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# INTRODUCTION

How shall we dare to speak of distance, near or far,
To Him who swung the spheres to roll in rhythmic grace . . .
His thoughts are not as ours,—our narrow thoughts of space.
And, looking down from heaven, "Home" and "Foreign" are one.

—Mrs. M'Vean-Adams, Methodist laywoman,
Mound City, Kansas, 1892

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.

—Psalm 24

The United States looms large in studies of globalization. Scholars have coined terms like "McWorld" or "Fundamentalist Americanism" to describe its influence, including the spread of its Christianity.[1] America—its promise and its problems—has loomed so large, in fact, that comparatively few studies have closely examined how U.S. Christians themselves make and imagine global forms. And those that do generally converge around people who travel—missionaries, statesmen, pastors, migrants, or (in my own earlier work) tourists and pilgrims.[2] Yet here is the thing: most Americans do not fall into those categories, at least not most of the time. Statistically speaking, about 40% of U.S. people have a passport and perhaps two-thirds have left the country at some point, but this travel is irregular and mainly within North America, the Caribbean, and Western Europe.[3] So if we want to know something about how globalization works *within* U.S. Christianity, we are left with a question: how do Christians imagine and experience the world in conditions of relative immobility?

This book responds by tracing how "Christian globalism" is made. The term is shorthand for a cluster of ideas, cultural forms, structures of feeling, and social connections that at a very basic level emerge from the understanding that the Christian God encompasses all human beings as their creator and eventual judge. All forms of globalism, Christian or otherwise, take shape within specific societal frameworks and institutional structures.[4] With that in mind, I focus on one site in particular: child sponsorship programs in the United States. This fund-raising model, which began in Protestant missions two centuries ago and then spread to NGOs, is familiar in North America and Europe. It requests a defined yearly or monthly amount to aid a foreign child, with some promise of communication between donors and recipients. Today, most sponsorships cost about $40 a month, and an estimated 9 million children are supported worldwide.

Sponsorship is a good vantage point from which to address the "immobile global" since less than 1% of U.S. sponsors actually meet the child they support.[5] It nurtures a kind of globalism that happens here and there, at odd times and at home. At the same time, sponsors participate in an enterprise that is arguably the most profitable private Christian fund-raising tool today, circulating billions of dollars and millions of letters and photos around the globe every year. It expresses and champions some of Christianity's "biggest world-making dreams and schemes."[6] This world-making—its hopes and limitations—is the subject of my study.

* * *

When U.S. Christians engage globally, they aspire to universalism.[7] This vision understands all people as created by a single God who became immanent in the form of Jesus, an anointed teacher whose death and resurrection has worldwide relevance. It usually implies a Christian teleology, although not always; the most liberal of those with whom I worked described a "Force" that unites human beings and spoke only vaguely of a divine plan for the world. Regardless, at root it insists there is some sort of oneness—or potential oneness—in the human condition. Christian aspirations in this regard are not unique: Muslims may interpret *tawhid* as a form of unity that extends from Allah to all human life; Hindu nationalists promote *sanatana dharma* as a universal truth, while elites may view *Brahman* as all-encompassing reality. Oneness ideologies buoy many other endeavors from humanitarianism to Communism, international law to advertising to ecological activism.[8] Such "totality concepts" have no indexical relation to what they signify. In other words, one cannot unambiguously point to Christian globalism or display it, and this plasticity is highly effective since "abstraction and generality can capture and digest . . . unanticipated ideas and actions."[9] However, abstraction also poses a major challenge to the practical reality of human lives.

This book tracks globalism in living rooms, church lobbies, and shopping malls. It argues that Christians come to understand themselves as global people with a global God by cultivating particular forms of discourse, aesthetics, sensations, and embodied exercises. In terms of sponsorship, one thinks immediately of photography (the sad-eyed orphan) and its associated slogans ("For just pennies a day, *you* can save her!"). I do not ignore these well-studied media, but I contextualize them within a much broader spectrum of what I call participatory techniques. These multisensory activities include how nineteenth-century Americans impersonated "heathen" by wearing their clothes and imitating their speech. Or how, in the twentieth century, they ate "orphan fare" and endured "30-hour famines" to viscerally feel a foreign child's deprivation. Today U.S. Christians experience displays of global poverty in church parking lots. And throughout, sponsors have engaged in the everyday labor of penning letters to a child, pinning up his photos, and praying on his behalf. In short, "being global" is an ongoing and flexible process that reaffirms physical and spiritual connections. In Christian terms, it is "to *manifest* love toward [others] as being one with us in the bonds of Christ."[10] Not surprisingly, to feel enmeshed in this totality is a demanding task with fleeting results. Globalism's techniques must be honed and repeated.

A second point follows from this one. In order to make globalism a visceral (if momentary) reality, Christians mobilize a dialogical relationship between *immensity* and *particularity*. In this regard, I am inspired by the classic theme in studies of globalization that asks how global and local scales interact.[11] However, I want to rethink the general assumption that immensity is a negative quality when it comes to local engagement with global issues: the avalanche of numbers related to global "poverty, profit, and predation" writes anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in a typical assessment, "threaten to kill all street-level optimism about life and the world."[12] My contention is that sensations related to immensity are in fact productive and even necessary for Christians to make real God's global reach. As a result, many U.S. Christians try to reproduce them, for example through the use of world maps, aggregated statistics, and hymns about universal salvation. As I use it, "immensity" also includes what might be thought of as a middle-global scale, such as frameworks for imagining relations between nations or photos that crowd hundreds of people into one frame. All of these forms are meant to evoke awe—a "pleasurable swept-up-ness"[13] or even an awe-ful dread—when one is confronted with the immensity of God's creation. The goal is to reify God's presence and power.

If one is a Christian intent on co-laboring with God, these techniques and attitudes exist together with those that operate on a human scale, which promise intimate connections across vast distances. One might engage in mutual prayers with an individual overseas or meditate on the photo of a single child in need. Through such actions, sponsorship purports to change the inner being—the soul in Christian terms—for donors and the children they support. As I elaborate below, bodies are fundamental in this process. The type of globalism under study promises to shatter differences by emphasizing what are assumed to be common human experiences, such as hunger, sadness, or hope, along with common human aspirations, such as education and financial security. While this idea could describe humanitarianism writ large, in this case it arises from the particular assumption that all humans are the product of a single divine creative act, which translates into the further assumption that all bodies share basic emotional cues and somatic reflexes.[14] It leads U.S. Christians to cultivate global intimacy by engaging in embodied facsimiles of other people's experiences. Thus, immensity and particularity are both affective and often bodily forms of globalism, but the former lifts one up and outside humanness while the latter seems to deepen it to connect with people far away.

The globalism I study has specific attributes born of Christianity's social location in the United States and the country's place in the world. Throughout the book, I identify four major tendencies in this respect. The first tracks how "love" came to offer U.S. people (and especially white middle-class women) conceptual space to frame their intimate actions and emotions as moving a global God to make impacts elsewhere. The second concerns how U.S. Christians came to trust their bodies as sites of deep knowledge about God and about others, as noted briefly above. The third explores the hope that unity can arise out of human diversity. I argue that this hope is, in fact, dependent on the continued existence of historically specific assumptions about binaries between Christian/other, white/black, and rich/poor. The people I discuss in this book do not think such divisions are a good thing, but they also generally assume they are natural to humanity in its earthly state. As a result, when global projects do succeed in creating deeply felt empathy and unity, it can be credited as evidence of a higher power. Fourth, and last, I examine a broad tendency that encompasses love, bodies, and unity-in-diversity within its scope: globalism's inseparability from vexing questions about power and inequality. While the country's relative global power has changed over sponsorship's two centuries, U.S. Christians have always viewed themselves as givers and not recipients of global charity. This assumption is characteristic of Western missions and humanitarianism, but it is especially resonant in a country built on the mythos that anyone can, and should, prosper economically. It is further entangled within sponsorship's promise that, to some degree at least, global unity can be achieved through the loving actions of individual givers.

Sponsorship is a call for human action, and more specifically a call for action by those who have been "blessed" by resources—that is, U.S. sponsors themselves. It therefore widens Americans' global perspective, while also continually re-centering them as the axis through which God's resources flow.

As a result, sponsors often grapple with how material inequality troubles the Christian imperative to view the world as a communion of equally valued "brothers and sisters." Why does God's "abundance" seem to favor certain places over others? What role do Americans have in circulating God's "love" to elsewheres near and far? As these kinds of questions show, being global isn't easy. Globalization, and its variant "global Christianity," have never flowed unencumbered across the world, and (even) U.S. Christians—though "Western," American, and often evangelically minded—do not effortlessly occupy global subjectivities. They make and remake their commitments to a global God.

* * *

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) started sponsorship plans in Bombay and Ceylon in 1816, shortly after sending the first North American missionaries abroad. These initial programs, and the others I define as sponsorship, have a few distinguishing characteristics: they raise funds by *systematic giving* (a defined amount donated on a regular schedule), they seek to produce *sustained commitment* over an extended period, they benefit *individual children* who are not relations or neighbors, and they provide *regular news* about the child during the period of support. At no point was sponsorship viewed as a "free gift" in the anthropological sense of an unrequited act of charity. It has always been understood as a method to cement relational ties—hence the use of the terms "protégé," "adoption," or "godparenting" in its earlier iterations. In the nineteenth century, this relation was usually between a child and a small group of donors. Since World War I, it has generally been conceived as a one-to-one (1:1) relation with a single donor or donor family. In either case, sponsorship's success owes a lot to the type of fund-raising it popularized: small, regular payments over a sustained period of time. This system appealed to Americans and Europeans on the inside margins of economic power—women, children, and the petty bourgeois. It declared that all givers were of equal value; through penny donations, millions of people came to see themselves as charitable givers on a global scale.

Sponsorship developed through transatlantic dialogue. The ABCFM picked up the idea from models in German-Danish missions supported by English churches. When nascent NGOs started permanent plans after World War I, it was Europeans who first introduced them to the United States.[15] Today, of the approximately 200 substantial child sponsorship organizations in the world, all are based in Western Europe and North America. Anglo-Protestant places provide an especially favorable ecology for their spread: 61 organizations are based in the United States and 43 in the UK.[16] Throughout its history, sponsorship has widened the "external footprint" of these nations by sustaining networks of people, technologies, and techniques alongside the formal institutions of industry, government, military, and diplomacy.[17] It is no accident that U.S. sponsorship plans began in India (where British imperialism opened the way for missionary presence), then moved to France and Belgium (where U.S. troops fought a war), and later flourished in Korea (where they fought another one).

For more than a century after 1816, Protestant missionary societies and then wartime relief organizations started such plans to raise funds quickly and curtailed them once they became too onerous to maintain. But the experience of war inspired Save the Children, an English organization founded in 1919, to successfully transition sponsorship into a permanent fund-raising tool, ushering the way for a new phase in its history. China's Children Fund, later renamed Christian Children's Fund (CCF), was the first major permanent organization founded in North America. It began in 1938 through a partnership between a Southern Baptist missionary in China and Presbyterian pastor J. Calvitt Clarke in Virginia, who knew sponsorship well from his work for Near East Relief in the early 1920s and Save the Children Fund (USA) in the early 1930s.[18] In the 1940s, Clarke expanded his operations considerably—and attracted Christian competitors. Evangelical pastor Bob Pierce founded World Vision (WV) in 1950 and conservative Baptist pastor Everett Swanson started what became Compassion International in 1952. Far outstripping previous sponsorship plans, by 1960 CCF supported 36,000 children and World Vision had 21,000; by 1964, Compassion had another 22,000 in its care.[19]

These organizations scaled up quickly through partnerships with established missionary-run orphanages. Initially based in Asia, until the 1970s their approach to global coverage was largely ad hoc, depending on which missionaries accepted their offers of partnership and which governments allowed their presence. In this formative period, CCF, WV, and Compassion competed for charity dollars and sometimes bickered over who supported which missionary, but they were also closely connected. They hired (or poached) each other's personnel and ran joint training sessions. Pierce showed Swanson around Korea before the latter began operations; CCF and WV learned from each other as they transitioned to computers in the mid-1960s.[20] A few years later, first WV and then Compassion initiated meetings with CCF and Save the Children to discuss best practices. In the mid-1970s, they collaborated on a fund-raising code of ethics.[21] They also developed institutional structures that remain the norm today. Each organization has a U.S.-based headquarters, support offices in other donor countries (for example, Germany or Canada), national offices in recipient countries or regions, and local projects that interface directly with children and their families (see appendix B).

As sponsorship expanded in the 1970s, it attracted the attention of U.S. Catholics. Sponsorship had not been completely absent in Catholic circles. In 1866, for example, the Spiritans promoted it to secure European support for slave children in Zanzibar. In 1868, the Archbishop of Algiers used it to appeal to French donors after a famine left hundreds of orphans in his care.[22] Yet sponsorship was never widespread, perhaps because Catholic missionary orders did not compete on the same voluntary basis as Protestants and felt less need for popular, cross-denominational programs. Whatever the case, individual U.S. Catholics did sign on. At least some contributed to Protestant plans in the late nineteenth century and many more did so by the 1960s and 1970s; the Franciscans promoted Compassion, female religious joined World Vision's intercessory prayer team, parish schools incorporated WV activities for Lent, and CCF advertised in Catholic magazines.[23] By 1980, almost 20% of World Vision's U.S. donors were Roman Catholics.[24]

Bob Hentzen and Jerry Tolle, former missionary priests in Latin America who had left their orders and returned to Kansas City in the 1970s, encountered sponsorship as it expanded on two fronts. At the time, World Vision and Compassion were moving into Latin America and Hentzen and Tolle realized that U.S. Catholics who wanted to help Catholic-majority countries often unwittingly funded evangelical outreach.[25] Closer to home, they encountered sponsorship in their work for the Holy Land Christian Mission (today Children International), a nonprofit in Kansas City that piloted the model in Latin America in 1980. The following year, Hentzen and Tolle struck out on their own and created the Christian Foundation for Children, which is now called Unbound. As liberals who were strongly influenced by Catholic social teachings, Hentzen and Tolle built an organization that differed in ethos from its Protestant and non-religious counterparts, while reiterating the same basic fund-raising plan; in fact, they toured Compassion's headquarters to establish an initial framework.[26] Following the Protestant model, Unbound also began by supporting established (Catholic) missionaries and expanded its networks through personal connections. By 1998, it supported more than 135,000 children, about 90% of whom were in Latin America and the Philippines.[27]

The Protestant organizations I studied underwent a major shift in the late 1970s, which was echoed at Unbound in the late 1990s. They abandoned the system of transferring direct payments to established missionary orphanages and schools in favor of programs that supported children's families. They created their own legal entities to administer these programs, usually called project or field offices, which were generally staffed by middle-class "national" Christians who liaised between local workers and the U.S.-based headquarters. For CCF and WV, this system offered more control over programming and the flexibility to support local church or government programs as needed. For Unbound, it underlined its independence from institutional Roman Catholic structures, which appealed to its liberal Catholic base. For Compassion, it provided a method to strengthen local evangelical and Pentecostal churches that administered its programs, with the twin goals of serving the poor and augmenting these churches' social capital.

Today, WV and Compassion have about a million U.S. sponsors each, and CCF (now ChildFund) has 450,000. Unbound, the largest organization for the U.S. Catholic market, has close to 300,000. When I started writing this book in 2015, estimates put the number of sponsored children at about 9 million globally, with more than $3 billion in support each year.[28]

## NEW THEORIES OF GLOBAL PRACTICE

Studies of globalization began in earnest in the mid-1970s as sociologists, political scientists, and philosophers sought to understand the connections between modernization, nation-states, and capitalism. These early studies largely ignored religion or assumed it was a reactionary type of anti-modernism.[29] By the late 1990s, however, so many scholars of religion had begun to address globalization that its faddishness, wryly noted the authors of a 2001 volume, made some of their colleagues "apoplectic with ire and others giddy with excitement."[30]

A key text from this period, familiar to many anthropologists, religionists, and historians, is Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* (1996). Revising historian Benedict Anderson's famous thesis about the nation-state as an imagined community, he argued that global "scapes" had surpassed this older order to form new "imagined worlds."[31] The idea was highly productive, not least in how it stimulated critique. Four years later, in his study of globalization among Swedish charismatic Christians, anthropologist Simon Coleman argued that Appadurai's model wrongfully implied that the "globe" was imagined and accessed in equivalent ways regardless of social location. The same year, anthropologist Anna Tsing voiced a growing concern that metaphors of flows and scapes obscured the frictions that accompany globalization.[32] More recently, studies have called attention to how inequalities and power differentials not only inhibit certain people from traveling but also promote certain ideas over others, even within the framework of a supposedly global church.[33]

For my purposes, Coleman's study of Swedish charismatics is seminal in how it emphasizes the construction of global identities that result in "new ways to experience and orientate the self towards the world in physical as well as aesthetic and broadly material terms." For example, Coleman shows how congregants favored images of Jesus striding or moving. They used televisual media to project their message to the world, through which they came to experience themselves as people whose words had no bounds.[34] His observations concur with trends in non-religious spaces, too. In Karen Ho's study of Wall Street, for example, investment bankers are socialized into global subjecthood by repeating their companies' hyperbolic claims about continual expansion.[35] Like Coleman, Ho underlines the process of making globalization, rather than only tracing its effects. This book sets out to do the same, though with more sustained attention to material, sensory, and performative aspects.

In this respect, I turn to studies that take up Mauss, Bourdieu, and Foucault to explore the bodily disciplines that produce religious subjects. Saba Mahmood's work with Egyptian Muslims is well known for articulating the idea that contra Bourdieu (and to some degree Mauss), actions may be self-consciously undertaken in order to cultivate changed attitudes. This turn to self-making in studies of religion is well suited to sponsorship as a form of non-denominational, voluntary, and intentional engagement and, in many ways, I interpret the actions of U.S. sponsors along the same lines.[36] However, unlike the Muslims in Mahmood's study who practice religious habits on a daily basis, most sponsors engage in globalism sporadically, triggered by receiving a letter from the child they support or seeing something in the news.

As I began this project, my thinking was also buoyed by ecotheorist Timothy Morton's work on hyperobjects. At first, the connection may seem tenuous. Morton's interest in Christianity is minimal and my work diverges from his in a number of ways.[37] What is helpful, however, is his careful discussion of the affective quality of immensity. Writing of global warming, Morton describes hyperobjects as "viscous": they are so pervasive that we already live within them, though we only experience them in brief flashes as they seem to "phase" in and out of our spatiotemporal world. Thus, we are already "within" a changing climate, for example, but only experience it when global warming results in a sunburn or heats up a thermometer. For Morton, the sheer scale of a hyperobject disturbs our sense of being in the world; it "humiliates" humans by displacing us from the center of things. Morton associates the resulting ontological threats with feelings of weakness, lameness, and terror. At one point, though, he offers a synopsis that corresponds better with how I characterize Christian globalism: "These entities cause us to reflect on our very place on Earth and in the cosmos."[38]

Globalism may create anxieties, and even a sense of hopelessness, among U.S. Christians. But my contention is that it also creates a "quake in being," paraphrasing Morton, that makes possible the awe, euphoria, and humiliation (in a theological sense) that for Christians holds the potential to supersede the merely human scale and glimpse the massive work of God. Put differently, when U.S. Christians engage globalism, they reify what for them is a tangible manifestation of God's wholeness and power. Thus, whereas Morton focuses on how the hyperobject oppresses humans uninvited, the Christians about whom I write usually seek out such engagements. This brings us back to the work on embodiment and materiality noted above: I track techniques and modalities by which U.S. Christians render globalism usable for short periods—harnessing its "phasing," as it were.

Morton's work underscores a "knotty relationship" between immensity and intimacy. This is important because sponsors often describe what they do in terms of intimacy, rather than in the triumphalist strain of continual expansion found in Coleman's megachurch or Ho's investment banks. On this note, I return throughout the book to historians and critical theorists of U.S. culture whose work demonstrates how domestic intimacies and affective sensations are entwined in larger political processes. I also explore the trust required to invest in global projects; people must come to feel intimately engaged with, and dependent upon, faraway people—those pictured in need and those charged with disbursing one's money abroad. I am certainly not the first to raise this issue. Since Georg Simmel's pioneering sociological work a century ago, studies of capitalism have asked how people come to trust unknown networks and commit their money without seeing immediate results. The gap between the immediate and the projected yawns especially wide in global projects, with their time lags and spatial distance. Sponsors must trust that things go places and make impacts. If they are Christians, they must trust that other humans are similar enough to themselves to respond to care and ultimately advance God's project. Emotional engagements and participatory techniques are crucial because they lend specific sensory and material dimensions to these spatiotemporal projections.[39] The experiences they provoke make Christianity's global projects seem natural and effective—at least for a time.

## A GLOSS ON TERMS

Over the course of the book, I use a few terms to flesh out the discussion above. The most important ones are the following.

*Globalism.* I use this term to mean a world characterized by interconnections, as well as "how *the idea of the global* has worked to excite and inspire."[40] Globalism is not a modern phenomenon but it is intensified at different times, which social scientists often call "thinner" or "thicker" periods.[41] Globalism's rate of increase—the "thickening"—is globalization. I use globalism also to signal that this project is oriented differently from those on "Global Christianity" (or World Christianity) that track various forms of Christianity and the interactions between them.

*Absent/present.* The collapse of absence and presence through technology or travel is a classic theme in studies of globalization.[42] I bring a religious sensibility to bear on this discussion, since my use of "absent/present" refers to a variety of physically absent beings that are rendered present in some capacity through imaginative and sensory practices. Sponsored children are a potent example of living human beings who may fall into this category. It also encompasses other-than-human beings, such as the dead or the divine, which in various ways all Christians understand as sometimes present with believers despite bodily absence. Absent/present beings—human and divine—exert claims on believers as they waver between distance and proximity.[43] That wavering quality is important: globalism is not only about better communications and deeper experiences of knowing. It is equally characterized by the frustrated possibilities of what is partially grasped.

*Engaged empathy.* Global objects may call forth conflicting feelings of "overstimulation and numbness, alarm and anaesthesia."[44] U.S. sponsors most often describe anxiety, frustration, wonder, compassion, "thrills," and joy. I explore these feelings as affects and emotions. Following general scholarly use, I tend to use "affect" for broadly circulating sensibilities or moods and "emotion" for more personal feelings, bearing in mind that even the most visceral of these are richly social phenomena.[45] Globalism may be conscious or inadvertent but, as the word *engaged* suggests, the focus on sponsorship leads me to privilege the former: sponsors choose to be engaged although they cannot, of course, anticipate all the results. In brief, then, engaged empathy refers to emotional and affective attachments from afar, which in sponsorship are expected to yield sustained spiritual concern and financial giving.

*Participatory techniques.* Engaged empathy arises through visual stimuli and embodied experiences that I call "participatory techniques." The term "technique" is a nod to anthropologists, such as Mauss, who have used it to discuss the embodied *habitus* that frames subjective experiences of the world. The techniques I discuss include writing letters, taking photos, and looking at images, along with eating or walking through multisensory displays. They are legible to participants within authorized social forms and are often explicitly promoted by authoritative institutions, such as sponsorship organizations. At a fundamental level, they also raise questions about the possibility of empathy; Michel de Certeau insisted that embodied actions are opaque—one is always within one's own body, not in another's—and thus they necessarily organize a familiar here in relation to a foreign there.[46] From sponsors' perspective, the assumption that all bodies share certain fundamental qualities—feeling hunger is painful, seeing a smile makes one happy, reading encouraging words creates hope—means that participatory techniques often seem to shatter barriers and even produce a type of visceral participation in another's experience.[47] Because this engaged empathy is fleeting, participatory techniques are repeated. It is helpful to think of events of varying scales: the prolonged intensity of fasting for 30 hours differs from saying a prayer on a child's behalf. Yet both actions have engaged empathy as their goal and Christian globalism as their impetus.

*Mirroring.* I use "engagement" and "empathy" in part because of their positive connotations in the United States. The contemporary organizations I studied use "engaged" to describe their most committed sponsors. Yet the paradoxical nature of deep engagement, as critics of sponsorship and humanitarianism note, is that givers become so enmeshed that they fail to distinguish self from other.[48] This idea is amplified through Christian globalism's ontological substructure, which assumes that bringing people into contact, or awareness of each other, can make them into something new ("one new man" in Christian parlance). What I call "mirroring" contributes to this project by evoking difference—often demarcated by accent, dress, and skin color—to portray members of a diverse global public performing actions that are legible to Americans as godly.[49] For example, sponsorship organizations often circulate photos of foreign children in a typical American prayer pose—hands together, head down, eyes squeezed shut (figure 4.4). They also feature foreign children singing familiar hymns in accented English. By participating in forms that mirror what they already know, U.S. Christians experience a sense of their God's global reach. It is a key mechanism through which sponsors reproduce unity-in-diversity. The larger point is that to understand "the politics of felt difference"[50]—the charged divides between rich/poor, Christian/other, white/black, West/rest that orient U.S. Christians' actions in the world—one must attend closely to the politics of sameness too. American exceptionalism and Christian universalism have always depended on the existence of others. There is no "center" without a "periphery."

## MRS. JANE Q. SPONSOR: ON SUBJECT AND METHOD

I am often asked whether sponsorship works. The question implies something to the effect of how many cents on the dollar go to children in need and whether the poor become less poor as a result. While the organizations under study do differ somewhat in their budgets and programming, critics (going back at least to the 1940s) have condemned the one-to-one (1:1) approach for creating "little enclaves of privilege" within communities and failing to redress the underlying causes of poverty.[51] Development industry experts also criticize sponsorship's comparatively high overhead—the cost of translations, photos, postage, and extra staff to manage relations with sponsors. Such analyses treat the 1:1 aspect as a fund-raising gimmick rather than part of the "real" work that occurs in the field.[52] By contrast, sponsorship organizations, and most sponsors, perceive it as *integral* to combating poverty. In their view, 1:1 communication creates a channel for divine Love and, in more secular terms, fosters self-esteem for children who have experienced little encouragement to dream of a different future.

Many of the sponsorship professionals with whom I spoke, and the scholars whose work informs mine, also weigh differences between charity and philanthropy, sympathy and compassion, or mission and mutual solidarity. While I explore such issues as they came up during my research, I do not offer prescriptive suggestions for best practices or track what happens in the places where U.S. money ends up. I limit my discussion of organizations' inner workings to what is needed for clarity and insofar as it affects U.S. donors' experience. These topics are covered elsewhere in a number of excellent studies and dissertations.[53] On that note, sponsors and I sometimes discussed my role as a scholar in shaping the analysis. They were right to point it out. This book tries to do justice to their experiences, but it does so framed within my ultimate goal of tracing the contours of Christian globalism. By the same token, the fact that I have chosen sponsorship as a (semi) coherent site for this study shapes particular points of focus. It means that Protestants feature more prominently than Catholics, and Asia more than Africa. It means that certain contemporary forms of Christian global engagements, such as "End Times" prophecy and spiritual warfare, appear only in endnotes; evangelical organizations avoid beliefs they feel could alienate any segment of their audience. It means that the places where globalism "happens" tend to be at home, online, or at church-related events, rather than in streets, government offices, or courthouses.

This book also emphasizes female donors—"Mrs. Jane Q. Sponsor," as one Compassion executive termed it when we spoke. Women have always been sponsorship's most reliable target market. Indeed, when the ABCFM started the first sponsorship plan in 1816 it did so explicitly for women and youth who, it believed, needed concrete connections to fully comprehend the abstract concept of global responsibility.[54] (As many historians have shown, women were actually some of the earliest and staunchest supporters of foreign missions.) During the nineteenth century, sponsorship was yoked to sentimentalism, a growing trend in Christianity that seemed to secure a role for maternal influence within republican politics and industrial capitalism. At the time, groups of women typically pooled their resources to support a child overseas. By the mid-twentieth century, women often initiated sponsorship on behalf of their families. Throughout, mothers and female Sunday school teachers have used the plans as a pedagogical tool for children in their care.

A 1977 WV survey identified the typical sponsor as a middle-aged married Christian woman with a lower or fixed income.[55] She was also white. Although mid-century organizations showed some interest in courting the "economically rising Negro population," they largely failed to do so.[56] In 1974, Compassion's team likely summed up the issue correctly: African Americans were concerned about domestic poverty and distrusted white-run organizations with no ties to black communities.[57] Today, sponsorship continues to appeal mainly—though not exclusively—to white women. I worked most closely with contemporary sponsors at Compassion and Unbound. At Compassion, 70% of sponsors are female, 74% are married, about 88% are white, and 99% are self-described Christians of the evangelical variety (the two largest groups are 34.7% non-denominational and 17.8% Baptist). The average sponsor is 46 years old and roughly 60% do not have children at home, which Compassion's team attributes to a significant number of college students and retirees. At Unbound, the demographic is virtually identical (swap 99% evangelical for Catholic), but the average sponsor is a decade older.[58] My sample of 118 interviewees was quite consistent with these estimates. Rounding the numbers up or down, 87% of them were married or recently widowed; 90% had children (many grown); 75% were female; all self-identified as Christian and most went to church. My interviewees were more likely than organizational estimates to self-identify as white—all of my Protestant interviewees did so, along with 95% of Catholics. Their ages ranged from 30 to 87, but they were also older than organizational estimates; among my Catholic interviewees the average age was 65 and among evangelicals it was 55. In other words, this book should be taken for what it is: a glimpse at some, albeit rather typical, U.S. Christian sponsors. It leaves ample room for subsequent studies to compare across more social groups.

Sponsorship subtly stitches together moral communities. At one of my field sites, a Presbyterian church in New Hampshire, the Sunday school class sponsored a child and a bulletin board in the foyer displayed photos of the children supported by individual members. A few events during the year brought sponsors together, such as a Christmas card writing session (figure 7.5) and a Compassion Sunday event. Whether or not they could name other sponsors, my interlocutors had a collective sense that their church "does" sponsorship and thus contributes to God's global work. While this may be a motivation for participating, the actual tasks related to sponsorship happen sporadically in people's homes. It made research slow going at times and led me to adopt a pragmatic, interdisciplinary approach that combined archival work, participatory fieldwork, and surveys, as detailed in appendix A.

The book's first two chapters focus on missionary boards that used sponsorship in the nineteenth century—the ABCFM and two women's foreign missionary societies. Chapter 3 draws on archives from World War I relief organizations, especially Near East Relief and the Fatherless Children of France. The remaining chapters mix archival and ethnographic fieldwork related to the four post-war organizations mentioned above: CCF (mainline Protestant in the mid-twentieth century), World Vision (neo-evangelical) and Compassion (initially conservative Baptist), and Unbound (Roman Catholic). Today, WV and Compassion are both evangelical, but the former also draws many liberal Protestant and "secular" donors. Appendix B clarifies some basic details about these organizations as a quick guide for readers.

As the project progressed, I realized that the Protestant organizations cultivated self-definitions and affiliations that were much more fluid than I expected. In part, this reflects the pragmatics of creating overseas networks. For example, CCF's founder, J. Calvitt Clarke, tried to keep his staff free of "fundamentalists," but he made an exception for his longtime overseas director Verent Mills, a Pentecostal formerly with China Inland Mission. In the field, CCF partnered with everyone from the Assemblies of God to the Russian Orthodox Church. In South Korea in the mid-1960s, the conservative evangelicals at Compassion supported orphanages in partnership with Church World Service, an arm of the liberal National Council of Churches.[59] Mid-century Protestant organizations (and "secular" ones like Save the Children) also used flexible advertising strategies that included Christian symbolism, especially during the lucrative Christmas season. Audiences drew their own conclusions, which meant that an organization like CCF attracted liberal Unitarian Universalists alongside Moody Bible Institute–trained fundamentalists. World Vision and Compassion drew evangelicals alongside Catholics and Jews. In a gem from the archives, Compassion received its first major publicity boost from the Jewish advice columnist Esther Friedman Lederer, better known as Ann Landers, who endorsed it with the proviso that Compassion remove the word "Christ" from any mailings with her photo; a few years later, her twin sister and rival, Pauline Esther Phillips of Dear Abby fame, signed on as spokesperson for Compassion's evangelical competitor, World Vision.[60]

This book begins in the early nineteenth century, in part to correct the common misconception that twentieth-century humanitarians invented sponsorship.[61] Tracing the trajectory of a single fund-raising technique demonstrates how foreign missionary bodies were connected to nascent relief and humanitarian circles, both of which then bolstered the transition to faith-based NGOs after the 1940s. This point is of evident importance for readers interested in the rise of humanitarianism or missions, but it is worth noting for others as well. Excavating this history underscores globalization in the making, then and now, and emphasizes continuities between the modern and late modern period within which sponsorship has flourished. Of course, that does not imply an absence of diachronic change. Sometimes I point out such shifts explicitly; other times, careful readers will discern them in the chapters. Each one is structured around techniques, objects, or ideas that developed or were reinterpreted during the period in question. For example, chapter 3 centers on new visual media technologies in the late nineteenth century and the concomitant rise of global relief campaigns. Chapter 5 focuses on new interpretations of materialism in the 1970s, which diverged from how this issue was discussed a century before, as described in chapter 1.

On that note, I should clarify two significant shifts that molded sponsorship today. One was already mentioned: in the 1970s, the organizations under study went from supporting missionaries through transfer payments to creating their own legal entities to support children at home. At the same time, they began courting a broader market through slick advertisements and infomercials featuring those now infamously graphic portrayals of destitute children. The strategy produced a serious crisis of representation, which many organizational staff members recognized: their new media campaigns promoted the orphan model just as they were discarding it in the field. In the 1990s, programming and advertising became better integrated. Today, the organizations under study generally focus on children's joy and optimism and rarely feature images of destitution.

The second shift of note was much broader in scope. In the 1960s and 1970s, more U.S. Christians began to grapple with the liberatory politics that accompanied the end of formal colonialism. Over the next decade, they also became aware of the comparative growth of Christianity in the global south. Among Catholics, the Second Vatican Council, the ecumenical movement, and Liberation Theology contributed to an emphasis on local cultures and the need for mutual support across the global Church. Although liberal Protestants employed different language—"contextualization" instead of the predominantly Catholic term "inculturation"—they also reworked their interpretation of mission to argue that the Gospel was uniquely embodied in each local culture. They spearheaded what they began to call "partnerships" with global south churches, hoping to emphasize self-determination rather than paternalism.[62] Evangelicals picked up on these trends in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, all the organizations under study embrace these principles in a basic sense, including those on the more conservative end of the spectrum (Compassion explicitly refers to its ministry as “contextual”). In the world of child sponsorship, evangelicals have moved closer to Catholics and liberal Protestants in their emphasis on global partnerships and mutual solidarity; Catholics and hierarchically organized mainline Protestants have moved closer to evangelicals in their focus on local churches and community sovereignty.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The first two chapters mine missionary archives to explore the development of sponsorship as one facet of the rise of systematic giving and child-centered charities. Chapter 1 discusses informal evangelical theologies that fused the circulation of human love and Divine Love into a basis for U.S. Christian globalism. Chapter 2 examines an equally important set of building blocks: how the statistical science of “large numbers” worked dialogically with the penny donations of systematic giving and the individual recipients associated with “special objects” charity. Both chapters emphasize the participatory techniques that encouraged a vast economy of missionary giving. They also refute the assumption in earlier studies that the nineteenth-century turn to sentimental Christian “love” replaced an earlier emphasis on the glory of a “distant and majestic” God.[63] In Christian globalism, both aspects worked together.

Chapter 3 turns to World War I, when relief organizations introduced sponsorship to a wider public. At a basic level, it offers a corrective to how histories of nineteenth-century U.S. women’s missionary work often end in the interwar period with the dissolution of separate female boards. Instead, this chapter traces the link to non-sectarian relief organizations, in which many men and women from missionary circles were involved. Thematically, it focuses on new visual media, especially photography, that bolstered U.S. Christians’ ability to incorporate absent/present children into the intimate spaces of family life, while honing a god’s eye view of the world. It considers this visual media together with visceral (embodied) techniques as collaborative tools in emergency relief. I rely on a few guides, including cultural theorists Lauren Berlant and Susan Sontag, each of whom has asked how other people’s suffering may make moral demands on our minds as well as our bodies—our “hearts and tears,” as Berlant puts it.[64]

Chapter 4 explores the mid-century archives of CCF and WV to tackle what is in a sense the crux of 1:1 sponsorship: the promise of transglobal relationship. Taking up themes from chapter 1, it examines the tensions inherent in globalism’s attenuated forms of knowing—and the mediation it requires and conceals. It situates the discussion amid key trends at the time, including the formation of the United Nations and transnational adoptions from Asia. Along with chapter 3, it shows how Protestants positioned sponsorship as a type of intimate "heart conversion" that could repair the massive failures of mid-century diplomacy. This chapter most clearly introduces the role of mirroring in building a Christian ideal of racialized unity-in-diversity.

Chapters 5 and 6 incorporate archival materials from the 1960s to the 1980s alongside contemporary interviews and fieldnotes. Both chapters build on the discussion in chapter 4 about global forms of relationality. Along with chapter 1, these chapters also most closely examine capitalism and the futures it projects. Chapter 5 takes up morally freighted questions about materialism and some common coping tactics. Chapter 6 traces how Christian sponsorship organizations adapt secular audit culture. More broadly, it tackles what Appadurai calls "the capacity to aspire," asking how U.S. Christians envision futures for themselves, the children they support, and the world as a whole. And finally, chapter 7 covers the broadest chronological period and revisits a classic theme in globalization theory related to spatiotemporal collapse. It builds on previous chapters' discussions of intimacy, a god's eye view, and unity-in-diversity, by examining three forms of participatory technique: vocal arrangements, mapping techniques, and the virtual space of social media.

Writing an interdisciplinary book is challenging and liberating. Since I did not set out to produce a history of child sponsorship, I felt free to opt for a loosely chronological structure set within a thematic approach. It leads me to interrupt the chronological narrative at times; for instance, I include "postscripts" at the end of some chapters to clarify how a particular theme resurfaced in another period. I sometimes insert a brief remark about contemporary trends. The final chapter, which includes both historical and contemporary objects, is meant to disrupt any impression that early chapters were merely a historical prelude to the ethnography that follows. Another considered choice is the inclusion of two "interludes" about sponsor-child duos in the 1840s and 2000s. I have inserted them, first, to suggest the usefulness of experimental approaches to writing when globally dispersed sources are inaccessible or incomplete. I also hope that the prose will allow readers to gain a better sense of the temporality of sponsorship, which is shaped by sporadic letters over many years. Most important, I use the interludes to evoke the gaps in sponsorship's intimate relations. This theme appears in the chapters, but to some extent my authorial voice overwrites it by filling in explanations and clarifications. Though highly curated, the interludes re-center the absences, misunderstandings, and differing expectations that inevitably constitute global projects.

*Christian Globalism at Home* moves between private prayer closets and family dinner tables to moments that evoke some of humankind's biggest aspirations and concerns. For U.S. Christians at home, a perpetual challenge is how to harness globalism's wavering intensity so that, for a moment at least, absent becomes present and one feels the flash of God's expansive power.

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