

### 3.2.2.3.2.52 'Born again' cultural imperialists

Catholic preachers usually have a formal religious education, and not just anybody, in a day or two, can become a Catholic functionary.

But among Protestant zealots and missionaries, you can find those who have been "born again". Who have been "sinners" only yesterday, and today, they talk and behave as if they have been religious authorities for decades. And they typically tell everybody (but especially those who do not want to hear it) that absolutely everything depends on Jesus Christ. Yes, every born-again Christian is supposed to publicly bear witness and to spread the word, which means: to be a missionary.

They are a nuisance, but they also are something worse: an anti-hedonistic, imperialistic army.

Their activities are not restricted to spreading Christianity by word only. As they are totally convinced of Christianity's moral superiority, they also are out to spread the faith by good deeds. In a style for which the Salvation Army has long been the role model, they first help the poor, and then entice them to join in prayers.

The principal difference between the old-fashioned Salvation Army and the modern missionaries is that the Salvation Army works a harder turf. They are active around railway stations in Western countries, providing meals to old alcoholics who sleep rough. Those are street-smart. They know that if they pretend piety, they may not just get a warm meal but maybe even a few dollars... enough for a bottle of booze.

But modern Protestant zealots don't join the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is boring, and not exotic enough. Modern Christian zealots have discovered Third World hunger, and even more so, the plight of Third World children. They join NGOs, and make a showcase of a Third World country's inability to provide sufficient protection to its children.

And yes, they feel very, very good about themselves. Which is why they are in the game.

Oh, I am totally in favor of massive vaccination campaigns against common preventable child diseases in poor countries, financed by money from rich countries. Malaria eradication could save the lives of millions of children.

If they were genuinely serious about saving the lives of children in Third World countries, the best that born-again do-gooders could do would be to stay in the US, work hard, not allow themselves any pleasures, and donate 80 percent of their salaries to international malaria eradication efforts.

How boring! How void of dramatic excitement! How totally unappealing and non-stimulating! How little effect when what they aim for is, no, not to help the poor, but self-fulfillment as missionaries.

No, they don't want that, and they won't do it even if each of them could save hundreds of child lives per year, thousands in a lifetime. Instead they become volunteers and venture themselves into poor Third World countries, equipped with little money, but loaded with eagerness to praise the Lord, their Lord, with good and moral deeds.

They start community projects in villages, set up safe-houses for battered housewives, or orphanages for abandoned children. If the yardstick is saving lives, the effect of their actions is minimal. But it's anyway not really about saving lives. It's more about an interesting life for themselves, and about profiling themselves as moral leaders in a far land, whose inhabitants they regard as savages... though, they admit, friendly ones (they normally wouldn't be prepared to become martyrs among unfriendly savages, which is why you find many more missionaries in, let's say, Cambodia, than in Iraq).

Of course, their altruism is fake. If the poor country where they have an easy time profiling themselves as moral authorities were, by a sudden stroke of fortune, to become rich overnight, they would be the first ones on the next morning to complain that "now they are rich!" and no longer friendly.

Don't you see that for them, the poverty of Third World countries is

just the stage they need in order to play the role of the white knight?  
Or a ticket to sainthood?