
The “Third Testament”

American Exceptionalism as a Case Study in the Global Temptation to Embrace Political Idolatry

by Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert

The doctrine of American Exceptionalism, given its many historic permutations, is not new. Many would label it primarily a political ideology rather than a religious faith. But the Anabaptist authors of this paper are deeply suspicious of an ideology that threatens to become a civil religion, and of the deleterious effects of that civil religion on Christian faith, especially an ideology/religion as potentially pernicious as American Exceptionalism.

This paper focuses primarily on claims made during the 2012 presidential race between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney about America’s divine destiny and place in the world order: we suggest that (1) there was an underlying fundamental agreement between the rival candidates and that (2) these claims also had deep roots in American history.¹ Likewise, many of the same themes reappeared in the 2016 presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump; Clinton strongly affirmed the doctrine in a column she wrote about “American Exceptionalism” in *Time* magazine,² and Trump touted the slogans “America First!” and “Make America Great Again!” While Clinton rejected Trump’s slogans—in part because they implied America had lost some of its

Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert teach at Bethel University, Mishawaka, Indiana.

1 A longer, more heavily footnoted version of this paper was presented by invitation from Tite Tiénou and Harold A. Netland at the “Theology of Religions” track of the Evangelical Missiological Society North Central Region Annual Meeting at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, April 21, 2012. (Those interested in this topic may contact the authors for the conference draft at tim.erdel@betheluniversity.edu or robby.prenkert@betheluniversity.edu). We are particularly grateful for insightful comments from our Bethel colleagues, historians John H. Haas and David E. Schmidt. Cristian F. Mihut and David C. Cramer also kindly read a draft and provided helpful observations, some of which are reflected in what follows; we are also grateful to Cramer for a number of helpful edits made at the eleventh hour.

2 Hillary Clinton, “American Exceptionalism,” *Time*, October 24, 2016, 83, while Donald Trump’s primary campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again!” implied that America needs to recover an exceptional status she once had but has now lost.

greatness—Native American clergyman, reporter, activist, and politician Mark Charles points out that there was (again) no real debate between the two candidates about America’s uniqueness, just over whether America had fallen from its divinely ordered perch and therefore needed to be restored.³

Persons interested in the contemporary political debates during the 2020 election may determine for themselves whether any candidate is so bold as to repudiate the basic doctrine of American Exceptionalism, but the perspective of the present authors is that no major candidate for national political office in the United States is likely to do so, since repudiating American Exceptionalism would be tantamount to political suicide. One might as well refuse to play the national anthem, respect the flag, or recite the Pledge of Allegiance and still expect to gain a major political office.

Thus, while some of the discussions that follow are situated in a particular time and place, we propose that the fundamental assumptions concerning American Exceptionalism remain basically unchanged and that their ongoing danger to Christian faith is as serious a threat as ever.

1. Three Sources of American Exceptionalism

When Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney spoke at the Citadel on October 7, 2011, his speech dipped from several streams that flow into the grand river of American Exceptionalism—streams fed in turn by multiple tributaries. Three such streams arise: (1) from outside observers who have analyzed the American democratic experiment, (2) from the religious history of the United States, and (3) from the standard political rhetoric required if one is to be a serious candidate for national office in the United States.

1.1 Outside Observers Note That America Is Exceptional

One stream of American Exceptionalism is a kind of sociopolitical anthropology going back to Alexis de Tocqueville, who provided the first extensive foreign analysis of what he would call *Democracy in America*.⁴ Tocqueville offered his own unique mix of description, praise, and censure—a fairly balanced, if occasionally pessimistic, enterprise of enduring insight. He seemed to recognize

3 See Mark Charles, “The Truth behind ‘We the People’—the Three Most Misunderstood Words in US History,” *TED Ideas Worth Spreading*, TEDx, Tysons, Virginia, December 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_charles_the_truth_behind_we_the_people_the_three_most_misunderstood_words_in_us_history.

4 See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Godhammer, 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Library of America, 2004). Cf. Hugh Brogan, *Alex de Tocqueville: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), and Arthur Kaledin, *Tocqueville and His America: A Darker Horizon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

that American democracy is, in some important sense, exceptional among the nations, or at least was at that time. But he puzzled over what might make it so, not settling on a single cause. As he famously writes,

Thus the situation of the Americans is entirely exceptional, and there is reason to believe that no other democratic people will ever enjoy anything like it. Their wholly Puritan origin; their markedly commercial habits; the very country they inhabit, which seems to discourage study of science, literature, and the arts; the proximity of Europe, which allows them not to study these things without relapsing into barbarism; and a thousand more specific causes, of which I have been able to discuss only the most important—all of these things must have concentrated the American mind in a singular way on purely material concerns. Passions, needs, upbringing, and circumstances all seem to have conspired, in fact, to focus the attention of Americans on this earth. Only religion causes them to cast a fleeting and distracted glance heavenward from time to time.⁵

Tocqueville suggested, among other matters, that America has been spared the feudal background that haunts Europe; that America has a unique blend of public and private involvement and responsibility; that, for a civilized nation, America has a peculiar focus on the material and practical elements of life; and, more than anything else, that in America democracy and religion are mutual catalysts for liberty, while in France democratic liberty and traditional religion have been generally at odds with each other.⁶ Tocqueville was less optimistic about the implications of slavery and the inequalities suffered by persons of African descent and by Native Americans. He also notes the belligerence of many Americans and their insistence that the American way of doing things is best, even if they may be ignorant of other customs and cultures.

This sort of Tocquevillian analysis may be on target, but it does not support a strong thesis of American exceptionality, much less superiority. The United States is different from European nations, and the differences may be scrutinized, celebrated, or criticized as appropriate. There is no normative claim entailed by this approach that would suggest the United States is a towering colossus with a divine duty to police the rest of the world.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor makes similar observations, with a more concentrated focus on the effects of American democracy and religious liberty on the rise of a fairly unique civil religion within American society that stands in contrast to an increasingly secular Europe:⁷

⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 517–18.

⁶ Cf. James T. Schleifer, “Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* Reconsidered,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, ed. Cheryl B. Welch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121–38.

⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 522–30.

Go to the church of your choice, but go. Later this expands to synagogues. When imams also begin to appear at prayer breakfasts, along with priests, pastors, and rabbis, the signal is that Islam is being invited into the consensus.

That means that one can be integrated as an American *through* one's faith or religious identity. This contrasts with the Jacobin-republican formula of "laïcité," where the integration takes place by ignoring, sidelining or privatising the religious identity, if any.⁸

Taylor does note, however, that, unlike Europeans, who today are uneasy about their heritage of going to war in the name of God, Americans caught up in their civil religion still tend to support their nation's military ventures unabashedly: "It is easier to be unreservedly confident in your own rightness when you are the hegemonic power. . . . Most Americans have few doubts about whose side God is on."⁹

1.2 Religious Roots of American Exceptionalism

A much older stream of American Exceptionalism is directly religious, with roots in the Puritans. Some would even point clear back to the writings of Christopher Columbus,¹⁰ beginning before John Winthrop reworked a metaphor from the Sermon on the Mount in his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" and spoke of Puritan America as a "city upon a hill" (just before or while crossing the Atlantic on the *Arbella*).¹¹ Thus, in Winthrop's words, "The eyes of all people are upon us." Though the notion of a divinely favored nation that is a beacon of democratic freedom to the world is fairly widespread, today the idea that God especially favors the United States of America is particularly embedded in at least four contemporary religious traditions, two of which are

⁸ Taylor, *Secular Age*, 524.

⁹ Taylor, 528.

¹⁰ Citing passages such as his final journal entry during his voyage back from discovering the New World (March 15, 1493): "I know respecting this voyage that God has miraculously shown his will, as may be seen from this journal, setting forth the numerous miracles that have been displayed on this voyage." Quoted in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 37. Cf. *The Libro de las profecias of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Delno C. West and August Kling (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991).

¹¹ John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, ed. Perry Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982 [1956]), 78–84.

fairly marginal and two of which are now competing for a major place in the American political mainstream.¹²

1.2.1 British Israelism

To begin with, there are fringe groups that teach American Exceptionalism, including the peculiar offshoot of the Adventist family, known as British Israelism (or Anglo-Israelism), of which there are a dozen or so small denominations. Their central claim is that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples (or racially appropriate Europeans, especially the British and Americans) are descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and also, according to some, that today’s Jews descend just from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. British Israelism probably reached its heyday in the 1920s, when the various groups claimed as many as two million members, though real figures were probably in the lower tens of thousands. Prominent followers included one of their patrons—Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone and granddaughter of Queen Victoria—and William Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Some contemporary British Israelism groups—such as the Christian Conservative Churches of America and the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Aryan Nations—now overlap with the explicitly racist and anti-Semitic Modern Identity Movement, with ties to the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups.¹³ Because these groups are so socially marginal, they seem more like bizarre cults than serious threats to the mainstream of American culture and ideology. With a resurgence of Alternative Right (“alt-right”) in recent years, however, the influence of these currents should not be totally discounted.

1.2.2 American Zionism

There is also the peculiarly secular religion of “American Zionism” advocated by maverick political commentator and Yale professor of computer science David Gelernter, who openly champions “Americanism” as the fourth great Western religion.¹⁴ Gelernter insists that his is a “biblical religion,” though he is apparently indifferent to anything genuinely transcendental or supernatural. He just

¹² Liberal Protestantism and Roman Catholicism have their own strains of American Exceptionalism, so they should not be seen as somehow exempt from these tendencies, even if they are not the focus of this paper.

¹³ See, for example, various works compiled and edited by J. Gordon Melton, particularly the appropriate entries in the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 8th ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2009).

¹⁴ David Gelernter, *Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

wants people around the globe to believe deeply in the idea of America, which he summarizes as a commitment to the creed *Liberty, Equality, Democracy*.¹⁵

While Gelernter's proposal for a "biblical religion" (*not*, he says, a "civil religion," though surely it would be that too) of "Americanism" may seem a bit strange, it summarizes currents of thought that have long been invoked by politicians. He argues that Abraham Lincoln's late writings provide the greatest expression of this "biblical religion," at once completely nonsectarian—able to embrace all believers and even secular unbelievers (in terms of traditional religions)—yet also deeply rooted in the thought and language of the King James Bible. He writes, for example, that Lincoln at his death "became not only the greatest preacher and prophet of this new American Religion, but its greatest martyr. He made Americanism holy. He became the perfect symbol of man reaching uncertainly but stubbornly and inexorably for the just, for the good, for the Lord."¹⁶

Contrary to Gelernter's summary of Lincoln's thought, Lincoln was a humbler, subtler proponent of American Exceptionalism than were either the "Radical Republicans" of his era or many of the Confederate leaders, but some of his writings do seem to invite mis-readings.

While there is no evidence of an institutional church that has arisen from Gelernter's proposal, one would be hard-pressed to find a clearer summary of popular sentiments that are in fact held by many millions of citizens across the United States. Political commentator Andrew J. Bacevich calls this doctrine of American Exceptionalism the "Third Testament" of the American Bible. "The Hebrew Bible," he states, "provides no evidence to support this proposition. Nor do the teachings of Jesus Christ and his disciples. Yet the American Bible incorporates a de facto Third Testament, which validates this assertion of American uniqueness."¹⁷

A made-in-America religion, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as "Mormons," hereafter LDS), professes to provide a *literal* Third Testament that fully supports the doctrine of American Exceptionalism—namely, the *Book of Mormon*, at least if one accepts what has now become the official interpretation of the *Book of Mormon* by many LDS leaders.

15 Gelernter; see the overview of his argument in chap. one, "I Believe in America," 1–20.

16 Gelernter, 128–29. Gelernter's fifth and longest chapter (of eight) is on Lincoln—"Abraham Lincoln, America's Last and Greatest Founding Father," 103–46, in which he extols Lincoln's role in the founding of "Americanism."

17 Andrew J. Bacevich, "America: With God on Our Side," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/16/opinion/la-oe-bacevich-american-exceptionalism-20111016>.

1.2.3 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)

Another religious tributary of American Exceptionalism now flows from the official teachings of the LDS, however ironic such a stance is for a formerly marginal group that once fled from the Midwest heartland to eke out an existence in the Western desert. Prominent LDS leaders are unequivocal in their interpretation of the *Book of Mormon* and related texts such as *The Doctrine and Covenants*, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*,¹⁸ *Discourses of Brigham Young*,¹⁹ *Journal of Discourses*,²⁰ and *The Gospel Kingdom*.²¹ Whether by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve,²² by President N. Eldon Tanner,²³ by President Ezra Taft Benson,²⁴ by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve,²⁵ or the like, in speech after speech and article after article, LDS spokespersons teach similar themes, grounding their claims in the aforementioned documents.²⁶ The Holy Spirit, they assert, inspired Columbus, the pilgrims, the Puritans, and the Founding Fathers, guiding the development of the United States of America such that its founding documents are religiously authoritative, and the divine purpose for the United States gives it an absolutely unique

18 Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* Taken from His Sermons and Writings as They Are Found in the Documentary History and Other Publications of the Church and Written or Published in the Days of the Prophet's Ministry, with Joseph Field Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938).

19 Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, with John Andreas Whitsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1925).

20 Brigham Young et al., *Journal of Discourses*, ed. George D. Watt, 26 vols. (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University, 1956 [1974, a reprint of the 1854–1886 London edition]).

21 John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1944).

22 L. Tom Perry, “God’s Hand in the Founding of America,” *New Era*, July 1976, from an address at Brigham Young University, 24 February 1976, <http://www.lds.org/new-era/1976/07/gods-hand-in-the-founding-of-america?lang=eng>.

23 N. Eldon Tanner, “If They Will But Serve the God of the Land,” *New Era*, July 1976, from a speech in April 1976, <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1976/05/if-they-will-but-serve-the-god-of-the-land?lang=eng>.

24 Ezra Taft Benson, “Our Divine Constitution,” *Ensign*, November 1987, <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1987/11/our-divine-constitution?lang=eng>.

25 Dallin H. Oaks, “The Divinely Inspired Constitution,” *Ensign*, February 1992, <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/02/the-divinely-inspired-constitution?lang=eng>.

26 With the LDS doctrine of continuing revelation, the teachings of contemporary LDS leaders carry the same authoritative force as Scripture.

place among the nations of this world. As recorded in the *Book of Mormon* and *Doctrine and Covenants*, this was all divinely prophesied ages ago.²⁷

1.2.4 Evangelical Fundamentalists

Finally, American Exceptionalism remains fairly pervasive in certain evangelical circles, particularly fundamentalist ones influenced by the orbit of Bob Jones University, by home school curricula from Abeka, and by the writings of David Barton and Peter A. Lillback, among others.²⁸ Such sentiments won Glenn Beck—an unapologetic convert to the LDS—a standing ovation when he delivered his commencement address at Liberty University on May 15, 2010. “It is God’s finger,” Beck claimed in his graduation speech, “that wrote the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*. This is God’s Country. These are God’s rights. . . . Protect them and stand with Him.”²⁹

So the LDS and evangelical fundamentalists find common ground in the religious doctrine of American Exceptionalism. LDS and evangelical communities each have major stakes in the US political process, particularly on the Republican side.

1.3 The Political Rhetoric of American Exceptionalism

A third stream is politically ambitious in ways that Machiavelli would presumably recognize and has long been the mainstay of persons seeking higher office in the United States.³⁰ This form of American Exceptionalism insists that the

27 Some key passages from *The Book of Mormon* and *The Doctrine and Covenants* that supposedly predict and support the doctrine of American Exceptionalism—often being seen as prophetic predictions of a land of promise, of the founding of the United States, of the kind of government it would have, of the Constitution, and so forth—include the following: 1 Nephi 9:6; 13:10–19, 34, 39–41; 18:23; 2 Nephi 1:5–8, 10, 11; 10:11; Mosiah 29:23–26, 34; 3 Nephi 15:21; 17:16–17; 21:4; Ether 2:10, 12; 6:4, 12; Doctrine and Covenants 98:5–8, 10; 101:77–80; 109:54; 134:1, 2, 5.

28 Cf. John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), especially his discussion in chap. 4, “History for the Faithful: The Contemporary Defenders of Christian America,” 57–76. Cf. Thomas W. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic, 2010).

29 Listen to Glenn Beck’s entire address at <https://www.mediamatters.org/glenn-beck/beck-liberty-gods-finger-wrote-declaration-independence-and-constitution-gods-country>.

30 Cf. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince: With Selections with the Discourses*, trans. and ed. Daniel Donno (New York: Bantam, 1966).

United States has some sort of “Manifest Destiny”³¹ and is “the last best hope of earth” (in the words of Abraham Lincoln from his annual message to Congress, December 1, 1862³²); therefore, it is by Providential design the greatest nation on earth, with a singular duty and purpose that must be maintained at all costs.

Here religious language seems to have been hijacked for political interests, although the sense of God seems to be some sort of vague deism as opposed to designating a specific deity such as the Hebrew Yahweh, the Christian Trinity, or the Muslim Allah. But, however religiously generic or amorphous, to dare to repudiate these claims would presumably be to commit political suicide. So, for example, Ron Paul was roundly booed in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on January 16, 2012, at a debate for Republican presidential hopefuls when he suggested the United States should conduct foreign policy with the Golden Rule in mind. The crowd’s response echoed the merciless ridicule that Jimmy Carter received for trying, however briefly and ineffectively, to make moral criteria the guiding principles of American foreign policy. Moments after the boos at Paul’s comment, Newt Gingrich won wild applause by quoting Andrew Jackson concerning what one should do with one’s enemies: “Kill them!”³³

Despite frequent attempts to clothe the position of American Exceptionalism in at least quasi-religious language (as when Ronald Reagan perennially invoked John Winthrop’s language with his own favorite phrase for America, “a shining city upon a hill,”³⁴ or when George W. Bush described America using

31 Julius W. Pratt, “The Origin of ‘Manifest Destiny,’” *American Historical Review* 32.4 (July 1927): 795–98. The phrase was presumably coined by the journalist John L. O’Sullivan in the service of those favoring the aggressive expansion of Jacksonian democracy.

32 See Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), and Galernter, *Americanism*, 103–46. Cf. Mark A. Noll, “The Perplexing Faith of Abraham Lincoln: His Manifest Trust in God, Alongside His Unconventional Piety, Confounds Us Still,” *Christianity Today*, February 15, 1985, 12–16, and Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

33 On Ron Paul, see Saul Relative, “Christian Conservative Voters Boo Ron Paul’s ‘Golden Rule,’” *Yahoo! News*, January 19, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20121102141347/http://news.yahoo.com/christian-conservative-voters-boo-ron-pauls-golden-rule-011800008.html>.

34 From Ronald Reagan’s farewell address to the nation, January 11, 1989, “I’ve spoken of the shining city all my political life.” Cf. Michael Reagan, *The City on a Hill: Fulfilling Ronald Reagan’s Vision for America*, with Jim Denney (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), and Amos Kiewe, *A Shining City on a Hill: Ronald Reagan’s Economic Rhetoric, 1951–1989*, with Davis W. Houck (New York: Praeger, 1991).

language attributed elsewhere to the divine Logos³⁵), the need to assert it is ultimately based on a political question—does one intend to be a viable candidate for high office or not?³⁶

2. Converging Streams

Both national political rhetoric and religious teachings that assert American Exceptionalism assume a unique mandate for the United States—a divinely appointed place among nations that this singularly favored nation has a duty to sustain by economic might and military force. Both give rise to earnest civil religion. Both the political and religious streams feeding American Exceptionalism are much more triumphal and prescriptive than the Tocquevillean stream and are laden with imperatives that carry aggressive implications for United States foreign policy. Hence, Romney’s uncompromising stand at the Citadel:

I am guided by one overwhelming convictional passion: This century must be an American century. In an American century, America has the strongest economy and the strongest military in the world. In an American century, America leads the free world and the free world leads the entire world.

God did not create this country to be a nation of followers. America is not destined to be one of several equally balanced global powers. America must lead the world. . . .

Let me make this very clear. As President of the United States, I will devote myself to an American century. And I will never, ever apologize for America.

Some may ask, “Why America? Why should America be any different than scores of other countries around the globe?”

I believe we are an exceptional country with a unique destiny and role in the world.³⁷

Romney went on to stress that the United States is not just exceptional in the way any great country such as Great Britain might think itself exceptional. Rather, the United States is absolutely unique because of a destiny that goes back to Abraham Lincoln, back to the Founding Fathers, and, ultimately—giv-

35 From George W. Bush’s speech on September 11, 2002, with the Statue of Liberty in the background, evoking the language of the prologue in John 1: The “ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.”

36 See Bacevich, “America.”

37 Mitt Romney, “Text of Mitt Romney’s Speech on Foreign Policy at The Citadel,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 7, 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2011/10/07/text-of-mitt-romneys-speech-on-foreign-policy-at-the-citadel>.

en Romney’s earlier premises and the history of American political rhetoric—back to God himself.³⁸ So, Romney pointed out, America has a divine duty to economic and military might in order to fulfill its destiny as the leader of the world: “If America is the undisputed leader of the world, it reduces our need to police a more chaotic world.”³⁹ And if American Exceptionalism brings special duties, it also carries special privileges. The United States of America never need apologize. The United States may act unilaterally. “But know this: while America should work with other nations, we always reserve the right to act alone to protect our vital interests.”⁴⁰

Romney said what virtually every candidate for high office in the United States feels obligated to say if she or he has any hope of being taken seriously by the American electorate. Thus, it is no accident that Robert Kagan, author of *The World America Made*, is lauded both by Romney, who named him a special advisor, and by President Barack Obama, who devoted precious time with television news anchors (just minutes before his State of the Union address) to praise Kagan’s book.⁴¹ Nor is it an accident that on May 23, 2012, President Obama gave a graduation speech at the Air Force Academy that deliberately echoed what Mitt Romney had said at the Citadel, saying such things as, “The United States has been, and will always be, the one indispensable nation in world affairs. This is one of many examples of why America is exceptional.” Obama went on to invoke repeatedly the language of an “American century,” again echoing Romney.⁴²

This blend of religion and politics gives rise to the ideology of American Exceptionalism, the doctrine of a divine purpose for the United States in the world

38 This sort of genealogical claim seems to be committing the genetic fallacy.

39 Romney, “Text of Mitt Romney’s Speech.”

40 Romney, “Text of Mitt Romney’s Speech.” As Cristian Mihut noted when reading an earlier draft of this paper, “Suppose America has a divine mandate in virtue of its genealogy. One would expect next that the content of the mandate for this nation would also be filled out by biblical prescriptions. For instance, being first in the Kingdom of God entails *service, longsuffering, humility, patience, and consistent love*. What is striking in Romney’s address is that the content he gives to the ‘divine’ mandate is *entirely* bathed in the language of self-interested protectionism and self-promotion. In other words, Romney draws on a divine genealogy to justify a secular, egotistical primitivism.”

41 See Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Knopf, 2012). Cf. Michael Crowley, “Hey, What’s the Big Idea? How Obama Is Profiting from a Romney Adviser’s Theory about American Power,” *Time*, February 13, 2012, 16.

42 See David Nakamura, “Obama Touts American Exceptionalism, End of Wars in Air Force Graduation Speech,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-touts-american-exceptionalism-end-of-wars-in-air-force-graduation-speech/2012/05/23/gJQANN2zkU_story.html, as well as the transcript of the speech itself, readily available online.

that makes her superior to all other nations and puts her behavior beyond the rules that govern other nations. For example, the United States may legitimately build and maintain a giant arsenal of nuclear weapons—one sufficient to destroy the globe several times over—but a politically, morally, and religiously suspect nation such as Iran must not be allowed to develop a single nuclear weapon. Nuclear weapons are a force for good when placed at the disposal of America’s God-ordained military but a source of destabilizing terror in the hands of less favored nations. Or again, the United States declares a war on drugs even as it exports tons of subsidized tobacco products to some of those same countries where it intervenes militarily because of drug trafficking. Examples could be readily multiplied. Some of the bitterest inequities are economic.⁴³

Richard T. Hughes suggests that what we are here calling American Exceptionalism may be a complex tangle of six or more intertwining American myths that sometimes support and sometimes conflict with each other:

1. We are a chosen nation. We are the New Israel, or at least God’s second favorite child.
2. We are nature’s nature. Democracy and free enterprise are grounded in the natural order of things.
3. We are a Christian nation, with American ideals rooted in bedrock Christian values.
4. We are a millennial nation and will usher in a Golden Age for all mankind.
5. We are an innocent nation. Other nations may have blood on their hands, but our pure motives and altruistic intentions mean that we remain unsoiled when we engage in conflicts.
6. We are a nation where whites reign supreme. White supremacy undergirds the first five myths in ways that may not seem obvious to whites but that

⁴³ For films that document such atrocities, see, for example, *Life and Debt*, directed by Stephanie Black, with a script adapted from the award-winning essay by Jamaica Kincaid, “A Small Place” (distributed by New Yorker Films, 2001); *Don’t Eat Today, or Tomorrow*, directed by Rob Hof (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 1985); *Crude: The Real Price of Oil*, directed by Joe Berlinger (Red Envelope Entertainment/Entendre Films, with Radical Media and Third Eye Films, 2009). Cf. John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004); Edward Seaga, *My Life and Leadership, vol. 1: Clash of Ideologies, 1930–1980* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2009); Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prekert, “Mentoring Marginal Men in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica: Nascent Hoop Dreams and Nagging Regrets,” *Anabaptist Witness* 3, no. 1 (April 2016): 87–103; Bryan Walsh, “Rain Forest for Ransom: Ecuador’s Demand: Pay Us or We’ll Drill for Oil in the Amazon,” *Time*, February 6, 2012, 36–39; Moritz Thomsen, *The Farm on the River of Emeralds*, Vintage ed. (New York: Vintage, 1989); Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennette, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

resonate deeply with many Native Americans, persons of African descent, Latinos, Asians, and other minorities.⁴⁴

Some of these points are echoed in a more recent monograph by Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry—who underscore the depth and breadth of these beliefs and their impact upon contemporary politics—as well as in earlier studies by John Fea.⁴⁵

Such sentiments inevitably work their way on down to evangelical students at the school where we teach—students who would presumably otherwise be horrified to be identified with cultish “Mormons,” or sometimes even with fundamentalists. We see these sentiments every semester in the opinion papers we grade for various courses, and we hear them in class discussions. Here, for instance, is a frustrated comment from a middle-aged student, who has had an admirable, long-term interest in Christian mission: “I wish we could erect a wall ten feet high around the United States and live in safe isolation, but unfortunately we have to go out and police the world.”⁴⁶

There is such a bundle of hidden assumptions in this statement that it would take some time to sort them all out. Among them, presumably, are (1) that the United States would be better off without further contact with foreigners, and that the United States especially needs to stem the flood of illegal aliens who are surging across the border; (2) that the United States could, in fact, prosper without the tidal wave of material goods, services, and personnel it imports from around the world; and (3) that the United States has a particular moral duty to “police the world,” to intervene in other nations’ social, political, economic, and military affairs as it sees fit and for those nations’ own good, as well as to bring its own national righteousness to them and spread the gospel of American democracy around the globe.

Or consider a response to the hypothetical question, “Is there something so important that it would be worth taking up arms for and killing to defend?”⁴⁷ Here is a student’s reply:

⁴⁴ Richard T. Hughes, “American Myths in Eclipse,” *Reflections: Yale Divinity School* (Fall 2016): 14–16; cf. Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories That Give Us Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

⁴⁵ Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). Cf. John Fea, *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

⁴⁶ From a student in a fall 2011 social studies course titled “Regional Geography: Latin America,” Bethel College (now University), Mishawaka, Indiana.

⁴⁷ Question posed to students in an “Introduction to Philosophy” course, spring 2012, Bethel College (now University), Mishawaka, Indiana.

My guns . . . if someone came to take my guns, I would be willing to kill to defend them. . . . I mean, we have a right to bear arms. It's part of our *Constitution*. . . . And since we are a Christian country, our documents are divinely inspired, so we have a duty to defend our rights. . . .

But I am a Youth Ministry major, and I am not sure what the Apostle Paul would say.⁴⁸

Again, there are a host of issues to be unpacked here, but the one fascinating issue is the conviction that US founding documents were divinely inspired, parallel to Scripture itself—although, on second thought, that did not seem to sound quite right to the student. What is astonishing is the degree to which evangelical students committed to Christian mission and ministry have absorbed and internalized teachings that accord so well with the doctrine of American Exceptionalism. This is so even though their immediate source is probably a sincere, generic, somewhat confused, unreflective, religiously infused patriotism, or perhaps publications in circulation among evangelical fundamentalists enamored by the notion of a “Christian America”⁴⁹ rather than the LDS, unless they have been listening to Glenn Beck.

Nor are such sentiments limited to naïve undergraduates. The first student's sentiments about building a wall, a foreshadowing of a major plank in Donald Trump's political agenda, seem rather similar to those of evangelical theologian Wayne Grudem, who also seems to think America needs to police the world. Grudem's discussions of the issues surrounding illegal immigration to the United States from Central America never move to the level of fundamental causes. He never considers the possible role of US military and economic forces in upholding fundamentally unjust social structures over the past century or so, nor if those who sow the wind ever reap the whirlwind.⁵⁰ Consider further these quotations from Grudem's political magnum opus, *Politics according to the Bible*:

This means that *as a nation* the United States has formally declared from the beginning that God (“the Creator”) has granted to every individual on earth

48 In this instance, ellipses indicate oral pauses, not verbal omissions.

49 Again, see John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 56–57, as well as Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God*, and Fea, *Believe Me*.

50 See Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 387–435, 470–83, and 580–84. A poem such as “La United Fruit Company” by Pablo Neruda offers a radically different slant on the sources of military, political, and economic pressures that drive people to migrate. Or see the fine analysis of biblical teachings by M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

certain basic rights, including both “life” and “liberty.” This implies that it is in our best interest and also *consistent with our foundational convictions as a nation* to promote the protection of life and human freedom in various nations around the world.⁵¹

It is wise to realize that *superior military weaponry* in the hands of the nation that protects freedom for itself and other countries *is a good thing for the world*, not a harmful one. The existence of superior military power in the hands of a peace-loving, freedom-supporting nation brings great benefits to the world.

Genuine peace in the world comes through the strength of the United States and other democratic, peace-loving nations. By contrast, US military weakness would simply invite war and provoke multiple attempts at conquest by aggressive nations led by evil rulers.⁵²

The problem is that Grudem implicitly labels governments “good” and “bad,” with the curious result that the United States is almost inevitably vindicated in her foreign policies, while rivals such as China are not. So China is wrong to make its presence felt so strongly in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific and should be restrained from doing so,⁵³ while the United States presence abroad is inevitably benign and beneficial.⁵⁴ As Bacevich comments elsewhere about the underlying premises of American Exceptionalism: “So, whereas a single Chinese aircraft carrier poses a looming danger, a dozen American aircraft carriers make the U.S. Navy a global force for good. A brief Russian incursion into Georgia threatens peace; protracted wars resulting from the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan advance it.”⁵⁵

There is no reflection by Grudem on whether the United States may have in fact provoked many of the wars which she has fought, nor that she may well have participated in still other wars unnecessarily. The Vietnam War, for example, is listed by Grudem in the roll call of wars that supposedly gave us our freedoms, even though a leading architect of that war subsequently raised fundamental

51 Grudem, *Politics*, 398.

52 Grudem, *Politics*, 399–400.

53 Grudem, *Politics*, 395–96. This is not intended as a brief for China, still less for its cruel Communist government. But not all that China does abroad is an unmitigated evil, just as not all US policies are an unadulterated good.

54 Cf. the very different perspectives presented by the films such as *School of the Americas*, *School of Assassins*, written and directed by Robert Richter, narrated by Susan Saradon (Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll World Productions, 1994); *Hidden in Plain Sight*, written and directed by John Smihula, narrated by Martin Sheen ([San Francisco]: Raven’s Call Production, 2003).

55 Bacevich, “America.”

questions about the purpose and conduct of that disastrous engagement.⁵⁶ There is also no recognition of the ways our “peace-loving” nation has almost continually engaged in armed conflicts,⁵⁷ often deliberately choosing war over other options, beginning with the War of Independence (rather than pursuing the Galloway plan⁵⁸), nor how unwelcome US troops and US military interventions are in many countries, nor how their presence might affect missionary efforts by Christians who happen to be US citizens.⁵⁹

Grudem writes with almost no sense of irony about the goodness of the United States in relation to other countries. There is no serious discussion of how “democratic” nations such as Great Britain or the United States successively became unrivaled global empires, other than the implicit *carte blanche* of divine Providence.⁶⁰ There is virtually no consideration of the great evils perpetrated upon indigenous peoples in the Americas,⁶¹ of the slave trade (except to say that the Civil War was necessary,⁶² itself a debatable proposition given that extensive slave trades were ended elsewhere without such wars), of repeated annexation

⁵⁶ Grudem, *Politics*, 74–75. Cf. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, directed by Errol Morris, with an original score by Philip Glass, starring Robert S. McNamara (New York: Sony Pictures Classics, 2003).

⁵⁷ See the *Wikipedia* article, “Timeline of United States Military Operations,” which lists an almost continuous stream of military operations since 1775, even if one excludes CIA-based operations or conflicts where we merely gave aid, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_United_States_military_operations. See also the recent cover story by Andrew J. Bacevich that ties our penchant for nonstop wars to American Exceptionalism, “The Old Normal: Why We Can’t Beat Our Addiction to War,” *Harper’s*, March 2020, 25–32.

⁵⁸ James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 35–51.

⁵⁹ See Timothy Paul Erdel, “The Great Commission and God’s Righteous Kingdom,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 16 (2008): 93–115; Timothy Paul Erdel, “Holiness among the Mennonites,” *Reflections* 10.1–2 (Spring & Fall 2008): 5–42; Timothy Paul Erdel, “Is ‘Just War’ Still an Oxymoron?” *Criswell Theological Review*, n.s., 4.2 (Spring 2007): 53–76; and Timothy Paul Erdel, “Pacifism and Non-violent Resistance,” in *The History of Evil in the Early Twentieth Century: 1900–1950*, ed. Victoria S. Harrison, vol. 5, *The History of Evil*, eds. Chad V. Meister and Charles Taliaferro, 6 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 163–83.

⁶⁰ Cf. Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

⁶¹ Cf., e.g., a single case study of a Native American people (the Crow) who *fully cooperated* with the US government but still suffered irrevocable loss, by philosopher Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁶² Grudem, *Politics*, 42–43.

of foreign territories, of assassinations of foreign leaders, or of other callously self-interested interventions in other nations.⁶³ There is no acknowledgment of how our sense of divine destiny intertwined with a ruthless, if quasi-religious, quest for oil from around the globe.⁶⁴ If Hitler’s attempted annihilation of the Jews serves to condemn Nazi Germany, which it surely does, then what is one to say of sixty million or more innocent victims since the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions on January 22, 1973? Grudem himself denounces those abortions and suggests that our nation stands under God’s judgment because of them.⁶⁵ But this does not seem to dampen his general preference for the United States vis-à-vis other nations.⁶⁶

When Grudem endorsed Mitt Romney in 2007, his statement enthusiastically supported his chosen candidate’s “conservative political values,”⁶⁷ presumably the very sort of values that led to Romney’s speech at the Citadel. Romney, like Ronald Reagan before him,⁶⁸ may have had a checkered history when it comes to the question of abortion, but neither he nor Reagan ever waived in their “America first” approaches to foreign policy and the military. Likewise, and perhaps even more controversially, Grudem has been supportive of Donald Trump and his agenda for similar reasons.⁶⁹

63 Cf., e.g., Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times, 2006).

64 See Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America* (New York: Basic, 2019).

65 Grudem, *Politics*, 177–78. This is just one of various conundrums one may find in Grudem. To take another example, Grudem has no problem saying that “raping is always immoral,” even amid the extremities of warfare (429). We agree. But we wonder why systematically killing and lying to or occasionally torturing one’s enemies are sanctioned actions. By what criteria are some “wrongs” (e.g., violations of the Ten Commandments) permitted while others are absolutely prohibited no matter the circumstances?

66 Though Grudem clearly and correctly says that to claim “the United States is always right” is wrong (*Politics*, 467), the general tenor of his analyses favors the United States again and again.

67 Grudem, *Politics*, 67–68.

68 On June 14, 1967, while governor of California, Ronald Reagan signed into law a rather permissive stance on abortion, viz., the “Therapeutic Abortion Act,” so that legal abortions jumped from just over 500 to over 100,000 a year in the state. Later, however, he apparently changed his mind and penned a remarkable essay against abortion, “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation,” which first appeared in the Spring 1983 issue of *Human Life Review* and later was expanded into a small book.

69 Cf. the online commentary about Grudem and his support for Trump in a blog essay by Michael F. Bird, “Trump, Grudem and Hermeneutics,” *Evangelion: A Post-Post-Modern Blog on Scripture, Faith and Following Jesus*, at *Patheos*, December 30, 2019,

3. When Does Political Ideology Become Idolatry?

Hebrew Scriptures are filled with examples of nations and their leaders who overtly worshipped false gods (whether Ashtaroah, Baal, Chemosh, Moloch, or the many gods of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt), who tried to thwart the expressed will of the living God of Israel (such as when Pharaoh would not let the people of Israel go), or who were filled with pride at their own accomplishments (remember Nebuchadnezzar), thereby failing to recognize and worship the one true God of the universe. The Prophets stress the sovereignty of the living God in the face of human idolatry.⁷⁰

It may be easy to point fingers at foreign peoples who have proudly championed their own ethnic superiority and perpetrated its horrific counterpart—the elimination of “inferior” peoples (“ethnic cleansing”). Clearly things went radically wrong in Burundi (1972) and then Rwanda (1994) when tribalism (conflicts between the Hutus and Tutsis) led to mass murders and attempted genocides, those unspeakable tragedies unfolding in countries where the majority of inhabitants claimed to be Christians. Nazi Germany is a prime example of nationalist and racial ideologies gone madly awry in another so-called Christian country. One of the sadder side-stories from World War II concerns the number of Mennonites in Europe and South America who abandoned their traditional pacifism and hermeneutical suspicion of human governments to support the Nazi cause, some of whom participated directly in the Holocaust itself.⁷¹ Is it not troubling that the doctrine of *Apartheid* in South Africa emerged as a peculiar variation of sincere Calvinism?

Here is a question for American evangelicals. How far removed is an overbearing *national* pride and sense of divinely supported superiority from that of a *racial* or *ethnic* one? If many American evangelicals are barely coming to grips with a long legacy of racial discrimination (or worse),⁷² far fewer seem to have

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/euangelion/2019/12/trump-grudem-and-hermeneutics/>.

⁷⁰ Cf. R. T. France, *The Living God: A Personal Look at What the Bible Says about God* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1970).

⁷¹ See John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi? Attitudes among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 1999); Gerhard Rempel, “Mennonites and the Holocaust: From Collaboration to Perpetuation,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84 (October 2010): 507–49 (cf. *The Mennonite*, March 2012, 17–22). Cf. Sally Elizabeth Erdel and Timothy Paul Erdel, “Nazi Nurses, Mennonite Nurses: Teaching Professional Nursing Values with Case Studies from World War II,” paper presented at the 2010 Baylor Symposium on Faith & Culture, Institute for Faith & Learning, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, October 28, 2010, printout (photocopied).

⁷² See the autobiographical plaint by William E. Pannell, *My Friend, the Enemy* (Waco, TX: Word, 1968); see also Columbus Salley and Ronald John Behm, *What Col-*

any awareness of the history of US military aggression and economic exploitation overseas, nor how those actions might have become intertwined with the evangelical missionary enterprise.

The great English literary critic Samuel Johnson warned long ago in his sermons on pride that there is a direct link between pride and oppression on both the personal and national levels.⁷³ He was also shrewd enough to recognize and warn against the calamitous effects of military conquest, colonial exploitation, and economic oppression on Christian missionary outreach with the gospel:⁷⁴ “Interest and pride harden the heart, and it is vain to dispute against avarice and power.”⁷⁵

What do we say when the temptation is not so much to deny God overtly as it is to claim God as a kind of national mascot who sanctions dubious political policies, especially military aggression in the name of national defense? The United States military may not engrave the words *Gott mit uns* (God with us) on belt buckles such as Prussian soldiers wore in World War I, but a significant portion of US currency bearing the words “In God We Trust” goes to fund military operations at home and abroad. Furthermore, what does it mean if much of that wealth is generated by economic exploitation of weaker powers?

4. Some Missiological Reflections

God called Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldees in order to make him a source of blessing to all nations. This is but one of many places in the Bible, from Creation to Revelation, where God shows his concern for all nations in blessing (and judgment). Book after book in the Hebrew Scriptures underscores this theme, from Ruth to Isaiah to Jonah. The prophet Isaiah, for example, is called

or Is Your God? Black Consciousness & the Christian Faith, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981). Cf. also Robert Coles, “The Inexplicable Prayers of Ruby Bridges,” *Christianity Today*, August 9, 1985, 17–20.

⁷³ Samuel Johnson, *Sermons*, edited by Jean H. Hagstrum and James Gray, the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vol. 14 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); see especially his sermon 6, 65–73. See also Donald Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990).

⁷⁴ Johnson’s most virulent attacks upon European (including English) colonial conquest and economic exploitation and their insidious effects on Christian missionary efforts appear in his “Introduction” to *The World Displayed: Or, A Curious Collection of Voyages and Travels, Selected from the Writers of All Nations . . .*, compiled by Christopher Smart et al., vol. 1[of 20] (London: Printed for J. Newbury, at the Bible and Sun, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1759), 1–23. Cf. *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé, written by Robert Bolt (Burbank, CA, and New York: Warner Bros. Pictures, Goldcrest Films International, Kingsmere Productions, 1986).

⁷⁵ Johnson, “Introduction,” *The World Displayed*, 10.

upon to live *naked* for *three years* as part of an extended warning to Egypt and Cush (see Is 18–20). The Lord’s concern for the enemies of Israel is about as far removed as one could imagine from attitudes that would support nationalism, ethnocentrism, pride, or religious triumphalism. There are myriad biblical passages that underscore God’s gracious concern for *all* peoples, for *all* nations.

The history of the modern Christian mission is haunted by the intertwining effects of Western military conquest, colonial empire, and economic exploitation.⁷⁶ This is especially evident whenever Americans listen to their sisters and brothers in the majority world.⁷⁷ It would be wonderful if, in the wake of insights from such anthropologists as Eugene A. Nida and Paul G. Hiebert, American evangelical missionaries no longer went abroad with attitudes so obviously marked by ethnocentrism, by national pride, or by cultural imperialism.

When will we finally examine our Americanism in light of the Kingdom of God? When will we finally recognize that pride, whether personal or national, is the antithesis of our Lord and Savior’s own mission (Jn 13, Phil 2:5–11)? Evangelicals need to firmly repudiate the idolatrous religion of Americanism if their missionary outreach is to be in any sense biblical. “The Great Sin,” as C. S. Lewis rightly called pride in chapter eight of *Mere Christianity*, is indeed, in his memorable phrase, “the complete anti-God state of mind.” Pride, whether personal or national, should have no more place in Christian mission than it should in any other aspect of Christian faith and life. We fear that the temptation American Exceptionalism presents to many evangelicals requires us to remind them of basic biblical truths that should be self-evident but apparently are not always so.

76 Cf. Timothy Paul Erdel, review of *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*, by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Faith and Philosophy* 28.4 (October 2011): 483–486.

77 To take a recent example, see F. Lionel Young III, “A ‘New Breed of Missionaries’: Assessing Attitudes toward Western Missions at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 36.2 (April 2012): 90–94. Or again, see the new monograph by David R. Swartz, who underscores how frequently the popular history of US missionary activities almost completely discounts the real roles, achievements, viewpoints, and convictions of persons from the majority world, in *Facing West: How American Evangelicals in an Age of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).