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Introduction by Rosemarie Zagarri, George Mason University

Until very recently, most historians of the United States have located the origins of American imperialism in the Spanish-American War of 1898. In the standard narrative, it was assumed that American government and politics during the early decades of the nineteenth century focused primarily on internal domestic issues rather than on foreign policy or overseas adventures. More recently, however, this assumption has been challenged. Imperialism, it is said, does not necessarily entail the conquest of overseas territories or the colonization of foreign peoples. From its earliest days as a nation, the U.S. sought to conquer Native Americans and subjugate African slaves in order to advance its own expanding territorial goals within the contiguous territory of the North American continent. If Indians and slaves did not constitute foreign peoples or nations in the conventional sense, they nonetheless did represent groups who regarded themselves as separate and distinct from white Americans and were treated this way by white Americans. The growth of slavery and western expansion, then, should be seen not as an extension of American domestic policy but as a reflection of the country's growing imperial aspirations. Far from becoming an empire only in 1898, the U.S. has been an empire from its very inception.¹

This newer interpretation, while currently gaining traction among early Americanists, has not yet displaced the traditional narrative in the wider field of U.S. history. This is due in part to the resistance in some quarters to the adoption of a more capacious understanding of 'empire' and 'imperialism' that extends beyond traditional narrow definitions. It is also due, however, to the need for historians to produce a critical mass of studies that adopt an imperial framework and explore the variety of ways in which the early nineteenth-century United States acted as an imperial power.

Emily Conroy-Krutz's *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* addresses both of these issues and in doing so, makes an outstanding contribution to our understanding of scope and meaning of early American imperialism. Focusing on the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from its founding in 1810 until the eve of the Civil War, she explores the ABCFM's role in evangelizing peoples in regions ranging from the Cherokees in Georgia to the natives of India as well as to the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), Burma (Myanmar), Singapore, and Liberia. Drawing on the organization's extensive collection of printed records, archival correspondence, and religious publications, Conroy-Krutz argues that ABCFM missionaries wished to bring western "civilization," along with the Protestant religion, to their converts throughout the world. Existing empires, especially the British, provided the political and commercial networks through which the missionaries were able to advance their activities. As a result, ABCFM missionaries, in contrast to most Americans at the time, saw the British empire as a kind of role model and ally. Christian evangelization, then, should be understood not simply in

¹ See, for example William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2000); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

religious terms but also in imperial terms--as a way for American missionaries to disseminate what she calls "Christian imperialism" throughout the world.

One of Conroy-Krutz's most important interventions is in her precise definition of imperialism. Building on the work of Paul Kramer, she dismisses the question of whether or not the U.S. was an empire per se and instead deploys "imperialism as a tool of analysis, 'something to think with more than think about'"² (10). In other words, she chooses not to focus on nation-states, methods of governance, or the means of exploitation but on imperial ideology, especially the missionaries' religious ideals, their perception of America's relationship to the rest of the world, and their understanding of the native peoples whom they encountered. Thus, she says, "The Christian imperialism that the missionaries envisioned had little to do with states. . . . These missionaries were not primarily focused on the spread of Anglo-American governance; they were concerned with the spread of Anglo-American culture and the Protestant religion, seeing governance as a tool in this larger project" (10-11). Because conversion was their preeminent goal, however, they eventually became disillusioned with the existing empires which impeded their religious mission or failed to live up to their high moral ideals.

The contributors to this roundtable--Katherine Carté Engle, Nicholas Guyatt, Stephen Tuffnell, and Kariann Yokota-- are all highly-regarded specialists in various subfields of early American history. Significantly, all of the reviewers agree that Conroy-Krutz has made a unique and valuable contribution to the field. In particular, they commend the book for moving beyond the traditional boundaries of U.S. history and highlighting early America's connections with the larger world. For Engel, the book's signal contribution is "its complex interrogation of international and national impulses of government, faith, and empire" and the resulting "disjunctures between Conroy-Krutz's story and the tradition story of America religious history." For Tuffnell, Conroy-Krutz's global scope is important. Her willingness to extend her study beyond the conventional emphasis on transatlantic Anglo-American relations will contribute to "a profound reorientation of Antebellum diplomatic history." The reviewers also praise Conroy-Krutz's discussion of the "hierarchy of heathenism," a concept which articulates the missionaries' imaginary map of the peoples they sought to convert. Because Conroy-Krutz studies a period when "racial theories were in transition," her discussion, according to Yokota, represents "one of the most fruitful outcomes of the scholarly pursuit of global perspectives." Reviewers also find Conroy-Krutz's linkage of the ABCFM's "internal" imperialism toward the Cherokee with its external efforts to evangelize people in places as far away as Singapore and Liberia as especially noteworthy. Guyatt, although not entirely convinced by the juxtaposition, calls this "one of the most striking aspects of the book." Perhaps most importantly, the commentators confirm the work's larger implications. Tuffnell observes that the Conroy-Krutz's study "places alternative conceptions of empire at the heart of historians' discussions of U.S. statecraft." The missionaries' stories, Guyatt says, have "much to tell us about the emergence of the United States as a global power."

Given the *Christian Imperialism's* ambitious scope, it is not surprising that the commentators in this roundtable also express certain reservations about the work. Their particular criticisms, however, vary. A few of the reviewers asked to hear from a wider range of voices, besides those of the ABCFM missionaries. Emphasizing that "colonial encounters were two-sided affairs," Yokota would like to hear more from the natives who were potential converts, whose "perspectives are sorely lacking." Tuffnell believes that more

² Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States and the World," *American Historical Review* 116:5 (December 2011): 1348-1391.

attention to how ABCFM missionaries and Board members viewed their competitors--especially missionaries from other denominations--would be revealing. Guyatt suggests that investigating the attitudes of members of the British imperial bureaucracy--particularly colonial governors or members of the Colonial and Foreign Offices--would provide a useful additional perspective. Commentators also wondered about the precise dynamic that operated in the interactions between the British government, British missionaries, and American missionaries. Tuffnell, in particular, warns that we must “be wary of projecting the power of the Victorian Empire backwards.”

The most pointed questions, however, address Conroy-Krutz’s central issue: the notion of imperialism itself. The book is at once a religious history, a transnational history, and a global history. Although these approaches share much in common, they also have their own distinctive questions and issues. This fact creates certain tensions in Conroy-Krutz’s analysis. Not all the commentators fully accept Conroy-Krutz’s argument that Christian imperialism should be seen as analogous to state imperialism. Guyatt, for example, complains that “one of the book’s few major limitations was its difficulty in capturing the complex and shifting patterns of national and imperial governance that were emerging in the nineteenth-century world.” Viewing the matter from the perspective of religious history, Engel comments that “although missionaries tried to apply lessons from one mission to another, there was no simple way to transfer experiences from one global region to another, or even between American regions...Everywhere, abroad and at home, politics intervened.” Nonetheless, their overall assessment is positive. Tuffnell, although critical of Conroy-Krutz’s definition of imperialism, also notes that the book “opens up as many questions as it answers.” This is high praise. Few books, and even fewer first books, challenge other scholars to ask new questions or open provocative new lines of inquiry.

One new line of inquiry that *Christian Imperialism* does open up is the feasibility of writing a comprehensive narrative of U.S. history that explores imperialism from the origins of the republic through the twenty-first century. Instead of treating the early national period as an exception to the rise of American imperialism, the Early Republic now can be connected to the subsequent rise of American imperialism after 1898. Given a common conceptual framework, historians of many different periods will then be able to discuss and debate the varieties of American imperial power and how American imperialism evolved and changed over time. Generating such fruitful possibilities, as Conroy-Krutz’s book does, is indeed a substantial achievement.

Participants:

Emily Conroy-Krutz is an assistant professor of history at Michigan State University. She is the author of *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015). Her articles on missions, empire, and transatlantic reform have appeared in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, H-Diplo, and *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic*, edited by Andrew Shankman (New York and London: Routledge, 2014). She is currently at work on a study of gender and religion in transatlantic reform movements.

Rosemarie Zagari is University Professor and Professor of History at George Mason University. She is the author of several books and many articles, including “The Significance of the ‘Global Turn’ for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31(Spring

2011): 1-37. She is currently working on a book project called, “American Nabob: Thomas Law and the Problem of Empire in Colonial British India and the Early American Republic.”

Kate Carté Engel (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin) is an associate professor of history at Southern Methodist University. She is the author of *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), and she has published articles in *Church History* and *Early American Studies*. Her current book project, *True Religion: International Protestantism and the American Revolution*, chronicles how that conflict transformed both the ideal and the reality of religious community in the Atlantic world between 1763 and 1792.

Nicholas Guyatt teaches American history at the University of Cambridge, where he is also a fellow of Trinity Hall. He is the author of *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016). His new project examines how antebellum Americans came to think about imperialism through their encounters with other nations’ empires.

Stephen Tuffnell (D.Phil.) is Associate Professor of Modern U.S. History at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on the American diaspora throughout the nineteenth century, with a particular interest in the collaboration of American expatriates, engineers, and missionaries with British imperialism between 1865 and 1914. He is the author of “Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871-1910”, *Journal of Global History* 10:1 (March 2015) and “Expatriate Foreign Relations: Britain’s American Community and Transnational Approaches to the U.S. Civil War”, *Diplomatic History* 40:4 (September 2016): 635-663.

Kariann Akemi Yokota earned an MA in Asian American Studies and an MA and Ph.D. in History from UCLA. She is currently associate professor and Associate Chair of the Department of History at the University of Colorado Denver. She is the author of *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Her research interests include transnational relations in the era of the American Revolution, interethnic relations in the twentieth century, and material and visual culture.

Review by Katherine Carté Engel, Southern Methodist University

John Wesley, Methodism's founder, came out staunchly against the American colonial cause in the early days of the Revolutionary War, complicating the nascent American Methodist movement's development. By the time the war ended, only a few Methodist preachers remained. Nonetheless, where international connections fell off, Americans built a powerful national system. In one of the greatest success stories in United States history, by 1850, thirty-four percent of religious Americans were affiliated with the Methodist Church. The genius behind this growth was Francis Asbury, the itinerant preacher who designed and oversaw Methodism's circuit-rider system. That system allowed the Methodists to expand quickly on the frontier, often ahead of any other form of institutional life. Asbury himself traveled more than six thousand miles a year, and he preached an estimated 17,000 sermons.¹ The Methodists and their evangelical fellow travelers, the Baptists, helped sanctify the new American Republic, marrying a democratic theology with a democratic nation. The West and the expansive opportunities it brought thus defined American religion, and America's religious multitudes returned the favor by embracing the new republic and its Constitution, at least until the wheels came off in the Civil War.

This, for all intents and purposes, is the version of religion in the Early Republic that American students learn, and have, with some variations, learned for a generation. The United States, a powerful young nation, is both the narrative's scene and its subject. Indeed, the relationship between religion and national identity is at the core of the very idea of an evangelical age in the Early Republic. The rising evangelical tide faced off against the old establishment, or the 'Presbyterians,' as the cultural elites of the mid-Atlantic Presbyterian and New England Congregational churches were dubbed, in a contest for the nation's soul. Though elites sought to reform the nation through bible societies, Sunday schools, temperance movements, foreign missions, and eventually abolition, the expansionist and nationalist evangelicals ultimately created the nation's religious culture.² All involved were focused on the chaotic world of the new United States, its cities teeming with immigrants, its boundaries threatened by savages, and its sturdy pioneers ever in danger of falling into moral decay in the absence of the church. The expanding U.S. west was the center of action, and the rest of the world was off the map.

Emily Conroy-Krutz's book, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic*, intervenes in this narrative by lifting foreign missions out of the context in which they usually languish: in the middle of a list of reform movements and the acronym-laden societies that supported them. Pushing her readers to consider American Protestants on the global stage in the early nineteenth century, Conroy-Krutz follows the efforts of missionaries sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) as they embraced the concept of Christian empire in general and the British Empire in particular

¹ John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 43.

² Although this narrative is familiar, is by no means exhausted. For innovative new treatments of the subject, see Sam Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religions and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). A recent exception to this is Christine Heyrman's *American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered the World of Islam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), which also seeks to internationalize the story of religion in the Early Republic.

during the first decades of the nineteenth century. She provides histories of the Board's work from India to Liberia, and from Hawaii to the Cherokee Nation in Georgia. Yet, as Conroy-Krutz argues, most of these zealous Protestants labored in vain to bring the 'heathen' to Christ. The real transformation came within the mission movement itself, as the ABCFM learned that governments almost invariably dictated the terms of missions, rather than the other way around. Conroy-Krutz paints these missionaries as an intriguing mix of brash imperialists, genuine idealists, and humble pawns, but the governments they encountered held the power.

The book's greatest contribution from the perspective of American religious history is its complex interrogation of international and national impulses of government, faith, and empire. I use the word impulse here, because the imperial world Conroy-Krutz describes was capricious and unpredictable. American missionaries worked in proximity to U.S., British, and commercial colonial authorities. Each of those entities worried about its own position vis-à-vis other powers, often leaving missionaries in uncertain and shifting positions. In India, missionaries found that the decision as to whether they would be allowed to evangelize was up to individual East India Company governors. Conversely, in Hawaii, unexpected successes left the missionaries defending what they saw as a new Christian society from encroaching American traders, pushing them to articulate a critique of the U.S. imperial presence. In Georgia, ABCFM missionaries found themselves ensnared in the nasty politics of Indian removal, while in Liberia, where the Maryland Colonization Society (MCS) provided the authority, missionaries had to negotiate between settlers, natives, and MCS officials. In the midst of it all, the missionaries believed that they were acting in line with providence, which effectively anointed the political circumstances and removed them from critique.

This is a story of fits and starts, but at its center is the missionaries' desire to spread Christianity and their conviction that empire offered their best vehicle. Yet Conroy-Krutz is less interested in defining empire than she is in "imperialism as a tool of analysis" (10). Her goal is to shed new light on these early foreign missions, "but also on America's position in the world in the early republic" (10). The thread Conroy-Krutz follows through this complex web of ideas and events is therefore the history of missionaries in two different imperial realms: first, the ABCFM's imagined globe of mission targets, and second, the British and American political spheres in which missionaries conceivably could act. The first form of empire, what Conroy-Krutz terms a "hierarchy of heathenism," was a systematic approach to the world's peoples that placed the highly civilized Anglo-American Protestants at the top and the 'least' developed peoples, in terms of civilization and religion, at the bottom (17). In the view of the missionaries, these latter cultures, including most Native Americans, had too far to go before they could comprehend Christianity and the civilization to which it was inextricably linked. Those near the top needed missionaries less. Asians fell in the sweet spot in between. Interestingly, those in Central and South America, which were Spanish and Portuguese zones of colonization, were also considered unappealing prospects for rapid conversion, as their Catholicism was "so deeply entrenched in the government that it would not allow Protestant missionaries to evangelize effectively" (36).

The global spheres in which ABCFM missionaries worked were largely determined by the access they could gain through British and American political and commercial imperialism. Indeed, the ABCFM's positive views of both Britain and its empire are striking in a period when Americans not only remembered the Revolution keenly but also fought a second war against the British. Yet the ABCFM knowingly and eagerly copied its British counterparts for both practical and ideological reasons. The founding of the evangelical Baptist and London Missionary Society predated the establishment of the ABCFM, and thus the British had experience as missionaries the Americans did not. In addition, piggy-backing on the British Empire's presence around the globe allowed the Americans to operate in otherwise inaccessible regions, such as India.

Furthermore, the high esteem in which missionaries held Anglo-American Protestantism generally in its “hierarchy of heathenism” drew the Americans close to their erstwhile colonial masters. Nonetheless, missionaries were, Conroy-Krutz argues, “not primarily focused on the spread of Anglo-American governance; they were concerned with the spread of Anglo-American culture and the Protestant religion, seeing governance as a tool in this larger project” (11).

The missionaries’ Anglophilia suggests one of the ways that Conroy-Krutz’s story intervenes in the well-worn narrative of religion during the Early Republic, a story both bounded by the nation and characterized by growing nationalism. One wonders, however, how these missionaries related to their fellows back at home. The missionaries’ Anglophilia appears to have been relatively unperturbed by the War of 1812. If anything, the war pushed British and American missionaries in the field together, even though its uncertainties were “in some ways the beginning of the American missionary conception of itself as working in opposition to governments and its critique of secular imperialism” (65). But if missionaries in India found common cause with their British fellows, the same cannot be said of American Protestants more generally.

The disjunctures between Conroy-Krutz’s story and the traditional story of American religious history recounted above are worth pondering. Where the ABCFM remained focused on the broader world, many American Protestants turned inward and westward during and after the War of 1812. Their ties to Canadians, many of which dated to before the Revolution, weakened, as Canadian Protestants pivoted away from their southern neighbors and built closer ties to Britain. The partisan politics of the war era also heightened millennialist-nationalist narratives within the United States, so that collaboration with British Protestants may not have been as obvious to Americans in Ohio as they were to those in Calcutta. Moreover, the ‘Presbyterianist’ establishment in general was failing alongside the Federalist party to which it was allied. In this context, it is perhaps less surprising that Conroy-Krutz’s missionaries, this time in Georgia, not so long afterwards fell afoul of the Jacksonian Democrats.

The ABCFM’s missionaries did not lead American Christians into greater harmony with Britain. But Conroy-Krutz’s tight and effective series of chapters on missions to the Cherokee, to Hawaii, to Liberia, and then finally to Singapore do not suggest any such influence. Instead, they focus the reader on what the missionaries learned from their varied efforts. Everywhere, they learned about the fickleness of their fellow Protestants and of the strength of secular authority. In Georgia, ABCFM missionaries were litigants in the famous Supreme Court case in which Jackson quipped that John Marshall might enforce his own decision. In Hawaii, their struggles against sinful influences from the United States “led to a close examination of the relationship between civilization and Christianity” (126). In Liberia, the “Board confronted the question of what an American presence ought to look like,” but in doing so it was “arguing with other Americans” (152) and here too the result was frustration and difficulty. Although missionaries tried to apply lessons from one mission to another, there was no simple way to transfer experiences from one global region to another, or even between American regions. The relationship between missionaries and governments remained, and in many ways remains, thorny.

The governments had the power, though, not the missionaries. That is clear from Conroy-Krutz’s narrative, and it is reminiscent of the way that religious communities in the United States ultimately foundered on the shoals of slavery and abolition. The capacity of governments to dictate the terms upon which religious communities operated—whether supporting/banning slavery or permitting missionaries to labor in their midst—dominates both the traditional story of Early-Republic religion and Conroy-Krutz’s corrective. The War of 1812, the ability of governments in mission sites to abruptly change the rules for missionaries, and the

ominous political trends at home in the United States ultimately determined the ABCFM's capacity to spread the Gospel. In the 1840s, the issue of abolition forced an ABCFM "reformulation of its role in the world and of the duty of missions in bringing civilization" (212). The eyes of Conroy-Krutz's missionaries and their supporters may have been drawn around the globe, but everywhere, abroad and at home, politics intervened.

Conroy-Krutz's insightful and perceptive book demonstrates with clarity that attention to the ideas and actions of religious communities must play an important part of placing the Early Republic in a global perspective. As she writes, "Americans of the early republic were attuned to the events and peoples of the world around them," and "Christian imperialism" was an essential part of how they interpreted that world (207). In addition, she is to be commended for weaving together in such a lucid way a set of stories that span the globe. Indeed, Conroy-Krutz's articulation of the missionaries' "hierarchy of humanity" makes a signal contribution by explaining the global vision of an important part of the American population, whether they were members of the 'Presbygationalist' elite or listened to one of Asbury's circuit riders on the frontier. It is a fascinating work, and one that students of the Early Republic and of international history would do well to consider.

Review by Nicholas Guyatt, University of Cambridge

You wait years and years for a really interesting book on American overseas missions in the Early Republic and then two come at once. Emily Conroy-Krutz's study of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions follows hard on the heels of Christine Leigh Heyrman's *American Apostles*.¹ Both books are fascinating and, better yet, engage the same theme in very different ways. Both are concerned with the actions of missionaries representing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the years after the War of 1812; both focus principally on American missions established in Asia, although Conroy-Krutz makes a foray into Cherokee Country and Liberia, about which more later. The two authors agree on a good deal, and their work overlaps in many productive ways. Even their occasional disagreements of emphasis or argument confirm that missionary activity has much to tell us about the emergence of the United States as a global power.

I should start by saying a word or two about Heyrman's *American Apostles*, which I read before *Christian Imperialism*. Heyrman's focus is on a very small number of American missionaries working in the Middle East in the late 1810s and 1820s. Her evangelicals, like many of the subjects of Conroy-Krutz's book, rode on the coattails of British preachers and imperial officials into other people's empires. Working under the gaze of the Ottomans, Heyrman's missionaries were both excited by the prospect of spiritual harvest and tantalized by the proximity of the whitening souls before them. U.S. missionaries gained access to Turkey, Egypt or Syria through their connections to the London Missionary Society; in effect, these early emissaries of American benevolence served as junior partners to their British counterparts. When they found their bearings in the Middle East, American missionaries soon realized that their proselytizing powers were limited. Ottoman officials insisted that any conversion activity should be restricted to non-Muslims, placing most of the region's population just beyond the reach of Christian missions. Although Heyrman's book flirts with the idea that a few of these early missionaries were harbingers of the more recent (and clumsy) U.S. engagement with "the world of Islam," one comes away from *American Apostles* struck by the powerlessness of these evangelical pioneers.

Christian Imperialism approaches these themes from the opposite direction: unlike Heyrman, Conroy-Krutz embraces the language of empire to describe and even define the activities of American overseas missionaries between 1815 and 1840. In the hands of a less able historian, this might become a crudely instrumental exercise: American evangelicals became pathfinders of a political expansionism that led easily towards the conquests of 1898 and after. Conroy-Krutz recognizes from the outset that this is not right: "If American missionaries exhibited imperialist thinking," she writes in the introduction, "it does not follow that they supported empire in all of the forms it took in the early nineteenth century." (10) Instead, then, "Christian imperialism" refers to a practice and an aspiration that does not map precisely onto the extension of U.S. power or influence, either in North America or around the globe. "Missionaries presumed their right to come into foreign spaces and transform them," Conroy-Krutz writes, "relying on their own values as they judged those around them." (10) This cultural chauvinism was forged nearly a century before the sinking of the *Maine* and the capture of Manila, and its connection to those later events was more complicated than we might imagine.

¹ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered the World of Islam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015)

Conroy-Krutz invites us to follow a diverse cast of American missionaries to a dazzling range of missionary locales – South Asia, Hawaii, Liberia, Singapore and several other far-flung outposts – and does a great job of realizing the potential of the rich ABCFM archives. A world of missionary experiences and encounters was faithfully recorded and mailed to Boston in the first half of the nineteenth century. Conroy-Krutz skillfully mines these records to reverse-engineer a global missionary landscape: from debates over accommodations to local culture in mission schools to political tensions with colonial governors and rival missionaries, she impresses us with the sheer extent of American activity in an age when we typically limit the horizons of U.S. influence to the (admittedly vast) continent of North America. She also persuades us that the Board's missionaries could hardly have avoided thinking about empire when they thought about conversion. Their access to prospective converts was brokered with local authorities – imperial officials, usually – who viewed those converts with rather different motives and ambitions. Some U.S. missionaries may have imagined that political empire, especially under the rubric of Britain or the United States, would naturally secure the empire of the spirit. Conroy-Krutz cleverly shows us that, more often than not, things did not work out this way.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is its integration of ABCFM missions that took place within territory controlled by the United States. ABCFM missionaries in Tennessee and Georgia in the two decades before Indian removal have received plenty of attention from historians, but Conroy-Krutz places them in a completely new context which reflects the broadly chronological argument of *Christian Imperialism*. Although the book concedes that the relationship between missions and empire was never straightforward, Conroy-Krutz employs a linear narrative in which her subjects were gradually disillusioned by the political/secular versions of imperialism. In summary: her missionaries (mediated by the all-controlling intelligence of the Board in Boston) were initially tempted by the notion that either Britain or the United States might vouchsafe their access to indigenous people in India, East Asia or even North America. For example, U.S. missionaries leveraged the political beachhead of the East India Company to reach untold thousands of “heathens” from Singapore to India. But then, Conroy-Krutz argues, the experience of the Board's mission in Cherokee Country forced a change of heart. After years of struggling alongside the Cherokees to defy state and federal governments in the U.S. Southeast, the Board and its missionaries ultimately failed to persuade the Jackson administration to reject Indian removal. “In the aftermath of this contest over the way that the United States would act as an imperial power,” she suggests, “the Board lost its hope for a benevolent empire.” (150) The gap that opened up between Christian imperialism and political imperialism widened further in the case of the Board's mission to Liberia later in the 1830s, and led at least some missionaries to wonder if empire was a proper vehicle for evangelization.

This is an ingenious narrative, and I was thrilled to see the effort to link the Board's activities within the United States with its vigorous expansion overseas. I'm still not sure, however, that the broad narrative here – of “Christian imperialism” ascendant until Cherokee removal, then humbled by that experience – is completely convincing. For one thing, *Christian Imperialism* never supplies a very strong idea of what the ‘Board’ actually looked like. It is assumed to have been a controlling intelligence, but we often find ourselves wishing for a more concerted engagement with how the Board's managers in Boston processed the many inputs it was receiving. Then there are the details of the Cherokee case. When the ABCFM finally shifted its position to embrace the (pro-removal) Treaty of New Echota in 1835, the Board and its local missionaries effectively surrendered to the demands of political imperialism. If the course of events challenged the Board's earlier rejection of removal, both the brass in Boston and the missionaries in the field eventually succumbed to its logic. I would love to know more about the sources in the ABCFM archive on the missionaries' switch: Did ABCFM managers or field missionaries agonize over the shift? One imagines that there would be a paper trail of breast-beating and excoriation, especially when Cherokee leader John Ross continued to resist removal

during the armed assault on the remnants of his people in the summer of 1838. But we do not get a sense of this from the book. In the same vein, I was excited by Conroy-Krutz's assertion that "Cherokee removal shaped [missionaries'] interpretation of what they saw in West Africa." (152) This might clinch the book's argument that missionaries learned some tough lessons about empire from President Andrew Jackson. However, very few of the sources cited in the following chapter on Liberia directly invoke the Cherokee example. Moreover, both here and elsewhere, we do not always get a sense that the Board itself had a synoptic view of its overseas strategy. Did Board members acknowledge that the problems in Georgia and Liberia were connected?

In fairness to Conroy-Krutz, her book covers so much ground that it can be forgiven for leaving us wanting more on specific episodes and arguments. But I found the sections on Native Americans harder to fit into the broader argument. It is my suspicion that the crisis over Cherokee removal did not play as great a role in reshaping the Board's views of empire as *Christian Imperialism* suggests. I wonder, also, if the shift from a more hopeful vision of empire to a more jaded realization of its toll on Native people was apparent either to missionaries or the Board. This returns us to the definition of empire, and the problem facing any historian who attempts to write about the phenomenon at a moment when national and imperial claims were overlapping or coterminous. As Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper have argued, we cannot easily trace a moment at which empires gave way to nation states; in fact, during the early nineteenth century, we can see the emergence of a strong U.S. nationalism within an Atlantic World – perhaps a wider world – that was strongly influenced by British imperial practices. Even proud Americans acknowledged Britain as a normative force for maintaining order, constructing an international legal regime, and dispensing 'benevolence.'² One does not get a strong sense from *Christian Imperialism* that Board officials or missionaries thought hard or often about empire as a building block of power and influence in world society. Perhaps this is not surprising, but it makes it harder for us to recover the assumptions and values they nurtured about the extension of political power beyond national borders.

Christian Imperialism sidesteps the question of whether the United States was itself an empire in the early nineteenth century, an elegant and perhaps necessary evasion. But I could not help thinking that one of the book's few major limitations was its difficulty in capturing the complex and shifting patterns of national and imperial governance that were emerging in the nineteenth-century world. I had some quibbles about this in specific parts of the book – for example, I found the equation of ABCFM missions with settler colonies to be a little confusing, especially in the context of the Board's presence in Georgia. (Here the true face of colonialism could be seen in the white settlers who were attempting to overrun the missionaries' Cherokee partners.) But I admit to doubts about whether 'empire' or 'imperialism' can be easily applied to this moment of American history – either domestically, or in the study of Americans overseas. Clearly, to return to Conroy-Krutz's working definition of Christian imperialism, American missionaries "presumed their right to come into foreign spaces and transform them." (10) This was, however, a presumption that was frequently tested and found wanting in the mission fields of South Asia, East Asia, and West Africa – as Conroy-Krutz admits.

One of the many things I learned from this book was that, despite evangelicals' hopes that religious and secular imperialism would be mutually reinforcing, the experience of seeking souls overseas could be a chastening experience. The final chapters of *Christian Imperialism* suggest that the ambitions of U.S.

² Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

missionaries comfortably exceeded their reach, a conclusion that cautions us against assuming an imperial continuum encompassing ‘domestic’ expansion, overseas missions, and the Pacific and Caribbean acquisitions of 1898. In the final lines of her introduction, when Conroy-Krutz argues that missionaries “came to view the world with the eyes of imperialists,” she evokes Mary Louise Pratt’s celebrated argument about culture and empire.³ (18) In her astute and careful descriptions of her missionaries at work, however, Conroy-Krutz shows us that there was no single imperial gaze that sustained Americans’ confidence that they could, despite everything, convert the world.

³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Review by Stephen Tuffnell, University of Oxford

“Many Americans ask what I think of the British occupation,” wrote Andrew Watson, reflecting on his work as a Presbyterian missionary in British-controlled Egypt at the turn of the twentieth century. “Theoretically, it may be compared to a man forcibly taking possession of another’s house,” Watson continued, adding that, “of course the owner of the house could not be supposed to show much affection towards the intruder, even though his rooms be better arranged, his furniture be better kept, his expenses be considerably less, and his debts gradually reduced.”¹ But what if one happens to be a guest of the intruder, as Watson was? The tensions between empire and Christianity, nation-based imperialism and international evangelicalism, and anti-imperialism and colonization are at the heart of *Christian Imperialism*, a transnational history of the engagement of American foreign missionaries with global imperialism and their attempts to spread God’s message throughout the world’s colonized spaces.

Christian Imperialism examines the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) as it attempted to Christianize the world between 1810 and 1840. Convinced of the need to give witness to their Christian belief and guide communities towards conversion, American men and women left the United States to establish outposts of American Protestantism across the globe – often with little knowledge of their final destination save that it would most likely be their final resting place. And they did so in large numbers. By 1860, Conroy-Krutz tells us, almost 1,300 ABCFM missionaries, more than 700 of whom were women, had fanned out across the globe and established 41 mission stations in foreign lands (4). Allied with them were hundreds of indigenous preachers and communicants who extended their work amongst local communities. These stations were bridgeheads from which missionaries proselytized, established schools, translated texts, and worked to convert foreign people to “both Protestant Christianity and an Anglo-American culture that they called civilization” (4). The work’s central argument flows from this prodigious activity. Missionaries were at the heart of the United States’ global connections and viewed “the world with the eyes of imperialists”; in the process they laid the foundations of “an evangelical Christian imperialist ideology” upon which the architecture of US imperial power was built (18).

Uniting these outposts was a community of prayer and a shared project of “Christian Imperialism.” The ABCFM’s missionaries “imagined a cooperative approach between missions and empire, whereby imperial expansion provided missionaries with access to the “heathen world” and missionaries helped to spread “civilization” along with Christianity’ (11-12). This was an Anglophile worldview that staked an aspirational claim of the centrality of American Christianity to ‘civilization’ but in practice entailed dependence on British imperial authority and the tolerance of rival British evangelists in colonial mission fields if it were to succeed. Throughout the volume, Conroy-Krutz discusses with admirable clarity the ambivalence felt by many Americans towards imperialism in the Early Republic, and demonstrates effectively the utility of such an approach to historians. Conroy-Krutz follows Paul Kramer’s recent advice to use imperialism as a tool of analysis for exploring the unequal power dynamics that enabled groups to exploit, discipline, and extract from others (10-11).² Through this framework, *Christian Imperialism* proceeds mostly as a series of paired case-

¹ Andrew Watson, *The American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1896* (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1904), 465-466.

² Paul Kramer, “Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World”, *American Historical Review* 116:5 (2011): 1348-1391.

study chapters: Chapters Two and Three focus on American missionary activity in India, Four and Five on the attempt to evangelize the Cherokee, while the final pair consider the transformation of the ABCFM's work in Liberia and Singapore. This, then, is a wide-ranging volume that joins a diverse collection of works that together are reorienting the historiography of the Antebellum Republic around its global connections.³

Britain now looms larger than ever before in scholarship on the Antebellum Republic. Recent works by Jack Greene, Sam Haynes, and Kariann Yokota have fruitfully reframed the Antebellum Republic as passing through a 'postcolonial' era as it navigated the transition from independence to nation-state.⁴ British imperial historians have joined this discussion too. P.J. Marshall's *Remaking the British Atlantic* argues that the vitality of transatlantic links were not only revived after the War of Independence, but were reinvigorated by Americans and Britons eager to maintain stable trading relations.⁵ Economically and culturally dependent on British products, the post-Independence United States is best considered, according to A.G. Hopkins, as Britain's "honorary dominion."⁶ *Christian Imperialism* provides fresh perspectives on these debates, but achieves much more than the mere addition of missionaries to the cast of non-state actors who drove the United States' engagement with foreign people, societies, and nations. Rather than a monolithic British Atlantic, Conroy-Krutz places Britain's imperial possessions at the centre of the United States' overseas connections. In the first instance, Britain's Empire opened new lands for evangelism for the ABCFM's "Anglophile Evangelicals" and provided a "model" of settler colonialism (207). ABCFM missionaries were not content to be mere houseguests under British rule, however, but instead attempted to "step in as the partners of Britain in bringing Anglo-American civilization along with evangelical Christianity to the world" (213). These claims are central to *Christian Imperialism* and suggest a profound reorientation of Antebellum diplomatic history – as such they will be the focus of the remainder of this review.

If, as political theorist and polymath Benjamin Franklin would have us believe, 'fish and visitors smell in three days,' how did ABCFM missionaries fare in the British Empire? As Conroy-Krutz makes clear, while "the British Empire created opportunities for American evangelicals, it presented problems as well" (58). These are

³ Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Eric Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York and London: Liveright Publication Corp., 2012).

⁴ Jack P. Greene, "Colonial History and National History: Reflections on a Continuing Problem," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64:2 (2007): 235-250; Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Kariann Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Religion has been a notable absence in this discussion so far, with the exception of Richard Carwardine's *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (London: Greenwood Press, 1978) – a fine transnational history that pre-dates current discussions.

⁵ Peter J. Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic: The United States and the British Empire after Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶ A.G. Hopkins, "The United States, 1783-1861: Britain's Honorary Dominion?" *Britain and the World* 4:2 (2011): 232-246.

probed throughout the volume, but in particular detail in case studies of India in Singapore. In both instances, ABCFM missionaries stepped into a fluid imperial context and attempted to carve out opportunities for American evangelism.

In Bombay, the site of the ABCFM's first mission in August 1812, American evangelicals encountered hostility from the East India Company whose officials enjoyed a close working relationship with Anglicanism, fretted about the destabilizing effect of missions on local religious leaders (and in turn their own profits), and were suspicious of American citizens thanks to the outbreak of the War of 1812 (53). Thus, in Conroy-Krutz's analysis, ABCFM missionaries were forced to be highly adaptable in order to work around the roadblocks thrown up by British rule. British missionaries were at times strong local allies, providing access to colonial officials and knowledge of germane conversion fields (65-6); in other instances, regional elites such as Evan Nepean and Stuart Elphinstone, who succeeded one another as Governor of Bombay, helped them to navigate the tense intersection of political and religious interests (69-71). Yet, in spite of this, the Americans found that for British officials "the prioritization of stability for commercial gain overwhelmed the goals of civilization and Christianity" (72).

In Singapore, it was the Board back home in Boston which nipped missionary ambitions in the bud. Seeking to take advantage of the port city's trading access, large population of Malay, Chinese, and Bugis migrants, and proximity to China, Ira Tracey, Daniel Bradley, and Peter Parker, the local ABCFM missionaries, proposed a far-reaching 'Christian Colony' in the area in 1836. Tracey, Bradley, and Parker proposed the settlement of twenty pious American families within the British colony that included clergymen, physicians, schoolteachers, craftsmen, and farmers who would act as a 'Christian example' to Singaporeans – and even rule the colony (90). The American Board vetoed the plan on the grounds that it imperiled the fragile cooperation it had secured across South Asia with British authorities (192-4). The proposal is perhaps best viewed as a tempest in a teacup – but Conroy-Krutz is right to remind historians of American imperialism that "some Americans were thinking in imperial terms even before the American entry into the Philippines in 1898" (204).

The ABCFM had more success with mission schools in both places. In India, though, ABCFM missionaries had achieved a paltry number of conversions (just ten former Hindus and fewer than five former Muslims by 1833), their schools reached more than 2,000 students from 40 locations (82, 73). Through education, the Board hoped to counter what it diagnosed as the most baneful social ills of Indian society (79-84): the caste system, idolatry, the practice of *sati* (the self-immolation of widows on their husband's funeral pyres), and hook vows (a form of spiritual thanksgiving in which individuals were raised off the ground on hooks passed through the flesh). Here, Conroy-Krutz reveals the transformation that British imperialism wrought upon missionary policy. In contrast to demands for immediate results from supporters in the United States, ABCFM missionaries preferred to work gradually through local educators such as Brahmins rather than impose values from above: "consciously or not, they adapted the British imperial policy of working through Indian institutions as they planned their long-term strategy for the conversion of India" (89). Similarly, in Singapore, although barred from establishing a formal colony, Tracey and his allies established local schools and a seminary. Mass audiences were reached through the printing press, however. Beginning in 1835, an astonishing two million pages were printed annually for the distribution of forty-four thousand tracts in Chinese, Malay, and Bugis – although the readership turned out to be significantly smaller (197). Intriguingly this printing activity was supported financially from 1834 by the American Tract Society and the American Bible Society – one wonders how often this form of cooperation occurred, or indeed whether the presence of one group of American missionaries acted as the portal for the entrance of further groups.

How are we to define this imperial world? *Christian Imperialism* undoubtedly provides a useful framework for understanding the actions of ABCFM missionaries, but analytically it opens as many questions as it answers. That American missionaries were co-evangelizers and at times co-opted British power Conroy-Krutz establishes beyond doubt, but were they co-colonizers? The closest the American Board came to being “a partner with the British in the work of world evangelization” (203) was in Singapore, where the ABCFM and the London Missionary Society cooperated over such matters as the opening of new American posts on Batavia and Prince of Wales Island (present day Jakarta and Penang Island respectively). But even here, the American missionaries were cautious junior partners. The export of American Christianity abroad was not simply a matter of white imperialists versus colonial subjects, as Ian Tyrrell has highlighted in his work on the late nineteenth century, but was often marred by tensions aroused by the attempts of American missionaries to impose their own moral standards upon fellow reformers.⁷ We learn a great deal about ABCFM conceptions of colonizer and the colonized, but how did it view its fellow missionaries? In India and Singapore, it appears, the London Missionary Society could be relied upon as a source of local knowledge and advice on missionary practice (65-6, 203) – but was this uniformly the case? And how did denominational rivalries affect these relationships?

How does this world of American evangelical endeavor alter our view of the United States’ global interactions? At most, the ABCFM’s global reach in this period mirrored the British Empire’s own limited reach before 1830. Geographically, “the missionary map followed the imperial map,” writes Conroy-Krutz (6), several features of which leap out from the case studies presented in the volume. The world of American Protestant evangelism outside of Europe and North America was an oceanic world, bounded by points of coastal access, extraction, and interaction. With the exception of Jalna and Ahmednugger in western India, the ABCFM’s evangelism rarely penetrated deep into British colonial hinterlands, and was strongest near port cities such as Calcutta and Port Natal; or along coastal regions where the imperial state was deepest and commercial connections most accessible such as on the Island of Singapore. As Conroy-Krutz argues, missionary activity depended upon access – and protection – and while this was interpreted as part of a providential” plan (209), it severely limited the penetration of American evangelicalism in the Antebellum era (more on this below).

Christian Imperialism thus connects the United States and the British Empire’s colonies in novel ways, moving historians away from the transatlantic treatment of Anglo-American relations that have previously dominated. Here historians of the Early Republic must reckon with several features of British imperialism and be wary of projecting the power of the Victorian Empire backwards. *Christian Imperialism* spans a transient phase in Britain’s imperial development. Between 1780 and 1830, the British Empire was undergoing an extraordinary transformation from a jumble of territories picked up from eighteenth-century wars and ruled by powerful private stock companies to the beginnings of a ‘British World’ of settler dominions bound together by shared cultural connections and buttressed by a heavily industrialized domestic economy, Army, and Navy. What the British lost in North America they regained in their ‘second’ empire on the Indian sub-continent, over which they achieved complete dominance with the defeat of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818. To this, Britain added the Cape Colony, Penang, Eastern Australia, Malta, Trinidad, and Mauritius – and they ejected the French from Egypt and Syria. Industrialization changed the equation of imperial power: before 1830, an abundance of coercive force was required to repel internal and external threats; after

⁷ Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America’s Moral Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

industrialization the global projection of imperial power was made easier by new technologies of transportation, communication, and warfare. None of this proceeded from a coherent plan invented in Whitehall.

This view of British imperialism has major implications for American historians' understanding of the imperial world which was encountered by citizens of the Early Republic. First, aware of the contingency of British rule, alert to the weakness of their own grip on power, and sensitive to the vulnerabilities of Britain's exposed imperial frontiers, British officials surely found American reformers a distraction at best. Further voices from members of the British imperial bureaucracy (such as colonial governors and their staff, members of the Colonial and Foreign Offices, possibly even the British Army) would help the reader to fill out the geo-strategic and commercial imperatives at stake for the British in the regions where ABCFM missionaries evangelized. Second, because British expansion did not occur according to any plan housed in the Colonial Office, it was easily shaped by imperial lobbies in London. Did the American Board act as a similar lobby on British policymakers? Did their success depend upon access to sympathetic individuals in London, or intermediaries from British missionary societies? Here the transatlantic element of this story may surface more strongly. The volume's "Prologue" tells the story of Adoniram Judson, an ordained Board Missionary and graduate of the Andover Theological Seminary, who travelled to London to secure permission to open an American Mission in India – but who did Judson meet? Was a pre-emptive meeting in London standard practice amongst ABCFM missionaries, or did this develop after the initial frustrations of the 1810s? How important were pre-existing denominational links in facilitating this process? Later, the Atlantic is referred to as a "gateway" (208) to the British Empire – if so, in what ways?

These queries are not intended to detract from a volume of such wide ranging ambition and scope. In fact, they are suggestive of the many avenues opened by *Christian Imperialism*. This is a fine work of transnational history (one among many of Cornell University Press's ever-impressive "United States in the World" series) that places alternative conceptions of empire at the heart of historians' discussion of U.S. statecraft. As such it deserves, and undoubtedly will attract, a wide readership amongst historians of the Antebellum Republic.

Review by Kariann Yokota, University of Colorado Denver

God Deployed in the Service of Empire or Empire Deployed in the Service of God?

Historians of the Early Republic, like the nineteenth-century Protestant Christian missionaries that are the focus of this study, are increasingly moving from a domestic ‘field of labor’ to embrace global perspectives. Emily Conroy-Krutz’s *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* surveys the scope of early American missionary work from the early nineteenth century to the U.S.-Mexican War. The book argues that the missionaries’ efforts shaped Americans’ views about the wider world and their nation’s place within it.

Christian Imperialism is part of a growing number of monographs that recognize the significant impact of global encounters on the development of the United States. It is a fitting addition to the well-curated *United States in the World* series edited by Mark Philip Bradley, David C. Engerman, Amy S. Greenberg and Paul A. Kramer. The book is grounded in archival research while also displaying theoretical sophistication and knowledge of the various historiographical debates that inform it.

This book will elicit the interest of academics across many fields because it teases out the complex relationship between organized religion and the political agendas of imperially motivated nation-states. Conroy-Krutz establishes the ways in which Western missionary societies benefitted from the aggressive political agendas of their home countries as they followed in the wake of imperialist forces. By focusing her lens on the work of missionaries, the author is able to tease out the ways in which the goals of the American Protestant community and the agenda of the U.S. government both coincided and conflicted throughout the period in question. As she puts it “The Christian imperialism of the missionaries of the early republic consistently came up against the empires of governments, but it represented a significant vision for a global America” (204).

Given the momentous nature of the nation-building project, historians of the Early Republic have traditionally focused on internal issues and continental expansion. The development of transatlantic studies over the past several decades nudged domestically-centered scholars of the Early Republic across national borders, priming them to embrace increasingly broader perspectives.

This widening analytical scope has produced scholarship that situates early American history within a global context. By doing so, these studies provide new insights into the development of the nation. Conroy-Krutz notes that, “(f)oreign missionaries are an essential group for understanding the ways that Americans lived in the world during this era” because they “helped determine foreign relations” in a period in which very few of their countrymen lived abroad. (3) The wider world that these idealistic and globally oriented American missionaries encountered was defined and delineated by empires. Western nations established inroads into distant locations where the ‘heathen’ others that were sought after by Christian missionaries dwelled.

Perhaps somewhat ironically for a people who had recently fought for independence from the British Empire, Americans emulated Great Britain in many respects, including missionary work. Hoping to gain recognition of their nation on the world stage, missionaries followed in the footsteps of their counterparts in the mother country. Initially, American missionaries traveled as guests upon the trails forged by the British Empire to places such as India and Singapore. Established commercial and political networks provided convenient conduits for missionary work. As the title of the book’s second chapter, “Missions on the British model” explicitly indicates, the younger missionary movement in America consciously modeled itself on its more well-

established British counterpart. In an age of empire building, Christian missionaries were frequently called upon to grapple with the conflicting mandates of God and country.

Identities are fluid, and people can inhabit more than one at any given time.

For instance, members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) simultaneously identified as U.S. citizens and members of an Anglo-American evangelical network. In the years following the Revolution, Americans who were active in global networks encountered their more established British counterparts everywhere they went. As Conroy-Krutz notes, “they were both evangelical Christians who saw themselves as transnational figures taking part in a global struggle for God’s kingdom and Americans whose national pride called them to partner with Great Britain in the conversion of the world.” (5)

These dual roles often created tensions between the missionaries’ religious and national identities and they “struggled with the relationship of religion to culture, and of the missions to government” (213). Ultimately, American missionaries’ hoped that “a kind of Christian imperialism” would define the role of the U.S. in the world. Their relationship to established and formal governments, and their connection between culture and Christianity, continued to plague the mission movement throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (212).

Religion, politics, and culture were inextricably linked in the activities of the missionaries. The ABCFM’s mandate to spread Christianity and Western civilization to the ‘heathens’ of the world was inarguably “dependent on the expansion of British and American power overseas” (209). The book makes clear the links between religious conversion and commercial and imperial expansion. After all, missionaries followed in the wake of merchants and diplomats. Their version of imperialism that prioritized religious conversion and “civilizing” efforts over formal political intervention often ran afoul of the priorities of the British government (for instance in the case of missions in India and Singapore) as well as the U.S. government (in the case of the Cherokee Nation). In the end, “missionaries were not primarily focused on the spread of Anglo-American governance; they were concerned with the spread of Anglo-American culture and the Protestant religion, seeing governance as a tool in this larger project” (11). Idealistic as they were, the missionaries still realized that in order to spread the Gospel across the whole of the globe, they were dependent upon their governments.

Broadly speaking, this book can be viewed as a meditation on Americans’ conflicted relationship with imperialism in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Like many of their fellow citizens, American missionaries displayed an “ambivalence about imperialism” (7). To understand this complex relationship, the author draws upon academic insights regarding settler colonialism, empire, and racial theory to analyze the copious records of the missionaries and their parent organization, the ABCFM.¹

¹ See for instance, Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *American Umpire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison of North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” in *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23-67; Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Ian Tyrell and Jay Sexton, eds. *Empire’s Twin: U.S. Anti-Imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Kariann Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America*

One of the most fruitful outcomes of the scholarly pursuit of global perspectives is the new insight they provide on the history of race relations and racism in this period. In the case of this particular study, Conroy-Krutz presents in Chapter One what she calls a “hierarchy of heathenism” to explain how missionaries organized the world they encountered in the course of their travels. Racial theories were in transition during the early nineteenth century “as racial theories began moving closer to more biological and fixed conceptions of race and human difference” (41). Theorists struggled to explain the vast racial differences Westerners encountered in a rapidly globalizing world that was defined by exploration, imperialism, and colonization.

Anglo-American missionaries adopted this “hierarchy of heathenism” and then worked within its parameters as they developed their plans to convert the world. This hierarchy ranked people and societies on a linear order, ranging from heathenism to enlightened Christian civilization. It placed them according to what the missionaries judged to be their “level of civilization or depravity, with the ultimate goal of determining who would be most likely to be converted by missionary evangelism” (20).

Not all missions were created equal in this period of nation and empire building. Each of the book’s chapters focuses upon a different location on the widening American missionary map. Different types of missionary settlements and proselytizing programs were established in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. In Hawaii (known then as the Sandwich Islands) and when working with the Cherokee Nation, American missionaries enjoyed the cooperation of local leaders to create settlement-style missions. The author describes the settler colony in Liberia as an attempt to create a “foreign solution to the domestic problem of slavery” (153).

When establishing each of their missions, Americans were forced to adapt to prevailing political, military, and commercial exigencies in every location they encountered. In order to attain their religious goals, missionaries realized that whether they liked it or not, they had to consort with both American and British governments as well as the native populations they hoped to convert. In their efforts to save souls, missionaries often found themselves in the middle of government and commercial desires and those of the native peoples themselves.

It is the voice of the potential converts that has yet to be heard. The most urgent task of future global studies of the Early Republic is to recover the perspectives of the so-called ‘others’ who took part in the global encounters of Americans. Their perspectives are sorely lacking. When Conroy-Krutz states that it is “important to remember that these were dynamic encounters in which the so-called heathens were active participants who helped shape American perceptions of the world”, she is identifying the most serious challenge for studies such as hers. (16-17) As Native-Studies scholars have long argued and shown in their work, a more balanced view of these interactions is long overdue.

The obstacles for writing global histories that strive to equally consider the native perspectives are admittedly many. They include language barriers and a lack of the types of written archival sources that most historians are versed in locating and trained to analyze. While the missionaries and their parent organization, the ABCFM, left behind ample archival evidence with which to work, many of the societies they encountered did

Became a Postcolonial Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Rosemary Zagari, “The Significance of the ‘Global Turn’ for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31:1 (Spring 2011): 1-37.

not leave written records. Primary sources elucidating the perspectives of the ‘natives,’ then, are extremely hard to find and so historians must seek to uncover and utilize non-traditional oral or material sources.

One can catch fleeting glimpses of the native perspectives in instances of their subtle and not-so-subtle push-back against the missionaries’ agendas. This tension is reflected in missionaries’ debates about the ‘meaning of conversion’ and the questions raised about the ‘true conversion’ of natives. Missionaries’ doubts lingered even when natives declared themselves converts. After all, “conversion was a tricky thing to measure” (76). In India, some natives chose to “incorporate their new faith into their old tradition” (77). Others were happy to receive the knowledge offered by the schools’ that missionaries established while remaining wary of religious conversion. “If missionaries struggles to find converts,” notes Conroy-Krutz, “they did not struggle to find students” (85). In this way and in others, “native Indians shaped the missionary project to their own interests” while “American missionaries desperately sought to remain fixed in their work” (75). As this book shows in multiple contexts and through multiple examples, despite the condescending attitudes of the missionaries, natives did not passively accept efforts to ‘civilize’ them. As readers will see, projects in the name of Christian imperialism, like all other types of colonial encounters, were two-sided affairs that significantly changed both the missionaries and their potential converts alike.

Author's Response by Emily Conroy-Krutz, Michigan State University

I would like to begin with genuine thanks to Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable, and to the participants for their thoughtful and engaged reviews. Katherine Carté Engel, Nicholas Guyatt, Stephen Tuffnell, and Kariann Yokota are ideal commentators for this work, coming as they are from the various subfields that *Christian Imperialism* attempts to integrate. It is a real treat to have a virtual conversation about the book with scholars whose work I admire so much.

Christian Imperialism recounts the first several decades of American foreign missionary activity, from the 1790s through the 1840s, with a focus on what this movement reveals about evangelical Americans' vision for the role of their new country on the world stage. It is part of a growing historiography that rethinks the way that historians have traditionally understood this period in relation to American engagement with the world. The reviewers all do an excellent job of describing the book's scope and its contributions to the historiographies of American diplomatic history, the history of the Early Republic, and American religious history. It was extremely gratifying to see them each focus on different aspects of the book, but generally agree on the value of thinking about missionaries and their 'hierarchy of heathenism' in our discussions of the history of foreign relations in this era. In this response, I will address some of the questions and thoughts for future work that emerge out of these reviews.

With a book titled "Christian Imperialism," I am obviously engaged in the project of thinking about American approaches to empire and imperialism, which came up in the reviews of both Guyatt and Tuffnell. There are several imperialisms in action here: the British Empire, which as Tuffnell usefully discusses, was itself in a state of flux and transition at this moment; a nascent American empire, which as Guyatt describes, was largely continental and settler colonial in its form; and this Christian imperialism, which was an imagined model that the missionaries embraced. It understood political empire as a tool of evangelism, and asserted that Christian nations (and they thought both Britain and America fit this definition) ought to have Christian empires. Taking these missionaries seriously as participants in the conversation about America's place in the world at this time reveals this third category and highlights the ways that continental empire was not the only kind of empire that Americans could imagine at this time, as well as the ways that the British Empire served as a model, not a counter-example, for some Americans in this moment. Much of the book is an exploration of how this imagined imperialism came into conflict with the real political and commercial empires that missionaries encountered through their work around the world.

Tuffnell asks a series of excellent questions about the nature of the Anglo-American connections in the Board's work. "That American missionaries were co-evangelizers and at times co-opted British power Conroy-Krutz establishes beyond doubt," Tuffnell writes, "but were they co-colonizers?" This is a great question. If by co-colonizers, Tuffnell means equal partners in the work of colonization, then certainly not. Part of what is so interesting about this moment is the impossibility of such a partnership—the United States simply did not have the power to act on a world stage in the same way as Great Britain. American missionaries' opportunities were shaped by this basic fact. And yet, Americans did see themselves as partners to the British in this work. As Tuffnell suggests, they were junior partners for sure, but partners nonetheless. Americans may have been only a 'minor distraction' for the British officials who were engaged in the work of building and solidifying their empire in the regions in which the missionaries worked, but the British loomed large in Americans' eyes. Part of my argument here is about the ways that American evangelicals understood this work as being partly about claiming equality with Britain. National and religious identities took precedence at different times, but one of the central claims of the foreign mission project in this moment was that the United States, as an

independent country, was now able (and indeed, duty-bound) to take part in the global moral and evangelistic work in which their British peers were engaged.

On this point, Tuffnell's question of how American missionaries viewed fellow missionaries, including British ones, is interesting. The intra-reform tensions that are so important in Tyrrell's work are less important in this era, again largely because of the lack of stability for the American presence. Americans were indeed critical of other reformers at times, usually across denominational lines, but this period saw more of an emphasis on a shared identity as fellow Christians who were collectively trying to change both the places where they were active and at times the structures of imperial power that governed them. India, for example, saw the formation of a Missionary Union that was international and multi-denominational in its membership. The Sandwich Islands missionaries, too, corresponded with British missionaries in the region. And of course the Board itself corresponded regularly with the London Missionary Society throughout these years on a range of topics, with real friendships developing among the leaders of the groups (68). But denominational differences did matter. While the Board's missionaries were generally respectful and appreciative of the expertise of British Baptist missionaries such as William Carey, they separated American Baptists into a distinct missionary body. Real theological differences divided them even as they adopted many similar policies and worked without competition in these years. The Board missionaries' writings on the Church of England in India are perhaps most to the point here. American missionaries could be quite critical of what they saw, comparing the worship ritual to that of the Catholics (never a good sign from this group) and criticizing what they saw as an over-commitment to the Empire in place of the Church. The Board and its missionaries generally got along much better with the missionaries of the London Society, who shared their theological viewpoint. As the mission movement grew later in the century, conflicts were more common, usually arising over one group's assertions that another was interfering with its work in a particular location. To avoid these conflicts, American and British missionary organizations became more likely to divide space among themselves, assigning particular locations to particular organizations.

Foreign missions are a rich topic for exploring alternate perspectives on the history of America in the world. As Guyatt's comparison of my work with Christine Heyrman's wonderful *American Apostles* suggests, there is a lot to say about these missionaries in this era, and a range of ways to rethink how we might integrate missions into U.S. history more generally.¹ My approach here was to try and recreate what the mission movement writ large looked like to its supporters in the early nineteenth century. In *Christian Imperialism*, I try to reconstruct their map of the whole world—what places seemed more important than others and why, how incredibly diverse spaces seemed logically connected to each other in the missionary mindset, and where the United States fit into a global order.

As Yokota points out in her review, this choice does constrain other options. Since my interest was in reconstructing an imagined global order created by American evangelicals, I spent less time here focusing on the native response to the missionaries' actions. I agree wholeheartedly that a necessary area for further research is to examine the perspectives of those whom the missionaries sought to convert. The very nature of that kind of study, which often requires multi-lingual research among other things, tends to limit the

¹ Christine Heyrman, *American Apostles: When Evangelicals Entered the World of Islam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015)

geographic scope of the study.² Since I wanted to get at a more comparative focus of the American view of the world, I did not do as much here on the dynamics between missionary and would-be-convert as a scholar with different research questions might have done. In my chapter on mission schools and conversion, though, I do discuss the ways that missionaries and converts talked about the mission's work at Bombay. Through a close reading of the memoir of Babajee, a Brahmin convert at the Bombay mission, I discuss the ways that missionaries used his story and that of his wife to tell their American readers a particular story about conversion, civilization, and the way that God worked in the world to advance Christianity in places like India. I also, though, suggest that we can read this mediated source against the grain to identify some of the ways that Babajee had his own understanding of what it meant to be a Christian and to work for the mission that differed from the ways that missionaries packaged his tale (91-101). I look forward to future research that does more than I was able to in this project to examine these kinds of dynamics and advance our understanding of what American missions meant for those who were on their receiving end.

Guyatt raises some important questions about the Cherokee case in particular and whether the removal crisis challenged the Board's thinking about empire around the world in the following years. As he suggests, discussion of the Cherokee in Liberia "might clinch the book's argument that missionaries learned some tough lessons about empire from President Andrew Jackson." Yet Guyatt wants to see more sources indicating the "synoptic view" that I argue the Board had for its overseas work, particularly in the case of Liberia. As I discuss throughout the book, we can see this view when the Board provided instructions to new missionaries and regularly encouraged them to peruse the instructions to previous missions, even to very different locations. We can see it in the Monthly Concert of Prayer, which was intended to spiritually unite supporters of the movement around the world as they prayed for each other. We can see it, also, in the publications of the Board, which regularly described the diverse activities of the mission movement side by side, and clearly understood them all to be related. The Board, particularly in these early years when a single corresponding secretary was responsible for all of the missions around the world, understood its global work to be connected.

Accordingly, crises in one location tended to have significance for other places. The crisis over Cherokee removal absolutely marked the beginning of a move towards a very different conception of the role of missions in the world. While individual missionaries well into the later nineteenth (and even twentieth) century would continue to embrace some of the ideas that motivated this first generation of missionaries, the official policy of the Board was quite different and revealed an end to the idea of American missionaries as partners in empire. In my chapter on Liberia, I discuss some of the ways that the beginning of this shift shaped missionary policy in Cape Palmas. The Cherokee and Liberian examples pair very nicely for this question for many reasons, including the fact that the missionaries in each space were partnering with American agents of empire. In the Cherokee case, this was the U.S. government in the years before removal; in the Liberian case, it was the officers of the Maryland Colonization Society. In both situations, the Board initially expected significant overlap in its priorities and those of the relevant government. Of course we know the story of how this fell apart in North America.

² Excellent examples of this location-focused approach include Usamma Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) and Jennifer Thigpen, *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

Guyatt is right to expect some agonizing over the Board's decision to shift mission policy toward removal. As I discuss in the book, both missionaries in the field and the Board in Boston experienced internal dissent at the time (143-149). In fact, it was those agonizing discussions that would have made later references to the Cherokee example particularly striking for the Board's leaders. In Liberia, as tensions emerged between the colony, the missionaries, and the Grebo, both colonists and missionaries referred to the Cherokee example as an analogy. As Guyatt points out in his review, this happens in only a few sources, but there are enough that we need to pay very close attention to them. The invocation of the Cherokee example by the Liberian colonists was striking and inflammatory enough to the missionaries that they reported it back to the Board in Boston in their regular dispatches. Later, the missionaries themselves repeated the comparison as part of a critical commentary on what they saw as the harmful behavior of Liberian colonists towards the Grebo (167-170). The situations in Liberia and Georgia were in fact quite different; it is significant that both missionaries and colonists used the Cherokee as a point of comparison. It is also significant that these arguments helped convince the Board to remove its missionaries from Liberia and to relocate them to Gabon, which was then independent. I find the discussion of the Cherokee example in Liberia to be a useful way of understanding the shifting ways that missionaries approached their work in West Africa, as well as the ways that they would go on to think about their work in Singapore and elsewhere around the world. Scholars are only beginning to uncover the many links between Indian removal and colonization. Between my work, Guyatt's recent book, and recent and forthcoming work by Brandon Mills, I imagine that we will be having many fruitful conversations about these topics in the years to come.³

Engel's comments focus on the place of this book in the historiography of American religion. Her piece considers the two central questions that emerge from writing a history that is at once religious and international in its focus: what difference does religion make to the history of America in the world, and what difference does the global context make to a history of American religion? I am deeply flattered to hear Engel say that the book "demonstrates with clarity that attention to the ideas and actions of religious communities must play an important part of placing the Early Republic in a global perspective," as this was one of my major goals with the book. The second question, as she suggests, is tricky, and should remind us of the divisions within American Christianity in the early republic. The differences between the narrative of American religion that emerges from Christian Imperialism is different than the narrative of revolutionary-era Methodist Francis Asbury that she lays out here largely due to denominational, geographic, and political divisions among American Christians in this period, as Engel points out. The Board was built by Anglophilic Presbygationalist Federalists who occupy a particular place in American religious history as the leaders of the "Benevolent Empire" of the Board, the Tract Society, the Bible Society, and other similar groups in this era. Missionaries in the field had different perspectives than the Board did in Boston, as domestic politics and religious concerns animated the Board's directors more than it did its missionaries (Jeremiah Evarts, for example, wrote extensively to the missionaries in India about the threat of Unitariansim in Boston. I have not seen any evidence that they responded with any commentary on the issue.)

The questions Engel brings up about the ways that the missionaries' Anglophilia fit in with their fellows at home goes beyond religious history to a general issue of where these missionaries fit in with our general understanding of the Early Republic and the ample Anglophobia of the second quarter of the century. The

³ Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Brandon Mills, "'The United States of Africa': Liberian Independence and the Contested Meaning of a Black Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34:1 (Spring 2014): 79-108.

book will be read, I hope, alongside the growing transnational historiography of the Early Republic to help answer questions about how the United States emerged as an independent nation on the world stage. The missionaries and their supporters that I discuss in *Christian Imperialism* do not stand in for the entire country. They had a particular vision for what America might be that was shaped by their religious perspective. But it was a well-articulated vision that spoke not only to the missionaries who actually went out into the field, but also to the significant number of Americans at home who supported their work through financial contributions and prayer.

This book is about what early republican missionaries saw when they looked out at the world and what this can tell us about their vision for their country. It examines early American thinking about empire and nation, about the place of the United States in the world, and the ways that Americans thought about race, culture, and civilization. The questions raised by Guyatt, Tuffnell, Engel, and Yokota suggest many of the exciting directions for further research that await scholars of diplomatic and religious history. I am looking forward to pursuing some of them in my own future work, and to reading the work of others who take up these themes.