

WORLD CHRISTIANITIES PRIZE ESSAY

*Experiments in Missionary Writing:  
Protestant Missions and the  
Imprensa Evangelica in Brazil,  
1864–1892*

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*The Imprensa Evangelica, published between 1864 and 1892 in Brazil by Presbyterian missionaries, furnished Brazilian Evangelical minorities with a means of crafting new religious identities and of asserting their presence in the public arena. Its editors defended the political rights of non-Catholics in the country, took part in religious controversies with Catholic publications in Brazil and Portugal, and intervened in on-going public debates on the separation of Church and State and the abolition of slavery. This article also examines how the periodical's circulation generated new reading practices in Brazil.*

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This article examines the production and circulation of the Protestant periodical *Imprensa Evangelica* (Evangelical Press) in nineteenth-century Brazil, the periodical's engagement with the religious and political debates of the time, and its role in the establishment and expansion of Protestant missionary work in Brazil. In doing so it aims to

AHP = Arquivo Histórico Presbiteriano, São Paulo; BFM = Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States; *IE* = *Imprensa Evangelica*; PHS = Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia; RTS = Religious Tract Society

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integrate two distinct scholarly trends in World Christianity: studies on Latin American Evangelicalism on the one hand, and on Christian literacy on the other. Emerging in the 1960s with the influential monographs of Christian Lalive D'Épinay and Emilio Willems, academic studies of Latin American Evangelicalism acquired new depth in the English-speaking academic world with David Martin's and David Stoll's ground-breaking monographs, published in 1990. These studies analysed broader social processes associated with religious change in Latin America, the remarkable and uneven growth of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity across the subcontinent and the transformations that it consequently entailed, such as the reconfiguration of the Latin American religious landscape, the emergence of new economic cultures and the dissemination of Evangelicalism among the poor and dispossessed.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent research in this field expanded the analytical range and enriched the study of Latin American Christianities by focusing on the impact of Evangelicals and Evangelical politicians on Brazilian politics,<sup>2</sup> the reconfiguration of gender relations in Colombia,<sup>3</sup> the contrasting approaches of Pentecostalism and progressive Catholicism to popular culture,<sup>4</sup> the influence of the Evangelical emphasis in Venezuela on self-improvement and moral purity<sup>5</sup> and the emergence of Protestant social theologies,<sup>6</sup> among other topics. Despite the enormous variety of these studies, it is possible to isolate some trends. First, the majority of contributions come from the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology, with historical research constituting a small, though

<sup>1</sup> C. Lalive D'Épinay, *Haven to the masses: a study of the Pentecostal movement in Chile*, London 1969; E. Willems, *Followers of the new faith: culture change and the rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*, Nashville, TN 1967; D. Martin, *Tongues of fire: the explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*, Oxford 1990; D. Stoll, *Is Latin America turning Protestant? The politics of Evangelical growth*, Berkeley, CA–Oxford 1990.

<sup>2</sup> P. Freston, 'Brother votes for brother: the *New Politics* of Protestantism in Brazil', in V. Garrard-Burnett and D. Stoll (eds), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America*, Philadelphia, PA 1993; A. B. Fonseca, 'Religion and democracy in Brazil: a study of the leading Evangelical politicians', in P. Freston (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and democracy in Latin America*, New York–Oxford 2008.

<sup>3</sup> E. Brusco, *The reformation of machismo: Evangelical conversion and gender in Colombia*, Austin, TX 1995.

<sup>4</sup> D. Lehmann, *Struggle for the spirit: religious transformation and popular culture in Brazil and Latin America*, Cambridge 1996.

<sup>5</sup> D. Smilde, *Reason to believe: cultural agency in Latin American Evangelicalism*, Berkeley, CA–Los Angeles, CA–London 2007.

<sup>6</sup> C. Mondragón, *Like leaven in the dough: Protestant social thought in Latin America, 1920–1950*, Madison, WI 2011; J. D. Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical theology in the 1970s: the golden decade*, Leiden–Boston 2009; D. Kirkpatrick, 'C. René Padilla and the origins of integral mission in post-war Latin America', this JOURNAL lxxvii (2016), 351–71.

influential, minority.<sup>7</sup> Second, most of these analyses concentrate on the revival of Latin American Christianities in the post-World War II period, whereas little attention is paid to the earlier history of Evangelicalism and the establishment of missionary societies in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Finally, although Pentecostalism was the driving force that pushed Evangelical growth in the twentieth century, mainline Protestants, with their contributions to the spread of Christian literacy and education, have been ignored.

The present analysis of the *Imprensa Evangelica* in Brazil addresses some of these omissions by engaging with recent studies in Christian literacy and missionary print. The development of mass print and the worldwide dissemination of missionary societies in the nineteenth century played key roles in connecting religious actors across the globe and in standardising religious doctrines and practices.<sup>9</sup> Religious mass print simultaneously provided missionaries with a powerful technology of conversion and reshaped the contours of global Protestantism. The social and religious impact of Christian literacy have been particularly well-studied by Africanist scholars: translation of Bibles, tracts and books for the various African societies which European missionaries encountered required interaction and dialogue with indigenous converts, a process that indigenised missionary literature itself.<sup>10</sup> As Isabel Hofmeyr has shown in her influential study of the circulation of *Pilgrim's progress* in Africa, indigenous Christians disseminated John Bunyan's classic work in various ways and *via* different media, such as postcards and magic lantern slides, which enabled them to reconfigure and reorder atomised bits and pieces of the narrative.<sup>11</sup> Although European missionaries envisaged literacy as an instrument for the domestication of intellectual habits and for fostering introspective reading habits, African indigenous converts appropriated Christian texts in ways not anticipated by their missionary interlocutors, including reading texts aloud, memorising and reciting long biblical passages, or

<sup>7</sup> V. Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala: living in the New Jerusalem*, Austin, Tx 1998. For a recent contribution to the history of Christianity in Latin America see V. Garrard-Burnett, P. Freston and S. Dove (eds), *The Cambridge history of religions in Latin America*, New York 2016.

<sup>8</sup> An exception is L. Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and political conflict in the nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean*, New Brunswick–London 2002.

<sup>9</sup> C. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780–1914: global connections and comparisons*, Oxford 2004, 333.

<sup>10</sup> C. Clark and M. Ledger-Lomas, 'The Protestant international', in A. Green and V. Viaene (eds), *Religious internationals in the modern world: globalization and faith communities since 1750*, Basingstoke 2012, 30–1.

<sup>11</sup> I. Hofmeyr, *The portable Bunyan: a transnational history of the Pilgrim's progress*, Princeton–Oxford 2004, 30.

even using their pages as cigarette- and wrapping-paper.<sup>12</sup> Religious texts produced by African Christians, alongside Bibles and tracts translated into the vernacular languages, furnished Evangelicals across the continent with ideas and doctrines that shaped new religious identities, engendered new liturgical practices in Christian congregations and created proto-nationalist notions of ethnicity and race.<sup>13</sup>

In keeping with recent scholarship on Christian literacy, this article analyses how the *Imprensa Evangelica* contributed to the making of new Evangelical identities in Brazil in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when a series of clashes between the imperial state and the Catholic Church took place and prompted liberal intellectuals to promote the cause of Church-State separation. In a context of competition and conflict with a revitalised conservative Catholicism, this Protestant periodical, alongside a number of other anti-Catholic publications from the secular press, furnished Brazilian converts and foreign missionaries with the means for articulating alternative Christian religious identities. A complex and far-reaching network encompassing Evangelical *colporteurs* and mission stations in Brazil and Portugal enabled the *Imprensa* to circulate not only across most of Brazil's territory, but also into parts of the Lusophone Atlantic. American and Brazilian missionaries and laypeople who contributed to the periodical closely followed public debates on religious freedom, republicanism and slavery, and interacted with both the secular and religious presses of the time. In mobilising their small constituencies in Brazil and receiving funds and material support from Evangelical organisations in the United States and Britain, the *Imprensa* editors were able to keep the periodical circulating for nearly three decades, a significant achievement for a religious minority at that time. Furthermore, the periodical's circulation generated new reading practices in late nineteenth-century Brazil, when more than 80 per cent of the population was illiterate,<sup>14</sup> prompting Bible-readers, *colporteurs* and evangelists to read aloud sermons, recite catechisms and sing hymns printed on the pages of the *Imprensa* to their congregations and in family meetings. By means of

<sup>12</sup> P. Harries, 'Missionaries, Marxists and magic: power and the politics of literacy in south-east Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies* xxvii (2001), 405–27; T. Kirsch, *Spirits and letters: reading, writing and charisma in African Christianity*, New York–Oxford 2008.

<sup>13</sup> J. Cabrita, *Text and authority in the South African Nazaretha Church*, New York 2014; D. Maxwell, "'Sacred history, social history": traditions and texts in the making of a southern African transnational religious movement', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* xliii (2001), 501–24, and 'The creation of Lubaland: missionary science and Christian literacy in the making of the Luba Katanga in Belgian Congo', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* x (2016), 367–92; J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious encounter and the making of the Yoruba*, Bloomington 2000.

<sup>14</sup> *Recenseamento do Brazil em 1872*, Rio de Janeiro 1874.

the pages of the *Imprensa Evangelica* Brazilian Evangelicals projected themselves into the public sphere and into the transnational networks that integrated Protestant missionary efforts in the Lusophone Atlantic. In discussing these literary endeavours, this article complements the strong Africanist studies of the intertwined histories of Evangelicalism and print by contributing a uniquely Latin American perspective.

*The place of Imprensa Evangelica in the Brazilian missionary enterprise*

Throughout the nineteenth century, the establishment and expansion of Protestant missions and churches in the Brazilian Empire was the result of two interrelated processes: foreign immigration and the work of missionary societies. When the Portuguese royal court fled the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal, with the support of the British navy, and moved its administrative centre temporarily to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, Portuguese imperial authorities made a series of diplomatic, commercial and religious concessions to the British, one of which was permitting the establishment of Anglican chapels in Brazilian coastal cities.<sup>15</sup> Upon gaining independence from Portugal in 1822 and throughout most of the nineteenth century, the promotion of foreign immigration remained an important policy for the Brazilian Empire. Brazilian policymakers in the 1840s and 1850s believed that European immigrants would play a civilising role, supplying the country with an alternative workforce in the face of the declining, though still pervasive, slave labour.<sup>16</sup> German and Swiss Lutheran immigrants pioneered this migratory movement, settling in the southern provinces of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná, and cities in the coastal provinces of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. From the 1860s onwards, as a consequence of the American Civil War, Confederate Americans also made their way to Brazil, attracted by the country's expanding economy, cheap lands and slavery. They settled in different regions in the country, such as the provinces of Pará, in the Amazon region, and Bahia, on the Atlantic coast. Their main destination, however, was São Paulo, with its burgeoning coffee plantations and expanding railroads, where Confederates established Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist congregations.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> R. Graham, *Britain and the onset of modernization in Brazil, 1850–1914*, Cambridge 1968, 278–9.

<sup>16</sup> E. V. Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: myths and histories*, Chicago–London 1985, 94.

<sup>17</sup> C. Dawsey and J. Dawsey, 'Leaving: the context of the southern emigration to Brazil', in C. Dawsey and J. Dawsey (eds), *The Confederados: Old South immigrants in Brazil*, Tuscaloosa–London 1995, 11–23

These communities provided American and British missionaries with an important initial base. In fact, Presbyterian and Methodist mission stations in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo began their evangelistic work from the late 1850s onwards addressing themselves to American and German immigrants before turning to Brazilians.<sup>18</sup> During this period, Protestantism was particularly appealing to marginalised urban and rural social groups on the expanding agricultural frontiers and in the growing cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Paraná and Bahia. It was the possibility of establishing independent communities, freed from traditional social and religious restrictions, in which members could exercise elective action, that was so attractive to disenfranchised immigrants, the emerging middle class, poor urban workers and small farmers.<sup>19</sup> The most successful missionaries in this period were the American Presbyterians who, after establishing their first mission station in Rio de Janeiro in 1859, founded dozens of churches throughout the country from the 1870s onwards, established numerous parish schools and a few fully-equipped secondary colleges, prepared a generation of distinguished Brazilian and Portuguese-speaking pastors, and engaged the laity in missionary work. In 1888, when the Presbyterian national synod was created, the mission had opened churches and congregations in twelve of the twenty provinces of the Brazilian Empire, and had approximately 3,000 communicant members distributed across sixty-one churches; of these, thirty-four were located in the Province of São Paulo. Some of these churches showed signs of autonomy, such as the São Paulo Church, which had become self-supporting and whose pastor was the influential Brazilian minister and grammarian the Revd Eduardo Carlos Pereira.<sup>20</sup> However, due to financial constraints and numerical limitations, less than a half of these congregations had permanent ordained ministers. In the face of this, it was the laity, especially schoolteachers, *col-porteurs* and Bible-readers, who took over the task of evangelism, assembling believers and conducting the daily life of churches and congregations.

Until 1889, when the monarchy was overthrown, imperial laws on religious freedom and ecclesiastical administration were disruptive for both the non-Catholic minorities in Brazil and the Catholic Church. The Constitution of 1824 established Catholicism as the empire's official religion and incorporated a Portuguese colonial tradition, state patronage, into its juridical apparatus, limiting the autonomy of the Catholic

<sup>18</sup> W. Wedemann, 'A history of Protestant missions to Brazil, 1850–1914', unpubl. PhD diss. Louisville 1977, 131–50.

<sup>19</sup> R. Frase, 'A sociological analysis of the development of Brazilian Protestantism: a study of social change', unpubl. PhD diss. Princeton 1975, 330–1.

<sup>20</sup> *The fifty-second annual report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, New York 1889, 39–44 (hereinafter cited as BFM–PCUSA annual report with year).

Church and subjecting it to political control.<sup>21</sup> The empire, not the Church, was in charge of the collection of tithes and appointment of bishops, while the provincial assemblies, not the ecclesiastical authorities, were constitutionally empowered to create new parishes or to divide existing ones.<sup>22</sup> Non-Catholics, on the other hand, were granted the right to hold their religious services with freedom. However, their houses of worship could not resemble religious buildings, and they could neither vote nor run for parliament or the provincial assemblies. Complementary laws of the late 1820s did not recognise the validity of non-Catholic marriages and subjected municipal cemeteries to ecclesiastical control.<sup>23</sup> These laws were not homogeneously enforced throughout the empire; non-Catholic religious agents thus had some room for manoeuvre in their negotiations with local political authorities.<sup>24</sup> In the face of these restrictions, Protestant missionaries and Brazilian converts were able to take advantage of other opportunities to expand their missionary programme, especially the weakness of a system of public education that facilitated the creation of private schools, and the emperor's consistent defence of freedom of the press.<sup>25</sup>

It was within this context that the *Imprensa Evangelica* was founded in 1864 by the Revd Ashbel Simonton, the first missionary sent to Brazil by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, together with two members of the Presbyterian Church of Rio de Janeiro: the civil servant and poet Antonio dos Santos Neves, and the periodical's manager Domingos Quintana.<sup>26</sup> According to David Vieira, it was the centrality of religious controversies in the pages of the Brazilian secular press, especially the strongly anti-Catholic attitudes of some journals and publishing houses, that first attracted Simonton's attention.<sup>27</sup> The Scottish medical-missionary Robert Kalley, founder of the Presbyterian mission on Madeira in the late 1830s, and of the Congregational Fluminense Evangelical Church in Rio de Janeiro in 1858, pioneered the involvement of Protestant missionaries in the Brazilian press by

<sup>21</sup> G. Boehrer, 'The Church in the second reign, 1840–1889', in H. H. Keith and S. F. Edwards (eds), *Conflict and continuity in Brazilian society*, Columbia 1969.

<sup>22</sup> G. P. Neves, 'A religião do Império e a Igreja', in K. Grinberg and R. Salles (eds), *O Brasil imperial, I: 1808–1831*, Rio de Janeiro 2009, 395.

<sup>23</sup> M. G. Kothe, 'O Brasil no século XIX: restrições aos grupos não católicos', in A. Menezes (ed.), *História em movimento: temas e perguntas*, Brasília 1999, 92–103.

<sup>24</sup> P. Feitoza, 'British missions and the making of a Brazilian Protestant public', in J. Cabrita, D. Maxwell and E. Wild-Wood (eds), *Relocating world Christianity: interdisciplinary studies in universal and local expressions of the Christian faith*, Leiden–Boston 2017, 81–2.

<sup>25</sup> J. M. Carvalho, *Dom Pedro II*, São Paulo 2007, 88.

<sup>26</sup> J. A. Ferreira, *História da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil*, i, 2nd edn, São Paulo 1992, 49–52.

<sup>27</sup> D. G. Vieira, *O protestantismo, a maçonaria e a Questão Religiosa no Brasil*, Brasília 1980, 147.

translating John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* into Portuguese in 1856. Bunyan's classic was serialised and published over thirty-five numbers of the secular *Correio Mercantil*, a periodical that had one of the largest circulations in Brazil at that time.<sup>28</sup> These important antecedents played a crucial role in prompting Simonton to assemble his editorial team and launch the eight-page *Imprensa Evangelica*, Latin America's first Protestant periodical.<sup>29</sup> The paper's periodicity and place of publication varied. It was first issued fortnightly in Rio de Janeiro by the Laemmert brothers' publishing house, one of the largest publishers in nineteenth-century Brazil. Later, in 1879, it became the responsibility of the São Paulo Presbyterian Church, and between 1878 and 1880 was published every week. In 1881 missionaries decided to transform it into a thirty-two page monthly magazine, but the following year it returned to its journal format and fortnightly appearance.

The sources of the funds and material used in the publication of *Imprensa Evangelica* highlights the links between Protestant missionaries in Brazil and British and American Evangelical organisations, and illustrates how Brazilian converts were also animated by the voluntarist impulse of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. Its editors believed that the periodical should become self-supporting, relying on subscriptions and contributions from churches. The Revd Alexander Blackford, who became editor in 1867 upon Simonton's death, encouraged congregants of the Presbyterian Church of Rio de Janeiro to contribute, which helped to relieve the financial burden carried by the mission station.<sup>30</sup> Since annual subscriptions covered approximately half of the *Imprensa's* costs in 1880, the BFM was responsible for the rest.<sup>31</sup> Besides local fundraising and American capital, the periodical also received material support from the London-based Religious Tract Society. Simonton first requested financial support from the RTS committee in 1866, which was initially denied on the grounds that the committee could not spend money on a publication that they could not monitor.<sup>32</sup> Twenty years later, however, when the RTS began to expand its operations in the Lusophone Atlantic, the committee decided to support the *Imprensa* by sending fifty reams of paper to its then editor, the American missionary George Chamberlain.<sup>33</sup>

Alongside the translation and circulation of religious tracts and Bibles, the *Imprensa* was part of a wider missionary programme in nineteenth-

<sup>28</sup> J. G. da Rocha, *Lembranças do passado*, Rio de Janeiro 1941, 46–7, 50–1.

<sup>29</sup> E. R. Santos, *O jornal Imprensa Evangelica: diferentes fases no contexto brasileiro (1864–1892)*, São Paulo 2009, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Report of Rio de Janeiro Station of the Brazil Mission for the year 1870, PHS, mission correspondence, South American letters.

<sup>31</sup> Annual report of J. B. Howell, São Paulo, Brazil, for the year 1880, *ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> J. Tara to A. Simonton, 5 July 1866, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, USCL/RTS/03/19–20.

<sup>33</sup> *The eighty-eighth annual report of the Religious Tract Society*, London 1887, 195.



century Brazil. This programme involved, among other initiatives, the provision of formal education, and the production and dissemination of religious literature.<sup>34</sup> Brazilian pastors and foreign missionaries believed that the circulation of Evangelical texts and Bibles – operating beyond the reach of missionaries and evangelists – could initiate processes of religious change and prompt unaided conversions to Protestantism. In so doing they echoed nineteenth-century Evangelical notions of textual agency that attributed exceptional power and authority to religious texts.<sup>35</sup> In a report sent to the BFM in 1892, Presbyterian missionaries noted that ‘the *Imprensa* has proved an invaluable pioneer agency’, claiming that the periodical introduced the ‘self-evident’ Evangelical message to non-Evangelicals out of the reach of missionaries, and that it was a useful tool for the instruction and edification of local congregations destitute of ordained ministers.<sup>36</sup> They also informed their missionary societies that the periodical initiated processes of conversion and prepared the way for other modes of evangelistic work, elements that justified its high costs.<sup>37</sup>

In order to reduce the expenses associated with the periodical, editors connected its printing processes with other areas of the missionary work in Brazil. Students of the São Paulo Presbyterian school who received financial aid from the mission station helped with the work of typesetting.<sup>38</sup> The training of Brazilian and Portuguese converts for the Presbyterian pastorate in this period involved some preparation in mission schools and in the publishing enterprise. As a consequence, licensed preachers, ordained pastors and some church elders contributed in different ways to the *Imprensa Evangelica*, fulfilling the vision of a self-supporting periodical. In 1880, for instance, the American missionary John Beatty Howell, who was then responsible for the periodical, transferred his editorial responsibilities to José Zacarias de Miranda and Eduardo Carlos Pereira, licensed preachers of the São Paulo Church who were later ordained to the Presbyterian ministry and contributed to the *Imprensa* until it ceased publication.<sup>39</sup> From the pages of the periodical were also launched important initiatives which aimed to make Brazilian churches self-sustaining and self-governing, such as the Brazilian Society of Evangelical Tracts, established by Pereira in September 1883. Subscribers and contributors to the society had their names and contributions published in the pages of the

<sup>34</sup> Graham, *Britain and the onset*, 283–4, 295–6; E. G. Léonard, *O protestantismo brasileiro: um estudo de eclesiologia e história social*, 3rd edn, São Paulo 2002, 94–8, 147–50; A. G. Mendonça, *O celeste porvir: a inserção do protestantismo no Brasil*, 3rd edn, São Paulo 2008, 144–67.

<sup>35</sup> Hofmeyr, *The portable Bunyan*, 17.  
<sup>36</sup> The *Imprensa Evangelica* (or Evangelical Press), 1892, PHS, mission correspondence, South American letters.

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Church of Petropolis, 1874, *ibid.*  
<sup>38</sup> BFM–PCUSA annual report (1880), 18.

<sup>39</sup> Annual Report of J. B. Howell, São Paulo, Brazil, for the year 1880, PHS, mission correspondence, South American letters.

periodical, a strategy that bore resemblance to mechanisms of fundraising employed by European and North American mission societies.<sup>40</sup>

Converts and Brazilian ministers played a crucial role in the making of the periodical in its early years. The first Brazilian Presbyterian pastor, the former Catholic priest, José Manoel da Conceição, became an active contributor after his ordination in 1865 up until his premature death in 1873. In trying to protect contributors from retaliation most contributions to the *Imprensa* in its early years were anonymous. Conceição's hymns and poems, however, usually carried his signature.<sup>41</sup> The note on his death, published in January 1874, recalled not only his itinerant work in the provinces of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, but also his role in the first years of the periodical.<sup>42</sup> Two prominent figures of the Brazilian literary and political establishment, Julio César Ribeiro and Miguel Vieira Ferreira, also left important marks on the periodical. Julio Ribeiro was a journalist and novelist who joined the Presbyterians in 1870, and taught at the Presbyterian School of São Paulo. In the same year he began to contribute to the *Imprensa*, debating ecclesiastical history with the Rio de Janeiro-based Catholic periodical *O Apóstolo* (The Apostle), founded in 1866 and one of the key organs of the nineteenth-century conservative Catholic revival in Brazil.<sup>43</sup> Religious controversies and discussions between the *Imprensa* and *O Apóstolo* generated an intense exchange of information and communication in the Brazilian religious public sphere. Miguel Ferreira was an engineer by training, an intellectual, and one of the founders of the Republican Party of Rio de Janeiro. He joined the Presbyterians in 1873 and was soon elected an elder of the Rio de Janeiro Presbyterian Church, where he frequently preached and also helped American missionaries with evangelistic trips into the countryside. In 1879 he broke away from the Presbyterians and founded the Brazilian Evangelical Church, which combined Protestant, Catholic and Spiritualist practices and doctrines.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the declared intention of its first editors to eschew political discussion and concentrate only upon religious affairs,<sup>45</sup> the involvement of these Brazilian converts projected the *Imprensa Evangelica* into the religious

<sup>40</sup> *IE*, 29 Sept. 1883, no. 18.

<sup>41</sup> *IE*, 20 July 1872, no. 14; 3 Aug. 1872, no. 15; 7 Dec. 1872, no. 23; 21 Dec. 1872, no. 24; 6 Sept. 1873, no. 17.

<sup>42</sup> *IE*, 3 Jan. 1874, no. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *IE*, 19 Mar. 1870, no. 6. On the Catholic Church and the Ultramontane reform see K. Serbin, *Needs of the heart: a social and cultural history of Brazil's clergy and seminaries*, Notre Dame 2006, ch. ii, and C. F. G. de Groot, *Brazilian Catholicism and the Ultramontane reform*, Amsterdam 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Relatório de A. L. Blackford pelo anno Presbyterial de Agosto de 1874 a Julho de 1875, AHP, Coleção Carvalhosa. On Ferreira and the origins of the Brazilian Evangelical Church see E. G. Léonard, *O iluminismo num protestantismo de constituição recente*, São Bernardo do Campo 1988, 26–44.

<sup>45</sup> *IE*, 5 Nov. 1864, no. 1.

and political debates of the 1870s, as they brought both anti-Catholic controversies and the defence of religious freedom to the forefront.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, American missionaries believed that the participation of native converts and Portuguese-speaking ministers in the production of the periodical helped to popularise the *Imprensa* among the Brazilian public.<sup>47</sup>

*The Imprensa Evangelica and the political and religious transformations of Brazil*

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s contributors to the *Imprensa Evangelica* used its pages to defend the rights of non-Catholics in the Brazilian Empire. Two specific issues attracted their attention: the establishment of the civil registration of marriages, and the secularisation of cemeteries. Brazilian Protestants, conscious that the Empire's policymakers were anxious to attract European immigrants, as well being opposed to the judicial restrictions imposed on non-Catholics, claimed in the pages of *Imprensa* that imperial regulations on marriage and freedom of worship discouraged immigrant families and drove them away from Brazil.<sup>48</sup> In 1869 the imperial authorities issued a decree recognising the legal validity of all marriages celebrated by non-Catholic ordained priests, a reform that did not satisfy the editors of the Protestant periodical, who continued to view the implementation of civil registration of marriages as an issue of religious tolerance, and as a sign of a more advanced civilisation. They affirmed that the adamant opposition of *O Apóstolo* to this reform demonstrated the 'antipathy of the Roman Church in its spirit and its institutions with the spirit of this century and the institutions and reforms that the country demands'.<sup>49</sup> Similar arguments can be seen in the periodical's defence of the secularisation of cemeteries. In 1870 the *Imprensa* printed an imperial resolution instructing all bishops and presidents of provinces to provide separate areas in municipal cemeteries for the burial of non-Catholics, and to carry out all the religious and political ceremonies necessary to enforce these instructions. The periodical's contributors praised this decision arguing that, on the one hand, it would satisfy all those who defended 'the progress of the country and the religious and social wellbeing of the people' and, on the other, that it stood as a 'conclusive proof of the

<sup>46</sup> Vieira, *O protestantismo*, 147–9, 151–6.

<sup>47</sup> BFM–PCUSA annual report (1880), 18.

<sup>48</sup> *IE*, 21 Apr. 1866, no. 8; 6 Apr. 1867, no. 7.

<sup>49</sup> '(empenha-se em mostrar) a antipathia da igreja romana em seu espirito e em suas instituições com o espirito do seculo e as instituições e reformas que o paiz reclama': *IE*, 2 Dec. 1871, no. 23.

essential antipathy between romanism and the free institutions of our century and country'.<sup>50</sup> In their opinion 'every single act of religious intolerance is an iniquitous attack on the inalienable rights with which the Creator endowed men and on the principles consecrated in Christ's Gospel that we profess'.<sup>51</sup> In associating the Church-State alliance with despotism, religious tolerance with social wellbeing, and religious liberty with the natural and inalienable rights of men, Brazilian Evangelicals connected their theological doctrines with Enlightenment and liberal notions of progress and tolerance.<sup>52</sup>

During the same period, new critical commentaries of global Catholicism and Church-State relations in Brazil crystallised in the pages of *Imprensa Evangelica*. These emerged in reaction to the nineteenth-century conservative Catholic revival – Ultramontanism – and its reverberations in Brazil. Affected by the disaggregating effects of revolutionary and nationalist movements in Europe, the Catholic hierarchy sought to reassert the centrality of Rome to the worldwide Catholic community, the authority of the pope as the spiritual head of the Church, and to popularise modern devotions, such as the cult of the Sacred Heart.<sup>53</sup> In spite of its attacks on republicanism and modern science, Ultramontane Catholicism did promote modernisation, as both clergymen and laypeople created voluntary associations, made use of modern mass circulation media, and established modern schools for deprived social groups and to train the clergy.<sup>54</sup> From the 1860s onwards, influential Brazilian Catholic clergymen, in line with the conservative revival in Europe, began to extend the effects of Ultramontane reform to the Brazilian Church. A new generation of well-educated clergymen, trained in European institutions, occupied key positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and attempted to revitalise a Church with limited resources by mobilising the laity, demanding high moral standards from their fellow Catholic ministers and parishioners, and drawing the Brazilian Church closer to Rome. These initiatives led

<sup>50</sup> 'o progresso do paiz e o bem estar religioso e social do povo ... prova concludente da antipathia essencial entre o romanismo e as instituições livres de nosso seculo e paiz': *IE*, 28 May 1870, no. 11.

<sup>51</sup> 'todo acto de intolerância religiosa é um atentado iniquo contra os direitos inalienaveis com que o Creador dotou o homem e contra os princípios consagrados no Evangelho de Cristo que professamos': *IE*, 2 July 1870, no. 14.

<sup>52</sup> B. Stanley, 'Christian missions and the Enlightenment: a reevaluation', in B. Stanley (ed.), *Christian missions and the Enlightenment*, Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge 2001, 8–15.

<sup>53</sup> V. Viaene, 'Nineteenth-century Catholic internationalism and its predecessors', in Greene and Viaene, *Religious internationals*, 88–9.

<sup>54</sup> C. Clark, 'From 1848 to Christian Democracy', in G. S. Jones and I. Katznelson (eds), *Religion and the political imagination*, Cambridge–New York 2010, 201.

to serious clashes with the state.<sup>55</sup> Relations between the empire and the Church became increasingly problematic in the early 1870s, when the bishop of Olinda-Recife, Dom Vital Oliveira, and the bishop of Belém, Dom Antônio Costa, in obedience to papal bulls that had not been approved by the empire, demanded the expulsion of Freemasons from lay brotherhoods in their dioceses. The imperial authorities reacted by bringing the bishops to trial, and in 1874 they were condemned to four years imprisonment with hard labour. This conflict, known as the 'Religious Question',<sup>56</sup> was frequently and extensively examined by the *Imprensa Evangelica*.

The *Imprensa* editors followed these events closely, lamenting in dramatic articles the policies of Pius IX, the dogma of papal infallibility and that of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>57</sup> When Dom Vital was found guilty the *Imprensa's* editors praised his religious zeal and courage in his decision to remain faithful to his oath of obedience to the laws of his Church. They argued, however, that both the bishop and the empire were in a paradoxical situation: the bishop was forced to obey either the laws of his country or the doctrines of the Vatican, while the empire, in establishing Catholicism as its official religion, was bound to a similar set of rules and orders emanating from Rome, a supranational power. According to the *Imprensa Evangelica*, the only possible solution was the complete separation of Church and State, a principle that remained at the forefront of the periodical's agenda until the late 1880s, and that continued to be viewed by Protestants as the only solution to their own troubled situation in the Brazilian Empire.<sup>58</sup> These ideas chimed with those of a secular periodical, *O Novo Mundo* (The New World), which, edited from New York by the influential Brazilian journalist and Protestant convert José Carlos Rodrigues, circulated widely in Brazil.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, Protestants began to argue more systematically that recent events in Brazil and in the world showed how religious change, and not racial difference, was the main driver of social progress and economic modernisation. In 1875 Miguel Vieira Ferreira translated into Portuguese a tract written by the Belgian economist Émile de Laveleye entitled *The future of the Catholic peoples*. The central argument of this influential text was that the social and individual effects of modernisation, such as education, personal cleanliness, economic progress, democracy

<sup>55</sup> G. A. Bohrer, 'The Church and the overthrow of the Brazilian monarchy', *Hispanic American Historical Review* xlviii (1968), 380–401.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed account of the Religious Question see M. C. Thornton, *The Church and Freemasonry in Brazil, 1872–1875: a study in regalism*, Washington, DC 1948.

<sup>57</sup> *IE*, 15 Jan. 1870, no. 2; 5 Feb. 1870, no. 3; 19 Feb. 1870, no. 4; 5 Mar. 1870, no. 5; 19 Mar. 1870, no. 6.

<sup>58</sup> *IE*, 7 Mar. 1874, no. 5.

<sup>59</sup> G. A. Bohrer, 'José Carlos Rodrigues and *O Novo Mundo*, 1870–1879', *Journal of Inter-American Studies* ix (1967), 127–44.

and freedom, flourished wherever Protestantism triumphed over rival faiths, whereas Catholicism, with its centralised system of administration and resistance to modern political reforms, predisposed societies to corrupt despotism.<sup>60</sup> The *Imprensa Evangelica* praised this publication, asserting that it was a timely and decisive contribution to an on-going debate on the effects of Catholicism and rationalism in contemporary societies, and continued to publish excerpts from the tract in its pages.<sup>61</sup>

In periods of religious and political turmoil such as these, Brazilian and foreign Protestant missionaries laid out their positions in wider public debates and associated themselves with different groups in civil society. A considerable body of scholarship on Latin American Evangelicalism has stressed that Protestant missionaries and converts, alongside other religious minorities, strengthened their connections with liberal-radical groups on the continent who advocated radical political reforms such as the complete separation of Church and State. Masonic lodges, 'societies of thought' and circles of mutual aid constituted the main spaces of sociability for these groups.<sup>62</sup> The pages of the *Imprensa Evangelica*, on the other hand, demonstrate a different aspect of Evangelical public engagements. According to its editors, parliamentary debates on the Religious Question cut across political lines. They argued that one could find in the Senate 'liberals and conservatives who accept the *infallibility* and think according to the *syllabus*',<sup>63</sup> and in the Chamber of Deputies a conservative who defends civil marriage.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, the periodical often praised the modernising effects of political reforms carried out by the Conservative Party, such as the abolition of slavery and the progressive concession of political rights to non-Catholics. They reproduced government bills signed by Paulino José Soares Souza, a Conservative Party minister of the late 1860s and 1870s, and condemned the actions of the Liberal Party senator Zacarias de Góes e Vasconcelos, who defended the actions of Dom Vital in parliament.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> E. Laveleye, *Do futuro dos povos catholicos: estudo de economia social*, Rio de Janeiro 1875, 10, 22–7.

<sup>61</sup> *IE*, 5 Sept. 1875, no. 17; 16 Oct. 1875, no. 20; 6 Nov. 1875, no. 21; 4 Dec. 1875, no. 23.

<sup>62</sup> J. P. Bastian, 'The metamorphosis of Latin American Protestant groups: a sociohistorical perspective', *Latin American Research Review* xxviii (1993); 'Protestantism in Latin America', in E. Dussel (ed.), *The Church in Latin America, 1492–1992*, Tunbridge Wells 1992; and (ed.), *Protestantes, liberales y francmasones: sociedades de ideas y modernidad en América Latina, siglo XIX*, Mexico, DF 1990.

<sup>63</sup> '(No senado, por exemplo,) há liberaes e conservadores que aceitam a *infallibilidade* e pensam pelo *syllabus*': *IE*, 7 June 1873, no. 11.

<sup>64</sup> *IE*, 2 Dec. 1871, no. 23.

<sup>65</sup> *IE*, 1 Jan. 1870, no. 1; 20 Dec. 1873, no. 24; 21 Feb. 1874, no. 4.

In eschewing bipolar political associations, Protestants used the pages of the *Imprensa Evangelica* to interact with various actors across the religious and political spectrum in Brazil, associating themselves with those committed to the causes of religious liberty and laicisation of the state, irrespective of formal political affiliation. American Protestant missionaries and Brazilian converts thought that despite the limited liberality of the Constitution and the progressive leanings of the Emperor Pedro II, their political rights were unstable in the empire, dependent upon negotiations with police delegates, local authorities, foreign diplomats and imperial ministers.<sup>66</sup> They feared that a conservative Catholic counter-reaction during a possible reign of Princess Isabel, the religiously devout daughter of Pedro II, would threaten the progress of religious liberty in the country.<sup>67</sup>

If editors and contributors to the Protestant periodical had given central importance to issues of religious freedom and state laicisation since the early 1870s, the problem of slavery, certainly one of the most pressing concerns of nineteenth-century Brazil, did not make its way onto the agenda of *Imprensa Evangelica* until the following decade. The reasons for this late engagement with the abolitionist movement can be found in the configuration of Brazilian Protestant communities. Although some Presbyterian missionaries from the American North were sympathetic to the abolitionist cause, others, especially Baptists from the Southern states of the USA, still regarded slavery as acceptable.<sup>68</sup>

It was in 1884 that the problem of slavery made headlines in the periodical. The abolition of slave labour in the northern province of Ceará in that year, and the publication of a resolute defence of abolitionism by Joaquim Nabuco, one of Brazil's most renowned intellectuals, prompted the *Imprensa* editors to respond. The periodical reproduced excerpts from Nabuco's book in which he affirmed that the promotion of European immigration and the existence of slavery were mutually exclusive practices.<sup>69</sup> In the same year, the pastor of the Rio de Janeiro Presbyterian Church, the Revd J. Houston, preached a sermon, partly reproduced in the *Imprensa Evangelica*, asserting that Old Testament slavery was much diluted in comparison with the Brazilian system, that enslavement was only tolerated by the Mosaic Law and, therefore, could not justify contemporary Brazilian slavery.<sup>70</sup> The strongest campaigner for the abolitionist cause among Brazilian and foreign Protestants, however, was the Revd Eduardo Carlos Pereira. In 1885 he made his debut in this on-going debate in the pages of the *Imprensa Evangelica* arguing that the subjugation of human beings tied slave owners to indolence, killed their moral

<sup>66</sup> Vieira, *O protestantismo*, 119–28. <sup>67</sup> *Brazilian Missions*, Aug. 1888, i, no. 8.

<sup>68</sup> J. C. Barbosa, *Slavery and Protestant missions in Brazil*, trans. F. G. MacHaffie and R. K. Danford, Lanham 2008, ch iii.

<sup>69</sup> *IE*, 29 Mar. 1884, no. 6; 24 May 1884, no. 10. <sup>70</sup> *IE*, 18 Oct. 1884, no. 20.

sentiments and injected ‘into our social organism the poison of slavery’.<sup>71</sup> In the following year Pereira published an emphatic condemnation of the Brazilian system of slavery entitled *The Christian religion in its relations with slavery*, in which he brought together biblical texts from the Old and New Testaments alongside concepts of human rights and freedom borrowed from modern liberal thought, to argue that captivity was in irreconcilable opposition to Christianity.<sup>72</sup> This tract was, later in that year, serialised and published in six separate numbers of the *Imprensa Evangelica*.<sup>73</sup> Another Brazilian Protestant, José Carlos Rodrigues, also published ardent defences of abolitionism in his influential periodical *O Novo Mundo*.<sup>74</sup> Whereas American missionaries adopted a conciliatory stance with regard to the abolitionist debate, avoiding possible conflicts with their parent societies in the United States or with fellow American missionaries in the field, Brazilian converts and ministers were able to condemn slavery with impunity.

*The Imprensa Evangelica in motion: circulation and the creation of new religious identities*

In analysing a publication such as the *Imprensa Evangelica*, attention has to be paid to the various ways in which the periodical generated new reading practices in nineteenth-century Brazil, and to how its editors aimed to address multiple audiences – local, national and transnational. Literary scholars and social scientists have been drawing attention to issues of circulation of texts and the constitution of publics and audiences in the last decades, conceptualising the public as an imagined entity that comes into being by means of the circulation of discourse.<sup>75</sup> Besides being a useful platform through which Evangelicals engaged with wider public religious and political debates, the *Imprensa Evangelica* also acquired new functions and forms as it circulated around Evangelical audiences in Brazil and other Lusophone societies.

The primary space of sociability within which the periodical was collectively read was the Evangelical Church. Throughout the nineteenth century Baptist, Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian congregations inaugurated new forms of religious sociability in Brazil separate from the

<sup>71</sup> ‘em nosso organismo social o veneno da escravidão’: *IE*, 2 May 1885, no. 9.

<sup>72</sup> E. C. Pereira, *A religião cristã em suas relações com a escravidão*, São Paulo 1886.

<sup>73</sup> *IE*, 3 Apr. 1886, no. 14; 10 Apr. 1886, no. 15; 17 Apr. 1886, no. 16; 24 Apr. 1886, no. 17; 1 May 1886, no. 18; 8 May 1886, no. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Boehrer, ‘José Carlos Rodrigues’, 130, 136.

<sup>75</sup> M. Warner, *Publics and counterpublics*, New York 2005, chs i–ii; K. Barber, *The anthropology of texts, persons and publics: oral and written culture in Africa and beyond*, New York 2007, 137–54.



aristocratic institutions of the secular public sphere and distinct from the overwhelming influence of the Catholic Church. Protestant Churches, with their weekly meetings and democratic electoral systems, alongside mission schools, with their innovative pedagogical methods, brought together individuals from different levels of society and served as a vehicle of institutional participation for Brazil's emerging middle class and other disenfranchised social groups.<sup>76</sup>

Due to the scarcity of ordained ministers in Brazil, American and Brazilian missionaries attributed central importance to the texts that they circulated, especially to the Bible, religious tracts, catechisms and the *Imprensa Evangelica*.<sup>77</sup> The periodical furnished lay leaders of small congregations with sermons, faith confessions, weekly devotional material for both collective and individual reading, and conversion narratives. The case of the Presbyterian church at Ubatuba in the province of São Paulo is illustrative. Its leader, José Joaquim Fernandes de Lima, had purchased Evangelical tracts and a Bible from missionaries of the Rio de Janeiro Presbyterian Church in 1868. According to the history of the foundation of the church, upon reading the Scriptures and other religious books Lima was convinced that 'the religion in which he was raised was not the religion taught by Jesus and his Apostles'.<sup>78</sup> In 1874, after receiving a few books that he had ordered from the Evangelical bookshop in Rio de Janeiro, which came to him wrapped in an old number of the *Imprensa Evangelica*, which he read eagerly, Lima decided to subscribe to the periodical and encouraged other people from Ubatuba to do the same. The Ubatuba church was founded in 1880 with a ceremony celebrated by Brazilian and American ordained ministers of the Rio de Janeiro Church, but until the end of the decade it did not have its own ordained pastor. One of the elders acted as a Bible-reader for the benefit of the congregation, reciting sermons taken from the *Imprensa Evangelica* alongside Evangelical tracts and passages from the Bible.<sup>79</sup>

In many other places throughout the country lay leaders of Evangelical congregations integrated religious texts and the *Imprensa* into the daily liturgical practices of their churches by reading aloud pages of catechisms and the periodical to believers. The periodical had, in this sense, reading publics and audiences simultaneously, a fact that extended the reach of the *Imprensa Evangelica* way beyond the limits of subscriptions. Dozens of churches scattered across the provinces of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Bahia had this periodical, religious tracts, catechisms and the Bible as

<sup>76</sup> Frase, 'A sociological analysis', 248–9, 306–7; BFM–PCUSA annual report (1879), 23.

<sup>77</sup> A. Blackford. *Sketch of the Brazil mission*, Philadelphia 1886, 17–18.

<sup>78</sup> 'a religião em que fôra creado não era a religião ensinada por Jesus e pelos seus apóstolos': Primeiro Livro de Actas da Igreja de Ubatuba, 1880, AHP.

<sup>79</sup> BFM–PCUSA annual report (1890), 27.

their main source of religious doctrine and instruction in the 1880s.<sup>80</sup> Schoolteachers also used written texts such as the *Imprensa* and catechisms as primers in parish and Sunday schools. Moreover, editors encouraged subscribers to bind the various numbers of the periodical together, so that they could keep serialised publications in order and take full benefit from them.<sup>81</sup>

Such reading practices, facilitated by the circulation of Evangelical literature and new forms of religious sociability in nineteenth-century Brazil, also contributed to instilling in Evangelical readers a renewed sense of belonging to a worldwide Christian communion. Historians of both African and European Christianity have shown how mission correspondence and the reading of missionary reports became conduits of transnational religious solidarity, and enabled believers and contributors to mission societies to imagine themselves as part of a global and fraternal fellowship of committed believers.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, the *Imprensa Evangelica* sought to inspire in its readers a sense of belonging to a transnational imagined community of Evangelical Christians. In the 1870s editors included two sections in the periodical entitled 'The Evangelisation of the World' and 'Religious News', which aimed to keep their readers abreast of the worldwide growth of Protestantism and the spread of mission societies, especially in Africa.<sup>83</sup> They usually registered the creation of new churches and ordination of ministers in Brazil in the 'Religious News' section, representing their own missionary work as a chapter in the wider international movement.

The periodical itself circulated in different Lusophone Protestant communities: in both Portugal and in Illinois in the American Midwest, where there was a group of Protestant Portuguese immigrants who had fled religious persecution in Madeira. In fact, a thick network comprising London-based Evangelical organisations, such as the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society, Portuguese immigrants in Illinois and Brazil, and British missionaries linked together Protestant

<sup>80</sup> BFM-PCUSA annual report (1884), 32; (1886), 46, 49.

<sup>81</sup> *IE*, 21 Oct. 1865, no. 24. Indeed, some subscribers followed the instructions of the *Imprensa* editors, and in contemporary Brazil one can find well-preserved bound collections of the periodical in the private libraries of old Evangelical families. My first contact with the periodical occurred in 2008, when I visited the house of the Revd Elben Lenz César (1930–2016) in Viçosa, Minas Gerais, who was of his family's third generation of Presbyterian pastors.

<sup>82</sup> E. Wild-Wood, 'The travels and translations of three African Anglican missionaries, 1890–1930', this *JOURNAL* lxxvii (2016), 781–98; P. van Rooden, 'Nineteenth-century representations of missionary conversion and the transformation of Western Christianity', in P. van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion to modernities: the globalization of Christianity*, New York–London 1996, 72.

<sup>83</sup> *IE*, 19 Feb. 1870, no. 4; 18 Apr. 1874, no. 8.

missionary work in the Lusophone Atlantic world.<sup>84</sup> Evidence suggests that the *Imprensa Evangelica* began to circulate in Portugal itself as early as 1867. In that year editors affirmed that, by unclear means, some numbers of the periodical reached Portugal and roused the opposition of Catholic journalists who questioned the legality of Protestant propaganda and the circulation of Evangelical Bibles there.<sup>85</sup> From then on, the *Imprensa Evangelica* engaged in religious debates with Portuguese Catholic publications and frequently advertised the places, dates and times of religious services in both Lisbon and Porto.<sup>86</sup> The Brazilian Presbyterian minister José Zacarias de Miranda published a series of articles between June and December 1885 which responded to the critiques of the Portuguese writer Cunha Carvalhaes, who described the Evangelical missions in Portugal as erroneous and heretical. Miranda argued in his articles that the Catholic Church was not an apostolic institution because neither its head, the pope, nor its doctrines, that included the veneration of images, had been instituted by Christ and the Bible.<sup>87</sup> Texts, ideas and people moved in several directions across the transnational networks of nineteenth-century missionary societies, building an Evangelical transatlantic public sphere.<sup>88</sup> Conscious of the existence of these connections, the editors and contributors to the *Imprensa Evangelica* at times addressed the extended Lusophone reading public, projecting the periodical into the transnational network of global Protestantism.

Conversion narratives published in this period furnished Brazilian believers with a means of refashioning individual experiences. In the early 1880s the *Imprensa* editors began to publish a monthly literary supplement which was circulated to all subscribers. American missionaries told their home societies that one of these supplements, a conversion narrative published in 1885, had a powerful impact on the Brazilian public. This text – *My conversion: revelations of a lady to her Catholic friend* – was written by an Italian immigrant named Ausonia who lived in Rio de Janeiro and was converted there.<sup>89</sup> Ausonia described her conversion as a process intimately connected with her reading of the Bible and of other religious texts, especially an anti-Catholic polemic, *History of the popes*. Upon obtaining these books from a friend, Ausonia spent a week reading them and felt deeply disturbed by the contrast between the Catholic faith that she professed and their critical message. She described this process as one of

<sup>84</sup> Feitoza, 'British missions', 85–90.

<sup>85</sup> *IE*, 20 July 1867, no. 14.

<sup>86</sup> *IE*, 6 June 1869, no. 11; 15 Jan. 1870, no. 2; 16 Aug. 1884, no. 16; 20 Feb. 1886, no. 8.

<sup>87</sup> *IE*, 6 June 1885, no. 11; 21 June 1885, no. 12; 1 Aug. 1885, no. 15; 5 Sept. 1885, no. 17; 19 Dec. 1885, no. 24.

<sup>88</sup> Clark and Ledger-Lomas, 'The Protestant international', 30.

<sup>89</sup> BFM–PCUSA annual report (1886), 48.

anguish and perplexity, in which all her cherished Catholic beliefs were deconstructed by the act of reading.<sup>90</sup> On the following Sunday Ausonia went to mass in Rio and was repelled by all the symbols that she had previously admired, and so, upon returning home, burned her images of saints.<sup>91</sup> In nineteenth-century Brazil, missionary publishing played a role similar to that of Christian literacy among African converts: periodicals, spiritual autobiographies and religious tracts enabled converts to refashion themselves, creating new reading habits, disciplining behaviour, interiorising Evangelical doctrines and fostering processes of religious change.<sup>92</sup>

In July 1892, after twenty-eight years of regular publication, the editors of the *Imprensa Evangelica* announced that it was to cease publication, a fact that reveals some of the problems that Brazilian Protestant Churches were facing at the time.<sup>93</sup> Financial problems at the Brazil Mission and conflicts of interest among Protestant missionaries brought the periodical to an end. Although American and Brazilian missionaries had aimed to make the *Imprensa Evangelica* self-supporting, they were not able to increase the number of subscriptions as they had planned: by 1892 there were only eight hundred subscribers.<sup>94</sup> This was due both to limited Evangelical growth during this period and to the high rates of illiteracy in Brazil. Furthermore, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in the United States decided to suspend its financial support for the *Imprensa* as conflicts in the Brazil Mission began to escalate. Brazilian ministers and church elders of the São Paulo mission, under the influential leadership of Eduardo C. Pereira, clashed with a group of Northern American missionaries over the control of the São Paulo Presbyterian Church and the administration of the mission school.<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, the *Imprensa Evangelica* played an important role in forging new religious identities in nineteenth-century Brazil and projecting a religious minority into the Brazilian public sphere. Exchanges and controversies with Catholic and secular periodicals in this period generated a flow of information and doctrines centred around issues of religious freedom, secularisation and Church-State relations that asserted the presence of Evangelical minorities in the public arena. Furthermore, Protestant-

<sup>90</sup> [Ausonia], *Minha conversão: revelações de uma senhora à sua amiga catholica*, Rio de Janeiro 1885, 29.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 53–6.

<sup>92</sup> J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa*, Chicago–London 1991, 60–3; K. Barber, ‘Hidden innovators in Africa’, in K. Barber (ed.), *Africa’s hidden histories: everyday literacy and making the self*, Bloomington 2006, 8; J. D. Y. Peel, ‘“For who hath despised the day of small things?”: missionary narratives and historical anthropology’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* xxxvii (1995), 581–607.

<sup>93</sup> *IE*, 2 July 1892, no. 27.

<sup>94</sup> The *Imprensa Evangelica*, 1892, PHS, mission correspondence, South American letters.

<sup>95</sup> Léonard, *O protestantismo*, 154–60.

Catholic controversies in this period reinforced both nineteenth-century Evangelical identities, which emerged in strong opposition to traditional Catholicism, and the Catholic Ultramontane revival, that portrayed the spread of Protestantism, Positivism and republicanism in Brazil as major threats to the traditional social order and to the place of Catholicism in Brazilian society.<sup>96</sup> Besides being an instrument of evangelisation, the *Imprensa* also furnished Protestant converts individually with doctrinal and catechetical material which aimed to develop processes of religious change by interiorising Evangelical creeds, and small congregations with liturgical and educational matter, such as hymns, sermons, catechisms and reading primers.

<sup>96</sup> R. Della Cava, 'Brazilian messianism and national institutions: a reappraisal of Canudos and Joazeiro', *Hispanic American Historical Review* xlvi (1968), 402–20.