RESEARCH ARTICLE

Immobile Global: Christian Globalism at Home in the United States

Hillary Kaell

ABSTRACT Drawing on research with Christian child sponsors in the United States, this article explores the everyday techniques that work global commitments into being. It argues that global projects are compelling in how they tack back and forth between states associated with differing scales: the "immensity" of a God's-eye view and a grounded view of human relatedness. Both are emotive and often embodied forms; however, the former lifts one outside humanness, while the latter seems to deepen connections with people far away. These modes are illustrated through the Christian use of statistical aesthetics and foodways. In the process, this article seeks to undo the persistent assumption that being global is natural to contemporary US evangelicalism. At a broader level, it contributes to a growing body of work that positions "transcendental orientations" (Keane 2015) as integral to the "world-making" (Tsing 2005) through which people make and imagine global connections, whether they travel or not. [*globalization, embodiment, humanitarianism, Christianity, United States*]

RESUMEN Basado en investigaciones sobre patrocinadores infantil Cristianos en los Estados Unidos, este artículo explora las técnicas cotidianas que hacen compromisos globales lo que son. Este argumenta que los proyectos globales son contundentes en cómo alternar vistas entre estados asociados con escalas que difieren: la "inmensidad" de una vista del ojo de Dios y una vista basada en la relacionalidad humana. Ambas son formas emotivas y a menudo corporeizadas; sin embargo, la primera lo asciende a uno fuera de lo humano, mientras la última parece profundizar las conexiones con las personas en la lejanía. Estos modos son ilustrativos a través del uso cristiano de la estética estadística y las prácticas culinarias y hábitos alimenticios. En el proceso, este artículo busca deshacer la asunción persistente que ser global es natural al evangelismo estadounidense contemporáneo. A un nivel más amplio, contribuye al cuerpo creciente de trabajo que posiciona las "orientaciones trascendentales" (Keane 2015) como integral al "hacer el mundo" (Tsing 2005) a través del cual las personas hacen e imaginan las conexiones globales, bien sea que viajen o no. [*globalización, corporeización, humanitarismo, cristianismo, Estados Unidos*]

Susan and her prayer group meet once a week in the cozy library of their nondenominational evangelical church in San Jose, California. When I arrived on a cold evening in May 2014, the seven women had already formed a circle around a standing globe. "I like to settle into it," Susan said, perhaps for my benefit. She paused and spun the globe. We watched the colored countries blur together. Susan's hands hovered a few inches above, fingers spread slightly in the position that Charismatic Christians often use to pray over each other. "Dear Father," she began an extempore prayer, "You see all the people in the world. You love them and care for them." Then she plunged her index finger down and arrested the motion of the globe. Her finger landed on Southeast Asia. A woman called out a prayer for sex-trafficking victims, a hot topic among US evangelicals. We laid our hands on the globe as she prayed aloud. Then she spun again to pinpoint

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another place and another prayer. I left San Jose shortly after, but that evening helped crystallize something for me: feeling "global" is not a free-floating attribute of contemporary evangelical identity. It uses specific techniques and requires regular cultivation.

I first met Susan when I volunteered at an event in her church for Compassion International, a sponsorship organization that supports over two million children worldwide. Since its inception two centuries ago in Protestant missions, child sponsorship has become an enormously popular fundraising tool, especially in the Protestant-inflected cultures of Western Europe, North America, and Australia (Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge 2013, 401). Sponsorship plans request a defined contribution to provide ongoing support for an individual abroad, with some promise of communication between donors and recipients. Today, most plans cost about forty US dollars a month, and about nine million children are supported globally. It is arguably the most profitable private Christian fundraising tool, generating approximately 3 billion dollars each year (Wydick et al. 2013, 394). Demographically speaking, Susan was representative of US individuals who support this system. Like many sponsors, she was middle-aged, white, and married with children (who, in her case, were grown).[1] Susan was also typical in another way that is especially relevant here. As we chatted, I asked her if she had traveled abroad. She had been to Canada and twice to Western Europe. But she also felt connected to many places where she had no intention of going. She supported a Christian ministry in Thailand and was following news about Egyptian Copts because she was concerned for their safety. She sponsored a child in Rwanda and another in Tanzania. And, of course, there was her weekly global prayer group.

Americans like Susan have too rarely figured as central in anthropological work on Christians and globalization. In studies of the rapid rise of evangelical and Pentecostal churches worldwide, US people appear regularly, but they are generally members of a select club—traveling missionaries and celebrity pastors (e.g., Coleman 2000; Frederick 2016; O'Neill 2010, 188–92). The growing literature on US Christians' own global engagements, although it by no means ignores home audiences, also tends to converge around people who travel—missionaries and short-term missionaries, humanitarians, pastors, migrants, or, in my own earlier work, tourists and pilgrims (Bornstein 2005; Halvorson 2018; Howell 2012; Kaell 2014, McAlister 2018).[2] Yet here is the thing: although systemic conditions clearly differ, most US Americans are in fact typical of the vast majority of the world's people who imagine a "global space" that is not personally experienced (Beliso-De Jesus 2013, 705; Bornstein 2006, 85; Coleman 2013, 385). Few US people travel abroad regularly, and when they do, they generally limit those trips to North America, the Caribbean, and Western Europe. In short, Susan is the norm. The relative immobility of US Americans should therefore be central in our analysis of their global commitments.[3]

Although this article discusses child sponsorship, the goal is not to paint a comprehensive portrait of that particular fundraising tool. Instead, I position sponsorship as a window onto the globalism of "immobile" people; it lends itself well to this task, since only about 1 percent of US sponsors actually meet the child they support.[4] In exploring sponsorship, then, this article clarifies something important about American Protestants—a not insignificant task given their centrality in studies of global Christian growth. At a broader level, it contributes to an expanding body of work that highlights how what has been variously called "transcendental orientations" (Keane 2015, 216) or "cosmovisions" (Pennock and Power 2018) is integral to the "world-making" (Tsing 2005) through which people create and imagine global connections, whether they are travelers or not.[5] Such cosmological orientations are not limited to Christians—the studies just cited discuss communists, ancient Aztecs, and ecological activists. There is overlap, too, with studies that track legal institutions that claim "universal jurisdiction" (Teitel 2005) and humanitarians or governments that claim to act in the name of "humanity" (Fassin 2011, xii; Feldman and Ticktin 2010, 5). What I call *Christian globalism* is a variant—and, in the West, often the root—of such "oneness" ideologies (Malkki 2015, 79). The term "globalism" itself, drawn from Anna Tsing (2000), refers here to a cluster of ideas, embodied activities, structures of feeling, and social connections that, for Christians, emerge from the understanding that one God created all human beings and will be their eventual judge. Like all forms of globalism, the Christian variant takes shape within specific cultural and institutional structures (Meyer 2010), such as child sponsorship.

While I am inspired by previous work on "cosmovisions" and "oneness" ideology, the everyday sort of commitments I track lead me to focus more particularly on how globalism is instantiated through regular embodied techniques.[6] Activities, such as spinning a globe to pray over it, are often noted as aides to global projects; here I position them as central. There are important precedents for this approach to the material and sensory aspects of global engagements (Coleman 2000, 61; Coleman 2013, 381; Halvorson 2018; Malkki 2015; McAlister 2018). Particularly in more recent studies, this emphasis owes much to the anthropological turn to self-making, which explores how bodily disciplines may be consciously undertaken to cultivate changed attitudes (e.g., Mahmood 2005). In terms of Christianity, this framework has been useful in understanding why people engage in "purposeful acts" (Elisha 2016) of "free-will" voluntarism and charity (Muehlebach 2012, 7–8; O'Neill 2013). Sponsorship certainly falls into these categories, but here I focus on self-making to a somewhat different end: I explore what it reveals about the process of making and

remaking global commitments (Englund 2005; Ho 2005) through the bodies of Christian donors at home.

Most US sponsors "feel global" only sporadically, triggered by receiving a letter from the child they support or seeing something on the news. My first, overarching point is that they also cultivate such moments of intensity by engaging in embodied techniques. As a result, this article focuses away from sponsorship organizations' internal workings or the legacy of visual media campaigns featuring sad-eyed, emaciated children. These topics are well covered elsewhere (Bornstein 2005; Fieldston 2015; King 2019; O'Neill 2013; Zarzycka 2016). It also reorients the extensive literature on humanitarianism's rhetorical and visual use of the universalized suffering body (Stephens 1995; Ticktin 2017b, 287) to recognize the importance, for home audiences, of their own bodies as instruments with the capacity to "feel" in much broader terms. In other words, sponsorship does not just picture bodies abroad but also mobilizes bodies at home to express and champion some of Christianity's "biggest world-making dreams and schemes" (Tsing 2000, 347).

My second, more specific point has to do with the quality of that world-making: US sponsors instantiate globalism through sensory engagements of *differing scales*, namely the immensity of a god's-eye view from on high and a grounded view of human relatedness. Feelings associated with immensity may be evoked through, for example, participating in exercises with world maps or singing a hymn online at the same time as thousands of other believers. The affective charge comes from recognizing the presence of a God that can encompass so much at once. The other part of the equation—the intimacy of human relations—is, at first glance, more familiar in child sponsorship: it is the individual profile or photo and the specific prayers it calls forth. In fact, globally minded Christians seek out immense and intimate modes of engagement, tacking back and forth between them. Some of the most successful and long-lasting techniques combine both: one spins a globe and stands above it before arresting its motion to say a particular prayer for a particular place.

My five-year study (2012–2017) of sponsorship utilized mixed methodologies, including archival research and fieldwork. Among other activities, I spent five months in residence at four sponsorship organizations' offices, participated in church programming related to sponsorship, volunteered with organizational outreach teams, and recorded long-form conversations with 118 sponsors. Here I focus on research related to World Vision US (WV) and Compassion International, which were the most evangelical of the organizations I studied, as well as the largest, with over a million US sponsors each.[7] Both organizations, and especially World Vision, draw supporters from a variety of churches. Many of those I got to know self-defined as "born-again" and attended churches called "evangelical," but I also worked with liberal ("mainline") Christians, as noted below. When I discuss "US Christians," then, I refer to those sponsors with whom I worked who shared a sense of global mindedness, as expressed through their decision to support World Vision or Compassion.[8] The article begins by briefly elaborating the structure of Christian globalism as I observed it, attending to its racialized aspects. I then turn to two popular sets of techniques through which sponsors cultivate a god's-eye view and a human scale, respectively: statistical aesthetics and foodways. Throughout, but especially at the end, I underline the persistent tensions embedded in a reliance on the body to reify God's immensity and other people's experiences.

STRUCTURING GLOBALISM THROUGH CHILD SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is commonly associated with images of destitute children and hyperbolic slogans: "For just pennies a day, *you* can save her!" As an extensive literature on visual imagery in modern humanitarianism shows, Enlightenment thinking privileged sight as the best tool for creating "sympathy" with distant sufferers (Boltanski 1999; Halttunen 1995; Malkki 2010). A product of the early nineteenth century, sponsorship championed this new sensibility and incorporated photographs when the technology became available. Especially since the 1990s, scholars have published significant, often biting, criticism of its emotionally and racially charged images of poverty (Burman 1994, 247; Moeller 1999, 9; Zarzycka 2016). Previous studies of US sponsorship have also tied it closely to particular periods, viewing it as indicative of a paternalistic ethos in US foreign relations in the 1950s (Fieldston 2015) or an individualistic neoliberal one since the 1980s (O'Neill 2013).

While I do not disagree with these assessments, per se, my long-term comparative approach reveals something more basic about its substructure: sponsorship organizations and their donors have honed an array of techniques beyond much-studied forms of visual media to augment the intensity of a particular form of universalism expressed through US Christian conceptions of body, self, and soul. As noted, at the heart of this process is the interaction of scales that we can shorthand here as immensity (a god's-eye view) and particularity (a human-to-human approach). The relation between these modes of engagement is rarely remarked upon, since studies of globalization generally view immensity as detrimental to the human capacity to act. Scholars argue that the scale of global objects, like climate change, "humiliates" humans by creating feelings of weakness, lameness, and terror (Morton 2013), or that the avalanche of numbers related to global "poverty, profit, and predation … threaten to kill all street-level optimism about life and the world" (Appadurai 2013, 299). While immensity can indeed create hopelessness, I have observed that it can also produce a "quake in being" (Morton 2013) and a "pleasurable swept-up-ness" (McAlister 2008, 881). It makes possible the awe, euphoria, and humiliation (in a theological sense) that for Christians

hold the potential to supersede the merely human scale and glimpse the massive work of God.

However, if one is a Christian intent on co-laboring with God, one cannot end there. Sponsorship promises a particular, even intimately one-to-one, connection with a person far away. This ideal derives its structuring logic from the biblical example of the apostle Paul, who sent letters to people in places such as Corinth and Galatia to help them build their faith. Likewise, sponsorship implies that, to use emic language, a "mature" Christian in the West can provide spiritual and material "encouragement" to a new Christian (or potential Christian) abroad. The genius of early sponsorship was that it yoked this concept to what historians often call "sentimental" Christianity, which was also developing in the first half of the nineteenth century (Brenneman 2013; Rabinowitz 1989). This now ubiquitous mode of US Christianity emphasizes bodily reflexes as a site of deep, intuitive knowing; it is how many Christians, and especially evangelicals, are taught to know that God is with them in worship and prayer (Bielo 2018, 108; Luhrmann 2012) and to recognize if they have a "heart" (strong interest) for an activity or cause (McAlister 2008). Sentimentalism made human bodies central conduits for feeling global intimacy, first, because such connections, once sensed in a sponsor's body, seemed to be affirmed by God, and second, because human bodies were understood to share basic sensory cues due to their shared origin as creations of that God. For two centuries, these ideas have led US Christians to engage in embodied facsimiles of other people's experiences, including dressing up and play-acting, walking through multisensory displays, and food ingestion, as I discuss below. In sum, immensity and intimacy are both sensed and often embodied forms of globalism. However, the former lifts one up and outside humanness, while the latter seems to deepen it to connect with people far away.

The Christian universalization of human bodies—like humanitarianism's subsequent iterations (Ticktin 2017a, 609)—incorporated rather than excluded racial difference. In this respect, two facets are notable here. First, as many studies point out, race is baked into conceptions of global giving: the (usually white) Christian is the giver and the (usually nonwhite) person is the recipient. In the practices I discuss below, this idea takes on a sensory aspect because "whiteness" is rendered neutral or blank whereas racialized poverty is associated with (noxious/exotic/overwhelming/alluring) smells, sights, and sounds. This imbalance makes it seem possible to American donors that they could harness certain sensations to participate in facsimiles of other people's lives. Second, sponsorship materials routinely evoke racialized difference—demarcated by skin color, clothes, and accent—to show a diverse global public performing actions that are legible to Americans as godly, such as praying together or holding hands around a globe. This imagery evokes an affective sense that corresponds to more generalized "happy diversity" images (Ahmed 2010), but, for Christian audiences, it also points back to one Creator: showing people of many "colors" together indexes God's capacity to create and contain immensity. It evokes biblical promises that God will gather the "nations" around the Throne in Heaven and at the end of days.

These racialized idioms of Christian globalism—and the pleasurable sensations they evoke—have facilitated sponsorship's transition from missionary to humanitarian contexts at organizations like World Vision and Compassion. Put differently, these two sponsorship organizations have actually changed significantly since their inception in the 1950s, when they adopted sponsorship as a method to send direct-transfer payments to Protestant foreign missionaries. By the late 1960s, changing political norms and the desire to grow and professionalize triggered major restructuring. They created their own in-country programs that, as Erica Bornstein (2005) tracked in the 1990s at WV Zimbabwe, were largely administered by middle-class Christian "nationals," some of whom began to call for less paternalistic representations of Brown and Black children. These internal debates reflected larger shifts at the time (Sack 2000, 162), as many globally minded US Christians grappled with the liberatory politics that accompanied the end of formal colonialism and became more aware of demographic shifts as the world's Christianity majority tilted toward former missionary fields.[9]

Today, both WV and Compassion work to run their programs as "partnerships" with people and churches in the Global South. In their advertising, they largely eschew images of children in distress, focusing on optimism and empowerment instead. Without minimizing such changes, my point is that the kind of world-making at stake remains one in which race still indexes "happy diversity" among Christians of "every nation." It is still based on the concept that God's love flows through differently colored bodies via feelings of joy and connectedness that have the potential to link even believers who are physically separate. In other words, the pleasurable sensations associated with racialized Christian globalism have contributed to making sponsorship a highly resilient tool that has weathered, and in fact flourished, despite significant bureaucratic and political change.

FEELING IMMENSITY THROUGH STATISTICAL AESTHETICS

I was sitting at Eleanor's kitchen table as she hunted for her laptop in the log-cabin-style home she shares with her husband in New Hampshire. At sixty-two years old, Eleanor is a semi-retired nurse who has sponsored children through Compassion for over a decade. On Sundays, she often drives to Boston to attend church, but that weekend the snow was thick and she shuddered laughingly at the idea of leaving our mugs of tea to brave the frigid weather. Besides, she told me, she finds ways to worship from home: she wanted to show me a video from her Facebook feed that she had found so beautiful it brought tears to her eyes.

Laptop found, we clicked through to the website of OMF International, an evangelical ministry that grew out

of the nineteenth-century China Inland Mission. The four-minute video started with a black screen on which white letters appeared: "On 21 February 2016," it informed us, "an estimated 1.1 million believers together across 100 countries" collaborated in a Global Hymn Sing. As the words faded, US evangelical musician Kristyn Getty came into view singing the first lines of the hymn "Facing a Task Unfinished" in an evangelical church in California. A montage of congregations around the world followed, as the purported 1.1 million believers sang the same lyrics with Getty on the appointed day. OMF has used big numbers in service of globalism for more than a century. Its predecessor, China Inland Mission, published a flagship periodical called *China's Millions*. OMF renamed it *East Asia's Billions*.

Protestant missionary work, including child sponsorship, began amid the "first great Statistical enthusiasm" that swept Europe and North America in the early nineteenth century (Porter 1995, 78). It is well known that emerging nation-states developed statistics and taxonomies during the Enlightenment as a tool for governing domestic and colonial populations (Asad 1994; Foucault [1966] 1970; Rowse and Shellam 2013). Christians were also riveted by systematic tabulations of population. Famed Baptist missionary William Carey incorporated the "appalling" population of "heathens" into his 1792 manifesto that inspired the first major Anglo-Protestant foreign missions. In 1818, just as they launched North America's inaugural child sponsorship plan, the first US foreign missionaries published "The Conversion of the World or, the Claims of Six Hundred Millions," a popular tract based on the supposedly "accurate computing" of global populations. Home audiences were treated to continual displays of numbers, graphs, and maps in which "millions" bound together a series of abstracted enormities: the bodies of heathens, the size of their territory, their economic power, and the gods they worshipped. Big numbers provided a key tool to shape moral coherence amid new global interrelations.

My interest lies in their vernacular uses in this regard. US Christians at home also mobilized what I describe as "statistical aesthetics" to give shape to God's global projects, peppering their missionary literature with statistical tables, tabular views, and aggregate numbers. For example, an 1895 missionary periodical aimed at US Methodist women (among whom there were many child sponsors) announced, "the human family living on earth to-day consists of 1,450,000,000 souls." It continued,

> In Asia … there are now about 800,000,000 people, densely crowded … in Europe there are 320,000,000…. In Africa there are, approximately, 210,000,000, and in the Americas … 100,000,000…. The extremes of the blacks and the whites are as 5 to 3, the remaining 700,000,000 intermediate, brown, yellow and tawny in color. Of the entire race 500,000,000 are well clothed … 230,000,000 habitually go naked, and 700,000,000 only cover the middle parts of the body; 500,000,000 live in houses, 700,000,000 in huts and caves, the remaining 250,000,000 virtually having no place to lay their heads. ("The Human Family" 1895)

I view these patterned models of densely clustered zeros as a form of aesthetics, which means defining the category more capaciously than the high arts favored by neo-Kantians (Meyer and Verrips 2008, 29; see also Good 2002, 400). Yet I do not want to lose Kant's interest in how aesthetic contemplation may provoke feelings of the sublime. After all, sublime awe is fundamental to the "sacred surplus," or emotional excess, that scholars have long understood as central to religion (Meyer 2016). This link between statistics and the sublime, although not religion per se, finds some precedent in studies of how colonial governments at the time also circulated statistics not in "the sober register of … careful collection of data" but to stoke affective reactions (Pandey 1995, 205). Their magnitude evoked both excess and specificity, simulating fear, hope, or astonishment.

For Christian missionary and humanitarian projects, this numerical weight was not meant to crush but to uplift and enliven moral action insofar as "millions" projected forward to the awe-inspiring possibility of uniting this mass of humanity under one God (also see Engelke 2010, 819). To make sure US Christians learned to read big numbers in this light, missionary promoters developed pedagogical exercises. For example, the Methodist women's board of missions (the same one that published the paragraph above) issued a set of instructions detailing an exercise recommended for their local groups (Benton 1886). The leader was counseled to stand before her audience and silently mark down the following numbers on a blackboard:

> Population of the United States.
> 2d, underneath, population of India.
> 3d, population of China.
> 4th, population of Japan.
> 5th, population of Corea [*sic*].
> 6th, estimated population of Africa.

The audience was left staring at a column filled with zeros, where the numbers for China and India jutted out past the rest. Then the leader was instructed to tally the last five numbers and print the aggregate number of global "heathens" in the space directly below the US population. Now the zeros were overwhelming in comparison. She was to face her audience (with a flourish?) and name the religion of each heathen nation and its objects of worship, ending forcefully with two rhetorical questions: *Why send missionaries to them? Has Christianity any benefits to atone for their innocent ignorance of Christ?* The exercise concluded with a hymn of thanks to God. These activities, wrote the women who used them, seemed to reveal a global reality that was "stimulating" and "inspiring" (Uniform Readings 1883) and provoked "increasing wonder" (Johnson 1904).

After World War II, these tools were revamped by newly established neo-evangelical organizations like World Vision (begun in 1950) and Compassion (1952), alongside older ones like China Inland Mission (which became OMF in 1965). This trajectory leads us back to Eleanor, who supports Compassion and OMF. Aesthetics of immensity

remain woven throughout sponsorship and the lives of people who support it. For example, Compassion's website displays charts and row after row of photos of children's faces, aggregating the thousands who need a sponsor. At Eleanor's church, where the Sunday school sponsors a child in Rwanda, a large collage hangs on the classroom wall in which hundreds of children's racially diverse faces are pasted together to make a single body—the symbolically resonant "body of Christ." And of course, there was the OMF video where 1.1 million Christians in 100 countries sang the same words on the same day. Their faces, marked as "global" through racial difference, mingled for a precious moment as a shot from one church faded into another. It was an affective moment of immensity, when a million voices seemed to clarify the power of a God that encompasses so many believers at once.

As the OMF video suggests, the internet often mediates Christian globalism in especially convincing ways. At an individual level, this pattern speaks to strong affinities between users' offline and online behaviors (Campbell 2012, 80; Miller 2016). At a broader level, it is a reminder that "ideologists of the Internet" and Christian globalists have long shared an "elective affinity" (Meyer 2011, 35)—the latter because the internet's promise of expansiveness jibes with the possibility of a limitless God (Coleman 2000, 177) and the former in their sometimes "feverish belief in transcendence—a faith that this time new technology will deliver us from the limitations and frustrations of this imperfect world" (Morley [2000] 2003, 186). One thinks of Mark Zuckerberg's early rhetoric about Facebook (Garbin 2013). What social media certainly does accomplish is to enliven long-standing participatory techniques through the ability to post photos and comments. Eleanor was moved by the OMF video in part because of the comments underneath, which, as she pointed out to me, listed the names and locations of many Christians who had been moved by the song's power, just as she had.[10] Social media is thus icon and interface of globalism: it symbolizes a broad Christian network and also creates it (Oosterbaan 2011, 70).

Studies of transnationalism generally focus on how online technologies allow users to calibrate connections between multiple offline "home" spaces—for example, among diasporic populations (Georgiou 2010; Madianou and Miller 2012). In the context of Christian globalism, however, users are often less interested in "homes" than in the interlinked space between them. In emic terms, this space is sometimes called the "Kingdom of God." Evangelicals use "Kingdom talk" a lot, but in a basic sense it refers to Christian sites of activity that seem to instantiate God's work on earth and, in theological terms, augur the Messiah's return.[11] The Kingdom is not a place per se; it is God's continual presence and *spread*. Just as mass-produced terrestrial globes offered nineteenth-century Christians new ways to mediate their prayers for the world as a whole (making way for groups like Susan's),[12] so too has the internet encouraged certain ways of mediating the Kingdom of God. Today that spread is often portrayed as electrified points or glowing beams and cybernetic cables. As Thomas Csordas (2015, 134, 141) notes in his survey of church websites, maps of light-filled nodes demarcating a community's global affiliates creates an affective sense of "hot spots, safe zones, or high points." Other maps, also popularized online, fuel more negative emotions: the widespread "10/40 window," with roots in a partnership between WV and Fuller Seminary, indicates a swath of global territory resistant to Christian evangelism (McAlister 2018, 144–58). Regardless, these maps approximate the god's-eye view that, quoting Roland Barthes (1997, 9), "permits us to transcend sensation [on the ground] and to see things *in their structure*" and thereby assert a certain mastery over them. Mapping immensity is an imaginative tool that encourages sponsors to think of themselves as co-laboring with God—the "master of a world," to paraphrase Barthes.[13]

Yet US Christians also recognize that big numbers and big maps often fall short. Some sponsors told me these tools made them question the adequacy of their efforts. Others were uncomfortable with how mapping erases people by making lived places into graphic spaces; after all, sponsorship is built on the very concept that human-to-human relations are the mechanism by which God's love travels globally. Statistics and maps, like all forms of immensity, are therefore framed within a larger set of techniques that bring them into productive tension with the particular.

FEELING HUMAN CONNECTION THROUGH FOODWAYS

Another day, another kitchen table. Tracie, a forty-two-year-old physician's assistant who attends an evangelical Lutheran church in Massachusetts, was trying something different for dinner. In fact, I had been the catalyst. A few weeks earlier, I mentioned a post on Compassion's blog by Valerie Hopkins, a pastor's wife in Virginia, about her family's decision to eat like their sponsored child in Uganda for a week every month. Tracie was inspired, and although Mercia, the child she supported, lived in Tanzania, Tracie thought Valerie's suggested dishes could work. She invited me over for the inaugural meal—flatbread, beans and rice, and a chicken stew with mango. As we ate, Tracie guided our conversation to Mercia's living conditions and the meaning of sacrifice for Americans. Her three children, aged seven to eleven, filled up on flatbread and ignored the mango stew. The eleven-year-old said the bread was so good it did not feel very sacrificial. As we washed up afterwards, Tracie admitted it had not gone quite as she had hoped, but she planned to persevere over the coming year, as the blog suggested.

Food-related techniques are just one of many activities through which sponsorship organizations have long attempted to cultivate embodied experiences of global intimacy. A notable forerunner to Tracie's meal was the Near East Relief's "Golden Rule Dinner" campaign, which

was enormously popular in the mid-1920s. Founded during World War I by former Protestant missionaries and their supporters, the group promoted yearly sponsorships of Armenian orphans and encouraged US people to eat "like an orphan" using recipes for rice pilaf, stewed beans, or baked prunes and olives. It also organized high-profile events where hundreds of distinguished guests arrived in fancy dress to eat plain "orphan food" in the country's best hotels. In Washington, President Coolidge even attended. Mainline and evangelical Protestants revived these techniques in the postwar period (Sack 2000, 137–83), especially in the 1970s amid fears about world hunger and "population explosion" stoked by UN-supplied population statistics and stark famine photos. WV hosted a 1974 luncheon for US Congress, serving a few ounces of rice since "until Americans willingly experience hunger ... they cannot begin to comprehend the condition [of famine]" (quoted in King 2012, 934). At the same time, Compassion began "starve-ins" for Christian teens, and WV launched its popular Planned Famine. Today, the latter is called "30 Hour Famine," and, according to its website, more than six million teens across North America have participated.

In the United States, WV pitches the 30 Hour Famine mainly to Christian youth groups, most of which are evangelical (although I came across many liberal Protestant and Catholic ones too). After signing up online, group leaders receive a manual with suggested activities for each hour of the thirty when participants abstain from food and congregate together, usually in church recreational spaces. Groups also engage in sharing sessions and Bible study. WV's website calls 30 Hour Famine a chance for teens to "get up close and personal with hunger," "identify with the hungry children they're helping," and "grow closer to God and each other." There is nothing self-evident about these claims. Eating (or not eating) is certainly not necessary to raise money and awareness about a humanitarian cause. It also clearly differs from the Christian tradition of spiritual fasts in which abstinence is meant to cultivate detachment from the world. Instead, one of the event's primary goals is that US Christians "experience" hunger pangs to "identify with" faraway people who feel them too.

In April 2015, I joined a 30 Hour Famine at a United Methodist church near Kansas City. The youth pastor, Brett, had organized the event for fourteen teenagers (and two adult chaperones and me). Using WV's manual, he introduced games and skits where we would "experience what kids go through in famine places," as he (and the manual) put it. Some activities were rather obvious in this respect, such as building a shelter using cardboard boxes. Others were less clear at first. For example, late Friday night, about fourteen hours into the fast, we divided into teams for a relay during which we completed tasks such as knocking down cans with a rubber band or carrying an uncooked egg on a spoon. It was fast-paced and stressful. Afterwards we sat in a circle to debrief. "How do you feel right now?" Pastor Brett asked us. "Hungry! Yeah, and how did that impact your energy level during the game? How did it affect your mood?" The teens chimed in: they couldn't focus, tasks felt harder, they were more irritable. This suggested activity, like many others in WV's manual, was meant to simulate how hunger ate away at people's aspirations, capacities, and empathy. Brett summed up with WV's words: "We're starting to know what hunger sounds like and feels like... . You know your fast is almost half over already. *But what if there was no end in sight?*" He looked up at us to reinforce the point: "The stress you just felt, you know, can I get the rubber band there or whatever. That's just a little taste of [the stress] that's life for lots and lots of people around the world... . Our problems seem pretty small in comparison." The teens nodded soberly around the circle.

The 30 Hour Famine translates the sharpness of hunger pangs into the sharpness of stress and fear during famine: *What if there was no end in sight?* It translates the dull throbbing of gnawing hunger into the relentless grind of poverty that eats away at one's ability to act and react. This focus differs from how other studies of Christian humanitarianism, including those on child sponsorship, highlight the body as a metaphor for a global church or examine how victimized foreign bodies are visual markers in Western media (Elisha 2016; Malkki 2010; McAlister 2018, 159–74). These analyses are correct, but they miss a class of activities through which US Christians at home purposefully utilize their own bodies as sites for the physical manifestation of globalism.

Parallel techniques are evident, for example, in Liisa Malkki's (2015) study of older Finnish women who knit bunnies for Red Cross packages. She argues that such seemingly small actions are in fact significant conduits for what I call globalism. By manipulating the wool as they picture the object's trajectory, knitters make "virtual and enchanted connectivities" (124) with strangers abroad. Working in a more explicitly Christian atmosphere, with Lutherans in Minnesota, Britt Halvorson (2018, 74–75) notes that volunteers who process medical discards for clinics in Madagascar likewise learn to make their embodied acts—handling and winding bandages, for example—into a process of self-incorporation as instruments of divine agency and as members of a Christian "body politic" linked together through the objects they touch. Other humanitarian campaigns, akin to the techniques in WV's 30 Hour Famine, use full-body simulations in which donors move through facsimiles of refugee camps (Redfield 2005) or play-act being caught in a village raid (Hertzke 2004, 252, 266). A close cousin of these campaigns is "slum tourism," which often seeks to raise funds and awareness by leading visitors through places where they are "surrounded by new [urban] sights, smells and sounds, consuming different food and drink ... [to] gain new bodily ways of knowing themselves and others" (Jaffe et al. 2020, 1021).

As this observation about slum tourism suggests, food is contextualized within larger fields of activity. In that respect, political theorist Jane Bennett (2010, 40) is helpful when she emphasizes that eating is an embodied

"series of mutual transformations between human and non-human materials." To one degree, Bennett refers to the metabolic level: our bodies digest food, which transforms us by producing physiological effects. What we eat may make us hyperactive, dull-witted, or focused. Yet she also follows two nineteenth-century thinkers—Nietzsche and Thoreau—in arguing more broadly that food acts "inside and alongside intention-forming, morality-(dis)obeying … and culture-making human beings." For Nietzsche, German anti-Semitism spread through multisensory experiences of consuming certain food (coffee and beer), reading certain newspapers, listening to Wagner, and cultivating military aesthetics. For Thoreau, vegetarianism produced bodily effects ("greater wakefulness") and new social conventions. Each one believed that food interacted with "intensities often described as perception, belief, memory" to coarsen or refine the political, and we might add ethical, imagination (Bennett 2010, 39–43; see also Mauss [1935] 2009, 83).

Techniques like the Golden Rule Dinner or 30 Hour Famine rest on similar principles: an expectation that feelings of global connectedness can result from the consumption of particular foods ("orphan fare") or abstention ("planned famine"), combined with reading newsletters and scriptures, speaking prayers and hymns, doing physical activities, and gazing at visual media. As Bennett implies, food is especially powerful because it is digested into the stuff that is our bodies. Hence why so many religious rituals employ it to produce a mingling of bodies (or conversely, use food restriction to maintain separations). For Christians, communion is the preeminent example: by eating blessed bread, a believer takes divinity into herself and mystically unites her body with others in "the body of Christ."

While the activities discussed above are rarely likened to communion per se, there are clear overlaps, especially in the dual goal of uniting oneself with God and other Christians. As WV's publicity materials consistently reiterate, the 30 Hour Famine is meant to help participants "grow closer to God and each other." It implies that participants inhabit God's emotional register to some degree. As they abstain from food, Christian teens are meant to stoke the euphoria of global connectedness intermingled with the pain of hunger as a performative link to a deity who, in the US evangelical imagination, has a heart that overflows with love for humankind even while it is "broken" by human sin and sorrow. In other words, while previous studies have viewed such food "simulation games" as having "little theological content" (Sack 2000, 173) because they lack clear references to particular thinkers or church traditions, I view them as a sensory mode of communication that is theological to its core in terms of what it crystallizes for Christians about their place in the world.

When it comes to connections with other humans, US sponsors have generally used food to produce globalism in two main registers. Some food is meant to evoke "plainness." NER defined this quality as ingesting a minimal number of ingredients, little or no meat, and no rich dessert; for WV, it means no food at all. In either case, plain food is meant to transpose the "feeling" of foreign poverty and destitution, along with a sense of humility and simple gratitude to God. At other times, Christians evoke very different moods of fascination and excitement as new flavors prick the tongue—for example, when NER's recipes called for tangy olives with prunes or Tracie served mango stew. WV's most recent 30 Hour Famine manual, from 2019, suggests eating yam *fufu* from DR Congo beforehand to raise funds or afterwards to break the fast. The resulting sensations may intrigue or repel. Tracie was drawn to different consistencies and flavors as a visceral connection to Mercia in Tanzania; her kids pronounced the same items "gross." Food-related techniques are thus a microcosm of the main registers in which US Christians often engage the world, namely through deep empathy for what they believe others lack (and gratitude to God on their own behalf) alongside attraction to (or repulsion from) "exotic" foreignness. In either case, for a moment at least, foodways are expected to make other people's worlds (literally and figuratively) digestible and body forth a future in which all people—whether they eat olives or yams—are intimately knowable to Americans at home.

US Christians came to value exercises like eating olives or yams alongside the growing acceptance of cultural relativism. What I mean is that nineteenth-century sponsors' aspirations for transglobal intimacy focused largely on US missionaries abroad and the "native" converts who adopted familiar names and customs. This changed as early twentieth-century liberal Protestants, such as those behind NER's Golden Rule campaigns, began to praise "culture" as a positive aspect of human diversity. Since the 1980s and 1990s, US Protestants of all stripes have, often emphatically, celebrated cultural differences among Christians, and even among people generally, as varied and legitimate ways to acknowledge humankind's Creator. In Christian globalism, to make culture matter on the human scale is to universalize the divine scale: once neutralized as a human-made thing, culture no longer seems to threaten a core level of belonging and can be viewed as evidence of the Creator's capacity to contain so much diversity instead. Consuming foreign foods as part of ritualized activities like 30 Hour Famine is therefore a gustatory complement to (visually) consuming racialized images of "happy diversity."

Social constructions of race are threaded throughout these techniques, including those that rely on sensory affects (with or without the more commonly studied visual imagery). Since the 1990s, studies have helped clarify how, in countries like the United Kingdom and United States, the power of a majority viewed as white is so normalized that the public and political spheres "can be presented as if [they] were … colourless or ethnically neutral" (Morley [2000] 2003, 118). A similar phenomenon affects class, where the poor have long been associated with a particular look, smell, and sound, whereas the normative bodies and spaces of privileged classes seem sensorially neutral or blank (Willis 2018, 327). These twin assumptions drive the slum tourism (Jaffe

et al. 2020) and facsimiles of refugee camps (Redfield 2005) noted above; the habits and habitats of US suburbanites are never fodder for such tours or fundraising events. This unbalanced sensory regime makes it seem natural to middle-class US sponsors, including nonwhite ones, that racialized poverty has a *feel* to it, which they might therefore be able to experience, for a moment at least, through embodied techniques. It is the unspoken norm that welds together diverse techniques that make it seem possible and important to eat (or dress, dance, etc.) like someone far away.

Most of the sponsors I got to know found "global diversity" highly stimulating, even as they explicitly or implicitly pointed to two major problems. First, most of them did recognize the problem of racialized inequality in a global framework, albeit perhaps obliquely. Second, as they emphasized diversity (marked by racialized "culture"), they also planted seeds of doubt about whether an untraveled individual could ever really know faraway others and, at a spiritual level, trust that all Christians are indeed "one new man" in Christ (Ephesians 2:15). Therein lies an irony. The irresolution and inconsistencies of racialized universalism prompt US Christians to re-entrench the body as a neutral site of deep connection. By virtue of a common Creator, human bodies seem to provide an avenue for more visceral, global participation, and sponsors are optimistic about the humanitarian actions that can result. Nearly every sponsor I met viewed embodied, and therefore "personal," individual commitments as an antidote to the massive, systemic failures of armies and governments.

CONCLUSION

The study of US Christian globalism is lately coming into its own. For more than two decades, work on the topic often stalled around a series of related assumptions: that globalization was a progressive force that was natural and inevitable (Tsing 2000, 332); that global commitments were especially natural in the West (Appadurai 1996, 36), including among US Christians with their powerful postwar missionary and humanitarian institutions; and, via influential work by Christian scholars, that global Christian growth was natural, too, because it was providential—evidence of God's work in "the great ongoing drama of world Christian transformation" (Noll 2009, 14; see also Jenkins 2002). This article begins from a different angle, prompted by a simple, but important, demographic point: the vast majority of US Christians actually approach globalization from a place of "immobility." Its primary goal, then, is to clarify some of the day-to-day mechanics that create globalism—conceived of as a process rather than a finished product represented by the amount of money US Christians have donated or the expansion of their NGOs.

Child sponsorship is both an enormously successful fundraising technique initially developed by Christians and a good lens through which to explore global commitments without physical displacement. Based on my work with US child sponsors, I argue that their globalism is often cultivated through sensory techniques. Further, I argue that this world-making has a particular quality: global projects are often especially compelling when they tack back and forth between techniques that foster the immensity of a god's-eye view and human-scale intimacy. Each mode is anchored in the assumption that one can trust feelings as a site of deep knowing and thus tune the body and its senses to access visceral truths about the global state of things. The mutual constitution of these emotive states, or scales, is highly important, especially because what I call immensity is not often included in studies of affect and embodiment. Immensity reminds us that embodied practices may be disarticulated from what a human body can in any real sense experience—that is, globally minded US Christians may cultivate vertigo, wonder, and a "quake in being" (Morton 2013) to lend specific sensory and material dimensions to the Creator's seemingly limitless reach. It is a corrective to many studies of globalization that assume emotions associated with immensity stifle engagement in global projects by creating apathy or despair.

Turning to the techniques that hone human-scale relations, most operate on the premise that it is possible to grasp something fundamental about people by virtue of all bodies' origin point in one Creator. This idea—minus the supernatural origin—has actually prompted significant debate among humanists and social scientists. Many cognitive philosophers and affect theorists view all humans as sharing basic emotions and somatic reflexes. For phenomenologists, the body is a key site for the possibility of empathy, meaning a "primordial experience of participating in the actions and feeling of another" (Duranti 2010, 7). Humanitarian activists and fundraisers base their messaging on this premise. There is overlap, too, with cultural and medical anthropologists who have championed studies of "social suffering" as a shared experience across local contexts (e.g., Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997). Such ideas repeatedly prompt criticism that insists cultural difference frames even what might seem to be basic human functions (Leys 2011; Robbins 2013; Ticktin 2017a).

I note these academic fault lines because they highlight similar challenges among globally minded US Christians. Over the last three decades, Protestants across the spectrum have come to acknowledge and celebrate "cultural" difference across the world. As a result, they try to cut through the murk of difference by identifying some universal humanness that underlies the global connections they imagine and work into being. Positioning the body as a key site in this regard, US Christians cultivate embodied knowledge about others that seems to provide reassurance that they are indeed one in Christ (as the Gospel says). The fact that scholarship on "primordial" embodied experiences overlaps with US Christian globalism is not especially surprising; after all, both are inheritors of overlapping lineages in modern Western thought. In either case, we are left with significant questions—some of the biggest questions one can ask. *Who are we? What is our place in the world?* There are no sure answers, of course, which is precisely why such questions pry open space for

incommensurability and aspiration. It leaves room for creatively engaging even the most natural-seeming expressions of universalism by exploring the hope and labor that sustains them—in our work and among our interlocutors.

Hillary Kaell *Department of Anthropology and School of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2T7, Canada; hillary.kaell@mcgill.ca*

NOTES

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1. Internal surveys at the US organizations where I conducted fieldwork show that the average sponsor is female, married, white, and self-identifies as a Christian. Sponsors range from students and pensioners to upper-middle-class dual-income earners. Given the typical sponsor profile, I should say a word about gender. As is well attested, women were excluded literally and conceptually from spaces in which modern "publics" emerged. Thus, they were made into quintessential homebodies—bodies that stayed home (Morley [2000] 2003, 65–67, 114–15). This assumption fuelled the earliest child sponsorship plans in the 1810s: male promoters believed that women and youth, defined as homebodies, needed a "definite" home-related responsibility—children in need—to comprehend the otherwise abstract concept of global commitment. Gendered norms are therefore undeniably central. However, I do not address this issue in more depth here in order to emphasize that the basic impetus—that is, to introduce global "abstractions" to "immobile" people—was also meant to appeal to locally situated men, who do participate in sponsorship, albeit often within the family unit.
2. There are notable exceptions among historians (Bays and Wacker 2003; Hollinger 2017) and sociologists (Wuthnow 2009). Granted, nearly all studies of US missions at least acknowledge home audiences insofar as they provided financial support for people who went abroad.
3. "Relative immobility" refers to the gap between travel and the connections many globally minded US Christians sustain. Susan was actually better traveled than many sponsors I met, due to her social class and age (no young children, but not yet elderly). In calling her the "norm" I refer to surveys that show that two-thirds of U.S. Christians have left the country at some point during their lifetimes, but this travel is infrequent (Wuthnow 2009, 251–58). Statistics from the National Travel and Tourism Office show that 83 percent of US foreign travel is to North America, the Caribbean, and Western Europe. In 2018, about half of that was to Mexico (39.5 percent).
4. 1 percent is a generous estimate, according to my staff interviewees at Compassion, Unbound, and World Vision. In other words, contra O'Neill (2013, 217), very few sponsors renew their commitment through face-to-face encounters. Likewise, Bornstein's (2001, 606–609; 2005, 73–77) example of her interactions with a sponsor named Peter in Zimbabwe is actually highly atypical.
5. These studies, and mine, build on the long-standing interest among scholars of globalization in imagined and projected connections, for example in diasporic or online communities. Regarding religion, sociologists Robert Robertson and William Garrett (1991) and Wade Clark Roof (1991) published early volumes that included essays on Christianity's "universalist" and "one place" ideologies. Even more directly relevant to this article is Benedict Anderson's (1983) famous thesis about nation-states as "imagined communities," which Arjun Appadurai (1996) adapted in his concept of ideational "scapes" as new "imagined worlds." His theoretical framework prompted a response by scholars such as Tsing (2000) and Coleman (2000), upon whom I draw to anchor the idea of "globalism" in this study.
6. "Technique" is a nod to Mauss ([1935] 2009), who used it in relation to the embodied *habitus* that frames subjective experience. The focus on globalism as process signals that my project is oriented differently from those on "Global Christianity" (or World Christianity) that track various forms of Christianity and the interactions between them.
7. The four contemporary organizations I studied were World Vision, Compassion (Colorado Springs, CO), Unbound (Kansas City, MO), and ChildFund (Richmond, VA). The latter two are Catholic and mainline Protestant/secular, respectively. I was based at World Vision International in Monrovia, CA, which housed all historical records. World Vision United States (which organizes 30 Hour Famine) is in Federal Way, WA. When I use "WV" in this article, I am referring to World Vision US.
8. The terms "evangelical" and "mainline" are complicated in the contemporary United States by a deeply divisive two-party political system that promotes identity politics by interweaving factors such as religion, race, and views on "morality" issues. Further, many Americans "church switch" over their lifetimes, and follow multiple pastors and religious media simultaneously. My aim is not to clearly delineate between US Christianities. Instead, I identify individual sponsors, where possible, by their church affiliation. Otherwise, I identify them by the organization they choose to support and basic views or self-definition as liberal, born-again, or conservative, etc.
9. None of this was entirely new in the 1970s. For example, in the 1920s, the period I mention below vis-à-vis Golden Rule dinners, globally minded liberal Protestants were already grappling with how to reorient their relations with racially/culturally

"Other" Christians as "friendships" rather than top-down paternalism (Robert 2002, 52; Hollinger 2017, 61–66). However, in the 1970s to 1990s, these ideas spread to become the norm for many globally minded Christians in the United States. In sponsorship programming and advertising, these changes also happened gradually. WV was an earlier adopter in the 1970s and 1980s, whereas Compassion, being more conservative, took another decade to implement changes. See Kaell (2020). On WV, see King (2019).

10. In fact, most of the churches in the OMF video were majority white and located in the United Kingdom, the United States, or Australia. The posts were also nearly all from people who seemed to be Anglo-Protestants, mainly based around the United States. None of this seemed to bother Eleanor, who was impressed by the diversity.
11. Bornstein (2005, 106–108) does mention WV's repeated use of the term "Kingdom of God" but does not analyze the content of what it means for Christians. Instead, she is interested in how it is a form of discourse, along with neoliberal economics, that allows Christian NGOs to incorrectly claim to be apolitical.
12. James Wilson made the first globes in the United States in c.1810, which substantially lowered their cost and encouraged their incorporation into Christian pedagogy (Osborn 2015). It was the same year the first US Protestant foreign mission society was established, which then announced the first US child sponsorship program in 1816.
13. Although admittedly Barthes emphasized vision in this regard, he did not completely do away with sensation ("euphoria") or object materiality. He therefore called the view from on high a "concrete abstraction" (1997, 9, 10).

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