moral and Ethics Curriculum, Olga Polykovskaya, and Head of textbooks for Russian schools, Aleksandr Abramov.

The Co-Mission group worked with a public relations agency to highlight their relationship with Russian federal education officials at the ACSI Convention. At the press conference, Aleksandr Asmolov said, "I want to emphasize today that Russian education is open for Christian values. And it is a miracle that the Christianity of the United States is going to help their brothers in Russia. I want you to realize that the people who go to Russia can make a heroic deed." Bruce Wilkinson would go on record in the same press conference highlighting the shameful irony that formerly Communist Russia now had more freedoms for Christian values in public schools, than were available in the United States. This scene happened against the backdrop of a private Christian education conference. In the words of Paul Kienel, "The CoMission responded to a unique door of opportunity unprecedented in human history."

> That sounds like an overstatement, but when have you heard of a delegation from a foreign government coming to a large body of evangelical believers in the US or in any other country, as did the Russians in 1992, and inviting them in the presence of national

[171] Wilkinson, 95.

> and international media representatives to come and train their public-school teachers in Christian ethics and morality? As far as we know, no invitation quite like it has ever been offered before. The great psalmist David says that it takes the training of only one generation for a nation to turn back to God.[172]

Perhaps as remarkable as the words of Kienel, is the sense of importance that he and the others of the Co-Mission felt at the time. Leaving aside the planning, execution, sophistication, networking, and brainstorming that had gone into this very moment, Kienel is able to stand back, look at the results of his work and pronounce it one of the most significant moments in human history. While the relative level of importance of this moment may not rise to Kienel's view, it does indeed give us a very clear picture of how leading Evangelicals saw both themselves and this post-Cold War moment. The world was changing, and they wanted to be a part of shaping that change.

Aside from the remarkable hubris of the CoMission leadership, perhaps the most fascinating component of their work was their fifteen values. These values say much about the unifying ability, sophistication, and key goals of Evangelical elites at the end of the Cold War. They are as follows:

1. Realize that working together pleases God.
2. Make repentance central to all organizational planning.
3. Expect opposition from your own organization.
4. Give the credit to God.
5. Do the work under a neutral banner.
6. Expect every organization to pay its own way.
7. Respect the unique gifting and calling of each organization.

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[172] Wilkinson, 95-103.

8. Be flexible.

9. Divide the task and the territories.

10. Respond to open doors quickly.

11. Mobilize people to pray.

12. Ask for pledges of personal purity.

13. Work with leaders.

14. Entrust the ministry to laymen and laywomen.

15. Express love in tangible ways.

All told, this movement gathered thousands of people across more than eighty of Evangelical America's most dynamic institutions. It brought together groups that had never worked together. It transcended national boundaries, linking American Evangelicals with Kremlin officials, including Mikhail Gorbachev himself. It brought Evangelical ideas and Christian morality from the federal level to every part of the Russian public education system.

The CoMission leadership set these fifteen rules to guide their unified work. Only one of those rules had to do with personal behavior. It was Rule #12, which banned extramarital or premarital sex for six months prior to working with the Co-Mission. Of all the many behavioral rules that govern Christian behavior, sexual promiscuity was the only one that the Co-Mission chose to actively enforce. Why? Certainly, these leaders were a product of their time, which included the rise of the Moral Majority, and a resurgence of Christian puritanism throughout the eighties and nineties. However, the Co-Mission makes clear that the motivation was bigger. They clearly wanted nothing to stop their vision of capturing Russia. Sexual mistakes were perceived to be the primary danger to productivity since, "Co-Missioners were propositioned

frequently during their time of ministry," in Russia.[173] For the CoMission leaders, the target was Russian society, and only those sins which could slow the missionary work were worth mentioning: lack of unity and promiscuity.

Russia has been a target field for American Evangelicals for well over a century. Heather Curtis shows that one of the earliest and most successful Evangelical missionary and humanitarian initiatives ever launched, was a Russian famine relief campaign led by T. Dewitt Talmage and Louis Klopsch in the 1890s. The two men used creative stories of human suffering, small donation appeals, and bold theological arguments for giving. Further, Curtis finds that the Russian relief campaign used the conscious goal of bolstering US diplomacy abroad to raise funds. Klopsch would successfully link American political standing in the world with Christian missionary work. In fact, the appeal went so far as to argue that such an effort would create bonds of friendship between America and Russia, which would ultimately advance both trade and the Christian message. American business, prosperity, freedom, and religion were linked together explicitly.[174]

Yet, Curtis also explores more nuance in missionary motivations. She identifies a core debate among Evangelical missionary communities. While some embraced America's cultural influence as a God given opportunity to change the world; others agonized over how to keep nationalism from interfering with what they viewed as the global, borderless message of Jesus.

Curtis finds numerous miscalculations, questionable donation methods, and a calculated business approach among Evangelical missionary aid fundraisers. Yet, she also finds a strong

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[173] Ibid., 281.

[174] Heather D. Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 34-35.

spirit of genuine care and religious sincerity among Evangelicals devoted to helping the poor and suffering around the world.[175] In fact, Curtis argues that despite the popular conception that big, secular, and government institutions dominated the non-profit sector, religious charitable initiatives were essential to the development of the global humanitarian aid system.[176]

David Hollinger argues that regardless of motivation, missionaries may have had a greater impact on America than they did on their target fields. He traces how many missionaries, and missionary children would shape America through the most turbulent years of the twentieth century, and help to move both mainstream Protestantism and American society in a more progressive direction.[177] Hollinger argues that the social contact between missionaries and the peoples that they sought to proselytize changed America as much as it changed other lands.

Hollinger argues that the very theology of American Protestantism was liberalized due to the observations, anthropological work, and philosophical changes spurred by missionaries and those influenced by them. Hollinger acknowledges that Evangelicals had largely come to dominate the wider American missionary landscape by the 1970s, and his work largely concludes with this decade. Yet, his underlying thesis argues that there was a kind of progressive liberalization of American Protestantism that extended between the 1890s and the 1970s, as missionaries went out from the United States, encountered other cultures, and, in so doing, softened lines of doctrinal orthodoxy. This argument raises an important consideration. Did the missionary influence on America stop after the decline of mainline Protestantism, or did that influence shift to the Evangelicals? Moreover, what forms did that influence take?

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[175] Ibid., 13-15, 292-294.

[176] Ibid., 4-6.

[177] Hollinger, 1-23.

In her work on the global history of American Evangelicals, Melani McAlister devotes an entire chapter to the study of Evangelical response to Communism. Arguing that American Evangelicalism can only be understood within its global context, she sketches their missionary engagement behind the Iron Curtain. McAlister focuses on the importance of suffering for Evangelical missionary activity. She touches on a diverse set of figures such as Richard Wurmbrand, Brother Andrew, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Billy Graham, and Jerry Falwell.[178] McAlister highlights the power of American Evangelicalism to shape the currents of international affairs through influence and funding of foreign partnerships.

James Enns also concludes that Evangelical missionary work had social effects far beyond the stated purpose of evangelism. He finds that figures like Billy Graham helped awaken Germany to American culture. By their very presence, missionaries promoted American values and anti-Communism.[179] Enns finds that Evangelical presence in Germany had an impact on other parts of the world through outreach into immigrant communities. Enns argues that American Evangelicals had significant influence on the formation of the religious landscape in Germany after the war by helping to nurture a fresh Evangelical religious scene. Interestingly, many of the same leading Evangelicals who did missionary work post-war Germany, such as Billy Graham, also proselytized in post-Soviet Russia. [180]

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[178] McAlister, 105-116.

[179] James Enns, *Saving Germany* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017), 6-8.

[180] Enns, 204-217. See also Andrew F. Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 3-10. Walls describes world Christianity as normative. He has led the way in viewing Christianity through a global frame, rather than region specific, and certainly, Western frame.

Ian Tyrell shows that long before the twentieth century, American Evangelicals have been motivated to work across borders.[181] Thomas Bender argues for a contextualizing of the entire American enterprise, or nation building, to be part of a much bigger global story.[182] Indeed, it is now widely acknowledged that for more than two centuries, American Evangelical missionaries have both followed, led, and even challenged American culture and power across the world.[183] Yet, for all of the attention paid to large missionary efforts like the work of Billy Graham and the CoMission, transnational religious changes are experienced and developed at the ground level by missionary families like the Purcells, to be discussed later, in Chapter Six.

American Evangelicals encountered a much stronger self-awareness of "national identity" among the peoples of the former Soviet Union than they perhaps expected find. On the other hand, American Evangelicals were arguably going through shifts in their own sense of identity in the United States around the same time that the Soviet Union was collapsing.[184]

In post-Soviet Russia, a newly open nation was available to be redeemed by American missionaries. Uta Balbier finds that missionaries to post WWII Europe experienced deep and meaningful social exchanges with those they sought to proselytize.[185] This social exchange happened in the Russian case as well. While many Evangelicals acknowledged the religious primacy of Russian Orthodoxy, some went further, and followed prominent thinkers who saw

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[181] To better understand just how long American Evangelicals have intentionally established global networks, see Ian Tyrell, *Reforming the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-27.

[182] Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 3-14.

[183] Oliver, et al., 1019–1042.

[184] Michele Margolis, *From Politics to the Pews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 13-14.

[185] Balbier, "Transnationalizing US Religious History and Revisiting the European Case."

Vladimir Putin as an agent of progressive change.[186] This change in feeling towards Moscow led to a new period of friendly alliance building between some conservative Evangelical Americans and conservative, religious Russians, a subject which will be discussed later in Chapter 6.[187] However, such an era of good feelings is not the historical norm for the EC and the ROC.

[186] Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2013), 106.

[187] Pasquale Annicchino, "Winning the Battle by Losing the War: The Lautsi Case and the Holy Alliance between American Conservative Evangelicals, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican to Reshape European Identity." *Religion and Human Rights* 6, no. 3 (2011): 213-19. 213-19.

Chapter 4

Evangelical Attitudes Towards Russia Before 1990

Fill the jails so full of Communists their feet stick out the windows.

– Billy Sunday[188]

American Evangelicals have been virulently against Communism since its earliest rise in Russia. However, this fact is rarely acknowledged by scholars, who tend to date the beginning of the Evangelical anti-communist movement to after World War Two. While the first "Red Scare" of 1919-1920, is commonly known by historians, it has often been treated as a nationalist, cultural, or economic question.[189] In her work on early twentieth century missionizing in Russia, Heather Curtis, for example, only hints at early Evangelical fears of communism. [190] Of course, before the fifties, mainline Protestantism was preeminent in American society, and fundamentalists and Evangelicals were not commonly accepted in elite circles. This relative social isolation may explain why Evangelical anti-communism is not highly visible among scholars until the fifties and the breakout years of Billy Graham, which again, are consistently seen as the beginning of visible Evangelical anti-communism.[191]

However, decades before Graham would start his evangelism career, another evangelist named Billy was nationally famous. This was Billy Sunday, who said in the 1920s, given his way, he would, "Fill the jails so full of Communists that their feet would stick out the windows." When he considered the possibility of Communist political dominance in America, he said,

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[188] Quoted in Sirgiovanni.

[189] Stanley Coben, "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-20," *Political Science Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1964): 52-75. doi:10.2307/2146574.

[190] Curtis, 182.

[191] Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4-11.

"We'll swim our horses in blood up to the bridles first."[192] Sunday was a former major league baseball star, turned fundamentalist evangelist, who had outsized influence on the revivalist culture of the Evangelicalism that was then developing in the lower classes of American life. He led the Evangelical charge in support of Prohibition, preached a strong form of cultural conservatism, and called people to mass conversion events in major cities across America. His preaching legacy endures among Evangelical leaders to this day.[193]

The 1950s are indeed remarkable for the mainstream breakout of Evangelical religious culture as it matured in methodology and approach. As mentioned, this breakout was partly due to the anti-communist, God and country version of Evangelical Christianity preached by Billy Graham and others. However, the undercurrent of opposition to worldwide communism and left-leaning ideas existed powerfully and vocally from their beginning.[194]

American Evangelicals have had wary eyes on Russia since at least the late 1860s when prophecy teacher, John Nelson Darby, identified the nation with the land of Gog in the book of Ezekiel. From that time, onwards, a large segment of American evangelicals has linked Russia with the idea that before the end of days, Jesus will catch the true global church to Heaven, in a moment known as the Rapture, while seven years of horror (The Tribulation) play out on earth. At the end of these seven years, Jesus will return for a final victorious struggle with the forces of evil, the conclusion of which will immediately inaugurate a new kind of golden age on earth –

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[192] George Sirgiovanni, *An Undercurrent of Suspicion* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 27.

[193] Justin Taylor, "What Was It like to Hear Billy Sunday Preach?," The Gospel Coalition, August 3, 2016, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/what-was-it-like-to-hear-billy-sunday-preach/.

[194] Jason Stevens, *God Fearing and Free* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), viii. Stevens grounds his work in the mid-forties to sixties, focusing on what he describes as the last major revival in America. In doing so, he acknowledges a cultural continuity of religious consciousness on American public life that dates back much earlier. However, he misses an opportunity to explore anti-Communism as part of a bigger struggle against godlessness.

the Millennium, a time in which Jesus will literally reign over the whole world. For American evangelicals of the premillennial variety, this prophetic belief is closely linked with Jewish restoration to the land of Israel, and is also closely linked to fears of one world government, one world religion, and the rise of a global dictator – the Antichrist. Various forms of premillennial thought break down into the smaller categories of pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation. The prefixes all refer to the point during the Tribulation at which the Rapture occurs. The apocalyptic view of Russia as Gog, means that for premillennial Evangelicals the country is a sinister force. In this scenario Russia is predicted to lead a coalition of anti-Semitic nations against the people of Israel prior to the final battle of Armageddon. [195]

The Bolshevik revolution was immediately identified by Evangelical leaders as a prophetic moment which moved the world closer to the end of days, and helped solidify an anti-communist spirit. This came on the back of Evangelical fears that the German Kaiser of WWI was the living embodiment of the antichrist. Billy Sunday, endorsed the view.[196]

As the young USSR solidified its hold on power in Russia, Evangelicals linked both the state and its Communist ideology with the power of the antichrist. Sutton notes that Billy Sunday linked Russian Communism to the fall of personal virtue and morality in declaring that no Russian girls over fourteen maintained their virginity in such a godless place.[197] As the world moved closer to WWII in the 1930s, Evangelicals then linked Germany and the Soviet Union in a godless conspiracy, and overtly tied American and Anglo nationalism to the Christian message.

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[195] Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 17-26.

[196] Ibid., 69-71.

[197] Ibid., 185.

Fundamentalist and Evangelical anti-communism grew ever more intense during the Roosevelt years, as Washington forged warmer ties with Moscow.[198]

The post war world and the rise of atomic weapons led directly to an apocalyptic consciousness among ordinary Evangelicals, fundamentalists, and the elite alike. For the first time in history, the world seemingly had the power to destroy itself. It is perhaps no small wonder, that in this environment Billy Graham, a polished and winsome product of Evangelicalism, who had fundamentalist roots, would become America's leading religious figure for the next half century.[199] Graham and his "big religion" of the Evangelical, pro-American, and Anti-Soviet variety exploded onto the popular American scene in the fifties, particularly after it was helped along by President Truman's call for a total religious effort against Communism.

From the 1950s, Evangelicals were publicly powerful enough to mobilize against Communism. Richard Wurmbrand's story of suffering, and works like that of Soviet dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, were popular accounts that helped mobilize Christian responses in the seventies and into the eighties.[200] This culminated in the overt advocacy of President Ronald Reagan who demonstrably tied the Soviet Union's lack of religious freedom to imagery of an evil empire. His support of the Siberian Seven, a group of persecuted Pentecostal Christians, who sheltered in the US Embassy in Moscow, gave public currency to a central theme of his administration which saw itself at the center of a global struggle between atheist darkness and God-believers, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim.[201]

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[198] Ibid., 219-224.

[199] Ibid., 294-301.

[200] McAlister, 106-108.

[201] William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 315-321.

Evangelicals would maintain an apocalyptic fear of Russia through the end of the Cold War, ultimately culminating in their self-perceived victory with the advent of the Reagan administration.[202] The message of the end of the world was clear. Jerry Falwell wrote about it in 1979 in his short book, *Armageddon and the Coming War with Russia*. In the book, he identifies Communist Russia as the evil nation which will fight against God's people and be ultimately destroyed for its wickedness and pride. When the Soviet regime collapsed, this longstanding fear of Russia would lead to the paradox of triumph at the fall of the USSR and the fresh fear of George H. W. Bush's "new world order." [203]

Evangelicals had to make sense of their apocalyptic views of society. They believed that the world was getting increasingly worse due to moral decline, and that Communism was Satan's tool to bring about the Apocalypse. When the Soviet Union dissolved, they had to come to terms with a fact that contradicted their long held views of an apocalyptic future, the decline and end of their greatest enemy, Communist Russia.

The social and political movements of Evangelicals that exploded in the late 1970s, were largely led by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Falwell, a famous Baptist pastor, would found and lead the Moral Majority to combat the rise of social liberalism, anti-religious sentiment, and growing secularization. His movement is remarkable not only because it would have a documented effect on the election of Ronald Reagan, ironically defeating an Evangelical Baptist president, Jimmy Carter, in the process, but also because he would advocate for a movement away from traditional Baptist beliefs about separation of church and state.[204]

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[202] Ibid., 358.

[203] The Politics of Realism and Religion: Christian Responses to Bush's New World Order." *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 1 (2010): 95-118. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24916035.

[204] For a survey of the various Baptist views on religious liberty, see David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 197-214.

Jerry Falwell was indeed a powerful figure. In his ability to politically organize American Evangelicals, he was unmatched. Early in her work on Falwell, Susan Harding references a story set in the eighties at Falwell's church, about a controversial incident taking place in Nebraska. The state of Nebraska ordered a Christian school to close for not complying with regulations. During a major conference at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Falwell's associate, Ron Godwin, who was live on the scene in Nebraska, would phone in to provide the congregation with regular live updates about the 'siege' – complete with real imagery of protesting pastors being forcibly removed from the church and dumped onto sidewalks. Evangelical leaders created and fostered the fear based religious culture in which Evangelical missionaries to Russia were formed.[205]

Harding's use of the story poignantly resonates with me, since my own father was one of the hundreds of pastors who was on the scene at the Nebraska incident. I can vouch for her narrative, since, as a little boy in a small church in Texas, images from the Nebraska moment sparked a personal fear of my father's arrest as well as looming state sponsored religious persecution in my own Evangelical upbringing. Stories like the Nebraska showdown were used to frighten Evangelical children in the 1980s, with fears of Communism coming to America and imprisonment of believers. The story was used to set up a skit during a children's activity at a church in Colorado Springs, which I attended as a child, in 1987. During an evening meeting, the lights were suddenly switched off, and a group of soldiers with guns and flashlights stormed in. One of them screamed, "Whoever in here are Christians, you are going to die tonight!" The kids screamed, but enough of them figured out the "joke," that the lights were switched back on, and the room full of children aged, seven to twelve, were treated to a story about how this was

[205] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 10., https://books.google.com/books/about/Armageddon_and_the_Coming_War_with_Russi.html?id=h2USywAACAAJ

what life was like for Christians in Communist Russia. If we wanted a free country, we'd better grow up and work hard to keep it free.

Jerry Falwell is famous for his backing of Ronald Reagan, his founding of the Moral Majority, and his self-made status as a political flashpoint and power symbol of the American religious right. While his global activities are much less known, they are arguably just as important as his forays into domestic American politics. Falwell traveled throughout the world to dozens of countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa. These trips, while mostly presented as missionary endeavors, were at times more political than religious in nature.

On a 1985 trip to South Africa during which he infamously supported the Apartheid regime, he was joined by a group of pastors, including the current president of Liberty University, Jerry Prevo, a Baptist from Anchorage, Alaska. His son Jerry Falwell Jr., the future second president of the university, was along too. However, it was not just pastors, and it was not just missionary work. It was very much political. Influential conservative columnist, and Falwell ally, Cal Thomas was there, as was a *Washington Times* journalist, among other conservative media figures. The result of the trip was a glossy magazine edition depicting the trip as a way to raise awareness about the looming Communist takeover of South Africa. For Falwell, Apartheid was better than Communism. Politics, in this case, was certainly as important as religious activity.[206] It seems to have paid well too. On the trip to South Africa, the entire party flew either first or business class. Falwell, and two others would leave the group early, and fly back to JFK airport via London Heathrow on the Concorde.[207]

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[206] "Telex Message #138 List of Delegates to South Africa," August 13, 1985.

[207] Jerry Falwell, "Special Report: The Untold Story - South Africa," *The Fundamentalist Journal*, 1985.
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One of Falwell's protégés, the Rev. James (Jim) A. Vineyard, a fundamentalist in Oklahoma City, learned well from Falwell the lessons of political action and religious pragmatism. Vineyard was instrumental in raising awareness of missionary opportunities and personally launching a wave of missionaries into Russia throughout the nineties. Throughout his years of service as a member of the clergy, he reflected Falwell's anti-Muslim, anti-gay, anti-liberal hate speech domestically and globally. Vineyard would meet with government leaders, military officers, and university educators across Russia on his missionary travels. Fifteen years later, he would become infamous for his long letters to Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush, advocating for them to support Zionism in the disputed Gush Katif region of Israel and Palestine.[208] Vineyard organized protest events at Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch, and even moved one of his Russia missionaries, David Sloan, away from working in the former USSR to focus on the Gaza crisis.

When I was about fifteen years of age, I attended a national youth conference at Jim Vineyard's congregation, the Windsor Hills Baptist Church. The week-long conference featured a recurring good vs. evil themed comedy sketch starring an original superhero character, "Mike Crunch." The Mike Crunch story arc was always about saving a group of Christian teenagers struggling with temptation to do "sinful" activities. These activities covered the usual range of standard religious prohibitions such as drugs and alcohol, to premarital sexual activity. Skits like this were and are still fairly typical for large gatherings of Christian teenagers. They often feature a take on a Hollywood theme like "Mission Impossible" or "Star Wars." They are generally low quality productions, with pastors doubling as actors, and often breaking the fourth

[208] Andy Newman, "Group to Visit Gaza Strip to Oppose Israeli Pullout," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, June 5, 2005), https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/05/nyregion/group-to-visit-gaza-strip-to-oppose-israeli-pullout.html.

wall, to show that they are in on the joke. Their role in Christian youth conferences is mainly to warm up the crowd or provide a schedule break from the more intense activities such as worship music and preaching. This day however, in Oklahoma City took a much darker turn. The Mike Crunch character featured as the leader of a club called the "KKK" which was presented as a group of militant Christians saving young people and America in general from dark, evil, and Communist forces: homosexuals. The "KKK" was spelled out in signs, and stood for "Kill a Kweer for Khrist." The "comedy" sketch featured Mike Crunch and his band of KKK warriors beating a gay effigy to death on the stage in front of approximately 1500 baying teenagers and church youth leaders. At one point in the sketch, the gay character is tempting the good Christian teenage boy. The boy feels trapped. The main lights turned off, strobe lights flashed, American flags waved, music played, and the auditorium was told to chant "KKK" to bring out Mike Crunch. Another gay effigy was shot off the balcony from a cannon, and landed on the stage, dead. Mike Crunch and his gang then took baseball bats and Bibles and continued to beat the "dead" gay effigy while the room chanted words of hate.

Mike Crunch yelled from the stage that anyone who didn't chant was probably "gay themselves." I remember standing in the back, scared to be seen, not chanting, but desperately hoping none of my friends would see me, and think that I was gay. To be sure, at age fifteen, I had always been taught to fear homosexuals and to believe that homosexuality was a sin. However, I didn't have hate and anger tied to my fear of the gay community. I thought that God loved the world, so I didn't agree with violence or rage against anyone. Yet, I was almost swept into joining in the vile chant out of peer pressure and fear of my religious leadership.

Vineyard's church could mix hate speech, racism, American patriotism, and a belief in the looming end of the world with the Christian scriptures. It was also a leading missionary

organization, and, working closely with Baptist International Missions Inc. (BIMI) Vineyard helped to deploy hundreds of people and millions of dollars to the former Soviet Union, and many other countries for missionary work. Missionaries sent out from this church or influenced by this church, went to Russia in the 1990s and are still there. They went, as Falwell, Vineyard and the like, sent them – to save Godless Russia from dark Communism, and to convert them to the American version of Evangelical Christianity.

The thing that Falwell, Vineyard, and the rest of their tribe hated most was Communism. Communism had broken down racial barriers. Communism was responsible for the "gay" problem. Communism threatened the nuclear family, freedom of religion, and free market. Communism was the devil's work. When the Soviet Union fell, it was the job of every right thinking American Christian to do their part to thoroughly cleanse Russia of its godless Communism through doing or financially supporting missionary work. It did not matter that Communism had collapsed. The fear-based religion that they espoused led them to believe, at least throughout the nineties, that Communism would come back to Russia if their missionaries weren't sent abroad to proselytize. Ultimately, this Falwell inspired missionary work was not only meant to save the world, but in doing so, to also save America.[209]

David Hollinger argues that earlier Protestant missionaries created a similar reverse or boomerang effect of sorts, on America. Hollinger describes their effect as "stealthy."[210] More than 10,000 American missionaries were recruited from college campuses to serve abroad by the Student Volunteer Movement between 1886-1920. In 1925 there were more than 7400 American

[209] Interview with D.S. October 16, 2021 and T.P. Personal, March 26, 2022.

[210] Hollinger, 297.

missionaries in China, India, and Japan alone, with thousands more scattered to all parts of the globe.[211]

Early missionaries went abroad to spread American Protestantism and found Western exploitation, gross inequalities and cultural supremacy, which to many of them, made a mockery of the tenets of the Christian religion. It was within this setting that many of these missionaries became agents of cultural change, and became aware of the hypocrisy that they found back home in their sending churches: the assumption of American power, American empire, and American righteousness. Missionaries had gone abroad and come face to face with the harsh realities of how Western and specifically, American, power was used. This realization led in many cases, as Hollinger points out, to crises of faith among missionaries, which could take several forms.

In many cases, the crisis of faith led to the adoption of a pronounced progressivism within a religious setting. Hollinger points out, however, that over time, while this progressivism within a religious setting, provided a kind of moral framework for the children of these missionaries, it also led them to question the very religion on which their parents would hang that moral framework.

The most zealous of mainline Protestant Christians, such as the United Methodists, ELCA, and American Baptists, who in their earnest desire to convert the heathen of the world, were motivated by the words of a still famous hymn, by Isaac Watts, "Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fight to win the prize, and sail through bloody seas?"[212] Yet Hollinger finds that these same

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[211] Ibid., 3.

[212] Mike Cosper, "Isaac Watts: The Reformer You Know By Heart but Not By Name," April 6, 2011, *The Gospel Coalition*, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/isaac-watts-the-reformer-you-know-by-heart-but-not-by-name/.

Protestants would become the missionaries who would move away from their proclamations of the Christian gospel and exchange their proselytizing motive for social activism and human rights campaigns as a new style of missionary work.[213]

Hollinger follows this liberalizing or progressive trend to the voices of the children of missionaries, like Pearl Buck, who would drop their religious faith altogether to serve society and community through progressive political advocacy and social commentary.[214] In this sense, the most zealous of Christians would ultimately become agents of the demise of the mainline Protestant religion in the United States.

Overall, Hollinger sees the effect of these Protestant missionaries as a good one. He ascribes to them positive influence in liberalizing America, using their overseas knowledge of the world to change society for the better, making it more diverse, more inclusive, and more welcoming towards minority groups.[215] Former missionaries and their children were at the forefront of major social changes on issues such as racial equality, LGBT rights, and social justice. Missionaries led on these changes both within their own religious denominations and across society.[216] Of course, it should be noted that it was people from mainline Protestant denominations who broadly held power for most of American history.

Paternalism was a part of the culture of these Protestant missionaries, but gradually over time, missionary leadership roles were handed over to citizens of other countries and people from different ethnic backgrounds.[217] Mainline Protestants would lose control of their own

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[213] Hollinger, 3 – 9.

[214] Ibid., 37.

[215] Ibid., 288-299.

[216] Ibid., 217-287.

[217] Ibid., 22-23.

missionary enterprise. Furthermore, the decline in membership of the mainline Protestant churches led inevitably to a decline in numbers of missionaries, and ultimately, the petering out of the Protestant missionary project. It would become a shadow of its former self.

Hollinger's work is critical to understanding the way missionaries affect their religious communities. His "stealth effect" implies that the very action of missionizing is one that leads to intercultural relationships, and then, subsequent changes in the society that sends out the missionaries themselves. Hollinger recognizes the decline of Protestant missionary influence, and acknowledges the rise of the evangelical missionary and the drastic loss of influence and numbers in mainline Protestant churches.[218]

However, it is very apparent that the missionary enterprise did not decline at all, with the rise of Evangelical Christianity and Evangelical versions of these mainline Protestant denominations. As Protestant denominations became mainline it was the Evangelical splits or splinter groups who held to the foundational religious beliefs that sent the Protestant missionaries out to begin with.

To better understand American Evangelical missionaries, it is necessary to take a brief look at the various scholarly approaches to understanding Evangelicalism itself.[219] Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe give three distinct approaches to understanding and defining what it means to be Evangelical.[220] The first comes from George Marsden, who gives three nuances to the term Evangelical. He sees it as denoting a "group of Christians who fit a certain definition."

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[218] Ibid., 111-116.

[219] Kendrick Oliver, Uta A. Balbier, Hans Krabbendam, and Axel R. Schafer, "Special Issue: Exploring the Global History of American Evangelicalism Introduction," *Journal of American* Studies 51, no. 4 (2017): 1019-1042.

[220] Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14-24.

Second, Marsden argues that the term can be used broadly to describe a loose and "organic" movement of people who share a kind of conceptual unity. Finally, Marsden also sees a group of people who consciously use the term Evangelical in a restrictive fashion to define both institutional organizations and personal movements. In his expansive definition, he offers five belief points of unity for Evangelicals: first, the final authority of Scripture as developed in the Protestant Reformation; second, the historical reality of God's salvation; third, that eternal salvation can only come through personal trust in Jesus Christ; fourth, the importance of evangelism and missions; fifth, the importance of spiritual transformation.[221]

A second definition, famous for its brevity and relative simplicity, comes from David Bebbington. He posits a four-fold belief test to mark Evangelicalism: conversionism – the idea that lives need to be changed, activism – the gospel needs to be expressed, biblicism – a high view of the scriptures, and crucicentrism – a high view of Jesus Christ's death on the cross, and its central place in the Christian message.[222]

The third definition, comes from Stuart Piggin who defines Evangelicalism in a three-fold way: experiential – the importance of the holy spirit, biblicist – the importance of the Bible, activist – the importance of engaging the world with a message.[223]

While all three of these definitions are useful, they also fall short in specific ways. First, Marsden's focus is almost entirely focused on American Evangelicalism, and fails to take note of global influence. Bebbington's definition is useful in its simplicity, but also risks being overly simplistic in that might not be suitable for understanding the global diversity of Evangelicals,

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[221] George Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), ix-xi.

[222] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Routledge: London, 1993) 1-19.

[223] "The Evangelical Synthesis," in Stuart Piggin*, Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word, and World* (Victoria: Acorn Press, 2012), Kindle ed.

and is focused on the British context. Finally, while Piggin's Australia focused work provides a useful tool for broadly understanding transnational Evangelical diversity, it is even more simplistic than Bebbington's, and fails to provide sophisticated theological clarity.[224]

Again, each definition is useful but limited. Taken together, all three approaches to understanding the core identifiers of Evangelicalism do provide a broad based and flexible approach that is helpful given the extraordinarily global diversity and transience of religious "constellations" in general, and Evangelicalism specifically.[225] Rather than attempt a synthesized definition, I will follow Hutchinson and Wolff in avoiding a proscribed definition. Again, even as they reference Nathan Hatch's warning that Evangelicalism eludes singular definition, they also recognize its collective global significance.[226]

What can be established from all the definitions collectively, is that Protestant Evangelicals commonly believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God. The Gospel as understood by these Protestant Evangelicals is the sole authority of truth and, for every person, the only way of salvation from damnation. Finally, it is the job of every true Christian to play a part in missionary work.

American Evangelicals sought legitimation during the 70s, 80s, and 90s.[227] As mainline Protestant missions declined, Evangelical missions would see an explosion globally in missionary work, missionary power, and missionary funding, especially in the years following the beginning of the Lausanne proselytization movement, under the influence of people like John

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[224] Hutchinson and Wolff 17-25.

[225] Beckford, 244.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Christopher J. Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.

Stott, and Billy Graham.[228] The Evangelical missionary enterprise over the last half century, about the time Hollinger ends his research around 1970, has been the largest missionary movement in the history of global Christianity. More than 400,000 international missionaries are currently being sent out globally, with more than one quarter of those sent from the United States alone.[229]

A three-fold trend of sorts has taken place in American Protestantism. First, many conservative members of mainline Protestant churches have left their local congregations and gone over to churches preaching Evangelical versions of their beliefs. For example, in the Lutheran context, many people have moved from the ELCA into the Missouri Synod. Or, in the Presbyterian context, people have moved from the mainline PCUSA into the evangelical PCA.

Another form of change is non-denominationalism, such as independent Baptist churches breaking away from the mainline and progressive American Baptist Convention, across the northern United States. Finally, conservatives have actively joined forces and captured the infrastructure of historic denominations to avoid becoming liberal and mainline. The best example of this trend is the conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s, which would lead to a minority of more progressive Baptists seceding from the SBC and forming left leaning versions of their denomination, such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Over the last fifty years there has been a mass sorting out of American Christianity, similar to the political sorting out, in which conservative Evangelicalism has become the ascendant and primary force of Christian thought and Christian ethos in the United States. These Evangelicals

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[228] "Billy Graham and John Stott," Lausanne Movement, June 15, 2021, https://www.lausanne.org/billy-graham-and-john-stott.

[229] Melissa Steffan, "The Surprising Countries Most Missionaries Are Sent From and Go To," July 25, 2013, *Christianity Today*, https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2013/july/missionaries-countries-sent-received-csgc-gordon-conwell.html.

are the main force behind the missionaries who have been raised up and sent out through the Protestant missionary enterprise since 1970.[230]

If Hollinger's thesis is carried forward, and if earlier Protestant missionaries had a global impact on the way Christianity has been spread across the world, evidence shows that the boomerang effect that Hollinger describes, is still very much alive, but now catalyzed by Evangelical Protestants. In other words, the stealth effect remains. Now it is led by Evangelicals. This effect can be seen in the US State Department dating back to the Reagan administration, picking up tremendously during the Bush years, not fading out during the Obama years but instead growing in sophisticated use of power and mechanisms. This Evangelical power culminated in the Trump administration with a global network of Evangelicals working to promote religious freedom and Christian culture through the greatest mechanisms of diplomatic power: the US State Department and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.[231]

In his work on providence, Nicholas Guyatt describes the Baptist concept of success as linked with providence. Success itself would become the ultimate arbiter of God's providential

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[230] Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2009), 6. See also "The Growth of Evangelicals and Decline of Mainline Protestants," Lifeway Research, May 19, 2015, https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/05/19/the-growth-of-evangelicals-and-decline-of-mainline-protestants/. Ed Stetzer, "In a Dramatic Shift, the American Church Is More Evangelical than Ever," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, October 27, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/14/in-a-dramatic-shift-the-american-church-is-more-evangelical-than-ever/.

[231] Edward Wong, "The Rapture and the Real World: Mike Pompeo Blends Beliefs and Policy," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, March 30, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/30/us/politics/pompeo-christian-policy.html.; Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Prominent Southern Baptist Albert Mohler Opposed Trump in 2016. Now, He Says He Will Vote for the President.," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, April 16, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/04/16/souther-baptist-albert-mohler-to-vote-trump/. "Christian Evangelicals and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Council on Foreign Relations* (Council on Foreign Relations), accessed April 3, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/christian-evangelicals-and-us-foreign-policy. "UK Government Urged to Take Steps to Prevent Persecution of Christians," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, July 7, 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/08/uk-government-urged-to-take-steps-to-prevent-persecution-of-christians.

blessings. He views this Baptist styled providence as one built upon free will proselytization of the individual, especially when set within a marketplace of religious ideas.[232] The Baptist penchant for deregulation of religion, numerical success, and rapid growth fit well with the culture of America.[233] Motivated by the wealth of giving schemes like the Cooperative Program, which powers the outreach of the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination, Baptist missionaries were positioned to take full advantage of the Soviet Union's dissolution. Global changes provided fertile ground for wealthy missionary agencies to move in with workers, funding, and resources. The largest of these was indeed the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which, per the Russian Baptists themselves, would mass more volunteers and funding to Russia than any other Evangelical group.[234]

American Evangelicals none more so than the Baptists built an early foundational relationship with society that would help to shape the United States. America is the only large nation where a religious family or brand, the Baptist faith type, explicitly built upon the foundations of individualism and cultural influence, would become the dominant religious force. John Ragosta has even argued that the principles contained within this faith type are no less than America's creed.[235]

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[232] Nicholas Guyatt, *Providentialism and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 157-158.

[233] Thomas E. Buckley, *Church and State in Revolutionary Virginia*, 1776-1787 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 164.

[234] "In a Class by Itself," *Baptist*, accessed April 3, 2022, https://baptist.org.ru/read/article/95630.

[235] Ragosta, 221.

For more than two centuries, American Evangelical missionaries have both advanced and challenged American culture and power across the world.[236] As American Evangelicals have grown in number and global influence, their views have spread exponentially. Therefore, Hollinger's main point is accurate. The Protestant missionary boomerang or "stealth effect" is a real one. But the boomerang has a different thrower today than it did a century ago. Whether it was Riley Barnes, the son-in-law of the globally famous Southern Baptist leader, Al Mohler, serving as a senior official to Mike Pompeo, the former Secretary of State, or ground level Evangelical missionaries turning Amazonians against the Covid-19 vaccine, missionary minded Evangelicals, like their liberal Protestant brothers and sisters from earlier times, are changing the world and America in their image.[237] For his part, Hollinger recognizes the stealth influence of missionaries, acknowledges the decline of liberal mainliners, but then ends his chronology in the 1970s. Hollinger is therefore unable to not acknowledge the continuing implications of his thesis. Missionary stealth influence on American society and government kept right on going with the rise of Evangelical dominance in foreign missionary activity. Religion has remained vitally important both in America and abroad. It simply changed, and missionaries changed with it. And no one was more responsible for this change than the Baptist preacher, Jerry Falwell.

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[236] Kendrick Oliver, Uta A. Balbier, Hans Krabbendam, and Axel R. Schafer, "Special Issue: Exploring the Global History of American Evangelicalism Introduction," *Journal of American* Studies 51, no. 4 (2017): 1019-1042.

[237] "'They Will Turn into Alligators': Evangelical Christian Missionaries Turning Amazon Villages against Covid Vaccines," *News Break* (News Break, February 17, 2021), https://www.newsbreak.com/news/2165210121988/they-will-turn-into-alligators-evangelical-christian-missionaries-turning-amazon-villages-against-covid-vaccines.

Chapter 5

A War for Souls

When a door is only partly opened, it can be shut very quickly.
– Brother Andrew[238]

In 1994, Jerry Falwell led a large group of more than one hundred American church leaders and Liberty University students to Moscow for a large event held in concert with Russian Orthodox partners.[239] As part of the lead up to this event, he funded the publishing and printing of thousands of copies of a religious tract by a Russian Orthodox priest, Alexander Men. The tract was titled, "To be a Christian." It contained a sort of American Evangelical and Russian Orthodox synthesis, and offered a reason for people to convert to Christianity. While the story of Alexander Men is beyond the scope of this work, he remains a popular but controversial figure within Russian Orthodoxy. Father Men was a church reformer, vocal and clever opponent of Communist restrictions on religion, and an avowed ecumenist. A prolific author, he promoted both the spiritual, practical, and experiential aspects of the Christian faith.[240] His 1990 murder is still unsolved, and remains a point of speculation for those who follow his work.[241]

Falwell's journey to Moscow reads like a novel. The most politically charged and explosive of American preachers journeyed to the land of his former enemies to preach in

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[238] Quoted in Brother Andrew.

[239] Richard Lee, The Coming Revolution: Signs from America's Past that Signal our Nation's Future (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2012), 131-132.

[240] Andrew Louth, "An Inner Step toward God. Writings and Teachings on Prayer by Father Alexander Men," Edited by April French, Translated by Christa Belyaeva. Pp. 192. Brewster, Ma: Paraclete Press, 2014. £17.99 (Paper). 978 1 61261 238 6." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67, no. 1 (2016): 227–227.

[241] Interview with Lewis Purcell. Personal. December 9, 2021. See also, "Assassination of Father Men," Alexander Men, http://www.alexandermen.com/Assasination_of_Father_Men.

Moscow's Olympic Stadium. Billy Graham had done it two years prior. Using one word, "Why?" on dozens of billboards across Moscow, along with four million leaflets, most of which were sent through the postal service directly to people's homes, 100,000 people supported by more than 3000 churches turned out to hear Graham preach his message of conversion.[242]

Falwell showed up late. By 1994, Russian Orthodoxy had seen enough of the mass campaign style of evangelism that the Americans loved to sponsor. Falwell was savvy to this change of temperament. He spent hundreds of thousands of dollars complete with Russian cultural programs such as ballet performance and folk music to draw only about a 20-25% capacity crowd to the same 40,000 seat venue which Graham had packed repeatedly. Yet, what Falwell did was intriguing. He worked closely with Russian church partners and engaged very closely with Russian Orthodox clergy. They sponsored and endorsed his campaign. Exactly how Falwell found access to engage with the ROC is difficult to assess. However, the story of the Co-Mission reveals that Evangelical leaders, some of whom would have known Falwell personally, had engaged personally and deeply with both government and religious leaders at the highest levels of Russian society. It seems that for an Evangelical with money and influence, access was not difficult. The fact remains that Falwell understood the importance of ROC clergy visibly validating his own activities in Russia. His Christian-unifying strategic vision can be documented from at least the secret 1982 meeting in Virginia.

Liberty University students fanned out across Moscow for weeks, visiting orphanages, handing out literature, and distributing Bibles. They worked with young people, played soccer, and walked the streets doing subtle evangelism. Falwell seems to have used the trip much like

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[242] Eleanor R and Olph, "Billy Graham Stirs Moscow's Religious Spirit," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, October 26, 1992), https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/10/26/billy-graham-stirs-moscows-religious-spirit/0b243ce9-ff40-4a38-a6f1-3bbecde20ee2/.

he used others – for a dual purpose. Certainly, there was an evangelistic event that took place, but conversions were minimal. Mostly it seems to have been a publicity boost for Russian Orthodox clergy while being pitched to donors and supporters back in America as an outreach to godless Russia. One short-term Liberty University student who was on the trip told me that Jerry Falwell brought the entire large group of Americans into an auditorium shortly before the end of the trip for an important announcement, only to inform them the trip budget was $10,000 short. He then asked for a systematic auctioneer style show of hands from the trip participants until the bill had been met.[243] Who knows what the real needs were?

Falwell was no televangelist shakedown artist. He was intensely focused, meticulously planned, and forward thinking in his objectives. What strikes me most after talking with or reading the reports of three different people connected to the Falwell trip to Moscow is just how little information is available about what he did while he was there. He seems to have met with pastors, and spoke at the main event one night in Moscow. However, his talk is reported to have only been about ten minutes long. Moreover, it is established by all concerned that the organizers worked intentionally and closely with the Russian Orthodox leadership.

How did Falwell or Falwell's organizers know where to find the right people to open access for a Russian Orthodox sponsored event featuring Jerry Falwell? First, it's not immediately apparent that Russian attendees knew anything about Falwell. The event seems to have been more Orthodox focused with unnamed American friends along as co-sponsors. Second, the Falwell aspect of the trip seems to have been promoted only to American donors who would support Falwell and his large group to go to Russia. What was the purpose of this trip then?

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[243] Interview with M. L. Personal, October 21, 2021.

Falwell friend, and trip companion, Rev. Richard Lee, megachurch pastor from Atlanta shed light on the moment in his 2012 political book, *The Coming Revolution*, that the main event was a Moscow Ballet performance on the Life of Christ.[244] Lee preached on the question "Who Is Jesus?" after the first ballet act. After the second and final act, Falwell preached, "How You Can Know Jesus as Your Savior." At the end of his short sermon, no one accepted Falwell's invitation to convert to Jesus Christ. After a seemingly eternal wait, Falwell stood at the front with "arms outstretched." One older woman finally stood up, then a few others, and then hundreds, and then thousands. Then Falwell asked them to pray a prayer of salvation, and then was interrupted by an Orthodox leader, who endorsed the prayer. Lee claims more than 5000 of a crowd of 10,000 were converted through his and Falwell's preaching. He did it all under the endorsement of Russian Orthodox leadership. It seems Falwell's trip was intended to position him in Russia as part of his global religious liberty work, and to build ties with Russian Orthodox leadership to advance conservatism in the global culture wars.

By the time that Falwell took his big trip to Moscow, I had already been on four trips. My first trip was two years earlier, and it was very different from Falwell's experience. In the summer of 1992, about six months after the end of the Soviet Union, I was a young teenager on a TWA flight to St. Louis with a dozen Baptist church members and leaders from Oklahoma City. We made an onward connection to JFK airport in New York. After another layover, we boarded an international Finnair flight to Helsinki. After yet another a wait, we took a final flight to Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

A queue, several hours long, followed by passport and visa checkpoints in Customs awaited us. Russian customs agents found two to three suitcases per person filled with American

[244] Lee, 131.

canned goods, beef jerky, Pringles, bottled water, as well as thousands of tracts, Bibles, and New Testaments. It took hours of careful questioning and searching by customs agents before the group was finally cleared to pass through into the bustling arrivals hall. Somehow, the Russian agents never discovered the $50,000 in cash that two preachers in the group had divided between them, safely held in personal money belts.

Our American group was met by a Russian Baptist pastor from an unregistered congregation. During the Soviet Union, unregistered churches differed from registered congregations in that they refused to submit sermons to local authorities for official approval. They also held unsanctioned youth meetings, which prompted state authorities to accuse these church leaders of indoctrination of children. The Muscovite pastor who met us had served a two-year prison sentence under Soviet law for teaching the Bible to children. The group crammed into a tiny hired van with him, for a ride to his flat, in a nondescript apartment block – the type which can still be seen from the former East Germany across the Eurasian landmass to Vladivostok, on the Pacific Ocean.

After an evening of food, showers, and conversation, courtesy of the pastor's wife, who was an English interpreter, we boarded a train for a twenty-four journey from Moscow to Kiev, Ukraine. There, we were met by another group of unregistered Baptist pastors from the newly independent nation of Ukraine. We journeyed in a bus, for about six hours from Kiev to a medium sized city on the Dnieper River, Cherkassy. For the next eight days, our American group spread throughout the Cherkassy region, and beyond, speaking in unregistered Baptist churches, state schools, hospitals, and community centers in small villages, and towns.

We also distributed the Bibles, New Testaments, and tracts, by the thousands. A rented truck with a loudspeaker accompanied us. The local pastors would drive through small

Ukrainian towns ahead of the bus, announcing free Bibles and literature. As Americans, very consciously and symbolically aware of our actions, we would pull the bus into the central square of the town. There, we would set up under the seemingly ever present statue of Vladimir Lenin, to distribute Christian literature and Bibles freely to thousands of Ukrainians.

Of course, such activities did not always go over well. Local authorities called our group in for questioning twice. The leaders were briefly detained. But the religious registration laws previously used to regulate public practice had changed. This was now Russia and Ukraine. The Soviet Union had disappeared less than eight months prior. A spirit of freedom, anarchy, and uncertainty was everywhere. No one quite knew what to do with a noisy, disruptive, and unprecedented group of American missionaries barnstorming across Ukraine.

Sometime during the trip, the American church leaders gathered with their Ukrainian counterparts in a private room of a church, and proceeded to carefully hand over the cash they carried. Then, after a whirlwind of activity, our convenience store food gone, bottles of water empty, we boarded a train to Moscow, where we spent two days visiting another church and sightseeing. Then, we left to return to Oklahoma. Some would never return to Russia. Others went back again and again. Some would raise personal donations and subsidies to move to Russia or Ukraine permanently to work as missionaries.

The group was a mixture from various walks of life. Several Bible college students were on the trip. The trip was a way for them to survey the possibilities of doing missionary work in the new "Russia." For the American team, again, regardless of whether they were in Moscow, Kiev, or Minsk, it was always Russia. Even in Ukraine team members had to be continually reminded not to say, "Russia." The Soviets were the "Russians."[245]

[245] Interview with T.P. Personal, October 16, 2021.

These Oklahomans were Baptists from the Evangelical culture of the American Bible belt. However, these Baptists were stricter than the Evangelicals. They were fundamentalists. They came from an independent, fundamentalist Baptist network of churches. The pastor of their church, the already mentioned Jim Vineyard, used to lead the busing outreach for several large churches including Jerry Falwell's operation in Virginia.[246] These churches were early mega churches, before the term had come into vogue. They rose to prominence through the work of combative newspapers such as the aforementioned *Sword of the Lord*, the fundamentalist newspaper, run by John R. Rice.

The missionaries from Oklahoma represented this contentious fundamentalist fervor. Their pastor, Jim Vineyard, brought a minor celebrity, disabled evangelist, Tim Lee, to his church in Oklahoma. Lee, a former Marine, lost both of his legs in Vietnam.[247] He then reconverted to the fundamentalist Christianity of his youth, which he had abandoned as a teenager. He became famous for his stand for the American flag, as well as a very specific type of preaching. Lee made a habit of showing up at political events and church rallies. He was present at the Nebraska standoff, referenced in the previous chapter. His sermon, delivered countless times, through the heartland, "The Crown is Fallen," depicted a once great America who had abandoned her greatness, kicked god out of public schools and exchanged the Bible for the false gods of abortion, homosexuality, and socialism. Pastor Jim Vineyard, himself a Vietnam veteran, a former Green Beret, hosted Tim Lee for one of the most meaningful moments of his life: a surprise reunion, with the African-American Marine who had saved him

[246] Interview with D.S. Personal, March 26, 2022.

[247] Jonathan Livesay, "Home," Welcome to Tim Lee Ministries!, https://www.timlee.org/about-tim/tims-story.

after he stepped on the land mine. The visual was incredible for those present. Here were two preachers who had fought the Communists, one a former Marine, the other a former Green Beret, breaking a racial divide, to support the American flag, the US military, and the Christian Gospel. During the 1980s, in the world of fundamentalist and Evangelical Christianity, nothing was more important than those things.

In the final years of the Cold War, no visual moment was bigger for American Evangelicals than the fall of the Berlin Wall. While it was a transcendent and poignant moment for much of the world, Evangelicals particularly felt empowered to rejoice.[248] The moment was one of pride: the man they felt responsible for electing had singlehandedly defeated the specter of Communism and the Soviet monster.[249] Ronald Reagan's, 1987, "Tear down this wall," speech at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate was used to inspire Evangelicals to go to Russia as missionaries. Ron Winkler, a missionary raising funds to go to Russia would use a video of Reagan's speech as late as the early 2000s to inspire a large California church to give him financial support for his missionary project.[250]

The political and social views of American Evangelicals had been transformed in the waning years of the Cold War, again, by leaders like Jerry Falwell.[251] These Americans traveled throughout Russia holding mass evangelistic rallies, conferences, distributing Bibles, literature, preaching on television – even meeting with powerful politicians.[252] Russian Protestant

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[248] Interview with Michael Johnson. Personal, July 1, 2021

[249] Jerry Falwell, "An Agenda For the 80s," *An Agenda For the 80s* (1980).

[250] Interview with Adam Young. Personal, September 15, 2021.

[251] Margolis, 13-14.

[252] Mark Elliott; Anita Deyneka, "Protestant Missionaries in the Former Soviet Union," *Emory International Law Review* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 361-412 (366).362.

celebrities were also popular in the United States. Russian preachers who had been imprisoned made tours of American churches.[253]

Open Doors, led by the already mentioned Brother Andrew, a Dutch Bible smuggling and church relief operation, had romanticized the persecuted church through the publishing of Andrew's well-known book, *God's Smuggler*.[254] Open Doors is also well known through mainstream media crossover products such as the *World Watch List*.[255] Persecuted Russian evangelical pastors like Georgi Vins worked with Open Doors and other groups like it who published stories of his plight under the Communist regime.[256] Vins would enjoy a wave of popularity traveling across America, speaking in churches.[257] He would also visit Jim Vineyard's church in Oklahoma City.

The number of foreign Christian missionary organizations in the former Soviet Bloc doubled from approximately 150 in 1982 to 311 in 1989, and then almost tripled to 1000 by 1997.[258] Evangelical Christian radio spent almost $40 million on international broadcasting in 1987. In the mid 1980s, the Far East Broadcasting Company, an Evangelical radio organization

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[253] John Rutledge, "Vins Says Protests Help Soviet Prisoners, Will Speak at Convention," *The Baptist Standard*, May 1979.

[254] McAlister, 172-174.

[255] "One in Three Christians Face Persecution in Asia, Report Finds," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, January 16, 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/16/one-in-three-christians-face-persecution-in-asia-report-finds.

[256] Keston Center Archive, Baylor University.

[257] Georgi Vins was a Baptist pastor who became internationally famous for his civil disobedience and subsequent persecution by Soviet authorities. Twice imprisoned, he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship, until it was restored by Gorbachev during the Glasnost period. Vins was a hero in the West, and an international symbol of religious freedom, and prisoners of conscience. http://www.bpnews.net/1699/russian-exile-georgi-vins-dies-of-brain-tumor-at-69. "Bibles Said Smuggled into China." *The Washington Post* (1974-Current File), Dec 27, 1980. 1, https://search.proquest.com/docview/147057274?accountid=1186. See also:
Peter Deyneka and Anita Deyneka, "Evangelical Foreign Missionaries in Russia," in *International Bulletin of Mission Research* Vol 22, Issue 2, pp. 56 – 62 First Published April 1, 1998.

broadcasting across the USSR, was receiving no more than a dozen letters a month on average. As Glasnost era reforms took effect, under Gorbachev's leadership, the rate of letters increased dramatically, hitting more than 1600 letters in March 1989 alone.[259] The peak of foreign missionary influence in the post-Cold war period was large in absolute terms, with approximately 5600 Western missionaries permanently placed across the former Soviet Union.[260]

Evangelical Protestant missionaries were numerous enough to become an irritant and create social image problems for themselves.[261] Laws favorable to Orthodoxy that restricted the rights of evangelical Protestants were enacted, notably the 1997 Law on Religion.[262] John Witte and Michael Bordeaux describe missionary proselytization in post-Soviet Russia as a "war for souls" between Russian Orthodoxy and invasive Western Evangelical religions. They argue that regardless of the number of foreign missionaries in Russia during the nineties, there were enough of them to influence the fears and the legal push behind the 1997 Russian Law on Religion. In their analysis, Witte and Bordeaux focus heavily on Orthodox anger at foreign missionary money and spending. They offer an image of Orthodox Russia as an inseparable part of Russian culture, identity, and post-Soviet power.[263]

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[259] Jeffrey K. Hadden, "The Globalization of American Televangelism," in *Religion and Globalization*, ed. by Veronique Altlgas (London: Sage, 1994), 352-353.

[260] Geraldine Fagan, *Believing in Russia: Religious Policy After Communism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 58.

[261] Lawrence A. Uzzell (2005) *Politics, Propriety, and Proselytism, The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 3:2, 11-18, DOI: 10.1080/15435725.2005.9523210.

[262] Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Russia's Law On Religion, Assembly Debate, (10th sitting), 23 April 2002 rapporteur: Mr McNamara; Doc. 9407, opinion of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Gatterer; and Doc. 9409, opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Roseta). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 April 2002 (11th Sitting), online, available from http://en.rlinfo.ru/documents/resolution1278.html.

[263] John Witte Jr. and Michael Bordeaux, *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 24. See also, John Witte Jr. "Soul Wars: The Problem and Promise of Proselytism in Russia," *Emory International Law Review* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 1-42

However, Catherine Wanner finds that far from the conservative Russian Orthodox portrayal of American Evangelicals dictating a new way of belief to post-Soviet proselytes, the converts, as well as the indigenous evangelical churches, such as Russian Baptists and Pentecostals exercised a high degree of agency. In fact, Wanner argues that local Ukrainian Protestant missionaries may have influenced post-Soviet Russian society even more than American missionaries did in terms of genuine converts, even if early 1990s American missionary efforts were the initial catalyst for creating what would become many indigenous communities of Evangelical Russians.[264]

However, the early days were indeed heady for early American Evangelical missionaries to Russia. Through groups like the CoMission, the Russian state allowed Evangelicals into schools in full cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church to teach conservative family values, and the Evangelical version of the Christian message at will. Missionaries could walk into state universities unannounced and be presented with full lecture halls of students and faculty to share a Christian sermon. Conversion opportunities would be offered by these itinerant, random preachers on the spot.[265]

The "godless" country of Russia was now cooperating with Evangelical Christians in ways that they could not even imagine in America. Americans suddenly had institutional access to the educational spaces of the country that had been their greatest enemy. In the minds of many Evangelicals, Jesus Christ was granting true Christian believers a harvest of souls to be saved from Russia before his return to earth.[266]

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[264] Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 250-254.

[265] Interview with T.P., October 16, 2021.

[266] Wilkinson, 1-30.

The post-Soviet period brought religious change to Russia. Despite the overt atheism of the Soviet state, Russian evangelicals managed to sustain themselves, and even "thrive" during the USSR period.[267] Threads of transnational contact and affinity between American and Russian evangelicals were also established covertly during the Soviet years, and aided in the quick flowering of a visible transnational relationship between evangelicals in America and the former USSR.[268]

At the end of the Cold War, thousands of short-term American Evangelical missionaries boarded flights for Russia. They came in vast numbers to experience and evangelize the former Soviet Union. Years of appeals to provide Bibles for struggling Russian Christians, from evangelical celebrities like Netherlands-based, Brother Andrew, had created high awareness of the plight of the Soviet underground church as a missionary opportunity for American evangelicals. One of the most remarkable missionary campaigns targeting Russia during the final Soviet years, was funding for the printing of 100,000 Bibles provided to the Russian Orthodox Church, in conjunction with celebrations commemorating one thousand years of Russian Christianity.[269]

The global political and religious power of American Evangelical Christianity is being expressed through missionary movements on an unprecedented scale. The best example of this

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[267] Protestant communities in the USSR, https://www.dhi.ac.uk/protestantizm/.

[268] Wanner, 2.

[269] Brother Andrew, "A Plea from the Soviet Union, 'Please Send Us Bibles'.," n.d.; "Russians Celebrate 1,000 Years of Christianity," *UPI* (UPI, June 12, 1988), https://www.upi.com/Archives/1988/06/12/Russians-celebrate-1000-years-of-Christianity/2838582091200/.

power, are the connections forged through missionary activities in the former Soviet Union.[270] At the end of the Cold War, Evangelicals swept into Russia in extraordinary numbers with a focus on reaching the entire society. They were well-poised for this missionary movement since they had been largely responsible for keeping public attention focused on the plight of persecuted Christians during the Soviet era.

A major part of this wave occurred through something that was not available to the earlier historical missionaries of David Hollinger's focus: the short-term missionary phenomenon. Research from Baylor University estimates that the number of US Christians taking part in a short-term missionary venture lasting one year or less has grown from less than one thousand in 1965 to more than 1.5 million in 2010. More than two billion dollars annually is spent on these trips and initiatives.[271]

The short-term missionary is one who can go for weeks or months at a time, do a bit of missionary work, and then bring their conversion stories and cultural conclusions back to the United States. A global outburst of short term mission activity has increased exponentially in the last forty years, to the point that it is rare to find an Evangelical church anywhere in the United States, which has not directly sent or indirectly sponsored some of its regular membership to global missionary endeavor.

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[270] "Lecture at the Highland Park a Presbyterian Church in Dallas," The Russian Orthodox Church. Department for External Church Relations., https://mospat.ru/en/news/55990Adam Federman, "How Us Evangelicals Fueled the Rise of Russia's 'pro-Family' Right," *The Nation*, June 29, 2015, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-us-evangelicals-fueled-rise-russias-pro-family-right/. Catherine Belton, "Exclusive: American Banker and Putin Ally Dealt in Access and Assets, Emails Reveal," *Reuters* (Thomson Reuters, June 10, 2019), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-banker-exclusive/exclusive-american-banker-and-putin-ally-dealt-in-access-and-assets-emails-reveal-idUSKCN1TB0KG.

[271] "Short-Term Mission Trips: Are They Worth the Investment?," Media and Public Relations | Baylor University, May 2, 2011, https://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=93238.

These short-term interactions and engagements with the world have changed the missionary economy in ways that are astounding. Now, Evangelical Christians in the American south or Bible Belt can visit their missionaries, supported by through congregation, by simply using an app on a smartphone to purchase a round-trip economy fare. They can go and keep tabs on their missionaries, which ensures that missionaries are not isolated from their sending churches back home, and are forced to maintain rigid doctrinal positions with much more scrutiny and oversight. The isolation, closed communities, and relative independence from home oversight, experienced by missionaries of a century ago is a thing of the past. Now churches can engage with their missionaries in real time. And they do.[272]

Therefore, the present Protestant Evangelical missionary culture ensures that the beliefs and positions of the American sending congregation are safeguarded and spread throughout the world. The influence of missionaries who have come back to the United States is bigger than ever before. It is part of a global Christian way of thinking, in which American Evangelicals are sending their most zealous, having created sophisticated oversight systems to ensure that the vast majority of their missionaries retain their zeal and fervor for purity of doctrine and rigid ways of practicing Christianity. Further, missionary groups and denominations actively promote those missionaries who are the most vocal and successful at doing so. Missionary organizations actively work to ensure that their missionaries keep the faith, do not become liberal, and do not drift from orthodoxy in faith and practice.

Protestant Evangelical missionary networks also have significant business relationships and power in the political sphere, which has allowed them to work in close concert with governments around the world. For example, while the earliest evangelical missionaries in the

[272] Interview with G. H. Personal, October 5, 2021.

nineties went to post-Soviet Russia with the mindset that the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was their enemy, the perceived threat of left-wing social movements in the United States and Western Europe has changed this calculus. No longer is a strict separatist stance against the ROC necessary, when secularism, Islam, and the LGBT rights movement are common threats shared by all conservative Christians.

A global Christian political activist network, as Kristina Stoeckl has extensively documented, has led to intentional missionary movement into spaces that were historically no-go zones for conversion oriented evangelicals.[273] Billy Graham, with a few exceptions, was a remarkably neutral voice for the global expression of evangelical Christianity and would intentionally reach out beyond the traditional divide between ancient and contemporary churches. Billy would work with Catholics, Orthodox and whomever would allow him to give his main message: the conversion appeal to sinners and seekers.

Franklin Graham, his son, has actively and overtly engaged in a kind of Christian political transnationalism that Billy avoided. Franklin has made positive comments about the Russian government, and issued messages of endorsement for Vladimir Putin, a repressive dictator, whose regime is antithetical to the principles of democracy. Missionaries around the world, have engaged in low level versions of the same. The average Protestant evangelical missionary who now goes out from the United States to the world can be both a zealot bent on saving the lost from hellfire, and steeped and cultured in a worldview, which proclaims Protestant evangelicalism as the only true path to God, and American conservatism nationalism as a true expression of the same.

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[273] Susanna Mancini and Kristina Stoeckl, "Transatlantic Conversations." Chapter, "In *The Conscience Wars: Rethinking the Balance between Religion, Identity, and Equality*," edited by Susanna Mancini and Michel Rosenfeld, 220–257, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

The Protestant evangelical missionaries that go out to the nations of the world are able, through short term missions, to go for a much shorter amount of time then the missionaries of Hollinger's time. They can stay within a group setting that reaffirms their beliefs. They are not isolated from their home culture, and they do not have to expose themselves to views that challenge their baseline beliefs. Furthermore, they go out into a world, which is far more culturally influenced by America ideas, brands, and culture than the missionaries of a century ago experienced.[274]

There are of course exceptions to this argument, and some isolation and exposure to other views is inevitable in any form of global travel. Yet missionary organizations have been very effective at establishing oversight and policies that weed out all those who seem to be softening on their doctrinal, social, and political views.[275] They have also perfected the use of technology to keep missionaries tethered to their theological and cultural values.

The return or "boomerang" effect of missionary activity from American Protestant evangelicals today is possibly even more powerful, organic, and yet sophisticated than ever before. Virtually every single American evangelical church sees itself as an individual weapon in a much greater global war for souls and for culture.

An important consideration stems from Hollinger's argument that the very theology of American Protestantism was liberalized due to the observations, anthropological work, and philosophical changes spurred by missionaries and those influenced by them. Hollinger acknowledges that evangelicals had largely come to dominate the wider American missionary landscape by the 1970s, and his work largely concludes with this decade. Yet his underlying

[274] Interview with S.P. Personal, December 14, 2021.

[275] Interview with D.S.

thesis argues that there was a kind of progressive liberalization of American Protestantism that extended between the 1890s and the 1970s, as missionaries went out from the United States, encountered other cultures, and, in so doing, softened lines of doctrinal orthodoxy.

This point of Hollinger's is key. Evangelicals took over the missionary enterprise as mainline denominations went into decline. As they did so, the missionary experience changed drastically. The very ground of American Protestantism, particularly that version which foreign nationals were most likely to encounter shifted from the liberal sensibilities of Hollinger's missionaries, to Evangelicals, who were nationalistic, politically conservative, and proselytization focused. Put another way, the missionary ecosystem of the United States, became largely Evangelical. This shift happened at just about the same time that the ROC ecosystem was regaining a level of access and power across Russia not seen since the tsarist times.

Hollinger argues that during the early and middle twentieth century, mainline Protestant American missionaries, seemingly the most devout believers, willing to leave home, family, and friends, to take a religious message abroad, were themselves agents of secularization in the United States and globally.[276] They used their powerful platform of resources and voice to weaken the social underpinnings of religious authority by challenging conventional doctrinal and social orthodoxy. In stark contrast to Hollinger's mainline missionaries of the past, the global effect of today's Protestant missionary enterprise, is powerfully dominated by conservative evangelicals.

[276] Ibid., 295.

Soviet evangelicals were ready for this wave from the West. They had acted throughout the Cold War to foster Western relationships.[277] Underground evangelical churches were poised to grow in wealth and number in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet dissolution because of their highly visual role as both victim and hero in the post-Soviet West.[278] The Soviet evangelical churches had managed to hold themselves together through the power of the born again experience and highly proscribed religious group behaviors, or what Emile Durkheim describes, as "moral communities."[279] Now they were about to financially benefit from the pent-up generosity and warm feelings of millions of their fellow American Evangelicals who were eager to give to relieve the suffering of their Russian brothers and sisters, and to convert the godless Communists who had persecuted them for so long.

After the Second World War, American evangelicals built and came to enjoy deep transnational connections, political power, and worldwide networks that were utilized with great effect in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse. With the dramatic increase in foreign missionary opportunities that began with the demise of the Soviet Union, Protestant evangelical missionaries from the United States moved across these newly opened lands with speed, funding, and strategy.[280] However, after a few years of evangelistic work in Russia they discovered that

[277] Walter Sawatsky, "Bibles In Eastern Europe Since 1945," Supplementary Paper, vol. No.3., 1975. See also, McAlister, 105-116 for an overview of persecution narratives and Western missionary alliances during the Cold War, especially 1960s onward.

[278] "Whoever believes in God is punished," *Youth Edition Open Doors*, October 19, 2021.

[279] Wanner, 9-12.

[280] Joe Gouverneur, "Underground Evangelism: Missions During the Cold War," *Transformation* 24, no. 2 (2007): 80-86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052695.

Russian Orthodoxy had become the dominant force in re-evangelizing the Russian people. Furthermore, it was also rising in political and cultural power.[281]

American evangelicalism adapted, and quickly moved beyond its historic distrust of formerly Communist Russia. Missionaries largely conceded the religious rivalry with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the race to proselytize Russia. Yet, the missionary wave of the early 1990s is still felt thirty years later as regular updates come from missionaries who have visited a church, received an agreement for monthly support, and in return send back consistent monthly updates about the work that they are doing. The case of missionary Donald Ossewarde is an excellent illustration of this sustained connection.[282]

Ossewarde had worked for almost fifteen years in Russia for BIMI, the fundamentalist missionary organization based near Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 2016, he fell afoul of Russia's 2016 law on religion which heavily restricted the activities of foreign religious groups. Ossewarde's story made international news, went to the top of the Russian court system, and was even referred to the European Court of Human Rights. While *Christianity Today's* article focuses on the collapse of religious liberty in Putin's Russia, and expresses hope that Ossewarde's case may overturn a repressive and badly authored law, the missionary's own interview with a local Russian media outlet reveals a very different perspective.

Ossewarde is very complementary of Putin in this interview, and expresses open hostility towards Barack Obama. He refuses to condemn the 2014 conquest of Crimea. He describes America as a place to make easy money. He supports a thaw between Putin and Trump, and

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[281] Coit D. Blacker, "A Typology of Post-Cold War Conflicts," in *U. S. Intervention Policy for the Post-Cold War World*, ed. by Arnold Kramer and Linton F. Brooks (London: W.W. Norton, 1994), 52-53.

[282] Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "US Missionary May Get Russia's Anti-Evangelism Law Overturned," News & Reporting (*Christianity Today*, January 24, 2017), https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/january/us-missionary-may-get-russia-evangelism-law-overturned.html.

even defends the new law on religion – describing it as an anti-terrorism law. This sentiment is obviously directed at Islam. Elsewhere in the interview, Ossewarde confirms that he first visited in Russia as a short-term missionary in 1994, calling the Soviet Union, "the evil empire." The interviewing journalist describes Ossewarde as Donald Trump's "namesake," and implicitly congratulates the missionary for not changing his opinions of Putin. Indeed, Ossewarde elsewhere in his personal blog attacks Hillary Clinton. The missionary concludes the interview hoping for a "peaceful sky over our countries."[283]

Following the conclusion of the legal proceedings, Ossewarde joined his "old friend," Rev. Jim Vineyard on a trip to Israel, defending Zionism. He joined the faculty of Providence Baptist College, an extremist fundamentalist, unaccredited Bible College, led by Rev. Keith Gomez, a close friend and long-time supporter of Jim Vineyard. Ossewarde, Vineyard, Gomez, and their entire network of clergy, are connected to the late radical fundamentalist Jack Hyles, a friend and contemporary of Jerry Falwell. Hyles and Falwell were at one time both eminent fundamentalists. However, Falwell would break with Hyles and other fundamentalists around the time of the 1982 meeting at the home of Carl F. H. Henry, with his decision to publicly embrace Catholics, Pentecostals, Mormons, and anyone else who would join forces in the political struggle against secularism.[284]

Two Evangelical narratives about Russia formed rather quickly. One is that God had opened a window of time to "save Russia." This language simply meant that God wanted the

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[283] Don Ossewarde, March 16, 2017, http://www.donossewaarde.com/Ministry/law_update/update028.htm.

[284] Ibid. See Also, Walt Harrington, "What Hath Falwell Wrought? Fundamentalism's Superstar Has Won Power and Respect for His Religion. in the Process, He Is Risking Fundamentalism's Soul," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, July 24, 1988), https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/1988/07/24/what-hath-falwell-wrought-fundamentalisms-superstar-has-won-power-and-respect-for-his-religion-in-the-process-he-is-risking-fundamentalisms-soul/fae37dc0-6cb5-4f57-8c10-29dadb0e204b/.

Russians to hear the true Christian message and that missionaries better get over there as soon as possible, because the door would slam shut to missionary work again soon. News events cooperated with this notion. The Russian Constitutional Crisis of October 1993, highlighted the instability of the new post-Soviet period in Russia, and only accelerated the call for missionaries to "get in while they still could."[285]

The second idea was a revival of reformed theology which rejects the notion of a rapture, and believes that Jesus will only return to earth once the Church has essentially conquered it. A wave of reformed missionaries affiliated with Douglas Wilson, spread out across Russia, teaching a hardline view of Protestantism in line with the views of Douglas Wilson the leader of a breakaway sect of Presbyterians, based in Moscow, Idaho. I will focus on the consequences of this view in the next chapter.

Pastor Jim Vineyard, who was very much of the first apocalyptic camp went on multiple trips to Russia, and then sent scores of missionaries such as Ossewarde, from his Oklahoma based college and church networks on both short-term and permanent assignments.

Another one of these missionaries is Duane Hearron, who has been working in Siberia since the mid-1990s. For more than twenty-five years, he has sent out monthly updates to churches around the United States who support his work. One of these, Anchor Baptist Church, a small church of only about twenty in San Antonio, Texas, sends him monthly financial support. In one of his recent letters Hearron writes about the results of the Russia "referendum" in Crimea, and offers prayers of thanks to God for allowing him and his family to move from Siberia to the new Russian Crimea due to their legal residency status.[286]

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[285] Interview with D.S.

[286] Duane Hearron, May-June, 2021.

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Researchers who try to understand the Evangelical missionary world are likely to never begin to think about entering a church as small and isolated as Anchor Baptist Church. Instead, academic religious research in San Antonio, Texas, tends to focus on John Hagee, the megachurch global television personality. Yet, the global missionary effect of evangelical missionary work is real and vibrant in even the tiniest and most obscure of churches, who would reject elite evangelicals like Hagee out of hand.

At Anchor Baptist Church, a direct connection to Russian culture, Russian religion, and Russian political perspectives comes monthly from a real missionary whose lived experiences are likely to outweigh, for the members of the congregation, the voices of news outlets and academic journals. When I visited, on the bulletin board at the back of this tiny church could be seen letters from four missionaries receiving support: the already mentioned Hearron family to Russia, another family working in the United Kingdom, a third doing Bible training in Latin America, and a fourth group which works to train Christian clergy in the Middle East. An article on the front of the newsletter states that the dominant religion in the Middle East teaches women that their role in life is to "obey orders." This group is there to teach women that evangelical Christianity offers them equal value to men. With zero irony, the article concludes that part of their outreach to Muslim women is to convert them and help them learn to become submissive wives.[287]

At the bottom of the bulletin board, is a red, white, and blue postcard, offering "Coffee with a Colonel." The event is a chance to go to a local library to hear a retired USAF colonel, POW, and Vietnam veteran tell about his life and experiences. On this board at the back of an

[287] Photograph, October 17, 2021.

obscure and isolated church is the tangible reminder of the twin global forces of American Evangelical religion: missionaries and military power.

Chapter 6

City on a Hill Meets the Third Rome

Obviously, he (Putin) may be wrong about many things, but he has taken a stand to protect Russia's children from the damaging effects of any gay and lesbian agenda.

– Franklin Graham[288]

In 2011, Hilarion Alfeyev, the Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, and head of external relations for the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, came to Washington DC. After his visit to the capital city, he continued to Dallas, where he visited Dallas Theological Seminary, one of the most conservative and venerable evangelical institutions in the United States. He met with George W. Bush, and spoke at the very large and prominent conservative Evangelical Highland Park Presbyterian Church. Alfeyev's speeches condemned the concept of personal freedoms and civil liberties that allowed for people to engage in behaviors morally unacceptable to Christian rules. He spoke against Western liberal democracy, including legal freedoms for LGBTQ people. Finally, he issued strong calls for unity among conservative Christians globally.[289]

Alfeyev's visit to Texas was organized by a Koch brothers political supporter, and connected businessman, Jerry Fullinwider, an oil executive and elder at the church. Fullinwinder has a deep background in oil and gas across the former Soviet Union, and was introduced to the ROC church leader, Alfeyev, in the mid-2000s by Bob Foresman, then head of Barclay's Capital

[288] Franklin Graham, "Putin's Olympic Controversy," *Decision Magazine*, October 2, 2018, https://decisionmagazine.com/putins-olympic-controversy/?response_type=embed.

[289] "The Russian Connection: When Franklin Graham Met Putin," National Catholic Reporter, August 8, 2018, https://www.ncronline.org/news/politics/russian-connection-when-franklin-graham-met-putin.

Russia.[290] Foresman shows up years later as Vice Chairman of UBS New York, in a Reuters article that describes him as deeply religious. The article reveals his close ties to potential corruption in the Putin regime, and his association with the Donald Trump administration and an appearance in the Mueller report.[291]

During Alfeyev's trip, he was interviewed by *Christianity Today,* the leading national Evangelical periodical. The ROC leader stated the purpose of his trip was to find common cause with Evangelical Christian leaders. During this interview, three clear points of agreement can be drawn out. Family issues such as abortion, divorce, and homosexuality, are specifically defined as problems. Islam, at least that "in other countries," which does not fit the moderate standards of Russia's Muslims, is also identified as a threat. Finally, the most important threat is secularism.[292]

Journalists have been active in exploring ROC-EC connections, but among moderate Evangelicals the broader trend towards Russia has been quietly noticed for years. For example, Daniel Patterson[*], a then senior employee at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) recalls a media interview from 2014, in which the leader of global Christian charity Samaritan's Purse Evangelist Franklin Graham defended Vladimir Putin and Russia's "pro-family" positions, from criticism by ERLC President,

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[290] Adam Federman, "How Us Evangelicals Fueled the Rise of Russia's 'pro-Family' Right," *The Nation*, June 29, 2015, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-us-evangelicals-fueled-rise-russias-pro-family-right/.

[291] Catherine Belton, "Exclusive: American Banker and Putin Ally Dealt in Access and Assets, Emails Reveal," *Reuters* (Thomson Reuters, June 10, 2019), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-banker-exclusive/exclusive-american-banker-and-putin-ally-dealt-in-access-and-assets-emails-reveal-idUSKCN1TB0KG.

[292] Morgan, Timothy C. "From Russia, with love: Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion offers Evangelicals more than an olive branch." *Christianity Today*, May 2011, 38+. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed April 28, 2020). https://link-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/doc/A256364888/AONE?u=wash_main&sid=AONE&xid=fa781585.

[*] No relation to Paige and Dorothy Patterson.

Russell Moore.[293] The meeting was the 2014 ABC Easter special, with the following religious leaders: Russell Moore, Franklin Graham, and Ralph Reed, the Chairman of the Faith and Freedom Coalition. Russell Moore recalls about the same television studio interview: "Somehow Putin came up, and Reed and Graham were sympathetic to Putin and I was very hostile…Graham was *very* sympathetic to Putin. I was…I was really surprised. I didn't really expect that he would criticize Putin, because…Samaritan's Purse, they want to be able to operate…but he was very supportive! So I was surprised by that and thought, 'Something is at work here.'"[294]

Russell Moore has consistently been one of the only prominent Evangelical leaders in America to oppose Donald Trump. He has also received tremendous criticism from some conservative leaders within the Evangelical community for taking supportive positions on social justice issues and standing with survivors of abuse. He is now a senior director at *Christianity Today*, and was a research fellow at the University of Chicago in 2021.[295] Moore's anti-Putin position would also bring him into direct opposition with Dr. Dorothy Patterson, women's studies scholar and wife of Paige Patterson, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Pattersons are one of the most significant power couples of the last forty years of Evangelical life. They led the SBC's "Conservative Resurgence," a purging of moderates and progressives from leadership across America's largest Protestant denomination. Due to the

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[293] Interview with Daniel Patterson, April 12, 2020, Personal. See also, ABC News (ABC News Network), accessed April 22, 2022, https://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/week-religious-23398798.

[294] Interview with Russell Moore, May 4, 2022, Personal.

[295] Sarah Pulliam Bailey and Michelle Boorstein, "Russell Moore's Departure from the Southern Baptist Convention's Leadership Prompts Questions over Its Future," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, May 19, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2021/05/19/russell-moore-leaves-southern-baptist-convention-evangelical-future/. "Bio," Russell Moore, July 2, 2021, https://www.russellmoore.com/about/.

political maneuverings of the Pattersons, Robert Jeffress, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, has even dubbed Paige to be "the Winston Churchill of the Southern Baptist Convention."[296]

Paige is a denominational hero. Dorothy is the more strategic and effective of the two at amassing and using political power. In 2015, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Paige was President of this institution from 2003 until his firing in 2018) in Fort Worth, Texas, established the Dorothy Kelley Patterson Chair of Women' Studies. This fully endowed professorship was meant to provide perpetual funding for scholarship that both opposes feminism, and supports a Biblically submissive gender role for women. Some very significant people were present at the ceremony to both celebrate the lifetime achievements of Dorothy Patterson, and to install Dr. Candi Finch in the inaugural role in the position. One of these was the extreme anti-feminist Janice Crouse, then executive director of the World Congress of Families (WCF), and by that time already a friend of the Pattersons "for almost two decades."[297]

Dorothy and Paige had been heavily involved with the WCF. Three years earlier, both the Pattersons had spoken at the 2012 WCF in Madrid. Dorothy's presentation focused on defining women's empowerment as the privilege that women have to give birth to their children and consequently wield influence over the next generation through lifelong motherhood.[298] Both Pattersons had supported the WCF since its inception. In fact, Paige stated that he would support

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[296] Mark Wingfield, "The Saga of Southwestern Seminary and the Pattersons Just Got Stranger, and It's All in the SBC Book of Reports," *Baptist News Global*, June 5, 2021, https://baptistnews.com/article/the-saga-of-southwestern-seminary-and-the-pattersons-just-got-stranger-and-its-all-in-the-sbc-book-of-reports/#.YpPxki-cbOQ.

[297] Keith Collier, "Dorothy Patterson Women's Studies Chair Inaugurated," *Baptist Press*, https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/dorothy-patterson-womens-studies-chair-inaugurated/.

[298] Staff, "SBC Digest: New Ky. Associate Exec; World Congress of Families; Other News," *Baptist Press*, July 25, 2012, http://m.bpnews.net/38341/sbc-digest-new-ky-associate-exec-world-congress-of-families-other-news.

the organization under "just about any circumstances."[299] In a remarkable video from 2013 promoting the WCF to take place in Sydney that year, Paige promotes Muslim, Hindu, and Christian families, carefully avoiding any form of religious sectarianism or divisiveness. If leading Evangelicals like the Pattersons could work with Muslims and Hindus to promote traditional family values, it seems quite likely that working with Russian Orthodox leaders to do the same would not be much of a leap.

To return to Russell Moore's concerns, Dorothy Patterson had pushed him to use SBC denominational funds via his agency, the ELRC, to co-sponsor the WCF to take place in Moscow. He refused, which put him squarely in her sights. After Putin's invasion of Crimea, the WCF did publicly cancel the conference that was due to take place in Russia. However, they then proceeded to quietly hold an identical conference under a new name, "The Large Families Forum," with the same set of speakers and program. People involved with this forum, included key funder, Konstantin Malofeev, who founded and led the largest Orthodox charity in Russia, St. Basil the Great. Through his friendships with leaders of the WCF, Malofeev has deep trans-Atlantic ties to the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Home School Legal Defense Association, groups registered as hate groups with the Southern Poverty Law Center. WCF leaders and their Russian Orthodox partners have a global vision. Fabrice Sorlin, who was the French representative of the WCF stated the following:

> This Europe of the people and of nations would substitute technocratic Europe with a more traditional European civilization; it would promote Christianity within Europe, which has until now been dominated by the LGBT lobby. It must ally with Vladimir Putin's Russia in order to create a version of Europe that stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

[299] Paige Patterson, Video, April 15, 2013.

Managing Director of the WCF Larry Jacobs stated that Russia just might be the "Christian Saviors of the World." Malofeev made clear exactly what Jacob's statement meant. For Malofeev, "saving the world" meant stopping the "sodomization of the world."[300] Getting in the way of this WCF network and its agenda would have real consequences for opponents.

Russell Moore would face consequences like few others. The Pattersons and their supporters would rally against Moore when he criticized Donald Trump and promoted social justice. The Conservative Baptist Network (CBN) was launched in large part to oust Russell Moore from denominational leadership. After Paige Patterson was fired from Southwestern Seminary for covering up sexual abuse and lying to trustees about it the Pattersons led in the launching of a network of far right political activists and clergy members to once again retake the power of America's largest Protestant denomination. Installing one of his fired lieutenants from Southwestern, Scott Colter as Executive Director of the CBN, Paige and Dorothy intended to use the playbook that had worked for them in the 1980s during the Conservative Resurgence. Other Patterson confidants like Candi Finch would move into this effort. She is now a leading administrator and professor at the fundamentalist Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, the most prominent CBN institution.[301]

The steering council of the CBN includes the following: Liberty University Vice President and Charlie Kirk confidant, Ryan Helfenbein; former Arkansas Governor and political commentator, Mike Huckabee; investor, former legal counsel of PayPal and political operative Rod Martin; President of the Family Research Council and prominent Southern Baptist, Tony

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[300] Hélène Barthélemy, "How the World Congress of Families Serves Russian Orthodox Political Interests," Southern Poverty Law Center, May 16, 2018, https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/05/16/how-world-congress-families-serves-russian-orthodox-political-interests.

[301] Connect, "Finch, Candi," MABTS, October 29, 2021, https://www.mabts.edu/directory/finch-candi/.

Perkins; Head of Sovereign Alliance and political commentator, Michael O'Fallon; and former Congressman and Executive Director of the Council for National Policy, Bob McEwen. This group of far right political operatives works alongside pastors, seminary educators, and a vice president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. In the CBN religion and politics have merged publicly, intentionally, and overtly.[302]

Since departing the ERLC for his new moderate Evangelical base at *Christianity Today* Russell Moore is no longer a Southern Baptist. However, the CBN group that helped pressure him into resignation from his post as denomination spokesperson is rapidly growing across America's largest Protestant religious group. Rod Martin, one of the key drivers of this group, and a strong supporter of the Pattersons, has used Saul Alinsky's book, *Rules for Radicals* as his playbook for leading the CBN to take over the 50,000 churches and fourteen million congregant strong SBC denomination. Rod Martin was a co-founder of PayPal, and worked closely with Peter Thiel. He attempted to start a conservative version of MoveOn.org in the mid-2000s. Today Rod Martin leads a venture capital fund under his own name. He is aggressively and intentionally working to help the Pattersons recapture their lost power in the SBC.[303]

The vision of Rod Martin and the rest of the CBN is not limited to a denominational war. They truly believe that by joining forces and capturing the cultural influence that the SBC holds across the American South, they can control the Republican Party, and consequently the United States government. Rod Martin, the Pattersons, and other Evangelical leaders have brought

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[302] Diana Chandler, "Conservative Network Launched to Address Concerns about SBC," *Baptist Standard*, April 27, 2020, https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptists/conservative-network-launched-to-address-concerns-about-sbc/., See also: "Steering Council," Conservative Baptist Network, accessed May 30, 2022, https://conservativebaptistnetwork.com/steering-council/.

[303] Josh Harkinson, "12 Things to Know about the Other Thin-Skinned Billionaire Speaking at Tonight's RNC," *Mother Jones*, July 22, 2016, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/07/thin-skinned-billionaire-peter-thiel-trump-rnc-republican-convention/., Interview with anonymous, June 12, 2021, Personal.

together a deep network of nationally and globally connected conservatives to join forces to fight a cultural war to establish Christian values in society wherever they possibly can. The fight to capture the SBC is one of the key fronts in this culture war. The CBN leadership truly believes that the direction of the SBC dictates the direction of America. They are playing to win. They have the power, the money, and the network to do so. The Pattersons and their friends will work through groups like the WCF to partner with the ROC and anyone else with money and power who will help them achieve their global ambition of establishing traditional family values wherever possible.[304]

Back in 2014, when Russell Moore was pressured by Dorothy Patterson to financially co-sponsor the WCF event in Russia, and when Franklin Graham spoke out so supportively in favor of Vladimir Putin's cultural Christian values, he knew something was going on. Little did could he know at the time just how global and intentional the movement was and just how powerful it would be within a few short years.

The web gets increasingly intricate. Also in 2014, *Mother Jones* reporter, Hannah Levintova, published a story that traces the global anti-gay work of the aforementioned Scott Lively. His participation in the hateful documentary, *Sodom*, aired on Rossiya-1, the main government sponsored TV channel.[305] Another report from *Mother Jone*s, explores Lively's global work, including his promotion of the anti-gay extremist movement in Uganda, a fifty-city

[304] "Anaheim," Conservative Baptist Network, https://conservativebaptistnetwork.com/anaheim/. See also, Federman.

[305] Hannah Levintova, "This Anti-Gay Candidate's Message Is Bigger in Moscow than Massachusetts," *Mother Jones*, October 13, 2014, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/scott-lively-massachusetts-governor-sodom-russia/.

tour of Russia, and close associations with an anti-gay charismatic, Evangelical Latvian preacher who started a ministry across the Soviet Union as far back as 1989.[306]

Gina Bradbury, *Salon* journalist, has documented many of the same stories, tracing the threads of Russian influence inside prominent American Evangelical or right wing groups. Her work exposes how former Fox News Hannity producer, Jack Hanick, launched *Tsargrad*, an Orthodox Christian television network based in Moscow and funded by one of Russia's wealthiest men, Putin confidant, and serious Russian Orthodox Christian, the aforementioned Konstantin Malofeev.[307] Hanick, his wife, and children enthusiastically later converted, and were baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church.[308] Malofeev's companies and personal founding influence are closely connected with the Safe Internet League, a Russian internet censorship group, linked both to the Russian Government and the ROC.[309]

These connections are intriguing, but the difficulty with the available journalism that we have on EC-ROC convergence is that while it reveals the existence and deepening of the relationship, it does little to help us understand the historical background of how it emerged in the first place. In a sense, journalists can look at connections forming and monitor movements like the CBN, but without theoretical and historical context it can be very disorienting to identify the root causes of such movements.

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[306] Mariah Blake, "Meet the American Pastor behind Uganda's Anti-Gay Crackdown," *Mother Jones*, March 10, 2014, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/03/scott-lively-anti-gay-law-uganda/.

[307] Gina Bradbury, "Russia's Lasting Grip on Christian Conservatives," *Salon* (Salon.com, May 2, 2019), https://www.salon.com/2019/05/04/russias-lasting-grip-on-christian-conservatives_partner/.

[308] Fr. John, "Founding Producer of FoxNews Received into Orthodoxy in Moscow," Journey To Orthodoxy, May 10, 2016, https://journeytoorthodoxy.com/2016/05/founding-producer-foxnews-received-orthdoxy-moscow/.

[309] Michael Gorham, "Beyond a World With One Master," in *Transnational Russian Studies*, edited by Andy Byford, Connor Doak, and Stephen Hutchings (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 268.

Stoeckl argues in her work on moral norm entrepreneurship that the ROC is intentionally and aggressively acting as a protagonist by joining forces with the EC to move into international moral conflicts over secularism, gay marriage, abortion, and gender equality. Stoeckl sees this convergence as an ROC bid to globally advance its own traditional views on these subjects. Yet this dissertation shows that the EC has been trying to do the same sort of moral norm entrepreneurship in concert with the ROC and others for decades.

Stoeckl's concept of "moral norm entrepreneurship" flows mainly out of the international relations field, and draws upon early interdisciplinary application of work by Cass Sunstein, Ann Florini and other scholars, to demonstrate how NGOs, international organizations, and other soft power institutions define and set behavioral norms for both local and global communities.[310] Subsequent to Sunstein and Florini's work, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink developed the concept of a three stage "norm life cycle." They argue that international norms, especially in their relationship to the state, follow a social evolutionary growth cycle from birth to mainstream acceptance. They describe the norm emergence, the norm cascade, and the final stage, the internalization of the new norm. This three-stage process, involves a "tipping point" between the first and second stage. The tipping point is reached when a group of people push long enough and loud enough for a new norm to be adopted by society at large.

Finnemore and Sikkink write, "Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community."[311]

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[310] Ann Florini, "The Evolution of International Norms," *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:363, (1996), 89. See also, Cass R. Sunstein, "Social Norms and Social Roles." *Columbia Law Review* 96, no. 4 (1996): 903-68. Accessed February 26, 2021. doi:10.2307/1123430. Sunstein is often credited with coining the term "norm entrepreneur," in his 1996 article about human behavioral norms, their evolution and effect on social development.

[311] Martha, Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887-917. Accessed February 26, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361.

Ariel Colonomos' 2001 work, "Non-State Actors as Moral Entrepreneurs: A Transnational Perspective on Ethics Networks," describes EC missionaries as the very agents who push and build moral norms in developing countries.[312] Russia fits this framework perfectly. In the years leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, American Evangelical missionary organizations aggressively planned, promoted, funded, and launched new "moral values" initiatives such as the CoMission, across the Soviet Union and, after 1991, the former Soviet Union.[313] Irina Papkova shows that as the proselytization motive of Protestant Evangelical missionaries became clear, it spurred the Russian Orthodox Church towards greater activism in the public schools of Russia.[314] Alexander Agadjanian can credibly argue that the ROC call for a return to traditional morality and values has acquired an "extraordinary international relevance."[315] Put simply, Russia is a prime example for how Evangelical missionaries were agents of moral norm development.

After the establishment of the Russian Federation, and the reemergence of the historic Orthodox Christian identity in Russia, many Evangelicals viewed the country as an ally. A Christian nation had been redeemed. This new friendship led to relationship building based on shared interests between the EC and ROC. One example of this is the Lautsi case in Italy, which brought together an unprecedented legal alliance of the Roman Catholic Church, Russian Orthodox Church, and American Evangelicals. The case was a dispute about the rights of Italian

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[312] Ariel Colonomos, 'Non-State Actors as Moral Entrepreneurs: a Transnational Perspective on Ethics Networks', in *Non-State Actors in World Politics* ed. by Daphne Josselin and William Wallace (London: Palgrave, 2001), 76-89.

[313] Elliott and Deyneka, 366.

[314] Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russia Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 95.

[315] Alexander Agadjanian, "Tradition, morality and community: elaborating Orthodox identity in Putin's Russia," *Religion, State, and Society*, VOL. 45, NO. 1, 39–60 (2017) http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2016.1272893

schools to display crucifixes in the classroom. The dispute was argued at the highest levels of the EU courts between the government of Italy and a secular Finnish family, who felt that the display of a crucifix violated the safe learning environment of their child.[316]

C. Stroop's work lays out a timeline that traces the political norm development of the ROC from the early nineties to the present. Stroop's research reveals how the WCF and other prominent Christian organizations, such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, now led by Billy's son, Franklin, have acknowledged a new Russian political leadership globally in the areas of Christian culture and family values.[317] The ROC and EC groups have discovered common cause in pro-life ideologies and created messages for transnational religious agents (missionaries) who successfully connected and spread them, "Beyond narrow circles of pro-life activists and church leaders."[318] For Evangelicals like Russell Moore who recognized Putin and his regime as anti-democratic opponents, it was disorienting to watch former political allies such as Franklin Graham drift towards the illiberalism of the ROC.

A 2018 study by Susanna Mancini and Kristina Stoeckl demonstrates specific ROC convergence with EC with their study of transnational pro-life activism. Mancini and Stoeckl trace the evolution of pro-life, anti-abortion political movements from what they describe as a "fetus-protective" approach in the seventies and eighties, to a "woman-protective" approach in the eighties and nineties, to finally, a "society-protective" approach in the present.

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[316] Annicchino, 213-19.

[317] C. Stroop, Russian Social Conservatism, the U.S.-based WCF [World Congress of Families], & the Global Culture Wars in Historical Context," *Political Research Associates*, Feb. 16, 2016.

[318] Susanna Mancini and Kristina Stoeckl, "Transatlantic Conversations." Chapter, "In *The Conscience Wars: Rethinking the Balance between Religion, Identity, and Equality*," edited by Susanna Mancini and Michel Rosenfeld, 220–257, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Their work illustrates the application of the Finnemore and Sikkink three step evolution of adopted social norms: norm emergence, norm cascade, and norm internalization. However, once again Mancini and Stoeckl do not explain how the norm "emerged" in the first place. Put another way, there are a fair number of journalists and a few academics who have noticed this ROC-EC relationship, but still to date no one has fully grasped or explained its missionary origins.

To understand these origins, the hometown of Vladimir Putin, and Peter the Great's window to the world, Saint Petersburg, is once more a good place to start. In 1990, at the sunset of the Soviet Union, Blake and Cathy Purcell arrived in Leningrad, more than a year before the city would revert to its historic name. They served as missionaries with the Navigators.[319] The Purcells arrived at a time of economic upheaval and poverty, when the infamous bread lines could be seen on city streets.[320] The family moved to Russia during the CoMission initiative, with two young children, and would have four more during their three decades of missionary service, born either in Russia or across the border in Finland. Blake Purcell worked as an evangelistic missionary, meaning his focus was to convert Russians to evangelical Christianity. After several years, he went through changes in his personal views on Christian beliefs, and was ordained in the conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

Purcell would move on to work with an even more conservative group, the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). The CREC's most visible leader is Douglas Wilson, based in Moscow, Idaho. Wilson is famous for hard line patriarchal beliefs, quoted by

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[319] "Leadership," Hope Russia, https://hoperussia.org/leadership/#blake.

[320] "Millions of Soviets on Bread Line, Pravda Reports," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles Times, March 25, 1989), https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-03-25-mn-475-story.html.

Vice journalist, Sarah Stankorb, "He has written, 'the sexual act cannot be made into an egalitarian pleasuring party.' Instead, he argues that 'a man penetrates, conquers, colonizes, plants,' while a 'woman receives, surrenders, accepts,' and that 'true authority and true submission are therefore an erotic necessity.'"[321] Wilson has also been named by the Southern Poverty Law Center as the leader of a hate speech organization for his positive portrayals of slavery in the antebellum South.[322]

Wilson is closely linked to the legacy of R.J. Rushdoony, the most prominent founder of the Christian Reconstructionist movement which emerged in the 1970s as a theocratic response to the civil rights gains and liberalizing political forces of the time. Rushdoony called for the fulfilment of the "cultural mandate," his blueprint for the future in his infamous *Institutes of Biblical Law*. For Rushdoony, the cultural mandate was a kind of Christian version of the ISIS state, a heady vision of an entire world governed by the Christian scriptures under the oversight of a reformed and puritanical State controlled totally by the Church.

"Thus, the first step in the mandate is to bring men the word of God and for God to regenerate them. The second step is to demolish every kind of theory, humanistic, evolutionary, idolatrous, or otherwise, and every kind of rampart or opposition to the dominion of God in Christ. The world and men must be brought into captivity to Christ, under the dominion of the Kingdom of God and the law of that Kingdom. Third, this requires that like Paul, we court-

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[321] "Inside the Church That Preaches 'Wives Need to Be Led with a Firm Hand'," *VICE*, accessed April 3, 2022, https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7ezwx/inside-the-church-that-preaches-wives-need-to-be-led-with-a-firm-hand.

[322] "Schools Association Rejected after Founder's Past Surfaces," Southern Poverty Law Center, January 1, 1970, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2016/schools-association-rejected-after-founder%E2%80%99s-past-surfaces.

martial or 'administer justice upon all disobedience' in every area of life where we encounter it. To deny the cultural mandate is to deny Christ and to surrender the world to Satan."[323]

Douglas Wilson is an intellectual descendant of Rushdoony.[324] He argues that the Old South is the last place on earth truly built on foundational Christian principles, and that slavery was largely practiced in a positive and Christian fashion.[325] His religious "empire" has spread and grown his name recognition throughout the United States and the world through the work of missionaries like the Purcells.

Purcell would found the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Saint Petersburg, Russia, where is most dynamic disciple, Oleg Volkov, would become the lead pastor. Volkov would go on to start churches under the CREC banner throughout Central Asia. Volkov is financially backed by churches across the American South, in small towns ranging from Nacogdoches, Texas, to the Starkville, Mississippi, area.[326]

Blake Purcell is from Wichita Falls, Texas. A graduate of Texas A&M University, he is the son of the late US Congressman Graham B. Purcell Jr. of Texas' 13th district. Purcell grew up in a politically prominent, socially connected, and prosperous family. Yet the family had difficulties due to divorce.[327] Blake had a religious experience after leaving Texas A&M, where

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[323] R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Kindle Version, locator 1530).

[324] Gillis J. Harp, "Meet the Conservative Evangelicals Practicing 'Strategic Hibernation' in the American Northwest," *Christianity Today*, June 16, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/june-web-only/survival-resistance-evangelical-america-crawford-gribben.html.

[325] Mark Potok Former Senior Fellow, "Doug Wilson's Religious Empire Expanding in the Northwest," Southern Poverty Law Center, January 1, 1970, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2004/doug-wilson%E2%80%99s-religious-empire-expanding-northwest.

[326] "Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches," CREC Resources, accessed April 3, 2022, https://crechurches.org/missions/#partneredMissions.

[327] Associated Press, "Graham Purcell, Longtime Texas Democratic Congressman, Dies at 92," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, June 13, 2011), https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/graham-purcell-longtime-texas-democratic-congressman-dies-at-92/2011/06/13/AGWNMiTH_story.html.

he had served as a member of the Corps of Cadets. Going to Russia as a missionary with an evangelical group like the Navigators was a traumatic but very meaningful experience for the Purcell family.

The trajectory of Purcell's missionary career can be read through the prism of the hardening lines of American evangelicalism since 1990. Purcell started out with a relatively moderate, evangelical "big tent," the Navigators. Yet, he earnestly sought firmer church doctrine, and more rigid methodologies of missionary practice. Joining the PCA he was still a typical evangelical, but decidedly on the conservative side of the aisle. When he departed the PCA for the CREC, Purcell cast in his lot with the Rushdoony approach to Christian nationalist fundamentalism. He invited hardline fundamentalist speakers like R.C. Sproul Jr., a young earth creationist, and son of the more mainstream famous evangelical leader, R.C. Sproul.[328] On several occasions, Douglas Wilson came to Russia to work with the Purcell's church. The Purcells now lead Hope Russia, an organization that works across the entirety of Russia and in four countries, complete with a seminary, twenty distinct church groups, as well as more than one thousand leaders.[329]

The Purcell apartment became a gathering place in the city of Saint Petersburg. In the 1990s and through the first decade of the 2000s, Saint Petersburg was home to dozens of Western missionary organizations. As a cultural center, and more socially progressive city than Moscow and the provincial cities, Saint Petersburg offered American evangelical groups a large

[328] Justin Taylor and Justin Taylor is executive vice president for book publishing and publisher for books at Crossway. He blogs at Between Two Worlds and Evangelical History. You can follow him on Twitter., "R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)," *The Gospel Coalition*, December 14, 2017, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/r-c-sproul-1939-2017/.

[329] "Copy of What We Do," Hope Russia, accessed April 3, 2022, https://hoperussia.org/what-we-do-1.

population with comprehensive services, good travel links, and close proximity to Finland and the European Union. Missionary groups joined together to start the International Christian School for their children that still exists today as the International Academy of Saint Petersburg (IA).[330] The Purcell family was intimately involved in the formation and growth of the school. Their children attended and graduated from the school.

The school has educated children from countries across the world, including Japan and South Korea. The educators are mostly volunteer missionaries who raise their own financial support to serve at the school. One of these is the aforementioned Yoko Sato, a missionary from Osaka, Japan, who has worked at the school for many years.[331] Sato worked alongside Baptist missionaries, Kevin and Tammy Plaster at their registered missionary church in the historic center of Saint Petersburg. Her Japanese church is Senri Newtown Baptist Church.[332] The church that funded her missionary work in Russia is an independent, fundamentalist Baptist church, founded in 1966 by missionary Don Sisk.[333] This same Don Sisk would ultimately become the head of BIMI, and lead that fundamentalist missionary organization to distribute millions of Bibles across Russia.

In the early 1990s, Sisk would partner closely with fundamentalist extremists, such as Jim Vineyard, to send missionaries to Russia and the former USSR, including missionary Don Ossewarde. In 2013, Vineyard's Windsor Hills Baptist Church, would make the SPLC's hate list for its anti-gay, and anti-Muslim rhetoric. Vineyard's missionaries would have a heavy impact

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[330] "Get to Know Us," International Academy of Saint Petersburg, https://myiasp.com/.

[331] "Mission Statement," International Academy of Saint Petersburg, https://myiasp.com/about-ia/.

[332] "Senri New Town Baptist Church," 千里ニュータウンバプテスト教会, https://senrinewtown.com/.

[333] "Tell the World," Ministry127, https://ministry127.com/missions/tell-the-world.

on the missionary scene in Saint Petersburg, through the work of the Heinricy family, Charles Hoblitz, and others.[334]

The Purcells were Presbyterian, yet their influence extended far beyond their own denomination well into Baptist life. T.P., a Baptist missionary who had lived and served with BIMI in Saint Petersburg, remembers the Purcell family apartment as a gathering place for the missionary community as far back as the early to mid 1990s.[335]

Because of the ambitious outreach work of the Purcells, and the friendships of their six children who were connected across the missionary scene through the Christian school, the Purcell home was a beehive of energy and community for expats and missionaries. Holidays, weekends, and birthday parties were often happening at the Purcell home. It was a place where denominations, worldviews, backgrounds, and ethnicities mixed freely under the oversight of Blake and Cathy. Alcohol flowed and food was offered liberally. The Purcell children had video gaming consoles, and plenty of kid-friendly space.

For more than three decades, and through the growth of the evangelical movement which Blake sparked, the Purcell home has remained a gathering place for missionary work. Today, the home is occupied by Lewis, the now married fourth child, who can currently be seen in a promotional video as a teacher on the website of the International Academy. Lewis attended Duke University after graduating from IA. He returned to Russia as an evangelical missionary and married a Russian local. The Purcell's oldest son, Graham, attended the University of Mississippi, and was elected student body president. He served in Afghanistan as an Army

[334] Interview with T.P., D.S., A. Y., See also, Sam Slobodian, "Vitaly and Alexandra Keller," Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries (Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries, March 11, 2019), https://www.baptistinternational.org/news/187.

[335] Interview with T.P. Personal, October 16, 2021.

officer, then attended seminary, and returned to Saint Petersburg as a Presbyterian missionary with the PCA linked, Mission to The World. He is still connected to his father's old work. Another son, Zachary, attended the University of Texas at Austin, and works as a motion graphics designer. The Purcell children attended respected universities and have done well in their careers, with at least two following in the parent's path of missionary service. Still another child was a Fulbright scholar.

At least one of the children worked for Russian pro-family organizations, helping them apply for grant funding from US based anti-abortion groups. The Purcells are closely linked with pro-nationalist elements of the Russian Orthodox Church. They also maintain deep working ties to both mainstream and fringe elements of global evangelicalism. After thirty-five years, the legacy of the Purcell family is remarkable. From the Chevrolet Suburban, which they shipped to the Soviet Union, and drove around St Petersburg before American cars could be purchased on the open market, to their links to Christian nationalism in the United States, the Purcell family missionary legacy is deep, wide, and complex. It is also influential.

This family is well known by the Russian establishment, and has been allowed to teach Protestant views with little to no interference from the State. Of course, the views that they propagate are very much in line with the conservative extremes of the Putin regime and the ROC. Their transnational ambition to create a global movement of fundamentalist Christianity has linked them with the hardest line elements of the American Protestant world, such as Douglas Wilson.

Yet, in a Russian context, their views are not remarkable at all. The lesson of the Purcell family is that while endless American diplomats, entertainers, and business leaders have passed through the city of Saint Petersburg, as missionaries it is they who have built a global legacy of

cultural influence which is now spanning three generations. Purcell grandchildren are now being raised in the original centrally located apartment which they have owned and occupied since 1990.

On the well-produced video for the International Academy in which Lewis Purcell features, he is seen walking into a Starbucks in Saint Petersburg. The script is written to appeal to volunteer young teachers. The message of the video is a recruiting pitch that seems to say, "Come to Saint Petersburg, experience beautiful culture, and a wonderful city, and enjoy the amenities of home (like Starbucks)."

Starbucks, a politically liberal company from Seattle, has indeed gone global. Yet, here the irony is that the young hipster sipping coffee from a Starbucks branded cup on a bench in Saint Petersburg is the child of a missionary who has brought the most extreme elements of patriarchal, politically extreme, and fundamentalist American Christianity to all of Russia. What is the message here? Simply this, diplomats and businesspersons come and go. Aid workers drop in for a few years, but the work of missionaries is permanent.[336]

Missionary Blake Purcell and the leaders he produced across Russia believe that their job is to change the world to reflect the moral norms of Jesus Christ. They accept the "cultural mandate." These hardline men were different in some ways from the Baptist missionaries who stemmed from the influence of Jerry Falwell and his network, such as Jim Vineyard. Early on the Baptists believed that their job was to convert as many Russians as possible to American evangelical Christianity because Jesus was about to return to earth for the rapture, and it would be too late. One of these groups worked to claim the world for Jesus Christ, while the other group, the Purcell group, worked to rescue the world for Jesus Christ. While the two groups are

[336] Interview with Lewis Purcell. Personal. December 9, 2021.

very good at arguing with one another among their rank and file, the practical effect of their theological differences is nil. Through the efforts of groups like the CBN and leaders like Rod Martin and the Pattersons their goals have come together. But this movement towards unifying Evangelicals started about forty years ago.

To return to the visual of Falwell's secret meeting in Virginia, the two sides can be seen in the room. On one side is social reformer, Francis Schaeffer, and on the other is proselytization specialist, Jerry Falwell. In the middle is the mainstream Evangelicalism of Carl F. H. Henry and the Billy Graham organization, smoothing out the rough edges to create a synthesized agreement on religious freedom, united leadership, and global engagement on the big issues of the day: "family values" and protection of Christian culture. Post-Soviet Russia would become a sort of proving ground, to show that the ROC and the EC can get along at the elite level, even if their masses tend to bicker.

More than forty years after Falwell began his campaign to take back the world for Jesus Christ, American Evangelicals have become immensely wealthy power brokers across global Christianity. Historic Christian communities have taken note. For example, in 2015, the *Under Caesar's Sword* conference at the Vatican included representatives from Baylor University, Liberty University, and Gateway Church alongside ancient apostolic churches. This conference brought virtually all globally significant Christian communities together for a summit about religious freedom and persecution of Christians.[337]

What was the ultimate spirit and goal of the American Evangelicalism that formed, nurtured, and cultivated the views and methods of the missionaries like the Purcells who swept

[337] Marketing Communications: Web // University of Notre Dame, "Speakers & Panelists // under Caesar's Sword // University of Notre Dame," Under Caesar's Sword, https://ucs.nd.edu/rome-conference/speakers-panelists/.

into Russia in the 1990s? What is the goal that animates the contemporary work of the Pattersons, the CBN, and Rod Martin today? John Anderson contends that for American missionaries like the Purcells, it was the Puritan ideal of the "city set on a hill." On the Russian side, for people like Konstantin Malofeev there is a similar yearning for the return of a conservative Orthodox civilization.[338] Perhaps it is R. J. Rushdoony, who describes best the spirit of the missionary, the political-religious operatives, and the church leaders who act as "moral norm entrepreneurs." These words, written at the end of his chapter on the cultural mandate, may suffice. "If men are not regenerated by Christ, and if they will not submit to His calling, to the cultural mandate, they will be crushed by His power."[339]

[338] John Anderson, "Dreaming of Christian nations in the USA and Russia: The Importance of History," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 10, no. 3, 201-221 (2012), DOI: 10.1080/14794012.2012.698546.

[339] Rushdoony, locator, 1539.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

While religious faith helped create an American nationalism, it also fostered a powerful sense of internationalism.

– Andrew Preston[340]

This dissertation is primarily about two main things. First, it focuses on the strategic nature and vast scale of transnational American Evangelical connections with Russian Orthodoxy. In a sense, this work is a sociology of missionizing. Yet this dissertation is not intended to analyze the full diversity of American Evangelicalism; indeed, not all Evangelicalism is created equal.[341] Nor has the aim of this work been to provide a comprehensive understanding of the deep complexity of the Russian Orthodox Church. Rather, in a narrow sense, it has explored how American Evangelical missionary efforts in post-Soviet Russia were themselves part of a fundamental shift in ideas. To fully understand the nature of these missionary efforts, it is critical to understand the American Evangelical culture that produced them. American missionaries like the Purcells went to Russia with specific ideas of themselves and their quest. The culture of leadership that shaped and produced these missionaries would ultimately merge easily with the nationalism of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Second, by exploring these Evangelical efforts, this work has grappled with some of the implications of transnational missionary work. This dissertation calls for a deeper synthesis of religion and the field of international relations theory, by confirming that Evangelical missionary initiatives are helping to globally politicize conservative Christian "moral norms" through

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[340] Quoted in "Introduction," Preston, 3.

[341] David Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left In An Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3.

collaboration with Russian Orthodoxy. This norm politicization has happened against an extraordinary backdrop. Christian conservatives from two rival nations, America and Russia have joined forces to remake the world. Perhaps even more astonishing is that the EC and ROC, two religious ecosystems who are intensely defensive about their beliefs, have managed to set aside severe doctrinal differences to work together to promote the traditional family and Christian behavioral norms across the world.

Religion is a field of study increasingly influenced by globalization. [342] David Martin writes about Evangelical Christianity: regardless of its most recent Western origins, it has spread far beyond its early expressions and is now a social reality that has truly globalized and is transforming societies with unprecedented speed.[343] James Beckford argues that religious groups create and use their own constructions of globalization.[344] If transnational religious movements can shape the identity of state and non-state actors alike, it follows that IR theoretical frames, such as constructivism can be a theoretical door to analyzing the origin and base motivations for transnational religious networks in an IR context. Indeed, transnational religious pressures have important security implications for both Russian and American societies.[345]

Eriksson and Giacomello write, "The argument here, is that unlike material reality, social reality is socially constructed, and so is consequently always susceptible to change…Rather than asking what social realities are, IR constructivists ask how social realities become what they

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[342] Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 2.

[343] David Martin, "The Evangelical Upsurge" in *The Desecularization of the World* ed. by Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 38.

[344] Beckford, 196-197.

[345] Hunter, 87-88.

are."[346] Alexander Wendt states, "In one sense, identity, ideology, and culture are distinct from power and interests, and do play a causal role in social life."[347]

Economic factors, political factors, and geographical factors may play an important role in why a religious ideology or movement expands. However, external pressures by themselves fail to explain the heart of why an ideology becomes present among a group of people "in the first place."[348] The application of Wendt's Hobbesian-Lockean-Kantian triad to EC-ROC relational evolution provides a fresh narrative and new frame for seeing just how religions move across perceived boundary spaces in a globalized world. The following story is an excellent illustration of just how this sort of theoretical movement takes place in the real world.

In July of 2021, I was fortunate enough to get a working breakfast with Michael Johnson, head of the Slavic Gospel Association (SGA). This organization has close ties with Wheaton College, *Christianity Today*, and dates to the golden era of American fundamentalism, the 1920s. During our breakfast, Johnson told me how he had tripled the revenue of SGA to almost ten million dollars in annual donations. He bragged about his fundraising skills, and said, "If you want to raise money from Evangelicals, do three things. Talk about Muslims, Communists and Israel." Shifting in his seat, Johnson leaned in closer, "Better yet," he said. "Try to talk about Communists or Muslims taking over Israel." He settled back in his chair and laughed. But the truth was out there. Johnson knew the Evangelical mindset, and he was determined to exploit it for financial gain. Later, during the breakfast, he told me the most explosive information that I have received throughout this research journey. In the summer of 2022, President Putin is

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[346] Johan Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello, "The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (ir)relevant Theory?," *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 3 (July 2006): 221-44.

[347] Wendt, 93.

[348] Wendt, 134.

hosting a secret meeting of global conservative Christians, and he, Johnson, had received an invitation. Where was the event? Saint Petersburg, of course. Johnson smirked, "I can try to get you one through my contacts, but it is invitation only, you know."

Is this a real meeting? At the time, I did not know. It seemed to be an invitation-only meeting linked to the sidelines of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Conference on Inter-Cultural and Inter-Religious dialogue which was to have been held in Saint Petersburg in May of 2022. The secret meeting had proved difficult to verify. Yet, on May 23, 2022, I was able to confirm with Johnson that he had been invited to a "religious freedom summit hosted by Putin." The invitation had come through Russian-Baptist contacts. Franklin Graham was the key Evangelical figure at this meeting. He was scheduled to speak at the Putin summit, and then subsequently hold a sanctioned mass proselytization event in St. Petersburg. Johnson, as a true Evangelical elite, was very much following in the Falwell tradition of conspiracy, strategy, and dynamic fundraising. The conference was canceled due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Now, Johnson was intending to fund and host a major gathering of Russian and Ukrainian church leaders in either Turkey or Israel later in 2022 or early 2023. He wants to bring them together for a common cause, with the stated goal of healing rifts from the war. [349]

The difference from the Cold War days for these Evangelical leaders is that instead of trying to defeat Soviet Russian elites, Evangelicals are trying to defeat progressive American and global elites. The ROC is now a co-conspirator in this sort of "missionary" work. The twin pressures of the fall of the Soviet Union and Western progressivism created an Evangelical world in which Jerry Falwell was able to work with the Russian Orthodox Church. That world did not exist before, but it is a world in which we live today. The Evangelical missionary movement has

[349] Interview with Michael Johnson, May 23, 2022, Personal.

been transformed from an "end of the world" philosophy to a "conquer the world" philosophy. It truly is extraordinary to see low church American Evangelicals uniting with the ancient traditions of Russian Orthodoxy.

Kristina Stoeckl has continued to look for historical threads to understand the intellectual nature of this relationship among various ROC and EC elites. She and Dmitry Uzlaner have traced how the moral philosophy of Russian emigre, Pitirim Sorokin, influenced elite EC thinkers for decades. Uzlaner and Stoeckl portray his work and philosophy as a thought and relational bridge for transnational alliances between the EC and ROC ecosystems.[350] Yet, while Sorokin may be a small contributing factor in the current ROC-EC relationship, his influence pales in comparison to the massive number of relationships gained and interests fostered through the micro and meso level missionary connections, facilitated by people like the Purcells. These relationships between American Evangelicals and Russian Orthodox Christians have been forged almost exclusively in the first three decades after the Soviet Union.

In this dissertation, my research briefly pulls back the curtain and reveals a glimpse of the powerful elites who strategize, and the ordinary missionaries who work to advance the worldwide goals of American Evangelicalism. The thousands of missionaries who went and who still go to the "ends of the earth" are changing societies everywhere a little bit each day.

The Kingdom of God truly has no borders. American Evangelicalism can shape the currents of international affairs through influence and funding of foreign partnerships. These foreign partnerships can also reshape American Evangelicals.[351] One of the most complicating

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[350] Dmitry Uzlaner, and Kristina Stoeckl," The Legacy of Pitirim Sorokin in the Transnational Alliances of Moral Conservatives." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18, no. 2 (May 2018): 133–53. doi:10.1177/1468795X17740734.

[351] McAlister, 105-116.

factors for fully grasping the complexity of American Evangelical missionary work is that at least among rank and file missionaries, sincere faith, genuine compassion, and powerfully felt emotions are deeply embedded.[352]

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed expands on this point, "That emotions orient us toward things in the world, directing our attention and sometimes capturing our bodily experience."[353] Various human emotions, including disgust, hate, shame, love, and fear, interact with each other to create human behavioral signals and movements. In Ahmed's discussion of fear, she describes Jerry Falwell's fear based response to the 9/11 attacks in America. His explicit shaming of a range of ideas and groups as complicit in what he considered to be the domestic downfall of American society was seemingly born out of a fear of looming national death. In this specific case, Falwell linked social and spiritual death with physical death.[354] In doing so, he opened a window to the currents of fear that flow through American Evangelical life.

The implications of Ahmed's work for some American Evangelicals goes further. She argues that crises, whether objective events (such as a hurricane) or constructed (such as a political feud) fetishize a moment in time and bestow upon it a life of its own. A crisis then, requires an enemy to fight against. That enemy could be hunger or chaos. It could also be, and often is, as the Falwell case shows, a select group of the population who are deemed worthy

[352] Interview with B. S. Personal, August 31, 2021.

[354] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 77, On September 13, 2001, speaking on the 700 Club with Pat Robertson, Falwell said ,"The pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays, and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say you helped this happen." Robertson's reply: "Well, I…totally concur."

recipients of hate since they have in some way "contributed to" or "caused" the crisis by their perceived misdeeds.

Ahmed argues that any object of hate must be attached to an object of love. In this sense, religiously motivated hatred for the "other" is motivated by the fear of losing some object of deep affection or love. Whether that love is a family construct, a religious belief, a political system, or a national heritage, those that are perceived threats to the stability of such social arrangements often find their bodies to be objects of fear, hate, and even, physical violence.[355]

The most extreme elements of American Evangelical Christianity are now in the forefront of global missionary efforts. Russia, once a feared enemy, is now a friend and ally to many American Evangelical Christians who fear new enemies such as Islam, Hollywood, and the Democratic Party.

Jerry Falwell, and a few others changed everything. They wanted to make the major domestic issues about abortion and homosexuality. They wanted to make the global issue about Soviet Communism. And they succeeded. With the Soviet Union, they had the perfect enemy, an anti-religious, and anti-American global menace, already widely loathed. The former Soviet Union was fertile soil for bringing together all that they had preached and campaigned for: a missionary target nation, the Bible, traditional Christian values, democracy, and the American way of life. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Evangelical elites claimed much credit for its collapse. Then these same elites launched and funded a tidal wave of missionary work that would change religion worldwide.

That wave has brought about a generation of confident and sophisticated Evangelicals who have built well-funded global political activist networks like the World Congress of

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[355] Ibid., 43

Families. During the Trump Administration, they have proven their ability to focus the attention of America's most senior diplomats on secondary issues like the release of American pastor Andrew Brunson from a Turkish prison.[356] Religion matters once again, and policy makers ignore it at their peril.

Religions have the power to transcend borders and create new identities or resurrect old ones. Right wing social ideology was used by Jerry Falwell and others to train and mobilize the American Evangelical missionaries who went to post-Soviet Russia. In fact, American political partisanship has a key role to play in forging the very identity of Evangelicals.[357] Culture war is as much a part of the American Evangelical missionary effort as helping the poor and sharing the Christian gospel.

Missionaries incubated in American Evangelicalism have proven capable of forging transnational alliances that blur the boundaries of social movement, politics, and religion. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph illustrates this with very specific political imagery. She describes missionaries as 'agents of Rome, Mecca, Washington,' and even an Evangelical hub city like, 'Dallas.' [358]

Indeed, Evangelical missionary are agents of change. Their home churches in America seem themselves as centers of truth in a world awash in evil. These churches send their young people out on global missionary trips to remote corners of the world to shine light in darkness. That is, to convert "people groups" of native tribes and ethnic minorities to American Evangelicalism. They forge career missionaries with years of sophisticated cross-cultural

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[356] Fiona Hill, Interview.

[357] Margolis, 3-5, 31-33.

[358] Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Dehomogenizing Religious Formations," in *Transnational Religion and Fading States,* edited by Rudolph and James Piscatori (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 248.

training, equip them with every possible financial and technological resource, and then send them out to change the world. They do it by the thousands across denominational boundaries. Every summer virtually every Evangelical church in the United States sends some of its members out to some part of the United States or the world on a missionary excursion ranging in time from a few days to a few months. Hundreds of thousands of people and billions of dollars are spent annually to send American Evangelicals to all corners of the world. At the top of this massive network are a very few powerful leaders. People like Franklin Graham, his father before him; Jerry Falwell Jr., and his father before him, learned to deftly avoid internal religious controversies to martial vast transnational power and wealth. Their institutions are wealthy, growing, and reach to all corners of the world. The biggest change for Evangelicals and fundamentalists alike is that their work doesn't really seem to be about saving souls, as much as it is about conquering the world.

The proselytization work of the American Evangelical missionary movement across Russia failed. The ROC won. Now, instead of doing traditional missionary work, very influential American Evangelicals have built close ties with Russian political and religious leaders.[359] These two groups found that they had a very similar view of the world. An alliance based upon shared interests has come to pass at the highest levels of the Evangelical and Orthodox religious ecosystems.[360]

Will the current war in Ukraine change the calculus? It is far too early to make any kind of definitive judgment on this question. However, my conversation with Michael Johnson leads

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[359] Franklin Graham, "Putin's Olympic Controversy," *Decision Magazine*, October 2, 2018, https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/march-2014/putins-olympic-controversy/.

[360] Timothy C. Morgan, "From Russia, with Love," *Christianity Today*, May 4, 2011, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/may/fromrussialove.html.

me to believe that it will not. As noted, he is already planning a unity conference in Israel or Turkey to rebuild ties between Ukraine and Russia. And his organization is funding the entire event! Again, this sort of missionary work has very little to do with saving souls and helping the poor, but everything to do with amassing a powerful global network.

A little more than thirty years after the Cold War ended, it is now possible to state unequivocally that leading America Evangelicals have set aside the original proselytization motive of their work across Russia. They came to Russia afraid of Communism hoping to save Russia from its seventy years of "godlessness." They found the Russian Orthodox Church to be a rival also working to save the souls of Russians.

The Soviet Union promoted a religion replacement ideology that attempted to implement new traditions by force or social pressure. Again, Berger understands both totalitarian and religious social constructions as primarily a defense against the human terror of finding oneself in a world devoid of meaning.[361] The fall of the Soviet Union, its rituals, and its symbols, created a fresh of social conditions that would open the door to religious opportunities for both Russians and the world beyond.

American Evangelical leaders replaced the old fear of Communism with the new fear of secular progressivism. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Putin regime that collaborates with it shares this same fear. American Evangelical leaders have replaced their traditional missionary goals with a global moral values alliance with friendly allies everywhere, most especially the Russian Orthodox Church.[362] The Trump administration represented a chance to

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[361] Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 31.

[362] Geoffrey Evans and Ksenia Northmore-Ball, "The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 4 (o4 December 2012), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2012.01684.x.

gain more than just domestic power such as seats on the Supreme Court. Trump gave Evangelicals a chance to push their global missionary priorities forward through American foreign policy. At this stage, Hollinger's missionary stealth effect is actively in operation. Evangelicals are changing the notions of liberal democracy. Through the calculus of leaders like Jerry Falwell, they have already narrowed the culture of their churches. They want to do away with pluralism. In the ROC, American Evangelical leaders have recognized a similar desire.

Since the end of the Cold War, globalization trends have allowed Evangelical missionaries to live in the world, learn the world, and forge a vision of the sort of the world that they want to see. In no place can their missionary evolution be seen as clearly as in Russia. First they went to save souls with their American gospel. Then they found a world more complex than the one they had anticipated. They also found a world brimming with opportunities to influence governments, educational institutions, and entire societies. They adjusted to the post-Cold War world. The American Evangelical vision has metastasized beyond borders. It is now everywhere. And it is no longer even controlled by Americans. Evangelicalism is a fully transnational force to be reckoned with.

Large transnational forces have the resources, the networks, and the sophistication to make grand alliances, build global strategies, and connect ecosystems to one another. And American Evangelicalism and Russian Orthodoxy have certainly influenced one another. They have both learned lessons from the other. American Evangelicals have learned much about statecraft, ruthlessness, deceit and power acquisition from their ROC counterparts. In other words, American Evangelicals were able to add Russian authoritarianism to their toolbox. On the other side, Russian Orthodox leaders have learned much about communication, marketing, and entrepreneurship from their EC counterparts.

However, both sides developed their heritage, their goals, and their views of the world independently. They are not the same. At the ground level, they still have severe differences with one another that show few signs of changing. That's why the work of missionaries and the elites who send them is so critical to building transnational religious alliances. The ecosystems don't need to change functionally at the ground level, for their leaders to find points of friendship and overlap at the upper levels. Missionaries have provided the soil for anti-pluralist collaboration between these two ecosystems: the ROC and the EC.

In the end, Evangelical missionaries brought America's culture and religious message to Russia, and found a different language and culture disguising the same false idols their own leaders had embraced: political ambition and wealth.[363] Andrew Preston is right. American Evangelicalism is international, politically connected, and powerful, but so too, is the Russian Orthodox Church. They have found one another.[364] Together, they intend to change the world.

[363] Walter Sawatsky, "After the Glasnost Revolution: Soviet Evangelicals and Western Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 1992): 54-60.

[364] Bethany Moreton, Peace and World Affairs Berkley Center for Religion, "What Do We Miss When We Call Them 'Culture Wars'?," Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/what-do-we-miss-when-we-call-them-culture-wars.

Appendix 1

CoMission Members[365]

1. A.C.M.C. (Association of Church Missions Committee)
2. Alpha Care Therapy Services
3. American Tract Society
4. Association of Christian Schools International
5. Baptist General Conference
6. BCM International
7. B.E.E. International
8. Biola University
9. BMC International
10. BMC USA
11. Boneem International
12. Bright Hope International
13. Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU)
14. Campus Outreach Augusta
15. Cedarville University
16. Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF)
17. Chosen People's Ministries
18. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA)
19. Christian Associates International
20. The Christian Bridge

[365] Wilkinson, 283-285.

21. Church Resources Ministries
22. Columbia International University
23. Community Bible Study
24. Daniel Iverson Center for Christian Studies
25. Educational Services International
26. European Christian Missions
27. Evangelical Covenant Church
28. Evangelical Free Church Mission
29. Evangelical Friends Mission
30. Evangelical Mennonite Church
31. Evangelical Methodist World Missions
32. Evangelism Explosion III International (EE)
33. Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches
34. Focus on the Family
35. Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (IMB)
36. Gospel Light Publications
37. Gospel Missionary Union
38. Grace College of the Bible of Nebraska
39. Great Commission Ministries
40. HCJB World Radio
41. In Touch Ministries
42. Institute for East/West Christian Studies
43. Wheaton College

44. International Aid, Inc.

45. International Coalition for Christian Counseling

46. International Cooperating Ministries

47. International Teams

48. John Guest Evangelistic Team

49. Lancaster Bible College

50. Maranatha Ministries International

51. Mission Athletes International

52. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)

53. The Mission Society for United Methodists

54. Mission to the World (MTW)

55. Mission to Unreached Peoples

56. Missionary Board of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)

57. Missions Fest Vancouver

58. Moody Bible Institute

59. Multnomah School of the Bible

60. Nashville Bible College

61. The Navigators

62. OMS International

63. Philadelphia College of the Bible

64. Prairie Bible Institute

65. Project C.A.R.E. (Coordination of All Resources for Evangelism)

66. Reimer Foundation

67. Ronald Blue and Company

68. Russian Ministries

69. Salt and Light

70. Sea-Tac Ministries

71. SEND International

72. Serve International

73. Slavic Gospel Association (SGA)

74. Team Expansion

75. Transport for China

76. U.S. Center for World Mission

77. Walk Thru the Bible Ministries

78. Wesleyan World Missions

79. World Gospel Mission

80. World Help

81. World Partners

82. Worldteam

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