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

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- 1 Over the last few decades, as evangelicals achieved an increasingly powerful presence in U.S. politics, scholarship on the Christian Right (also called the Religious Right) has proliferated. Most of it has prioritized the role that domestic social issues in the United States, including abortion, gay rights, and prayer in schools, have played in underpinning the rise and success of evangelical activism. Early studies have actually traced the origins of evangelical and fundamentalist political mobilization to the broad conservative backlash that erupted in response to the rights revolutions of the 1960s and early 1970s. In the process, dimensions of U.S. foreign relations, such as evangelical foreign policy interests, evangelical lobbying, and missionary work, have remained unexplored.
- 2 Lauren Frances Turek's *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations* challenges the emphasis on the domestic political power of the Christian right. Its main argument is that international and foreign policy concerns held significance for evangelicals and inspired them to greater involvement in politics. Not only did evangelicals reorient home policy but they also influenced official decision-making on a number of foreign policy initiatives, as evidenced by the

International Religious Freedom Act, which both houses of Congress passed by an overwhelming majority in 1998.

- 3 On the other hand, evangelicals articulated a strongly internationalist outlook and built a robust global network of fellow believers based on their firm commitment to fulfill the “Great Commission” — the biblical mandate to evangelize all nations — and thus hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God. In the decades since the 1970s, Turek notes, “global evangelism, foreign policy lobbying, and the promotion of international religious freedom have had, and continue to have, cascading effects on the lives of people throughout the world” (187). As their concerns about these issues intensified in the late 1970s and 1980s, evangelical leaders and activists coordinated ever more closely with their Christian brethren abroad.
- 4 The book is organized in two parts. The first three chapters explain how evangelical lobbying and internationalism developed. They link the global expansion of evangelical Christianity with the rise in evangelical political influence in the United States. The second part (chapters 3-6) offers three regional examples — the Soviet Union, Guatemala, and South Africa — that reveal how evangelical leaders, missionaries, and interest groups drew on their political power and the international network they had helped build to shape international relations and national policies in the United States.
- 5 Chapter 1, “A Global Shift in Missionary Christianity,” delves deeply into the economic, political, and social changes of the 1970s that led to a renewed sense of missionary urgency among evangelicals throughout the world. It demonstrates that active involvement in this new global Christian network cultivated an internationalist outlook among U.S. evangelicals. While liberal human rights activists emphasized economic and social justice, evangelicals espoused a commitment to protecting freedom of conscience as the most fundamental human right. As a result, evangelical missions proliferated. It was also in this context that Billy Graham organized the International Congress on World Evangelization (1974), which generated the ongoing Lausanne Movement.
- 6 In the second chapter, “The Communications Revolution and Evangelical Internationalism,” Turek examines the strategic approach of U.S. evangelical organizations in using electronic communications to spread the gospel and expand their international reach. She explains how technological innovations significantly contributed to the vast expansion of evangelicalism and made evangelical Christianity attractive to its new adherents throughout the world.
- 7 Chapter 3, “Religious Freedom and the New Evangelical Foreign Policy Lobby,” argues that a powerful evangelical foreign policy lobby emerged in response to growing anxieties about developments in international relations, especially the increase in Soviet human rights abuses that accompanied the détente with the Soviet Union and the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Evangelicals drew on their connections with coreligionists abroad and combined their spiritual beliefs with human rights language to build support among policymakers for the cause of international religious liberty. Concerns about religious persecution and other abuses against the faithful led the nascent lobbying groups to advocate for foreign policy positions that would further their global evangelistic agenda, not just in the Soviet bloc but also in Central America, Southern Africa, and other major geopolitical hotspots throughout the world.
- 8 Chapter 4, “Fighting Religious Persecution behind the Iron Curtain,” examines evangelical lobbying on behalf of persecuted Soviet Pentecostals and Baptists during the Reagan administration. It shows that evangelicals expanded their contacts through

their missionary work and advocacy for persecuted Christians, including the Siberian Seven. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, evangelicals accelerated their efforts to expand their spiritual influence in the region, so as to ensure that the postcommunist states would guarantee religious liberty for their citizens and allow foreigners to evangelize.

- 9 As the title indicates, “Supporting a ‘Brother in Christ’ in Guatemala,” chapter 5 focuses on Guatemala, where evangelical dictator General José Efraín Ríos Montt seized power in a coup in 1982. Ríos Montt’s religious beliefs, coupled with his staunch anticommunism, led politically influential evangelical leaders to support and promote his regime. Despite mounting evidence that Ríos Montt’s military campaign against the “communist insurgency” in his country involved the mass killing of indigenous Mayans, many evangelical groups argued that the dictator’s Christian faith would compel him to improve the human rights situation in Guatemala. The chapter places evangelical involvement in the Ríos Montt regime in an international context as part of the larger crusade to evangelize the world.
- 10 Chapter 6, “The Challenge of South African Apartheid,” explores the evangelical contribution to the debate over U.S. relations with the apartheid government of South Africa and the global anti-apartheid movement. It pays particular attention to the networks that evangelical leaders built with their counterparts in South Africa in the 1970s and the manner in which these connections informed the policy opinions of conservative Christians in the United States. While some members of the Southern Baptist Convention joined progressive religious groups to protest U.S. involvement with the regime, many evangelicals urged the Reagan administration to refrain from imposing sanctions on South Africa or pursuing disinvestment strategies. Although they lost their battle to stop congressional sanctions in 1985, white evangelicals served as influential allies of the Reagan administration’s policies toward South Africa.
- 11 In conclusion, this volume, which is richly researched and well organized, is a timely and valuable contribution to existing studies on the American Christian Right. It is a good read for those interested in religious studies, American foreign policy, and the interactions of religion and politics in the US. And it is certainly accessible enough for nonspecialists seeking to understand the specificities of a movement enjoying unprecedented political attention. By highlighting the understudied phenomenon of Christian foreign policy engagement during the late twentieth century within the framework of the human rights movement, this book advances our understanding of the diverse factors that drove international relations in the late twentieth century

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