

Working Title:

Print Culture in New York: The Essence of the Benevolent Empire from 1816 to 1837

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Content Abstract (Significance and Contribution)

My ongoing research is based on my dissertation, which puts the history of evangelical reform and savvy business practices at the center of the American evangelical print culture of the "Benevolent Empire" during the Early Republic. During the "market revolution" (western expansion, eastern urbanization, and boom in trade and manufacturing) after about 1815, the business of benevolence boomed in religious publishing in large eastern cities that inspired American merchants and prominent businessmen to consolidate dozens of missionary, Bible, and tract societies. They concentrated capital, technology, and business administration to create the first national benevolent societies, the American Bible Society (ABS) in 1816 and the American Tract Society (ATS) in 1825. *Print Culture in New York* examines how these national institutions adopted the incipient forms of corporate structuring that shaped their implementation of technology to effect social and cultural change in New York City, the headquarters of the evangelical benevolent republic referred to by scholars as the Benevolent Empire (BE). Realizing that no other city could match access to national and international trade and supply demands, a new class of wealthy businessmen and American merchants combined business strategies with commercial substances that asserted traditional moral and ethical values in advancing an evangelical concept of social order.

As New York City became the new emergent center of commerce, the strategists and leaders of the BE set out to flood the market with its first wave of mass media that became known as the General Supply (1829-1831). *Print Culture in New York* is a story about the technological innovation and savvy business fortitude of the print culture of the benevolent elite in the Empire City who constructed national benevolent societies to produce the first wave of mass media that was part of a global Bible, tract, and mission movement. It reveals how the visionaries of the BE defied the commercial literary market by distributing pamphlets and Bibles at cost or often for free, which market strategies became symbiotic to the trends of early antebellum evangelical reform in local and regional communities. It argues that the print culture of the benevolent elite promoted a Protestant urban movement that, developing the world of charity and evangelism, infiltrated the complex social and institutional developments crucial to the forging of nationalism.

Print Culture in New York is a story of the national charity publishers producing mass media, which meant a universal circulation of publications would be placed into the hands of every man,

woman, and child in America. For the ABS, the general supply meant they would distribute Bibles to everyone in the nation within two years, and for the ATS, the general supply meant they would place a tract into the hands of every city resident each month through a systematic monthly distribution plan. By setting the story of the national charity publishers, I argue how developing formal constitutions and governing boards of managers and executives created the business strategies for overseeing the systematic operations of their institutions. During the first two decades of operations (the first generation of cohorts), I developed how the leadership of these institutions effectively applied new technology, particularly stereotyping, that became the most important technological advancement for Bible and tract work in American publishing. I also discuss other most important technological innovations besides the use of stereotype plates, such as steam-powered printing, machine papermaking, and in-house binding. These new printing technologies empowered their systematic production, which connected to small and large auxiliaries (voluntary labor networks) and grew into a centralized and systematic national distribution.

In his book, *Spreading The Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*, Peter J. Wosh explains that one-quarter of the forty-seven ABS early managers whose origins can be documented grew up in New York. The biographical tributes on the managers of the ABS and executives of ATS reveal an Anglo-American nature of benevolence and reform that penetrated every aspect of the Empire City in the early nineteenth century. Patrician New York elite men such as John Pintard and DeWitt Clinton, who directed the affairs of the ABS, were involved with a variety of humanitarian endeavors, public institutions, and civic advancements, including the construction of the Erie Canal, the founding of the New York Historical Society, the founding of the Bank of Savings for the City of New York, the founding of the New York Institution of Learned and Scientific Establishments, the founding of the American Academy of Arts, and the founding of the General Theological Seminary. These benevolent elites demonstrated Anglo-American reform characteristics that steered the city's numerous currents of cultural and social life.

Print Culture in New York reveals that the benevolent evangelical republic impacted the Empire City by forging ideas for nationalism during this crucial time in a rapidly urbanizing environment. It details the strategies and leadership of the great national charity publishing societies that promoted a variety of characteristics of benevolence and reform that impacted the Empire City during the growing tensions over ethical and moral standards for a new nation. It places the charity publishing societies and the lives of the benevolent elite at the center of early antebellum reform as the city emerged as the nation's leader of economic, social, and institutional life.

Chapter 1- Background of the Benevolent Empire

Chapter one opens with the development of the consolidation from across the northern parts of the United States of the Bible and tract societies that resulted in the creation of the headquarters of the evangelical benevolent republic (Benevolent Empire) in the Empire City. It offers a background of the sense of urgency by reformers for Christianizing the nation against secular forces. It discusses how leading benevolent men like John Jay (1745-1829), the first chief justice of the United States and first Vice-President of the American Bible Society, worked to establish national benevolence and philanthropy that established the rough borders of the Benevolent

Empire. It details men like Henry Rutgers (1745-1830) and John Pintard (1759-1844) in the story of developing the national benevolence that in the consolidation movement secured a place for the great national publishing societies in the Empire City. It introduces the new class of businessmen and American merchants who emerged in New York City in the 1810s and were involved with the transatlantic trade and the revivals of the Second Great Awakening. It details how they offered new business strategies and corporate structures that differed from traditional clergy-styled societies.

Chapter 2- The Benevolent Empire Pioneering in American Publishing

Chapter two explains the systematic corporate implementation of modern printing technology and distribution techniques that transformed the moral reform missionary societies into nonprofit corporate national publishing companies. It offers context to the missionary societies' quest to become national institutions that acquired sophisticated corporate structuring that was bent on implementing new technology. As the seat of operations is established in New York City, they deploy strategies for pioneering many aspects of American publishing, including modernizing production, nationalizing distribution, the use of stereotype plates, steam-powered printing, steam-powered papermaking, and in-house binding. The ABS and ATS also contracted with leading men in the print business and technology world, such as Daniel Fanshaw, who was one of the most established printers in New York City. Little has been written about Fanshaw, yet the ABS archives and other sources have much to share about his work. Fanshaw handled the print work for the ABS (1817-1844) and ATS (1825-1844) and worked closely with Daniel Treadwell, who built the Treadwell steam-powered bed and platen press.

Chapter 3- Auxiliaries of the ABS and ATS of the Benevolent Empire

Chapter three opens with the mid-1820s during a transitional time of expanding corporate efficiency. It details how the managers and executives at the ABS and ATS geared their corporate policies towards efficiently distributing their publications by growing the auxiliaries. It discusses how they developed first the local auxiliaries and branches in New York, which they connected to the organization of the auxiliary and branch system that expanded across several states. This English-inherited auxiliary and branch system adopted by the ABS and ATS in New York became the focus for centralizing the operations of both Societies system of organization. The history of the auxiliary system in the United States is embedded with the growth of the religious voluntary phenomenon that flourished in the revivals of the Great Awakenings during and after the War of Independence. This chapter will reveal how strengthening the local and regional auxiliary system became key to systematic distribution. It will also reveal how the missions movement in New York City was pivotal to strengthening the auxiliary system. It will discuss key men like Gardiner Spring (1785-1873) and Arthur Tappan (1786-1865), who were significant to the city's mission movements and sprawling auxiliary system.

Chapter 4: Linking the Benevolent Empire To Early Antebellum Reform And Education

Chapter four links some of the early managers and executives of the ABS and ATS to their private businesses, ethical and moral standards, philanthropy work, and commitment to the Bible and Tract cause in the context of the Empire City. It will evaluate leading benevolent contributions made by the benevolent elite. It will argue that ideology propagated by the national publishing societies for furthering the pleromatic energies of Christendom was perceived as the only means for establishing civilization. At a critical time for unfolding civilized ideas for a new

virtuous nation, chapter four will detail New York experiencing the intellectual and reading revolutions that simultaneously emerged during a communications revolution as the market forces ripened for launching the first great wave of evangelical mass media (1829-1831). It will argue that the first general supply impacted New York City by forging ideas for the broader national identity of the growing republic at a critical time when religious and secular print became a complex vehicle for promoting public debate, information, and education. It will discuss how the first general supply produced literature for evangelism and educational purposes, targeting reading and educational trends in opposition to the secular newspapers that had a long history of promoting quarrels and factions over politics. It will detail how the evangelical print empire, through the benevolent elite such as Pintard and Clinton, propagated ideas for virtue and equality in the rise of educational reform (including the common schools) that interacted with the library movement, including charitable and free libraries.

Chapter 5: Women of the Benevolent Empire

Chapter five opens with an overview of women's roles in the Benevolent Empire in New York City between 1816 and 1837, which still needs more recognition and representation. The study of women's involvement in evangelical print culture (Bible and tract cause) in New York City began in 1816 with their numerous auxiliaries that distributed Bibles and tracts to the "destitute" and the "careless," including prostitutes. Their stories illuminate their attitudes, desires, and ideas for a critical period marked by a contest over moral and ethical standards. Little is known about the women involved with the Bible and tract causes or their involvement with missions, especially near Corlears Hook, the birthplace of the term hooker, where these evangelical women founded several Sunday schools. These women on the Lower East Side waterfront systematically visited the poor and rescued women from brothels in the respective fields of exertion, including Corlears Hook. Further, in auxiliary societies of the ABS and ATS, women's work is yet to be explored, especially their officers, many of whom were married to prominent members of society (Mrs. John E. Caldwell, Mrs. Peter A. Jay, Mrs. Gardiner Spring).

The prosperity of revivalism within the development of the evangelical print culture provided a sumptuous socially accepted outlet for women's religious commitment to unfold in collaborative ways supportive of benevolent action outside of the traditional power center for organized religion. In a current climate where sex trafficking continues to surge across the globe, evangelical women in New York City offer us a first glimpse of how they evangelized the downtrodden, especially the prostitutes across the city and living at the famous Corlears Hook.

Project Description

Stemming from the Anglican church in England in the eighteenth century, evangelical Protestantism in America proliferated in the evangelical dominations of the Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians during the American state-by-state disestablishment movement between 1776 and 1833. These leading evangelical denominations, especially the Methodist and Baptist, fused evangelism with organizationalism, which resulted in the awakening of religion (revivalism), the promotion of benevolent reform, and the rapid expansion of new churches.¹ As revivalism revealed an American zeal for organized churches and religious

¹ David Paul Nord, *A History of the Book in America: An Extensive Republic Print, Culture, and*

associations, numerous voluntary societies were organized on local, state, and national levels, especially in the northeastern parts of the United States. Out of this religious voluntary phenomenon, hundreds of missionary, Bible, and religious tract societies proliferated during the first decades of the nineteenth century, creating the borders of what became known as the benevolent evangelical republic or the Benevolent Empire.²

In addition to the evangelism and organization produced by traditional clergy, these religious movements became appealing to the newly emerging class of wealthy businessmen and American merchants in New York, many of whom were patrician New Yorkers. These elite benevolent men expanded the press of evangelical print culture that became congruent with the agenda of the Benevolent Empire. The growth of the vast networking of voluntary societies described by historians as the Benevolent Empire produced a popular brand of evangelical benevolence in the western and central regions of New York during the Second Great Awakening. In the Empire City, the nature of business and benevolence harmonized in ways that demonstrated the modernizing and urbanizing characteristics of the new early antebellum reform. According to Mary F. Cordato of the American Bible Society, historical accounts of the institutions associated with America's Benevolent Empire are found in two key publications: Clifford S. Griffins, *Their Brothers Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States* and Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837*.³

Sixty delegates for a national Bible society met in New York City on May 8, 1816, announcing a consolidation and coordination of the local societies. They also announced the adoption of a

Society in the New Nation, 1790 to 1840. vol 2. ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4.

² For discussion on the Benevolent Empire see Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading The Word: The Bible Business In Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1-6; For historiography on revivalism in early nineteenth century New York see Rachel Cope, "From Smouldering Fires To Revitalizing Showers: A Historiographical Overview Of Revivalism In Nineteenth-Century New York," *Wesley and Methodist Studies* 1, no 4 (2012): 25-49; For intellectual history on revivalism in early nineteenth century New York see Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned Over District: The Social And Intellectual History Of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), 1-103; For ideas of evangelical reform see John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); For ideas on evangelical reform including the urban foundations of New York evangelicalism see Richard Lee Rodgers, "The Urban Threshold and the Second Great Awakening in New York State," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no 4 (December, 2010): 694-709. For concepts of benevolence at the center of the great national voluntary interdenominational movement of societies in New York, see Clifford S. Griffin's "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815 to 1860." For the growth of the voluntary system in America, see Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840 to 1940," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no 4 (Spring, 1999): 511-557; For disestablishment interacting with volunteerism see Carl H. Esbeck and Jonathan J. Hartog, *Disestablishment and Religious Dissent: Church-State Relations in the New American States, 1776-1833* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2019), 3-24; In tracing evangelicalism see Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). See also for roots of evangelicalism M. J. Jones, *Hannah Moore*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 80-81; Also see Ford K. Brown, *Fathers Of The Victorians: The Age Of Wilberforce* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 104-105.

³ Mary F. Cordato, "ABS Historical Working Papers Series," (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), 22.

Constitution and the election of thirty-six managers to operate the national American Bible Society.⁴ The *Panoplist* in 1816 announced that the British and Foreign Bible Society was encouraged with the formation of national societies in numerous countries, especially the national Bible society in New York City.⁵ By the mid-1820s, following the same corporate model of the ABS, the American Tract Society and the American Sunday School Union forged a popular brand of evangelical mass media that quickly spread in an modernizing and urbanizing New York City.⁶ Located in the communications center of America, these largest religious publishing companies engineered corporate structuring that became crucial to the unfolding of institutional processes in public life.

Thomas Bender has argued that the Christian evangelical world in the 1820s in New York City brilliantly connected benevolent institutions to various public institutions and civic advancements that rapidly intertwined with intellectual ideas and social trends. Bender explains that the urban life of New York City after 1820 was led by benevolent elites such as John Pintard (recording secretary of the ABS and elite New York businessman and benevolent reformer) and DeWitt Clinton (vice-president of the ABS and elite politician, businessman, and reformer) who characterized progress of the nation within the moral standards of a benevolent republic that penetrated intellectual and social trends of the city's culture.⁷ Pintard and Clinton were arguably the leading voices in extending the characteristics of benevolence and reform into civic culture and social trends, especially literary and academic cultures, in New York after the revolution. These elite patricians, like Pintard and Clinton, saw no distinction between benevolence, philanthropies, commerce, and government in advancing community and civic life. They believed benevolent institutions and reform must be connected and were essential for promoting morally and ethically sound civic advancement in New York.

In arguing for Manhattan's innovation and educational advancement, Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright said a city like New York is "the grand point and focus of wisdom."⁸ By 1820, New York had become the new global center of commerce, intellectual culture, and institutional life. It became the focus of market strategies that coupled intellectualism and wisdom with evangelical ideas permeating the center of those trends and discussions. My work focuses on how the benevolent elites created a flexible and innovative corporate business model that harnessed the organization of the growing American auxiliary network to promote their mass media in the context of New York's market and new urbanizing developments. It argues that a benevolent evangelical republic impacted the Empire City by forging ideas in mass media for nationalism during the growing tensions over ethical and moral standards for a new nation.

⁴ Tom Glynn, *Reading Publics: New York City's Public Libraries, 1754-1911* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 102-107; American Bible Society, *Catalogue of the Editions of the Holy Scriptures in Various Languages, and Other Biblical Works, in the Library of the American Bible Society* (New York: Daniel Fanshaw, 1837), 26-27.

⁵ *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* 11 (1816), 86-92.

⁶ Wosh, *Spreading The Word*, 1-3.

⁷ Bender, *New York Intellect*: 65-68.

⁸ Bender, *New York Intellect*, 94.

Clinton stated in his journal that his success was in “the efforts of talent, and genius, and perseverance in the promotion of education, the diffusion of benevolence, and the increase of wealth and prosperity.”⁹ In a series of papers, Clinton argued that the ideas for benevolence in society and the promotion of virtuous education growing among an expanding institutional life needed to reflect a high moral and ethical standard for success in preserving a lasting American character.¹⁰

Project Archival Proposal (Work Plan)

I have completed much of the research at the Newberry Library; I am now in the writing phase. My status as a Visiting Scholar in Residence since August 1, 2022, at the Newberry Library has enabled me to work for three years with the archives rather than visit them. My fellowship for a third year at the Newberry was renewed on June 28, 2024, which provides ongoing access to an extensive amount of secondary sources and archives while writing. The Newberry has extensive books and archives depicting the Benevolent Empire as an evangelical print culture that transferred from religion to social and moral reform. It details how the evangelical publishing style promoted and overlapped with broad developments with benevolence, philanthropy, reform, and education. Its archival collections reveal that the religious print culture created social change that forged nationalism and created a wide range of practices of evangelical reform such as anti-slavery and temperance. It contains numerous special archival collections, including diaries, letters, correspondence, reports, and unpublished memoirs for elite reformers such as DeWitt Clinton (1769-1828), John Pintard (1759-1844), Elias Boudinot (1740-1821), and Hannah Moore. For example, for John Pintard, we have Letters from John Pintard in General Collections and Letters To John Pintard from DeWitt Clinton in the Ayer Collection. We also have unique Lectures and Notes by David Hosack and Gregory Weems taken at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the City of New York from November 1825 to January 1826 (Friedberg Collection). Hosack compiled and published the Memoirs of DeWitt Clinton, also available at the Newberry. The Newberry also has extensive archives and books on John Jay, who was the first Vice President of the American Bible Society and a founding father of America, including lengthy archival collections of correspondence with Alexander Hamilton and letters to George Washington. Also, the Newberry has extensive collections and books on other diplomatic elite reformers such as John Cotton Smith (1765-1845), Vice President of the ABS and Governor of the State of Connecticut, and John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), Honorary Vice-President of the ABS and President of the United States. There are also numerous books and archives at the Newberry on benevolent elite managers and executives at the ABS and ATS, such as Gardiner Spring (1785-1873, sat on the board at both the ABS and ATS), Thomas Eddy (1783-1838), James Milnor (1773-1845) and Arthur Tappan (1786-1865). The Newberry depository also contains the Annual Reports, Board of Manager Minutes, and various corporate reports for the largest benevolent publishing societies, including the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union. It also holds for the period, a

⁹ DeWitt Clinton and William W. Campbell, *Life and Writings of DeWitt Clinton* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), 37.

¹⁰ Clinton and Campbell, *Life, and Writings of DeWitt Clinton*, 13.

sufficient amount of magazines and newspapers in print and on microfilm, including the *Gospel Messenger* (1826-1834), *New York Evangelist* (1830-1834), the *New York Observer* (1832-1839), and the *Journal of Commerce* (1827- Present).

Print Culture in New York offers a business-oriented historical approach to a religious print culture that, during the culmination of new markets and expansion of mass communications, resulted in America's first mass media. Little is known about the institutional developments connected to technology and business strategies during the first wave of mass media. Too many publications on evangelical religion and religious movements during the early antebellum are bogged down with Anglican or Puritan theologies, resulting in a boring read. The world of charity and its promoters in New York City saw the printed word as a benevolent business that needed new corporate engineering towards systemization and centralization to produce an efficient national institution. The benevolent elite envisioned their millennial vision for producing mass media would possess the sound structuring for preserving the moral and ethical standards for the nation. *Print Culture in New York* is a story that explores how the benevolent elite played a pivotal role in Christianizing a level of society and improving it by imparting a standard of sound morals and ethical practices that intertwined with the fabric of the city's new social and cultural heritage one that the world would admire.

Key patrician elites such as John Pintard and DeWitt Clinton focused on founding elite institutional places of learning, such as New York's Atheneum, a reading room, and a place for various private lectures that were absorbed in 1839 by the New York Society Library. Pintard and Clinton's involvement with such a variety of public institutions gives us a glimpse into the characteristics of benevolence and reform intertwining with the city's poor working classes, middle classes, and ruling elite. *Print Culture in New York* focuses on the time frame from 1816 (the formation of the ABS) to 1837 (the financial panic). By 1837, evangelicalism had shifted, and about half of the early managers and executives at the ABS and ATS had died. They had been replaced by a new cohort that had a different unifying vision than the early board members. This 1837 date is also congruent with the rise of the new cohort of managers of the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society in London.¹¹ This time frame revealed a shift in new transatlantic values essential to the leadership of the first generation of elite benevolent men. The time is also marked by the grand climax of the revivals of the Second Great Awakening penetrating New York and western Pennsylvania from 1820 to 1835 (Charles Finney's revivals ended in New York City in 1835). As the period unfolded, the new business strategies connected to emerging technology were firmly established in an evangelical print culture that made significant moral and ethical contributions that impacted Empire City by forging ideas for nationalism.

¹¹ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing And The British And Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29.