

The Global “Bookkeeping” of Souls: Quantification and Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Missions

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This article combines perspectives of the sociology of quantification and field theory in analyzing the emergence of a field of global evangelical missions. Drawing analogies to Werner Sombart’s thesis on the relationship of double-entry bookkeeping and the genesis of capitalism, it shows how the introduction of statistical methods and accounting techniques into the realm of missions in the nineteenth century constructed a visibility of a global distribution of religious adherents that spurred, oriented, and perpetuated an interorganizational sphere geared toward the conversion of the world to Christianity. The article identifies the soteriological and eschatological prerequisites that led to the coalescence of demographic notions and missionary perspectives and draws attention to the extensive reporting system of missionary societies that further consolidated logics of “bookkeeping” in missions. It argues that this ongoing evangelical missionary enterprise is an instance of a more general mechanism of quantification spawning a social field dedicated to the maintenance or alteration of particular “quantities.”

The last decades have seen the emergence of a sociological and historical literature that, rather than implementing statistics and calculation as a methodological tool, investigates quantification as an object in itself. Its emphasis lies on the reality constructions and “reactive” effects that result when measurements are “fed back” into the social realms to which they refer (Desrosières 1998; Espeland and Sauder 2007; Espeland and Stevens 1998, 2008; Hacking 1982; Patriarca 1994; Porter 1995). Similar constructionist perspectives have been advanced within the accounting sciences, where an extensive literature has employed a broad repertoire of social theory to explore the social implications of accounting (see Burchell et al. 1980; Chapman et al. 2009; Hopwood and Miller 1994). Lately, new work in finance sociology has put forth a related agenda in investigating the role of theoretical models, calculative devices, and computational technologies in constructing and performing the reality of economic markets (Callon 1998, 2007; MacKenzie and Millo 2003).

The previously mentioned literature has dealt with quantification in diverse institutional realms, for instance exploring the relationship of statistics and nation-building; the effects of rankings in the educational sector; and the constitutive role of economic equations in financial markets. Yet, it has remained relatively isolated from scholarship interested in social fields, that is, bounded spheres of action driven by autonomous logics and held together by distinct cognitive frameworks and shared

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beliefs (e.g., Bourdieu 1996; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Scott 1994).¹ The mutual neglect of these two literatures is somewhat surprising as many of the previously mentioned studies highlight an important feature of quantification that gains additional relevance from a field-theoretical perspective: Calculative procedures are uniquely capable of constructing particular visibilities and relationships that readily integrate the perspectives of multiple actors. They create numerical entities such as demographics, comparative ranking systems, or prospective stock profits that are likely to foster distinct interests and particular logics of action oriented toward volatile figures and quantities.

In the accounting literature especially, there has been a notable tendency to limit the analysis to the level of a single organization (Vollmer et al. 2009). Where the social beyond the organizational level has come into view, the focus has either fallen on broader institutional environments and pressures, such as on a general proliferation of neoliberal programs and ideas of accountability (e.g., Miller 2008; Power 1997); on a historical genealogy of far-reaching discursive shifts in accounting (e.g., Hoskin and Macve 1986, 1988); or on a “political economy” of accounting, where accounting techniques are implicated in cross-cutting sociopolitical forces and social relations of production (e.g., Bryer 2000a, 2000b; Tinker 1980). To date, only few studies have chosen a *field-level approach* to investigate the effects of accounting practices on dynamics within societal fields or sectors (but see Ezzamel et al. 2012; Oakles et al. 1998). The extent to which calculative technologies shape, transform, or even create fields and field-level processes is still in need of more investigation.

Such questions gain additional urgency in light of an increasing sociological interest in transnational fields (e.g., Go 2008; Go and Krause 2016; Krause 2014). Here, again, the relative ease with which numbers travel across linguistic boundaries and transform the qualitatively and culturally different into a common metric (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Heintz 2010) would suggest a close engagement of the sociology of quantification with the literature on transnationally extending field structures. Yet, extant studies on the relationship of quantification and globalization have either focused on the broader international diffusion and standardization of accounting practices and regulations (e.g., Mennicken 2008; Samsanova 2009), or they have analyzed how accounting technology figures in enacting, appropriating, and rendering practical the global within multinational organizations (Barrett et al. 2005; Cooper and Ezzamel 2013; Cruz et al. 2011). Where social fields have come into view, the focus has mainly been on supranational organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, or the OECD transforming and homogenizing *local* fields through the promotion of a vocabulary and technology of accounting (Neu et al. 2002, 2006), or the interest has shifted from accounting to the role of the accounting *profession* in the emergence of an increasingly global field of professional business services (Arnold 2005; Suddaby et al. 2007). What is more, a recently emerging literature on global indicators again opts for a view on cross-cutting aspects of power and governance while largely ignoring

1. In this article, I will not discuss the specific differences between the various approaches using the “field” concept but shall stick to this basic definition of a social field as a common denominator.

how such indicators figure in the creation of relatively bounded domains of action with distinct “rules of the game” (e.g., Davis et al. 2012; Hansen and Mühlen-Schulte 2012). With the sole exception of some work in the Luhmannian tradition (Heintz and Werron 2011), the role of quantification in the emergence and perpetuation of transnational fields remains underexplored.

To address these lacunae, this article highlights a case from the religious realm that shows how quantification and accounting can contribute to forging a global field of action and intervention. It investigates how calculative practices were involved in the global outreach of evangelical missions since the nineteenth century. Earlier initiatives by Anglicans and German Pietists notwithstanding, the nineteenth century marks the beginning of an unprecedented Protestant endeavor to bring the gospel to the “heathens” as missions originating from the United States, Great Britain, and continental Europe extended to all continents and into countries and regions previously untouched. This surge eclipsed previous Christian missionary efforts in organizational rationality, geographical scope, and its unambiguous ambition to evangelize the world (see Latourette 1937–45; Neill 1987; Porter 2004; Stanley 1990; Tyrell 2004). The article argues that these missionary motives of world evangelization were decisively fueled by the construct of a “heathen population” in the foreign world fabricated through *practices of quantification*. Religious statistics constructed a visibility of a global distribution of religious adherents that spurred, directed, and perpetuated an interorganizational enterprise geared toward the conversion of the world to Christianity. The discursive production of a “global object” through calculative practices propelled a globally oriented dynamic of evangelization and proselytization.

The contribution of this article is thus threefold. First, it adds to the nascent literature on global fields, where processes of field emergence are still little understood. While recent contributions in this area have stressed the role of cultural beliefs and individual actors with extraordinary “social skills” that purposively fashion (global) fields (Dromi 2016; Fligstein and McAdam 2012), this article, taking up insights from Werner Sombart and finance sociology, instead points to the role of sociotechnical devices and material infrastructures in constructing an object and objective capable of spawning and captivating a field of organizations and individual actors. It underscores the relationship of quantifying technologies and the genesis of particular “meaning systems” (Scott 1994), “institutional logics” (Friedland and Alford 1991), or “stakes” (Bourdieu 1996; Fligstein and MacAdam 2012) that drive the autonomization of transnationally extending supraorganizational realms perpetuated by collective and individual actors who have come to share in a field-specific ontology and worldview.

Second, the study contributes to the literature on accounting, where the debate on accounting and religion has largely been shaped by Laughlin’s (1988) seminal paper arguing that the “sacred” cosmos and the “profane” activities of accounting were carefully separated in the Church of England. Since then, many papers have raised doubts about this strict divide by variously revealing how accounting methods can play a constitutive role in religious organizations (Corderly 2006; Irvine 2002, 2005; Jacobs 2005; Jacobs and Walker 2004; Quattrone 2004). This article further adds to this debate by providing an example from the much-neglected macrolevel of social

fields. Instead of showing how accounting techniques productively shape spiritual life in individual organizations, it demonstrates how a numerical object constructed through quantification integrates the perspectives and drives the actions of a whole array of religious organizations of various denominations and stripes.

Finally, the article contributes new insights to the history of Protestant missions in the nineteenth century, where such effects of religious quantification have elicited very little attention. It argues that in addition to ideology and structural opportunity, commonly cited as explanatory factors in the literature (Beaver 1968; Latourette 1937–45; Neill 1987; Phillips 1969; Porter 2004; Shenk 2004; Stanley 1990), the constitutive effects of statistics and bookkeeping need to be considered in explaining the rise and logic of nineteenth-century missions and their continuation in the contemporary spread of global evangelicalism.

For data, I use missionary periodicals, sermons by prominent missionaries, and tracts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To highlight historical discontinuities, I also look at early treatises on global religion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the United States and Great Britain were the two leading missionary “powers” in terms of missionaries sent abroad and funds raised for missions (Warneck 1901: 85–139), I focus on material from these countries.² I furthermore limit my analysis of missionary periodicals to the organ of the biggest missionary organization in the United States, the *Missionary Herald* of the interdenominational American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), and to *The Missionary Review* (later: *Missionary Review of the World*), the leading general-interest mission journal of its time, reaching a circulation of 13,000 by 1900 (Mathews 2006: 116; Robert 2003: 284–94). Annual reports of the ABCFM, the *Missionary Herald*, and the sermons of ABCFM missionaries have been acquired from the ABCFM archives at Houghton Library, Harvard University. Sermons by British missionaries and evidence on British missionary organizations come from secondary sources on British missions. Finally, in pointing out how this particular missionary dynamic has endured until today, I look at online resources for contemporary evangelical missions. I use these data to show how calculative practices are employed in prompting and orienting Protestant missionary endeavors.

I do not discuss Catholicism in this article, for two reasons. First, in contrast to the material on Protestant missions, broadly published in missionary journals and treatises of the time, primary documents on Catholic missions are substantially less accessible. Second, Catholics played a reactive rather than a proactive part in the upsurge of missions at the turn of the century. Indeed, Roman Catholic missions had been at a “low ebb” (Cox 2008: 9) since the political decline of the Roman Catholic imperial powers and the preliminary end of Jesuit missions after the papal dissolution of the order in 1773. To be sure, the fact that Protestants had the initiative in the nineteenth century by no means implies that Catholicism was insignificant. On the

2. I am, however, aware that continental Europe, especially Germany, was also heavily engaged in missionary publishing and that such publications enjoyed a wide readership even in the Anglo-Saxon world.

contrary, rejuvenated by the Protestant missionary challenge, Catholic orders became a fierce competitor of Protestant organizations, and numerical gains of Catholics were closely monitored in Protestant missionary publications (as was likely true the other way around). However, as this is rather in line with, than contrary to, my argument of numbers and numerical competition fueling an interorganizational field dedicated to evangelization, and as I am more interested in the genesis and perpetuation of this field through technologies of quantification, I consider the focus on Protestantism to be warranted.

The article begins with one of the earliest proponents of a relationship between calculative practices and the emergence of specific institutional orders as it examines Werner Sombart’s (1916) classic thesis on the relationship between double-entry bookkeeping, the construction of the category “capital,” and the genesis of a capitalist economy. It argues that central elements of Sombart’s argument can be generalized to highlight similar developments in fields beyond the economy. Thus, as is shown in the remainder of the article, demographic techniques played a comparable role in the emergence of nineteenth-century missions. Here, they made global categories of religious adherents numerically visible, installing a “bookkeeping rationale” that quite analogously sparked a missionary enterprise dedicated to altering quantitative distributions in favor of Christianity. The article thus identifies a more general mechanism in the quantitative constitution of distinct social fields: in Sombart’s case as in the one presented here, calculative practices merge with particular meaning structures (religious and economic, respectively) to construct a specific *numerical object* (distributions of religious adherents and “capital,” respectively) that in turn spawns and becomes the center of an *autonomous and recursive institutional order* focused on maintaining or modifying quantitative values of said object (the missionary movement or capitalism, respectively).³

To set the stage for this novel perspective within religion, I first look at early forms of religious quantification on a global scale, dating back to the early seventeenth century, in the second section. In the third section, I proceed to discuss how and why demographic concepts and logics of accounting merged with a missionary outlook on the religious world in the nineteenth century. In the fourth section, I focus on the systematic observation of the overall progress of Protestant missions and show how global statistics of religion drove and oriented missionary efforts. Finally, I flesh out the central analogies of the emergence of nineteenth-century missions with Sombart’s thesis on the birth of capitalism and highlight the continuities with contemporary evangelical missionary perspectives.

3. While referring to the process delineated in this article as a mechanism, I do not subscribe to the methodological individualism that Hedström and Swedberg (1998) tie to the mechanism concept. The causal chain observed here operates at an institutional level of discourses, meanings, and relevance structures as well as at an organizational level, with quantitative practices creating discursive objects that influence and orient organizations and organizational structures. Consequently, the microfoundations of these processes add little explanatory value. On multiple levels in the analysis of mechanisms see Jepperson and Meyer (2011).

Sombart's Thesis on Accounting and the Rise of Capitalism

Both Max Weber (1978 [1921], 1981 [1923]) and Werner Sombart (1916) have pointed to the constitutive role of double-entry bookkeeping in their studies on the rise of modern capitalism, seeing it as a unique and defining element of the rational capitalist enterprise. However, it is first and foremost Sombart's perspective on the relationship of accounting and capitalism that bears subtle yet fundamental constructionist implications as it points to the "ideational" consequences of economic bookkeeping for the emergence of a capitalist economy. According to Sombart, the very practice of bookkeeping essentially *created* the notion of capital as something that could be accumulated—an accumulation in the first place made *visible* through accounting. In Sombart's words:

The method of double-entry bookkeeping actualizes the complete separation of the funds used in profit making and the funds used for everyday life. Herewith the acquisition principle reaches its full development. *There remains only one single purpose: to increase a measured amount of "value."* To penetrate the mysteries of bookkeeping, one must forget the qualities of goods and services. One must no longer think of ships or shiploads, flour or cotton, but exclusively in terms of quantities, of increasing and diminishing amounts of value. The idea of organic limitation of human needs, expressed in the livelihood principle, is replaced by the principle of *acquisition as an end in itself*.... The very concept of capital is derived from this way of looking at things; *one can say that capital, as a category, did not exist before double-entry bookkeeping.* (Sombart 1953: 38; emphases added)

This thesis and the exact nature of the relationship of double-entry bookkeeping and the genesis of capitalism are still lively debated today. As I am more interested in the structure of the argument than in its actual validity for capitalism, I will not discuss this controversy here.⁴ Rather, in the context at hand, three interrelated elements of Sombart's proposition are of relevance. I shall call them *construction*, *catalyzation*, and *rationalization*.

Accounting practices *constructed* a numerical "entity," a specific quantitative distillate first derived from particular calculative procedures. This quantitative construct *catalyzed* a broad and systematic endeavor or "enterprise" geared toward its incrementation (as manifested in individual enterprises); a certain measure thus emerged as the center of attention and action within a largely autonomous sphere—a field fueled by a specific interest or "spirit" inextricably bound to a purely calculative outlook. Finally, accounting methods formed the basis of increasingly *rational procedures* within this field: Where outcomes of previous undertakings could be made visible

4. For an overview see Chiapello (2007), who offers an analysis of the relationship between double-entry bookkeeping and the emergence of the *theoretical concept* of "capitalism," especially with reference to the work of Marx. Here, one also finds a discussion of the work of Yamey (1949, 1964, 2005), who is among the most adamant of Sombart's critics.

and compared, future practices could be optimized and selected in terms of desired results.

As I will show in the remainder of this article, similar “catalytic” effects of bookkeeping methods as those posited by Sombart can also be discerned in sectors other than the economy. My focus is on the religious realm, where the transposition of demographic “accounting” practices unto religious affairs created novel categories and numerical “objects” that established and set in motion an autonomous social field devoted to modifying quantities of Protestant adherents and “heathens.” I thus illustrate how the confluence of demographic perspectives with a missionary discourse led to the construction of “religious populations” and the institution of “bookkeeping” practices in nineteenth-century global missions, dynamizing an endeavor to evangelize the world. To throw the novelty of this perspective on global religions into sharp relief, the following section will first briefly examine early forms of quantifying the worldwide religious landscape before turning to the missionary discourse of the nineteenth century.

Early Quantification of Global Religion

Global accounts of religion date back as early as the seventeenth century. Samuel Purchas’s *Purchas, his Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation unto the Present*, published in 1613, may be seen as the earliest work of a whole genre of treatises that aimed to comprehensively survey the religions of the globe as it was known then.⁵ These treatises adopted a mostly “qualitative” approach to the comparison of religions (classified as Judaism, Christianity, “Mahometanism,” and “heathenism”/idolatry) and things religious as they took stock of the customs, the historical past, and the present locations of the various religious traditions.

However, some of these volumes also exhibit a curious way of comparing the world’s religions in a quantitative fashion. Thus, in his treatise *Enquiries Touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions Through the Chief Parts of the World*, first published in 1614, Edward Brerewood offers the following account in his chapter “Of the Quantity and Proportion of the Parts of the Earth, Possessed by the Several Sorts of the Above-Mentioned Religions” (Brerewood 1674 [1614]: 144–51):

It being first supposed...that the proportions of Europe, Africk, Asia, and America, are as 1—3—4, and 7. And that the professors of the fore-mentioned Religions, possess the several portions and proportions, of each of them, which is before set down: It will be found I say upon these suppositions...that Christians possess, near about a sixth part of the known inhabited Earth; Mahumetans, a fift part...and Idolaters, two thirds, or but little less. So that, if we divide the

5. Masuzawa (2005) has dealt with most of these surveys in her study *The Invention of World Religions*; on the discursive prerequisites of such comparative treatises see Harrison (1990) and Pailin (1984).

known regions of the world, into 30 equal parts; The Christians part is as five, the Mahumetans as six, and the Idolaters as nineteen, for the poor dispersed and distressed Christians, which are found in Asia and Africk, mingled among Mahumetans, and Idolaters, I receive not into this account, both because they were but thin dispersed...and because also, many Mahumetans, are found mingled among Christians in Europe, to recompence and countervail a great part of that number. (p. 145)

Brerewood's quantitative snapshot of global religion, relating religions according to the total area of the regions where they are largely professed or encountered, would sporadically reappear unaltered in comparable treatises throughout the next one and a half centuries. An identical account can be found, for instance, in William Turner's *History of All Religions* from 1695. Hannah Adams (1784), a distant relative of President John Quincy Adams and herself renowned for her many encyclopedic surveys of the world's religions, drew a very similar picture still in 1784, though Jews were now included and Greek Orthodox Christians listed separately.

A sensitivity and interest for numerical relations among religions were thus already present before the nineteenth century. Religious quantification could not have elicited much fascination at this early stage, however. Not only was new information widely missing, but also this rather static way of thinking about quantitative relations among religions, that is, in terms of geographic dominance rather than in terms of individual allegiance, did not allow for much observable change. With religious "populations" at best implicitly in the picture, enumerable fluctuations were not to be had. As will be argued in the following, this changed fundamentally as the missionary discourse of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries became wedded to a demographic discourse.

The Introduction of Demographic Perspectives into Missions

The novel religious view on "populations" emerging in the missionary discourse of the nineteenth century is best exemplified by a treatise that is widely considered to be one of the founding documents of nineteenth-century Protestant missions: William Carey's *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* of 1792. Carey, a British shoemaker of London who had recently converted to Baptism, showed himself deeply affected by the writings of Captain James Cook, which featured reports on the many heathen tribes encountered during Cook's voyages. Consequently, Carey's tract argues for the undiminished urgency of the Great Commission and calls for the establishment of missionary societies modeled after trading companies.

This treatise is especially noteworthy for its extensive use of statistics and demographic reasoning. Section III of the tract, "Containing a Survey of the Present State of the Globe," provides statistical tables for all continents, with countries listed as rows and their geographical "extent," "number of inhabitants," and "religions"

indicated in the columns. Already here, “populations” and “religions” are brought into affinity. The population figures are estimates based on a method that had already been employed by Vauban in 1707: It begins with an approximation of how many people can be sustained by a square mile of land, taking local factors into consideration, and then extrapolates this figure to the total area of the country in question.

It is not the dubious accuracy of this estimate that is of interest here. The importance lies in the discursive shift that is indicated by it. Rather than quantitatively comparing religions by simply putting their geographical extensions into relation as done by Brerewood in 1614 and by Hannah Adams as recently as 1784, the focus is now clearly on *countable individuals*. The shift is purely a matter of semantics, not of new and advanced intelligence, as, obviously, geographical areas are still the basis of this calculation.

In aggregating these estimates, moreover, Carey’s tract offers global totals of religious adherence in what may be considered one of the first specifications of a *global religious distribution*; here, the world’s *population*, not the geographical world, is dissolved into its various religious segments, putting the discursive innovation markedly into relief:

The inhabitants of the world according to this calculation, amount to about seven hundred and thirty-one millions; four hundred and twenty millions of whom are still in pagan darkness; an hundred and thirty millions the followers of Mahomet; an hundred millions catholics; forty-four millions protestants; thirty millions of the greek and armenian churches, and perhaps seven millions of jews.⁶ (Carey 1792: 62)

In arguing his case for global missions, Carey’s emphasis lies poignantly on the *quantitative amount* of heathens:

It must undoubtedly strike every considerate mind, what a *vast proportion* of the sons of Adam there are, who yet remain in the most deplorable state of heathen darkness, without any means of knowing the true God, except what are afforded them by the works of nature; and utterly destitute of the knowledge of the gospel of Christ, or of any means of obtaining it. (Carey 1792: 62; emphasis added)

Similar pleas for global missions had preceded Carey’s treatise; they had had, however, comparatively little repercussions and had been largely void of any numerical argument.⁷ Indeed, prior to the 1790s, British Protestant missionary endeavors had been, as Stanley (1990: 55) put it, “sporadic and geographically limited,” confining themselves mostly to North American settlements. Continental Europe, to be sure, had

6. To be sure, instances of quantifying church members can be found at least as early as the sixteenth century as, for example, in the ecclesiastical censuses in England of 1547, 1563, 1603, 1676, and 1688 (Cline Cohen 1999: 36); however, while some of these censuses also surveyed nonconformists, they generally did not dissolve a “population” into religious segments nor were any of them interested in religious adherence on a global scale.

7. See, for instance, the hymns and appeals of Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and Philip Doddridge (1702–52), which already had, according to Stanley (1990: 55), “a distinctly global flavor.”

witnessed an early impulse of global missions in the first half of the eighteenth century when the Danish-Halle Mission and missionaries of the Moravian Church ventured into India, the West Indies, and even Persia and China. However, these momentous initiatives had been unable to sustain a broader influence on Protestantism (Pierard 2011: 294; Warneck 1901: 66–70).

In contrast, Carey's *Enquiry* prefaced an unparalleled surge in missionary efforts from Protestant denominations across the board. Its call for missionary societies was heeded just months later with the formation of the Particular-Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen (later: Baptist Missionary Society). Before the century ended, the initially ecumenical London Missionary Society and the Anglican Society for the Missions to Africa and the East (later: Church Missionary Society) had joined the scene. In 1810, North American Protestants followed suit with the foundation of the ABCFM. Similar organizations sprung up in the following years in Germany, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands.

The turn of the century thus saw a striking shift from more locally bounded missionary engagements to endeavors that were truly global in scope, marking an "unprecedented geographical advance of Christian influence" (Stanley 1990: 83). Most importantly, this novel missionary movement was able to persevere over the course of the century and remains vibrantly alive among evangelical factions of Protestantism even today.

As the example of early Pietism shows, it is unlikely to have been the revivalist atmosphere of the century's turn alone that gave this newly roused missionary movement such an unswerving and long-lasting momentum. Rather, as this article argues, the fact that the evangelical fervor of the nineteenth century was channeled into efforts of religious quantification played a decisive role in *durably establishing* a self-perpetuating as well as global dynamic in the realm of Christian missions. For Carey's treatise not only ushered in an era of missions theretofore unequalled in organizational capacity and global expansion. It also set the foundation for the complementary enterprise of *continually monitoring and rigorously quantifying* the world's religious landscape and worldwide missionary progress.

Before elaborating on this aspect, the very coalescence of quantification and missions warrants some attention. What, in the first place, led to the adoption of demographic and quantitative perspectives in the missionary outlook of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? What, in short, were the prerequisites for this novel way of relating to Christian missions in quantitative *and* global terms as exhibited by treatises such as the one by William Carey?

First, as I discuss in the following, I maintain that the well-documented *soteriological and millenarian* features of nineteenth-century Protestant theology, which are generally cited as central factors in the onset of global evangelical missions (Beaver 1968; Latourette 1937–45; Neill 1987; Phillips 1969; Porter 2004; Stanley 1990), bore an elective affinity to practices of accounting and demography and need to be considered also with regard to the quantitative perspectives they helped install. I thus argue that quantification should be viewed as a relevant mediating factor in explaining the emergence and persistence of evangelical missions.

Second, I show that “bookkeeping” perspectives were further consolidated by the missionary societies’ practice of *legitimizing* missions through detailed reports that accounted for income and donations *as well as* for successful conversions; here, for apparent reasons of parsimony, similar or often even identical notations and tables for both aspects of missions were used, making “gains” in communicants visible and inevitably lending further plausibility to the idea of religious adherents as something to be “accumulated.”

Theological Prerequisites

Within nineteenth-century Protestant theology, it was perhaps first and foremost the *soteriological* outlook that leveled the field for the introduction of demographic perspectives. The emergence of modern demography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the seminal contributions of John Graunt in England and Johann Peter Süssmilch in Germany, was closely tied to applying bookkeeping techniques to mortality bills and records of “christenings,” thus balancing births and deaths of a “population” (Kreager 1988).⁸ In light of the soteriological exclusivism of nineteenth-century Protestantism, such deaths, as they were implied in demographic reasoning and the calculation of populations, inevitably gained a special significance when considering the sizable proportion of unevangelized “heathens” among the dead; after all, the dominant doctrine of the time held that those who had not turned to Christ would perish in hell. A sermon by Robert Moffat, missionary of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, delivered to his parish in 1843, makes this quite apparent:

Who can look to the East Indies now, and to China now, who can look to those interesting portions of the globe, because the most populous, the most dense, without yearning with compassion over the teeming millions that are there moving onward every day like some vast funeral procession; onward and downward, sadly and slowly, but certainly to the regions of woe? “Oh, you are a hard man,” some might say; “do you think they will go to hell?” Where do they go? Do they go to heaven? All idolaters, we are told, have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (cited in Stanley 1990: 65)

As indicated by the mention of India and China, the focus of this particular soteriological perspective inevitably falls on demographic magnitude. Furthermore, such images of “souls” continually “lost” to damnation if not otherwise “won” for salvation resonate with logics of accounting that underlie modern demography in general.

To be sure, an exclusivist stance toward religious salvation is far from unique to this particular period and certainly insufficient as a cause for missions. For the quantity of heathens to even have been of relevance and not just a purely academic question, the idea that the fate of these heathens could be altered by an earthly intervention had to be presupposed. This Arminian notion that man could play an instrumental part in the

8. On the origin of modern statistics see, for example, Lazarsfeld (1961).

salvation of others did indeed increasingly supplant orthodox views of predestination in the eighteenth century (McLoughlin 1959; Mead 1942). Not surprisingly, then, the call for global missions often went hand in hand with a piercing critique of those voices that held God alone ultimately responsible for the salvation of the heathens. To illustrate, Lyman Beecher, one of the central advocates of the Arminian “New Haven Theology,” preached during his sermon at the annual meeting of the ABCFM in New York City on October 12, 1827:

The idea that God will convert the heathen in his own good time, and that Christians have nothing to do but to pray and devoutly wait, is found in no canonical book. It is the maxim of covetousness, and sloth, and uncaring infidelity. We have no authority for saying, what some, without due consideration, have said, that God, if he pleased, could doubtless in a moment convert the whole heathen world without the Gospel. It might as well be said, that he can, if he please, burn without fire, or drown without water, or give breath without atmosphere, as that he can instruct intellectual beings without the means of knowledge, and influence moral beings without law and motive, and thus reclaim an alienated world without the knowledge and moral power of the Gospel. It is no derogation from the power of God, that, to produce results, it must be exerted by means adapted to the constitution of things which Himself has established. (Beecher 1827: 19–20)

The quotation exemplifies the reconciliation of profane rationality, “instrumental activism,” and the realm of the sacred, which can be seen as a fundamental prerequisite for the “pragmatic” approach of quantifying heathens and converts.

Second, aside from these soteriological features, the specific *millenarian* perspectives of early-nineteenth-century Protestantism were likewise conducive to adopting a quantitative outlook on global missions. Though pre- and postmillennialists disagreed whether the Second Coming of Christ would precede or follow the millennium, both ideological strands converged in the conclusion that missionary endeavors were urgent and critical, either to save as many souls as possible before the imminent day of judgment or to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth and thereby hasten Christ’s return. Moreover, successful conversions in themselves were considered a tell-tale sign that these were in fact the end times. Thus, the conversion of the world’s population was as much seen as a *task* to take part in as it was considered an *indicator and gauge* of the millennium’s imminence; consequently, a numerical accounting of those already won for Christ and those yet to be gained suggested itself somewhat naturally.

Accordingly, petitions and statistical reasoning as they are exhibited in Carey’s early treatise would continue to pervade the many missionary publications and sermons of the nineteenth century. The millenarian ambiance, setting the expectation of an imminent dawn of the “Kingdom of God,” of which an increasing number of conversions was indicative, as well as the notion of a “soteriological” responsibility for the salvation of the heathens can be said to have borne an elective affinity to calculative practices and demographic perspectives. As we shall see in the following

section, a quantitative outlook and practices of religious “bookkeeping” were further enforced by the meticulous reports of Protestant missionary societies.

Missionary Reports

While the theological outlook of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestantism invited demographic concepts into a missionary discourse, it was especially the regular reporting of the various missionary societies emerging from the Protestant missionary awakening that consolidated “bookkeeping” practices in the realm of missions.⁹ With only a few exceptions, these organizations were voluntary associations that formed outside the official churches and relied heavily on the service of the religious laity. Nonetheless, they were generally run in a highly bureaucratic fashion. A board of missions in the homeland usually supervised and coordinated all missionary activities in the mission fields, which had to be carefully recorded and continually reported (Tyrell 2004).

Nearly every missionary society entertained some publication that made the information from these reports available to the broader public. Such journals interspersed news from the field and other stories relating to mission with detailed financial reports and surveys of the missionary progress. One function of these publications was to pique a general interest for the missionary cause and elicit donations from domestic supporters.

More importantly, however, these journals can be seen as an important means and vehicle of conveying the *legitimacy* of the missionary society to actual and potential donors. The transparency and detail of the financial reports published in these organs can be attributed precisely to this.¹⁰ Carruthers and Espeland (1991) have highlighted the rhetorical functions of economic accounting, which often played the greater part in the early adoption of bookkeeping methods: Beyond its technical advantages, the practice of accounting was from the outset seen as an effective way of conveying to an audience the legitimacy of a business venture. Similar considerations on the part of the missionary “entrepreneurs” can be discerned from the missionary journals. To illustrate, in its organ *The Missionary Herald*, the ABCFM (ABCFM 1882: 342) restated some of its principles as they were elucidated in an 1862 report on the expenditures and finances of the board:

The Missionary Herald, published monthly, contains an accurate account of all donations received during a previous month, with the name and place of residence of each donor, which corresponds with the sum entered as received upon the cash-book.... This is a very important safeguard, which cannot be had in ordinary business transactions; and this, and other checks adopted by the Board, for the

9. See Warneck (1901: 85–144) for a list and discussion of the various missionary societies that originated from North America and Europe.

10. For a similar point on accounting in religious organizations see Irvine (2002).

security of its funds, *should give assurance to every donor that his gift will reach the treasury of the Board.* (emphasis added)

Sure enough, the annual reports of the missionary societies did not content themselves with financial statements. Information regarding new communicants as well as general expositions of the further need of missions also played a significant part in the effort to legitimate a missionary enterprise dependent on the benevolence of donors:

A condensed and succinct view of each missionary station, of the receipts and disbursements of the Treasury, and of various subjects connected with the general cause of missions, is required at the close of each year, to justify, not only the past proceedings, but the future plans of the Board, *and to satisfy the Christian public, that their labor and sacrifices are not in vain in the Lord.* (ABCFM 1824: 62–63; emphasis added)

Hence, annual summaries determining the total number of church members as well as the number of church members added during the year generally appear in the various missionary journals, in *The Missionary Herald* as early as 1829.

The simple contiguity of financial statements and reports on added communicants lent plausibility to thinking about expenditures, income, and converts in very similar terms. In the annual reports of the ABCFM, as elsewhere, expressions such as “net gain,” “increase,” and “total” were often used to refer to finances and communicants alike.¹¹ Thus, quantitative perspectives on religious adherents were reinforced through “semantic interferences” with economic bookkeeping practices *sensu stricto*, thereby establishing practices of *religious* “bookkeeping.” In essence, the missionary societies’ need to assert legitimacy and give some measure of success to convince donors that their charitable investments were worthwhile solidified logics of “accounting” in the missionary outlook on the religious world.

These missionary reports also supplied the necessary data for the construction of an ever-changing distribution of religious adherents that stood at the center of monitoring the overall progress of Protestant missions and of effectively directing and orienting the missionary enterprise. It is to this *global* “bookkeeping” of souls that I now turn.

The Global “Bookkeeping” of Souls

Based on the extensive report system and the many publication organs of the missionary societies, some took it upon themselves to continually pool all the available information to give a *comprehensive overview* of the *worldwide* Protestant missionary enterprise. Many magazines dedicated to such a task were already circulating in New England before Americans even became seriously involved in global missions: *The*

11. See McKinlay and Mutch (2015) for similar transferences of accountability practices between the economic domain and religious (self-)assessments in Scottish Presbyterianism.

New York Missionary Magazine (1800–3), *The Panoplist* (1805–8), and *The Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* (1803–8) are early examples of such publications (the latter two merged in 1808 and were later replaced by *The Missionary Herald*, the organ of the ABCFM).

Among the most noteworthy and exhaustive of these ventures was *The Missionary Review*, as of 1888 *The Missionary Review of the World*, edited by Royal G. Wilder from 1878 to 1887, by Arthur T. Pierson from 1888 to 1911, and by Delavan L. Pierson from 1911 to 1939. It could already rely on a well-established system of missionary reporting and thus serves well to illustrate *the construction of a continually changing numerical relation between a heathen and a Protestant population* as focal point of nineteenth-century missionary efforts.

During the *Review*'s first decade, an overview of all financial statements and mission reports of every church and missionary society from America as well as Europe would run through all the editions each year to finally conclude in a comprehensive statistical table summarizing, with some reservations, the present state of global Protestant Christendom. As of 1893, two such statistical tables, one summarizing the Protestant missionary efforts originating from the United States and Canada and the other those from Great Britain and continental Europe, would appear in the first two issues of each year. As stated in the tables, the “figures are almost wholly derived directly from the annual reports of the various Societies” (Pierson 1893: 72–73).

These tables are in many ways notable: Each year, the annual progress of a total of more than 100 Protestant missionary societies is surveyed. Moreover, financial statements and notes on the number of communicants and adherents are again brought together *in one table*. Thus, the last three rows of the table in 1884 give “grand totals” of the current year and the preceding year as well as “year’s gain” for financial income, administrative costs, and communicants of the global Protestant community. Figure 1 shows the second half of the table listing European organizations, with the totals for American organizations brought over.

Such *global* “gains” in communicants “made visible” through accounting practices and tabular devices focalize the missionary endeavor on a global distribution of religious adherents. Moreover, they discursively highlight the *fluidity* and *alterability* of this distribution. They thus serve as the key rhetorical device not only in legitimating but also in *motivating* and *driving* general missionary efforts in the nineteenth century. First, it is the quantified *success* of missions that spurs the missionary undertaking: “Do not these facts present abundant evidence that God is bestowing large and special blessings on efforts to evangelize the heathen?” (Wilder 1884: 464). Second, it is the quantified *need* for missions that serves to stimulate missionary ventures as these figures are balanced against the as of yet unconverted portion of the world’s population: “Assume Prof. Christlieb’s estimate of 1,650,000 converts from heathenism, as the result of modern missions, to be correct, and yet how small this result compared to the 1,000,000,000 still unevangelized” (Wilder 1881: 34).

Accordingly, the “bookkeeping” of communicants and adherents is flanked by diligent calculations regarding the conditions for an evangelization or conversion of the world “in twenty years,” thus “before the year 1900” (Pierson 1881: 437), or “in

EUROPEAN ORGANIZATIONS.	Home Strength.		Year's growth in comm'ts.		Foreign Missionary			Maximum Salary of		Administration.		Workers from Christendom.		Native Workers.		Year's Gain.			
	Minis- ters.	Com'ts.	Total.	Per cent.	Total.	Per mbr.	Miss'y.	Officer	Whole cost.	Cost per c't.	Be- gan For. Mis.	Ord.	Wo- men	Ord.	Native Com'ts.	In c'm'ts.	Per cent.		
51. Gospel Prop. Society,	23,000	13,000,000			\$547,862	\$.04	\$3,000	\$3,000	71,848	11.20	1701	160	61	62	79	1382	28540	1862	6.97
52. Church Miss'y Society,	"	"			1,126,157	.08	3,000	3,000	120,670	12.00	1799	222	34	15	240	3075	37443	1117	3.07
53. Eng. Baptist	1,882	304,802	28,446	10.29	303,612	.99	1,350	3,000	34,674	12.89	1792	75	20	23	75	477	40247	2050	5.33
54. Gen. " Society,	404	26,153	0	0	42,890	1.64	700	600	3,345	8.67	1816	7	9	22	7	1175	27	2.35	
55. London Miss'y Society,	3,205	360,000	0	0	632,963	1.75	1,170	2,500	50,353	8.64	1795	152	130	383	4920	86222	12960	less	
56. Wesleyan Meth. " 18,850	2,000	407,085	27	0	846,800	2.08	1,200	2,340	103,652	13.99	1814	270	30	226	270	1789	91276	1927	2.15
57. Prim. " " 15,782	1,151	196,480	0	0	13,098	.06	600	942	968	7.98	1843	4	4	2	4	350	0	0	
58. New Connex Meth. So. 1,271	188	33,383	2,578	8.36	27,276	.81	1,250	750	3,360	14.04		5	4	12	43	1161	30	2.65	
59. United Free " " 3,417	431	84,152	9,256	12.15	70,428	.83	900	900	3,300	10.64	1857	18	8	15	134	7127	344	5.07	
60. Bible Christians	1,930	33,920	0	0	32,521	.95	400	750	2,414	8.01	1821	59			325	4095	31	6.76	
61. Eng. Presbyterians,	273	98,406	1,004	1.74	80,120	1.37	2,250	0	3,740	4.89	1847	18	9	6	15	59	2859	91	3.28
62. Estab. Ch. of Scotland,	1,660	539,292	9,282	1.75	140,112	.26	3,200	750	5,366	3.93	1827	12	11	6	4	98	415	95	39.68
63. Free & Ref. Ch. of Scotland,	1,034	314,027	34,027	12.86	389,180	1.23	1,920	2,000	9,339	2.46	1827	37	35	50	13	425	4443	172	4.02
64. United Presbyterians "	583	178,195	4,638	2.65	182,674	1.02	2,250	2,000	9,766	5.64	1847	55	8	13	20	418	11519	1304	12.76
65. Irish	632	103,548	723	0.70	54,505	.52	1,780	2,000	2,518	4.62	1840	13	4	8	10	38	370	10	2.77
66. China Inland Mission,					66,168				7,447	12.68	1865	14	42	50	102	1100	20	1.85	
67. Livingstone "					25,600						1878								
68. London Society for Jews,					223,680				31,236	16.28	1808	30	28		8				
69. Col. and Cont. Chr. Society,					235,170				24,213	11.47	1823	136	44		92				
70. Christian Faith Mission,					11,380						1691								
71. So. Am. Miss'y Society,					76,120		3,000	3,000	14,217	22.96	1844	14	10	11	0	5	220		
72. Edinburgh Medical Society,					44,437		1,500	1,500	5,500	14.12	1841	3	5	3					
73. British Miss'y Soc'y, Jews,					47,270				7,208	15.25	1842	12	9	3		80			
74. Colonial Miss'y Society,					20,091				3,083	18.12	1836								
75. Basle Miss'y Society,					254,180		1,000	1,000	2,992	7.25	1815	83	34	83	26	286	7268	43	.66
76. St. Chrischona Miss'y Society,					26,021				1,856	7.68	1840	4	27	6		10			
77. Rhenish Miss'y Society,					86,000					18.28	1840	70	6	60	2	180	9150	150	1.66
78. North German Miss'y Soc'y,					24,000					18.36	1836	10	8	12	250	140	12727		
79. Leipzig Miss'y Society,					63,176					18.19	1836	22	2	22	10	260	13321	60	0.45
80. Berlin " "					88,000					18.24	1836	57	12	30	2	162	8060	60	0.75
81. Gossner's " "					34,000					18.36	1836	12	5	10	8	205	12500	1714	15.89
82. Hermannsburg Miss'y Soc'y,					70,300					18.53	1840	40	55	55	22	188	3920	120	3.15
83. French Evang. " "	1,500	639,000			64,616				4,000	6.59	1822	25	6	26	2	130	6820		
84. Netherland Ref. " "	1,612	425,000			40,800					17.07	1836	11	8	6	2	35	2650	650	5.41
85. " " Ms'y Union,					12,000					18.68	1836	8	8	8	5	150			
86. Utrecht Miss'y Society,					18,000					18.59	1836	10	8	8	12	100			
87. Java Comite,					7,500					18.55	1836	6	3	6	13	350			
88. Mennonites Miss'y Society,					6,500					18.50	1836	3	3	3	12	160			
89. Ermelo Miss'y Society,					8,000					18.56	1836	0	4	3	14	50			
90. Christian Ref. Ch. Ms'y Soc.					7,000					18.60	1836	3	2	2	5	40			
91. Dutch " " "					7,500					18.60	1836	3	2	2	15	150			
92. Norwegian " " "					51,500					18.42	1836	38	4	16	6	220	2000	320	19.04
93. Lands " " "					7,000					18.45	1836	7	2	4	0	14	80	30	60.00
94. Stockholm Stads Miss'y Soc.					4,000					18.53	1836	4	3	3	2	300			
95. Finnish Miss'y Society,					20,150					18.59	1836	5	3	7	6	8		2	33.33
96. Ansgarius Union,					3,500					18.65	1836	1	1	1					
97. Free Ch. Canton de Vand.					10,815					18.99	1836	5	3	5	6	100	40	66.66	
98. Danish Ev. Miss'y Society,					7,800					18.46	1836	8	2	3	30	120	25	6.12	
99. Jerusalem " "					5,095					18.52	1836	4	2	3	3	210	33	18.64	
100. Universities' Mission,					65,170					18.59	1836	19	11	10	1	32	250	30	13.63
European Totals,	41,250	32,854	16,694,443	89,091	6,203,237				527,317			1,780	549	1030	1241	15420	396715		
American Totals,	36,758	76,640	10,484,289	179,897	3,420,613				233,595			975	129	1132	1102	10936	248079		
Grand Totals in 1882-3	78,008	116,494	27,178,732	269,888	9,623,850	0.44			760,912			2,755	678	2162	2343	26356	644794		4.22
Grand Totals in 1881-2	78,009	118,264	27,057,012	155,914	5,967,500	1.31			723,451			2,729	608	2013	2210	22719	618657		7.64
Year's gain,	1	2,270	121,720	113,974	\$656,350				37,461			26	70	149	133	3637	26137		

FIGURE 1. Table quantifying foreign missions in 1882-83 (European organizations, and American and European totals) by Wilder (1884: 460-61)

this generation” (Pierson 1892: 143). Hence, Arthur T. Pierson (1881: 438) writes in *The Missionary Review*: “Think of it! We may take *one in ten* of the Protestant church members and with them bring the whole population of the world to the knowledge of the Gospel, by simply securing this result: that each of that elect number shall in some way bring the gospel into contact with three souls each year for twenty years” (emphasis in the original).

Of course, the uneven terms regarding natural demographic increases are seldom overlooked in this matter: “During the century since Carey went to India, Dr. Murray Mitchell computes that *at least* 200,000,000 have been added to the pagan population of the globe; and that for every 10,000,000 added to nominal Christendom, fully 15,000,000 have been added to heathendom” (Pierson 1889: 69; emphasis in the original).

However, the continual review of missions had to go beyond statistical aggregations to effectively orient the missionary cause. After all, the main objective of *The Missionary Review*, aside from rallying support for the missionary enterprise, was to furnish missionaries with the proper knowledge needed to conduct foreign missions efficiently and rationally and to counter the “lamentable lack of information, even among Christians, as to the real state of the heathen” (Wilder 1878: 7).

Consequently, efforts such as the one put forth by *The Missionary Review* consisted not only in making the amount of heathens visible and numerically relating them to Christian adherents and communicants in regular intervals. They also included extensive discussions and comparisons of the conditions and proceedings in the various local mission fields. The *Review* thus featured several articles on specific countries and continents. Moreover, under editor-in-chief A. T. Pierson, a section “The Monthly Concert of Missions,” later called “Field of Monthly Survey,” was introduced with the explicit intention “during the twelve-month to turn the whole wheel round and bring successively to view every part of the world-wide circle of missionary labor” (Pierson 1889: 67). Here, the January issue usually featured “Facts and Figures about the World-Wide Field” (Pierson 1891: 72), while the following issues of each year explored particular countries on all of the continents.

These articles address anything of relevance to missionary work: that is, the properties and degree of difficulty of local languages; the customs of the local people; general facts on the geography and demography of the land; or the basic tenets and practices of local religions, especially as the latter gained more and more contour in Western discourse on “other” religions. Furthermore, statistical data on the missionary progress are given, usually offering trends regarding conversions as well as figures on the missionary societies and missionaries active in the country.

As these paragraphs and articles on the various countries broke the numbers down and put them into context, they were no less compelling than the general surveys and tracts. They painted the grim yet urging picture characteristic of Carey’s early treatise as they highlighted the *sizable populations* untouched by the gospel or clinging to “false” religions: “But of whatever races the population [of Guatemala] is made up, here are 1,200,000 fellow men, without, so far as we know, a single Protestant preacher of the Gospel to tell them of Jesus and the resurrection” (Wilder 1882: 260).

Furthermore, missionary progress was rarely stated matter-of-factly but more often reported in an encouraging, if not at times triumphalistic, manner: “But best of all, the church members, in five years, from 1883 to 1888, grew more than five-fold, from 5,000 to 25,514 [in Japan]! Buddhist priests are in danger of being driven to work to avoid starvation” (Pierson 1889: 702). Finally, reviews of the general conditions of the land and the people usually played into the theme of “Divine Providence” regarding the *kairos* of current missions: “Never was such opportunity [in Japan] presented to the Church of Christ; and woe be to us if we come not up to God’s help in this juncture” (ibid.: 703).

While the actual direction of missionary endeavors was still often opportunistic in character, such demographic reasoning did weigh in heavily in the allocation of evangelistic efforts and resources. Indeed, as Phillips (1969: 57–58) has pointed out, the perceived “numerical strength of Oriental Paganism” was a decisive factor in directing the service of American missionaries to foreign fields in the first place—after all, the American continent was not without “heathens” in alleged need of the gospel. Hence, in a sermon delivered in 1812 in Philadelphia prior to his departure to India, ABCFM missionary Gordon Hall argued:

While on the most liberal calculation, there are but a very few millions to the *west* of us, there are in the *east* more than *five hundred millions*, who are perishing for lack of vision. How immense the difference here? And ought not the principal exertions to be directed towards the principal mass of souls? (Hall 1815: 16; emphasis in the original)

Likewise, as the events that unfolded in connection with the Opium Wars in the decades between 1830 and 1860 opened China for missions, the sense of a pressing need to seize this opportunity was fueled first and foremost by numerical considerations. Thus, in 1858, the year when further treaties that guaranteed noninterference with Christian missionaries were signed in Tientsin, an annual report in *The Missionary Herald* read:

There are reasons which give great force and urgency to the call for more laborers in China; reasons which exist in no other part of heathendom, in the same manner and degree. In no other empire is there such a multitude of human beings; no where else are there so many precious souls to be lost forever, or to be saved by the ministrations of the Gospel. (ABCFM 1858: 206–7)

The missionary activism of James Hudson Taylor in Great Britain was to have an especially profound effect in the context of China’s opening. Taylor famously couched the criticality of missions to China in drastic numerical terms and a language of potential “gains” and “losses.” His treatise, “China: Its Spiritual Need and Claims,” published in 1865, poignantly asserted: “Every day 33,000, every month 1,000,000 subjects of the Chinese Emperor pass into eternity, without ever having heard the gospel.... Oh! Let us shew our interest in these sin-sick, perishing souls, by making strenuous efforts to bring them to the Great Physician” (Taylor 1865: 37). The tract,

“reprinted twice within the year” and running “through eight editions before 1900” (Austin 2007: 80), made ample use of lively analogies and illustrations to contrast the unthinkable dimensions of the Chinese empire with those of, say, Scotland or England, and is considered to have had a similar impact on missions as did Carey’s *Enquiry* in 1792 (Austin 2007: 80; Latourette 1944: 328). In 1865, the same year he first published his treatise, Taylor founded the China Inland Mission, a nondenominational organization dedicated to the rapid evangelization of China. With its vivid slogan “a million a month,” referring to Chinese souls continually lost to damnation, it was able to acquire funds not just from Britons but also from international sources, especially from the United States, Canada, and Australia, and grew to be one of the most important missionary ventures in China (Latourette 1937–1945, vol. 6: 326–31). To be sure, other societies also benefited from the newly aroused enthusiasm for ministering to the unevangelized Chinese multitudes. As Stanley (1990: 79) notes for Great Britain:

Missionary giving reached an exceptionally high level in 1858, and remained well above average until 1861. Buoyant giving was matched by rising recruitment. The [London Missionary Society] noted in April 1858 that “an unusually large number of suitable men had within the last weeks offered themselves for Missionary Service.” The [Church Missionary Society] received seventy-eight applications from British candidates in 1858, more than in any other year between 1850 and 1875.

Accordingly, by 1890 China had overtaken the Near East, Latin America, and Africa as missionary targets and ranked only behind India among the principal fields of British as well as American missions in terms of deployed missionaries (Field 1974: 34–36). Thus, as one would expect in a domain where the quantification of heathens and conversions plays a constitutive role, once all diplomatic obstacles were removed the two most densely populated countries constituted the two principal missionary fields of Great Britain and the United States, the key players in the Protestant missionary endeavor. Overall, while in 1858 there were but 81 Protestant missionaries in all of China, the number had risen to 1,296 missionaries by 1889 and to 3,445 missionaries by 1905 (Latourette 1929: 405–406; McGillivray 1907: 674). The numerical rhetoric of the tracts, sermons, and articles cited in the preceding text thus closely matched the observable rationale of the missionary enterprise.

Missionary publications of the nineteenth century, feeding off the annual reports of the missionary societies in foreign fields, thus constructed an ever-changing quantitative relation among blocs of religious adherents and established a primary focus on demographic magnitude. As I shall elaborate further in the following section, the consequences of these quantitative perspectives in the religious realm are in essence analogous to those attributed to double-entry bookkeeping in the economic realm by Werner Sombart.

The “Sombartian Dynamic” in Evangelical Missions

The analogy of this article’s argument to Sombart’s claim about the relationship of double-entry bookkeeping and the genesis of a capitalist sphere can now be restated

in more detail. As illustrated in the preceding text, for Sombart accounting gave birth to a capitalist economy first and foremost through the creation of a novel category. In separating funds, it essentially constructed a visibility of “capital” as the “amount of wealth...used in making profits” (Sombart 1953: 38), which consequently led to the installation of an economic field unreservedly committed to its rational accumulation. I used the terms *construction*, *catalyzation*, and *rationalization* to highlight these general components of Sombart’s argument.

An analogous relationship between calculative operations, on the one side, and the emergence of a self-perpetuating domain of action, on the other, can be observed in the case of nineteenth-century missions. As demographic concepts and with them a logic of “accounting” merged with missionary perspectives, they, too, *created* a visibility of global quantities of religious adherents. Carey’s missionary treatise that helped spark nineteenth-century missions first brought attention to the vast amount of “heathens” among the world’s population. Subsequent missionary tracts continued to point to exorbitant numerical figures representing the proportion of non-Christians or “heathens” on the globe.

As we have seen, this fostered very specific relevance structures for a social field of global missions. To a substantial degree, though not solely, missionary success was assessed in terms of numerical gains in communicants or adherents. Missionary societies documented yearly growth in converts in their annual reports, and journals such as *The Missionary Review of the World* continually surveyed the progress of Protestant missions as a whole. Numbers (of heathens) attested to the need for missions, numbers (of heathens) geographically oriented missions, and numbers (of converts) legitimated the continuance of missions. A global distribution of religious adherents—a numerical object that was not “in the world” before a demographic perspective and quantitative practices entered a missionary discourse—thus *catalyzed* and *perpetuated* a worldwide missionary operation as it became its focal point. Finally, an element of *rational* allocation and direction of missions came to the fore as missionary articles helped identify regions with comparatively dense populations of heathens.

Consequently, what Anthony Hopwood (1987: 225) has stated regarding the introduction of accounting systems into an organizational context also holds true for this particular social field: “[A] socially constructed visibility created an enterprise organisationally dependent on the resultant knowledge.” In essence, the missionary movement of the nineteenth century created its own object of interest. It is precisely this fascination for “heathens” as a *numerical category in flux* that gives this missionary enterprise its self-perpetuating features.

While mainstream Protestantism has largely shed the focus on world evangelization after World War I, emphasizing the humanitarian aspects of missions over the element of conversion, evangelical Christianity today is still a stronghold of the quantitative perspective on global missions.¹² Indeed, the element of a *rational*

12. On the liberal paradigm shift in mainstream Protestant missions after World War I see Hutchison (1987); for an evangelical perspective on this development see Glasser and McGavran (1983).

orientation and direction of missions has become even more profound since the nineteenth century—a rationalization that is still part and parcel to the *numerical* outlook of the many vociferous proponents of global missions to non-Christians within evangelicalism today.¹³

Thus, in this continuing project of quantifying missions, the notion of “unreached people groups” is now occupying the position formerly held by the term *heathens* in missionary discourse. Following the assumption that culture and language play a decisive role in missions, this perspective dissolves the world into several thousand “people groups” according to linguistic, ethnic, and sociocultural variables, while quantitatively assessing the extent to which they already have been brought into contact with the gospel. Interactive global maps (using Google Maps as a platform) and regularly updated status reports on each “people group” are available online on websites such as The Joshua Project, an organization formally affiliated with the US Center for World Mission, or Operation World, an online resource of a reference book project by British evangelical Patrick Johnstone.¹⁴ A plethora of statistical indicators regarding Christian outreach is also supplied by the World Christian Database of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity in Massachusetts.¹⁵ It continues the work of late missiologist David B. Barrett and others, whose *World Christian Encyclopedia* provided such telling country measurements as “evangelistic offers per capita per year,” “costs per baptism” in US dollars, and “responsiveness” of each people group to efforts of conversion (Barrett, Johnson et al. 2001; Barrett, Kurian et al. 2001).

The extent to which such statistical exercises continue to potentially orient and direct missions is perhaps best exemplified by the concept “10/40-window,” which is directly related to the idea of “unevangelized” non-Christians. It refers to the region between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude allegedly harboring “an estimated 3.02 billion individuals [living] in approximately 5,579 unreached people groups” (Joshua Project, n.d.). There is an explicit call to prioritize this region in evangelical missions, which includes Northern Africa, the Middle East, India, and China. The term *10/40-window* has gained wide currency within evangelical discourse and is referenced on most evangelical mission websites. It attests to the extent to which quantification is still a driving factor of global evangelical outreach.

13. Indeed, one may argue that the rationalization of evangelical missions since the nineteenth century resonates as much with an encompassing “occidental rationalism” as it is a specific instantiation of such rationality within an autonomous sphere of missions. On the universality and “sphere-of-life” specificity of rationality and rationalization in the work of Max Weber see Kalberg (1980). On shared “plausibility structures” between evangelical revivalism, political republicanism, and a penetrating market economy in nineteenth-century America see Thomas (1989). For a neoinstitutionalist perspective on Pentecostal organizations exhibiting “isomorphism” with secular organizations in using legitimately “rational” technologies and techniques in the implementation of their albeit nonsecular goal of spreading the gospel, see Lechner and Boli (2005: 173–90).

14. See www.joshuaproject.net and www.operationworld.org (accessed January 3, 2017).

15. See www.worldchristiandatabase.org (accessed January 3, 2017).

Conclusions

Extending sociological perspectives on quantification and the emergence of global fields, this article adds new insights into the workings of nineteenth-century evangelical missions as it identifies a broader macrostructural mechanism at play in the perpetuation of a global missionary endeavor. Generalizing Sombart's thesis regarding the relationship of double-entry bookkeeping and the genesis of a capitalist sphere, the study argues that quantification bears specific potentials to merge with particular meaning structures and consequently form distinct numerical objects that move to the center of an autonomous and self-propelling sphere of action and attention. Insofar as such objects transcend regional boundaries, the mechanism described here points to a dynamic of globalization as it highlights the emergence of a *global* field dedicated to altering or conserving specific global "quantities."

Thus, in the case at hand, the confluence of millenarian ideologies and demographic perspectives constructed a visibility of a worldwide distribution of religious adherents and yearly gains in Protestant communicants that spurred, legitimated, sustained, and oriented a global enterprise of Protestant missions. This has been demonstrated in four significant ways. First, as one would expect if quantification indeed played a decisive role in the early mobilization of the missionary endeavor, numerical arguments figured prominently and centrally in pleas for missions, beginning with Carey's tract giving concrete figures of the vast amounts of heathens in the world, and continuing in articles, tracts, and sermons pointing out the work to be done in quantitative terms designed to shock and impress.

Second, as one would expect if demographics were indeed momentous in directing missions to foreign lands, numerical comparisons were a central motif in urging missionaries not to content themselves with bearing witness in their homeland but to travel to more populous locations.

Third, as one would expect if demographic considerations were indeed consequential, the most resources were allocated to the most populous regions. Despite the many other motives and opportunity structures undoubtedly in play, India and China moved to the forefront of missionary efforts once all diplomatic barriers were cleared, and constituted the largest missionary fields of Great Britain and the United States.

Finally, as one would expect if quantification was indeed integral to the sustenance of foreign missions, numerical arguments were routinely employed in exhortations to continue or invigorate the missionary effort. Quantifications of successful conversions, often to the point of triumphalism, demonstrated the legitimacy of the missionary enterprise, while quantifications of heathens continued to serve as a reminder of the unresolved task. Both approaches were reconciled in numerical calculations considering the possibility of evangelizing the world "in this generation," validating the feasibility of the missionary endeavor as such.

What is borne out of quantification, then, is a novel "quantity," a "heathen population," giving rise to a field geared toward manipulating *worldwide quantitative* relations among religions—a field that still has a strong hold on a large array of evangelical organizations dedicated to world evangelization and conversion today.

Numerical figures become the center of attention and the focal point of action of a whole legion of missionary societies as does the category of capital within an economy of capitalist enterprises in Sombart’s account of the emergence of capitalism.

The study thus illuminates the potentials of calculative technologies in catalyzing global fields with distinct logics, a topic underexplored both in the literature on fields and the sociology of quantification. The numerical construct of a global “heathen population” was able to focalize the ideological currents of nineteenth-century Protestantism and channel them into a sustained effort of global outreach. Quantitative reasoning pointing to the large number of “uncivilized heathens” catered also to another popular motive of nineteenth-century Protestant missions. Much of the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise identified with a broader “civilizing mission,” an ambition to transform a culture regarded as inferior by imposing upon them Western standards and notions of progress, enlightenment, and instrumental rationality (see Fischer-Tiné and Mann 2004). Consequently, missionary journals also featured anecdotal articles on the “cruel rites” of the heathen as well as on natives’ lives “sublimely” transformed by conversion.

Even though the common project of a “civilizing mission” was often grounds for partnership and cooperation between missions and colonial powers, especially in the sphere of education (Copland 2006), this in no way undermines the principal autonomy of the social field of global missions. Indeed, there is now an increasingly consensual view in the literature that there was no fundamental collaborative tie between missions and empire, and that both rather constituted two independent realms with autonomous goals and rationales (see Porter 2004; Stanley 1990). In this regard, nineteenth-century missions were in many ways different from the Catholic *conquista* missions of previous centuries (Tyrell 2004: 56–76). As opposed to the latter, the Protestant missionary effort of the nineteenth century was not a state-sponsored operation and, as seen, even relied mostly on voluntary associations outside of traditional church structures. What is more, colonial officials often dreaded missionary efforts for their politically disruptive effects among the indigenous subjects and imposed many restrictions on Christian missions while showing little interest in curtailing “heathen practices,” much to the chagrin of the missionaries. Thus, forced conversions, short-circuiting the realms of colonial power and religious meaning, a common fixture of previous missionary centuries, had no place in nineteenth-century missions. The autonomy of the missionary enterprise is finally evidenced by the numerical construct of global heathendom and the calculation of worldwide religious distributions: These are objects devoid of political meaning and incongruous with political demarcations. As seen in the preceding text, colonial openings were evaluated in light of structural opportunities and *demographic* considerations, not nationalist sentiment. As a result, colonial territories with “heathen” populations attracted missionary organizations from various sending countries, not just the metropole.

In highlighting the emergence of a field of missionary organizations, commonly oriented to a quantitatively fashioned object of global religious affiliations, the study furthermore adds to extant work on accounting and religion. Instead of focusing on individual organizations using accounting techniques in their spiritual affairs, this

article shows how a discourse fed by tracts and general-interest journals pooling all available data constructed an object of interest for a broad field of Protestant missionary organizations of various denominations. Indeed, the orientation to a common objective of world evangelization did not always suppress the particularistic perspectives of each missionary society. Much collaboration notwithstanding, the common fascination with global figures of unevangelized heathens also gave rise to much competition among the various denominations (*ibid.*: 119–20), an interorganizational dynamic likewise resting on the shared ontology constructed by an infrastructure of calculative technologies.

This “Sombartian dynamic” described here should be generalizable to other institutional orders as well. In the political sphere, the Foucauldian example of a biopolitical maintenance of a “social body,” to no small extent constructed through modern demography, is a case in point (see Foucault 1980; Hacking 1982). Furthermore, university rankings as analyzed by Espeland and Sauder (2007) can be seen as another instance in the realm of education: Here again, numerical indicators institute novel categories (of quality) and thus give rise to actions directly aimed at their manipulation as these figures move to the center of attention of the universities subjected to such measurements. Though the focus of the authors is on the specific mechanisms that underlie the “reactivity” of public measures of performance, their findings also point to the emergence of a new social “space” with autonomous “rules of the game” as universities begin to actively compete for ranks; they can thus be recast in these generalized Sombartian terms.

More importantly, however, it is the globalizing potentials of this mechanism that merit further comparative analyses. For instance, in the mid-twentieth century the macroeconomic abstractions of national income accounting and the cross-country comparisons made possible by them similarly produced a globally oriented sphere of foreign development and social engineering aimed at attenuating the huge international discrepancies that became numerically “visible” for the first time (Speich 2011). Comparative research could further highlight similarities and differences in the way quantification creates (or alters) autonomous social fields centered on newly instituted “quantities” of particular relevance and how it contributes to global orientations of such orders. The questions arising from such research perspectives would need to relate not only to the specific effects of quantitative measures but also to the historical contingencies that lead to the invention of particular quantitative “entities” as well as to the meaning structures that render them relevant.

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