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Review by Hannah Peckham, University of Notre Dame

In the spring and summer of 1900, the American press galvanized the reading public with tales of the escalating conflict in China, particularly as the death toll of American citizens, many of them Protestant missionaries, rose at the hands of the Boxers, a secret society active in northern China at the turn of the century. However, even as a coalition force of Western powers gathered to march on the capital, a countervailing force in American life asserted itself. In "Protestant Anti-Imperialism and the Vindication of the Boxer Rebellion, 1899-1901," Jeffrey Rosario highlights the contributions of a vocal, if small, group of Americans who were opposed to the intersection of Christian nationalism, economics, and American power. These Americans, many of whom were either members of the American Anti-Imperialist League or sympathetic with its goals, publicly critiqued the role of Protestant missionaries in inspiring anti-Western sentiment and, as Rosario shows, at times sought to defend the actions of the Boxers. In a work that contributes to a growing historiography of American anti-imperialism, Rosario utilizes Seventh-Day Adventist periodicals and conference records to argue that "outright anti-imperialism" was a stronger force within American Protestantism than historians have yet understood (350).¹ In addition, Rosario positions Adventism as a significant Protestant denomination that, out of conservative rather than liberal theological impulses, committed itself to a defense of the Boxers and a clear-eyed opposition to the use of American military power.

Rosario begins by highlighting the development of a coalition of Protestant ministers and religious leaders who challenged American expansionist adventures in Asia, especially the Philippine-American War. While many such figures were prominent in the press, education, and American public life generally, Rosario instead focuses his attention on Seventh-Day Adventists who, he says, were "aware of these broader currents" of anti-imperialism and "echoed much of the critique." They typically did not join organizations such as the American Anti-Imperialist League, he notes, but "did consider themselves fellow laborers" with those dissenters in other denominations (352). By recovering the voices of Adventists who are generally left out of mainstream Protestant narratives, Rosario argues that a clearer picture of a "dissenting tradition" within Protestantism emerges, one that critiqued the prominent role of American missionaries in stoking Chinese

¹ See, for example, Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton, eds., *Empire's Twin: U.S. Anti-Imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism, 1898-1909* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

animosity through unequal treaties in the nineteenth century that protected American rights to extraterritoriality and proselytization, grounded in an ideology of racial superiority (353).

While other historians have shown how some liberal Protestants objected to US policy in China and the Philippines, Rosario utilizes articles written for Adventist periodicals by “over twenty Adventist writers from coast to coast” who represent, he suggests, a “broad range of Adventists” who were opposed to American imperialism (355).² While he does not define imperialism as such, Rosario suggests at least some Adventists objected to militarism, economics, and religion, “the key factors that underwrite imperialism” (370). Given the limitations of his source base, Rosario is not able to show whether these twenty writers were representative of broader Adventist sentiment nationally, but he does attempt to demonstrate the existence of a two-fold strain of Adventist critique of US economic policy in Asia, including the Open Door policy and merchant participation in the illegal opium trade, and the missionary establishment that enabled widespread Western intrusion into China (357).

Page | 2

Rosario convincingly shows that the editors of Adventist periodicals regularly reprinted Chinese official complaints against the so-called ‘Christian’ powers of the West, and often agreed with their criticism, especially in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, as the Western coalition extracted enormous concessions from the Chinese government. Much as they reprinted the speeches and communiques of Chinese officials, Adventists also regularly republished the speeches and sermons of other Protestant dissenters, seeing their periodicals not only as an internal Adventist dialogue but, in Rosario’s words, “as a sort of meeting place of other dissenting voices” (366). Writers for the Adventist press broadly grounded their critiques of American imperialism, and the supposed superiority of Western ‘civilization,’ in their theological views, particularly when they argued that certain other Protestant missionary societies conflated evangelism with a nationalistic conception of American exceptionalism (360).

Implicit in Rosario’s argument is the view that through strategic and repeated engagement with other Protestant groups, Adventists negotiated the role of a major Protestant voice in American public life, despite their more controversial opinions, such as a strong defense of Boxer activity within China. Directly countering the portrayal of the bulk of the American press, Adventist periodicals argued that Boxers were broadly justified in their response to Western economic and imperial aggression. Here again Adventists grounded their position in theological and political terms, of the Golden Rule and the right of nations to defend their sovereignty. Rosario highlights the activity of Warren Eugene Howell, who ran a Chinese school for boys in Hawaii at the end of the nineteenth century. In this capacity, Howell learned Chinese, wrote for the local Chinese newspaper, developed a friendship with the secretary of the Chinese consulate, and penned numerous articles to “vindicate the character of the Chinese people” while still encouraging their conversion to Christianity (369). He, along with Baxter L. Howe, another Adventist in Honolulu, believed that imperialism misrepresented the true spirit of Christianity, and led Chinese leaders to believe that military

² For Protestant ambivalence towards American imperialism, see Heather Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World But Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012); Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America’s Moral Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

prowess and capitalism were core features of the Gospel (370). Can it be a surprise, these Adventists asked, that Boxers rose up on patriotic fervor to defend their nation?

Given the limited chronology under review, Rosario's argument leaves several enticing questions unanswered. In particular, he does not explore whether it was possible for any proselytizing group to wholly "disassociate from U.S. imperial policies in mission fields," especially when imperialism enabled the existence of those mission fields, or divest itself of its national origins and cultural assumptions (351). Indeed, Howell and Howe clearly both directly benefited from the US annexation of Hawaii in 1898, which enabled easy access to the Chinese children who were enrolled in Adventist schools and broader connections to the Chinese community in Honolulu, but Rosario does not mention whether their advocacy for Chinese immigrants in Hawaii extended to self-analysis of their position vis-à-vis Hawaiian annexation.³ Although he notes a longer Adventist tradition of advocating for human rights, from anti-slavery efforts to opposition to the annexation of the Philippines, Rosario does not discuss why Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries did not enter China until 1903, after foreign powers had wrested massive indemnities and concessions from the government; it is likely not coincidental that Adventist presses, which were headquartered in Shanghai after that point, were able to quickly and effectively circulate their print matter in China (356). Perhaps the critique by Adventist leaders of other Protestant groups and the United States government would have been more muted had Adventists maintained a direct stake in China before 1900. While Rosario convincingly demonstrates that there was indeed a dissenting tradition within Adventism, a more robust analysis of how Adventist missions benefited from (and perhaps grappled with their implication in) US imperialism would have been welcome.

Page | 3

Among the most interesting historiographical interventions in his article is Rosario's move to situate Seventh-Day Adventism as a major force within Protestantism by the turn of the century. Partially given its origins as a home-grown American religious sect in the mid-nineteenth century and ambivalent relationship to the large denominations often associated with the Protestant 'mainline,' Adventism is often left out of narratives of missions and American Protestantism more generally.⁴ Rosario convincingly demonstrates that some Adventists did ground their objections to American imperialism in the principles of religious liberty and the Golden Rule as articulated in the Gospel of Matthew. However, a large percentage of Rosario's examples are of Adventist editors republishing and repurposing speeches and writings from Chinese officials and major Protestant figures, without necessarily contributing Adventist theological distinctives or offering analysis of their own. Rosario does not mention Adventist members of the American Anti-Imperialism League, instead characterizing Adventist leaders as "fellow laborers" with other denominations, and it is not clear how

³ The literature on missionary activity in Hawaii is extensive. For recent work, see Noelani Arista, *The Kingdom and the Republic: Sovereign Hawai'i and the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Joy Schulz, *Hawaiian by Birth: Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and U.S. Colonialism in the Pacific* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

⁴ A few representative examples that survey American evangelicalism and mainline Protestantism are Joel Carpenter and Wilbert Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990); Elisha Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); John Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974). Seventh Day-Adventists are briefly mentioned in William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 128.

widespread anti-imperialist sentiment was among Seventh-Day Adventist communities more broadly (352). Were these writers and publishers representative of their readership? Perhaps a longer chronological view, or a larger source base that included personal papers or archives in Hawaii or East Asia would have enabled a more sustained analysis of Seventh-Day Adventism in the larger context of the American Protestant landscape by World War I, as well as an examination of the resonance of Adventist thought outside the borders of the United States.

Rosario's article sheds light on an important element of US Protestantism and public life more broadly at the turn of the century, particularly by centering a dissenting Protestant tradition that spoke clearly against U.S. military intervention in China and missionary complicity in the events of the Boxer Rebellion. Sustained study of the domestic implications for the Boxer Rebellion on the United States is sorely needed, and Rosario, by highlighting a particular denomination that has been previously neglected by historians, has offered a strong corrective.

Hannah Peckham is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Notre Dame. She holds an AB from Duke University in history and an MA in religion from Yale University. Her dissertation research is on the history of international education and American higher education in the twentieth century, and her interests broadly are in the histories of education, religion, and politics.