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THE AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION IN CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

BRENT GILCHRIST, B.A. (Hons.)

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

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submitted by

Brent Gilchrist, B.A. Hons.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

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November 2, 1995

ABSTRACT

This project posits civil religion as a symbolic form of political culture, situating it in relationship to ideology, religion, and myth. It explores the debate that has ensued from the conceptual application of civil religion to empirical phenomena in the United States of America, and affirms by way of conceptual and empirical historical analyses that an American civil religion exists. American history reveals a vibrant religio-political language of rhetorical political legitimation and cultural self-understanding. This self-conception constrains the American national identity, its politics, and its religiosity. The Americanism that emerges from this civil religion involves an idealization of American life and aspirations that sacralizes liberal doctrine and reinforces American consensus. As an aspect of social control in a democratic society, civil religion serves to "convert" its adherents to the prevailing doctrine, lending legitimacy and stability to a regime that, thus, rules from "within."

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Chapter One: Political Culture as Ideology, Myth, and Religion

American reverence for the separation of Church and State has led to analyses of American political culture that stridently alienate political behaviour from underlying beliefs. According to this view, American politics are, and should be, practical and pragmatic, rational and non-ideological--detached from prejudice and conceit. American political commentators typically fail to see ideology, myth, and religion at work in American political culture. Arthur Schlesinger and Stephen Carter, for example, both agree that religion and myth do not have decisive influences upon American politics, Schlesinger celebrating this as a great and unique accomplishment that must be vigilantly maintained, while Carter laments the inefficacy of religion in public policy formulation and in the public arena generally. Both incorrectly, and typically, fail to apprehend the texture of political culture and, specifically, the role that religion plays in American politics, however unacknowledged it might be.¹ American eyes squint in self-examination.

Schlesinger's insistence upon the primacy of reason in American political behaviour accompanies his interpretation of American history as a tradition of practical, non-ideological politics of experimentation. Schlesinger's secular tradition stands opposed to, yet often is assailed by, a "counter-tradition" of value-impregnated, 'ideological', 'false' politics that would claim to imbue America with meaning and "destiny."

¹See Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The Cycles of American History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986), and Stephen L. Carter, The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion (New York: Basic Books, 1993; rpt. New York: Anchor, 1994).

This 'ideological' behaviour is out of bounds for Schlesinger and, he claims, for all "traditional" Americans.¹ In fact, what Schlesinger objects to is the frequent visibility of particular American beliefs, the revelation of ideology, myth, or religion as the source and foundation of supposed rational policy. Taking their own as the given truth, Americans abhor explicit political culture and, especially, phenomena and analyses that tend or attempt to unveil, explicate, or attack the "prejudices" and conceits implicit in "traditional" American behaviour.

Stephen Carter's lament for a culture, The Culture of Disbelief, echoes Schlesinger's severance of behaviour and belief, and bewails the banishment of religion from American government as well as its relegation to some private sphere of the individual. Unlike Schlesinger, Carter is upset by this and advocates what Schlesinger might call a "counter-traditional" attack, desiring to inject politics with religiosity. Carter's assertion that public religiosity can be effective only in group behaviour demonstrates the invisibility, to most Americans, of religion in their political culture.² Individual behaviour is no longer the carrier of underlying beliefs in this approach; government and politics are receptors of belief only through group activity. Public religion is relegated to interest group status, maintaining the purity and neutrality of government and politics proper.

As with Schlesinger, politics remains a neutral system for Carter,

¹Schlesinger, "The Theory of America: Experiment or Destiny?", in The Cycles of American History, pp.3-22.

²Carter, The Culture of Disbelief, pp.17, 21.

perhaps subject to 'ideological' influences through group pressure, but itself value-free and benign, or non-believing. This outlook supports policy outputs of the system as practical, un-biased or truthful, and just, hence the importance, to Carter, of explicit influence by religion. Carter laments religion's lost legitimacy and seeks to restore it through an acceptable participation on the part of religion in the formulation of supposedly rational, unbiased, and "true" policy. Such a market-place perception of American politics is typical of Americans, and of many American analyses of political religiosity. Like Carter,¹ they expect, and approve, attempts to influence the activity of the system, to push for particular outcomes, but deny and denounce attempts to infuse the system itself with particular beliefs, to skew the system with 'ideological' prejudice.

This approach ignores its own assumptions, as well as those of the prevailing political system, or order of things, by artificially separating behaviour and outcomes from embedded beliefs. Ideology is misunderstood as merely any explicit belief or belief system, thus merging ideology proper with religion and other scattered, but explicit, beliefs. Implicit beliefs are ignored, explicit religion and ideology are seen as confused, and the socially foundational symbolic form, myth, remains more or less invisible and unanalyzed. The significance of particular forms of belief and behaviour is devalued and the importance of political culture is effectively denied.

By contrast with Schlesinger and Carter, James Kloppenberg exalts the

¹Ibid., p.91.

place of ideology in American culture, but at the regrettable price of ignoring the formal differences among religion, myth, and ideology altogether. Kloppenberg asserts an explicit merging of ideology, myth and religion in Revolutionary America, enabled by the openness of the American cultural environment relative to Europe. This deliberate conflation of symbolic forms elevates a revered manifestation of one form, namely ideology as liberalism, to a primacy that effectively obliterates other symbolic forms in a partial embrace of their content.¹

More successful is Ruth Bloch's attempt to salvage American religion and myth as symbolic forms by calling attention to their capacity to shape ideological content from without, rather than following Kloppenberg's conversion of myth and religion to ideology.² Bloch asserts that key religious themes of action--"the necessity of righteous behaviour in the world" and "the definition of an elect community with a secular history overseen by Providence"--were "common denominators" in early America, "these two basic themes weav[ing] in and out of the political ideology of the Revolution." Rather than being absorbed in the primacy of Kloppenberg's liberalism as secularized religion, she says, American religion remained separate from ideology, and was thus influential in an ongoing relationship: "Far from having become secularized by the

¹James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," The Journal of American History 74 (1987), pp.19-20.

²Ruth H. Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," in Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), pp.45-48.

eighteenth century, the religious preoccupations that had always informed political ideology remained vitally important to Americans of the Revolutionary generation."¹ This points us in the direction of analytically delineating the symbolic forms of ideology, religion, and myth, and examining their inter-action and interpenetration of content, as opposed to conceptually collapsing one into another and consequently ignoring their very real differences of structure and impact. Bloch's approach to political culture may render politics more transparent and point, as well, to specific developments and manipulations of symbols that help us to understand and explain particular political behaviours.

Following the philosopher Ernst Cassirer, Willard Mullins has asserted that culture does not merely constitute particular fragmented beliefs per se but, rather, beliefs as structured and preserved through time. Such preservation is sustained by symbolic forms which together constitute culture. Political culture embraces, generally, all symbolic forms and that content, or those symbols, deemed to be politically relevant. The symbolic forms that consistently generate symbols of political relevance, hence the forms that are political culture and that produce particular political cultures, include ideology, philosophy, myth and religion.² Mullins maintains that political philosophy serves a contemplative function, or one of pure belief, its historical dimension and active potential being expressed by ideology; both ideology and myth,

¹Ibid., pp.46-47.

²Willard A. Mullins, "Ideology and Political Culture, in Ideology, Philosophy and Politics, ed. Anthony Parel (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1983), pp.111-136.

however, are "active elements of political culture."¹ Although neither Mullins nor Cassirer develops this point, I would add that religion as the third key symbolic form in the present study also generates symbols of political relevance, has active potency, and shows a distinctive mode of political intercourse with the other key forms, ideology and myth.

Ideology has been defined narrowly by Hannah Arendt as a specifically political "system based upon a single opinion"² and broadly by William T. Bluhm as an entire system of all ideals and beliefs impinging upon behaviour, or as political culture in aggregate.³ This latter political culture formula posits ideology as *Weltanschauung*,⁴ harnessing religion, myth, philosophy, and other scattered symbols or sets of symbols into a total outlook, effectively obliterating conceptual distinctions of either form or content and rendering political culture conceptually all-encompassing; all thought becomes ideology. With this total embrace, all of human consciousness becomes political and we are dumbfounded by the total undifferentiated and conceptually homogenised mass of human thought and sensibility that enters the terrain of political science; every outlook is political culture, or, because of a lack of conceptual clarity, nothing is.

Hannah Arendt's apparently narrower view noted above, however,

¹Ibid., p.131.

²Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (Cleveland: Meridian, 1967; First published 1951), p.159.

³William T. Bluhm, Ideologies and Attitudes: Modern Political Culture (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp.4-6.

⁴Ibid., p.6.

restricts ideology to particular beliefs that become systematized as 'isms' and successfully move a people.¹ While this approach seems to divide *Weltanschauung* into facets that can be conceptually differentiated --some phenomena constitute ideology, others do not--we are left with potentially any "opinion" as the seedling of an ideology. Any 'ism' might be construed as ideological, such, for example, that Mormonism or Catholicism become ideologies rather than religions. Nevertheless, Arendt posits racism and materialism as the only two truly successful ideologies, their having "defeated" all other pretenders, relegating them to the status of 'lesser,' or pseudo-, ideologies.² Liberalism falls into rank with other more or less potent 'isms,' the entire phalanx being incorporated into one or the other 'master' ideology. With systematized opinions potentially becoming movements out of any of the symbolic forms, Arendt's concept of ideology again confuses the distinctions by which we might understand the evolution of any particular movement and the formal significance of the particular symbols employed. Any symbol, moreover, may or may not become political and we remain ill-equipped to apprehend how or why particular symbols may be more or less politically potent than others. While some ideas are certainly ideological for Arendt and others are not, all could become ideological and, again, we are left facing an overwhelming mass of human experience with little but hindsight to help us to sort it out. Political science becomes philosophy only, understanding through reflection but stripped of active or predictive capabilities.

¹Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p.159.

²Ibid., p.159.

While particular religions may have political ramifications attached to their behavioral 'fallout,' and ideologies may often seem like religions--'secular religion' being a common label for ideology'--the interaction of symbolic forms, their mutual shaping and convergence in particular empirical cases of shared symbols, must not be construed as a confusion or fusion of particular religions and ideologies and, most importantly, of the conceptually distinct forms of religion and ideology themselves. Protestantism may have an inherent ideological bent in its communion with liberalism, but it remains Protestant Christianity and religion, not liberalism and ideology. Discrimination and careful delineation are required to maintain the conceptual integrity of key aspects of political culture, to understand their intercourse, and to thereby explain political culture's impingement upon politics generally.

Such a delineation of ideology has been undertaken by Mullins, for example, where ideology is conceived as

a logically coherent system of symbols which, within a more or less sophisticated conception of history, links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one's social condition--especially its prospects for the future--to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration or transformation of society.²

This conception points to a social, or 'this worldly,' orientation of ideology, as opposed to an 'other worldly' approach on the part of religion. Religion is not analytical in its response to the world,

¹Willard A. Mullins, The Form of Ideology and the Structure of Political Culture (Unpublished manuscript), pp.209, 256.

²Willard A. Mullins, "On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science," The American Political Science Review 66:2 (June, 1972), p.510.

prescribing actions of faith rather than reasoned understanding--religion, although it may gain systematic expression as in a catechism, does not discursively communicate the causal operations of this world and its social and political phenomena, focusing instead upon their meaning as hermeneutically given by another world. This distinction is made more explicit when an economic emphasis is recognized as an integral part of ideology, its progress being in large part material, rather than primarily spiritual, at least ultimately. While religion might lend itself to material progress, and ideology seek to express an ideal of perfection, or, at least betterment, these are, generally, concomitant with the respective major thrust and central concerns of each, and this re-enforces their differences.¹ Mullins's focus on the discursively evaluative and cognitive elements differentiates ideology from the far less rationalistic and predominantly imagistic social orientation involved with myth. Moreover, the heightened significance of human involvement with the future through programmatic action at once distinguishes ideology from utopia and connects it clearly within the dominion of political organization and policy formulation. This prescriptive element involves a rationality and explicitness that, again, keeps ideology discrete from myth.²

Mullins notes that "ideologies often include elements characteristic of myth,"³ presenting their own mythic symbols or, perhaps, borrowing from pre-existing mythologies. This points us in the direction of

¹Mullins, The Form of Ideology, pp.209, 258.

²Mullins, "On the Concept of Ideology," p.506.

³Ibid., p.503.

conceptual confusion and overly broad conceptual circumscriptions discussed above. The appearance of myth or mythic symbols within any particular ideology may suggest a confusion of the symbolic forms, or seem to assume that ideology replaces myth and, even, religion, or that myth is the subsuming form that itself encompasses ideology and religion as particular types of myths. The phenomena which symbolic forms illuminate in the empirical world, however, can only be seen and understood in connection with the formal archetypes. While these abstractions may not be found in their 'purity' in the empirical world, they must, nevertheless, be delineated in that purity if one is to apply them to the apprehension of particular cultural patterns. Only then can confusion be avoided, such as Arthur Schlesinger's implicit treatment of ideology as myth,¹ or a similar but explicit confusion by Richard Slotkin. While focusing his efforts on the delineation of myth and, specifically, on American mythology, Slotkin stumbles upon his intuitive apprehension of mythic and ideological relationships. He treats mythology as Bluhm treats ideology, as a total collection of a culture's beliefs. Ideology becomes part of mythology, sometimes as its content (beliefs) and, at other times, as a new, more articulated type of mythology itself, systematized to convey mythic 'truths' to a modern world.² Again, ideology, myth, and culture are confused, each absorbed by another in a hierarchically developing

¹Schlesinger, The Cycles of American History, p.56.

²Richard Slotkin, Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890 (New York: Harper Perennial, 1985; rpt. 1994), pp.19, 22-25; Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992; rpt. 1993), pp.5-6.

ideal world. Conceptual and taxonomical integrity are lost, leaving the interactions under consideration beyond analysis.

This same conceptual derangement often attends accounts of religion and ideology, their relationship lost in an amalgamation excused by shared or borrowed symbols. For example, James Moseley's observations on the political manipulation of religious symbols and the intermingling of religious and political thought, remain unexplained by his proposition of a temporary union of forms. Ideology, and politics *ensuite*, become religion in his account of the American Revolution's upheaval that overturns their explicit differentiation, a differentiation that Moseley maintains is requisite to a placid, if complex, modern society.¹ While Moseley correctly points to a political culture providing symbols and shared meanings that might be manipulated by ideologues,² his analysis is resonant of Kloppenberg's in its reduction of politics to religion.

Lewis Lipsitz is similarly confused in his recognition of religion's importance to the political. Lipsitz posits a political apprehension of religion as ideas concerning the sacred.³ Politics, it follows, embraces the functionally religious--"some set of beliefs related to 'ultimate' matters"⁴--expressed in ideology as the modern carrier of the sacred that

¹James G. Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp.31-32.

²Ibid., pp.64, 161.

³Lewis Lipsitz, "If, As Verba Says, The State Functions As A Religion, What Are We To Do Then To Save Our Souls?" The American Political Science Review 62 (1968), p.528.

⁴Ibid., p.535.

effectively displaces religion and myth. While asserting that ideology and politics take on elements of the sacred, Lipsitz avoids explaining this transformation, substituting metaphor for analysis and, apparently, expelling religion and myth as distinctive forms from modern political culture. This, while trying to emphasize the political and cultural importance of religion, demonstrates a typically American, if not modern, prejudice that can only comprehend 'ultimate' matters in secular terms (the sacred becomes secular, subject to rational analysis--social science--as it moves mysteriously from religion to politics).¹ Clearly, delineations of myth and religion must stand alongside, but conceptually separate from, the form of ideology, if we are to understand their empirical relationships and avoid the confusion endemic in convenient descriptions of political phenomena by metaphor.

While myth is often stigmatized as falsehood by the uninitiated, a misconception bolstered by such pillars of rationalistic analysis as Herbert Spencer and Max Müller, Ernst Cassirer's more sympathetic delineation of the concept dismisses the rationalistic approach as "the logical result of that naïve realism which regards the reality of objects as something directly and unequivocally given, literally something tangible."² For Cassirer, then, rather than a misapprehension of reality, myth participates in the very genesis of human consciousness and world-building as social reality. The human is created through the progressive

¹Ibid., " p.529.

²Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, Trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1953; First published by Harper & Bros., 1946), p.6.

capacity for symbolization and myth is the initial element of that creation.¹ At the foundation of human sensibility itself, and therefore also at the ground of rational procedure, lies the primordial mythic matrix.

Society emerges with myth out of common utterances, common experience, that find first meanings in metaphor, symbolic embodiments of truths rooted in the consensus of common sense.² Mythic symbols are immediate condensations of experience, reflecting "not the objective character of *things*, but the forms of human practices," or human participation with the cosmos.³ Such participation involves an integration of reality, a continuity between man and his environment. Through mythic metaphor man reshapes his environment, making experience understandable; through mythic metaphor, a human world is created.⁴

Myth is an unreflective and direct symbolic concentration of experience, the imagistic fusion of experience and emotion into a collective self-representation in the 'world.'⁵ Although myth lays the foundations for 'higher' symbolic forms that articulate and define

¹Ibid., pp.9-16. Also see John D. Schaeffer, Sensus Communis: Vico, Rhetoric, and the Limits of Relativism (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1990), pp.7-9.

²Schaeffer, Sensus Communis, pp.4-5.

³Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp.33,41.

⁴Schaeffer, Sensus Communis, pp.6-7.

⁵Mullins, "Ideology and Political Culture," pp.123-125; Cassirer, Language and Myth, p.57; Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950; rpt. 1976), p.xi.

themselves in a progressive devolution--religion and philosophy being increasingly theoretical, abstract and diffuse'--original mythic social constructions persist as underlying 'truths' that support, shape and constrain their intellectual superstructures.² In this sense, myth transforms knowledge into power, sentimentally prescribing action, and "defining and limiting possibilities for human response to the universe,"³ as an embedded social 'instinct.' More immediately, however, myth transforms power into knowledge in "an attempt to remake in language what has been made in fact in human culture."⁴ In this way, myth transfigures 'reality' into social meaning, preserving concrete experience as it takes on a social reality filled, eventually, with moral and spiritual meaning that motivates individuals and societies.⁵ The 'given' truths that make, shape, and sustain a culture reflect man's original creative powers. Mythic man is a spontaneous creator, not a mere recipient, of the 'given.'

¹Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp.90-91.

²Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State, (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946), pp. 277-296. Also see Peter Behrenberg, "Three Explorations of the Relation between Politics and Myth: Vico, Cassirer, and Blumenberg," New Vico Studies 9 (1991), p.17.

³Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973; rpt. 1987), p.7.

⁴Donald Phillip Verene, "Imaginative Universals and Narrative Truths," New Vico Studies 6 (1988), p.14.

⁵Christopher F. Mooney, Religion and the American Dream: The Search for Freedom Under God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p.24; Robert N. Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p.3.

Vital in the symbolic embodiment of 'given' truths, man's participation in the mythic involves a recovery of these original creative powers. The unifying nature of mythic symbolization obliterates distinctions, such that participants are united in experience; to do the same is to be the same.¹ The mythic perception of experience constrains its meaning, conforming all like participants to potent symbols that imagistically unify them in defiance of time and space. History is annulled as time is collapsed, or transcended, in a recovery of perpetually contemporary origins of human being and social meaning: "The mythic outlook ignores the distinction between the time of the beginning and the time of the present, for it is the same time: continuous, undifferentiated, a beginning that is always happening."² Renewal purifies the 'given,' cleansing it of the corruptions of history and restoring its meaning in defiance of the devolution of thought that clouds original culture.

This destruction of history by "an *eternal present*, which is indefinitely recoverable" as a regeneration of culture through the return to original times,³ is one way in which myth differentiates from ideology. This ahistorical perspective, moreover, is joined by a primarily

¹Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp.91-92, 40-41.

²Mullins, "On Political Myth, Archaic and Modern," Unpublished essay, p.4; Slotkin, Fatal Environment, p.24; Richard T. Hughes, "Recovering First Times: The Logic of Primitivism in American Life," in Religion and the Life of the Nation: American Recoveries, ed. Rowland A. Sherrill (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), p.200.

³Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1957; rpt. 1961), pp.88, 81-85.

emotional, rather than rational or logical, 'structure' that also sets myth apart as a symbolic form. The cognitive and evaluative elements of myth are not logically expressed but intuitive, emotional responses cued by immediate imagistic identification with mythic content, myth and mythic man--giver and recipient--'speaking heart to heart.' Thus, the prescriptive potency of myth for action is immediate and emotional, coeval with original experience embodied in the mythic symbolization, released upon reception. Meaning and action are unified in myth, such that reception and response denote action unmediated by rational thought. This action, if "programmed," is not done so consciously and logically, but involves instead an immediate evocation of feeling and participation that are joined in the symbolic reality.

We might define myth, then, as the immediate, unreflective, and simple symbolic embodiment of a common emotional response to experience, an embodiment that carries, hence evokes, that emotional response, binding together its respondents in a community of feeling that integrates this community while constricting its consciousness in conformity with the original symbolic embodiment. While mythic evocations bring original experience to the 'surface' of social consciousness, renewing, re-integrating and solidifying the sociality of a given community, the existence of surrounding symbolic forms colours the reception of 'surfacing' myths, such that the original myth is changed, "updated" so-to-speak each time it is evoked. For practical purposes, then, we might alter the constricting clause of this mythic definition to read: "while constricting its consciousness in conformity to the original symbolic

embodiment *and* its reception or evocation." The vital myth is always a renewed myth.

The rise of additional symbolic forms that impinge upon the reception of mythic symbolizations--the progressively articulated devolution of thought--is a consequence of the ultimate failure of myth to integrate total experience and constrict all of human being within the immediate. Thus, the sacred aspect of myth, the awe and fear inspired by the powers 'felt' in mythic being, devolves in an increasing personification and deification of the natural world. This abstraction ruptures man's 'world' with a transcendence that increasingly requires a specialized and discursively articulated communication of its meaning. Religion arises as a symbolic form to repair the rupture of man's sacred world, to explain the now divine ultimate reality in a semi-rational explication of the cosmos.¹ With the evolutionary transition from myth to religion, "man's symbolic power ventures beyond all the limits of his finite existence." The prophetic promise of the future as "ideal" negates immediate meaning in experience, implying "a new and great act of integration; it marks a decisive phase in man's ethical and religious life."² 'Knowledge' that can no longer be mythically infused is now 'explained' in an increasingly elaborate system that removes the sacred from immediate daily experience

¹Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (New York: Doubleday, 1966; rpt. Anchor Books, 1967), pp.111-112; Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp.17-23, 62-83.

²Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1944; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1970), pp.60, 96.

and common knowledge. Myth remains as an 'unseen' social fabric that underlies the elevating structure of meaning and communicates ultimate reality from above rather than from within. Society becomes mundane, immediately detached from the sacred yet bound to it in a relationship of mutual definition and purpose--heaven and earth begin to fulfil one another as history begins.

As a symbolic representation of ultimate reality,' religion's self-perception involves an increasing displacement of myth from 'truth.' Religion aspires to encompass a totality of truth and to embrace all of human experience. This leads, again, to the possible confusion of formal symbolic content, and of the forms themselves. From 'within,' religion embraces everything, at least ultimately, so that everything relates to religion; "religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant."² As scientific observers, we impose limits upon the religious to preserve the integrity of symbolic forms and discrete human experience, and to understand their interaction and social meaning. This imposition is so successful in the modern world that it has penetrated the content of modern religion. As all have become "scientific" observers, willing to dissect 'truth' and accord each expertise its own dominion of reality, so modern religiosity is entirely corrupted with the acceptance of alternate 'truths.' 'True' religion is

¹Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America, p.161.

²Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967; rpt. Anchor Books, 1990), p.28; Richard P. McBrien, Caesar's Coin: Religion and Politics in America (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p.8.

singular and totalistic in its embrace of 'reality,' admitting no formal rivals. A particular religion that is truly or purely religious, as well as admitting no formal rivals to the truth, will admit no other religion, church, or sect to its feast of righteous authenticity. Visible pluralism in modern religiosity is a corruption of religion, rendering religion *qua* religion alien to observers and elusive as a concept.

If, as Carl Jung asserts, religion is one of the "most universal activities of the human mind," then it cannot be displaced from 'truth' by scientists anxious to bolster their own 'preferred' symbolic form to primacy based upon its own limited premises, as the theologians previously had assaulted myth. Jung emphatically denounces such work as bad science, an artificial exclusion of religion according to a philosophical prejudice that is empirically inadmissible.² To him, religion is part of the structure of man. Regardless of professed beliefs to the contrary, even of apparent atheism, man is religious.³ Jung asserts that religion has more value "from the standpoint of psychological truth" than does science and scientific theory, the abstraction and exclusively rational approach of the latter rendering them incomplete and ill-equipped to grasp "an irrational fact, such as the psyche."⁴ Since the human psyche is not "a merely personal affair," but the vehicle of tremendous "instinctive

¹Carl Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1938; rpt. 1966), p.1.

²Ibid., p.112.

³Ibid., pp.102-103.

⁴Ibid., p.56.

forces" that are unleashed in the social world, religion, as the revelation of those forces from their repository in the psychic unconscious, is of vital concern to social and political science.¹

Carl Jung's notion of the unconscious mind attempts to explain the original relationship of myth and religion, and leads to an experiential delineation of religion as a concept. The unconscious is a storehouse of public images and thoughts, of common reactions to experience that are formed in the structural make-up of the human psyche. This is to say that the unconscious is the resting place of human myth-making, the potentiality of symbolization according to archetypal patterns. Social being dwells within personal being as patterns in the unconscious. These patterns, or the content of the unconscious, are triggered into consciousness by certain cues. The unconscious 'surfaces' as intuitive, instinctive reactions to experience that are constricted by unconscious content. These reactions are responses in judgement and feeling that are immediate and intuitive, "hunches" that naturally arise and carry our social being.²

Such emergence of the unconscious is termed religious experience by Jung. Religion is the revelation of the unconscious to the conscious, or ongoing participation in myth-making and myth-renewal. The sentimental evocation of the mythic mind becomes religious feeling, the awe and fear of mythic perception becomes reverence for that which inspires it, the

¹Ibid., pp.16, 52.

²Ibid., p.46. Also see Carl Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Man and his Symbols, ed. Carl Jung (London: Aldus Books, 1964; rpt. London: Pan Books, 1978), pp.20-25, 49-50, 57-58.

sacred.¹ Jung, then, co-mingles religion and myth, denying religion formal integrity of its own. Religion is the experience of myth, the active communication of mythic 'knowledge,' or presentations of the sacred. Religion becomes a kind of all-encompassing mythic experience, a 'master' myth that aligns and communicates lesser myths, much like Hannah Arendt's 'master' ideology. This approach points to the origins of religion in sacred mythic experience, with the mythic asserting its continued psychic relevance despite religion's subsequent devolution as a form. It does not delineate religion as a symbolic form, nor does it help to explain its unique structure, content, and impingement upon social and political worlds. Jung preserves the original religious 'moment' as 'true' religion, denouncing, rather than delineating, all subsequent theoretical devolution of the concept.²

While participation in the mythic, the revelation of the unconscious to the conscious, continues as the vitality of religion, this renewal of original religious experience does not account for the theoretical apparatus of formal religion that distinguishes it from myth. As a symbolic form, religion involves more than Jung's "momentary" experience. Cassirer traces an evolution of increasingly discursive and, finally, theoretical religious thought, from scattered "momentary gods" (Jung's religious experience), to a unified Divinity that embraces all in system and ultimately even becomes abstract beyond language.³ This "theoretical

¹Berger, The Sacred Canopy, pp.25-26.

²Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp.52, 63, 6.

³Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp.62-83.

systematization" forms theology out of mythology--theology according to Berger and Luckmann being a systematized and theoretical mythology that 'moves' man out of the mythic, into the religious proper.' Such a metaphor implies an evolution within myth's formal structure, so that religion remains myth, albeit elaborated myth. This view blurs the distinction between mythic and theoretical thought that, according to Cassirer, sets myth apart from its symbolic outgrowths--all is myth, more or less.

Émile Durkheim's functional definition of religion is one step removed from Jung's, describing religion according to its social effect engendered by its commonality of experience. While Durkheim implies the departure of religion from myth in a transcendence that requires religion to relate men to sacred beings, this distinction is not explicit. Religion is defined as a system of sacred beliefs and practices uniting believers into a moral community: "Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities."² Again, the distinction from myth is not clear, nor, if we are tempted to accept broad definitions of 'sacred' as potentially having to do with any view of ultimate reality, does this definition differentiate religion from science or ideology. We are, once again, in a world where everything might be

¹Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp.111-112.

²Émile Durkheim, as quoted in W. Lloyd Warner, "An American Sacred Ceremony," in American Civil Religion, eds. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p.108, and as referred to in Gail Gehrig, American Civil Religion: An Assessment (Storrs, Conn.: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1979), p.32. Also see Patrick H. McNamara, Religion American Style (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp.3-5.

religious. Such is the view of the United States Supreme Court.¹ Patrick McNamara asserts that, despite Durkheim's stress on the distinction between sacred and profane, this approach can substitute reverence for sacredness, making 'natural' world-views religious. McNamara supports the blurring of religion and ideology by noting Communist reverence for its doctrine and its 'prophets'--Lenin, Mao, Castro, Ché Guevara, Ho Chi Minh --and the 'religious' devoutness with which ritual celebrations--May 1, the anniversary of the Revolution--are observed.² American examples, although legion, are conspicuously absent.

As Martin Marty insists, not everything is religious: "If everything is religious nothing is religious."³ Marty affirms religion's concern with ultimate things and points to the language of myth and symbol that joins with ceremony and ritual to reinforce some "metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical sanctions, compelling some sort of socialization, and exacting some sort of behavioral consequences." Marty dismisses the need for a reference to deity as a western prejudice, pointing to "numerous world religions" that lack such reference.⁴ This definition might encompass Jon Butler's definition of religion as a belief in, and resort to, superhuman powers or beings that determine natural and human events.⁵

¹McBrien, Caesar's Coin, pp.9-10.

²McNamara, Religion American Style, pp.4-5.

³Martin E. Marty, "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in American Civil Religion, eds. Richey and Jones, p.139.

⁴Ibid., pp.139-140.

⁵Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990; rpt. 1992), p.3.

This would admit astrology, magic, and numerous kindred 'beliefs' to the realm of the religious and, while acknowledging close original links between these and myth and religion, again undo religion as a conceptually distinct form. As any system of ultimate beliefs becomes religion, in Marty's approach, so any or all forms become religion.

These inclusive approaches point to phenomena that appear 'like' religion, that lend themselves to a religious label by their functional or behavioral qualities. They do not constitute religion proper, however, as they ignore the origins of the form in its departure from myth through the increasing deification of mythology and its gradual contextual unification and personification as a transcendent 'god.' Other observed phenomena might constitute late stages of rupturing mythology, or early stages of religious evolution; but without a god, and a personal monotheistic god at that, they do not constitute religion in its 'highest' form of devolution. The fully developed symbolic form that we call religion must have a personal god. All else that we call religious might be that, religious--of a religious quality--but might just as well be described as mythic or, if having leapfrogged religion to a godless ideology, ideological. Without God there is no religion.'

'Steven M. Cahn argues that religion without god exists and can be observed as 'natural' religions that "perform rituals, utter prayers, accept metaphysical beliefs and commit themselves to moral principles without believing in supernaturalism." Cahn's argument, however, attributes these, as religious performances, to essentially non-religious behaviours that are likened to the authentically religious -- any ritual becomes religious ritual, meditation becomes prayer, philosophy is religion, and morality, while not relying upon the existence of god, is possible only within a religious context. Cahn opens religion to include any beliefs or behaviours that might be likened to religion. Without a god, however, such phenomena cannot be ultimately distinguished as

Jon Butler is correct to emphasize that, "above all," religion explains.' In explaining the extraordinary as acts of God, religion fixes the rupture of the mythic world, restoring its lost integrity. Unable to account for all experience in immediate metaphor, myth spins out into an extended metaphor that is increasingly elaborate and that alters its own nature. By embracing theoretical communication, this metaphor becomes religion, rather than remaining myth, losing its immediate, concentrated and emotive quality in its acquisition of conviction. Religion becomes an argument about original senses, about religious experience and mythic foundations. It becomes an argument about the meaning of man, society and, even, the political. The argument is always about the original, but always in light of the transcendent. If it is religion, God rules.

I would define religion, then, as an elaborate symbolic system that explains ultimate reality in terms of a transcendent god, placing all of the mundane within its purveyance, prescribing personal and social behaviour according to that explanation, most often directing that behaviour toward some transcendent end. It uses both mythic and systematic thought to convince by its completeness, and especially uses myth to revivify itself both personally and socially. Religion explains the religious experience.

The foregoing explorations and formulations of ideology, myth, and religion might be used to examine their mutual shaping and interdependence

religion; putting on the king's cloak does not deliver one a kingdom. See Steven M. Cahn, Philosophical Explorations: Freedom, God, and Goodness (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), pp.64-68.

'Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.9.

in their empirical intercourse as political culture. Maureen Henry's assertion, for example, that the political is based upon a mythic and religious pre-political world that constrains its development and shapes expectations within,¹ points to a necessary underpinning of ideology's rationality by the intuitive and sensitive consensus that emerges with myth and religion.

The earliest American polities took shape under the auspices of "God's will," basing governments upon scripture and commanding commitment to the political covenant as it arose unanimously from the pre-existing religious order known by all. Religious offenses became crimes in their injury against political foundations.² Even the Southern economic pre-occupation was bolstered and justified by a mythico-religious context, within which enterprise gained meaning and permanence.³ Jon Butler asserts that inter-colonial religious diversity is outweighed by a stunning similarity, the intermingling of political and religious realms forging a public ceremonialism that conjoined the sacred and secular in place and persons. This was especially swift and true in Virginia, a supposed economic enterprise. Throughout the American colonies, religion and politics provided mutual support and legitimacy, reinforcing the

¹Maureen Henry, The Intoxication of Power: An Analysis of Civil Religion in Relation to Ideology (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), pp.29-31. Also see Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," p.48.

²Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.31-35.

³Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1956), pp.99-140; Thomas Virgil Peterson, Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South, ATLA Monograph Series No.12 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978), pp.13-16.

social, political, and religious status of individuals and of belief.¹ More than a legitimizing sanction, religion converges with myth to provide the political a 'ready-made world' to stand upon, but with which it, too, must converge--even revolutionary ideologies that strive to destroy existing 'worlds' must, themselves, create, or prey upon, some other mythic or religious underpinning, and they must have an intuitive or emotional consensus about how things are so that they can explicate that status logically and direct responses to it.

Ideology requires this consensual underpinning in its mass appeal, its direction of belief into action as "political mass movements." Rather than being exclusively elite knowledge, ideology brings political ideas into touch with the realm of ordinary belief, a realm of common mentality beneath which myth and religion lie as potent symbolic forms.² Typically, Americans of "lower-income groups and those with less formal schooling" are more 'believing,' especially in the religious. However, even Americans with higher education and incomes are surprisingly religious:

one ought not overlook that 50 percent of U.S. college graduates await Jesus Christ's return. As Gallup and Castelli observed in 1989, the United States is nearly unique in the Western world with its "unmatched combination of high levels of education and high levels of religious belief and activity."³

¹Jon Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," in Diversity and Unity in Early North America, ed. Philip D. Morgan (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.151-156.

²Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1960), p.194.

³Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1992), pp.13-15.

Religion, moreover, continues along with myth as a unifying social force in America, cutting across class lines and shaping a common sense according to its content. Americans unite in millennial expectations, in reverence for the Founding Fathers, or in admiration and emulation of Boone, Crockett, and a host of mythic figures. As well, ideology acts according to policies based upon, and incorporating, these underlying common sense realities, the particular content of these mythic and religious symbolic forms. Ideology's active impulse is potent in America when it "uses" mythic and religious pre-suppositions.'

The emergence of liberalism as an ideology demonstrates this dependence of ideological potency upon a non-ideological substructure. Initially, liberalism teetered this way and that. Hobbes, although not strictly speaking a liberal, is the fountainhead of much that becomes liberal thought. But Hobbes's theorizing was unsupported by prevailing religious and mythic sensibilities, being contrary to them in its material exposition of human behaviour. Hobbes spoke to the few, an elite philosophical appeal.² John Locke's liberalism, by contrast, although following Hobbes in many ways, nevertheless used religion as part of its mass appeal. Ellis Sandoz confuses this use of religion and of mythic imagery as being itself theological. Sandoz envisions Locke as a civil theologian and his tract as constituting a peculiar theology, rather than an ideology par excellence. Rather than mythically making a 'world' as

¹Mullins, "Ideology and Political Culture," pp.129-130.

²Kloppenber, "The Virtues of Liberalism," p.16; Wolin, Politics and Vision, p.194.

some new ultimate reality, as Sandoz insists, Locke builds upon a pre-existing 'world.' Sandoz is correct to point to Locke's use of mythic imagery, his persuasion through appeals to common sense, and the religious infusion of reason to explain reality, but Locke's call to action is nevertheless political and economic in orientation--an ideological, rather than eschatological, response to his 'world.' Locke's 'theoretical vagueness' does not expose him as a composer of an evocative myth and does not make Locke a civil theologian as Sandoz concludes, presumably by assuming that any 'lesser' thought than philosophy constitutes myth. Sandoz, therefore, effectively disintegrates ideology and confuses myth, religion and civil religion.¹ Rather than theology, Locke fashions an ideology. Locke builds upon given foundations, but does not build a religious edifice. Liberalism is not a church.

While Locke's ideology was built upon religious and mythic assumptions and prejudices, Locke was himself distinctively anti-theological, infusing man and human agency with once transcendent powers and "Divine" meaning. His man becomes the Creator, the divine maker and changer of worlds.² In this godly destruction, liberalism is a humanist,

¹Ellis Sandoz, A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion, and the American Founding (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1990), pp.51-52, 75-79. One should be aware that, like many exponents of civil religion, Sandoz invokes part of the American Founding to advocate, rather than explain, a particular version of America. By turning Locke's liberalism into civil religion, the American Founding becomes a religious founding, restoring a felt loss of legitimacy to religious government in America. Chapter 2 takes up the discussion of this use of civil religion to advocate, rather than explain, America's religious governance.

²Ralph C. Hancock, "Religion and the Limits of Limited Government," The Review of Politics 50 (1988), pp.696-697.

non-religious and ultimately anti-religious, ideology. The American Founding, however, demonstrates how two opposed forces can feed upon each other as they converge toward similar, but not identical, ends--at least in this world. Ralph Hancock explains that interpretations of a liberal founding and a religious founding are not opposed, but are concomitants, "two sides of a single coin," in a converging commitment to secular, liberal progress and to worldly action.¹ Lockean and Jeffersonian liberalism both rely upon external sources of virtue to moderate centrifugal social forces. Both, therefore, looked to the Great Provider to temper American political culture and built upon the religious framework within which a liberal society arose in early America.²

As ideology builds upon a given social reality, both myth and religion help shape its interpretation and guide its resultant action. Coloured by myth from its earliest stages, American liberalism and its institutions functioned differently from European counterparts.³ Daniel Boorstin envisions ideology, myth, and religion coalescing in America as an inclusive social reality, what he calls the "given." Symbolic forms merge in this American sense of "givenness" that presents the world as a Divinely given, unified absolute reality. Boorstin describes a religiosity that is political and politics that are religious; conceptual distinctions being obliterated by the practical exigency of everyday life in America.

¹Ibid., pp.695-699.

²Kloppenber, "The Virtues of Liberalism," pp.22-23.

³Michael Kammen, People of Paradox: An Inquiry concerning the Origins of American Civilization (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972; rpt. 1990), p.160.

Americans have no ideology, no philosophy, and even no religion or politics per se. Americans have only their interaction with and their reception of, the "given"--Americanism, or 'the American Way of Life.' Boorstin's prescription for a politics of veiled belief resonates Schlesinger's deep wish to exclude transparent action as unorthodox, 'ideological,' and un-American.² However, and this is crucial, Boorstin's unified American outlook is ultimately self-divisible. This is because Boorstin points to the difficulties with which new Americans try to enact American doctrines without the benefit of their underlying supports that 'give' them their peculiar Americanness.³ In other words, American liberalism is shaped by American religion and mythology, especially in its application:

Immigrants, often stupidly blamed for breeding "subversive" or "un-American" ideas, have as much as any other group frenetically sought a "pure" American doctrine. Where else has there been such a naïve sense of political orthodoxy? Who would think of using the word "un-Italian" or "un-French" as we use the word "un-American"?⁴

Boorstin's land "without dogma" utterly rejects as alien any "ideology" that is not itself immersed in American religiosity and myth, cleansed in a baptism of sacred history and, thus, 'given' new life in a unification with 'truth.' Despite America's apparent openness and its supposed

¹Daniel J. Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953).

²Ibid., pp.6-9.

³Ibid., p.14.

⁴Ibid., p.14.

tendency towards an ease of unorthodoxy,' even slightly unorthodox American deviations create a disturbing politics and invite violence as they threaten the felt social unity of 'givenness.'

The breakdown of religious and mythic underpinnings, then, the disjointedness of multiple interpretations of American dogma, give birth to political and ideological challenges that disrupt 'politics as usual.' Socialism has never found a legitimate entrance to American politics, its antagonism to American myth and religion denying it the cultural supports that have benefitted liberalism and capitalism.² Yet, diverse versions of Americanism have challenged America's 'givenness' in terms of its own orthodoxy, as if to smite the Divine cheek with its own Providential hand. Amongst other such uprisings, Mormonism invoked America against itself and demanded a restoration of the original American purpose and meaning. In a changing world, nineteenth-century Mormon republican mythology lamented the apostasy of American pluralism and its failure to realize the American promise for dislocated and alienated Yankees. The Mormon invocation of

¹Kammen, People of Paradox, p.58. Kammen maintains that "it has always been easier to deviate from canons of orthodoxy in this country, both because the canons have been so unclear and uncoded, and because people who thought 'otherwise,' like Roger Williams or Brigham Young, could go 'elsewhere' and do so with impunity." Neither Williams nor Young would characterize their deviation as 'easy,' and neither was so unorthodox as might be imagined. Both now appear typically American, although their ever-so-slight unorthodoxy--their prophetic invocation of American doctrine against a majority that were 'non-practising' Americans--brought them violence and expulsion, neither "went" elsewhere. This can hardly be handed down as ease of deviation from orthodoxy when the hard facts demand conformity or emigration on pain of death -- for example, Mormons suffered under extermination orders and wars sponsored by several governments, even after they vacated the United States. 'Shape up or ship out,' and even then 'shape up.'

²Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.112-114, 122-124.

specifically American doctrines became an insistence upon actualizing concretely their singular vision of an idealized American life. Illegitimate in its denial of pluralism, Mormonism was violently rejected as "un-American," despite its most American religio-political content and form.

Ohio residents initially refused the Mormons' patronage in an attempt to starve out these "aliens" from New York, only to see Mormon-American enterprise elevate the Mormon community to local economic and political dominance. Eventually, therefore, the Mormons were forced into Missouri where another Mormon settlement had been pushed into unsettled northern counties, their homes burned and their land and livestock confiscated. Now, as a consolidated community, the Mormons continued to invoke the Constitution of the United States against their fellow Americans, preaching the Declaration of Independence more vehemently than ever. Appeals to state and national governments for compensation for their injuries to person and property were coupled with Fourth of July speeches, typically American jeremiads that now condemned Missourians as un-American, thus inviting the wrath of locals and, eventually, of the Missouri government. A mass exodus to Illinois followed an extermination order by Governor Lilburn Boggs, the Mormon leaders barely escaping immediate execution orders.

In Illinois, Mormons achieved unprecedented economic prosperity and political success, attracting attention from across the United States and beyond. The Mormon domination of local affairs through the implementation of their "original" version of Americanism remained offensive to local

residents and threatened to spill over into state and even national politics. The fear of a Mormon America sparked violence once again, leading to the assassination of Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader and candidate for the United States presidency--a murder perpetrated by local economic and political aspirants with, at least, the tacit approval of the Governor of Illinois, who was 'mediating' an imminent civil war in the Mormon counties. The famous Mormon trek followed, pioneers finally settling in the Great Salt Lake valley.

Interference with Mormon community building continued and another war threatened when federal troops eventually were ordered into Utah to establish order--some Mormons were taking too many wives. The curtailment of specifically religious practices was imposed by Washington, a condition for statehood, and elderly church leaders were imprisoned for their vigour in resisting the cultural onslaught and the conformity of American consensus. Mormons themselves eventually acted as good Americans, rooting out persistent offenders against the rule of the majority, the assimilation made complete by the 1950s when Mormon-Americans engaged in a sweep of renegade Mormon communities in Utah, confiscating children and breaking up polygamous marriages.' America's pluralism is not actual enough to accept such concrete invocations of minority Americans, and this "pluralism" is 'ypically unified in its smashing of meaningful difference--the paradox of pluralist unity resolved by the irrelevance of minor differences in the midst of utter conformity.

¹Brent Gilchrist, Mormon America (Carleton Univ.: Unpublished Honours Research Essay, 1994). Also see Marvin S. Hill, Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989).

More dramatic than America's Mormon wars, America itself split in two as North and South confronted one another with diverse interpretations of the same ideology, the divergence largely attributable to changing religious and mythic underpinnings that gave meaning and active prescriptions to the American Founding. In the end, two different meanings and two opposed prescriptions fought for supremacy in a bloody and decisive civil war. These divergent ideological interpretations, based upon increasing Antebellum North-South differences in religion and myth, have been seen as an intrusion of ideological difference into the American political system, an intrusion that broke American consensus and, ultimately, the nation.¹ With both sections invoking original Americanism, however, the broken consensus should be seen as social and foundational, mythic and religious, rather than ideological, at least initially. Thus, early religious and mythic sectionalism led to increasingly transparent ideology, two 'worlds' finally colliding in a 'second American Revolution,' a 'second Founding.' A new original moment re-unified American society in mythic, religious, and ideological outlooks, violently re-creating American unity and the American nation.²

The pre-political world is not only potent when influencing and constraining the political. Ernst Cassirer, among others, earnestly warns

¹Eric Foner, "Politics, Ideology, and the Origins of the Civil War," in The Coming of the American Civil War, ed. Michael Perman (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1993; 3rd ed.; First published in Nation Divided: Essays on the Civil War & Reconstruction, ed. George M. Fredrickson (Burgess Publishers, 1975)).

²See Anne Norton, Alternative Americas (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986). Also see pp.164-216 below.

against the violence engendered by the disconnection of ideological from mythic and religious worlds. While religion introduces an increasing degree of rationality to the once mythic world, elaborating its abstractions in place of the immediacy of myth it, eventually, becomes over-extended by uprooting rationality from its mythic ground in the imagination.¹ Ideology, moreover, consummates this divorce of thought from original experience by re-imposing its own kind of rationality upon the concrete world. The flushing-out of the irrational from the world of accepted thought amounts to a disconnection of thought from immediate experience, not only a severing of the rationally articulated social superstructure from non-rational prejudices, but also the unleashing of potent mythic and religious forces which are now disconnected from the moderating effects of the rational order. These forces can become dark and dangerous, uncontrolled as they lash out at the now unresponsive rational political superstructure.² Carl Jung concurs with Cassirer, asserting that religion and myth are vital social forces that cannot be neglected or repressed without their self-intensifying and self-generating potency resulting in destructive expression. A once beneficial human and social characteristic becomes "demonic." Once surrounding the rational with the safety of continuity and meaning, mythic and religious forces, once ignored, threaten that rationality that falsely thinks it frees itself by

¹Ellis Sandoz, "Myth and Society in the Philosophy of Bergson," Social Research 30 (1963), pp.194-195.

²Cassirer, The Myth of the State, pp.277-296; Nash Smith, Virgin Land, pp.ix-x.

pushing these forces into the shadows.¹ When mankind uses rationality to ignore the irrational, when we use science to reject myth and religion, we do so at our peril.² When Political Science ignores or rejects them, it becomes increasingly irrelevant.

The millennial mythologies that conjoined with the republican ideology of the American Revolution, shaped American expectations and constrained Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary action,³ were only one instance of a persistently surfacing and resurfacing mythico-religious undercurrent in American politics. Moments of crisis, of political realities coming unhinged from mythic and religious "truths," inevitably encourage the revival of mythic and religious forces and pressure the political to conform to their ultimate realities. Mythico-religious content is thereby re-invigorated and updated in the new actualization of experience, ideology lagging behind in its conformity and renewal. American revivals typically begin spiritually but rapidly become political, usually within two or three decades.⁴ Although the visibility of belief in these "moments" tends to reveal the potent constraints and

¹Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," pp.83-84; Psychology and Religion, pp.7-22; The Undiscovered Self, pp.36-39.

²Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p.91.

³J.F. Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Elwyn A. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p.193.

⁴Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp.209-213; William G. McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978); Samuel P. Huntington, American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1981).

contextual shaping of ideology by its foundational forms, the traffic is not merely one-way. Ideology's everyday relevance in its practical and mundane concern reciprocally and repeatedly impinges upon mythic and religious content, not awaiting crisis situations to do so.

The close relationship between politics and religion in the United States involves a sharing of particular symbols by multiple symbolic forms, so that the forms themselves seem at times to merge. These particular symbols, however, are changed as they pass from one form to another, the influence of similar ideas producing similar, but not identical, content within the respective forms.¹ Thus, the value of formal analysis in the use and examination of particular symbols, each symbol carrying multiple meanings according to its expression in diverse cultural structures. American religion and ideology are not merely mixed together, religion is not made 'secular' by its apparent absorption into ideology as Max Lerner maintains, nor, likewise, is communism a "political religion."² Although religion and ideology necessarily meet and interpenetrate, especially in the United States, they do not fuse. Michael Kammen's "spiritualized state containing secularized churches," his American religion without religiosity,³ are convenient paradoxes that effectively avoid contextual analysis of formal content. Such statements are, indeed, too fast and too easy. They leave the important work to be

¹Richard Niebuhr, "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy," Church History 23 (1954), pp.127, 129.

²Max Lerner, "Christian Culture and American Democracy," American Quarterly 6 (1954), pp.129-130, 127.

³Kammen, People of Paradox, pp.285-286.

done: to formulate the generic structural differences between myth, religion and ideology, then to show both their interconnections empirically and their consequences politically.

Nathan Hatch's "religious ideologies," the "new Christian ideologies" of America's national period, might just as well be called "ideological religions," the expressly religious, dynamic popular movements of the early republic stemming from a religious embrace of democratic language in godly appeals to the "ordinary man."¹ Republican virtues and political values became religious priorities through the Revolutionary period, as American religion adopted language and beliefs shaped by Revolutionary ideology. Ancient Israel became a republic, and during the Constitutional period a federal republic, in a reconstruction of a Biblical typology that harmonized religious with political beliefs. The new nation became the "primary agent of redemptive history" as the repository of evil was shifted from Papal Rome to "oppressive and arbitrary civil governments," politics and nations becoming the battlegrounds and agents of redemption in the "first novel eschatological interpretation since the Reformation."² Through such circuitous inter-penetration, ideology's shaping of political behaviour participates in the shaping of "national

¹Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), pp.99-101; Nathan O. Hatch, "The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics," in Religion and American Politics, ed. Noll, p.7.

²Nathan O. Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), pp.12-17, 147-155.

character," so that "statecraft is soulcraft, always and inevitably."¹

Ideology's penetration of religion focuses potent foundational beliefs, guiding them to action in a practical and logical explication of what can be done about what is important in them. In this way, ideology alters the religious consciousness, highlighting worldly concerns and possibilities, historical forces and processes, and shaping and constraining beliefs about this world.² This concentrated belief stirring towards action gives religion a new 'this-worldly' appearance, a political face. Thus, the World Congress of Fundamentalists produces a resolution denouncing the Soviet Union, communism, Marxism, and socialism, and resolves to "mount a determined offensive," encouraging free world governments to "take a strong stand" and "explode the myths of communism," a resolution that is longer than the other seven non-political resolutions combined. Clearly, ideology shapes religious content when this resolution repudiates the "pro-communist" ecumenical forces of The World Council of Churches, The National Council of Churches, and "other regional organizations of the Apostasy."³ However, this political face, as much as it may corrupt the rest of the body of the church, does not make religion an ideology. Rather, we have particular religions connecting with particular ideologies and sharing their symbolic content, yet heightening

¹George F. Will, Restoration: Congress, Term Limits and the Recovery of Deliberative Democracy (New York: Free Press, 1992; rpt. 1993), p.105.

²Mullins, "On the Concept of Ideology," pp.503-507.

³"Resolutions of the World Congress of Fundamentalists" (1980, 1983), in American Political Theology, ed. Charles W. Dunn (New York: Praeger, 1984).

the significance of those shared symbols by superimposing upon them an increased meaning and the strength of a deepening transcendence. Religion thereby intensifies and dogmatizes ideological belief.

This intensity is coopted by ideology through the adherents of particular ideologies; religion is used for social control, an assistant to ideology in managing the marginally attached, those for whom ideology alone may be an ineffective or incomplete motivater. Through the interchange of symbols, ideology and religion structure each other's content, shaping participation in the political according to dynamic expectations and beliefs. American democracy has used religion to socialize people, particularly relying upon the inherently democratic quality of Protestant Christianity to foster a democratic fraternity in the populace.¹ While the continued religiosity of the American people should preserve the sacred within the realm of common knowledge as a safeguard against any elite manipulation of reality through esoteric science,² the persistent corruption of religious content by ideology and politics requires periodic recapitulations of the social reality and a healing of the political body by the religious infusion in heightened moments of renewal. These surges are provided a conduit into the political system and its ideological structure by the continuous presence of a

¹Paul E. Johnson, A Shoemaker's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp.3-14; T.V. Smith and Eduard C. Lindeman, The Democratic Way of Life: An American Interpretation (New York: Mentor, 1951), pp.30-34; Murray Edelman, Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

²Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp.111-112.

religio-political medium, the American Civil Religion.

Chapter Two: The American Civil Religion Debate

Although the American Civil Religion is most potent in times of crisis, most importunate in periods of decline, its symbolic content forms a continuous religious Americanism that pretends to challenge the American experiment while cloaking it with the legitimacy of a divine destiny. As the carrier of vague, thus inclusive, notions of original American meaning and promise, the American Civil Religion provides a "marvellous rummage bag" of beliefs from which renewal might be sparked, or conservation entrenched. An openness of interpretation and reception, however, does not undermine the symbolic coherence of this religion, nor does it deny its social relevance. In fact, continuity, saturation, and social solidification are enhanced, and vitality engendered, by its integrative universal aspirations; the American Civil Religion is the public philosophy of the United States of America.²

In 1940, Walter Lippmann lamented the decline of public philosophy in the United States, a loss of common purpose and understanding that had been perpetrated by the specialization of an apparently increasingly secular American education. The exclusion "from the curriculum of necessary studies of the whole religious tradition of the Western world," Lippmann said, isolated "the graduates of these modern schools," making them an atomized citizenry without social conscience. Hence, "they worship

¹Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p.72.

²Phillip E. Hammond, "Epilogue: The Civil Religion Proposal," in Varieties of Civil Religion, eds. Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), pp.202-203.

false gods."¹ Lippmann's call for the "restoration and revival" of the public philosophy attests to civil society's need of some transcendent reality, some truth larger than man, to judge and constrain public life, and to keep men civil.² It also reveals Lippmann's elitism, his ignorance of a vital, if vulgar, religiosity that functions as the only public philosophy possible in America. While Lippmann intends his unbegotten philosophers to "have a deciding influence in determining what may be believed, how it can be believed, and what cannot be believed,"³ the democratic residence of a populist ultimate reality excludes such elitist pronouncements with an overwhelming consensus of inveterate belief.

The persistent religiosity of the American people,⁴ the maintenance

¹Walter Lippmann, "Education vs. Western Civilization," American Scholar 10 (1941); reprinted in The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy, eds. Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), p.420.

²Walter Lippmann, Essays in The Public Philosophy (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), pp.134-135.

³Lippmann, The Public Philosophy, p.136.

⁴American belief in God "typically hovers around 95 percent, ...82 percent of respondents said they considered themselves 'a religious person,'" and 80 percent believed in miracles, life after death, and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. 72 percent believed in angels ("America and Religion: The Counter-Attack of God," The Economist; rpt. The National Times, Nov. 1995, p.29). In 1993, 69 percent believed in angels, 46 percent had guardian angels, and a full one-third of Americans polled claimed to have had some personal experience with an angel (Nancy Gibbs, "Angels Among Us," Time: The Weekly Newsmagazine, Dec. 27, 1993, pp.46, 51). In 1991, 90 percent identified themselves with a denomination, 86.4 percent -- 214 million -- were Christian and 3.7 percent were non-Christian, about half of these Jewish, a quarter Muslim, a quarter Buddhist (Ari L. Goldman, "Portrait of Religion in U.S. Holds Dozens of Surprises," New York Times, April 10, 1991). While reviewing Jon Butler's Awash in a Sea of Faith, Andrew Delbanco told us that two-thirds of these, or 60 percent of Americans, attended their churches regularly (Andrew Delbanco, "Holy Tolerance," The New Republic, May 7, 1990, p.39), and in

of ultimate reality and continued world-making as a populist enterprise, counters the apotheosis of science and philosophy, elite pretenders to the throne of supreme American cultural arbiter. Typically, the evolution of philosophic and scientific thought out of mythic and religious foundations involves an increasingly elite guardianship of the sacred, or ultimate. Knowledge of ultimate matters is no longer common, but removed from everyday experience and language. The 'masses' no longer wield power over their world, only knowing to whom to turn as specialists of an increasingly esoteric reality.' In America, this evolution is countered by a vital religiosity that maintains a democratic reality, a guardianship of the 'masses' that anchors scientific and philosophic thought to the 'voice of the people' as the supreme judge of 'truth.' American experimentation must submit to the validation of a religious American destiny, and particular innovations are evaluated according to America's transcendent meaning and purpose, whose guardians and carriers are the American people. Even Lippmann cannot "do public philosophy without doing public theology," and this makes him "characteristically American."² Public philosophy must be religious in America because Americans are

1985, 80 percent of Americans were reported to believe that Jesus Christ is god and their personal saviour, 90 percent believed in heaven and more than 80 percent endorsed the Ten Commandments as truth (Robert Booth Fowler, Religion and Politics in America, ATLA Monograph Series, No.21, [Metuchen, N.J.: ATLA & Scarecrow Press, 1985], p.1).

¹Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp. 111-112.

²Robert N. Bellah, "Public Philosophy and Public Theology in America Today," in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1986), p.82.

religious, and democratic.¹

The alignment of individual and social worlds, this democratically enforced harmony of private and public American realities, legitimizes social institutions and practices, relating them to widely held religious ultimate realities: "The tenuous realities of the social world are grounded in the sacred *realissimum*, which by definition is beyond the contingencies of human meanings and human activity." Human institutions appear as creations *ex nihilo*, gifts from God in their original appearance and innocence, their legitimacy serving to maintain the order in which they participate.² Thus, political scientists Theodore Lowi and Benjamin Ginsberg report, in a text written for introductory students, that "the American Constitution is often seen as an inspired, if not divine work, expressing timeless principles of democratic government," concluding with their own affirmation that "these views are by no means false."³ Sacred roots colour their fruit with divinity, a husk of "security and permanence,"⁴ thus inevitability, that protects and conserves the man-made pulp. Its nectar, social and political institutions, becomes a gift of the gods, freely given.

This "givenness" is "the genius of American politics," according to

¹Gordon S. Wood, "The Radical Revolution," American Heritage (Dec. 1992), p.52; Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

²Berger, The Sacred Canopy, pp.32, 33-35.

³Theodore J. Lowi and Benjamin Ginsberg, American Government: Freedom and Power, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), p.31.

⁴Berger, The Sacred Canopy, p.36.

Daniel Boorstin, the uniquely successful sacralization of the American *schema* and the near-unanimous socialization of a citizenry of believing recipients.¹ American institutions, he says, are supported by a "common faith, ...a kind of generalized Christianity" that is "firmly established" in the United States, "an unexamined generalized religion" built around core beliefs held in common by most Americans: "What it is, is the lowest common denominator of all presently accepted and respectable institutional religions found within the borders of our country."² This consensual unity rallies around the inevitability of all things American, forming the basis of the American nation.

With political bases and definition achieved by its enunciation in the Declaration of Independence and that declaration's revisionist renewal as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, this common faith, or "natural religion, ...generally agreed for many centuries to be an indispensable prerequisite for government," provides the core of America's civil religion--the "belief in God, in the afterlife, and in divine punishments."³ The existence of this pre-political common religiosity was relied upon by America's Founders in their attempt to forge a transcendent unity coexistent with sectional and sectarian pluralism that was firmly entrenched prior to the appearance of the Constitution. This, Sidney Mead

¹Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics.

²Ibid., pp.28, 136, 140, 147.

³Robert N. Bellah, "The Revolution and the Civil Religion," in Religion and the American Revolution, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp.55-57.

asserts, had to be at least tolerated if there was to be a United States.¹ American Founders fostered this common religion, channelling the zeal and commitment of sectarian religiosity "into something larger, such as the nation; thus Benjamin Franklin called for a 'public religion.'"²

Franklin's "call for a new American religion"³ amounted to a civil religion proposal, the founding of an American creed to unite formally a diversity of believers in a common religiosity of the nation:

Here is my creed. I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is in doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion.⁴

Confronted by the resistance of each religious sect to the national dominance of any other one sect, American Founders induced the birth of a nation that would itself perform the dominant world-making role once accorded established religion. In a role vacated by the mutual exclusion of lesser sects, the sect of the nation carried its creed to dominance as

¹Sidney E. Mead, "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church'," in American Civil Religion, eds. Richey and Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p.54. Allen Hertzke notes that Americans see pluralism as a primordial state, "the way things are supposed to be." See Allen D. Hertzke, Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1988), pp.20-25.

²Martin E. Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.154; Andrew Delbanco, "Holy Tolerance," The New Republic (May 7, 1990), pp.39-40.

³Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.155.

⁴Benjamin Franklin to Ezra Stiles, as quoted in Cleon W. Skousen, The Making of America: The Substance and Meaning of the Constitution (Washington, D.C.: The National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1985), p.677.

the national religion, the nation becoming God's agent and carrier of the divine will through Providential history.' The American nation, founded upon a creed "set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence," is both unique and original, an exceptional participant in the authority of its Creator.²

The vacancy filled by the American nation was, in part, created by that nation as it came together under the auspices of the Constitution. The apparent religious neutrality of the Constitution and the separation of church and state entrenched in the Bill of Rights rendered all American churches equally potent as sources of public values, equally valuable as educators of civic virtue, freeing their exercise while imposing upon them all "the 'equality' of sameness."³ Entrenched rights of conscience led to an increasingly individualized religiosity that, in turn, brought about an ecclesiastical decline. The symbol-generating potency of the common religion of the nation and its mediation of ultimate 'truths' corrupted church religion, nationalizing its content and degrading beliefs other than those common beliefs of the national religion; sectarian doctrine and beliefs wilted into opinions, one sect became as good as another--none as good as the nation⁴--thus Mead's assertion that the Constitution involved

¹Sidney E. Mead, "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church.'"

²Ibid., pp.45-46.

³Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America, p.63.

⁴Ibid., p.63; H. Mark Roelofs, "Church and State in America: Toward a Biblically Derived Reformulation of Their Relationship," The Review of Politics 50, 1988, p.566; John Edwin Smylie, "National Ethos and the Church," Theology Today 20 (Oct. 1963), p.319.

not the separation of church and state, but of churches and the church, or sects as carriers of particular creeds from the nation as carrier of the universal creed. The eventual Constitutional secularization inherent in the 'neutrality' of American separation of church and state "is more accurately described as desectarianization of the civil authority."¹ Common religion presaged the subsequent civil religion.

America's common religion has been celebrated as a unifying medium that moderates the effects of pluralism, of which it is an outgrowth, over-riding divisive sectarian interests in the thrust towards a common creed by which the American polity is defined.² While American pluralism is expected to diminish the influence of any one sect or doctrine, common religion begins the compensation of particular creedal inefficacy. The inclusion of sectarian particulars within the American universal, and the subsequent public infusion of religious zeal as faith in, and 'loyalty to, political doctrine, invests that creed with religious potency and democratic legitimacy. The nation 'gathers her chicks' in a religious democratic patriotism that embraces an otherwise straw-splitting American diversity: "In the great and sublime ends of Providence, little things are lost, and least of all is he imbued with a right spirit who believes that insignificant observances, subtleties of doctrine, and minor distinctions, enter into the great essentials of the Christian character."³ Unified in

¹Mead, "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church'," pp.54-55.

²James Fenimore Cooper, The American Democrat (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989; First published 1838), pp.132, 96.

³Ibid., p.234.

its vision of "great and sublime ends," an American consensus indulges "a besetting vice of democracies" in positing public opinion as law, in this case common, or natural law. The American creed becomes truth, "given" once and for all through the American nation as the carrier of once particular beliefs, then common, now inviolable--"No tyranny of one, nor any tyranny of the few, is worse than this."¹

While many continue to celebrate the unifying embrace of American common religion and its begotten civil religion, others lament its exclusion of 'real' religion from the public arena. Stephen Carter's condemnation of civil religion as theologically empty and religiously demeaning, its political manipulation and self-affirming Americanism denying it any depth or virtue,² renews Will Herberg's damning cry against the apotheosis of national life. Herberg warned that America's civil religion had devolved into a self-justified "American Way of Life," a new religion of the nation that existed apart from the churches and their commonly held doctrine. This new American religion threatened to complete the corrupting Americanization of church religion in the United States, harnessing God as a tool for action in this life, translating American churches into political creatures.³

Herberg's American Way of Life had become the civil religion of the

¹Ibid., p.130. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, abridged ed., Richard D. Heffner, (New York: Mentor, 1956; rpt. 1984), pp.112-122.

²Carter, The Culture of Disbelief, pp.44-45, 51-53.

³Will Herberg, Protestant -- Catholic -- Jew: An Essay In American Religious Sociology (New York: Doubleday, 1955; rev. Anchor Books, 1960), pp.72-75.

United States, displacing the common religiosity of the churches with its own distinct, now transcendent creed: "The American Way of Life is the symbol by which Americans define themselves and establish their unity."¹ With political, economic, social and spiritual aspects, the American Way of Life melded the Constitution, free enterprise, equalitarianism, and American idealism into "a faith that has its symbols and its rituals, its holidays and its liturgy, its saints and its sancta; and it is a faith that every American, to the degree that he is an American, knows and understands."² This religion participates in a peculiar idealism that Herberg asserts is characteristically American, an idealism that equates espousal with achievement, an American faith in the spoken word--one is as one says.³ Thus,

it is interesting to note that at least in American letters what an author writes is much more important than how he behaves. For instance, Benjamin Franklin and Horatio Algiers [sic] are both cited as exemplary men because of what they wrote, their verbal self-depictions. The fact the Franklin was a libertine with a prodigious number of love children is seldom discussed, nor the fact that Algiers [sic] was a flagrant homosexual.⁴

More American than is his enterprise, Franklin's "quest for personal legitimacy" strives to forge public belief about the private person, an "attempt to make appearance and reality coincide."⁵ The importance of the

¹Ibid., p.78.

²Ibid., pp.78-79.

³Ibid., p.79.

⁴Douglas B. Saylor, The Sadomasochistic Homotext: Readings in Sade, Balzac and Proust (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), n.5, p.61.

⁵Kammen, People of Paradox, p.45.

public word in America heightens the significance of public religion and its rhetoric.

This zealous religion of the nation has been apprehended by some as nationalism, the creedal coagulation of the American nation taken for civic nationalism.¹ Herberg pointed in this direction with his fear of an idolatry of the nation in America, the sacralization of the mundane so that all national issues become "high moral issues," American democracy becomes a crusade, and the American Way is exalted as a "super-religion ...over and above all other religions." Herberg's American religion was a civil religion in which "national life is apotheosized, national values are religionized, national heroes are divinized, and national history is experienced as a *Heilsgeschichte*, as a redemptive history."² The American Civil Religion, then, participates in American self-definition through ceremony and rhetoric that is vital in its publicity, potent in its inherent claim of self-realisation, and dangerous in its apotheosis of national life.

This nationalist critique of American civil religion responds, in part, to the self-satisfaction of America, Boorstin's American faith in all things American--the sense of "givenness" that, while it is a celebration of the American Way of Life, is intolerant and aggressive

¹For example, see Yehoshua Arieli, Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), p.23, and Michael Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism, (New York: Viking, 1993), pp.3-4.

²Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes," in American Civil Religion, eds. Richey and Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp.79, 84, 78.

toward apostates and critics.¹ E.J.Dionne specifically echoes Herberg's concerns, invoking him against an American religion that serves only to justify everything American and validate particular goals and aspirations of the American Way.² Both echo the warning of Ralph Henry Gabriel, that the American Democratic Faith, while it parallels Protestant Christianity in its doctrine, amounts to a form of religious nationalism that, in the twentieth-century, has degenerated into state worship as an aggressive rival to church religion.³ This critique focuses on a particular manifestation, or recurrent phase, of American civil religion, dwelling for doctrine upon the emergence of the common religion as the furnace of national unity. This, in fact, is a relative breakdown of the more complex civil religion that has evolved out of the common religion of the nation, a periodic regression to the self-satisfaction of the nation that came, for instance, with the ratification of the Constitution and that led to the Second Great Awakening in response. The periodic decline of American civil religion leaves it obscured by the complacency of the American Way of Life, a fecund nationalism that erupts not from the creed that it pretends to embrace, but from a satisfaction and sense of accomplishment at having realized the promise of that creed, however illusory such faith may be.

¹Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, pp.9, 18, 162; Lipsitz, "If the State Functions as a Religion," pp.529-530.

²E.J. Dionne, Why Americans Hate Politics (New York: Touchstone, 1991), p.218.

³Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: Ronald Press, 1940; 2nd ed. 1956), pp.38-39.

Civil religion advocates consistently deny the equation of civil religion with common religion in America, or with the American Way of Life, and are adamant in their denial of religious nationalism as its essence. On the contrary, they argue that the American Civil Religion leads America away from nationalism by its invocation of a judgemental god that oversees the national project and inflicts punishments upon the nation as liberally as He pours out blessings. In this view, God keeps national self-righteousness at bay. Without this Divine judgement, communicated publicly and nationally through the civil religion, self-righteousness would degenerate into nationalism amidst the self-satisfaction of a plentiful America. The civil religion, they say, forms a distinct religion with its own theological content, distinct from the common religion of the nation, yet competing with that common religion and the churches for national dominance--it aspires to become the common or national religion, persistently invoking the American creed and its promise as judgement against the complacency of an ever errant nation.¹ The American Civil Religion, it follows, is a religion of renewal.

As the civil religion invokes original doctrine to Americans in

¹Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in Religion in America, eds. William G. McLoughlin and Robert N. Bellah (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p.3; Conrad Cherry, God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp.18-19; Gehrig, American Civil Religion: An Assessment; Phillip E. Hammond, "The Conditions for Civil Religion" in Varieties of Civil Religion, eds. Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Conrad Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies: Their Implications for the Study of Religion in America," American Quarterly 21 (1969), 739-754; J. Ronald Engel, "The Theology of the Republic," in The Lively Experiment Continued, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press, 1987).

persistent pursuit of the purity of American origins as a vestige of Eden, its prophetic judgement challenges the status quo. Those who wallow in American "givenness" are engaged in a priestly religion of self-congratulation, rather than in the prophetic civil religion that continually strives to forge America as a new beginning, recovering her original moment of "innocence"--taken by Americans as free agents, the creed chosen, rather than given.¹ Prophetic judgement, after all, is what religion has to offer, according to Clifford Geertz. This judgement subjects everyday life to transcendent rules, extracts of past experience --moods, motives and reactions whose extraordinary significance is captured in symbols, mythologized and sacralized--that constrain social and political worlds.² American judgement, however, is democratically chosen, again and again imbued with ritual significance that heightens its potency in this world. The prophetic civil religion is far from benign; "the faithful believed that their community was true, right, and natural because it stood as a virtual recovery of the truths of the first age," inspiring an America that "increasingly particularized and even absolutized its primordial identity," so that "redemption through persuasive example gave way to redemption through coercion."³ American judgement is universal.

Transcendent judgement continues to impose heightened significance

¹Hughes, "Recovering First Times," pp.212-213, 194, 198-200, 202-203.

²Clifford Geertz, "Religion As A Cultural System," in Religion American Style, ed. Patrick H. McNamara (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp.22-23.

³Hughes, "Recovering First Times," pp.207, 209.

upon the mundane details of life in America. Newt Gingrich, for example, insists that American rights are absolute, hence sacred, because they are endowed by God, a fact that "makes a huge difference in terms of crime."

Gingrich asserts that

if you're raping somebody who is endowed by God, the level of violation is infinitely greater than if you're merely put here for a purpose and it's an effective transaction. The whole underlying nature of society changes, depending on which vision of reality you believe.¹

This heightened significance is bolstered by ritual, the ceremonial coupling of everyday and transcendent worlds: "In a ritual the world as lived and the world as imagined ...turn out to be the same world." These momentary participations in the transcendent, symbolically presented, generate conviction and commitment through the renewal of original experience as feelings shared by participants. Transcendent and mundane worlds re-inforce each other in their permanence and security, tainting each other as sacred and profane merge, often automatically but, nevertheless, religiously--shaping the actual world in which they dwell.²

As Boorstin observes, a religious ceremonial calendar mingles American patriotism with the "non-denominational ritualism [that] accompanies the sessions of Congress and state legislatures and the inaugurations of presidents and governors." This state religiosity is rounded out by an abundance of religious rhetoric in the political arena and the study of civil religious texts, "the most dramatic and effective public speeches,"

¹Newt Gingrich, as quoted in Esther Dyson, "Friend and Foe: The Wired Interview," Wired (Aug. 1995), pp.110-111.

²Geertz, "Religion As A Cultural System," pp.23-25.

in public schools and universities.¹

We can find few nations whose oratory can bring the student so close to their history. The famous Fourth of July oration is not simply an example of the dilution of American literature; it is actually an important institution, a touchstone of American political thought.²

The ceremonial calendar joins "sacred and secular, ...holy day [and] holiday," in an American world in which symbols--written and spoken words, religious beliefs and practices, creeds and ceremonies--join familiar signs such as the flag to substitute renewal for new action and feeling.³

One scholarly attempt to verify empirically the existence of civil religion in America and, particularly, the pervasiveness of this civil religiosity of the ceremonial calendar, has denied not only its vitality, but also its very existence. However, these investigations stressed an erroneous equation of the apparent absence of civil religious newspaper headlines or editorial content around one supposed day of increased civil religious importance, a particular Fourth of July, with a lack of interest or belief on the part of the American people. They determined that civil religion does not exist in America, based upon this absence of interest and celebration as civil religion of a key holiday, insisting that the American Civil Religion is "more the creation (and fantasy) of the liberal political intellectual elite than active faith among the masses."⁴

¹Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, pp.146, 150.

²Ibid., pp.156-157.

³Warner, "An American Sacred Ceremony," pp.89-90.

⁴Michael C. Thomas and Charles C. Flippen, "American Civil Religion: An Empirical Study," Social Forces 51 (Dec. 1972), pp.218-225.

Focusing upon newspaper content, a medium that has never been particularly prominent as a transmitter of civil religious text, and narrowing that focus to a few days on either side of a single Fourth of July celebration is hardly definitive of the confluence, or not, of over three-hundred years of public rhetoric and ceremony. And this investigation falsely concludes that Americans do not celebrate national holidays as explicitly religious. The civil religion does not exist, it is claimed, because Americans do not acknowledge it as such. This conclusion despite the report's own observation that

for some weeks newspaper headlines and advertisements had been proclaiming a special Fourth of July celebration--Honor America Day. The focus of this July 4, 1970 celebration was to be Washington, D.C., but there were calls through the media for the spirit of the celebration to be carried throughout the nation in local ceremonies. The Washington ceremony, parts of which were carried on national television, was divided into two parts. The morning 'religious-patriotic service' featured as the main speaker the Reverend Billy Graham, one of the co-chairmen of the event. Also speaking briefly were such nationally known religious leaders as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, and Rabbi Marc H. Tannenbaum. The evening event was entertainment 'like a good, old-fashioned Fourth of July' as the sponsors liked to proclaim. The master of ceremonies for this event was Bob Hope, the other co-chairman. The President also spoke (via a recording) during the event. The sponsors of Honor America Day announced that the purpose of the ceremonies was to provide a rallying point for all Americans and a celebration for the 'good' in America. Some effort was made to include diverse political elements. Honorary chairmen of the event included Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives such as Harry S. Truman, Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, and Barry Goldwater.'

Rather than apprehending the entire proceeding as a celebration of the civil religion, appealing to Americans for national unity through

¹Ibid., p.219.

participation by, among others, "the preeminent religious figure in the United States, the Reverend Billy Graham" and a most religious president in the person of Harry Truman, these investigators searched newspapers for the absence of statements reflecting "major themes in the content of the belief system." Many of these beliefs--repeated again and again in civil religious texts throughout American history and are undoubtedly central to the American creed, such as "the human rights of man come from God, ...God has blessed America, ...God blesses the office of the President of the U.S.A.," and "the work of America is to do the will of God"--were referred to frequently in the papers (a text as noted above as least crucial as a civil religious source). These investigators, however, dismiss their importance. They even play down the transparently significant references to the Declaration of Independence by insisting that its pre-eminence this day "is certainly due to the fact that it is the signing of the Declaration of Independence which the Fourth of July celebrates."¹ This is like diminishing the importance of the Mass as evidence of church religion because, as expected, it is perpetrated in a church. This study, then, rather than denying life to the civil religion as the authors intend, seems in actuality to emphasize the blending of religious, political, and popular symbols in ceremonial and national celebration of a significant national holiday that is thus permeated with civil religiosity.

Twenty-five years after this study, the presumed lack of interest on the part of Americans in their ceremonial calendar continues to be

¹Ibid., pp.220-222.

contradicted by, for example, the "growing number of events around the country" that surround the "National Day of Prayer (the day in May, instituted by a congressional resolution in 1952)."¹ While many Americans participate in minimal ways, and many regard American holy days primarily as family or recreational holidays, the ceremonial calendar serves, nevertheless, to unite Americans as a symbol system that is shared by all, evoking common sentiments and fostering commonality while reducing difference; it "contributes to thinking, feeling and acting alike."² The convergence of civic and religious symbolism in the observance and celebration of these days clearly points to a civil religiosity:

The Memorial Day celebration is an American sacred ceremony, a religious ritual, a modern cult of the dead. Although it shares the theme of redemptive sacrifice with Christianity and other religions, and although its devotees would insist that the God called upon is the same as the God of Judaism and Christianity, the Memorial Day rite is a civic service that unites Protestants, Catholics, and Jews beyond their sectarian differences.³

This civil religion, while uniting Americans in ritual ceremony, also celebrates American sacrifice in a "cult of the dead" as a unifying force in American history. War binds the nation in a struggle against some 'other,' elevating war dead to national heroic status and war presidents to venerated demi-gods, particularly the martyred Lincoln--America's continual president, a looming American Christ-figure, complete with

¹"America And Religion: The Counter-Attack of God," The National Times (Nov. 1995), p.29.

²Warner, "An American Sacred Ceremony," p.90; Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," p.740.

³Cherry, God's New Israel, p.3.

temple and sacred text, a new testament to the divinity of America's genesis.¹ Memorial Day is a central ritual of this version of civil religion, its symbolic encapsulation and invocation of American unity across time and space sacralizes American history anew, inviting participation--sacrifice on the part of adherents, for the salvation of Americanism, death granting new life to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in perpetuity.² The blending of Christian and national symbols of sacrificial death "leaves as its psychic deposit a human willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for a finite end."³ American zeal is encouraged by a history that is ritualized in the ceremonial pageantry of Americanism.

While this religiosity has long existed and is expressed in various discernable ways, debate nevertheless continues out of the spark struck by its being called a religion.⁴ Robert Bellah gave conceptual birth to The American Civil Religion in 1967,⁵ by applying the civil religion concept to persistent American phenomena that had been integrated practically, if not formally, into American political culture for more than one hundred

¹Merrill D. Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), pp.6-8, 206-208, 214-215, 218; Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," p.750.

²Warner, "An American Sacred Ceremony," pp.91, 93-96, 100-101, 106, 110; Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," p.742.

³Lerner, "Christian Culture and American Democracy," pp.126-127.

⁴Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," in Varieties of Civil Religion, eds. Bellah and Hammond, p.3; Hammond, "Epilogue: The Civil Religion Proposal," p.200.

⁵Bellah, "Civil Religion in America."

years, perhaps twice that:

Crèvecoeur and Tocqueville found in America a realization of what their master Rousseau had called 'civil religion.' The American body politic, like Rousseau's ideal commonwealth, had at its core certain irreducible principles: the existence of God, belief in an afterlife in which virtue would be rewarded and vice punished, and the assurance of religious toleration. These ideas, according to the Founding Fathers, constituted the circle that circumscribed civilization.¹

Later, in the course of this debate over the existence or non-existence of a civil religion in America, Bellah invoked Tocqueville to bolster his own advocacy of civil religion as public philosophy, Bellah's invocation itself constituting a participation in the civil religion, a recovery and renewal of the sacred—a misprision, or creative misreading, of Tocqueville's Democracy in America absorbed into American scripture. Bellah notes that

for Tocqueville Christianity was simultaneously our public philosophy and our public theology. ...He went so far as to say that religion should be considered 'as the first of their political institutions,' not because it is established by law or intervenes directly in government, but because it provides the secure principles of our public life. 'Christianity,' he wrote, 'reigns without obstacle, by universal consent; consequently, everything in the moral field is certain and fixed, although the world of politics is given over to argument and experiment.'²

In Bellah's self-affirming manoeuvre, an Americanized Tocqueville praises the civil religious context of the American experiment, his analysis of American life being taken by Bellah, and by Americans typically, as prescriptive. Like other American truths, American civil religion's

¹Delbanco, "Holy Tolerance," pp.39-40.

²Bellah, "Public Philosophy and Public Theology in America Today," pp.79-80.

universality as described by Tocqueville is portrayed by Americans as "self-evident" in its pervasiveness, an affirmation of its "givenness."

Bellah's civil religious advocacy has been seen as lamenting a contemporary decline of public piety, and as an attempted renewal of a dying national Christianity. Christianity, it is argued by certain commentators, ruled America as the common religion of the nation until the middle of this century, God's bonding agent of his chosen people. This people, however, are now in crisis, fragmented in a dissolving society as Christianity loses potency and commonality. Civil religion, it follows, is merely an institutionalization of the values and symbols of that declining religion, the creedal legitimization of manifestly Puritan and Protestant middle-class aspirations. Bellah's proposal, in this view, seems nothing more than a "veiled revitalization movement, ...reactionary" in its attempt to return an increasingly complex America to a simpler time.¹ In opposition to this argument, however, it should be remembered that civil religion does not equate with common religion, but has a life of its own and, therefore, what Bellah's critics see as a decline in religion or common religion, generally does not necessarily translate into the demise of civil religion.

Others object that civil religion is only another name for public

¹John F. Wilson, "Common Religion in American Society," in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Rouner, pp.111-112, 115, 122-123; David J. O'Brien, "Catholic Contentiousness: The Public Consequences of Denominational Disputes," in Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America, eds. Robert N. Bellah and Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: Crossroad, 1987), p.157. Also see Michael W. Hughey, Civil Religion and Moral Order: Theoretical and Historical Dimensions (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

philosophy, that it is no religion at all, but actually godless in its idolatry of the state. They reject the use of the civil religion concept in America, therefore, as too "secular," a poor fit on an empirically religious nation. While application of the concept might be exact in discussions of Nazism, Marxism, or Leninism, they argue, it should never find a home in America. As well, as a public philosophy that pretends to religiosity, it is hollow in its secular "use" of a dead god.¹ Richard Neuhaus, for example, warns that the 'death of God' in the public arena announces, to many, the expiration of the American Dream, a loss of purpose and promise once definitively American.² On the contrary, we would argue, the so-called 'death of God' reconciles actual American existence and future promise in announcing the ultimate realization of the American Dream, America the beautiful. Transcendent judgement is forgone in an American celebration of concrete existence as ideal realization. Bellah's civil religion proposal actually amounts to an invocation of the prophetic strand of American religiosity, institutionalized as civil religion, against this priestly version that persistently pervades the presence of American prosperity--Puritan pride revisited as Eisenhower's complete America or Reagan's myopic 'city on a hill.' Bellah attempts to use civil religion to return civic virtue to America, to preserve republicanism against the fragmenting liberalism that he fears

¹Richard John Neuhaus, "From Civil Religion to Public Philosophy," in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Rouner, pp.98, 100.

²Richard John Neuhaus, "From Providence to Privacy: Religion and the Redefinition of America," in Unsecular America, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), pp.55-57.

increasingly defines a changing Americanism. Civil religion, Bellah claims, with its invocation of the American Creed in judgement of ongoing particular action, is the source of public virtue in America, an endowment by the Founding Fathers of righteousness to their posterity, cleansing the political by association with God's judgement. Civil religion reinvigorates with the spirit what human reform merely freshens. God is indispensable to a virtuous America, just as America is important to a providential God.¹

The American Civil Religion reveres God and His judgement, His Divine political intervention, as 'a permanent feature of American political life ever after' and its acknowledgement of Him in the Declaration of Independence. Bellah dismisses deistic objections that the Declaration's god, as "nature's God, ...is specifically not the God of the Bible."² The Jefferson of the civil religion, while he remains himself "Jefferson the god,"³ invokes the Creator, "a distinctly biblical God who is much more than a first principle of nature, who creates individual human beings and endows them with equality and fundamental rights,"⁴ heightening their

¹Robert N. Bellah, et al., eds., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985; rpt. 1986), pp.50, 219, 221-255; Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," pp.8-11; Robert N. Bellah, "Competing Visions of the Role of Religion in American Society," in Uncivil Religion, ed. Bellah.

²Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," p.11.

³Gore Vidal, Screening History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), p.68.

⁴Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," p.11.

significance to other Americans such as Newt Gingrich. In civil religious texts, Jefferson follows Washington in a pattern now sealed upon American public life, re-iterating the original godly invocation in judgement of American fidelity to its principles and creed. It may be correct that repeated allusions to God in the civic arena alone do not constitute a theology proper.¹ However, when a religiopolitical creed is combined with public ritual and ceremony to form a fairly complex and coherent national vista, "the existence of this highest level religious symbolism in the political life of the republic justifies the assertion that there is a civil religion in America."²

Phillip Hammond points to "a few religiopolitical tenets" accepted widely in America that underlay an alliance of politics and religion, and Hammond agrees with Bellah's collection of them into a civil religion that historically transcends the variations of felt religiosity that pollsters are intent upon capturing:

(1) There is a God (2) whose will can be known through democratic procedures; therefore (3) democratic America has been God's primary agent in history, and (4) for Americans the nation has been their chief source of identity.³

God's presence in the national *schema* is deemed necessary for the inculcation of virtue, a necessity asserted by Founding Fathers, and reiterated by Tocqueville, thus entrenched in the civil religion.

¹John F. Wilson, "A Historian's Approach to Civil Religion," in American Civil Religion, eds. Richey and Jones, p.121.

²Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," p.11.

³Hammond, "The Conditions for Civil Religion," pp.41-42.

Individual self-interest can be moderated in the public arena only by the promise of rewards and punishments in some future world of reckoning:

There are certain sacrifices which individuals are called upon to make for which they cannot reasonably expect a reward in this life; moreover, whatever ingenuity may be employed to prove that virtue is useful, there are individuals upon whom such arguments fail to make any impression. Virtue, then, must have an otherworldly support.¹

Virtually any religion can serve this political function of inculcating public virtue, according to Tocqueville, through the assertion of common beliefs sanctioned by a judgmental God -- no matter whether true or false, so long as they are believed.² President Eisenhower, "as a priest of this national faith" who saw "the nation itself as a kind of shrine or instrument of God,"³ made this clear in his assertion that "our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is."⁴

Less benevolent than Tocqueville's virtuous guarantor of freedom, Rousseau's civil religion is seen as a political device of legitimation and mobilization. Forced to "learn the language of the vulgar, and that is chiefly the language of divine inspiration or religion," achieve its

¹Marvin Zetterbaum, "Alexis de Tocqueville," in History of Political Philosophy, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963; 3rd ed. 1987), p.778.

²Ibid., p.779.

³Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.404.

⁴Dwight D. Eisenhower, as quoted in Max Lerner, America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p.715.

ends, the legislator adopts piety to persuade and motivate.¹ Rousseau denounced the social disunity engendered by Christianity with its manifestation as an alternate power-centre competing with the state, a view expressed in the historical development of the separation of church and state. Even when united with political power in the personage of a Christian king, moreover, Christianity is self-centred, re-orienting the political and submitting it to religious ends.²

Rousseau claims with his civil religion to improve upon Hobbes's remedy for the religious/secular schism--the unification of church and state as one entity. Hobbes's sovereign is the arbiter of all public statements of belief, intimately involved in the development of social utterances and, Hobbes says: "for the Actions of men proceed from their Opinions; and in the wel (sic) governing of Opinions, consisteth the well governing of mens Actions, in order to their Peace, and Concord."³ Thus, Hobbes attempts to blend civil law and individual conscience, denying any discrepancy through their confluence as "the publique Conscience."⁴ Hobbes's Common-wealth becomes the church, as the publique signifies holiness, thus joining the profane as "Common" with that which is "Holy" or "Proper." Repeated sacralization of the publique, or ritual, re-

¹Allan Bloom, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau," in History of Political Philosophy, eds. Strauss and Cropsey, p.573.

²Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On The Social Contract" 4:8, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Basic Political Writings, Trans. Donald A. Cress, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp.220-222.

³Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan II, ch.18 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968; rpt. 1985; First published 1651), p.233.

⁴Ibid., II, ch.29, pp.365-366.

iterates sacred obligations and stirs allegiance to the sovereign as ultimate authority, unifying once divided loyalties, religious and political.¹

Hobbesian civil religion practically amounts to a forced control of belief in its public utterance, cutting it off as it leaves the mouth--much as "Mrs. Hutchinson was not banished for her opinions but for publicizing them and causing 'disorders.'"² While aspiring to its own religiosity as faith in the sovereign, ritually instilled, this religion relies upon Christianity for its pageantry and doctrine, and for its binding truth, ultimately leaving the publique with a split conscience and divided loyalty. Rousseau heals the rupture by eradicating Christianity altogether, as unsuitable for republican government. A new religion is required, and provided for, by Rousseau--a civil religion proper.³

Rousseau's civil religion claims for its tenets a providential god, a future life after death, of reward and punishment for deeds of this life, sanctity of the state and its law, and a proscription against intolerance.⁴ Following this pattern, Washington's perpetual invocation of a providential god joins with Jefferson's reliance upon the next life for punishments and rewards as the germ of civic virtue. The result is a

¹Ibid., III, ch.35, pp.449-451. Also see Laurence Berns, "Thomas Hobbes," in History of Political Philosophy, eds. Strauss and Cropsey, p.407.

²Chard Powers Smith, Yankees and God (New York: Hermitage House, 1954), p.26; Roelofs, "Church and State in America," p.569.

³Rousseau, "On The Social Contract" 4:8, pp.222-226.

⁴Ibid., 4:8, pp.226-227.

religion that sanctifies the Constitution while celebrating, as an aspect of the national religion, the Constitution's exclusion of established religion in a proscription against intolerance in its interpretation and application. This is to say that the American Civil Religion proscribes intolerance against its own.¹

While Rousseau's civil religion strove for national unity in the rejection of Christianity, American civil religion has co-existed with Christianity by using only parts of it to bolster a new and distinct religion of the state.² Rather than struggling with the church for legitimacy, as in the European model of alternating mutual opposition and embrace, Americanism developed its own eschatology with its own ritual and pageantry to invoke and re-vitalize its potency: Washington, like other "sacred cities, ...is the central 'Mecca' for pilgrimage on behalf of the American polity," its pageantry of presidential inauguration ceremonies combining with more routine Congressional and judicial formalities to "serve as regular expressions of civil piety."³ Additional sacred places are consecrated in the landscape of American history and mind, the "Hallowed ground at Gettysburg," for example, joining other Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields as sancturaries of dead saints. It is sacrilege

¹William J. Federer, "George Washington," America's God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations (Coppell, Texas: FAME, 1994), pp.634-665; Thomas L. Pangle, The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988; rpt. 1990), p.120; Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, p.127.

²Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," pp.4-10.

³John F. Wilson, "The Status of 'Civil Religion' in America," in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Smith, p.5.

to disturb these locations, as is evidenced by Virginia's recent rebuff of a Disney enterprise planned for the near-sacred soil of a Civil War battlefield--testament to the continued weight of the Civil War in American imagination.¹ Although urban sprawl continues to reclaim once blood-soaked, thus sanctified ground, middle-class homes and shopping malls are "an odour of a sweet smell," signifying "a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God,"² and fulfilling American consecration whereas mere amusement debases.

In harmony with, yet separate from, Christianity, the American Civil Religion reconciles Rousseau's "mutually exclusive ...terms, ...in speaking of a Christian republic."³ It does so by pretending never to be quite Christian, nor quite a religion, but a sentiment shared by all Americans, inoffensive, even attractive in its unifying creed. This illuminates the furor raised by Bellah's finally calling it a religion in its maturity and thereby implying a rival and threat to church religion and Christianity in its appealing embrace of a supposed universal Americanism.

Bellah's American Civil Religion is an invocation of "that Revolutionary faith--what Lincoln called 'our ancient faith'"--that stirs the heart in renewal of America's original moment. This faith is based in, and defined by, the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address

¹Wilson, "A Historian's Approach to Civil Religion," pp.127-129; Fred Bruning, "The Self-hypnosis of America," Maclean's 107:34 (Aug.22, 1994), p.9.

²Philippians 4:18.

³Rousseau, "On The Social Contract" 4:8, p.225.

or, rather, in their continued transcendent judgment over the American experiment. A Lincolnian Jefferson coalesces with Washington and Benjamin Franklin in their announced fears of religious decline to embed that fear in the civil religion, along with its subsequent persistent call for renewal and vigilance in pursuit of public virtue and an idealized American "common good."¹ Bellah points to John F. Kennedy's inaugural address as a typical manifestation of the American Civil Religion. Its call for renewal through an invocation of God and the American Founders is a call to continue the American Revolution in support of God's work. Bellah's civil religion echoes those Founding fears of decline and strives to revive itself, and America, in the prophetic spirit of its origins.²

The self-affirmation of American civil religion conspires with Bellah's conceptual self-affirmation against denials that civil religion exists and claims that it is only a coherence intellectually imposed upon something scattered.³ These claims are dismissed by the 'proof' of its existence in the very use of the concept to gather, describe and explain historical and political phenomena, widespread since Bellah's initiation of a, thus, bona fide concept certified by utility.⁴ Religious conviction often serves as a better guide to Congressional voting patterns than does party affiliation, Robert Fowler asserts, and is always a better indicator

¹Bellah, "The Revolution and the Civil Religion," pp.55-56, 60-65.

²Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," pp.3-6, 18-21; Bellah, "American Civil Religion in the 1970s," pp.255-272.

³Roderick P. Hart, The Political Pulpit (West Lafayette: Purdue Univ. Press, 1977).

⁴Bellah, "American Civil Religion in the 1970s," p.256.

than denominational affiliation. The civil religiosity of the nation's ruling elite coincides with that of the population over which they preside, their shared religious sentiments endowing Congressional politics with supposed righteousness. Civil religion participates in "a well-implanted establishment of religion in the United States" that continues to be supported by the courts as well as the people and their representatives; "We have a clearly established civil religion in the United States," existing "at least in the sense of certain symbols which link religion and the government and state in our nation." Its establishment has withstood every challenge in the Supreme Court, its persistence has been popular and political, even Constitutional.'

The manifestation of this religiosity in political rhetoric--inaugural speeches and executive pronouncements being prominent, but not exclusive examples--is seen by some as empty of meaning, merely rhetorical, and basely political. As politicians undoubtedly use the language of civil religion to muster votes, especially in presidential politics, their sincerity is questioned and their insincerity asserted as defaming and trivializing religion proper. Political religiosity is dismissed as being merely an accommodation to the religiosity of the American people, a religiosity that requires appeals for political support to be masked as religious petitions. With the confusion of religion and politics in America, however, politicians have become the caretakers of the public religion. Religiosity has become a political function and

'Fowler, Religion and Politics in America, pp.127, 129, 237, 242, 268.

religious rhetoric an appeal through the civil religion to broaden and crystallize one's electoral base.' The American Civil Religion imposes moral significance upon the mundane, raising profane policy to sacred heights and, thus, inspiring unity and movement around once isolated or inconspicuous interests. Economic policy issues are zealously pursued, seemingly practical considerations become matters of righteousness, and ideological doctrine becomes gospel, as religious language unifies the various political parts, realizing the potential for symbolic identification and motivation at individual levels.² Religious rhetoric is indispensable to American politics.

Elitist interpretations of American civil religion argue that this rhetoric, while it is demanded by the religiosity of the American people, shapes those demands and constrains American sensibilities and public roles as an instrument of social control. Elite manipulation of key symbols legitimizes desired policy and crystallizes popular support, thus shaping demands upon the ruling class to which that class responds, and instills elite values as it unifies national opinion.³ Thus, America's Founders used religion as the language of legitimacy, pursuing their ends

¹Carter, The Culture of Disbelief, pp.44-48, 51, 59, 68, 75; R. Laurence Moore, Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), pp.67-71.

²Rhys H. Williams and Susan M. Alexander, "Religious Rhetoric in American Populism: Civil Religion as Movement Ideology," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 33:1 (1994), pp.1-15.

³Edelman, Political Language; Robert Bell, The Culture of Policy Deliberations (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1985); Winthrop S. Hudson, "Liberty, Both Civil and Religious," in The Lively Experiment Continued, ed. Brauer.

while inculcating public spiritedness as a religiously masked social control.' In this way,

the 'unity' of the American people derived ...from the ability and willingness of an Anglo elite to stamp its image on other peoples coming to this country. That elite's religious and political principles, its customs and social relations, its standards of taste and morality, were for 300 years America's.²

While this may be true, it does not hold that insincerity and manipulation characterize the actions and rhetoric of America's elite. It goes too far to say that the Constitution may no longer be sacred for the powerful, yet that they continue to 'sell' it to the American masses "as Latin-American dictators kept commoners traditionally Catholic," insuring obedience and limiting insurrection.³ In fact, American elites are "more likely to believe intensely" in American creedal values, more likely to be sincere in their rhetoric and civil religiosity.⁴ America's political elite are carriers of the creed, priests and prophets of the national religion.

Samuel Huntington agrees with Bellah, that there is a civil religion characterized by the transcendent judgement of America according to its original creed.⁵ According to Huntington, this religion is characterized by 1) an American consensus surrounding its articles of faith, 2) by the content of that creed--liberal, individualistic, democratic, egalitarian,

¹Roelofs, "Church and State in America," pp.561-565.

²Benjamin Schwarz, "The Diversity Myth: America's Leading Export," The Atlantic Monthly (May, 1995), p.62.

³"The Talk of the Town," New Yorker (Dec.1, 1986), p.29.

⁴Huntington, American Politics, pp.18, 72-73.

⁵Ibid., p.159.

anti-government values--and 3) by a changing but continuous intensity of belief in these values, over time and across groups. Furthermore, there is an "ever present gap" between the ideals of the American creed and their practical implications in political institutions, a gap that implies various social and political responses, including renewal through the prophetic invocation of the creed, or celebration according to the priestly model of self-congratulation as Americans deny that gap and claim self-realization.¹ The prophetic civil religion stands in judgement of that gap, of actual America, challenging Americans to live up to the promise of their destiny; "its ideals and aspirations stand in constant judgement over the passing shenanigans of the people, reminding them of the standards by which their current practices and those of their nation are ever being judged and found wanting."² Future America, the promise of American origins sacralized historically by the national sacrifice of blood, judges present America as destiny beckons.

This American creed has persisted throughout American history more or less unchanged for over two-hundred years, has shaped American political values, and has enjoyed broad support as it defined the national identity. Its core ideas are nested in the Declaration of Independence, implemented by the American Constitution, and interpreted through a combination of elements drawn from seventeenth-century Protestant Christianity and the Enlightenment as filtered through Lockean liberalism--chiefly, moralism,

¹Ibid., p.4; Leroy S. Rouner, "To Be at Home: Civil Religion as Common Bond," in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp.135-136.

²Sidney Mead, as quoted in ibid., p.30.

millennialism, individualism, congregationalism, natural rights, liberty, the social contract, and government dependence upon society. Without any theory to describe their co-existence, this "complex and amorphous amalgam of goals and values" is best understood as it coalesces in the civil religion of the nation.¹ Civil Religion allows for, in fact describes and accounts for, this American coalescence of political and religious ideas that might, in other contexts, be irreconcilable. This concept contains the relationship of religious revival to social reform and political renewal, explaining the cyclical nature of American politics and the persistence of peculiarly American political rhetoric.²

Critics that deny the existence of an American civil religion, or the usefulness of the concept in analysis of American society, insist upon the presence of an illusory diversity in America. They fear the implications of American consensus, of an overwhelmingly definitive religiosity and, so, they deny it life. One pre-eminent American scholar of American religion insists that there are "two kinds of two kinds of civil religion" in America--godly and godless, each with prophetic and priestly manifestations, thus four types. This injects American civil religion with a diversity that he claims unwinds the threads that tie the civil religion concept together. There is not one "religion," he claims, but many types of national religiosity that defy application of the civil religion concept. His four types, however, are merely manifestations of the phases

¹Ibid., pp.14-16.

²As well as Huntington, American Politics, see McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform and Tuveson, Redeemer Nation.

of civil religion and their responses, that Huntington and Bellah point to, periods of decline and renewal, rather than independently enduring religions. The four are one, rendered historically, gathered conceptually.'

Another critic of civil religion, Richard Neuhaus, anchors its religiosity with the weight of every church pew and altar in America, denying civil religion any religiosity of its own, a perpetual dependent of its progenitors² despite its obvious nationalist content that can be seen as original and that, in fact, gives continued life to American churches through their conversion to it, rather than vice versa. In contradiction of Neuhaus's view, it has been observed, out of the civil religion's apprehension of the American nation as God's agent came "the first novel eschatological interpretation of evil since the Reformation,"³ one that has coloured American history and religion since its Revolution. This alone breathes life into the concept, and demands its examination.

Neuhaus, however, denies the religiosity of American civil religion according to its failure to fulfil six requirements that he deems necessary to the constitution of any religion: 1) a cultic aspect that gathers members periodically to celebrate beliefs, events, and persons important to the religion, 2) "recognized leadership offices invested

¹Marty, "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion."

²Richard John Neuhaus, Time Toward Home: The American Experiment as Revelation, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); "From Civil Religion to Public Philosophy"; "From Providence to Privacy."

³Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, p.153.

formally or informally with sacred authority," 3) initiation and definition of members, 4) a creed, 5) a moral code that gives meaning to belonging and that connects individual action with group action, and 6) the above are institutionalized, "or at least there is a conscious effort to knit these elements together under the 'sacred canopy.'" Neuhaus denies that all or any of these requirements are met by evidence demonstrated by proponents of civil religion in America, maintaining, for instance, that Lincoln's religiosity is an American deviation rather than an archetype, or that Americans don't actually believe in the American creed forwarded by the civil religion--for instance, in the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, America's moral code is said to derive from Christianity, not from Americanism,¹ denying the vitality of American originality and its corrupting potency.

Neuhaus, nevertheless, is wrong; "the conceptualized civil religious dimension is found to exist empirically. As anticipated, it exists somewhat apart from three other church religious dimensions." Analysis of the potency of key civil religion texts reveals that "the separate existence of civil religion is in accord with the Hammond and Bellah theses."² As part of its enduring faith, Lincoln is perhaps neither exceptional nor archetypal in the American Civil Religion, but is certainly typical. Every American president has invoked symbols of the civil religion, some more ceremoniously than Lincoln, others more

¹Neuhaus, Time Toward Home, pp.194-201; "From Civil Religion to Public Philosophy," pp.101-103.

²Ronald C. Wimberley, et al., "The Civil Religious Dimension: Is It There?" Social Forces 54:4 (June, 1976), pp.890-900.

politically:

American history is, in fact, replete with leaders who have been canonized in the national consciousness as exemplars of American ideals and as particular bearers of America's destiny under God. When those leaders have met violent deaths they have become, in the national memory as well as in the ceremonies and speeches that surround their deaths, martyrs for the American cause, even in some cases redeemers.¹

A consensus of belief and repeated invocation surrounds the American creed, particularly the Declaration of Independence. This creed confers identity and membership through belief and adherence, constraining behaviour and soliciting violence against non-conformists--a morality that is distinctly non-Christian, yet typically American.² In fact, a survey of American history reveals that the American Civil Religion measures up to Neuhaus's formula in every respect, religious "truth" prevailing over its "persecutors"--critics of America's civil religion might heed the risen Christ's admonition to his persecutor Saul (later Paul the Apostle), that "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"³; "the themes, symbols, institutions and sources of revelation of the American civil religion are sufficiently continuous and uniform to constitute an isolable religion that functions vigorously in the public sphere of American

¹Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," p.744.

²Bellah, "Civil Religion in America"; Huntington, American Politics; McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform; Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies"; Newt Gingrich, "Renewing America," Newsweek (July 10, 1995), pp.26-27; Rouner, "To Be at Home"; Davis Newton Lott, ed., The Presidents Speak: The Inaugural Addresses of the American Presidents, From Washington to Clinton (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1994); Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land; Mark A. Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992).

³The Acts 26:14.

society."¹ American history reveals that this civil religion is vital and pervasive across time and space, and that it unifies all strata of American society as a symbolic form that stands between ideology and religion, harmonizing their content and uniting their potency for the direction of political action. Civil religion may be the most potent symbolic form of those that constitute political culture, as it draws from, and gives direction to, the other forms, mediating and legitimizing their action. In America, the nation continually aspires to 'a more perfect union'; through the American Civil Religion, it approximates its aspirations. Through it, America is perfected, the experiment challenged, and destiny approached. In civil religion, America approaches the Divine.

¹Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," pp.753-754.

Chapter Three: The Revelation of American History

The core beliefs and symbols of America's civil religion derive from biblical archetypes, but more immediately from American history as the reception of those archetypes. Persons and events of national significance gain cosmic meaning as the reincarnation of scriptural models, their sanctification cascading into national institutions and the nation itself. American leaders embody sacred figures, Lincoln a Christ and Washington a fusion of Moses and Joshua, their products--the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and the Gettysburg Address, for example, become American scripture, in an ongoing revelation of God through "the transcendent movement of history."¹

As the content of the civil religion is revealed in American history, so the active course of that religion is visible as interpreter and instigator of the American nation. Religious interpretation continually revives the past, history becomes a matter of faith, and faith leads to particular action as American history becomes a living tradition. Thus, the historical sources of civil religious beliefs "are not mere historical documents, but also *living documents*, ...the testaments of our history."² With a tendency "to imagine that the crucial documents of our past were somehow delivered on an American Sinai, direct from God to the American people,"³ the caretakers of American history have become High Priests,

¹Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," pp.749-750; Engel, "The Theology of the Republic," p.52.

²Daniel J. Boorstin, ed., An American Primer (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966; rpt. New York: Meridian, 1985), pp.xiv-xvi.

³Ibid., p.xvi.

"secular theologians," responsible for the preservation, description, and defence of the American covenant.¹

Some American historians participate in the development and direction of civil religion, and in its inculcation by America's citizenry. Just as a religious interpretation of the world involves awe and reverence for history as action in a declaration of faith,² so historical interpretation in America typically involves indoctrination in "good citizenship," civics rather than history.³ Despite Arthur Schlesinger's denunciation of the abuse of history as a weapon for indoctrination in false "ideologies," this kind of Americanization, the socialization of the unifying American creed and its indoctrination in "true" myth, is of paramount importance to him: "Honest history is the weapon of freedom."⁴ Schlesinger denounces multiculturalists for their apostasy from the American creed, however secular his interpretation of that creed might be, and cries for schools to return to the teaching of Americanism, their original nation-building function. Pluralism, for Schlesinger as well as for most "traditional" Americans, can only be tolerated within the context of an over-arching, all-encompassing Americanism, the unity of petty diversities.

¹Engel, "The Theology of the Republic," p.63.

²Michael Novak, "Religion as Autobiography and Story," in Religion American Style, ed. McNamara, pp.30-35.

³Vidal, Screening History, p.82.

⁴Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992; rpt.1993), pp.46-47, 52, 72, 80.

Rife with religious allusions, Schlesinger's lament reveals his righteous indignation at blasphemous offenses against American scripture and "the American Creed, the civic culture."¹ Akin to early Puritan jeremiads denouncing the backsliding of younger generations as sects degenerated into churches, Schlesinger invokes the longest serving High Priest of the American Civil Religion, the American president he acclaims as "the man of the century," yet who remains humble in his civil religious admixture: "I am a Christian and a Democrat--that's all."² Franklin D. Roosevelt affirms for Schlesinger, as for all true Americans "that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed."³

While effectively joining the struggle to rescue and revive America's civil religion, Schlesinger still insists upon a secular interpretation of American history through a divorce of creedal content from religious origins and intent. His history is prejudiced by his desire for rational truth unencumbered by prejudice, or, more specifically, by religious bias. The insistence of a secular main "tradition" in American history is belied by serious historians who do not shrink from America's religious past, by American courts that have used history to acknowledge the long interpenetration of religion and politics in the United States, and by the

¹Ibid., pp.27, 31, 35, 37, 43, 68-69, 74, 90, 102, 112, 119, 131.

²Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "The Man of the Century," American Heritage 45:3 (May-June, 1994), p.83.

³Franklin D. Roosevelt, as quoted in Schlesinger, The Disuniting of America, p.37.

history of American public schools, itself a history of American civil religion.¹ Until recently, American "schools were unabashedly Protestant in their prayers, morning devotions and general religious orientation. But they were also the depositories and purveyors of the events and documents of the national religion." Despite apparent secularization of the schools through limited Court action, "in the texts and classrooms students are still instructed in the basic documents of the civil religion (including references to God and providence), the religion's heroes and martyrs are still celebrated on their birthdays and on Memorial Day, the American ceremonial calendar is still observed."² It seems, then, that a religious interpretation of American history might be termed "traditional," even more revealing of the American mind than Schlesinger's actually "counter-traditional" approach.

American history is sanctified by an original immersion in biblical writ. Louis Hartz's secular liberal interpretation of the American tradition in which Hartz reserves acknowledgement of biblical influence for only a secular Hebraic analogy to the Revolution and the sectional fanaticism and backwardness of the zealous, thus illiberal, South,³ is an ideological myth that ignores far more potent gifts of the derivative nature of the American mind. Whereas America might constitute a liberal

¹Fowler, Religion and Politics in America, pp.268-269; Robert Michaelsen, "Is the Public School Religious or Secular?" in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Smith; Lynnell Hancock, "History Lessons," Newsweek (July 10, 1995), pp.28-32.

²Cherry, "Two American Sacred Ceremonies," pp.750-751.

³Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1955; rpt.1983), pp.37, 146, 168.

fragment, there is no question that America's mind also has been self-absorbed in inherited religious sources of apocalyptic Christianity.¹ The American fragment is at least as Puritan as it is liberal:

...central themes of the Puritan Awakening pervaded all of the British colonies in North America. If we accept the fact that Puritanism in some form influenced most of the denominations that broke off from the Church of England in the seventeenth century, and if we acknowledge that, even within Anglicanism, Puritanism had its exponents, we will have a better understanding of the importance of the Puritan Awakening on the nascent ideology of Americans. It is sometimes forgotten that in Anglican Virginia there were Puritans and Quakers who upheld this ideology, and Puritan views in sectarian form were widely diffused in Maryland and Rhode Island, which tolerated all sects. Quakers espoused their form of Puritanism widely, but especially in the colonies of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In fact, most of the churches in the colonies were decidedly Calvinistic in their theology; ...In short, a broad Calvinistic Puritan base was the common feature of the colonial world view, and it grew stronger rather than weaker as the years went by. In this respect, Puritanism was the prevalent ideology in the colonial period.²

Being truly religious, the circumscription of reality by earliest Americans was total: Puritanism constituted a broad theological, political and social theory.³

As American civil and Christian religiosities converge in an American redemptive history, all previous salvation history is reduced and concentrated imagistically into America as the political messiah.⁴ The potency of American primacy in the working out of mankind's destiny is evident throughout American history, Americans from the beginning having

¹Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.5.

²McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.38-39.

³Ibid., p.27.

⁴Henry, The Intoxication of Power, p.104.

viewed themselves as God's agents and continued in this self-appraisal well into the 1990s.¹ This mythic civil religiosity involves themes that were laid down by the clergy in the first generation of American habitation, a generation that transported its renewed fervour for the Book of Revelations from the Old World to the New as part of God's "grand design."² This "latter-day" transportation of interest continues to reveal itself in the religious undergirding of contemporary American culture.

Ellis Sandoz asserts that the Bible, as the dominant literature in America for over 300 years, dominant even on the frontier wilderness, is vital to our understanding of America.³ Its images and typologies are etched on the American mind in a mythic entrenchment that is both potent and pervasive. From the beginning, Biblical forms have provided context for the interpretation of mundane events, heightening the importance of every occurrence, every American event leading towards the expected apocalyptic end.⁴ As the earliest Puritans had hoped to transcend history in their mythic recovery or restoration of original purity, rejecting

¹Gustav H. Blanke, "God's Base of Operations: Mormon Variations on the American Sense of Mission," B.Y.U. Studies 20:1 (1979), p.84; E. Douglas Clark, The Grand Design: America From Columbus to Zion (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1992).

²Sacvan Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp.4-6, 70.

³Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp.129-131.

⁴Bellah, The Broken Covenant, p.12; Slotkin, Fatal Environment, p.61; Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1967; rpt.1969), p.32; Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.184-185.

reform as compromise, so the American quest continues as one through mythical time rather than space, a quest for original purity.¹ Even "Manifest Destiny" has included the Puritan pursuit of the pristine, "original" condition with its "hunger" for land and material expansion. America has been a land of renewal from its earliest moment.²

Colonial America as a Puritan Renewal

America's recovery quest began as self-conscious emulations of biblical emigrations, paralleling the Abrahamic and Mosaic quests for deliverance. Such emulations of archetypal journeys were meant to implement an equally archetypal divine plan of regeneration, the successful re-enactment of religious myth ultimately defining American efficacy.³ As soon-to-be Americans voyaged across the "Red Sea," the New World became "New Israel," Maryland an Edenic "Earthly Paradise," Georgia the "Promised Canaan."⁴ John Winthrop's "city upon a hill" and John Cotton's harmonious, yet separate, civil and ecclesiastical union as Christian communion quickly suffered ridicule in Europe. The American unification of sacred and secular history was blasphemous to some and, ultimately, spurned by Anglicans as leading to a new American self-conceptualization of an "errand into the wilderness." America became Israel struggling for Zion in the land of Canaan, a convergence of Old and

¹Hughes, "Recovering First Times," pp.196-198.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.42.

³Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.38-39.

⁴Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.6-8, 13-15.

New Testaments in Revelation's anticipation of the New Jerusalem.' This self-attribution of the Hebrew myth guaranteed the standing of the American enterprise, contextualizing all New World endeavours within the careful Providence of God. This ensuring of global significance in a sense of chosenness and mission has driven American history and remains "almost as relevant to an understanding of America today as it is to an understanding of the Puritans of 1630. ...Like the Puritan, the modern American also has a strong sense of being a part of a chosen people with a mission to perform."²

These biblical mythic foundations provide the pre-political "stuff" of American self-governance.³ Believing that the Bible is possessed of "absolutely authoritative answers to all questions of human and social action," early Americans subjected civic and ecclesiastic realms to Biblical law in a separation of church and state that amounted to a demarcation of administration rather than of principle. The church carried responsibility for the sacred and the state attended the human, while both realms were administered under and by God through Christ with the

¹John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity (1630)," in God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, ed. Conrad Cherry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp.42-43; John Cotton, "A Discourse About Civil Government," in Church and State in American History, ed. John F. Wilson (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1965), pp.3-7; Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.39-41; Blanke, "'God's Base of Operation,'" pp.85-86.

²Lawrence W. Towner, "John Winthrop," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.21, 42-43; Cherry, God's New Israel, pp.27-28.

³Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.29-30, 40; Ted Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn: The Settling of the North American Continent (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp.12-13.

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admonition that separation be kept harmonious, the realms to be coordinates rather than opposing contraries.¹ This notion of a separation that is harmoniously unified has coloured the politics of church and state in America since the beginning.

Despite arguments for the actual separation of church and state-- Roger Williams, for instance, insisted that holy types existed only in the Bible, and could not be restored by Americans, that American history and culture were not actually sacred, but secular re-enactments invoking Divine sanction for selfish motives, particularly expansionist land-grabbing²--the American placement of itself within a mythic and religious context of an over-seeing and favouring Divine Providence was pervasive.³ Even Williams awaited the imminent literal return of Jesus Christ, founding Rhode Island in apocalyptic anticipation and preparation as much as in response to his expulsion from Massachusetts--as "a dangerous threat."⁴ In fact, Williams's separation of church and state is not so real as many suppose, its motivation, the protection of individuals from ecclesiastical oppression, not hindering indirect interference by religion through civil government; although freedom of belief is absolute for Williams, individual actions, despite religious beliefs to the contrary,

¹McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, p.31; Cotton, "A Discourse About Civil Government," pp.4-5.

²Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.41; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.77.

³Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, p.33.

⁴Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.59-60.

are subject to punishment when they are breaches of the law.¹ In effect, religious persuasion must rule through the state in America rather than through the church, thus the confusion of America's politicized religiosity and religious politics.

Everything in America, from the critical to the mundane, has been placed under God's watchful eye. From the Providential town-building in Connecticut that led New Haven's founders to agree to base their political order explicitly "upon the Scriptures," or the sandwiching of the Mayflower Compact between God's hands, to the mundane details of everyday activity and even to the reporting of those details, God's Providence was seen to permeate and make possible all of American life.² The Mayflower Compact, a religious invocation, created a polity for "the glory of God, the advancement of the Christian faith, and, only third, for the honor of king and country. The primary consideration is the glory of God."³ This reflects the transparency of the social foundations of politics in American culture. Religious participation with the creation of civil powers transfigures the political covenant, making it a Divine project.

¹Ibid., p.78; W.K. Jordan, "Roger Williams," in James Madison on Religious Liberty, ed. Robert S. Alley (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1985), pp.126-127, 136; William Lee Miller, The First Liberty: Religion and the American Republic (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), pp.171-172, 183.

²Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.31-32; William Bradford, "The History of the Plymouth Plantation," in The Frontier in American Literature, eds. Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones (New York: Odyssey Press, 1969), pp.33-35, 37; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.60-65.

³Henry, The Intoxication of Power, p.29.

Originally the "Mayflower Covenant,"¹ the compact notion of American political union veils the Divine hand that directs this civil religion to its sublime ends--originally the salvation of American Indians from French Catholics,² later of American citizens from 'other' evils.

Celebrating his election "by the Company to be their Governor" as a calling from God, John Winthrop insisted upon success and prosperity as tokens of His approval: "I have assurance that my charge is of the Lorde and that he hath called me to this worke."³ Such assurance was bolstered by being chosen by other visible saints--the franchise in Massachusetts being restricted to full church members, only later extended to half-way members by the "half-way covenant" of 1662,⁴ thus expressing virtually the terms of America's present franchise and the source of a stumbling block for critics of the American civil religion in identifying its members. Furthermore, Winthrop was assured of his worthiness by his election according to persisting American qualifications for office: being "a godly man and highly approved among them (his fellow Americans)."⁵

Although the Virginia experience has been portrayed as predominately economic and largely secular, the religious contextualization of

¹Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Mayflower Compact," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, p.24.

²David Hawke, The Colonial Experience (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966; rpt. 1976), p.130.

³John Winthrop, as quoted in Lorin Baritz, City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p.12.

⁴Wilson, Church and State in American History, p.xxi.

⁵William Bradford, "The History of Plymouth Plantation," p.37.

enterprise under God's care was engaged in from its earliest days. Preceding the Puritans by ten years, Virginians also perceived themselves as a chosen "Israel" in a "Promised Land," engaged in the Christian work of remaking a wilderness under Providential care.¹ Virginia literature consistently portrays the colony as a religious as well as an economic endeavour, enframing all activities within a Providential context that, as in Puritan social theory, "dignified and sanctified trade and commerce." Afflictions and mistakes are attributed to trial, punishment, and tutelage under the Divine hand, or to Satanic temptation and error, the curse of the wilderness. Such religious interpretation appears in personal letters as well as published materials, attesting to the pervasive entrenchment of biblical types and myths. As typical Americans, Virginians declared that "God goeth before us" preparing the way for settlement and economic development.²

John Rolfe expressed the Virginian's sense of chosenness and mission as "a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God, to possess it [the New World], for undoubtedly He is with us."³ These sentiments translated directly into the fundamental laws, virtually the constitutions, of the earliest, and all subsequent, American colonies. Virginia's first and second charters, 1606 and 1609 respectively,

¹Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.24-26; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.36-37.

²Perry Miller. "Religion and Society in the Early Literature of Virginia," in Errand into the Wilderness, pp.100-118; McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, p.28.

³McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, p.36; Bellah, The Broken Covenant, p.41.

established the propagation of the Christian religion and the salvation of American Indians through that religion as its espoused *raison d'être*, a pre-condition for civilization and government, and thus enterprise, in the New World.¹ Civil authorities that "carried no Bible and forbade preaching" were suspected as papists or atheists and, therefore, found to be unqualified for office.² The "Articles, Lawes, and Orders, Divine, Politic, And Martiall For The Colony In Virginia (1610-1611)" acknowledged God, Christianity, and the duty of civil government to "a principal care of true Religion and reverence to God." More than this, however, its articles established the "highest duty" of each Virginian to God, to be in His service daily, and to pray "evening and morning." These Articles imposed the death penalty for impiety, blasphemy against God or the Scriptures, breaking the Sabbath, and for ministering in His service irreverently. All colonists were required to profess their faith and religion, and to obey church and civil leaders as they would obey God. Settlers were forced "to worship twice each Sunday under military escort, to work hard, and to fill their days with prayer." Eight impious offenders were executed in Virginia's first few years. Ministers were obliged to read these laws to their congregations prior to the commencement of their sermons each week.³ Clearly, in content, purpose, and administration, early Virginia joins other American governments as civil religious

¹Federer, America's God and Country, pp.624-626.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.54.

³Ibid., p.56; Wilson, Church and State in American History, pp.11-13.

ministries.¹

Slight variations in religiosity, sectarian differences, established the need for each new American colony.² Even this hint of flavour, however, was blanded in a civil religiosity--an effectively homogenized political expression of American self-conception. New Hampshire colonists mingled the will of God with their own as the joint foundation of civil government. In that same year, 1639, the first American constitution, Fundamental Orders (Constitution) of Connecticut, celebrated God's providence that had led colonists to a new, American, determination of the Word of God as definitive of law and government, their purpose fulfilled in the preservation of union, peace, and the gospel of Jesus Christ.³ The General Court of Connecticut quickly affirmed "that God's word should be the only rule for ordering the affairs of government in this commonwealth."⁴ Americans everywhere envisioned themselves as agents of the will of God, and their political endeavours as a manifestation of His design.

¹For a discussion of the interpenetration of social and political worlds in colonial Virginia, see Bernard Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia," in New Perspectives on the American Past 1607 to 1877, eds. Stanley N. Katz and Stanley I. Kutler (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969; rpt. 1972), pp.37-57.

²Ibid., pp.81-86; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.63-71.

³"Fundamental Orders (Constitution) of Connecticut, January 14, 1639," in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp. 177-178, 468; "Preface to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1638-9)," in Church and State in American History, ed. Wilson, pp.13-14; Henry, The Intoxication of Power, p.31.

⁴See Federer, America's God and Country, p.178.

Any potential for American diversity that may have been nascent in Maryland's recognition of Catholic rights was miscarried through "Christian" laws that began an assimilation of American Catholicism, at least politically, in the stirrings of an American common religion.¹ Maryland Catholics avoided persecution by disestablishing their religion, demonstrating a tolerance towards others that they hoped would be reciprocal, allowing Catholicism to flourish in an otherwise Protestant land.² In effect, this was intended as a sort of reverse establishment, or an establishment of disestablishment, typical in its American confusion of church and state separation. However, despite its intended protection of Catholicism, the use of "Christian" laws that recognized common beliefs and requirements of all citizens was a movement into American "generalized" Christianity. Becoming Protestant is the price of survival in America for 'other' religious groups.³

The tendency toward a common religiosity was bolstered by the New England Confederation and its Constitution, which overlooked sectarian differences that had, in other cases, 'required' separate colonial administrations. This confederation shared as its joint purpose the advancement of the "Kingdom of Jesus Christ" and the propagation of its gospel.⁴ The "Carolina Charter" of 1663 also set out to expand the

¹See "An Act Concerning Religion In The Maryland Colony (1649)," in Wilson, Church and State in American History, pp.14-15.

²Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, p.240.

³Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America, p.63.

⁴"Constitution of the New England Confederation, May 19, 1643," in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.466.

Christian faith as a "zealous Christian project", yet John Locke's hand in the Fundamental Constitutions of the Carolinas (1663) may have given it a more 'inclusive' approach by requiring only an acknowledgement and solemn public worship of "a God."

Political expansion in the name of the Christian god continued into Pennsylvania, a "Holy Experiment" in religious freedom and land 'reclamation.' William Penn's millenarian anticipations found room for growth and initial realization in "un-occupied" interior lands. Continuing the colonial civil religious trend, Penn mingled politics, economics, and religion in an attempted recovery of pristine social and political conditions, an Edenic recurrence as millennial prelude. His civil religious view of international affairs--for example, of war as God's chastisement and of Christian duty to avoid unjust wars, hence to participate in the assertion and waging of 'just' wars--are evident in Penn's Essay Towards The Present And Future Peace Of Europe, an invocation of the Christian Saviour and His New Testament against warring nations.² God's punishment in judgement of an aging and apostate Europe, however, is matched, in Christian fashion, by His merciful embrace of an innocent New World: "God will plan American [sic] and it shall have its day....The 5th Kingdom or Glorious day of (Jesus?) Christ ...may have the last parte of

¹See "Charter of Carolina, 1663," and "Fundamental Constitutions of the Carolinas, 1663," in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.90-91, 567-568; "The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina (1669-1698)," in Church and State in American History, ed. Wilson, pp.18-19.

²William Penn, "An Essay Towards The Present And Future Peace of Europe (1693)," International Conciliation 394 (November 1943), pp.569-585.

the world, the setting of the son or western world to shine in."¹ This millennial destiny, the context of the American experiment, is entrenched in various Pennsylvania constitutions. These are coloured by Penn's Frame of Government and its assertion of the sacredness of the institutions and ends of human government, and immortalized in his Prayer for Philadelphia, the "Virgin settlement" that continues to join Penn in his prayer "which now appears on a plaque in the Philadelphia City Hall"--a continued beseeching of God's favour in celebration of American righteousness.²

Pennsylvania's original purpose, "to reduce the savage natives by gentle and just manners to the Love of Civil Societe and Christian religion,"³ and its expression of the reputed magnanimity of William Penn were undone by Penn's sons and their "Walking Purchase of 1737."⁴ Their cheating of trusting Indians out of thousands of acres of prime hunting and agricultural land, reflects a decline of supposed Quaker purity and distinctiveness, following earlier patterns of Puritan spiritual decline brought on by worldly success. The homogenizing, Americanizing effects of prosperity are irresistible for the most part, with wealth and increasing security inviting all to join in the great American material banquet, a new sacrament: "As the Quakers got rich, they began buying silver watches and expensive furniture. They started wearing curled peri-wigs and ribbons

¹William Penn to Thomas Janney, August 21, 1681, as quoted in Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.37.

²Federer, America's God and Country, pp.498-503.

³"Charter of Pennsylvania" (1681), in ibid., p.502.

⁴See Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, pp.288-296.

in their hair. Some secretly had their portraits done."¹ This type of spiritual decline initiated two key civil religious responses that have persisted throughout American history--education and the jeremiad or political sermon.

From the earliest days when Virginian magistrates called upon citizens to join in "appointed days of fasting, humiliation, thanksgiving, and prayer,"² governments have shared with churches the concern for America's spiritual welfare. Laws requiring schools for the advancement of the gospel were instituted throughout the colonies, known in New England as the "Old Deluder Satan Laws." "In all such laws, reference is made to Satan, whose evil designs, it was supposed, could be thwarted at every turn by education."³ The New England Primer, a "famous little book" in colonial education, was full of Christian and religious references, often absorbed unconsciously in grammar and spelling lessons, conducive to high levels of literacy with religious zeal.⁴ Despite this early educational thrust, however, Americans typically read very little outside the Bible. Hence, the intense impact of the seven-thousand two-hour sermons absorbed by an average New-Englander in a lifetime virtually empty of other

¹Ibid., p.286.

²McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, p.36.

³Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), pp.32-33; "Old Deluder Satan Law, 1647," passed by Colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut, see America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.179, 488.

⁴Federer, America's God and Country, p.467.

intellectual distractions.'

The first Puritan decline met with lamentations that became "the common, persistent ritual" in American public life, political sermons decrying decline and apostasy, calling Americans to repentance in a renewal of the original covenant.² Election days became sacred days in which colonists were subjected to recitations of God's great blessings and His warnings, as a jealous god, against infidelity.³ Distinct from "regular" Sunday sermons, these "occasional" sermons were "preached at the first meeting each year of the legislatures, on special days of fasting or thanksgiving, before militia companies, and at other signal moments in a community's life."⁴ Contemporary political speeches often continue the general style and purpose of these occasional sermons. As well, these sermons are the ones that are published, then and now, making them "timeless" contributions to the "American record."

Jon Butler maintains that in the ritual ceremonialism of these "occasional" sermons, an effective establishment of religion was "firmly replanted" in America. "Cities became centers of ecclesiastical splendor" as Americans "understood that individual religious observance prospered best in the New World environment through the discipline of coercive

¹Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.47.

²Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.172.

³Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.44; Cherry, God's New Israel, p.27.

⁴Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.45-46.

institutional authority." The civil religiosity of preaching before Assemblies and other public sermons was bolstered by an elite ceremonialism that included "installation ceremonies for public offices, silver maces for magistrates' courts, engraved seals for commissions, and duplication of English court and legal ceremonies." This rising civil religion became increasingly important in crystallizing public opinion, its "occasions held immense ceremonial importance. Here were unparalleled opportunities to speak to a broad range of men and women in local society, not just church members." Always, these sermons denounced moral and political decay as intertwined, harkening citizens to their religious-political foundations: "Ministers thundered out the word of God through the authority of the state,"¹ laying down the pattern for American posterity, with later politicians taking up the weave with borrowed yarn.

Cotton Mather's jeremiads involved a renewal of early colonial history, revising the past according to the maturing civil religion and simultaneously renewing his America according to that revision. Mather's invocation of Jesus Christ as the hand that carried Americans across the waters to purify His church is coupled with Old Testament covenant renewal as the basis for continued success in North America.² This Biblical interpretation of the New World as that renewal is not new. What is renewed, however, is John Winthrop's assertion that smallpox was God's

¹Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, pp.128, 168, 172-173.

²Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana: or The Ecclesiastical History of New England, 2 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967). Also see Stout, "Rhetoric and Reality in the Early Republic," p.68, and Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.86-87, 92.

plague, intensified by Mather's Divine annihilation of Indians in an early manifestation of American destiny as heirs to this Promised Land: "The woods were almost cleaned of those pernicious creatures to make room for a better growth."¹

American history became "Christ's Great Deeds in America," in a strange mixture of Old and New Testament typology that likened Americans to Israel struggling against Indians likened to Canaanites and other lawless tribes, yet simultaneously likened Americans to early Christians among Indians who were "lost tribes," Jews in their "ancient work of opposing Christ." Mather reminded Americans that their "biblical 'wilderness' is not an area uninhabited but the dwelling place of devils--like that desert in which Jesus was tested."² This, amidst his own attempt to revive missionary efforts to the Indians--"The seal of Massachusetts Bay, Mather remembered, depicted an Indian quoting the biblical words 'Come over and help us' "³--reminds us of the ambiguity of the Indian as a symbol in the American imagination. As Jews, Indians retained a noble lineage and must be converted; as Canaanites, they must be swept off in Divine judgement. Providence, as revealed in the progress of "Manifest Destiny" from its earliest days, seems to have joined American governments to favour the latter interpretation and the

¹Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana 2:388-91. Also see Garry Wills, Under God: Religion and American Politics (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p.139.

²Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana 2:390; Wills, Under God, pp.137-139.

³Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.110.

destruction of America's Canaanites.¹

The catastrophes that befell American colonies in the latter part of the seventeenth-century--the near ruin of the colonies in King Philip's War, for instance, and the earthquakes, floods, and famine that joined savages to plague settlers--were interpreted alternately as judgements, punishments inflicted by God upon a backsliding people, or as a grand human participation in the unfolding of God's will. Weary victims were subjected to ministering 'Jeremiahs' calling them to repentance, to fidelity and appeasing sacrifice to God. This outlook was offset by the optimism and expectation of celebrated heroes, their victories being seen as manifestations of God's will, a bestowal of Divine favour and representations of the efficacy of man in the movement of history towards its millennial ends.² Indians were slaughtered according to "sufficient light from the word of God," human agency and history taking up the work where God's plagues had failed.³ Success and relative prosperity,

¹Thomas Morton's New English Canaan (1637), a celebration of America as a second promised land, filled with milk and honey and friendly red men that Americans should join and emulate, was poor prophecy. A century and a half of Indian wars, the annihilation of entire peoples, was celebrated as the 'righteous' approach to the Indian 'problem' in Timothy Dwight's The Conquest of Canaan (1785). This gave a decisive identification of ancient Israel with the new United States in which redskins joined redcoats as the devil's armies--and post-Revolutionary Indian wars became a mopping up, a police action. See Richard Drinnon, Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1980), pp.14, 18, 48-55, 66, and Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence, pp.58-93. Also see Brent Gilchrist, Beyond The Veil (Carleton Univ.: Unpublished research essay, 1995).

²Hawke, The Colonial Experience, pp.243, 301; Slotkin, Fatal Environment, p.55; Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.36-37; Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, p.69.

³John Underhill, as quoted in Hawke, The Colonial Experience, p.157.

however, were again followed by spiritual decline into the eighteenth-century.¹

First Awakening and the American Revolution

Despite the continued outward religiosity of American governments and public life, a general vein of concern ran through New England Puritanism as the new century began. Official invocations of the word of God, such as the biblical inscription on the Provincial Seal of New Jersey, 1697-- "Righteousness exalteth a nation" (Proverb: 14:34)²--seemed insincere, however civil religious, when "men often undertook full membership [as Puritans] only [just] before assuming local political office."³ A mature institutionalized religion struggled with a growing awareness of its own declining relevance in personal lives, coupled with ongoing manifestations of God's displeasure and punishing judgements in catastrophes.⁴ While jeremiads continued the call to righteousness as the avoidance of material 'evils,' earthquakes and the like, the punishment of religious offenders by the state and the persistent berating of all at the hands of the clergy involved an increasingly illegitimate use of authority. Both church and state housed unconverted agents of Divine authority, leaving societies

¹Baritz, City on a Hill, pp.47-48.

²Federer, America's God and Country, p.472.

³Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," p.153.

⁴Milton Cantor, "Great Awakening and Enlightenment," in Main Problems in American History 3rd ed., edited by Howard H. Quint, et al. (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1972), p.38; James West Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), pp.95-97.

divided by such abuse; "'estrangement' between the ordinary people and their leaders in church and state had created unbearable stress," pointing to the need for new sources of legitimacy for authority, both civil and religious.'

The Great Awakening began as stirrings of emotional religiosity in response to this decay of the outward covenant. Early in the century, Solomon Stoddard began searching for a more inclusive membership system than the half-way covenant, some manner of 'harvesting' lost souls into the embrace of authority. Stoddard's grandson, Jonathan Edwards, followed with a revival that secured this American embrace.² This widespread "foretaste of coming glory" was directed eventually at the hearts of all Protestants, regardless of sectarian creeds, unifying Americans in experience and outlook, and ultimately setting the stage for a national incarnation of renewed religious and political legitimacy.³

Edwards joined his grandfather in concern for an inner covenant, striving for an America where religious citizens' actions and beliefs coincide with some political obligation to a "higher law".⁴ This thrust towards the elimination of any gap between the actual and professed America remains the primary motivation of all American renewal. The religious infusion of politics has become typical in America, a spiritual

¹McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.55, 58.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.87.

³Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought, pp.122-125; Cantor, "Great Awakening and Enlightenment," p.39.

⁴Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.20-21.

response to decline and hypocrisy in the public arena. This first great revival, beginning as a crisis of authority, blazed a trail for later revivals in the hearts and minds of the American population. Understanding that people cannot be led from above, but that they must be led from 'within,' Edwards laid down a pattern for American leadership, setting out to penetrate the American masses in two ways: from alongside them as a man of the people, and from within through reason.'

Edwards's mobilization of his own community for revival was copied throughout the American colonies as the Awakening took off in earnest. Itinerant preachers struggled to revitalize individuals, and the revitalization of society was expected to follow. With the shared experience of conversion, and the mobility of the word and spirit through the itinerants, America's common religiosity was pushed to new heights. "Itinerant preaching was the fundamental social phenomenon" of the Awakening, "fraught with importance for the creation of America's identity."² While the established ministers, unconverted opponents to the Awakening, successfully lobbied colonial governments for laws against the itinerants, their fears of anti-authoritarianism revealed a misapprehension of the nature of the revival. They feared changing values and attacks upon the legitimacy of authority as the political

¹Miller, Errand Into The Wilderness, p.163; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.131-133.

²Baritz, City on a Hill, pp.58-59; McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.63, 75, 86-87; Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," pp.161-163.

ramifications of spiritualized religion.¹ In fact, the Awakening sought to renew an original fidelity to American beliefs and to re-establish authority, grounding it in the new legitimacy of "the voice of the people as the voice of God." The democratic appearance of this sentiment is belied by persistent demands of revivalists for more authority, and must be understood as an invitation to all Americans to participate in God's will rather than an antinomian declaration of independence.² The method of that participation, human reason, is subject to diverse manipulations that, after the fashion of its revelation in the Great Awakening, restore the embrace of American authority as legitimate, even Divine.

As the Great Awakening developed, human reason was 'revealed' as the agency of God's participation in the actual world. Sharing common elements and themes with the Enlightenment, the Awakening embraced reason "to banish mystery from the universe" in a revived faith that was accessible to all men.³ Sermons began to explain catastrophes scientifically as having been caused by God indirectly through nature, an "agency of second causes" that could be studied and understood rationally. In this manner, American religion harnessed the forces of the Enlightenment, much as Thomas Aquinas had done with the Aristotelian infusion that challenged the

¹McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.63, 91-94; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.120.

²McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.86-87; Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.97; Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, pp.179-181.

³Cantor, "Great Awakening and Enlightenment," p.42.

Church's legitimacy into the thirteenth century.¹ However American science explained events, God still caused them, but by 1755 the potency of reason and human agency had demonstrated man's superior capacity for the actuation of Divine will. Human history, as opposed to natural history, became the script of Divine intervention through religious and political "tumults."² Thus, the new primacy of interest in human affairs, the discovery as science of economics and politics, for instance--the latter being the "divine science."³ This general blending of religion, morals, and science has characterized American political science from its initiation,⁴ and continues sub-consciously, imbuing American studies with an unacknowledged yet distinctive eighteenth-century flavour.

The introduction of liberal ideas and their portrayal as the will of God involved a politicization of American pulpits as never before. This trend towards humanism, however, was offset by a retention of key religious concepts in association with political thought that enabled a religious revivification of the political world to pre-empt any scientific expulsion of God from the *civitate*.⁵ Even the movement into Deism "was embraced by only a handful of Americans," its rational god discoverable

¹For a discussion of Edwards's integration of Lockean thought into American Christianity, see Pangle, The Spirit of Modern Republicanism, pp.22-24.

²Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought, pp.98-103.

³John Adams, as quoted in Skousen, The Making of America, p.195. Also see Cantor, "Great Awakening and Enlightenment," p.42.

⁴Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.156-157.

⁵Powers Smith, Yankees and God pp.226-227.

through reason alone being too elusive for most seekers. The most radical of Deists, Thomas Paine, has lost his standing among American Founders due to his denunciations of America's biblical god. Yet, even his Deism is not so foreign to civil religion with its belief in a god and its subsequent imposition of political behaviour as religious duty, its demand for religious tolerance, and the prescription for living life according to the expectation of accountability in an afterlife and attendant punishments or rewards. These are the fundamental elements of civil religion, Paine and the Deist minority departing from other Americans only in their methodology, that is their rigid insistence upon the lone rule of reason in the discovery of those religiously imposed political obligations.¹

Although the divisive potential of such individualism was avoided by the religious embrace of reason, an ever-increasing religious pluralism threatened social unity and stability as an unexpected result of the Awakening's revival of authority. Diverse sects gained legal legitimacy as reason justified them and expediency demanded their acceptance--pluralism arose in colonies that needed and encouraged immigration, despite its tendency towards un-Americanism and instability, the two key issues that set the Awakening in motion in the first place. It was in this context that "Benjamin Franklin decided to found a school in 1749, ...prompted particularly by the presence in Pennsylvania of numerous 'foreigners unacquainted with our language, laws and customs.'" His hope was "to see the Germans assimilated and anglicized" by his school's "homogenizing

¹See Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason, Library of Freedom (New York: Gramercy, 1993). Also see Cantor, "Great Awakening and Enlightenment," pp.43-46.

influence."¹ American education has ever responded to the call of its partner, Jeremiah, within the civil religion--it was in Franklin's "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Philadelphia" that he defended "the Necessity of a Publick Religion" as a unifying device.²

The diversity of sectarian pluralism was absorbed by a national cohesion around an emerging common sense concerning American destiny and its subsequently burgeoning common religion. As the importance of human participation in the unfolding of God's design became increasingly self-evident, expectations rose concerning the imminence of the coming millennium and the possibility of America's restoration of itself as a "city on a hill."³ Building upon the new humanistic self-consciousness, Edwards pointed to history as the progress of the work of redemption, a human endeavour in the actualization of the millennial ideal. Human effort and ingenuity were to bring on the millennium in an impatient world wearied of waiting upon the god that waits upon men, yet as participation in the Divine will and a restoration of the "organic human-divine whole" of creation. This context of progressive history injects political, and American, meaning into Edwards's renewal of the call to "Zion" to "put on thy beautiful garments, O America, the holy city."⁴ The city of man becomes the city of God in America's millennial initiation. The entire

¹Kammen, People of Paradox, pp.45, 63-66; Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," pp.155-159.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.155.

³Cherry, God's New Israel, p.29.

⁴Jonathan Edwards, as quoted in Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.98-99.

history of American discovery and settlement becomes a religio-political prelude enacted by God and man together, so "that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there; that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the *new heavens and new earth*."¹

The American millennialism that surged throughout the Great Awakening heightened the importance of current events, elevating every development, however minor, to sacred heights in a renewal of earliest American outlooks. A new world beckoned, once again, as Edwards's post-millennial interpretation became a dominant American self-conception, the context of human upheavals and a looming national genesis.² America became the continuation of scripture, fulfilling biblical prophecy as an actualization of the word of God, rather than a typical mirror. All of human history pointed the way to an American millennium and, as revivalist thinking escalated, to New England specifically as the site for a literal return of Jesus Christ³--a spark in the American mind that, when coupled with the stress on unity that originated from the same source, would explode a century later onto battlefields throughout the rest of America.

As Franklin's school had demonstrated, unity now was marked as a national virtue in response to sectarian conflict being waged as a

¹Jonathan Edwards, "The Latter-Day Glory Is Probably To Begin In America," in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.55-56.

²Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, pp.70-71.

³Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.44-47; Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.107, 111-113; Baritz, City on a Hill, pp.64-65, 93-94.

"figurative war."¹ This bickering was soon pacified by increased unity sentiments engendered through American participation and success in actual warfare, the French and Indian War, an apocalyptic struggle against the forces of evil, the French-Catholic "Scarlet Whore of Babylon." Public religiosity proved itself in recruiting sermons that mustered too many volunteers against a "raging Satan" embodied in "heathen savages" and "French papists." Ultimately, evil was defeated by a combined military and clerical prowess, a successful indication of American righteousness, and of the rhetorical potency of the jeremiad in unifying and reinforcing millennial optimism.²

With the Awakening, the mystical effectiveness of public demonstrations of unity came to reside increasingly in the common religion, now becoming the public religion. Pennsylvania's first official "Fast Day" was proposed by Governor Benjamin Franklin in 1748 as being required by religious duty "to acknowledge their dependence on the Divine Being, ...Almighty God" for His provident intervention in human affairs "for the public good."³ Public prayers gained an increased emphasis in response to war and continued social strife, their intrinsic union and harmony supposedly music in God's ears.⁴ Edwards called for all America

¹Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.116.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.126-127; Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought, pp.197-201; Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.115-116.

³Benjamin Franklin, as quoted in Federer, America's God and Country, p.240.

⁴Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought, pp.166-167.

to unite in prayer for the coming of the Kingdom of God as union from North to South, and this became the revivalists' new object of desire. Consistent with the Awakening mind, these religious sentiments translated directly into political policies, as in Franklin's early proposal for a union of all American colonies: "Benjamin Franklin's 'Join or Die' cartoon, with its drawing of a sectioned snake, had been published in the Pennsylvania Gazette in May 1754, during the French and Indian War." The spiritual strength acquired by common prayer now turned to military strength in fighting together, as inward and outward covenants converged in American victory. Renewed Americans "found a voice in Patrick Henry: 'The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, are no more. I am not a Virginian but an American.' This was not a statement of fact but a rallying cry."¹

American unity became coupled with liberty even at this early stage in national development. The inscription of the tenth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus on the Liberty Bell capped Awakening thinking, celebrating political liberty as Divine, albeit humanly instituted, achievement. The story of Israel, ancient and American, emerged from the Awakening as the story of liberty in anticipation of a "New Canaan of Liberty," and in preparation for the American Revolution.² Thus, a religious Awakening fostered an "intercolonial solidarity" that emerged as a "radical nationalism which in political terms alone put even

¹Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, p.369.

²Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.117-118.

Hamiltonianism to shame."¹ Into the national period, jeremiads continued to celebrate their own contribution to America's ultimate growth "as one living body, animated by one living soul"--colonies becoming states that merged "'into ONE GREAT REPUBLIC' with 'ONE INTEREST--ONE END--ONE HEART AND ONE LIFE.'"²

As Ernest Lee Tuveson points out, "the nascent nationalism that followed the French and Indian War" gave birth to "a conception of the colonies as a separate chosen people, destined to complete the Reformation and to inaugurate world regeneration."³ Through the 1760s, the tyranny that had characterized the papal Anti-Christ was figuratively shifted onto the shoulders of the British king. Americans continued to polarize their political thought in religious terms, the ongoing political struggles being understood in terms of good and evil, as godly forces against those of the Anti-Christ. As the sacralization of liberty continued, so too did its contextualization within the overall American aspiration for unity. New England's religious rhetoric increasingly included all of the colonies, as millennial religiosity infused a growing Revolutionary "ideology" with fervour, and political terminology with religious meaning. Liberty became a sacred right, a necessity in the pursuit of salvation. The Revolution, then, became another step, although history's most

¹Reinhold Niebuhr and Alan Heimert, A Nation So Conceived: Reflections on the History of America from Its Early Visions to Its Present Power (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp.16-17.

²John Murray, "Jerubbaal, or Tyranny's Grove Destroyed, and the Altar of Liberty Finished. ...Delivered at the Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, December 11, 1783," as quoted in ibid., p.18.

³Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, pp.101-102.

dramatic one yet, into the millennial future. "Millennial symbolism ...came to pervade Revolutionary ideology, enabling Americans to perceive the outbreak of war and assertion of national independence as steps towards the realization of God's Kingdom on Earth."¹ It is in this sense that John Adams declared the Revolution to have begun in 1620 with a religious exodus that gave birth to American freedom and independence.²

Louis Hartz insists that America's revolutionary politics are not characterized by millennialism, a particularly European spectre that accounts for much turmoil and upheaval in the Old World. Church and state were allied in the American national genesis, Hartz asserts, their harmony in the Revolution pre-empting any development of a civil religious artifice such as has been required by European governments in the absence of Christian co-operation. In this approach, the United States developed 'naturally' through history as a free nation with no need for millennialism and its propensity for action towards a better world. Americans tended, instead, in the opposite direction, towards the separation of church and state, a luxury affordable by the natural harmony indigenous to the New World.³

This outlook, however, is blinded to American religiosity, and particularly to millennialism, by the very pervasiveness of the thing that

¹Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," pp.49-53.

²John Adams to Thomas Jefferson (1818), as quoted in C.H. Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy, and of Religious and Sectarian Forces, on the American Revolution," American Historical Review 19 (1913-1914), p.44.

³Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, pp.39-49.

it somehow denies, yet celebrates. So much of religion once widely subjectified, becomes invisible, seemingly "given." As we have seen, American freedom and harmony, while they are transmitted through history, are gifts of God in the American mind. Millennialism is not visibly fighting against American governments, church against state, for a better world precisely because that world is believed already to exist, or at least to be well on the way into existence. The American struggle is one to maintain what is in process, to fight off European encroachments and corruption, and to preserve the millennial initiation that is America. American millennialism is partly thrust into the future, partly a celebration and preservation of past accomplishment. Civil religion is not artificially and self-consciously constructed in America because, like freedom, it already exists 'naturally,' the harmony between church and state resisting any corrupt imposition of religion upon politics. Politics are already inherently religious in America.

Hartz is joined by additional interpretations of the American Revolution as a rational, legal transition to local government, and as being no true revolution at all.' This, however, is to skim only the political surface and to ignore the revolution in thought that churns beneath. While the primary goal of the American Revolution was the preservation of political liberty rather than particular social

'For example see Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution and Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics. Also see Franklin Wickwire, "The Conservative Revolution," in Main Problems in American History, ed. Quint et al., pp.65-89.

revolution,' the American understanding of that liberty, hence of its future, had departed dramatically from its European origins:

As Bailyn and the propaganda studies have amply shown, there is simply too much fanatical and millennial thinking even by the best minds that must be explained before we can characterize the Americans' ideas as peculiarly rational and legalistic and thus view the Revolution as merely a conservative defense of constitutional liberties.²

Gordon Wood asserts that millennialism underscores the American Revolution as a true revolution, the quest for a "regenerated society" marking America as a new order, just as religious rhetoric marked revolutionary politics with transcendent meaning.³ Although Thomas Pangle denies this religiosity the status of dominance in the American revolutionary mind, he still finds the powerful grip of Christianity upon the American people distinctive: "Nothing distinguishes more sharply the Americans, in their revolutionary spirit, from the French." Although the commitment of some Deist and Unitarian leaders to the Christian tradition is arguable, all American leaders were, nevertheless, acknowledges Pangle, "in important respects influenced by Christianity" and "they were compelled to speak and accommodate themselves to a Christian citizenry."⁴

The Revolution, then, did not so much change the political and economic order of things as it established the American interpretation of that order, a joint religious and political interpretation bequeathed by

¹Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, p.19.

²Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," in New Perspectives on the American Past, ed. Katz and Kutler, p.118.

³Ibid., p.119.

⁴Pangle, The Spirit of Modern Republicanism, p.21.

"the millenarian impulse of New England Puritanism" and the "eighteenth-century Enlightenment."¹ Together, these strains emerged from the Revolution full-fledged as "civil millennialism,"² the spirit and thrust of the American Civil Religion. As John Adams would later write, "the Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the Minds and Hearts of the People. A Change in their Religious Sentiments of their Duties and Obligations."³ More than any declared list of grievances, American progress and its increasingly national conception in millennial terms, "to the point of overwhelming persuasiveness to the majority of American leaders, ...explains the origins of the American Revolution." American history crystallized in the American mind through the 1760s and early 1770s, so that "Americans had come to think of themselves as in a special category, uniquely placed by history to capitalize on, to complete and fulfil, the promise of man's existence."⁴

American resistance to "foreign" corruption became political almost as immediately as Anglican encroachments upon religious liberty in the 1750s were translated into encroachments upon civil liberty. Temporal and spiritual tyranny were conjoined in the American mind, the inscription of Jefferson's personal motto upon his personal seal--"Rebellion to tyrants

¹Niebuhr and Heimert, A Nation So Conceived, p.125.

²Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, p.53.

³John Adams to Hezekiah Niles, February 13, 1818. See L.H. Butterfield, "John Adams: What Do We Mean by the American Revolution?" in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.246-257.

⁴Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp.20-22.

is obedience to God"--being a typical and guiding sentiment of the Revolution. The Revolution was a political response to a religious, as much as a political, problem, a civil religious phenomenon in its deliberate interpretation by its participants.' As such, the Revolution fits within the pattern of American revivalist politics:

Political influence and corruption were but palpable manifestations of the deeper spiritual malaise of *sin* and iniquity whose rot portended divine retribution unless the people (individually and collectively) repented, prayed for forgiveness, and returned to Christ in humility and faith. ...The general sentiment of the times was that America was a land blessed of Divine Providence, inhabited by a Chosen People, and led through Divine Grace by Christian men of heroic stature.²

Throughout revolutionary propaganda, this notion of "chosenness" imbued Americans with cosmic significance, America becoming the last hope of liberty in an initiation of Christ's kingdom that ensured "the hand of God" in the course of events,³ or at least in their explanation and justification.

"Rationalists" and supposed Deists participated in the promulgation of this religio-political interpretation. "Rationalists" used scripture to explain the context and meaning of the Revolution as apocalyptic, the fulfilment of prophecies found in the Books of Daniel and Revelations.⁴

¹Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp.96-97; Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp.86, 93; Kammen, People of Paradox, p.244.

²Sandoz, A Government of Laws, p.86.

³Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp.140-141.

⁴Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.183.

Paine's call "to begin the world over again" has been interpreted as tacit millennialism,¹ his "common sense" unable to resist the attraction of Providence and design as interpreters of extraordinary, yet human, events. The Old World stood apostate against the New Canaan, according to the design of Heaven, even for Paine.² Revolutionary leaders understood the value of religion as a "mobilization instrument," continuing their expression of political goals in religious rhetoric throughout the Revolution. Religion explained the Revolution to average Americans and moved them as it was successfully preached to them in terms of religious revival.³

The Revolution became an "antidote" for moral decay, repentance leading the way to victory in a renewed "fusion of piety and politics." A new faith in the "regenerative powers of republicanism" involved an ideological intrusion into religious doctrine, such that Locke became conjoined with gospel in American churches.⁴ Old and New Testament justifications for the rebellion were joined to Locke's ideological prescription in a widespread religiosity that co-opted republican

¹Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, p.74.

²Thomas Paine, "On the Present State of American Affairs," excerpt from Common Sense (1776) in Words of Our Nation: A Reader for Americans, ed. John Gabriel Hunt, Library of Freedom (New York: Gramercy, 1993), pp.25-28; Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.121.

³Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," pp.46-48, 53; Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America, p.33; Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp. 129, 135-143.

⁴Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp.114-124; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy ...on the American Revolution," p.49.

principles as Christian values. Politics became millennial as religion became political in this blended republican theology. Israel was reconstructed as a republic, its thirteen tribes paralleling the thirteen colonies, in a religiously fuelled retro-projection of American political realities and values--and the Bible was now subjected to the concerns of current events just as current events were interpreted in the light of scripture.'

Ideology per se remained a possession of the social and political elites throughout the Revolution, yet escaped the fate suffered by the Roman symbology so favoured among elites of the time. Although it provided the only non-biblical symbols in the American Founding, Romanism remained superficial and narrow in its appeal. Even among elites, it took more the form of mere description rather than of an internalized motivation. Religion provided the language that moved Americans, defining the Revolution for most as it both enabled and enforced a religious rhetoric that was used by all. Even Roman symbology, in so far as it was apprehended at all by the ordinary public, was interpreted through biblical eyes, so that "novus ordo" became Christian and millennial. Despite the Roman facade of the emerging republic and its admitted appeal to the imaginations of some Founders, even the most "Roman" 'Fathers' were Christianized. Jefferson's proposal of Israel's Mosaic exodus as a design for the great seal, and his eventual invocation (in his second Inaugural

'Alice M. Baldwin, The New England Clergy and the American Revolution (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1928; rpt. 1958), p.129; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.116-118; Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, pp.12, 16, 70, 79.

Address) of the biblical God as Provident leader of an American Israel, sealed his own fate as a religious symbol in a national embrace of all.¹ His candid insistence that he not be misinterpreted as anti-Christian, but understood instead as a Christian primitivist, or restorationist, was both public and private, and thus an unconditional contribution to his posthumous public Christianization by immersion in American religious rhetoric.² Ideology was spared irrelevance by the same tactic that saved most Founders: conversion, sincere or otherwise, into the American-Christian faith.

The wavering Deist John Adams conjoined civil and religious tyranny, hence civil and religious liberty, from the outset of revolutionary thinking. Church and state were linked in a civil religious rhetoric that surrounded the Stamp Act and its repeal as part of "Divine" politics, followed by the interposition of God, as exposed by Adams, to reveal additional schemes in the British conspiracy against American freedom.³ "Liberty, both civil and religious," became the "constant, concise statement of the revolutionary cause, ...reiterated by everyone, everywhere."⁴ Adams's early conviction that liberty was a Divine right

¹Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp.25-26, 32-33; Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.22-24, 44; Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, pp.73-74.

²Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, as quoted in In God We Trust: The Religious Beliefs and Ideas of the American Founding Fathers, ed. Norman Cousins, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), p.117.

³Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp.101, 121-122.

⁴Hudson, "Liberty, Both Civil and Religious," p.73.

whose preservation was dependent upon the public dissemination of its godly origins become active in the Revolution as "the will of Heaven," proven by victory and the later Federal Convention of "heroes, sages, and demigods."¹ Adams was joined by Jefferson in the assertion that the Federal Convention was "an assembly of demigods."²

Although Adams had rejected Christian atonement early on, his Deism is more representative of strides towards common and civil religion, than towards any theological rigidity. Adams recognized a general Christianity as the truth that ran through all Christian sects and, despite the tenets of Deism, remained expectant of a "utopian paradise" to be built upon biblical precepts. Adams's mingling of scientific and religious speculation was further removed from any proximity to strict Deism by his continued belief in the intervention of God and his constant association of the Laws of Nature with the Laws of God.³ Adams's diary and personal letters reveal a sincerity of belief in the god of the Bible and in Providence, so that his published appeals for religious and clerical resistance to British tyranny cannot be seen as mere rhetorical manipulation. Elites and masses were united in passionate and emotional belief that was communicated both religiously and politically, culminating

¹John Adams, as quoted in Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp.101, 106-107.

²Thomas Jefferson, as quoted in ibid., p.106.

³John Adams, Diary excerpts (1756-1765), in In God We Trust, ed. Cousins, pp.74-84; David Freeman Hawke, A Transaction of Free Men: The Birth and Course of the Declaration of Independence (New York: Scribner, 1964; rpt. New York: De Capo Press, 1989), pp.79, 113.

in violence in the service of God.¹

Political sermons proved more consistent and more effective in stirring Americans to revolution than did books, pamphlets, philosophers and politicians combined. The clergy taught inalienable rights and covenant government from pulpits, at town meetings, county conventions, and provincial conferences, even calling Americans to war to "wield the sword of the Lord." So successful were ministers and their sermons in recruiting soldiers and crystallizing public opinion around the revolutionary cause that legislative resolutions commanded the publication and distribution of those sermons throughout the colonies. The Presbyterian pulpit promoted the Revolution so strongly that it became known in some parts as the "Presbyterian Rebellion," Princeton University following in reputation as a "revolutionary nest" instigated by John Witherspoon, its President and clerical signer of the Declaration of Independence.² In all, political sermons deeply moved Americans, striking chords that resonated throughout the nation in a vibrant unison of religion and politics.

As the Revolution wore on, political sermons increased, however much governments and churches gradually shifted their religious rhetoric from

¹John Adams and Abigail Adams letters, in Words of Our Nation, ed. Hunt, pp.17-22; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.134-136; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy ...on the American Revolution," pp.52-53.

²Cherry, God's New Israel, pp.61-62; Powers Smith, Yankees and God, p.285; Baldwin, The New England Clergy and the American Revolution, pp.124-125; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy ...on the American Revolution," p.55; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.138-139.

mobilization and dissent to national legitimation and perseverance.¹ Recognizing the value of these religio-political sermons, the Continental Congress initiated "Fast Days," opportunities for occasional sermons and re-dedication of resources to the cause. From 1774 to 1776, all colonial governments declared "Fast Days" and published as patriotic pamphlets attendant sermons inciting resistance against the British. Throughout 1775 and 1776, sermons increasingly preached obedience to the Continental Congress and, from 1776 onward, consistently stressed union and obedience to the Congress.²

Such religiosity was not restricted to the clerical affiliate of the new government, but was endemic to the Congress, as well as to local governments. The "Fast Days" became annual instigations of the Continental Congress for the remainder of the decade, the resolutions referring to God, the "Great Governor of the World," acknowledging his "superintending providence" and "our indispensable duty ...to reverence and adore his immutable justice, as well as to implore his merciful interposition for our deliverance" and to "deplore our offenses against him." Despite, or perhaps because of, the assertions by later resolutions that "Almighty God in the righteous dispensation of his providence hath permitted the continuation of a cruel and desolating war in our land" as "evident tokens of his displeasure," the Congress persistently invited Divine mercy and

¹Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.201; Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," p.53; Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp.137-140.

²Baldwin, The New England Clergy and the American Revolution, pp.123, 133; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy ...on the American Revolution," p.58.

forgiveness through "the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ." God was expected to respond to expressions of repentance for sins and gratitude for divine blessings, "that it may please the Lord of Hosts, the God of America, to animate our officers and soldiers with invincible fortitude" that liberty and peace might be restored "for the promotion and enlargement of that kingdom which consisteth in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Victory was expected to accompany "fasting, humiliation, and prayer" as Americans amended their "lives according to his Holy Word" and their resolve according to such civil religious invocations.¹

The first official act of the new Continental Congress (1774) was to call for prayer in response to British hostilities at Boston, the invocation of America's god "in the name of Jesus Christ" being accompanied by scripture reading to open a new dispensation.² This first Congress officially declared its opposition to the Quebec French laws in the name of Protestant Christianity, the explicitly declared religion of the new republic.³ Massachusetts responded to the war with Christian rhetoric as well, its Congress and President John Hancock resolving to call for repentance on the part of the people to deflect from them God's

¹"Continental Congress: Fast Days and Thanksgiving Days," Resolutions of June 12, 1775; March 16, 1776; November 1, 1777; March 7, 1778; March 20, 1779; October 18, 1780, in Nationalism and Religion in America: Concepts of American Identity and Mission, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 26-30.

²"Journals of the Continental Congress, September 6-7, 1774," as quoted in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.136-137, 220-221.

³"Articles of Association" of the Continental Congress, September, 1774, Article X, in ibid., p.139.

punishment.¹ John Adams renewed the Puritan denunciation of success and prosperity as the corridor of sin and decline, thus of negative Divine judgement.² Massachusetts did not depend solely upon repentance and Providence, however, as human agency was portrayed as the arbiter of God's will in the politics of post-Awakening America. The Congress of Massachusetts declared resistance to tyranny a Christian duty, charging its Minutemen and militia to be good Christians in propitiation of Providence, Hancock and his Congress officially asserting that God rules over armies according to their sins and His forgiveness and grace. Thus the call for Massachusetts' own day of fasting and prayer.³

The new year saw the continuation of American civil religious invocations in the cause of war, its legitimation, and the sanctification of the emerging nation's tenuous life. The Continental Congress called for public worship and prayers on the part of all Christians, regardless of denomination, following its own invocation of God in the American declaration of war with a resolution for the Congress to "attend divine service" together twice in one day.⁴ The year 1775 witnessed Provincial laws and declarations that continued to buttress a Christian definition of the new country at local levels, for example Massachusetts' Christian

¹John Hancock and the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, in ibid., p.134.

²Hawke, A Transaction of Free Men, p.98.

³John Hancock and Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, resolutions quoted in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.59-60, 426-428.

⁴"The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms," Continental Congress, July 6, 1775; Continental Congress Resolution, July 19, 1775, in ibid., pp.139-140.

Sabbath law invoking God and Christ where North Carolina's Mecklenburg County Resolution enshrined Him as conjointly sovereign with Congress.¹ Georgia's Congress followed the pattern of Congressional days of fasting and prayer, unanimously passing motions of thanks to preachers for excellent sermons on their behalf.² While some legislators did their own preaching outside the hallowed halls of Congress, invoking Christian responsibility for the security of American freedom, Patrick Henry's famous "give me liberty or give me death" speech at the Second Virginia Convention enframed his sentiments within "the great responsibility we hold to God and our country." Henry insisted that "an appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us," in a Lockean-Puritan-American fusion of ideological and religious symbolism. Henry's invocation of the supposed Deist "God of nature" is revealing in its equation as the Providential "Almighty God" and the biblical "Lord of Hosts."³ America's god has many names, finding unity only in His vague, thus general, apprehension by His people.

In the midst of revolution conducted as a "civil war," Revolutionary soldiers joined their Congressional leaders in a religious self-consciousness that persistently points in the direction of a "holy war."

¹Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, Resolution June 16, 1775, in ibid., pp.633-634; "Mecklenburg County Resolutions," North Carolina, May 20, 1775, in ibid., p.482.

²Motions of the Provincial Congress of Georgia, July 4 and 5, 1775, in ibid., p.260.

³Patrick Henry, "Liberty or Death" (Virginia Convention, St. John's Church, Richmond, Virginia; March 23, 1775) in Great American Speeches, ed. Gregory R. Suriano, Library of Freedom (New York: Gramercy, 1993), pp.1-4; Also in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.288.

At Fort Ticonderoga, Ethan Allen demanded unconditional surrender "in the Name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress."¹ Such pretention was not extraordinary in the Revolutionary Army, as is witnessed by George Washington's communications and pronouncements throughout the course of the war. From the commencement of hostilities, Washington refused communion as a political statement, reinforcing his religio-political outlook with repeated orders for soldiers to act as Christians and to attend "divine service, so as to implore the blessings of heaven upon" their cause. His instruction to officers to set Christian examples by not cursing as a further invocation of "the blessing of Heaven on our Arms" seems Puritan in its religious concern for the smallest detail. However, lest the mundane cloud one's vision of the sublime, Washington assured his "zealous ...good Citizens and Soldiers" that their civic duty was only a lesser religious performance that must be attended by "the higher duties of Religion. To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian" as American success demands "the warmest returns of Gratitude and Piety to the Supreme Author of all Good." Washington's advice to the Delaware Chiefs in 1779 to learn civilized ways--"and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ" was repeated to his own people upon disbanding the army at war's end (1783) in yet another invocation of God's blessings upon the American people, imploring His protection and intervention to make all Americans Christian. Thus, Washington left his country and Congress in his

¹Ethan Allen, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.25-26.

god's hands.¹

Lesser patriots appreciated the potency of religion in the Revolution's progress, some raiding the tomb of Awakening "star" George Whitfield to gaze upon his corpse for inspiration. These officers, including Benedict Arnold, stole Whitfield's clerical collar and cuffs, later passing them among their ranks to inspire them.² Such inspiration was needed through the lean war years of 1775 and 1776. Congress joined its army in the propitiation of their god, appointing "Fast Days" through resolutions presented by members who renewed their importance for the new regime. William Livingstone, a future signer of the Constitution and first Governor of New Jersey, invoked Jesus Christ while calling for repentance in a resolution that passed unanimously.³ John Dickinson, whose campaign for the Constitution as "Fabius" rewarded him with eternal status as a signatory of that founding document, declared before the Congress America's confidence in the mercies of God and, following the spirit of the recent Awakening, in His "Divine wisdom" as revealed in the hearts and minds of his countrymen. Such wisdom, however, was apparently particular

¹George Washington, "Letter to Benedict Arnold, September 14, 1775; Instructions to Arnold, September 14, 1775; General Orders, 1775-79 (Headquarters, Cambridge, July 4, 1775; Headquarters, New York, July 9, 1776; Headquarters, New York, August 3, 1776; Headquarters, Valley Forge, May 2, 1778; Headquarters, Moores House, July 29, 1779); Speech to Delaware Chiefs, May 12, 1779; Circular Letter to the Governors of the States on Disbanding the Army, Headquarters, Newburgh, June 8, 1783; Address to Congress, December 23, 1783," in In God We Trust, ed. Cousins, pp.47-56.

²Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," p.167.

³Journal of the Continental Congress, March 16, 1776; Continental Congress, Appointment of Fast Day, May 16, 1776, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.395, 141.

as to its repository--Dickinson and his fellow Pennsylvania delegates to the independence Convention having recommended a Christian oath test for its membership, one that professed faith in the Holy trinity and acknowledged "the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by Divine inspiration."¹ The civil religion at this stage in its development was built upon a generalized religion of Christianity alone.

On July 1, 1776, John Adams stood in the Continental Congress and called down God's blessings upon independence. The next day, Congress approved the wording of the Declaration of Independence, its references to God the Creator and His Divine Providence being general enough, yet also particular enough, for all. After all had signed their approval, Samuel Adams declared this moment as the restoration of God to His throne in heaven and an enunciation of His coming kingdom. As if to hasten that kingdom, the Declaration of Independence was followed immediately by a Congressional order sending military chaplains to every regiment for the purpose of Christianizing the Continental Army. Congress sought to ensure its own fidelity in perpetuity by appointing a resident chaplain to pray daily in its sessions.²

John Adams prophesied the future civil religious celebration of this founding moment, missing the eventual historical mark by only two days in his July 3, 1776 proclamation to Congress:

the second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America, to be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival, commemorated as

¹Ibid., pp.211-214.

²Ibid., pp.141-143, 145-146.

the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty from one end of the Continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore.¹

The initiation of such celebration involved the first reading aloud of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 1776, to the peals of the biblically emblazoned Liberty Bell.²

Although America's early civil religion remained a porous Christianity, its strident Protestant temper was quieted by the Revolution. American Catholics fighting alongside patriots did much to soften any religious rhetoric of difference, as did the aid of Catholic France to the American cause. Washington announced France's entrance to the war as evidence that God was on the American side--an early indication of the American national god that assimilates all, Catholicism becoming just another sect within American pluralism. Necessity now submerged the Protestant prejudices that had moved Samuel Adams to denounce to Mohawks the Quebec Act as a vehicle of false gods, or that had moved Americans to celebrate as a colonial custom Guy Fawkes Day--an earlier civil religious ritual in which "the pope and the Devil were religiously burned."³ Catholic participation in the patriot cause was directed selfishly, at least in part, toward the achievement of an increased religious toleration and recognition of Catholic rights. That is to say, Catholics joined the struggle in an opportunistic strike into America's civil religion. The

¹John Adams, in ibid., p.143.

²Ibid., p.144.

³George Washington Proclamation, May 1, 1777, in ibid., p.642; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.143-146; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy ...on the American Revolution," pp.59-60.

sentimental rewards of tolerance through the struggle were joined by "official" rewards as Charles Carroll, a prominent Catholic layman, signed the Declaration of Independence.¹

Some new constitutions reflected and entrenched this newly broadened civil religiosity. The Constitution of Maryland (1776), of course, established a generalized Christianity and dutiful worship of the god to whom a debt of gratitude was owed for American liberties.² The Constitution of Delaware (1776) included a Christian oath test for membership in both legislative houses, written by one George Read, signer of the Declaration of Independence and future signatory of the federal Constitution, as well as future United States Senator and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Delaware.³ Such "tolerance" was not unanimously American, however, as North Carolina re-established a Protestant oath test for public office in its constitution, a test that would exclude Catholics until 1835 and Jews until 1868 when America's Christianity had consolidated its identity through another "civil war." Thus, the American embassy sent to Canada to "preach" revolution could speak only for the Continental Congress and, perhaps, some of the new states, in declaring the free exercise of religion and the right of any Christian to hold

¹Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.120-121, 132.

²"The Constitution of the State of Maryland," August 14, 1776, Articles XXXV and XXXVI, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.420-421.

³Ibid., pp.527, 528; See p.528 for Article XXII of the Constitution of the State of Delaware, 1776.

public office as enticements to the American cause.' In fact, six states emerged as officially Protestant while all state governments joined the national government in the insistence upon the existence of a god and some religiously imposed political duty to Him--the foundations of civil religion.² Several state constitutions would continue to prohibit Jews, Moslems, and atheists from public office and the vote into the 1840s. Professed atheists only became fully enfranchised in America during the twentieth century.³

The promulgation of God's word proceeded under the care of the Continental Congress, shortages of Bibles being answered by ordered imports and, eventually, by Congressional order for the printing of Bibles for public schools. Finally, Congress approved for printing the "Bible of the Revolution" which it endorsed on the facing page. This was in harmony with John Adams's conviction of the word's necessary dissemination as protector of liberty, and takes its place in the long list of

¹"Constitution of the State of North Carolina," 1776, Article XXXII (altered in 1835 and 1868), in *ibid.*, p.482; "Preamble to the Constitution of the State of North Carolina," 1868, in *ibid.*, p.483; Roger Sherman, John Adams, and George Wythe, "Instructions to the Canadian Embassy," in *ibid.*, p.559.

²James H. Smylie, "Protestant Clergy, the First Amendment and Beginnings of a Constitutional Debate, 1781-91," in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Elwyn A. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p.117; Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, pp.427-428; John M. Murrin, "Religion and Politics in America From the First Settlements to the Civil War," in Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), pp.29-30; "Articles of Confederation," 1777-1781, "Constitution of the State of Georgia," 1777, "Constitution of the State of Massachusetts," 1780, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.29, 148, 261, 429-430.

³D. Michael Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1994), pp.107, 344 n.9.

accomplishments by human agency that, in the American view, joined Divine powers to ensure the ratification of the Articles of Confederation.¹ Congress's sincerity of commitment to the importance of the Bible is captured symbolically in President Elias Boudinot's later foundation of the American Bible Society²--this Founding Father's embrace of all American scripture being a total, thus religious Americanism.

The Founding Fathers

Throughout the 1780s, state governors, including Massachusetts' John Hancock and Virginia's Thomas Jefferson, continued to proclaim days of thanksgiving and prayer to "Almighty God" for His disposition in favour of American liberty. The Continental Congress persisted as well, declaring for instance, national thanks for Divine deliverance from Benedict Arnold, and General Washington echoed Congress in his letter issued to American troops: its insistence that Divine exposure of Arnold was yet another affirmation of whose side God was on.³ By the war's end, Washington himself would become such proof, his presence on the American scene elevated to the heroic if not the sublime.

¹Federer, America's God and Country, pp.146, 25, 148-149.

²Ibid., pp.60-61.

³Governor John Hancock and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "A Proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving," November 8, 1783; President of the State of New Hampshire, John Langdon, "A Proclamation for a Day of public Fasting and Prayer," February 21, 1786; Governor Thomas Jefferson, Virginia, 1779-1781; Continental Congress, "Proclamation for a Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer," October 18, 1780 (re: Benedict Arnold); in ibid., pp.276, 430, 359-360, 469, 322-323, 148, 645.

Ezra Stiles, a "student of the Enlightenment,"¹ returned America to its original "moment" in "the clearest Revolutionary statement concerning the congruence of Old Testament Israel and modern America." Basing his remarks "on Deuteronomy 26:19, a passage detailing God's exaltation of Israel, Stiles concluded that the verse was 'allusively prophetic of the future prosperity and splendor of the United States.'"² In this Puritan rehearsal, Washington, like Moses, was invested with eternal life.

With Stiles, the Revolution was "retold as a heroic tale in the rhetoric of an Old Testament parable."³ Ellis Sandoz describes the language as "apocalyptic" in its description of "America's messianic destiny ...meditated to the point where the 'collective body of the United States' is evoked in close analogy to the mystical body of Christ ordained to 'illumine the world with TRUTH and LIBERTY.'"⁴ Stiles introduced this occasional sermon, preached to the Governor and General Assembly of Connecticut, as "a discourse upon the political welfare of God's American Israel." Greater things were promised for the United States, a prophetic future ensured by Washington, "this American Joshua ...raised up by God and divinely formed ...for the great work of leading the armies of this American Joseph." Although God's direct intervention and miraculous

¹Kammen, People of Paradox, p.54.

²Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p.44.

³Sandoz, A Government of Laws, p.110.

⁴Ibid., p.110.

providence in battle was credited with victory, Stiles asked "who but a Washington, inspired by heaven, could have" led America to its millennial fulfilment. This human endeavour, "the UNION of THE STATES, the PURITY OF CONGRESS, and the unshaken PATRIOTISM OF EVERY GENERAL ASSEMBLY" was assured by God's business in every detail.'

In Stiles's oration, what has been supposed as "Deist" language stood prominently alongside Christian messages of primitivist restoration. Stiles implored the world to contemplate and praise Washington, that in his victory "may this great event excite and elevate our first, our highest acknowledgements to the SOVEREIGN MONARCH of UNIVERSAL Nature, to the Supreme Disposer and Controller of all Events, ...the Most High, the God of armies ...the Omnipotent ...Lord of Hosts." Presented to the world as God's anointed "HERO, ...the great ornament of human kind," Washington was "beloved, enshielded and blessed by the great Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness as well as peace." The Revolution was declared the literal fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy, America the expectant host of all knowledge, sects, and tribes--the gathering of the Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles became American projects, the completion of the Revolution in a Christian restoration of "one language, one faith, one religion."² This became "the controlling self-interpretation of the founding ...and it remained substantially controlling as the basis of Americanism, the common

¹Ezra Stiles, "The United States Elevated To Glory And Honour (A Sermon preached before Governor Jonathan Trumbull and the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, Hartford, at the Anniversary Election, May 8, 1783)," in God's New Israel ed. Cherry, pp.82-87.

²Ezra Stiles in ibid., pp.88-92.

sense of the nation."¹

The mythification of Washington while he lived, and his apotheosis in the next life, gave perpetuity to the unifying symbol that he had become throughout America's revolutionary and constitutional struggles.² Even as he lived, some clergymen warned the nation against an obvious and ongoing apotheosis of the general, of his comparison to Moses, Gideon, Joshua and, occasionally, to Christ. "Clearly, Washington became the first 'saint' in the American civil religion."³ He stood alongside the gospel of Jesus Christ, revolutionary victory and, most recently, the new and "excellent constitution" as gifts from God in Samuel Langdon's 1788 echo of Ezra Stiles. Such gifts witnessed that "God hath graciously patronized our cause and taken us under his special care, as he did his ancient covenant people."⁴

The assertion of significant parallels between Washington and Moses established similar parallels between America and ancient Israel, reassuring Americans of their "chosenness." The American project gained sanctification as part of the Divine plan, its spiritual purity blending with that of Israel, just as Moses and Washington shared the same spiritual origins. Parallels were drawn between the numbers of covenant people saved in the two nations, the numbers of tribes to colonies, and

¹Sandoz, A Government of Laws, p.111.

²Wills, Under God, p.154.

³Cherry, God's New Israel, p.63.

⁴Samuel Langdon, "The Republic Of The Israelites An Example To The American States (1788)," in ibid., pp.98-99.

the mutual necessity of God's favour for victory and salvation. These outer parallels reinforced American assurance of inner parallels of virtue. America, however, even eclipsed Israel in its fidelity, as Washington surpassed Moses in his ability to complete his mission, to finally dwell in the Promised Land. Washington became a composite Moses-Joshua, a deliverer and political saviour in sermons given through the rest of the century, and was, thus, representative of America as a continuing "Old Testament" people.¹ "The predisposition to read Scripture typically and to regard the United States as a new Israel naturally led ministers to stress the grand narratives of the Old Testament." Laying foundations for a reactionary Southern resistance to future Northern, New Testament incursions, "well into the national period, the public Bible of the United States was for all intents the Old Testament."²

Washington actively participated in his own mythification through Providential rhetoric, religious interpretations of personal and national life, and the active development of public ceremonialism and symbolism. Ever self-conscious and deliberate, Washington's religious rhetoric was intended as definitive, his public posture as original--a pattern of precedents for posterity. The "Father of His Country" used the presidency "as an excellent pulpit from which to spread public religion," and to promote its institutions. Ceremonial statements expressed this religiosity in terms that were "noble, vague, and bland," making it "palatable to

¹Robert P. Hay, "George Washington: American Moses," American Quarterly 21:4 (1959), pp.780-791.

²Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation," pp.44-45.

people in the denominations."¹ That is to say, Washington's enlightenment language acted as an innocuous vehicle to carry religious messages to diverse believers, unifying them not only in the language, but also in its accompanying symbolism and ritual.

Washington's less pompous occasional sermons are found to be more precise in their religious language, specifically in their Christianity. His praises for "genuine, vital religion" were several times sung in unison with admonitions for Americans to be more Christian. Describing America as "enlightened," Washington asserted an American absence of bigotry and superstition accomplished by truth and reason as a foundation for personal worship of the God from whom he called down blessings upon his "audience." This same god had His "finger" in "those dark and mysterious events" that led to the new Constitution, however, and still required 'priests' and 'prophets' to ensure His people's understanding.²

Washington was such a 'holy' man. His assertion upon ratification of the Constitution, that God "has led us too long and too far ...to forsake us in the midst of it," was a typically expectant American apprehension of

¹Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.158.

²George Washington, "Reply to an Address Sent by the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in the United States (Address dated May 26, 1789; Washington's Reply Undated)"; "Message to the Bishop of the Methodist Church of New York, May 29, 1789"; "Reply to an Address Sent by the General Convention of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, August, 19, 1789"; "Letter to the Members of the New Church in Baltimore, January 27, 1793"; "Letter to Jonathan Trumbull, July 20, 1788," in In God We Trust, ed. Cousins, pp.59, 62, 70.

the Divine will.¹ From the commencement of his presidency, Washington would ensure American participation in that will, His government's promulgation of it to its people. Gratitude to God was declared a religio-political duty, a "Day of Thanksgiving" once again ordered to appease the "great Lord and Ruler of Nations," and to invite further blessings of peace and prosperity for "the true religion."² The American people "whose God is Jehovah,"³ had only that spring been blessed with what Clinton Rossiter calls a "touching little sermon"--Washington's First Inaugural Address.⁴

Rossiter attributes a fundamental importance to this first Inaugural. It asserted a primary American concern for the public good achievable under God, although Washington insisted "upon calling God anything except God." It "set an example that has been converted by time and memory into one of our few great national rituals." As well, Rossiter asserts, Washington's "remarks" embody the most challenging expression of "American Mission" in national history. "Of all the words of inspiration that Washington spoke in his career as public man, none were more influential, because none were more expressive of the American character." Rossiter invokes this Address across the ages, as a reminder of national purpose

¹George Washington to Benjamin Lincoln, June 30, 1788, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.648.

²George Washington, "National Day of Thanksgiving Proclamation," October 3, 1789, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.654.

³George Washington, as quoted in Federer, America's God and Country, p.655.

⁴Clinton Rossiter, "George Washington," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, p.194.

and "a destiny more exalted than our own freedom and well-being" and by which American action is to be judged--a prophetic invocation of American civil religion.¹

In this Address, Washington makes it his "first official act" to praise God from whom all blessings flow, personal and national, this being, to him, both a personal duty to God and political duty to his nation in his role as the people's representative, thus their voice. As if he were a Puritan, Washington attributes every American step into freedom to providential care, taking the opportunity to remind his fellow Americans that they must, as a nation, remember the "eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained," lest they risk quenching that "sacred fire of liberty" entrusted to them for mankind.² Adding "so help me God" to the end of his oath, Washington "laid his hand upon verses 13 to 33" of the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, "which recounts Jacob's blessing of Joseph as the prince of his brethren"³--a new American Joseph, Washington, receives charge of his "brethren" as America, the new tribe of Joseph, continues its charge for the world. The Masonic Bible that Washington touched that day belonged to St. John's Lodge No.1 of New York. "The oath was administered by Robert Livingstone, Grand Master of New York's Grand Lodge. ...The marshal of the day was another Freemason, General Jacob Morton. Yet another Freemason, General

¹Ibid., pp.194-195.

²George Washington, "First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789, Federal Hall, New York, New York," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.3-6.

³Sandoz, A Government of Laws, pp.112-113.

Morgan Lewis, was Washington's escort. ...Washington himself at the time was Master of Alexandria Lodge No.22, Virginia."¹ This Masonic presence forms part of the American undercurrent of generalizing religiosity and symbolic ritual and pageantry that are fused in the civil religion.

Gordon Wood assures us of the importance in this process of Freemasonry: "It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of Masonry for the American Revolution." It "created national icons that are still with us," and embodied "ideals of sociability and cosmopolitanism" that fostered the pluralist unity that is resident in America's civil religion. Wood asserts that "Freemasonry was a surrogate religion for an Enlightenment suspicious of traditional Christianity," offering "ritual, mystery, and congregativeness without the enthusiasm and sectarian bigotry of organized religion." As well, Masonry was a republican institution.² With the new national founding and its successful interpolation into religious destiny, it should not be surprising to find those in positions of both Masonic and national leadership transferring their fraternity to the nation, their common religiosity and symbolic ritual to its government.

The list of Masonic figures who were prominent in the American Revolution and national Founding is lengthy and impressive. Of them, Benjamin Franklin was an early Grand Master. John Hancock, Ethan Allen, and Paul Revere were members. Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee were

¹Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989; rpt. Corgi, 1993), p.348.

²Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, p.223.

alleged members, and President Peyton Randolph of the First Continental Congress was the Provincial Grand Master of Virginia.' One quarter of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, and Washington presiding, were Freemasons,² as were nine known (and perhaps, in actuality, twice that many) signatories to the Declaration of Independence. Twelve Freemasons participated in the Boston Tea Party, another twelve participants joining their brethren later.³ Throughout the Awakening, "Freemasonry would come to suffuse the whole of colonial administration, society and culture." It was shared by officer and soldier alike in the "Continental army, where, in the absence of regimental traditions, Freemasonry formed the basis for '*élan vital*' and '*esprit de corps*'"--a unifying force in conjunction with the common religion.⁴

Although Masonic influence on the Federal Constitution is unclear--the constitution is claimed by Masons to duplicate their Masonic federalism exactly, influenced by four Masonic thinkers of the "five dominant and guiding spirits behind the Constitution"--the contribution of Freemasonry to national symbolism and ritual, thus the civil religion, is highly demonstrable. Some Masons envisioned the Revolution as "the

¹Baigent and Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge, pp.274, 300-301, 304, 308.

²Alice J. Hall, "James Madison: Architect of the Constitution," National Geographic 172:3 (September, 1987), p.357.

³Baigent and Leigh, The Temple and the Lodge, pp.321, 385-386.

⁴Ibid., pp.286, 338.

⁵Ibid., pp.342-347.

foundation of the ideal Freemasonic republic."¹ The Capitol building's cornerstone ceremony provides an example of the symbolic merger of national, religious, and Masonic symbolism. Presided over by the Grand Lodge of Maryland with Washington present as Master, and attended by numerous Maryland and Virginia lodges, the pompous celebration began as

a great procession, which included a company of artillery. Then came a band, followed by Washington himself, attended by all officers and members of the lodges in full regalia. When he reached the trench in which the south-east cornerstone was laid, Washington was presented with a silver plate commemorating the event and inscribed with the designations of the lodges in attendance. The artillery fired a volley. Washington then descended into the trench and placed the plate on the stone. Around it, he placed containers of corn, wine and oil--standard symbolic accoutrements of Freemasonic ritual. All present joined in prayer and Masonic chanting, and the artillery fired another volley. Washington and his entourage then moved to the east of the cornerstone, where the president, standing on a traditionally Masonic three-stepped rostrum, delivered an oration. More Masonic chanting followed, and a final volley from the artillery. The gavel, the silver trowel, the square and the level used by Washington for the ceremony [being Masonic symbols] are today held by Potomac Lodge No. 5 of the District of Columbia. The [Masonic] apron and the sash he wore are held by his own lodge, Alexandria No.22.²

The geometric layout of Washington D.C. was altered from Pierre L'Enfant's original plan, to include "octagonal patterns incorporating the particular cross used as a device by Masonic Templars."³ This "holy city" still contains L'Enfant's diagonal street patterns, however, which form a star of David, or "Solomon's seal" in the city's centre, as is clearly visible

¹Ibid., pp.323-324.

²Ibid., p.349.

³Ibid., pp.349-350.

on the original design engraved on L'Enfant's tomb at Arlington cemetery.'

This same Solomon's seal rests atop America's eagle on the American Seal, visible daily on the dollar bill. Joseph Campbell asserts that "the eagle is the downcoming of the god into the field of time. The bird is the incarnation principle of the deity. ...This is the American counterpart of the eagle of the highest god." The eagle's thirteen leaves of laurel and thirteen arrows point alternate directions of millennial approach to the new world. Solomon's seal is composed of thirteen stars, placed in two tetrakys, or ten-pointed triangles, sharing a common centre--"the creative centre out of which the universe and all things have come, ...the initial sound (a Christian might say, the creative word), out of which the whole world was precipitated." This American universal centre can be found in the centre of the capital city, in the vicinity of Freedom Plaza. The alternate drawing on the Great Seal of the United States features the Masonic all-seeing eye, the eye of God smiling down upon the American project--the unfinished pyramid of thirteen ranges resting on the foundation of '1776.' "The number thirteen is the number of transformation and rebirth. At the Last Supper there were twelve apostles and one Christ, who was going to die and be reborn." The American Founders "were very conscious of the number thirteen as the number of resurrection and rebirth and new life, and they played it up here all the way through."² Through

¹Alice J. Hall, "L'Enfant's Washington," National Geographic 180:2 (August, 1991), p.134 (photograph by Sisse Brimberg).

²Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, The Power of Myth (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp.24-28.

such pomp and ceremony, and especially through the enduring symbology of the American Civil Religion, these men now mingle with the gods.¹

The Federal Constitution emerged as a response to the democratic surge inherent in the Revolution. The first priority of post-Revolutionary political leaders, to curb populism and democratic individualism, was shared by clerical leaders who became federalists in a quest for renewed authority. A power vacuum in central government existed alongside concerns about post-Revolutionary vice and declining public virtue.² Again, American success demanded Puritanical responses. Democracy menaced the Founders' notion of liberty, identified by Richard Hofstadter as linked to property and necessarily standing opposed to ultimate democratic ends.³ In the Constitution, American leadership shifted from mobilizing power to reconciling power, checking and balancing its capacities in a renewed emphasis upon the outward covenant. Civil authorities became the true ministers of god, pursuing and administering the public good through a mechanical apparatus that enabled governments to rely upon public virtue

¹The rear wall of Washington's tomb is engraved with verses from the eleventh chapter of John, including: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." As one ascends the staircase of the Washington monument, tribute blocks bearing civil religious quips, such as "IN GOD WE TRUST" and "MAY HEAVEN TO THIS UNION CONTINUE ITS BENEFICENCE," join scriptural passages from Old and New Testaments, such as "SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES" and "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (of Masonic significance as well), can be read in preparation for contemplation at the pinnacle, capped in metal engraved with the words: "Praise be to God." See Federer, America's God and Country, pp.665-666.

²Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.135; Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, pp.100, 110-115.

³Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition And The Men Who Made It (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1974), pp.12-13.

no longer, or so many writers now suppose.' Whereas the Revolution existed in the spirit of conversion, carrying with it the zeal of an American sect, the Constitution responded to the next generation, so to speak, with the external covenant of an American church² harnessing the forces loosed by, and finally completing the work of, the Awakening.

The Constitution is a product of the Awakening in at least two ways: the nature of its accomplishment and the nature of its operation. In its accomplishment, the Constitution is a document of enlightened liberalism, a product of rational "controversy and debate." As Daniel Boorstin asserts, "it emerged from the conversation and debates of men whose names and lives we know, and from their outspoken disagreement."³ Despite the reputedly open and rational nature of the Constitutional debate, however, man's agency was once again bolstered by its cosmic significance within a superimposed sacred context. Keeping pace with its time--fully one-third of all citations in propaganda and pamphlets from 1760 to 1805 were biblical⁴--Divine sanction was claimed by forces for and against the federal document, in broad assertions that constitute neither theological treatises nor political theory, but instead bring religious and political symbols to the fore as ideological argument and persuasion for a

¹Moseley, A Cultural History of Religion in America, p.33; Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty, p.116; Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution," pp.55-56.

²Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.33-34.

³Daniel J. Boorstin, The Exploring Spirit: America and the World Experience (London: British Broadcasting Corp., 1976), pp.30-31.

⁴Sandoz, A Government of Laws, p.129.

particular constitution.¹

The debate for ratification opened with a celebration of the Constitution and its Convention as the "blessing of Heaven" upon "a Revolution effected by good sense and deliberation," and a prayer of thanks and continuance to God for His keeping America from "running into a lawless Democracy."² It closed with ratifying conventions again expressing gratitude to God for the opportunity provided by providence to enter into "an explicit and solemn compact" and prayers for His attestation to the purity of its intentions.³ In between, even supposed "rationalists" once again could not resist the language and potent symbolism of America's civil religion. While "Centinel" complained that some federalists had the audacity to present the Constitution as divine revelation, additional anti-federalists cried out that "the great names of WASHINGTON and FRANKLIN have been taken in vain," an indication of their civil religious importance even at that early date.⁴

¹Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, pp.96-97.

²"A Revolution Effected by Good Sense and Deliberation," Daily Advertiser (New York), September 24, 1787, in The Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters During the Struggle over Ratification, 2 vols., The Library of America (New York: Literary Classics, 1993), 1:12-14.

³"Ratification of the Federal Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts"; "In Convention of the Delegates of the People of the State of New Hampshire, June the Twenty-first, 1788; "Form of Ratification, which was read and agreed to by the Convention of Virginia," in ibid., 2:547-550, 550-552, 557-558.

⁴Samuel Bryan, "Centinel" II, Freeman's Journal (Philadelphia), October 24, 1787; William Findley?, "Reply to Wilson's Speech: 'An Officer of the Late Continental Army'," Independent Gazetteer (Philadelphia), November 6, 1787, in ibid. pp.77-91, 97-104.

The importance of civil religion was invoked in favour of the Constitution by Pelatiah Webster, in his assertion that even a divine constitution cannot rise above bad government and, therefore, anti-federalists should quit their opposition to its form and concern themselves with its administration. Invoking a central tenet of Rousseau's civil religion, Webster assured doubters that a "mighty influence to the noblest principle of action will be *the fear of God before their eyes*; for while they sit in the place of God, to give law, justice, and right to the States, they must be *monsters indeed* if they don't regard *his law*, and imitate *his character*." National strength and vitality of action against states oppressing American citizens is deemed a sign of righteousness by Webster and, as "righteousness exalteth a nation," so the Constitution in its strengthening character must be a righteous endeavour.'

In this religious rhetoric, Rhode Island became a living example, "purposely left by Heaven to its present madness" to convince the other states that its only hope lay in the unity and solidarity of the Constitution.² Such unity was of peculiar interest to Madison, whose Federalist papers have become American scripture. Although he appears to remain purposefully quiet on the subject of religion in those papers, Madison cannot help but point to the Constitution's having been touched by "a finger of that Almighty hand" that providentially cared for America

'Pelatiah Webster, "The Weaknesses of Brutus Exposed: 'A Citizen of Philadelphia'," Philadelphia, November 8, 1787, in ibid., 1:176-188.

²Oliver Ellsworth, "A Further Reply to Elbridge Gerry: 'A Landholder' V," Connecticut Courant (Hartford), December 3, 1787, in ibid., 1:239-244.

throughout the Revolution.' As well, Madison's entire discussion of factions and interests can be seen in the light of religious pluralism and its attendant problems, as is indicated in Madison's October 24, 1787 letter to Jefferson. In it, Madison speaks of interests, parties, and the tyranny of majorities, all in terms of sectarian sentiment and religion, under the specific heading of "Religion." The formula for mutual checks in a large national pluralism are discussed, all familiar to readers of Federalist X.² Only a "holy war" and its hundreds of thousands of dead would prove Madison's constitution impotent when faced by the very thing he relied upon it to prevent.

Numerous occasional and rhetorically significant invocations of religion and America's early civil religion conspire to enframe the entire debate in a continued setting of Divine creation. Anti-federalists invoke the symbology of the Revolution and the Articles of Confederation as Divine, denouncing federalists as apostates committing blasphemy by asserting imperfections in what all agreed God had wrought. Federalists set the Constitution alongside the New Testament, both scriptures making men free. Finally, Washington's approval was joined by God's to carry the document through ratification as Benjamin Franklin compared anti-Federalists in their rejection of a divine constitution to Jews in their rejection of Christ. Again, Israel-America parallels were drawn, with an increased emphasis upon the thirteen tribes and colonies, and a final

¹James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist XXXVII," Daily Advertiser (New York), January 11, 1788, in ibid., 1:754-761.

²"James Madison to Thomas Jefferson," New York, October 24, 1787, in ibid., 1:192-208.

assertion of the Divine inspiration under which the Constitution was 'born.' The endless religiosity of this debate eclipses the pale controversy over Franklin's motion for prayer at the deadlocked National Convention, the motion that, despite contentions by some of its official failure, is reputed to have sealed the fate of the nation. Much more than Franklin's prayer carries the Constitution in a civil religious embrace, making the persistent debate over the issue of this one moment a petty and irrelevant nuisance.²

In its intended operation, the Constitution's primary concern with national unity, a concern shared of course by its proponents, is transparent. In this way, the document is a product of the Awakening. The entire national thrust that emerged from the Awakening to fight two wars now finds constitutional perpetuity in "a more perfect union." Anti-federalists, too, were concerned with unity, a "given" necessity for the survival of republican liberties. However, anti-federalists remained assured that such gifts were only "given" to small republics. Uniformity, they argued, could only be *imposed* upon larger peoples. Federalists, however, asserted that national unity could rise above federal diversities, the nation achieving some degree of transcendence through the new covenant.³ Here, reliance was placed upon the virtuous character of

¹Benjamin Franklin, "'K' to the Editor," *Federal Gazette* (Philadelphia), April 8, 1788, in *ibid.*, 2:401-405.

²See Benjamin Franklin, "Address to the Federal Convention" 1787, ed. Ralph L. Ketcham, and Ketcham's remarks surrounding its meaning, in *An American Primer*, ed. Boorstin, pp.94-100.

³Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, pp.343-344.

a people who would relate to its higher calling, pursuing a national destiny above the petty interests and concerns of government. The Constitution was intended to channel such divisive, sectarian concerns through a complex process that would stifle their effects upon the nation and dampen any detraction from the American mission. Quite simply, government would moderate factional pressures and, thus, enable virtuous individuals to lead the nation in pursuit of the common good.¹

Madison's Federalist X and its purported assumption of an unvirtuous, factional citizenry must be seen in light of his Federalist XLV and its assertions of virtue's necessity for the security of any government. Of course, Federalist LV underscores the entire discussion of the Constitution's response to factions and virtue. In it, Madison assures us that no checks, no "mechanical" response to an unvirtuous people, will enable their government.² The Constitution was not intended, at least by Madison, as any scientific formula of rule for an unruly people. Rather, divisive social forces were to be side-tracked from encroachments upon a virtuous citizenry's natural and rising solidarity. The Constitution was to prevent the zealous, the ambitious, and the unvirtuous from contaminating a happy American people, and from diverting it from its mission. "There are other qualities in human nature, which justify a

¹Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.253-255.

²Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, p.369; James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist X," Daily Advertiser (New York), November 22, 1787, in The Debate on the Constitution, 1:404-411; James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist XLV," Independent Journal (New York), January 26, 1788, in ibid., 2:101-106; James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist LV," Independent Journal (New York), February 13, 1788, 2:202-207.

certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form."¹ The unity and optimism of antecedent decades were to be secured eternally, the nation freed of the effects of 'politics' so that its destiny might be realised. The Constitution, then, is a servant, if not, indeed, a Founding document, of the American Civil Religion.

National unity and its relationship with the Constitution are clearly central federalist concerns from the outset of the ratification debate and even from the initiation of the entire project, as indicated by Hamilton's Federalist I.² A unified America, "knit together ...by so many cords of affection," is asserted by Madison to exist absolutely, an accomplishment of "the kindred blood which flows in the veins of American citizens, the mingled blood which they have shed in defense of their sacred rights" and which must "consecrate their Union."³ Madison is joined by Hamilton and John Jay who proclaim that this consecration is sanctified by the "design of Providence" for the entire world, the American union carrying the destiny of the entire human race. Jay went so far as to declare America's heart and mind to be one, pivoting around the profession of "the same religion" throughout the nation, clearly a slight to any supposed American

¹James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist Papers LV," Independent Journal (New York), February 13, 1788, in ibid., 2:207.

²Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, pp.96-97.

³James Madison, "'Publius,' The Federalist XIV," New York Packet, November 30, 1787, in The Debate on the Constitution, 1:431-436.

pluralism.' America's civil religion is enhanced by its invocation throughout the entire constitutional process, entrenched ideally by its assumption among federalists and anti-federalists alike. The Constitution as political framework for a pre-existing, emerging culture attempts to entrench that civil religion actually, to bolster its potency and to preserve in it America's transcendent meaning.

The social force that gave birth to the nation and to this document, however, is the very thing against which the Constitution struggles to entrench the civil religion. The religious zeal of the Awakening and its inherent democratization demanded such formal curbs on their potential by elite sectional forces wholly dedicated to notions of a national ideal, but clearly unconverted to certain populist ideals loosed upon the American people by the revival and which loomed as a threatening backdrop to the new American nationalism. Although the Awakening had penetrated the entire country, the southern revival had followed Northern patterns and initiation. Right through the Revolution, New England continued to set the tone of an American religious rhetoric increasingly dominated by Christian patriotism. The middle and southern colonies joined in the rhetoric of cosmic struggle and national unity, yet the more intense Christian revivalist rhetoric remained somehow 'alien' to a long established tradition of Old Testament rhetoric and social orientation.²

¹Ibid.; Alexander Hamilton, "The Federalist XI" in The Federalist, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (New York: Meridian, 1961), pp.65-73; John Jay, "The Federalist II," in ibid., pp.8-13.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.119-120.

By 1785, Jefferson would denounce northern Americans as self-righteous, superstitious hypocrites, their intense public religiosity askew and threatening to a post-Revolutionary society.¹ Virginia, a middle state that had proven highly susceptible to northern emotional incursions, gave birth to the Constitution initiative in response, searching for a device to prevent the concerted efforts that recently were directed against foreign foes from once again turning inward and southward. From the beginning, right through the Constitutional Convention, Virginia remained the dominant force pushing for a federal union in which the effects of all factions, sects in Madison's deliberations, would be eliminated and the unity of the people in general preserved. While religious revivals might continue to stir, it was hoped that no such momentous uprising as the Revolution would ever again threaten national political authority nor move the people away from a generalized national religion now securely established in the civil religion. It should be remembered that the post-Revolutionary "lawlessness" that triggered the Constitution, of which Shay's Rebellion is indicative, signalled an anarchist tendency in democracy, a tendency that was intrinsic to Christian revivalism and of which southern federalists were keenly aware.² With the Constitution, it was hoped, American government would be safeguarded against the effects of religious zeal. At the same time, the American civil religion was expected to

¹Kammen, People of Paradox, p.248.

²For a discussion of the Virginia initiative and drive for ratification of the Constitution, see Hall, "James Madison: Architect of the Constitution," pp.340-369.

contribute nationally by keeping sectarian politics and religion illegitimate, stifling their movement in a joint ambition by government against religious politics and by civil religion against political religion. Just as political authority would preserve the civil religion, so the civil religion was expected to reciprocate and guard that authority from revivalist slights to its national legitimacy and relevance.

This was a fatal miscalculation by Madison and allied southern federalists, however, as a second and essentially northern Awakening would direct the entire weight of sectarian impulse in unison against the national civil religion which, in league with the Constitution, became the only sect that really mattered. All other sects were reduced by the First Amendment in its artificial removal of them from the public arena. This removal ultimately could not be sustained. The national establishment of disestablishment should have kept America's increasingly sectional sectarian differences out of politics. The First Amendment had been intended by all to lead to unity, rather than divisiveness. Religious and political sectarians were expected to lose urgency and potency through a disestablishment in which tolerance amounted to ignorance, hence irrelevance. Jefferson expected a natural consensus to develop in consequence, and all Americans to become "Unitarians who would put public interest above their private passions."¹ Instead, revivalist sects and what should have been dogmatic leadership ignored their differences and allied around common themes to re-establish their relevancy and take charge of both the government and the civil religion. Jefferson and

¹Moore, Selling God, p.81.

Madison had expected a re-vitalization of "true" American religion through disestablishment. What had not been expected, however, was that Protestant Christianity would be the particular religion to be so invigorated by freedom, nor that its members would retaliate against the civil religion and attempt to dominate it with its "universal" dogma. Rather, Protestant Christianity was expected to succumb to the pervasiveness of the civil religion and, eventually, to dwindle into inoffensive Unitarianism.

In this way, Jefferson's "wall of separation" between church and state collapsed upon itself. His ideal of government perfectly isolated from any politics of religiosity, yet acknowledged, however reluctantly, to be wholly dependent upon that same religiosity for cultural integrity, a virtuous citizenry, and ultimate legitimacy remains a mere chimera. Jefferson's interpretation of the First Amendment, contrary to its ideal apprehension by contemporary separationists as actual historical accomplishment, absolutely condemns America as a union of church and state. Every president but Jefferson, it seems, has participated more or less in the civil religiosity that Jefferson identified as the measure of such union--the declaration of holy and religious days.'

Even the allegedly "reluctant" Madison proclaimed "Fast Days," especially during the War of 1812 when, after the fashion of the Revolution, he called down the blessings of Heaven upon his armies. Despite such invocations, Anson Stokes and Leo Pfeffer esteem Madison as

'Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Levi Lincoln, January 1, 1802," in In God We Trust, ed. Cousins, p.134.

a strict separationist who merely used religion politically.' This use, nevertheless, fails Jefferson's test of church-state alliance and clouds the issue with supposed motivations. Of course civil religion is political, but the problem at hand is that it is also religious. Whatever Madison's motivation, he blended religious symbols and rhetoric in the highest office of government, and did so to effect particular ends knowing full well the potency of his words, having chosen them precisely so. Furthermore, Stokes and Pfeffer insist that there is only one reference to religion in the entire eighty-five Federalist papers,² clearly a falsehood intended to bolster their desired interpretation of those papers.

A blindness to religiosity in American government is endemic to such studies. Their insistence upon the reality of Jefferson's supposed ideal, the "wall of separation," when such has never been realized actually, is at least misleading. Again, Jefferson's ideal condemns the entire course of actual American history, including his own Governorship of Virginia, as one prolonged alliance of church and state, his ideal itself being an aberration having very little to do with real politics in America. Even Jefferson reverted to the chosen people language of religiosity in his Second Inaugural Address, even Jefferson invokes God as president and places America within its Divine context to secure his own place at the altar of the American temple, and even Jefferson, as president, utters "A

¹Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, Church and State in the United States (New York: Harper & Row, 1950; rev. one-volume ed., 1964), p.89.

²Ibid., p.91.

National Prayer for Peace" in the name of Jesus Christ.¹ Rather than any "wall of separation," the relationship of church and state has more closely followed the schizophrenic pattern of North Carolina's early constitution, which "after barring all clergymen from public office, required all officeholders to believe in God, an afterlife, the truth of the Protestant religion, and the divine authority of both the Old and New Testaments."² While such an apprehension might seem extreme in light of much technical separationist argumentation, it certainly has more to do with actual American history and politics than does any "wall of separation," and immeasurably so. Furthermore, despite the relaxation of Protestant oath tests, Christianity remains a necessary attribute for any aspirant to America's highest office. The separation of church and state has in no way kept religion out of American politics. In fact, it has done quite the opposite. Politics and religion have grown together in America, as if in ignorance of the Constitutional blueprint.

Jefferson's Virginia bill for elementary schools reveals his ambivalence in a conditional attitude towards government sponsored religion. Through this bill, Jefferson approves the teaching of general religion in schools, so long as no person or sect is offended by its content.³ Madison took this approach farther into civil religion, by

¹Thomas Jefferson, "Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1805, Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.," in Lott, The Presidents Speak, pp.21-25; President Thomas Jefferson, "A National Prayer for Peace," March 4, 1805, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.327-328.

²Murrin, "Religion and Politics in America," p.30.

³Thomas Jefferson, "Bill for the 'Establishing of Elementary Schools' in Virginia," as quoted in Skousen, The Making of America, p.676.

insisting that presidential proclamations could, and should, participate in this type of religiosity. Furthermore, Madison outlined the "American political creed" that should be taught and "safeguarded against heretical intrusions," including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Federalist papers, and Washington's Inaugural and Farewell Addresses. The Farewell Address and its promotion of religion as the basis of good government, was said by Madison to "contain nothing which is not good."¹ Actually, it merely reasserted much of the Federalist's argument and attempted to point government in the direction intended by Madison's version of the Constitution.

Ultimately, the courts would take charge of interpreting the First Amendment and defining the often slight variations of "original intent" by key Founders, vacillating awkwardly between Jefferson's "wall" and Madison's "line of separation." Founders, thus, have been established as civil religious authorities, and subjected to invocations second only to God in a near-biblical exegesis of documentary and intellectual history.² By 1833, Joseph Story, described as the second most influential Chief Justice in early American history, would officially interpret the Constitution and First Amendment to be consistent with governmental fostering of Christianity as the foundation of the Republic.³ This

¹Meyers, The Mind of the Founder, pp.432-446. For Washington's Farewell Address, see Richard B. Morris, "George Washington: Farewell Address," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.211-229.

²McBrien, Caesar's Coin, pp.68-71, 73-100.

³Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.147.

reasoning followed recent juridical affirmations of general Christianity as an aspect of American government. Offenses against the Christian religion were deemed offenses against the American government, religion remaining an explicit concern of government despite the Constitution. Christianity and the Bible were declared a part of American law in 1811 and again in 1824, and, in 1817,¹ oaths affirming future states of punishment and reward along with subsequent religious duties were declared a necessity to law itself. Clearly, the civil religion was being entrenched ideally as well as practically.

Justice Story would go on to declare the First Amendment a friend to religion in 1840, finally even declaring America a Christian nation in 1844. Christianity, he said, was not to be laid prostrate to Mohammedanism, Judaism, and infidelity. Rather, the First Amendment was intended to exclude sectarian rivalry, but not Christianity altogether, from American government.² These decisions kept pace with the drift of America's citizenry, especially in the North, towards a de facto establishment of Protestant Christianity as the civil religion in spite of any intended consequences of Constitutional disestablishment. Madison's words, that "parchment barriers" are not enough, ring true in the echo of a civil war that continues to be both celebrated and ignored in America's

¹New York Supreme Court, "The People v. Ruggles," 1811; Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, "The Commonwealth v. Wolf," 1817; The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, "Updegraph v. The Commonwealth," 1824; in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.476-77, 347-48, 505-6, 506-8.

²Joseph Story, "A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States," 1840; United States Supreme Court, *Vidal v. Girard's Executors*, 1844; Joseph Story, "Commentary on the First Amendment's original meaning"; all excerpts in ibid., pp.573-574, 595-596, 574.

civil religion--celebrated for its war dead and their resurrectionist "new birth of freedom," ignored for its war dead and their obvious evidence of the failure of civil religion and Constitutional checks to temper an American religiosity that can admit no imperfections. Martin Marty claims, in fact, that civil religion and Constitutional checks have worked in America and that, unlike Europe, America has known no religious wars and few religious dead since the Revolution.¹ America's Second Awakening and her million casualties in its wake prove him wrong.²

Second Awakening and American revolution

Although religion may not be the only cause of the American Civil War, the rhetoric and public debate that led up to the war increasingly involved invocations of civil religious symbols in a self-conscious culture war that was to decide America's future and meaning. Both North and South resorted to religious justifications for their opposite stances, and both engaged in the typically American war as agents of Divine progress. Furthermore, the direct aggravations that disrupted a supposed early national consensus grew out of the Second Awakening, and American revival once again led to reform impulses that finally climaxed in war. The Civil War can be seen as the capstone of the Second Awakening, the war becoming "a religious event" that was shaped and intensified by

¹Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.164.

²640,000 dead and more than 450,000 wounded make the total at least 1,094,453, not including civilian casualties. For a breakdown of these numbers, see Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 3:1040-1041.

American Protestantism, if not born of it.' This self-indulgent war amounted to two versions of the American holy crusade. Northern self-righteousness was exercised in the expiation of national sin, the war being seen as a punishing self-flagellation and sacrifice to the god of American destiny.² Southern fidelity to the Revolution was entrenched in biblical language and national Old Testament rhetoric, invocations of the American god and His purpose being a response to the Northern onslaught and "apostasy." An anxious and declining American minority, the South struggled with renewal for thirty years in the face of a Northern sectarian faction that threatened to impose itself and its religious morality upon the entire nation, and that also threatened thereby to accomplish precisely what Madison's constitution aimed to prevent--a factional rally to tyranny.³

Interpreting the progress of America's civil religion, Robert Bellah points to the antebellum years of revivalist development as a period of civil religious change and preservation in the North, a period of renewal. This renewal is directly connected to the Second Awakening, a cultural and religious phenomenon that cannot be ignored, nor eclipsed by, narrowly economic and strictly political considerations in appraising Civil War causation. Bellah traces a fairly solid and direct line through the

¹Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.314, 320; Norton, Alternative Americas, pp.6-7.

²Moore, Selling God, p.69; Powers Smith, Yankees and God, pp.394-395.

³James M. McPherson, "The Distinctiveness of the Old South," in The Coming of the American Civil War, 3rd ed., ed. Michael Perman (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1993), p.190; Eric Foner, "Politics, Ideology, and the Origins of the Civil War," in ibid., p.187.

Revolution, Constitution, Second Awakening, and Civil War as Second American Revolution, as phenomena that interpenetrate in the civil religion.¹ Although "by all historical accounts, the enthusiasm [of the Second Awakening] contributed directly to the Civil War,"² religiosity as a cause of the war cannot be seen in isolation and it must not be allowed to eclipse the other causes in a detached formula. Instead, as Jon Butler asserts, the entire history of antebellum America should be seen as the history of Civil War origins in a complex relationship, one in which religion and religious movement can be useful indicators of social and political change.³ Despite the religious rhetoric that permeated it, and religious interpretations that sanctify it, the Civil War was fundamentally a political event. The aura of religiosity that surrounds it, however, the blending of the political and the sacred in its acknowledged definition of American character, makes the war a civil religious milestone that reveals much about the relationship of American politics and religion as they meet in the civil religion.

Just as antebellum politics must be understood to apprehend the significance of the Civil War, so is an understanding of antebellum religion necessary to an appreciation of American politics in this crucial period of national reformation. The key political issues of this period all had religious dimensions of national importance, their religiosity being part of a major continuity that bound American colonial and national

¹Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.33-44, 52-53.

²Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p.173.

³Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.292.

periods in American consciousness. In fact, it has been asserted that this continuity connects the First Great Awakening more directly to the Civil War than to the Revolution with which it has been paired.¹ This extension of American religiosity through time and politics, however, is not so direct. Rather, it is mediated by the civil religion that was engendered through the First Awakening, and by its reformation in the Second Awakening. This second great revival would shape America's civil religion for the next century. The revival's subsequent war would establish that religion as definitive of its carrier--"one nation under God."

Difficulties quickly arose out of the Constitution's loosening of formal ties between the new religious and political worlds that emerged from the Revolution. The sudden perception of political and social freedoms realized in a new order left American life disjointed, without a mainstream of cultural definition. Nathan Hatch sees the changes involved in this post-Revolutionary period as nothing less than "cataclysmic." The new freedom lent itself to religious experimentation and renewed quests for American meaning as, once again, social upheaval sent Americans to the Bible for refuge, prophetic explanation and self-assurance.² In the new freedom of official disestablishment, American religion again embarked upon a quest to re-establish religious authority and civil-religious legitimacy. As it did so, millennial expectations provided ends and justifications for both civil and religious ambitions, the two realms

¹Daniel Walker Howe, "Religion and Politics in the Antebellum North," in Religion and American Politics, ed. Noll, pp.121, 125.

²Hatch, The Democratization of Christianity, pp.6-7.

converging in the respective objects of their respective desires, and in the nation as their mediator.¹

The American project had become an ecumenical endeavour in the civil religion's celebration of unity and submersion of sectarian difference. Civil religion and the nation displaced church religion, high levels of public religiosity in national life being contrasted by a simultaneous and general ecclesiastical decline in which America witnessed its lowest levels of church membership and participation.² Only about ten percent of Americans were churched at the turn of the century, a figure that threatened to drop further with continued sectarian fragmentation and experiment.³ Amidst this general institutional decay, however, religion itself remained vital and relevant to both nation and state. In fact, any purported decline in religiosity might be seen as a confusion of church and religion, or as a revisionist creation of the Second Awakening in its Protestant rejection of Unitarianism as a "true" religion. The beginning of the greatest American revival is not merely coincident with the "high water mark" of American Unitarianism, but is concomitant with and responsive to it.⁴

¹Robert T. Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), pp.27-31; Hatch, "The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics," pp.99-102.

²Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, p.20; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.175.

³Handy, A Christian America, pp.24-25.

⁴Douglas H. Sweet, "Church Vitality and the American Revolution: Historiographical Consensus and Thoughts Towards a New Perspective," Church History 45 (1976), pp.344-346.

The Constitution's formal exclusion of organized religion and its attendant elevation of civil religion above the churches challenged America's Protestant clergy to relevance. Jefferson had expected a gradual conversion of all Americans to Unitarianism, a conversion that he hoped would bring America's churches and civil religion into close alignment and thus establish Unitarianism as the civil religion by default.¹ Church and State were to share unchallenged belief in this harmonious union of separate co-ordinates, in accordance with earlier Puritan visions of unified separation.² Furthermore, Jefferson, Franklin, and additional early stalwarts of the civil religion pointed to America's mythic agrarianism as an alternate source of communion with God. In this American church of the soil, 'farmers' carried the Holy Ghost in its purity as chosen sons of God who would lead American prosperity into the new century. The purity emanating from "virgin" soil was expected to imbue them with a righteousness that would overcome history and return mankind to Eden--the Puritan cycles of spiritual decline in the midst of luxury would finally be undone in a perfect state of incorruption.³ The idealization of American experience and the omnipresence of the American god joined with the apparent Unitarianism of post-Revolutionary civil

¹Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," p.14.

²See p.90 above.

³Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XIX," in Agrarianism in American Literature, ed. M. Thomas Inge (New York: Odyssey Press, 1969), pp.9-10; Benjamin Franklin, "The Internal State of America; Being a True Description of the Interest and Policy of That Vast Continent, 1799," in ibid., pp.115-119.

religion to spark a revival of church religiosity in response, a fire that would not be quenched until Unitarianism was displaced and Protestant Christianity entrenched as the dominant content of the civil religion. Throughout the nineteenth-century, Americans would replace their vaguely generalized, Providential god of earlier civil religion with an increasingly particularized biblical and Christian god, stamping America as an explicitly Christian nation.'

The rejection of Christian atonement and the primacy of human reason in the works and will of God that Unitarianism involved were too explicit and too elite for its Protestant contemporaries. A general rally of Christian forces in America responded to "overcome the threat of Enlightenment philosophy, to bring the faith into a position of influence in the young nation, and to plant churches in the rapidly opening West."² As a religious phenomenon, then, the revival arose to Christianize America. In political terms, the revival responded to the same forces--Jeffersonianism and Unitarianism. Jefferson's electoral victory of 1800 was the first victory of a national party, a signal of America's tendency toward one nation--the one preferred by Jefferson--one soul, despite its supposed pluralism and Constitutional opposition to factional dominance. This victory threatened America with the imposition of one identity upon a percolating, however narrowly Protestant, pluralism, an identity repugnant to Christian elements despite Jefferson's affirmations of

¹Hughes, "Recovering First Times," p.208.

²Handy, A Christian America, p.25. Also see Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, pp.220-221, and Arieli, Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology, pp.257-258.

Christian belief, enough so in New England as to spark secession movements there.¹ Jefferson's return to public invocations of a Providential and, as his presidency wore on, increasingly biblical god, came too late to assuage Protestant opponents. In this strange mirror of events to follow decades later, Northern Americans rejected national change and 'apostasy,' rising up in religious revival against the irreligion of "foreign infidelity, deism, and Jeffersonianism (all synonymous terms)." This "crusade to recall their countrymen to the faith of their fathers," however, would quickly move from conservative preservation to aggressive thrusts of conversion as the renewal of Puritan perfectionism recalled the ideal of a sinless American millennial empire²--a New England ideal that needed to be restated and made relevant now in response to the comparative tolerance and openness of the national myth fostered by the likes of Franklin and Jefferson.³ When this renewed Puritanism came to be imposed upon the rest of the nation, it would also meet with sectional secession and renewal in response, a response accompanied by violence.

In its earliest years, the revival constituted another element of American experience that tended towards unity and followed patterns found in the First Awakening. National themes of millennial approach and Providential care were expressed across sections by all American

¹Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, pp.20-21.

²Kenneth H. Winn, Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1989), p.45.

³James Fulton Maclear, "'The True American Union' of Church and State: The Reconstruction of the Theocratic Tradition," Church History 28 (1959), p.45.

denominations--thus "American Christianity" emerged in this period, characterized by participation in and conviction concerning the American millennial enterprise. Civic and ecclesiastic rhetoric converged in the re-articulation of an American mission that harmonized religious and political values, preserving American history and destiny within God's grand design against the encroachments of elite humanism.¹ The national consensus of belief in American "chosenness" and its accompanying "manifest destiny" involved a conspiracy of Christian faith and American patriotism that marked America, setting her apart as exceptional. The American way became the only way--truth revealed through human and Divine American action. This consensus of belief existed wholly apart from the churches and their particular faiths, forming the stuff of America's civil religion, a universal Christian faith around which American churches merely organized and directed their flocks.²

The nationalist rhetoric of the American jeremiad and the persistence of itinerant preachers continued the work of the Constitution, and the levelling of all sects into one American religion united in reverence for America's primacy in God's design and for her millennial promise.³ This religion, however, was markedly different from Jefferson's 'benign' Unitarianism. Instead, American Protestantism was action-oriented, a movement infused with ideology, constantly dissatisfied with the status quo. In the very nature of Protestantism, the rejection of present

¹Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," pp.193-194.

²McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.104-107.

³Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, pp.166-172.

circumstances in favour of an idealized promise constitutes the core of American renewal, the prophetic civil religious quest to eliminate the gap between ideal and actual conditions.¹ The inter-denominational unity that American religion exhibited in revivals and camp meetings, a shared communion signifying shared faith to participants, existed across sections and classes, thus making possible another national mobilization.² Unlike the time of the Revolution, however, this time America mobilized against internal forces that threatened the very nature of the American project with "wrong" belief. The Awakening became a valid, if Christian, response to America's perceived spiritual decline and political divergence from her original purpose.

Several noted Founders formed and presided over Bible societies during the revival's early stages. John Jay, America's first Chief Justice led local and national societies, invoking both God and Jesus Christ in appeals to Americans to elect Christian rulers for "our Christian nation."³ James McHenry, a signer of the Constitution, member of the Continental Congress, state legislator, and U.S. Secretary of War,

¹Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," American Quarterly 21 (1969), p.30; John B. Snook, Going Further: Life-and-Death Religion in America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp.30-31; Huntington, American Politics.

²Handy, A Christian America, p.26; Bernard A. Weisberger, "The Cane Ridge Camp Meeting," in That Old-Time Religion, ed. Jan Gilmore and Ginny Jacoby (Kansas City: Hallmark, 1972), pp.46-47; Frank Lawrence Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1949; rpt. 1965), pp.99-102; Snook, Going Further, p.26

³John Jay, as quoted in America's God and Country, ed Federer, pp.318-319.

presided over the first Bible society in Baltimore, joining Jay's civil religious rhetoric by invoking the Christian deities to solicit support for the American promulgation of the word.¹ New York's Chief Justice James Kent addressed the American Bible Society with Godly invocations and sentiments similar to those he had rendered in the opinion for *The People v. Ruggles*, 1811, which declared blasphemy against Jesus Christ a crime due to its inherent offence against American unity and sensibilities--America being a Christian country and Americans a Christian people, the Bible constituting part of the law of the United States.²

These individual leaders were preceded and accompanied by the common voices of America's legislatures sharing the same faith. Ohio's 1802 constitution makes provisions for the education of religious morality as a foundational social requirement, an insight shared by the national congress in its Act for Ohio which provides for the same necessity through conformity with Article 3 of The Northwest Ordinance. This requirement was repeated again in 1816 and 1817 for Indiana and Mississippi inaugurations respectively.³ Mississippi's constitution restricted its offices to those who adhered to the civil religion tenet of belief in a God and a state of future reward and punishment, encouraging education of religious morality

¹James McHenry, as cited in *ibid.*, pp.442-443.

²James Kent, to the American Bible Society, as quoted in *ibid.*, pp.348-349; *The People v. Ruggles*, 1811, in *ibid.*, pp.347-348.

³"Constitution of the State of Ohio, November 1, 1802," Article VIII, Section 3, in *ibid.*, p.486; "The Enabling Act for Ohio, April 30, 1802," and "The Northwest Ordinance," Article III, in *ibid.*, p.165; "The Enabling Act for Indiana, April 13, 1816," and "The Enabling Act for Mississippi, March 1, 1817," as quoted in *ibid.*, p.167.

to ensure good citizenship.¹ Congressional Indian treaties of 1803, 1805, and 1806 all provided monies for Christian missionary work to civilize the savages with whom they treated.² Despite the millennial optimism that stirred in contemporary revivals, encapsulated in Ohio's motto--"With God All Things Are Possible"--the legislative provisions above are typical of the Awakening's central and potent concern: social control and organization.

The original impulse of the Awakening was one of conversion, or religion as the internalization of government, and of a self-government that rendered external compulsion unnecessary.³ In this way, American freedom could be managed and liberty directed. Revivals were intended to teach people, to socialize citizens for democracy, a concern in an ever-widening electorate that might become increasingly ungovernable.⁴ It is here in the drive toward social control that American unity was lost in the Awakening, and North and South parted company. Southern revivalism continued in the tradition of individual reform, and the conversion from sin to alter man's standing with God rather than with his fellow man. In terms of social standing and practice, Southerners clung to an Old Testament with its patriarchal family orientation. So long as the Awakening remained focused upon its sinful individual orientation, the

¹"Constitution of the State of Mississippi, 1817," in ibid., p.451.

²Ibid., p.166.

³Bellah, The Broken Covenant, p.47-48.

⁴Maclear, "'The True American Union' of Church and State," pp.48-49.

revival remained a national and unifying force.¹ The entire American nation retained an Old Testament orientation, and was characterized as an "Old Testament culture" throughout most of the first two decades of the nineteenth-century.² Thus, Southern culture was at home within the United States. The focus of Northern revivalism, however, soon shifted towards institutional and coercive legislative reforms. Prisons, temperance, education and, eventually, slavery all fell subject to a Northern reform impulse that emerged from a millennial impatience tinged with cultural anxiety in the presence of a population that was increasingly diversified by immigration. The immediacy of 'foreign' elements combined with a Northern primal concern for social unity to require institutional suppression of such diversity. As the North shifted the revival to political impositions that tended to nationalize its sectional culture, the South rejected the Awakening and retreated from it.³ This also involved a retreat from what was becoming the American nation, so that by the 1830s American unity was economic and commercial only, the nation having begun to split apart spiritually and sectionally.⁴

As a phenomenon of social control, the Second Awakening was a

¹Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p.16; Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, The Kingdom of Matthias (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), p.10; Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," p.34.

²Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, "Introduction," in The Bible in America, ed. Hatch and Noll, pp.5-6.

³Peterson, Ham and Japheth, p.16; Johnson and Wilentz, The Kingdom of Matthias, pp.8-9; Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," pp.34-35.

⁴Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, p.23.

decidedly political and social instrument of American prosperity. The organizing impulse of the revival was especially evident in the North, where urbanization and industrialization were predominant problems. The amorality of an increasingly free market and the disruption of familial ties and controls due to modernization and changing labour arrangements demanded the reorganization of society by the new "better sort" of urban Americans.¹ Paul Johnson's case study of Rochester, New York, revivals in the first decades of the Northern Awakening establishes the emerging middle-class urban business interests as the chief proponents of the re-churching of America and the accompanying reforms in social legislation. This development was, in turn, a response to looser social and business connections with the labouring class, a class that threatened to detach itself completely from any kind of moral domination by its 'betters.' Relations were increasingly and restrictively economic, requiring anxious employers and well-to-do neighbours to resort to political and legislative coercion to enforce their preferred moral behaviour. For this reason, Rochester politics became infused with a religiosity that was more explicitly Christian than earlier civil religious behaviour had been. Local government was reorganized, licensing fees being imposed to control suspect behaviour, and opponents were ostracized as perverse and ignorant. Reform led the way to a new society of detached, yet responsible citizens. Although this type of study has not been undertaken for many American cities, Johnson maintains that those cities that have been examined show

¹Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," pp.31-36; Brian Harding, American Literature in Context, II: 1830-1865 (London: Methuen, 1982), p.9.

similar patterns of revivalist development and motivation, making Rochester typically American in its Christianization of local civil religion.¹

Additional students of American revival and reform assure us that this is the case nationally, that revivals and reforms were pursued as social controls by business and "secular" interests throughout this period of American history.² As a nationalizing influence, the revivals corresponded with the Constitution in its tendency to integrate American society and move the country away from a confederacy of states. In New England, religious duties became social duties, much as the federalist thrust had made political thought and expediency religious.³

American politics became permeated with Christian religiosity in this period, revivals having mobilized and socialized Americans in advance of political parties and legislative coercion. Consensus became the American authority sought after. Ostracism, the "Invisible Hand" of conformity, directed affairs according to its "judgment." All of the apparent divisiveness of splintering sectarianism amounted to nuance in an Americanization of Christianity that diluted doctrinal differences and mediated them through politics. "From the early part of the nineteenth century, religious language riddled the development of party politics in the United States," revivals precursing political rallies and party

¹Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium.

²Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers 1815-1860 (New York: Hill, 1978), p.34; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.176.

³Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," pp.39-41.

conventions, elections becoming civil religious "holy days" in a process, not of secularization, but of political and religious reinforcement. "Middle-class men began to join churches in larger numbers at almost precisely the same time [in the 1830s and 1840s] that they began to join political parties." In all of this, American perfectionism pushed Northern politicians and community leaders toward demonstrations of their worthiness. Politics increasingly involved confrontations of "visible saints" and saintliness likewise involving the pursuit of political goals through religious societies formed locally or state-wide around specific issues, then taken nationally.¹ Through these associations, people came to identify their cause with God's cause, their mission with America's mission.²

As the Awakening wore on, moreover, these American voluntary societies institutionalized the reform impulse in a drive to legislate Christianity. Initial reforms aimed at social control of the poor and disenfranchised members of society were quickly augmented by reforms around a concern once limited to elites and federalists and characterized by explicitly religious argument--temperance. This movement was nationalized as a social as well as a religious cause, picking up such advocates as Abraham Lincoln in the 1840s. The Congressional Temperance Society of 1833 decided to set a personal example for the nation, rather

¹Moore, Selling God, pp.72-74, 78-79, 84-85; Handy, A Christian America, pp.38-39.

²Merle D. Strege, "Jerry Falwell and 'The Simple Faith on Which This Country Was Built'," in The Political Role of Religion in the United States, ed. Stephen D. Johnson and Joseph B. Tammey (Boulder: Westview, 1986), p.108.

than legislation. "The first president of the society," however, "had already used his political position as Secretary of War to accomplish a temperance objective, that of removing liquor from the Army's rations." A portent of future sectional splits, in the 1830s voters began to vote across party lines against candidates who were known drinkers. Massachusetts passed liquor laws in 1838, Maine in 1846 and again in 1851, the second time imposing prohibition. By 1855, all of New England was "dry," a condition rejected by the more moderate South where temperance failed to make the same headway as in the North. In fact, the South was "solid" in not passing prohibition legislation, thus refusing to mix morality with politics. Unmoved by the Northern example, Southerners invoked tradition and constitutional theory to reject such state coercion of individual freedom. More than successful legislation differentiated Northern temperance movements from Southern counterparts, however, as many temperance leaders in the North were also abolitionists, abolition being aligned with temperance in various campaigns as joint avenues of cultural progress, harbingers of the American future.'

Despite the accomplishments of the American revival in churching citizens and driving them towards a consensus in which democracy would be safe for property and business interests, social control became a growing problem for the North as the century proceeded. American expansion became a fact of life in the nineteenth century, spatially as well as culturally. Manifest Destiny and the expansion of the West spurred on American self-

'Walters, American Reformers, pp.174-175, 123-137; Page Smith, The Nation Comes of Age: A People's History of the Ante-Bellum Years (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), pp.689-693.

consciousness to creedal re-definition, made rigid in response to immigration and the population of urban industrial centres. The socialization of the immigrant and American uneducated class accompanied the expansion of the political franchise, a special concern in the North as its culture suffered the pressures of westward migration and tremendous influxes of foreign immigration to the industrial Northeast.¹

Although Northern capitalists promoted immigration, the Catholicism of most immigrants presented problems for "true" Americans. The Protestant crusade that emerged from the Awakening in the Northeast was directed largely at these immigrants, their religion being their "definitive characteristic." The Americanization that was directed at these immigrants was accompanied by violence, a mark of vigilance against "wrong" thought in a society striving to consolidate belief and action in a realization of the world's last millennial hopes. A nationwide Anti-Catholic movement was joined by anti-Masonic and anti-Mormon violence, these animosities often residing together simultaneously for individuals searching to define "true" Americanism. Anti-slavery would follow once these alien 'others' were suppressed amidst the early sounds of war.²

With disestablishment came freedom for the Puritan tradition loosed from local reference to take the religious reconstruction of New England

¹Harding, American Literature in Context, pp.2-3; Walters, American Reformers, pp.4-5, 8; McPherson, "The Distinctiveness of the Old South," p.196.

²Norton, Alternative Americas, pp.66-68; Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, pp.171-173; Walters, American Reformers, pp.8-10; Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, p.54; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.276.

to the rest of the United States, particularly to the West. Religious and political rhetoric became increasingly national while retaining Christian overtones, unity once again rising to the surface of revivalist thought. Union became the design of God in the Second, as it had been in the First, Awakening. The first revival, however, had invoked unity for the sake of liberty, God's primary concern, whereas American union now became sacred in and for itself, a central issue in a changing society unsure of its integrity.¹ Protestant reformers set out to exclude difference from an American "sameness" that was idealized in the renewal of the "dream of an organic and tightly knit community made up of like-minded people who worshipped the same God the same way and who imparted to one another a sense of wholeness."² With liberty accomplished, unity meant conformity this time around.³

In this pre-occupation with conformity the West played a central role, seen by key interpreters of American mission as the definitive arbiter of national meaning and direction. The fate of the nation, and of the world, were to be decided in the American West, and American character was to be determined there once, for all. Lyman Beecher's "Plea for the West" pointed to the migration of Puritan blood that carried Puritan traditions to the land that now promised to test the American character,

¹Maclear, "'The True American Union' of Church and State," p.53; Henry, The Intoxication of Power, pp.81-82.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.234.

³Norton, Alternative Americas, p.74.

to refine it and decide its destiny.' Beecher announced western migration as the final millennial initiation of "moral and political emancipation of the world," and as definitive of America's "religious and political destiny."²

As America's "true" political religion was carried into expansion by New England's spreading population, intense efforts were exerted to Christianize the West.³ This mission was to be accomplished through public education, another pillar of reform in the Second Awakening. As evangelical religion was shaping American politics, moreover, and setting patterns for political reform, so it shaped American thought through Sunday schools, common schools, and colleges.⁴ Common schools were forwarded as civil religious institutions that were to teach a generalized religion thought by governments and reformers alike to be the basis for society. The "non-denominational" content of public education, however, involved common symbols of Protestant Christianity only, and these were blended with republican symbols in the promotion of national unity through a "common" faith. "The civil religion is both parent and child to the

¹Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, p.273; Maclear, "'The True American Union' of Church and State," p.57.

²Lyman Beecher, "A Plea For The West (1835)," in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, p.120.

³Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.195; Powers Smith, Yankees and God, p.291; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.222-223.

⁴Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.228-230, 242-244.

public school."¹

Sunday schools rose alongside America's common schools, opening their doors to all in "charity" aimed at the urban poor. Across the North and mid-West, Americans were assimilated to the New England version of American citizenship. The New Testament became a school text, joined in 1836 by McGuffey's Reader, "the mainstay in public education in America till 1920." This text included "copious extracts from Sacred Scripture" which augmented lessons on prayer, Christian salvation, the Bible and Christian morality, and on truth and punishment in an afterlife of judgement--again a main pillar of civil religion.² Catholics were expected to be Americanized through Protestant education and instruction in "true" history, as the threat of multi-culturalism was stared down in the West.³

Catholicism was beaten down in the East, mob violence spilling over into public schools where it gained official sanction. In 1859, the Police Court of Boston approved a teacher's beating of a Catholic student for refusing to recite the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments. The Bible having been placed in America's schools by "our fathers" as a support of religious morality, the basis of any republican constitution,

¹Hammond, "The Conditions for Civil Religion," pp.72-75; Handy, A Christian America, pp.34-35.

²William Holmes McGuffey, excerpts from McGuffey's Reader, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.439-442; Carl F. Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983; rpt.1993), pp.31, 44; McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, pp.112-113.

³Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, pp.31-32.

its "non-sectarian" use by public schools was affirmed and a thirty-minute beating, "inflicting serious wounds," was found warranted.¹ In New York City, the School Society and Protestant leaders ensured opposition to Catholic Schools to prevent the dissemination of alien viewpoints, a stance that stood firm until the 1860s after Catholic participation in another American war had sufficiently again assimilated their "thought" into the American Civil Religion. Then, as New York State tax dollars poured into church schools and hospitals to resume antebellum reforms, Catholics would be the largest religious recipients of New York City funding.² Clearly, popular opinion and the nature of the religion to be supported has had more to do with an establishment of religion than has the Constitution's disestablishment clause.

Henry Barnard and Horace Mann, "regarded as 'founders' of American public education," promoted the public school as the "Ark of God," the vehicle of education as a "holy cause" in a "Christian crusade."³ In 1848, Mann addressed the Massachusetts Board of Education in his twelfth, and final, annual report before his election to Congress. In his report, Mann, having served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate both--he was president of the Senate for a time--asserts the need for legislators to mingle "knowledge, justice, temperance, and obedience

¹"Commonwealth v. Cooke, Police Court of Boston, Massachusetts, 1859," in Religion in American Life, ed. Conrad Wright (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), pp.90-93.

²Amy Bridges, A City in The Republic: Antebellum New York and the Origins of Machine Politics (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984; rpt.1987), pp.86, 151.

³Hammord, "The Conditions for Civil Religion," p.74.

to the laws of God" in their deliberations. Invoking the Bible in his defence of public education, Mann presents scientific and natural laws as realms of human endeavour, however as "ordained of God" after the fashion of the First Awakening. Furthermore, religious education is deemed necessary to moral education so that, while Mann assures his readers that public schools should not be theological seminaries, they must inculcate general Christianity and Christian morals. The Bible is to be taught in schools without sectarian reference, in a tendency "to create brothers, and not Ishmaelites."¹ While this approach pretends to local unity, or perhaps even sectional unity, the encouragement of Northern zeal did, in fact, create American Ishmaelites of the two sections, North and South.

The public school system and its explicit Protestant-American socialization in a drive towards American cultural unity met with opposition in the South. While tax supported schools blanketed the North and mid-West with American "truth," they did not penetrate the South.² Beecher's "Plea for the West" to "educate! We must educate!" fell on deaf ears in the South. This invocation of education as guarantor of American liberty and destiny as fates yet to be decided were not-so-veiled references to American slavery and Southern backwardness whose extension into the West must be opposed "powerfully [by] the cause of free institutions [for] the liberty of the world."³ Common school texts taught

¹Horace Mann, "Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education, 1848," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.360-375.

²Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, pp.x-xi.

³Beecher, "A Plea For The West," pp.120, 125.

American "chosenness" in a conditional covenant with God, a covenant that required American fidelity and provoked the nation to realize its promise. Biblical invocations in support of abolition were buttressed by Northern clergymen intimately involved in public education, who denounced slavery as a sin that blighted the entire nation with God's punishment and threatened the covenant.¹ Increasingly, Southerners replaced Catholics, Masons, and Mormons as the 'alien' others who required assimilation.

Western expansion and its anticipated determination of American character exaggerated North-South differences by focusing attention upon slavery as an issue of fundamental cultural difference. Contemporary participants make it clear that the nature of the country was "up for grabs" in a perpetually changing, thus ever renewing, America. The national civil religion was expected to be decided in the political renewal institutionalized by the Awakening's reform impulse.² A Northern crusade against slaveholders had been prophesied by Virginians in 1832 as anti-slavery sentiment began to shift to abolitionism in the name of Christian righteousness, an accomplishment of Northern "crackpot reformers."³ "The abolitionist attack was overwhelmingly moral and religious," a Christian "cleansing action" sparked by early revivalists against slavery as the obvious sin for nationalist religious zealot. to

¹Strege, "Jerry Falwell and 'The Simple Faith on Which This Country Was Built'," pp.108-109.

²David Herbert Donald, "An Excess of Democracy: The American Civil War and the Social Process," in The Coming of the American Civil War, ed. Perman, pp.58-62.

³Avery O. Craven, "The Repressible Conflict," in ibid., pp 44 45.

3

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purge in the quest to realize the Kingdom of God in the American West.'

By 1840, American evangelists had revealed their objective to make the entire nation conform to a sectional version of America, all difference to be excluded in a tyranny of the majority that Louis Hartz finds acceptable, not tyrannical at all due to its blandness and non-violent nature. Liberalism is credited with producing this pacific Americanism in Hartz's celebration: "the American majority has been an amiable shepherd dog kept forever on a lion's leash." However Hartz intends his assertion that, when faced with Southern apostasy, "the North simply affirmed its principles with a new and wilder fury," and by all accounts that fury is attributable to Northern Puritanism renewed with militancy in the Second Awakening. Rather than Southern apostasy, it was a changing North in spritual renewal that lashed out at the retrenching South, with a self-righteous and tyrannical explosion of one sectional will to crush another and remove its embarrassing traces from the national civil religion.²

As a particular interpretation of the Declaration of Independence began to take hold in the North, abolitionists invoked it prophetically as a sect against American churches. American religion and politics both were denounced as bankrupt for their support and patronage of the Southern

¹Kenneth M. Stamp, The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p.84; William W. Freehling, The Road To Disunion: Secessionists at Bay 1776-1854 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), pp.289-290; Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, p.34.

²Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, pp.25-26; Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, pp.129, 156.

slave system. In 1842, and again in 1844, abolitionists shocked fellow Americans with endorsements of Northern secession, their high moral tone pointing to national guilt concerning the gap between their idealized version of the civil religion and actual American conditions. The civil religion, as they conceived it, condemned American churches along with the rest of the nation--significant now because their version of the civil religion prevailed, becoming the American Civil Religion for over a hundred years.¹

This attack by republicanism mingled with Christianity, that is by American civil religion, forced a crisis within American churches. Abolitionists affirmed their civil religion to be more vital than established church religion, more able to bring America up to its promise through politics and reform as God's will. Antebellum politics became the battleground of "pure" American religion; worthy men were to be elected to rid the nation of shame and guilt. Lincoln's admission of national, rather than sectional, guilt came late in the struggle, on the heels of explicitly religious abolitionists such as Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, and William Lloyd Garrison.² American churches split apart under this pressure, as two versions of Christian America diverged. Robert Handy sees this as a failure of the Protestant ideal to maintain its Christian

¹George M. Fredrickson, "White Supremacy and the American Sectional Conflict," in The Coming of the American Civil War, ed. Perman, p.227; Walters, American Reformers, pp.89-92.

²Brauer, "The Rule of the Saints in American Politics," Church History 27 (September, 1958), pp.251-253; Paul C. Nagel, This Sacred Trust: American Nationality 1798-1898 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p.167.

focus in America, a failure of religion to resolve the issue.' This is to understate the case. Instead, we should see American Protestantism, particularly revivalism, as the instigator and provoker of the difficulties through their competition and influence in the civil religion. There is no balm in America's prophetic political religion.

Southern revivals had been linked increasingly to conservative, pro-slavery tendencies in response to the Northern radicalism. With the pressure applied to Northern churches by the changing civil religion, major denominational splits began along sectional lines in the 1830s. American Presbyterians parted company in 1837, to remain apart until 1983. Baptists and Methodists split apart in the 1840s, the Southern Baptist Convention forming in 1845 and remaining the largest Protestant body in the United States into the 1950s. Methodists announced their own split as a pre-cursor to approaching civil war.² With hindsight, Jon Butler agrees that these religious divisions pre-figured, at least, the secular division of the nation and set the stage for greater division.³ John C. Calhoun was more direct in his assertions to the United States Senate, in 1850, that American religion was coming undone and, with it, the nation. Religion, he warned, was the strongest of social ties, but not strong enough to withstand the attack of radical sectional prophets.⁴ Again with

¹Handy, A Christian America, p.55.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.315-316.

³Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.292.

⁴Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.316-317.

hindsight, this broken religiosity has been attributed causal status to the war that followed, at least by the division's negation of religion as an otherwise unifying agency, at most by its direct provocation of hostilities.¹ Behind this divisiveness lay the prophetic judgment of an American civil religion lurching towards its own establishment.

The changing Northern version of the civil religion began to involve the rejection of the Constitution as a binding document, its compromise tainting it with worldliness. John Humphrey Noyes wrote to Garrison urging him to reject the document in favour of the Declaration of Independence--and Noyes's 1837 burning of the Constitution was copied by Garrison seventeen years later. In this fashion, Robert Bellah asserts, Garrison and the abolitionists worked from within the framework of the civil religion to change its content through shifting emphases and, primarily, through the elevation of the Declaration of Independence. They were joined in this, eventually, by the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.² Garrison announced his Liberator as established "within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty," emphasizing the Declaration of Independence as the truth for which he stood to fight, directly connecting himself and his cause with American civil religious symbols that gained new meaning through the connection.³ In 1835 Theodore

¹C.C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press, 1985).

²Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.50-51; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.316-317; Ariel, Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology, p.274.

³William Lloyd Garrison, "Prospectus for the 'Liberator'," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.295-300.

Weld, a revivalist abolitionist who converted whole towns to the cause, developed the language that was eventually used in the Fourteenth Amendment, preserving the Constitution as part of the civil religion by changing it in accordance with the fundamental Declaration of 1776.¹ Through such tactics, the Northern civil religion claimed continuity with the American Founding, undercutting, as if by anticipating, the complex constitutional arguments through which Southerners asserted their own fidelity.

The rhetoric of national guilt, sin, and punishment was given new impetus by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. By inspiring Uncle Tom's Cabin, published in 1852, abolitionists gained their most effective propaganda.² Although this novel condemned America's failure to live up to her promise, it promised a better day coming through the judgement and redemption inherent in "God's will." American injustice could last only so long, readers were warned. National repentance was necessary and America must become a Christian nation to withstand the judgements of the coming Kingdom of God. "Trouble" must come sooner or later, Harriet Beecher Stowe declared as if knowingly.³ The book "swept the nation like a cyclone," forewarning Americans of another "cyclone" to come.⁴ Stowe's sequel invoked Christian morality to condemn its portrayal of an antebellum Old

¹Bellah, The Broken Covenant, pp.51-52.

²Walters, American Reformers, pp.95-96.

³Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin: or Life Among the Lowly (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1852; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1962), pp.1-2, 454-460.

⁴Kenneth S. Lynn, Editor's preface in ibid., pp.ix-x.

Testament world, indicative of the shifting emphasis of America's dominant religiosity, from Old to New Testament in a renewal of Christian covenant theology to be consummated, once again, by the American president and High Priest.¹

By 1854, Lincoln was calling for the restoration of the Declaration of Independence in judgment of American institutions.² America's "republican robe is soiled," he said, "and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution."³ With the potency of mythic imagery, Lincoln joined abolitionists in changing the civil religion from within, shifting emphasis and meaning while invoking familiar symbols. By 1855, Lincoln was using the language of apostasy in accusations of Southern divergence from the Founding⁴ in his adept manipulation of those symbols. Lincoln's call to conformity with the higher laws of God and the Declaration of Independence sounded familiar now after years of abolitionist rhetoric. Henry David Thoreau had already joined abolitionists in the promulgation of this new American standard, as if in anticipation of Lincoln's Republican righteousness.⁵ By the time the Republican Party formed around it, this central notion had become the pillar of Northern civil religion.

¹Edmund Wilson, Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), p.37.

²Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, p.126.

³Abraham Lincoln, as quoted in Wills, Under God, p.209.

⁴Nagel, This Sacred Trust, p.168.

⁵Arieli, Individualism and Nationalism in America, p.274; Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, p.293-295.

The party merely had to follow its opportunistic Whig heritage in the use of anti-slavery rhetoric as a political tool.¹ This time, however, along with getting elected the Whigs would change the nation.

As a founder of the Republican Party, Charles Sumner asserted its initiation to be part of redemptive Christian history, following the patterns laid down by Moses and Jesus Christ. American slaves were to be freed so that Christianity might progress through the world.² This, through the election of righteous legislators.³ Walt Whitman began to look for his "Redeemer President" in 1856, to direct America to the realization of her millennial promise, and to redeem her of national guilt and shame.⁴ Increasingly, violence became likely as Republicans refused any compromise with their version of America. In fact, reformers now sought violence to step up their agenda, years of political haggling having concentrated support but not having freed any slaves. It seemed that only violence could bring on God's planned redemption.⁵

On Washington's birthday, February 22, 1857, Methodist minister Fountain Pitts, "by invitation of 'several members of Congress,' ...delivered in the U.S. Capitol a day-long sermon on America's prophetic

¹Foner, "Politics, Ideology, and the Origins of the Civil War," p.184.

²Charles Sumner, quoted in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, pp.576-577.

³Walters, American Reformers, p.97.

⁴Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, pp.205-206.

⁵Foner, "Politics, Ideology, and the Origins of the Civil War," p.182; Walters, American Reformers, pp.97-98; Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, p.83.

destiny" to an overflowing crowd. The sermon linked the Declaration of Independence with the Book of Daniel's millennial prophecy, and then pointed to the anticipation of war and destruction through which God, and the United States, would lead the world to republican Christianity as the only form of government and religion.¹ Civil religious symbols were mingled with anticipation of change amidst violence. William Seward's "Irrepressible Conflict," 1858, was extreme and explicit in its enunciation of America's confrontation of two systems that could not endure together, threatening in its resonance of Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech which, that same year, spurred Republicans, if not Americans, on to victory in a cause for which they had come so far.²

Two versions of the American faith had developed: a Northern millennialism closely linked to abolition as the perfectionist drive to eliminate the national "flaw," and a Southern covenant theology linked to slavery and patriarchy.³ Southerners reacted to Northern zeal by retrenching in an original culture that 'suddenly' became alien to the national mainstream through the North's return to a "founding before the Founding"--Puritanism, and its thrust towards "the materialization of God's will in the world."⁴ Southerners rejected this as a veiled union of church and state, insisting that pure, "true" religion remained vital only

¹Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, pp.84-86.

²William H. Seward, "An Irrepressible Conflict," in Main Problems in American History, ed. Quint et al., pp.352-356; Abraham Lincoln, "A House Divided," in Words of Our Nation, ed. Hunt, pp.82-86.

³Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.201.

⁴Norton, Alternative Americas, pp.3-4.

in the South through voluntary association and compliance with the word of God. Compulsion, meaning abolition, was rejected as radically opposed to the American tradition. Religious liberty, and thus civil liberty by implication of the Revolutionary tradition, remained safe only in the South.¹ The use of the civil religion by each section to offend and shame the other as sinners and tyrants destroyed its potency as a national force. While American consensus is enforced through local pressures of persecution and ostracism, it is the civil religion that universalizes and nationalizes the standards of belief, raising that conformity to a national level.² This universality was lost and the nation split as America's civil religion came undone through its own rhetorical invocation--American worlds are made effectively by words.

The lack of political will in the North to stifle abolitionists early on led to a reactionary stridency in the South, as lines of difference were increasingly hardened. In 1839, Henry Clay threatened and prophesied Southern secession for the preservation of republican government, slavery and abolition being explicitly the central issues this time--unlike South Carolina's secession scare of 1832.³ While the militancy of Northern abolitionists had been intended tactically to harden Southern rhetoric and, thus, to emphasize differences and discourage compromise, Southerners

¹William E. Channing, "The Duty of the Free States," The Southern Quarterly Review 2 (1842), pp.130-177; Robert Baird, "Religion in America," The Southern Quarterly Review 7 (1845), pp.350-372.

²Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Honor and Secession," in The Coming of the American Civil War, ed. Perman, pp.249-250, 256-258.

³Freehling, The Road to Disunion, pp.294-295, 359.

reacted with more than rhetoric. Moderate anti-slavery movements fizzled in the South, as new state constitutions entrenched slavery more firmly than ever in response to Northern radicalism. Abolitionists were antagonized in turn, so that a spiralling disintegration began, consummated, first, by the Fugitive Slave Act and the Dred Scott decision and, finally, by war. The abolitionist tactics worked to gather support in the North, however, as the spectacular growth of the movement signified a changing political will there.¹

Rhetorically, the South responded by entrenching itself deeper in the Old Testament and by re-asserting its connections with the Revolution. Once again the residence of tyranny was shifted onto an American opponent, this time from England to the North. The North became corrupt in the Southern view, a power in decline as had been England in the minds of America's Revolutionaries. British and Northern tyranny were further conjoined in the Southern mind through opposition to the annexation of Texas as a slave state. The North, therefore, was perceived as being part of an un-American conspiracy to realize a potential British occupation of western territories.² President John Tyler engaged in a civil religious defense of slavery as part of the advancing Christian civilization and

¹Handy, A Christian America, pp.54-55; Smith, The Nation Comes of Age, p.607, 609; John B. Boles, Religion in Antebellum Kentucky (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1976), pp.101-122; Fredrickson, "White Supremacy and the American Sectional Conflict," pp.229-232.

²Kenneth S. Greenberg, "Anglophobia, Southern Nationalism, and the Sectional Conflict," in The Coming of the American Civil War, ed. Perman, pp.204, 210, 214-217; President John Tyler, "Annexation of Texas," The Southern Quarterly Review 6 (1844), pp.483-520; David Brion Davis, The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1969), pp.43-48.

American mission, refusing any Southern reform of slavery under the pressure of abolition. The South represented the "true" America, Tyler told the United States Senate, one that must be extended through the west and Texas if America would accomplish her destiny.¹

Southerners invoked their own "chosenness" against the apostasy of Yankee infidels, establishing their "givenness" as the ideal one. The Old Testament remained the Bible of civil religion in the South, its myth the foundation of slavery and Southern society.² James Henry Hammond, once governor of South Carolina and United States Senator, wrote a defence of slavery based upon the Old Testament and the ever-American "will of God," eventually published in 1860 as "Slavery in the Light of Political Science."³ Among additional statesmen who joined in this type of political-biblical exegesis, Alexander Stephens defended the biblical foundations of slavery in 1846 to the U.S. Senate, insisting that Divine laws approved of the institution as must the Declaration of Independence in its conformity with those laws--a significant argument in light of the new interpretation of the Declaration being forwarded by abolitionists and eventually adopted into the civil religion through Lincoln and the Republicans. Southerners retained a literal reading of the Bible and the

¹President John Tyler, "Annexation of Texas," pp.507-520.

²Cherry, God's New Israel, pp.156-157; Arieli, Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology, pp.298-301.

³James Henry Hammond, "Slavery Defended on Scriptural Grounds," an excerpt in Religion in American Life, ed. Wright, pp.106-108; First published as "Slavery in the Light of Political Science," in Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments, ed. E.N. Elliott (Augusta, Ga.: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860), pp.634-636.

Constitution in their civil religion, in contrast to the North's movement by the spirit of the New Testament and the Declaration of Independence. Again, in 1849, Calhoun invoked biblical authority for slavery in addressing the Senate, as "political leaders joined clergymen [in] paying homage to the authority of the Bible for regulating social relationships." The Northern 'demotion' of the Old Testament was heretical to a South now proving its Puritan heritage as intensely as had the North: "The legal literalism of interpreting the Bible as the world's divine constitution helped revitalize in the South the colonial Puritan's myth of the state."¹ Typically, the American politics of nuance had invaded the civil religion. Once again, a slight diversity had great and violent implications.

The idealization of Southern society recalled the vision of a city upon a hill to this section, "whose mission was to uphold God's civil and religious laws as a beacon of light to the rest of the world."² The biblical myth of Ham, used as early as 1818 to justify slavery in the Senate, was renewed and embellished for the sanctification of Southern race relations, to the satisfaction of clergy and politicians alike. Religion and patriarchal familial relations were emphasized as key aspects of American self-government, as Southerners retreated into the Bible.³ "In the thirty-year period before the Civil War, a certain interpretation of the Bible as the constitution for the advance of Southern civilization

¹Peterson, Ham and Japheth, pp.20-23.

²Ibid., p.23.

³Ibid., pp.45-104.

became the dominant grounding for the Southerners' world view." Puritan America as New Israel was renewed in this Southern civil religion that stressed the ancient patriarchs and conformity to the Old Testament along with its renewed vision of America's Founding Fathers.'

By 1860, then, Southern opposition to the changing North became petrified in its own renewal of civil religion, just as Calhoun had warned in 1837. The North, too, had become rigid in its civil religion, Lincoln's Republicans and their refusal to compromise having prevailed over Stephen Douglas's feeble attempt to avoid civil religion altogether--and Douglas's compromise having made him a man out of step with his time. With Lincoln's election, it became clear to the South that the North would force its morality upon the nation, that the Northern civil religion would impose a 'restoration' of itself to national stature.² In his last speech to the U.S. Senate, Calhoun maintained that the Union had come undone through the loss of religious unity, political unity falling with it, all this as a consequence of Northern abolitionists.³ Ten years later, this spiritual split became actual as Southern statesmen "created" their nation in a renewal of 1776, carefully invoking original symbols for continuity with America's first Founders. Jefferson Davis left the U.S. Senate by invoking America's god, the god of the Revolution, against the North.⁴ The South

¹Ibid., p.112.

²Foner, "Cultural and Ideological Origins of the Sectional Conflict," pp.175-182.

³John C. Calhoun, as quoted in America's God and Country, p.87.

⁴Robert Hendrickson, Sumter: The First Day of the Civil War (Chelsea, Michigan: Scarborough House, 1990), pp.144-145.

Carolina "Declaration of Causes" rehearsed American history in a civil religious invocation of fidelity in their purpose, appealing "for the rectitude of our intentions" to the same god as had the framers of the Constitution.¹

The Civil War renewal of civil religion in the South was further enhanced by the Confederate constitution and its reception there. Benjamin Palmer's occasional sermon on America's "national responsibility before God" celebrates the new constitution as a "covenant with the God of Heaven, ...the God of Nations." Perceived mythically, the Southern nation becomes "a sort of person before God" in this covenant, an individual in its incorporated society and unity of life. Palmer pronounces the South's fidelity to God and the Founding, and its renewal of constitutional religiosity. The chief fault in the original founding, he asserts, is the omission of God from the Constitution, a fatal error that caused the shattering of "that nation" by incredulous and hypocritical leaders. The Confederate Constitution repents of this error, Palmer declares, by the official recognition of God in its first line. As the North had fallen away in apostasy, chasing after the "golden calf" of industrial wealth, so Southern secession had been decreed by God for the progress of American civilization, the South alone now being likened to Israel in its faithfulness to the covenant. As heir to the Revolution, and all of God's grand design for America, the Confederacy becomes mankind's last hope for self-government according to Palmer's call to "make the temple of justice

¹"The South Carolina Declaration of Causes," in ibid., pp.263-266.

awful and holy as the sanctuary of God."¹

Jefferson Davis, in his inaugural address, officially claimed this religio-political heritage for the South, taking his oath of office on Washington's birthday--a fact that he played upon in the first lines of his address. Davis referred to Washington and to original American independence as his progenitors immediately in his speech, embracing these "under the favor of Divine Providence" with the South's "hope to perpetuate the principles of our Revolutionary fathers." Davis's language remains moderate compared to Northern rhetoric, however, the former being an open and vague religiosity after the fashion of earlier American civil religion, although decidedly Confederate now. Davis closes his speech by committing himself and his country into the hands of "the Providence which has so visibly protected the Confederacy during its brief but eventful career," laying claim to "God's will" for the South and its continuation of American righteousness.² Both North and South would invoke this American god, however, His will to be known through military might despite Lincoln's self-righteous inversion of this formula.

Both American forces invoked their Christian God to the support of the cause, through civil religious fast days in the South, and through Thanksgiving in the North. Union forces became "the armies of the Lord and of Gideon," expecting victory through religious observance--reminiscent of

¹Benjamin M. Palmer, "National Responsibility Before God, June 13, 1861," in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.177-194.

²Jefferson Davis, "Inaugural Address as President of the Confederate States of America, February 22, 1862," in Great American Speeches, ed. Suriano, pp.88-92.

Washington's Christian soldiers of the Revolution. The South as a whole became increasingly pious as their cause faltered, expecting miracles of Divine intervention, hoping for God's will to be manifested on their behalf--again reminiscent of the Revolution and its perception by Americans. Instead, His will became manifest in the power of the North to impose their will and restore the nation. The Civil War became the most successful reform of the antebellum Christianizing effort, settling the character of the nation and of western expansion. The United States would become the Protestant civilization of the North.'

With this reform accomplished, the nation and the civil religion became entrenched as political and religious authorities. The quests for unity and authority that had plagued America's politics and religion were finally answered in an American nationalism that pre-empted sectarian potency. Thereafter, Protestant churches and sects remained harmonious in their irrelevance, competing religiously but not politically, as the nation and its government defined God's commands in actual terms. Political sectarians remained irrelevant altogether, alternate voices never "heard" in America. The civil religion prevailed over particular religions in this new arrangement wherein "true" religious meaning now was found in what Americans had in common.² As Herbert Richardson maintains, America had become a nation-state through the Civil War and had imposed upon it a civil religion that justified that war and its particular

¹Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.318-319, 325.

²Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.205; Hammond, "The Conditions for Civil Religion," p.68.

nation-state. A dominant faction had unified its power with the state, and forced its identification with the nation through the destruction of a lesser faction, ratifying the entire project through civil religion. Civil religion, then, becomes a key to centralized power in America, and is thus focused upon by Richardson as he attacks it to weaken government through the "re-institut[ion of] multiple nationhoods and multiple loyalties."¹ The Civil War settled religio-political issues for the next century, the war itself declaring to Americans that the republican virtue thought necessary to the Constitution would not be inculcated by religion and its promulgators. War decided issues of first principles, religion being unable to, and removed such principles forever from political discussion, leaving American politics with a compelling vision to guide its pursuit of practical policy. Mark Noll sees this accomplishment as tragic, the fight by both North and South to defend republican Christian virtue rendering that virtue irrelevant. Instead, it should be seen as a triumph of Northern religiosity. Victory carried with it a vindication of Yankee righteousness as they perceived it, providing for the mythic gift of Abraham Lincoln to the national consciousness, and for the givenness of the civil religion. Rather than removing Protestant Christianity from the public realm, the war now embedded its values in American "givenness."² In this way, church religion, already removed from American government by the Constitution, was essentially removed from American politics,

¹Herbert Richardson, "Civil Religion in Theological Perspective," in American Civil Religion, ed. Richey and Jon S, pp.167-170.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.328-332.

displaced in the public realm by the American Civil Religion.

Lincoln became the key figure in this civil religion, and through him entered an Americanized Christian symbology that keeps America essentially a Christian nation. Ever civil-religious in connecting himself to America's Founders, first principles, and God, Lincoln left Springfield for the White House with the invocation of the god that had cared providentially for Washington. "With that assistance," Lincoln declared, "I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well."¹ The nation being a spiritual entity of America's civil religion, no better 'man' than God could be relied upon to bind it together. In Philadelphia, two weeks later, President Lincoln made clear that the creed for which he would fight a war for his country, and even give his life for it, arose from "the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence. ...I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it [his sentimental attachment to the American Creed]."²

Although Lincoln always claimed to be fighting for American union alone, his speech in New Haven Connecticut, March 6, 1860, had established civil religion as the medium through which his unity was to be achieved. In this speech, Lincoln asserts that only slavery has ever threatened American unity, and only slavery is the issue that must be decided for the preservation of the Union. The decision is to be made, Lincoln maintains,

¹Abraham Lincoln, Springfield Illinois, February 11, 1861, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.377.

²Abraham Lincoln, Philadelphia, February 22, 1861, in ibid., p.377.

according to the underlying philosophy of the system, the civil religion. Its standards judge the correctness of particular policy, and so it becomes those standards that must be decided by the nation. The nation must unite around Southern slavery, a pecuniary interest and thus a particular policy, or around the moral, altruistic religion of the North, a universal sentiment and standard that rises above any particular policy to judge it. The civil religion in the South, Lincoln maintains, has created its own standards according to the existence of a particular policy, slavery dictating its own righteousness and defence in an apostate Southern civil religion. Instead, Lincoln proclaims, we must first choose the standard and only then judge the policy. It is this standard, the character of the American nation, that is to be chosen in the coming war.¹

Apparently, Lincoln did not expect war, as he believed Americans to be one nation universally attached to his principles, with the exception of a few slaveholding tyrants. However, his interpretation of American doctrine was only slightly removed from radical Republicans, liberal progressives who have since been termed moderately as "more advanced Republicans" because their standards prevailed as national. Instead, Lincoln thought himself closely aligned with the American Founders, thus with the American people as a whole, truly a spiritual president. His idolatry of the Founders began in his youth, it is reported, as part of the Second Awakening's sacralizing of American history. The South's

¹Abraham Lincoln, "New Haven Daily Palladium, 7 March 1860," in Harding, American Literature in Context, pp.222-224.

falling out of step with the progress of that Awakening, Lincoln thought, now threatened to undo the work of those Founders and the Revolution.¹ Lincoln invoked the Founders throughout the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, connecting himself to them in the mind of his audience. Envisioning himself as completing the Revolution, Garry Wills maintains, "the act of bringing forth a new nation conceived in liberty is always an *intellectual* act for Lincoln." This, despite Wills admission that it is the Civil War which completes the founding.² Civil religion is never entirely one or the other, civil or religious, intellectual or concrete, but always both.

While he might have based his American creed on "the intentions of the founders of the nation, as he understood them,"³ Lincoln transformed original American meaning in that understanding. His emphasis on the Declaration of Independence as the "birth of a nation" might be arbitrary, and his assertions of the binding commitment to equality that it imposed on the American people can be seen as historical revisionism.⁴ Still Lincoln was sure that most Americans believed as he did.⁵ Lincoln assumed

¹Stephen B. Oates, Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths (New York: Meridian, 1984), pp.80-81, 96-97, 59.

²Garry Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), pp.79, 85, 59.

³Harding, American Literature in Context, p.227.

⁴Willmoore Kendall and George W.Carey, The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1970), pp.84-95.

⁵Garry Wills, "Lincoln: The Power of Words in Times of War," Life 14:2 (February, 1991), p.27.

an American consensus to exist, and then enforced its existence, an 'improvement' upon the original founding that merits the inclusion, in America's civil religion, of Abraham Lincoln among names attached to the Declaration of Independence.'

The Gettysburg Address captures best Lincoln's religious, as well as political, significance in the civil religion and the life of the nation thereafter. As Garry Wills points out, its biblical, prophetic language in referring to the Declaration of Independence and the Founding Fathers carries Lincoln's audience into his belief in a sublime creation *ex nihilo* of the nation in 1776. The Declaration of Independence represents a "virgin birth" as opposed to the Constitution and its messy compromises.² In the Address, the Declaration becomes transcendent and with it the Union and its cause.³ The Civil War became transcendent, universalized in its struggle for human freedom and sublime truth. Lincoln changes the Constitution from within, Wills asserts, moving from the letter to the spirit of the law. Although Wills maintains a difference between this type of destruction and Garrison's symbolic burning of the Constitution, both men moved in the same direction, with the same effect--a Christianizing movement from Old Testament pharisaic law to New Testament freedom in the spirit of the word, both from within the civil religion. Garrison merely was earlier and more courageously explicit, or less politically expedient,

¹Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, p.87.

²Garry Wills, Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp.xv-xviii.

³Harding, American Literature in Context, p.240.

than was Lincoln.'

As nations are made by creeds as well as by blood, in Lincoln's estimation, so the war's dead must be joined by idealizing their sacrifice. Idealization the Declaration of Independence joined the Union dead in egalitarian rows at Gettysburg. The Constitution became an imperfect particular attempt to realize the ideals embodied in the Declaration, as Lincoln followed the North's conversion to abolitionist dogma earlier in the revival. The Declaration of Independence became the standard that judges history, the scripture that hermeneutically reveals the meaning of God's grand design for historians, ministers, and politicians alike in the 1850s. Lincoln now followed along, entrenching that 'revelation' in a new American scripture. Through the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln changed forever the emphasis of the Declaration of Independence, simultaneously changing the meaning of the Constitution and all the while effectively changing America's civil religion and its standards that judge the "correctness" of any particular policy, slavery included.² In this way, the Civil War can be said to constitute a "second American revolution," a revolution of thought and self-conception, especially within the civil religion--much as the first revolution had achieved as it emerged from the First Awakening. Arising out of religious renewal and awakening, the Civil War, although questionable in its revolutionary change of economic conditions, did involve a cultural revolution. Northerners claimed fidelity to the Founders in this

¹Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, pp.37-38.

²Ibid., pp.86, 101-113, 145-146.

revolutionary spirit, while Southerners perceived themselves as counter-revolutionaries who conserved the Founding. Again, both sides invoked original civil religion--the Founding and its god--in defence of their struggle.¹

The new emphasis and meaning that Lincoln placed upon the Declaration of Independence has successfully altered the American mind, so that the original American Founding is now seen through Lincolnian eyes. The past is changed through this interpretation, much as Christians re-interpret the Old Testament and Hebraic history through the New Testament and Christian dogma. Wills struggles to keep Lincoln in consonance with original founding sentiments, all the while insisting that he is instituting a new founding and changing America.² In American minds, Jefferson becomes very much like Lincoln, as evidenced by Bellah's preservation of the Founder in the Lincolnian New Testament version of civil religion.³ A certain fidelity to the Founding Fathers is required for legitimacy in America, a harmony required among first and second Founders. However, you are as you say you are in America, so that Lincoln's new founding can remain as it was presented--not change, but renewal of first principles and the original "moment."

By this caveat, that words matter in America more than deeds, Lincoln can be praised for inspiring "'the better angels of our nature', ...while

¹James M. McPherson, Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), pp.3-22, 23-42.

²Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, pp.38-39, 183-184.

³Bellah, "The Revolution and the Civil Religion," pp.63-64.

waging our bloodiest, most divisive war." Indeed, it is Lincoln's text that made him "great," as Garry Wills asserts. His "morally persuasive rhetoric" remains the measure of the man, rather than his actions as commander-in-chief through a terrible war.¹ In this way, Lincoln can be remembered in high school readers for his "dignity, tolerance, avoidance of doctrinaire solutions" that "turned him into a successful war leader in a democracy."² His Second Inaugural Address, its invocation of charity and frank 'admission' by Lincoln that he bears "malice toward none," speaks louder than do his war guns to declare Lincoln's morality and establish himself as prophet and priest to the American people. His persistent calls for American repentance are answered by the baptism of a nation, first through fire, and then through the word, as the Second Inaugural joins Thanksgiving Day proclamations to define the role of the war and of the nation in explicitly biblical, messianic terms. In all of this, Lincoln escapes history's judgement of himself as self-righteous by inverting his invocation of "God's will," insisting that he is hoping to be on God's side, rather than declaring God to have joined him.³ In this way, Americans believe, Lincoln is a humble servant seeking only to discern God's will and do it. Nevertheless, Lincoln's perseverance in doing the work of the Lord as He reveals it to America has given new impetus to the perpetual equation of the American cause with Divinity, the

¹Wills, "Lincoln," pp.23-24.

²Andrew Lee, Lincoln, Reputations Series (London: B.T. Batsford, 1988), p.9.

³Wills, "Lincoln," p.24; Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, pp.183-189.

Lincolnian inversion justifying and sanctifying American will as neatly as if read the other-way-around. This way, however, the American will claims for itself a certain Christian humility in its exercise.

Christian sentiments of rebirth and sacrifice are embedded in the civil religion by the Civil War, as they are by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and his personal religiosity. Wills correctly asserts that Lincoln "dreamed ...that out of all the suffering the nation would be born again in the biblical sense--'that this nation, under God, may have a new birth of freedom.'" Wills adds that this is "naive stuff; but most Americans believe it, basically, still." Robert Bellah agrees that Christianity enters the civil religion through Lincoln and the Civil War, much of it muted symbolically, making it effectively 'universal' in its appeal: "With the Civil War, a new theme of death, sacrifice, and rebirth enters the civil religion. It is symbolized in the life and death of Lincoln. Nowhere is it stated more vividly than in the Gettysburg Address, itself part of the Lincolnian 'New Testament' among the civil scriptures." The imagery of conception and birth are writ large in Lincoln's speech, sacrifice and sacrament imbuing the civil religion with a "Christian quality of the symbolism" without "any sectarian implication. The earlier symbolism of the civil religion had been Hebraic without being in any specific sense Jewish." Lincoln's idealized version of freedom and equality were now removed from Jefferson's original invocation, and joined with Christian sacrifice, death, and rebirth--encapsulated in Memorial Day celebrations

'Wills, "Lincoln," p.28. Also see Wills, Lincoln at Gettysburg, pp.88-89.

that grew out of Northern victory.¹

Although the non-denominational Lincoln began to attend church regularly during his presidency, and this set a pattern of holiness for later presidents to follow (but bested by Eisenhower's celebrated baptism shortly after entering the White House), the general Christianity that Lincoln espoused perfectly fitted him for the leadership of America's civil religion. Lincoln's faith itself is better described as American civil-religious than as Christian.² Lincoln's martyrdom, however, its immediate symbolic communication of death and sacrifice, cinched Christianity's grip upon the American imagination. "With the Christian archetype in the background, Lincoln, 'our martyred president,' was linked to the war dead, those who 'gave the last full measure of devotion.' The theme of sacrifice was indelibly written into the civil religion."³

The apotheosis of Abraham Lincoln was accomplished swiftly after his death, linking him to Christ in his "personification of humility, love of country and sacrifice." His death on Good Friday made Lincoln the perfect symbol for the Christian atonement of national sins and for the promise of redemption. Eulogized as a man of God, Lincoln the anointed joined another anointed one, George Washington, in his ascension to the American heaven. An 1865 engraving by John Sartain, "Abraham Lincoln the Martyr Victorious," is reminiscent of an earlier "Apotheosis of Washington." The

¹Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," pp.11-13.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.322; Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, pp.294-295.

³Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," p.13.

band of angels raising up Lincoln now includes Washington among them, however, as Lincoln joins the Patriots of '76 and all of the Union dead in heaven, an army of angels with Christ at the head. Washington and Lincoln become Father and Saviour in the national pantheon, with Lincoln threatening to overshadow his elder statesman, and even Christ himself.'

As a Christ figure, Lincoln's adoption into the civil religion mutes its Christianity, so that immigrants and Jews especially could identify with the nation and the civil religion through the martyred President, becoming Americans through their identification with Lincoln, rather than through explicit conversion to American Christianity. The South, too, could convert quietly to the civil religion of the North, through Lincoln as symbol and "Savior of our Country." While this conversion was slow, the South had begun to re-enter the national civil religion through Lincoln by mid-twentieth century. To support the legitimacy and continuity of their policies, twentieth-century American presidents linked themselves with Lincoln rhetorically, much as Lincoln had struggled to link himself to the Founders. Presidents Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Ford, each was explicit in likening himself to Lincoln, while John F. Kennedy had his speeches deliberately modeled after Lincoln's style to connect himself to the emancipator sub-consciously in American minds. Lyndon Johnson closed the national mourning for Kennedy on the steps of the Lincoln memorial, where Lincoln and his sacred American scripture are enshrined, making the connection explicit so that he might "continue" the work with national

'Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, pp.3-35.

legitimacy.' Richard Nixon, in the depths of the Watergate scandal, "climbed the steps" of the Lincoln temple "to remind voters that 'no President in history ...was more vilified during the time he was President than Lincoln'--hoping, no doubt, that they would see a link between Honest Abe and himself."² Unlike Nixon at the time, however, Lincoln's death fixed a different image of the president in the American schema (death seems to be repairing Nixon's image now too).

In Horace Bushnell's 1865 commencement address, all of the Civil War dead were linked to Christian redemption by blood. Life is in the blood, Bushnell declared, and there must be blood and sacrifice to open new and greater chapters of life. History and its progress must feed itself on blood, he says, as he closes the war with meaning while unknowingly foretelling of future American adventures abroad. The war brought a new age of history for America, he announced, and a new literary age as well, in which Americans would no longer write English, but American. A confident American identity was forged through death, America's free institutions preserved through bloody sacrifice:

In these rivers of blood we have now bathed our institutions and they are heretoforth to be hallowed in our sight. Government is now become Providential--no more a mere creature of our human will, but a grandly moral affair. The awful stains of sacrifice are upon it, as upon the fields where our dead battled for it, and it is sacred for their sakes. The stamp of God's sovereignty is also upon it; for he has beheld their blood upon its gate-posts and made it the sign of his pass-over.

Americans must now "honour and sanctify the dead" by taking up their

¹Ibid., pp.206-232, 251-255, 314-326.

²Wills, "Lincoln," p.34.

cause, fulfilling "the idea that inspired them." Again foretelling the approaching future, consciously this time, Bushnell speaks for the nation as "we swear by our dead to be Americans, ...to cherish the country and assert our future, ...to invigorate both in our civilization, and to consolidate them in our religion." And finally, he adds, "to champion, by land and sea, the right of this whole continent to be an American world," the very cause for which the Civil War was fought.¹

"Christian America" and its Mission

With the consolidation of belief that came with the Civil War, America's civil religion emerged to instill confidence in a new American consensus. The American character had been decided for the next one hundred years, a century of expansion and promulgation of the American gospel, rather than of its contention and development. Through the first half of this century, political leaders were near-unanimous in their vision of politics and "public service as a generally Christian enterprise. So it was with the Methodist Rutherford B. Hayes and the Disciples of Christ lay minister James Garfield." These men were joined by William McKinley, "who saw victory in the Philippines as an opportunity for spreading Christian civilization," and by Theodore Roosevelt in his "masculine" version of Christian politics.² As befits a "Christian

¹Horace Bushnell, "Our Obligations To The Dead, (An oration given at the Commemorative Celebration held in New Haven, on Wednesday of Commencement week, July 26, 1865, in honor of the Alumni of Yale College, who fell in the War of the Rebellion)," in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.199-209.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.299.

nation," the oath of office for all government officials was modified in 1868 to include the phrase "so help me God," and has remained so since.¹ In 1869, West Point began the continuing practice of presenting each incoming cadet with a Bible, the "infallible Word of God" according to Supreme Court Justice William Story, a suitable component in America's "weaponry" for its mission to the world.²

True to the form of the now Christian Presidency, Ulysses S. Grant, as President of the United States, wrote to the editor of the Sunday School Times in Philadelphia, admonishing Sunday schools to "hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties. ...To the influence of this Book are we indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this must we look in the future." Grant repeated a scripture that had by then become an American motto of self-congratulation, adding to it the prophetic warning that must have been vivid in the minds of the Civil War generation: "righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."³ President Hayes, in turn, added his own priestly declaration, declaring: "I am a firm believer in the Divine teachings, perfect example, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I believe also in the Holy Scriptures as the revealed Word of God to the world for its enlightenment and salvation."⁴ Clearly the "new" nation emerging from the

¹"The Oath of Office, 1868," in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.453-454.

²Federer, America's God and Country, pp.297, 575.

³Ulysses S. Grant, Letter to the Editor, Sunday School Times, Philadelphia, June 6, 1876, in ibid., pp.264-265.

⁴President Rutherford B. Hayes, as quoted in ibid., p.286.

"second American revolution" was confident in its Christian principles and civil religiosity.

Although religion is said to have returned to the private sphere in this period, this assertion can be substantiated for church religion alone. American civil religion remained vital throughout the post-Civil War years, fostering the return of church concerns to a theological, rather than a political, focus. New sects and religious schisms in this period are characterized as being apolitical, or even anti-political (the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example) as the civil religion retained a monolithic grasp on the national psyche. Thus, American fundamentalism arose as a response of church religion to the civil religion, attempting to reclaim American religion from the political arena to purify it and remove it from its ideological action orientation.'

With this new self-confidence of consensus, Americans struck out in a missionary enterprise, first to deal with unfinished business in the West, then to convert the world abroad. Mormons were forced to comply with the new religious consensus, as "the first significant free exercise case" brought Mormon religious practise into conformity with the rest of the nation's "higher" standard. Legislation outlawing polygamy was upheld by the Supreme Court with an interpretation of the First Amendment's free exercise guarantee that followed Roger Williams's reasoning. In Reynolds v. United States, 1878, it was maintained that "government could regulate beliefs when they broke out into overt acts against peace and good order."

'Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, pp.90-93; Clyde Wilcox, "The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America: Continuity and Change," The Review of Politics 50 (1988), pp.660-662.

In Mormon Church v. United States, 1890, the Court held that Congress even could infringe upon sacred American property rights, that Mormon property could be confiscated through disincorporation of the church, unless the Mormon hierarchy yielded in its support of polygamy. To save itself, the Mormon Church relented and renounced polygamy as a practise, thereby coming into the American fold. It also subsequently gained statehood through this compliance, an acheivement of the United States government and its Court's application of the First Amendement's free exercise clause--an American embrace of a culture that could not be achieved by several "Mormon wars" a generation earlier.¹ Although qualified over time, Reynolds "remains a basic guide to understanding the free exercise clause," and continued to be cited as a binding precedent into the late 1980s.² The Mormon cases remained the only real tests of the First Amendement's religious protections until the middle of the twentieth century, a testament to the civil religion's potential for American consensus in these years.

Approaching the end of the nineteenth century, most Americans viewed the United States as a "Christian nation," and "themselves as belonging

¹Michael J. Sandel, "Freedom of Conscience or Freedom of Choice?" in Articles of Faith, Articles of Peace: The Religious Liberty Clauses and the American Public Philosophy (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1990), p.80; Rodney K. Smith, Public Prayer and the Constitution: A Case Study in Constant Interpretation (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1987), pp.121-123.

²Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988), p.156; Edwin B. Firmage, "The Judicial Campaign against Polygamy and the Enduring Legal Questions," Brigham Young University Studies 27 (1987), p.108.

both to a denominational tradition and to the national religion, a religion of civilization."¹ Josiah Strong maintained that Benjamin Franklin's tenets of public religion, essentially the articles of faith in Rousseaus's civil religion, were now the fundamentals of all monotheistic religion--an embrace of all creeds in America's civil religion, as well as an assertion of its religious legitimacy against a rising religious fundamentalism that was working to undercut it.² Strong's defence of American civil religion was linked closely with a missionary impulse to strike out and assert the values of American civilization abroad, in the hope and belief of "the coming of Christ's Kingdom." Strong's 1885 bestseller prophesying the survival of the fittest race in Anglo-Saxon civilization, reflected the mainstream of American Christian thought and its expectation at the turn of the century. Robert Bellah notes "how long the Protestant clergyman remains a central spokesman for American culture," reminding us that he was echoed in American politicians well into the next century.³

J.F. Maclear points out that antebellum themes of civil religion are all present in the rhetoric surrounding American mission as it moved into the new century--the association of free government and Christianity, God's providential care, the chosen American race, its world mission, and the appeal for action in a critical hour, all are part of an antebellum

¹Handy, A Christian America, p.99.

²Mead, "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church'," p.57.

³Bellah, The Broken Covenant, p.56; Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.340-341.

pattern of religio-political rhetoric. What is new, Maclear asserts, is the modern context that gives fresh impetus to the mission, the "scientific" and "notorious adoption of fashionable Darwinian language" about the "competitive struggle of the races." In this renewal, the "Protestant Saxonism" of the United States becomes the "most effective instrument" of history, "God's right arm" in the battle of political and religious progress. New meaning was given to the plea, "America for the world's sake!"¹

While a missionary effort by Protestant churches accompanied American expansion in this period, it was the civil religion that gave religious legitimacy to this new imperialism. Senator Albert Beveridge insisted that God had "marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world." He was joined in these sentiments by President McKinley, his presiding role in the civil religion giving him a legitimate platform from which to pontificate his views on war as missionary work for the advancement of civilization and Christianity.²

Senator Beveridge, Bellah tells us, was no "ignorant 'redneck'" but, instead was "better educated and more intellectual than most senators," and expressed sentiments shared by "Americans of far greater capacity."³ His rhetoric, then, while it might seem incredible and even offensive to some now, cannot be dismissed as atypical. Instead, his is a candid

¹Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," pp.210-211.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.292-294; Handy, A Christian America, pp.105-130.

³Bellah, The Broken Covenant, p.38.

expression of the zeal and self-righteousness that lives at the heart of civil religion in America, in an uneasy co-existence with the prophetic strand of self-judgement. Beveridge's civil religiosity is unleashed from the constraints of humility imposed by Lincoln's example but is, perhaps, less hypocritical than the pious displays of Christian benevolence to which Americans pretend in their foreign policy.

In "The March of the Flag," 1898, Beveridge celebrates the conclusion of American continental expansion under the guise of "manifest destiny." This is the voice of civil religion as it echoes its own fulfilment in the consolidation of the American character and enterprise through the Civil War and final western expansion. "God has given us" this land, Beveridge declares, and "He has planted us on this soil." Americans are "a people imperial by virtue of their power, by right of their institutions, by authority of their Heaven-directed purposes." The Civil War has been definitive in its removal of doubt about American chosenness, quieting old whispers of an "almost chosen people." Beveridge declares that "it is a glorious history our God has bestowed upon His chosen people; a history heroic with faith in our mission and our future, ...a history divinely logical," this history of destiny now manifest. But, says Beveridge, there is a mission to perform still, as "God endowed us with gifts beyond our deserts and marked us as the people of His peculiar favor" for His own purposes:

Wonderfully has God guided us. Yonder at Bunker Hill and Yorktown His providence was above us. At New Orleans and on ensanguined seas His hand sustained us. Abraham Lincoln was His minister and His was the altar of freedom the Nation's soldiers set up on a hundred battle-fields. His power directed Dewey in the East and delivered the Spanish fleet into our

hands, as He delivered the elder Armada into the hands of our English sires two centuries ago. The American people can not use a dishonest medium of exchange; it is ours to set the world its example of right and honor. We can not fly from our world duties; it is ours to execute the purpose of a fate that has driven us to be greater than our small intentions. *We can not retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization.*¹ (emphasis added)

And so, Beveridge says, America must annex the Philippines, where American marines then stood. This speech is said to have had an immediate impact across America, winning many electoral victories for Republicans and propelling Beveridge to the United States Senate.²

Beveridge's speech opening the Republican campaign for West Chicago in September, 1900, and titled "The Star of the Empire," moves his civil religious rhetoric from a celebration of past domestic expansion to a continued justification for American world domination. "Used by the Republicans as a National Campaign document," this speech announces the right of expansion of American civilization throughout the world, as an "empire of liberty and law, of commerce and communication, of social order and of the Gospel of our Lord." Beveridge repeats the American refrain, "Providence has called us," to expand and conquer inferior races--first the American Indians, now the Filipinos. "The Americans, who God has given the Philippines to, to develop, regenerate their people and establish civilization," must respond in duty, Beveridge insists. "What war and nature--aye, what God hath joined together--is [not] to be put asunder.

¹Albert J. Beveridge, "The March of the Flag," September 16, 1898, in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.645-651.

²Ernest R. May, "Albert J. Beveridge: The March of the Flag," in ibid., p.652.

...The sovereignty of the Stars and Stripes can be nothing but a blessing to any people and to any land." Confident in the selfless interests of American imperialism, Beveridge denies the relevance of any impure, economic motivation: "I waive this large consideration as insignificant, compared with the master argument of the progress of civilization, which Under God, the American people are henceforth to lead until our day is done." Not finances, but prophetic statesmanship shapes American history, he continues, a heritage that must now be fulfilled in "this divine order of progress." The Americanization of the world is "the tremendous purpose of destiny. God's hand was in it all. His plans were working out their glorious results. ...the eternal movement of the American people toward the mastery of the world. This is a destiny neither vague nor undesirable. It is definite, splendid and holy. ...It is the high and holy destiny of the American people" to rule the world.'

These civil religious sentiments found official expression in the presidency, and William McKinley telling Methodists that duty demanded the annexation of the Philippines to "uplift and civilize and Christianize" the Filipinos. Frances Fitzgerald maintains that "this evangelical mission was not just the substance of American policy; for many it was the spirit of the nation itself. Who could dispute that the nation had a God-given mission, a manifest destiny? The proof was its extraordinary success."²

¹Albert J. Beveridge, "The Star of Empire," in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.140-153.

²Frances Fitzgerald, "The American Millennium," in Estrangement: America and the World, ed. Sanford J. Ungar (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), pp.274-275.

In a White House interview, November 21, 1899, President McKinley explained that he had arrived at this policy through a great deal of political counsel but, unable to decide, "I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me ...that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died."¹ Another report has it that, on this occasion, McKinley "heard the voice of God instructing him to annex the Philippines."² Still another report explains that it was in a dream that the president received his inspiration. Whatever the precise medium of communication to the president, it was through the President of the United States that God's will was delivered to the American people, in a civil-religious justification of a foreign military venture. "One of the moral hazards of a democracy, particularly one with a strong sense of mission, is that it cannot engage in wars, except they be for 'righteousness sake,' real or pretended."³ President Bill Clinton's assurance to the nation that he had prayed before deciding to bomb an Iraqi intelligence headquarters reminds us that this is so.

Success abroad, America's "undefeated record" through the second

¹William McKinley, from Charles S. Olcott, "The Life of William McKinley" (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1916), excerpted in Nationalism and Religion in America, ed. Hudson, pp.119-120.

²William Pfaff, The Wrath of Nations: Civilizations and the Furies of Nationalism (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp.177-178.

³Niebuhr and Heimart, A Nation So Conceived, pp.132, 137.

World War, worked to confirm American righteousness.¹ Woodrow Wilson's biblical background is said to have helped him to win support in the 1912 campaign, through its gift to him of fluency in the language of America's civil religion.² Although Wilson originally invoked Christ and His gospel to the American Senate in the cause of "the single supreme plan of peace, the revelation of our Lord and Savior,"³ he eventually aligned himself rhetorically with a growing renewal of apocalyptic thought and prophetic millennial anticipation. As Wilson believed American history to be Christian history, and that American policy could and should carry Christian principles into fruition, so another American president engaged in "holy" war, initially under the guise of a legal argument to defend America rights, finally and openly for the redemption of the world. It was America's destiny to save the world, Wilson maintained, in a Christian-American sense.⁴ Continuing in the tradition of "manifest destiny," Wilson told the United States Senate at the war's end that

the stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us into this way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and

¹Fitzgerald, "The American Millennium," p.275.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.361-362.

³Woodrow Wilson, as quoted in ibid., p.363.

⁴Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, pp.100-101; Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.302; Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, pp.209-213.

nowhere else.'

Unfortunately, the League of Nations was harder to sell with civil religious rhetoric than was war--the American nation still having retained a susceptibility to its original civil religion of Old Testament wrath and righteous indignation, a rhetoric that moves it where Christian pacifism cannot.

William Jennings Bryan, Wilson's Secretary of State for a time, left the cabinet as a "real Christian," according to the Los Angeles Tribune, unable in the end to use his influence to keep America out of the war. Bryan, who worked for years to involve "Christian men" in politics during this period of withdrawal from "the world" by church religion, had assured his supporters that Wilson was the incarnation of the Christian spirit. As part of his struggle to push peace, Bryan "requisitioned War Department swords, had them melted into plowshare paperweights, and gave them to Wilson and other officials." In the end, Bryan, too, had to withdraw from "the world," the only course of action open to a "real" Christian.²

Bryan was associated with the American populist movement around the turn of the century, an integrally religious movement that forms a revealing example of the relationships between ideology, religion, and civil religion. Populist rhetoric was full of the religious language and imagery readily understood by the American people. Religion was used to bolster essentially economic and political arguments in a civil-religious

¹Woodrow Wilson, "Presenting the Treaty for Ratification," in the U.S. Senate, July 10, 1919, in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, p.294.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.358-360.

sense of calling down God's will to justify a particular vision for the American nation--at one point God being about to kill all Republicans, to call "home" the Republican party. Moreover, populists used the civil religion in referential connections of themselves to first principles and the American Founding. Ideology served to diagnose American conditions and to prescribe remedial action in a progressive sense. Civil religion served to legitimize the movement and its particular actions. General religion, or church religion as far as it adhered to common American beliefs, mediated tensions between individual and community demands. The content of the civil religion is key, as it constitutes the standards by which the legitimacy of particular policy is judged. As always, this is why the content of the civil religion is so important, and why it becomes so contentious at times. The civil religion provides "a politically legitimate vocabulary" that can be used to keep progressive policy within the American mainstream of thought, justifying and sanctifying change as renewal.'

Becoming "One Nation Under God"

The connection of oneself to Founding Fathers and Christian virtue is typical of American political rhetoric. President Theodore Roosevelt, in a speech to the House of Representatives, brought the problems of American government at that time into a co-extensive existence with the issues facing Washington and "first" Americans. Beginning his speech with references to Washington that implied Roosevelt's own mythical continuance

'Williams and Alexander, "Religious Rhetoric In American Populism," pp. 1-15.

of his work, that is to say implied Roosevelt as a founder continuing to lay American foundations, the President then continued with the mundane issues of the day, closing with references to the Bible and the Ten Commandments. Practical policy issues are thus sandwiched by American meaning, elevating the entire debate.¹

Calvin Coolidge's speech to the Massachusetts Senate upon his election as its President, was said by Walter Lippmann to be a renewal of American Puritanism, a potent invocation of civil religion in America: "the people are delighted with a Puritan as their national symbol."² Coolidge became "the Darling of the Gods," as this address became "one of the major causes" that propelled Coolidge into the American presidency.³ In it, the Senator asserted that "men do not make laws. They do but discover them. Laws must be justified by something more than the will of the majority. They must rest on the eternal foundations of righteousness." These justifying eternal standards are known through the American Civil Religion, an instrument of government in the United States that 'blesses' America: "That state is most fortunate in its form of government which has the aptest instruments for the discovery of laws." Coolidge is joined by "thousands and thousands of his fellow men" in his renewed expression of "a broader, firmer, deeper faith ...that the Commonwealth is founded upon

¹Theodore Roosevelt, "The Man with the Muck-Rake," from a speech at the House of Representatives, April 14, 1906, in Words of Our Nation, ed. Hunt, pp.191-195.

²Walter Lippmann, 1926, as quoted by Walter Muir Whitehill in "Calvin Coolidge: Have Faith in Massachusetts, 1914," in An American Primer, p.780.

³Whitehill, in ibid., pp.780-781.

a righteousness which will endure," an abiding American faith.'

While mainstream American churches were aligned with the civil religion in support of the government's war stance in 1917, fundamentalists and sectarian purists continued their opposition to "worldly" religion. Ostracized for their withdrawal from the American religion, the political legitimacy of these religious voices was injured, a hinderance to them in their limited involvement in public life around a few issues. Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted, for instance, for non-conformity, acts reminiscent of antebellum crusades against "un-American" offenders.²

Most significantly, fundamentalists gained infamy in their opposition to the teaching of evolution in American schools. With faith in the government as God's agent for progress, mainstream churches withdrew from the anti-evolution struggle. They were secure in their support of the civil religion and its growing acceptance of "secular" science and Darwinianism. Progressive Protestant "liberals" were "eager to state the Protestant view of history in modern, 'philosophical' terms congenial to the age." A renewed emphasis was placed upon the Christian-Enlightenment thinking that entered America through the First Awakening. In this thought, the Divine purpose was to be worked out in a cultural process, as American history had demonstrated, the millennium to be approached through progress "in a natural context, rather than scriptural." With this renewal

¹Calvin Coolidge, "Have Faith in Massachusetts," 1914, in ibid., pp.776-779.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.364-366.

of eighteenth-century thought, Americans "achieved the ultimate historicization of the millennium."¹ Fundamentalists were left to fight alone against progress and a civil religion willing to compromise theology with science. Despite its apparent success, the anti-evolution battle would further damage fundamentalisms' political legitimacy and effectively remove it as a public voice until the 1950s and 1960s, when it would return to politics as an anti-Communist force in harmony with the civil religion, thus recovering American legitimacy.²

In the anti-evolution struggle to preserve "the nation's Christian heritage," William Jennings Bryan emerged as a fundamentalist spokesman who effectively linked "nineteenth-century efforts to establish a Christian America" with twentieth-century efforts to conserve that establishment.³ Eugene Provenzo Jr. argues that the popular perception of the "Scopes Monkey Trial" as an embarrassment that killed fundamentalism is incorrect, that in fact fundamentalism remains a vital force in current American politics. However, Provenzo ignores the submergence of fundamentalism as a political force until its resurrection to legitimacy in anti-Communism. Of course, it can be argued that the fundamentalists merely withdrew until that time, satisfied with their victory in keeping evolution out of the schools. A 1928 Arkansas law that prohibited evolution from public schools remained in force, upheld by the State

¹Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," pp.206-207.

²Wilcox, "The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America," pp.662-667.

³Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, p.383.

Supreme Court of Arkansas as late as 1966 in Epperson v. State of Arkansas. Although the decision was eventually overturned by the Federal Supreme Court, Arkansas remains indicative of the explicitly Christian nature of education in America up until the 1960s. Mississippi, moreover, continued its anti-evolutionary stance until the end of 1970, when the State Supreme Court ruled in compliance with the United States Supreme Court's decision in Epperson.¹

Hatch and Noll see the "Scopes Monkey Trial" as part of an American struggle for balance in the religious and civil-religious establishment, a struggle that continued through the 1960s when the Supreme Court prohibited the Bible from public schools "as a religious text but encouraged its study as a literary influence."² The nineteenth-century de-sectarianizing approach to religion as taught in public schools and as forwarded by Justice William Penn Lyon--his maintenance of legitimacy for the teaching of religion being based on an emphasis of what is common to all sects--was only gradually replaced by a "secularizing" approach of a peculiar nature. Lyons had held, in Weiss v. District Board of Edgerton, 1890, that the common religion tenets of America's civil religion should be taught in public schools. Robert Michaelson assures us that many state supreme courts remained favourable to the American "religious ideal of education" into the twentieth century, and that even those courts which ruled out formal Bible reading, "left room for common religious

¹Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., Religious Fundamentalism and American Education: The Battle for the Public Schools (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1990), pp.2, 52-54.

²Hatch and Noll, "Introduction," pp.7-10.

teachings." The "secularizing" tendency of American schools came about through a re-interpretation of the definition of religion, beginning with John Dewey's "Religion and Our Schools."¹

Dewey's article in the Hibbert Journal of July, 1908, asserted a distinction between "religion" and "religious," "religion" being a traditional, churchly affair involving supernatural explanations, while "religious" denoted "a quality of human experience involving natural, human explanations. "Religion" in the schools, Dewey's argument goes, could be considered "unreligious, even irreligious, because it would divert schools from the truly religious task of humanizing and communalizing Americans." America should strive for "a fuller religious consciousness" based on the state, science, and democracy, rather than on supernatural religion, Dewey argued. Sectarianism should be removed from the schools, its detracting from "state consciousness" being the very object targeted by a Constitutional separation of church and state. Sectarrians should continue to thrive, but not to the detriment of the community as a whole. Rather, sectarian religion should be removed from the schools in a "subordination of group interest" to community welfare. Although Dewey's ambiguous, thus openly inclusive, concept of religiosity provided a "grey area" for compromise and "fence-sitting" in later court decisions, there was not enough "religion" in it for his contemporaries-- Bible reading and prayer remained in at least thirty-seven states through mid century, and American courts continued to support the legitimacy of

¹Michaelsen, "Is the Public School Religious or Secular?" pp.25-28, 39.

common religion as it existed in "the religion of the Republic," or "civil religion." Throughout the century, "the court has articulated a position which is neither sectarian nor consistently secularistic," but which has increasingly been "more like common religious than common religion," a growing problem for American religion and its demand for the "judgement of transcendence."¹

By 1946, the explicit support of America's civil religion by public schools had become a national issue. Although some rejected this type of institutional entrenchment as an illegitimate union of church and state, John Wilson maintains that its supporters merely "advocated what already was" in existence throughout America. "The school systems are in fact the American religious establishment through their State symbolism, civic ceremonial, inculcated values, exemplified virtues, and explicit curricula."² The blending of religious and patriotic symbols in American schools was enforced by the Supreme Court, in Minersville School District v. Gobitis, 1940. Here, Jehovah's Witnesses failed in their attempt to further withdraw from the American "world." Their children were forced by this decision to salute the American flag, and to conform to the rituals of American civil religion. Although West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, 1943, overturned Gobitis, it did not do so on specifically religious grounds, but on broader grounds of individual conscience--part of the broadening of First Amendment religious rights

¹Ibid., pp.39-44.

²John F. Wilson, "The Status of 'Civil Religion' in America," in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Smith, pp.8-9.

that was only then beginning. This new decision came in response to much condemnation of Gobitis in legal journals,¹ and might be seen as an early indication of a new inclusiveness in the American Civil Religion. This inclusiveness became prominently visible in the 1950s as the South, Catholics, Jews, and even some radical sectarians, became mainstream Americans, in part, through their participation in, or harmonization with, a changing civil religion.

In the South, governments had begun to engage in social legislation, particularly through labour laws for the "spiritual development" and "moral protection" of women and children. Recognizing the role of religion in social and individual development, and accepting government's role in harmonizing that development with American ideals, the South began its conversion to American civil religion. Still, public education remained effectively under church control, subject to attack by promoters of the more "moderate" religiosity of the civil religion. Universities, including state institutions, remained subject to church influence through political pressure upon governments, a concern to progressives who believed in government's role in moral leadership. These Southerners looked to other parts of the nation where churches had continued to hand over morality, reform, and social control more completely to the civil religion of governments and politicians. The regulation of sport and entertainment, censorship boards and prohibition, all stood as examples of achievement by politicians under the influence of nineteenth-century American religion,

¹Donald E. Boles, The Two Swords: Commentaries and Cases in Religion and Education (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967), pp.139-143, 148-162.

and working through revivalist techniques and rhetoric. At home and abroad, the vitality of a once sectional civil religion proved itself in success, an irresistible force that continued to drive American assimilation and conformity through the twentieth century.'

Catholics and Jews also were being Americanized through the progression of American history. In 1927, Senator James Reed had spoken out for tolerance and inclusion, gathering all religious people--namely Catholics, Protestants, and Jews--into one American fold. In a civil-religious invocation of American history, Reed pointed to a Catholic's signature on the Declaration of Independence, participation by "all" of these religions "under the banners of George Washington," and throughout the War of 1812 where they "touched elbows behind the cotton bales at New Orleans, and mingled their blood in one common stream that victory might glorify American arms." Together, Reed continued, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews "bore our flag across the plains of Mexico and planted it in glory above the castles of the Montezumas." All participated in the American Civil War, across sectional lines and, once again united, they fought together against Spain. Most dramatically, Senator Reed concludes, they came and fought in the World War; "they did not come, sir, as Catholics or Protestants, as Jews or Gentiles, they came as American citizens."² The unification and consolidation of the American character

¹Charles W. Pipkin, "Social Legislation," in Culture in the South, ed. Couch, pp.646-665; Edgar W. Knight, "Recent Progress and Problems of Education," in ibid., pp.222-224; H. Clarence Nixon, "Colleges and Universities," in ibid., pp.229-239; Moore, Selling God, pp.193-225.

²James A. Reed, "Religious Tolerance," from a speech before the U.S. Senate, 1927, in Words of Our Nation, ed. Hunt, pp.196-201.

had been completed, announced by Reed in his plea for tolerance. America's civil religion demanded tolerance--the final tenet of Rousseau's civil religion--an element yet lacking in America. It could now finally be accomplished, as tolerance of one another in America is merely tolerance of self, of fellow Americans.

The broadening Protestant Christianity of America's civil religion came to include Catholics and Jews through the "Judeo-Christian" tradition that Americans increasingly claimed as their own. "All" Americans--Protestants, Catholics, and Jews--believed in the Republic and, at least implicitly, in its potential and mission for millennial progress.¹ During the Second World War, "the only sermon ever composed by the federal bureaucracy," but a government composition nonetheless, was entitled "Religion and Democracy." With its distribution, "the clergy of all faiths were instructed to show how 'as free men in the excellent fellowship of faith, we can go forward not only to create a nation dedicated to liberty but to build a world of brotherhood fit to be called the Kingdom of God'."² President Roosevelt's "Prologue" in the Gideon Bibles given to American servicemen bolstered the religious nature of America's mission abroad, as did his request for the crew of an American battleship to join him in singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" after praising the Christian principles for which they were fighting.³

¹Wilson, "Common Religion in American Society," p.115; Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.213.

²Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.214.

³Federer, America's God and Country, pp.538-539.

Those principles were celebrated by President Roosevelt in his "Four Freedoms," particularly their enunciation in America's civil religion, which Roosevelt claimed set Americans apart from their enemies by its inclusion of God among its beliefs. The Office of War Information essays on the "Four Freedoms," published the following year, continued Roosevelt's emphasis of the war as a religious struggle. The essay on freedom of religion declared religion to be the first concern of liberty, the motivation of America's discovery and founding, concluding with a denunciation of Nazism as anti-Christian that called Americans to another "holy" war, this time against the anti-Christ Hitler. Throughout the body of the essay, America's religious tolerance and harmony in its civil religion are celebrated, idealizing it as a standard for the coming generation.¹ From beginning to end of the war, President Roosevelt asserted that Americans were fighting a religious as well as a political cause, mingling American political symbols together civil-religiously. American victory, Roosevelt declared in his 1942 annual message to Congress, is "victory for freedom, ...for democracy, ...for religion." In a wonderful encapsulation of American self-righteousness that updated a legendary piece of cowboy bravado from America's "manifest destiny," Roosevelt warned, "the world is too small ...for both Hitler and God." Contrasting the selfish godlessness of the enemy to all "one hundred and

¹Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms," Washington, D.C., January 6, 1941, in The Penguin Book of Twentieth-Century Speeches, ed. Brian MacArthur (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp.197-201; "The Office of War Information Essays, 1942," with an introduction by Franklin D. Roosevelt, in Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms, ed. Stuart Murray and James McCabe (Stockbridge, MA.: Berkshire House, 1993), pp.109-123.

thirty million" Americans who "have been inspired to render their own full share of service and sacrifice," Roosevelt harkens his audience to Lincoln's "last full measure of devotion." This invocation of civil-religious sacrifice is followed immediately by another invocation of the Lincolnian Declaration of Independence, united by Roosevelt with the Bible and its god--the American war god can be no Jeffersonian "god of nature" in this struggle with fascism and its romantic proximity to natural deities and the reification of the state. America's civil religion is, instead, "true" religion with a transcendent god:

We are inspired by a faith which goes back through all the years to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis: 'God created man in his own image.' We on our side are striving to be true to that divine heritage. We are fighting, as our fathers have fought, to uphold the doctrine that all men are equal in the sight of God.'

As the enemy was fighting to destroy this belief, in Roosevelt's view, so they were fighting against the American Civil Religion.

After the pattern of Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelt had early on in his presidency identified "himself and his party with the founding father of American democracy," in part by attending the dedication of the Jefferson head at Mount Rushmore. Carved by the openly fascist Gutzon Borglum, a Klansman who had grown up in a "dysfunctional" polygamous Mormon family, the figures of Rushmore represent aspects of the American Civil Religion and its consolidation through "manifest destiny" in the American west. Jefferson, chosen by Borglum more for his expansionist acquisition in the Louisiana Purchase than for his Declaration of Independence, faces due

'Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message To Congress," January 6, 1942, in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.297-302.

west--the direction of civilization's movement. Lincoln was chosen for his preservation of the Union, through a war that decided the final nature of that civilization in its westward progression. Borglum chose Theodore Roosevelt for his role in the Panama Canal, through which he "accomplished the purpose of Columbus's entrance into the western hemisphere," according to American and Mormon visions of God's grand design. Borglum wanted nine dates engraved on the site, seven of them relating to territorial expansion--American history, according to the artist of "manifest destiny." Rushmore's civil-religious figures stand in judgment of the nation from the west, according to Simon Schama, in their final residence of civilization upon "the site of the bloody dispossession of the Sioux." Upon this "celestial platform from which America's Manifest Destiny could be surveyed," Americans desecrated Sioux sacred ground with the imposition of an alien religion's own sacred shrine, exalted proof of American righteousness in the conquering of man and nature, a final exclamation point to "manifest destiny."

Rushmore was only one part of the continuing sacralization of the American landscape. The Jefferson Memorial, inscribed with Jefferson's own words declaring "Almighty God" the creator of men's minds and "the Holy Author of our religion" and singing the praises of Jesus Christ, continued his Christianization and the renewal of civil-religious continuity. The U.S. Supreme Court building was completed in 1935, engraving in stone the fundamental law of the land above the head of the Chief Justice--the Ten

¹Simon Schama, Landscape and Memory (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), pp.390-398.

Commandments, protected by the American eagle. "Moses is included among the great lawgivers in Herman A. MacNeil's marble sculpture group on the east front." This imagery joins numerous quotations of biblical scripture inscribed on the walls of the Library of Congress, the words on the walls of the Capitol dome "The New Testament according to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and the appearance of the words "In God We Trust" opposite the President of the Senate and inscribed in the marble backdrop to the Speaker of the House of Representatives.¹ The "heroic statue of Junipero Serra stands in the U.S. Capitol," as California's gift, this Franciscan missionary who beat converts into submission and conformity to a then newly American Christianity.² Serra is joined in the Rotunda by a figure of the crucified Christ to whom American converts are "won." Amidst the revivalist 1950s, a joint resolution of Congress created a prayer room off the Rotunda, in which an altar supports an open Bible in front of a stained-glass representation of Washington kneeling in prayer. "Behind him are etched these words from Psalm 16:1: 'Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust'."³ Across America, battlefields and historic sites join churches and governments in this display of public religiosity and national invocation of the blessings of their god.

In the growing inclusiveness of America's civil religion, President Harry S. Truman stamped a final illegitimacy upon any remnants of pre-war

¹Federer, America's God and Country, pp.174-175, 333, 371-372, 595.

²Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.15-16.

³Federer, America's God and Country, p.174.

persecution of American Jews, overcoming opposition to Zionism by his recognition of Israel and its accompanying renewal of the civil religion's identification with the Old Testament. Michael Benson maintains that Truman's religious and biblical background were decisive influences upon his controversial recognition of the rising state. Oil and strategic interests, political considerations, and all of Truman's key political advisers argued against the decision. Furthermore, Truman risked his party leadership and his presidential incumbency, all of which combines to argue for his decision as one of principle, as Truman himself later asserted it was in his journal. With a childhood steeped in biblical study--the Bible was Truman's favourite book as a child, witnessed by his having read it through twice before age twelve--Truman rose through a political career in which he riddled his own speeches with civil-religious rhetoric to claim his place as God's chosen agent in one of the most important events in fulfilment of Bible prophecy.¹

Throughout his career, Truman had envisioned himself as one of God's chosen, a view bolstered by his vice-president's admonition to desist with his humility and self-deprecation, since "God raises up leaders. We do not know the process, but in the wisdom of Almighty God, you have been made President."² Apparently something more mysterious than the American electoral process is involved in the elevation of its leadership, or perhaps the Vice-President was referring to election to world leadership

¹Michael T. Benson, "Harry S. Truman as a Modern Cyrus," Brigham Young University Studies 34:1 (1994), pp.7-13, 15-19.

²Alben Barkley, to Harry Truman, as quoted in ibid., p.13.

as mysterious. He was not alone in this religious interpretation. A "former Israeli ambassador to the United States and president of the Hebrew University," Eliahu Elath, explained in 1977 that out of the land of Mormon Zion--Jackson County, Missouri has been identified as the original site of the Garden of Eden by Mormons, and Independence, Missouri as the future site of the millennial New Jerusalem--Truman had come to fulfil "the historic role a son of Independence-Zion was to play in the restoration of Israel to its ancient homeland in Zion."¹ Although Truman might have been mortified by his association with Mormons, their history being a scourge on Missouri's, he would, nevertheless, take to the apocalyptic role. When credited as "the man who helped create the State of Israel," Truman immediately corrected the accreditation: "What do you mean, helped create? I am Cyrus, I am Cyrus!" he cried, in a mythic self-conception of the biblical hero who returned the Jews to Jerusalem.² Clearly, religious and political leadership interconnect in the civil religion, politics and religion mingle in American policy and its justification, if not its very motivation.

Somehow, this new American "Judeo-Christian tradition" remained both implicitly and explicitly Christian in its promulgation by American leadership, however. As president, Truman wrote to the Pope in 1947 assuring him that America was a "Christian nation."³ Truman's embodiment,

¹Eliahu Elath, as quoted in ibid., p.10.

²Ibid., p.22.

³Harry S. Truman, to Pope Pius XII, in America's God and Country, ed. Federer, p.589.

"as a border state Democrat, [of] the conflicts that divided not only Missouri but the country" was finally resolved, as was the country's, by attachment to the nation and national history. Sectional attachment was abandoned in this nationalism through conversion to the Lincolnian Declaration of Independence as interpreter to the sacred Constitution. With this conversion came Truman's civil rights policy, seen as evidence of the South's ultimate reconstruction and restoration of the prodigal section to the fold of the civil religion.¹ The civil rights policy of Truman's "Message to Congress," February 2, 1948, is cloaked with invocations of a Lincolnian Declaration of Independence, and with appeals for inclusion by Americans of "all men." The appeal is cinched by Truman's reminder that the recent war involved, along with "all" religions, "all" colours. Once again, participation in an American "holy" war brought inclusion and tolerance within the parameters of the civil religion.

Hubert Humphrey echoed Truman's invocation of Lincoln's founding at the Democratic National Convention later that year, emphasizing its reverence for the equality of "all" religions, "Christian or Jewish, ...Catholic or Protestant," and of all races in "the brotherhood of man under their fatherhood of God." Being "God-fearing men and women," Humphrey continued, "I do not believe there can be any compromise of the

¹William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Conversion of Harry Truman," American Heritage 42:7 (November, 1991), p.68.

²Harry S. Truman, "Civil Rights Policy," Message to Congress, February 2, 1948, in Words of Our Nation, ed. Hunt, pp.209-213.

guarantees of civil rights."¹ In case all persuasion had failed for some, Humphrey relied upon the fear of God, the belief in an afterlife of punishment and reward, as the final prop of the civil religion and its enforcement--just as Rousseau, Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington, each had deemed necessary to republican government.

Adlai Stevenson's self-identification with Christ at the Democratic National Convention, 1952--"I have asked the Merciful Father, the Father of us all, to let this cup pass from me"²--failed to carry him to the presidency against the Republican Eisenhower and his own promise of priestly administration to the American people. In Martin Marty's formulation of "two kinds of two kinds of civil religion," President Dwight D. Eisenhower personifies the priestly minister of a nation under God. Eisenhower made Americans feel good about themselves and everything American, a "gifted priest" who "ministered to the anxieties of the cold war" and brought "divine sanction for the nation's adventures." Calling down God's blessings upon the American people, rather than His judgement, Eisenhower announced that "America is the mightiest power which God has yet seen fit to put upon his footstool. America is great because she is good." Presidents, Marty says, could not be president, if their main function in the civil religion was prophetic.³ It is here, in this

¹Hubert Humphrey, "In Support of Civil Rights," at the Democratic National Convention, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; July 14, 1948, in Great American Speeches, ed. Suriano, pp.180-182.

²Adlai Stevenson, "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," at the Democratic National Convention, Chicago, Illinois; July 26, 1952, in ibid., pp.196-200.

³Marty, "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion," pp.146-147.

distinction, that Lincoln stands out--not as the only religious president as critics of the civil religion concept in America maintain, but as the only president who was overwhelmingly more prophetic than priestly, necessarily so because he was forging the civil religion and the nation in terms of transcendent judgement and, thus, was supported by the majority of Americans as zealots in their own "new" conversion.

As priest of the civil religion, Eisenhower looked upon the American nation "as a kind of shrine or instrument of God." As president, he insisted that the worship of God was fundamental to Americanism and, thus, to anti-Communism and its godlessness.¹ Heralded into office as a restorer of morality and spirituality, a return to godliness celebrated in the rising political participation of evangelists and fundamentalists, Eisenhower institutionalized key aspects of the priestly function of the presidency. The National Day of Prayer was instituted in 1952, the first Presidential Prayer Breakfast held in 1953 and, in appeasement of Christian forces that failed to get a "Christian Amendment" to the Constitution declaring American allegiance to Jesus Christ, Eisenhower ushered through the pledge of allegiance with the inclusion of "under God" in it in 1954. In 1956, "In God We Trust" became the national motto, appearing on American currency as a civil religious daily reminder of the context of the American experiment. These "improvements" were foreshadowed by Eisenhower's Inaugural Day festivities, his appearance on that day at a special church service "to secure strength from 'prayer and the Word of God for his overwhelming new responsibilities'." These responsibilities

¹Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp. 404-405.

were not all secular, as Eisenhower appointed a staff assistant to help administer his priestly duties and religious activities.¹

Eisenhower's First Inaugural Address opened with "a little prayer of my own," as the new president asked his audience to bow their heads with him. The President of the United States prayed aloud to Almighty God, as his first official act, that American citizens everywhere might benefit from his service to them in the gift of discernment and in his righteous government through the laws of the land, splendidly blending ecclesiastic and civic functions in their administration "under the concepts of the Constitution." Praying "that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen," Eisenhower then turned his attention to the moment at hand and with the usual "my fellow citizens," he began his address.² "A few days later, Eisenhower was baptized and received into membership of the National Presbyterian Church, an event unique in presidential history."³

Although Eisenhower joined a particular religion, his public avowal of "any" religion as good fit him perfectly into the civil religion's general religiosity. His assertion that the American form of government was "founded in a deeply felt religious faith--and I don't care what it

¹Richard V. Pierard, "Cacophony on Capitol Hill: Evangelical Voices in Politics," in The Political Role of Religion in the United States, ed. Johnson and Tammey, pp.81-82.

²Dwight D. Eisenhower, "First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1953, Capitols Steps, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.301-302.

³Pierard, "Cacophony on Capitol Hill," p.81.

is,"¹ gave new impetus to common religion in America. E.J. Dionne maintains that this signalled the new tolerance and inclusiveness in the civil religion, a factor in helping Kennedy's election in 1960.² Sociologist Will Herberg sees Eisenhower's statement as a signal of American tolerance for the three main religions only insofar as they basically teach the same thing--they are all *American* religion. Differences in particular religions are merely manifestations of spirituality, Herberg maintains, not differences of fundamental doctrine and belief. Each of the three is less originally itself--less Protestant, less Catholic, less Jewish--than it is *American*.³ Harold Bloom agrees that there is an Americanism thriving behind masks of religious difference in the United States, that unites believers in the "large unconscious assumptions" of the "given" more fundamentally than any "overt doctrinal

¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, as quoted in Herberg, Protestant--Catholic--Jew, p.84; In "'And I Don't Care What It Is': The Tradition-History of a Civil Religion Proof-Text," The Journal of the Academy of Religion, 49:1 (March, 1981), pp.35-49, Patrick Henry engages in a picayune discussion of the accuracy and meaning of Eisenhower's statement and its quotation. Henry's argument is a thinly veiled attempt to discredit the civil religion concept as it is applied to American politics, but his argument is not convincing, and is buried by the avalanche of Eisenhower religiosity that lends itself to a more accurate interpretation of the president's outlook. Moreover, Eisenhower's religiosity is not necessary to "prove" civil religion in America, but it is there. It is typical, and fits within the parameters of the enduring conceptual construction. What are we to do with it? Ignore it? Such ignorance constitutes the core of civil religion's "critical" denial by American political scientists. An entire body of evidence, virtually the entire national history, is thereby eclipsed by minute convolutions of "secular" salvation. This might be satisfying, to some, but it is not revealing, nor is it "science," and it is not correct. As Henry admits, however, he did get an article out of it.

²Dionne, Why Americans Hate Politics, p.218.

³Herberg, Protestant--Catholic--Jew, p.231.

teachings" can divide them.' It is in this distinctively American content within each religion that political influence moves and socialization is enhanced.

America's civil religion, by the 1950s, constituted a unity of thought and feeling characterized by Herberg as "the American Way of Life," that justified and sanctified all things American. Idealistic, but equating espousal with achievement, Herberg says, this religion is coloured by Puritanism in its crusading impulse, yet is practical, an instrument concerned with this life, rather than theological in orientation. In short, says Herberg, it is religion Americanized.² We can see here the intrusion of ideology and its characteristics merging with religion in the public realm that they share. The separation of church and state in America, Herberg argues, is a facade of American Protestantism to protect itself in its paranoid "minority consciousness," its sensibility that it is always "under attack." By keeping religion from formal establishment, or at least by saying it is so, American Protestants protect their religion from "enemies" who might spoil its content through political machinations. The separation of church and state, then, is a device of self-preservation much as it was for Catholics in colonial Maryland. Jews, on the other hand, constitute a true minority, as Herberg reminds us. This minority benefits from the Protestant self-delusion and constantly pushes its instrument, the separation of church and state, as

¹Harold Bloom, The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

²Ibid., pp.75-83.

the secularist force in America, the "extreme" champions of Jefferson's "wall of separation."¹ While new religions and sects remain outside the civil religion, preserving their own orthodoxy, American Jewry has gained influence upon the content of America's civil religion but at the price of being itself diluted by American orthodoxy, by being Americanized.²

This corruption is the bane of religion, according to American fundamentalists and sectarians. American religion thrived through the 1950s--nearly seventy percent of Americans belonged to churches, Herberg says, compared to about ten percent in 1800. Most were active members. Ninety percent of Americans believed in God, and seventy-three percent believed in a final judgement. But a certain complacency had overcome American religion, with only five percent fearing the final judgement--the lack of theology and a focus upon the civil side of civil religion in political reform and warfare had robbed it of its potency linked with concern for the next life. Compared with the American past, judgement had become relatively impotent. Ninety-one percent of Americans claimed that they were trying to be good, seventy-eight percent feeling that they were at least half-way there, and a full fifty percent of Americans believed they were already there, that they were good.³ The prophetic challenge that religion offers for the improvement of mankind was obviously absent from American religion, its necessity denied by the president and High Priest himself. American civil religion now existed in a priestly stage of

¹Ibid., pp.234-239.

²Ibid., pp.78, 82-83, 238-239.

³Ibid., pp.72-73.

self-celebration and self-congratulation, as evidenced by Boorstin's The Genius of American Politics, among additional such religio-political works of propaganda. Herberg denounced all of this priestly civil religion as a corruption, announcing the need for "true" religion, a Puritan in his own way invoking the prophetic strand of civil religion against its more vain priestly counterpart. A growing religiosity on the "fringe" of America's mainstream, and a fundamentalism resurrected through legitimacy afforded by anti-Communist politics, began to challenge the civil religion. Mainstream churches joined in through the 1960s, so that a full-fledged backlash of church religion against the "secularizing" civil religion occurred.¹

During the later 1950s, leaders of church religions began to assert their differences with civil religion, and with each other, in the stirrings of a revival in traditional religiosity. Still, fundamentalists and evangelists, despite expressions of a growing fear and animosity directed at the civil religion, continued in an uneasy co-existence with it.² Billy Graham "established his hallmark 'working relationship' with the White House during these years, as a kind of bridge between fundamentalists, church religion, and the American Civil Religion--and as fundamentalists returned to the public arena, they continued their

¹Snook, Going Further, pp.2-6; Dionne, Why Americans Hate Politics, pp.218-219; Huntington, American Politics, pp.169-170; Moore, Selling God, p.243.

²Wilson, "Common Religion in American Society," pp.118-119.

denunciation of politics and political clerics.' Graham, however, became part of America's celebration of its own purity and "givenness," becoming a civil-religious symbol himself in America's continued espousal of their mission to the world.²

The Mission Continues at Home and Abroad

American politics and civil religion are said to have been "secularized" through this period--through First Amendment jurisprudence that, for the most part, removed legal compulsion from the civil religion as an instrument to enforce its conformity. "Tolerance" had become a prominent tenet of the civil religion by now, a practise made affordable by the overwhelming potency of American "givenness." Mark Noll maintains, however, that a nineteenth-century Calvinist quality of piety persists in American public life. A belief in the state and its capacity for reform in the realization of the good life continues to thrive in America, as purity is sought in a more secular, but still crusading, politics.³ John Foster Dulles expresses this sense of mission in "Freedom's New Task," 1956. In it, Dulles invokes Lincoln and the Declaration of Independence as eternal American gifts to the world, "for all people, for all future time." Dulles maintains that "this Nation was conceived with a sense of mission and dedicated to the extension of freedom throughout the world. Consciously or

¹Pierard, "Cacophony on Capitol Hill," p.82; Dionne, Why Americans Hate Politics, pp.216-217.

²Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land, pp.413-417.

³Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, pp.390-395.

not, Dulles points to the triumph of Lincoln's civil religion as definitive of American character and as the moment of national birth: "that has been the spirit which has animated our people since they came together as a nation." Unlike Soviet communism, Americanism is pure in its ambitions for the world, Dulles declares, invoking Franklin's declaration that "our cause is the cause of all mankind, ...a glorious task assigned us by Providence."¹

This statement of national mission abroad is echoed in Vice-President Nixon's 1960 speech at Wheaton College, Illinois, notable for its blending of past and present domestic civil religion with foreign policy, and for its implications in the future president's continuation of Eisenhower priestliness at home while reaching out to foreign foes. In this speech, Nixon maintained that America was great, not by military or economic strength but, rather by

the fact that we believe in the right things--our faith--our faith in God, our faith in the rights of man; that those rights to freedom, to independence, don't come from men, but come from God, and, therefore, can never be taken away by any man; our belief that America came into the world 180 years ago not just to have freedom for ourselves, but carry it to the whole world. ...Strengthen the faith of America. See that our young people grow up with faith in God, recognizing that this is a great country, recognizing that the ideals that we have belong not just to us, but to the world, recognizing that America has a mission, and that mission is to keep the peace. That mission is to stand for freedom for ourselves and for others as well. That mission is to lead the world to a world in which all men can live together in friendship, in which all men can have the right to worship God, in which all men can

¹John Foster Dulles, "Freedom's New Task," February, 1956, in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, p.327.

have freedom.¹

A dozen years later, Nixon, as president, would repeat these sentiments in his attempted restoration of American complacency. In 1973, however, this type of priestliness would be denounced as "embarrassing, ...an American innocence that is awe-inspiring, stupefying, in its simplicity." The civil religion would become sick by then, with its want for prophets having been answered only by priests.²

President John F. Kennedy continued America's civil religious crusade abroad, as well as domestically, his Inaugural Address recalling Americans to their mission. Bellah sees this address as an insightful manipulation of civil religious symbols by Kennedy, as being typical of American presidential rhetoric, and as "only the most recent statement of a theme that lies very deep in the American tradition, namely the obligation, both collective and individual, to carry out God's will on earth."³ Kennedy's "celebration of freedom" in "an end as well as a beginning ...signifying renewal as well as change," strives for continuity with the past that gives legitimacy to seeming discontinuity, and transforms change into "renewal." Kennedy reminds his audience that he has "sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed," attesting to his fidelity to America's god and Founders, thus his own righteousness in the judgement of the civil religion. Linking his cause with those American

¹Richard M. Nixon, as quoted in Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," p.214.

²Bellah, "American Civil Religion in the 1970s," pp.259-264.

³Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," pp.3-7.

judges--God and the Founders--Kennedy declares that "the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe," namely "the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God." Promoters of the civil religion, anxious for prophets, see this statement as one of promise. Bellah, for instance, asserts its admission that America is guided by "higher" laws and is, thus, ending its priestly self-righteousness and ignorance of transcendent judgement. He is bolstered in this view by Kennedy's call to sacrifice, and by his concluding prayer for God's blessings upon their mission as Americans make "God's work ...our own." We should be wary, however, because Kennedy, as a student of Lincoln's rhetoric, was comfortable with the inversion of divine sanction, stressing the "but" in his closing remarks: "asking His blessing and His help, *but* knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own [emphasis added]." God must conform to the American mission, Kennedy implies, in a continued self-assurance of the civil religion's assimilating potential. American "givenness" is eternal, extending to celestial spheres and an Americanized god.¹

Kennedy's assertion of American values against the "Soviet threat" followed their "renewal" by Eisenhower's "Commission on National Goals." Through them, Kennedy rallied support for government authority and "vigorous government action in the international field." With the success of the Inaugural Address in renewing American "dedication to the

¹Ibid., pp.3-7. Also see John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961, Capitol Steps, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.312-315.

projection of American values abroad" came America's "largest peacetime military spending increase up to that time." Once again the force of arms seemed necessary to assist the promulgation of the American gospel, as Kennedy took upon himself, in his role to the world, Lincoln's role to the American nation. As Lincoln had invoked the Declaration of Independence for all men, Kennedy announced, so he would now invoke that same Declaration for all nations. Carefully linking himself with the Founders, as had Lincoln, Kennedy made this announcement on the Fourth of July, at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. "Today," Kennedy said, "one hundred and eighty-six years later, that Declaration, whose yellowing parchment and fading, almost illegible lines I saw in the past week in the National Archives in Washington, is still a revolutionary document." His having just seen the Declaration connects him concretely to it in the minds of his audience. Its invocation brings mythical revolutionary continuity to Kennedy's renewal, again after the pattern of Lincoln. As Lincoln had done, Kennedy assures Americans that his own interpretation of that Declaration as a world-wide document is in conformity with the Founders' intentions, invoking Washington and Hamilton, and, finally positing himself, his administration, and its military spending in his own "signature" at the end of the Declaration, another "founding": "and for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor." Thus, Kennedy's particular policy was elevated above politics, becoming part of the American mission and

heritage, part of the Founding, and part of the civil religion.¹

Whereas in life Kennedy self-consciously linked himself rhetorically to Lincoln, in death Americans linked these kindred presidents as symbols in the civil religion. Kennedy was instantly canonized after his assassination, Andy Logan reports, in a myth-making explosion and hero worship reminiscent of Lincoln's apotheosis.² Kennedy's Catholicism, while opponents had tried to make it an issue during his election campaign, was sufficiently Americanized, more civil-religious than Catholic, for his inclusion in the civil religion's "Holy Trinity," Kennedy becoming the "Holy Ghost," with the associated imagery of eternal flame and open burial plot, to Lincoln's "Christ" and Washington's "God the Father."³

President Lyndon Johnson moved the mission home to the Great Society, invoking America's civil-religious heritage before a joint session of Congress in 1965. Johnson called for unity in the civil religion, for "every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause, ...the destiny of democracy." As Lincoln had fought for that same destiny,

¹John F. Kennedy, "The Doctrine of National Independence," Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4, 1962, in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.328-331.

²Andy Logan, "J.F.K.: The Stained-Glass Image," in Myth and the American Experience, eds. Nicholas Cords and Patrick Gerster (New York: Glencoe Press, 1973), pp.305-315 (this essay was first published in American Heritage, August, 1967).

³Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society (New York: Harmony, 1993), pp.168-170; Wilson, "The Status of 'Civil Religion' in America," p.4.

so Johnson now claimed his connections with "Lexington and Concord," and with "Appomattox," and his right to invoke those connections "in Selma, Alabama." Johnson closed his jeremiad on voting rights by reminding Congress that "above the pyramid on the great seal of the United States it says--in Latin--'God has favored our undertaking'." Claiming that favour for his own cause, Johnson proclaimed that "God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine His will. But I cannot help believing that He truly understands and that He really favors the undertaking that we begin here tonight."¹ This Lincolnian pretension to humility in the divination of God's will always is accompanied by an American assurance that, 'yes, we have divined it. Our will is God's will.'

Johnson's religiosity was blended with foreign policy as well, as he pursued the American mission abroad with renewed millennial anticipation. Johnson was one of three American presidents that came out of the Disciples of Christ, a millennial sect that began in the Second Awakening and had close connections with the rise of Mormonism.² This background gives depth to Johnson's biblical invocations in defence of America's Viet Nam policy, particularly in his references to Mosaic prophecy in a televised speech. Along with its subtle implication of another Lincolnian connection through Moses and emancipation, Johnson's reference to Deuteronomy 30:19 turns American attentions to an unfolding apocalypse.

¹Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address on Voting Rights," March 15, 1965, in An American Primer, ed. Boorstin, pp.945-954.

²Wills, Under God, p.144.

Announcing the fulfilment of prophecy, Johnson places before Americans the same choice that Moses placed before his people, to choose life or choose death. Just as Moses instructed his people to choose life, so Johnson chooses for his nation: "Well, we will choose life!" In so doing, America will prevail, Johnson declares, himself assured of the biblical promise associated with that choice--prosperity and success for American Israel, plagues and ruin for her enemies.¹

One of the few critics to denounce the foreign policy invocations of the civil religion was Senator J. William Fulbright. Fulbright railed against the self-righteousness of American chosenness, its history of invocations of a war-god to bolster imperialist policies and interventionist interference. Referring to McKinley's "voice of God" that told him to annex the Philippines, Fulbright remarked that it was "interesting that it was the voice of the Lord, but the words of Theodore Roosevelt, Lodge, and Mahan," all imperialists for empire's sake. Albert Beveridge's rhetoric and its associated American thrust into world domination have had a "fatal impact" upon smaller nations and their cultures, Fulbright asserted, an invasion led by "God" and his American missionaries. While the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary claim Latin America as a "responsibility" and a "burden" for American tutelage, says Fulbright, Latin Americans see only intervention and selfishness. All intervening countries think their motives are excellent, we are reminded, with the declaration that "the day of the United States blessing the world

¹Lyndon B. Johnson, "Our generation has a dream," Baltimore, Maryland, April 7, 1965, in The Penguin Book of Twentieth-Century Speeches, ed. MacArthur, pp.359-362.

is past." "We are not God's chosen savior of mankind" Fulbright finally asks Americans to admit, in this prophetic condemnation of American priestliness. The American nation is "only one of mankind's more successful [nations], ...endowed by the Creator with the same capacity for good and evil as the rest of humanity," Fulbright asserts, calling Americans to their original mission as an example--a city upon a hill--of self-development and true power. For a time, however, Fulbright was "a voice crying in the wilderness"--an American prophet temporarily without followers.'

While the "priestliness" of American foreign policy and its bolstering civil-religious rhetoric was satisfying for fundamentalists, their growing discontent with the American "secularization" of public life gave birth to a sustained attack upon the civil religion. Although this "secularization" should be seen as "de-sectarianization" of the universal American "church," fundamentalists responded in growing unison as a "sect" against the "church" for its decline and corruption of moral and spiritual life. The universal content of the civil religion had once again become too vague and "irreligious," reminiscent of its state just prior to the Second Awakening. Christians determined to influence the content of the civil religion with an injection of "sectarian" dogma launched their attack on American "secularization" through the civil religion. Senator Mark Hatfield, for instance, "at a famous prayer breakfast" in 1973, called for a national repudiation of the American Civil Religion. Hatfield

'J. William Fulbright, "The Arrogance of Power," 1966, in God's New Israel, ed. Cherry, pp.332-335.

wanted Americans to rededicate themselves to the biblical God, to renounce the civil religious god of national incarnation. Richard Neuhaus tells us that this jeremiad puzzled many Americans, as Hatfield "at the same time led a campaign to have Congress designate a day of national repentance and prayer," using civil-religious renewal to fight the very existence of civil religion in America.¹ With the "fundamentalist breakthrough" of Jimmy Carter's election to the White House and, especially, with the rise of the Religious Right in the Republican Party, this prophetic attack against the civil religion has since shifted from Hatfield's illogical utter denunciation to an embrace tempered by intrusion for change.² Civil religion is not so offensive in America when it is harnessed for one's own use.

With Ronald Reagan's presidency came a false-consciousness of American complacency, however uneasy, in a restoration of Eisenhower's priestliness to the White House. Americans ignored any prophetic challenge that the civil religion might once have had. Its potency was lost in the sectarian domination of American fundamentalists who insisted, once again, that everything American was good by ignoring or denouncing those things that were not good as un-American. "If utopia has already been achieved," writes Jean Baudrillard in 1986, "then unhappiness does not exist, the poor are no longer credible. If America is resuscitated, then the massacre

¹Neuhaus, Time Toward Home, p.190.

²Dionne, Why Americans Hate Politics, pp.224-233.

of the Indians did not happen, Vietnam did not happen."¹ This time, however, God's blessings upon America would be completely rhetorical, a symbolic sacramental re-capitulation of the civil religion in its glory days of the 1950s.

More than the pressure groups that Allen Hertzke maintains church religion became in the 1980s,² Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals became overt in their self-perception as "true" Americans, the best of the American heritage. Jerry Falwell epitomized a growing revivalism that began in the 1970s and 1980s, his invocation of the religiosity of the American Founders cloaking his call for American renewal in patriotic righteousness.³ Celebrating, rather than condemning, the "American Way of Life, Falwell warned that it was threatened by the Soviets and "secular humanists" both. Calling for a restoration of "true" civil religion, Falwell continued the Religious Right's invocation of prophetic civil religion against the remnants of its earlier priestly stage, yet in a contortion of the prophetic civil religion that made it priestly itself.⁴ That is to say, the height of priestly civil religion in the Eisenhower years was idealized and invoked against its own decline into "secularization." According to its one time proponents, this was a corruption of the prophetic mode of civil religion, so much so that many

¹Jean Baudrillard, America, Trans. Chris Turner (London: Bath Press, 1988, p.111; First published as Amérique, Paris: Bernard Grosset, 1986)

²Hertzke, Representing God in Washington.

³Strege, "Jerry Falwell and 'The Simple Faith on Which This Country Was Built'," pp.111-115.

⁴Jerry Falwell, "Listen, America (1980)."

abandoned the concept as empty, unable any longer to offer anything but the smug self-satisfaction that Fulbright had condemned. Even Robert Bellah, who had given birth to the conceptualization of American political religion as "civil religion" and promoted its prophetic capacities, abandoned the American Civil Religion in favour of "public philosophy" and its safety from fundamentalist intrusion.¹

As with President Johnson, Ronald Reagan's association with religious fundamentalism was enhanced by his Disciples of Christ background, and, as well, by his natural priestly approach to American history, religion, and politics. With Reagan came a renewal of priestly confidence in America, and in its civil religion. Fundamentalists gained a new influence on the content of the civil religion, their disproportionate political power being augmented by a general withdrawal of liberals from the civil religion. Although the political power of the fundamentalist right was disproportionate, however, there remained a large, untapped political resource in the Christian right of America.² While the fundamentalists and evangelists of the Christian right continue to provoke the Republican Party, consistently threatening to overpower it or divide it, they may only be "more advanced Republicans" as were the radical abolitionists of the 1850s and 1860s. Their view may yet prevail in controlling the civil religion and defining the American nation, as did their predecessors'. In

¹Bellah, et al., Habits of the Heart.

²Edward Tabor Linenthal, "Restoring America: Political Revivalism in the Nuclear Age," in Religion and the Life of the Nation, ed. Sherrill, pp.31-31; Wilcox, "The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America," pp.667-670.

1994, the Religious Right was still threatening to take control of the party, already absolutely controlling it in several states and, more or less, about to in fourteen more. An embarrassment to some Republicans, this growing power continued to divide "God's Own Party."¹

In the 1980s fundamentalists gained legitimacy in the American middle class, taking on the characteristics of a unifying sect in its zeal and potential for commitment, and displacing the declining mainstream religion as a decrepit church. Revivalism is usually associated with such phenomena in American society, but this revival was of a different sort given its immediate focus on politics and the civil religion. The civil religion had become the American church by now, the target of revitalization: thus the traditional time lag between church religion renewal and its subsequent pressure for political renewal and reform was virtually eliminated. Forty-five million American fundamentalists and evangelists, the religious majority even in New England where they are ignored by "liberal" elites, provided for the inundation of American courts with religious cases from the beginning of the revival and forced a moratorium on "secularization."²

Candidate Reagan agreed with his "more advanced Republicans" in this arrest of the alleged decline. In a remarkable civil-religious inclusion of American "others" that came two generations after the fact, Reagan said

¹"God's Own Party," The Economist 331:7868 (June 18, 1994), pp.29-30; Richard L. Berke, "Christian Right Defies Categories," New York Times, July 22, 1994.

²Kevin P. Phillips, Post-Conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis (New York: Random House, 1982; rpt. 1983), pp.180-186.

"that he was 'quite sure' God heard the prayers of Jews." However, this may have been a subtle slight directed at Jewish "secular" forces for their opposition to public religiosity, since it was followed with a statement of support for school prayers and Reagan's admission to a cheering audience that "I don't think we should have ever expelled God from the classroom."¹ Throughout the 1980s, and into the 1990s, God would be re-entrenched in American classrooms, through religious censorship groups that gained support of local officials and even state governors, and through defiance of Court-ordered "secularization."²

President Reagan's First Inaugural Address invoked the American Founders, the sacred American landscape that surrounded Reagan's reception, the Declaration of Independence with Jefferson and Lincoln both receiving adequate adulation, and, in Lincolnesque style, America's war dead in Arlington cemetery, lying under "crosses or Stars of David"--their union in death an example to the living. All of this, Reagan reminds his audience, co-exists in "a nation under God," the superintending caretaker of the American Civil Religion.³

In his Second Inaugural Address, President Reagan began with a moment

¹Frances Fitzgerald, Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Cultures (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981; rpt. 1986), pp.121-122.

²"Issue of Religion in Schools to Courts," New York Times, February 28, 1986; Dudley Clendinen, "Fundamentalist Parents Put Textbooks on Trial," New York Times, July 15, 1986; "Students Challenge Ban On Prayer at Graduation," New York Times, May 26, 1993.

³Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1981, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.345-350.

of silent prayer, a living example this time, America's High Priest indicating appropriate behaviour for his citizenry. We are reminded that George Washington first "placed his hand upon the Bible" not far from the spot where Reagan then stood, concrete connections of another would-be father of his people. The priestly Reagan continued, celebrating American accomplishment looking to the promise of its future. Of his presidency, Reagan says, "Let history say of us, 'These were golden years--when the American Revolution was reborn, when freedom gained new life, when America reached for her best'." Renewal, that "sweet refrain" of American legitimacy, carried the President through rhetorical connections with Founders, once again, and their Declaration of Independence for "one people under God, determined that our future shall be worthy of our past." Reagan speaks of "emancipation," "tolerance," and "progress" in the "brotherhood" of the civil religion, all the while sprinkling this transcendent rhetoric with references to taxes and economic policy, free-enterprise and government relations in a federal system. After denouncing the Soviets for their weaponry, Reagan closes his address by likening himself to Washington praying at Valley Forge, and to Lincoln struggling to preserve the Union, and once more declaring America "one nation under God."¹ As the speech captures the spirit of Reagan's incumbency, half past and half future, so it summons Americans to a celebration of their national past, because of the promise for the future that it carries. All of this is communicated, personally and nationally, through America's

¹Ronald Reagan, "Second Inaugural Address, January 21, 1985, Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C.," in *ibid.*, pp.350-355.

civil religion.

As Reagan left the White House, he identified himself even more explicitly with the nation, his reputation as the "great communicator" not earned, but "given" he says. "I communicated great things not my own ...but from the heart of a great nation, from our experience, our wisdom, and our belief in the principles that have guided us for two centuries." Preferring to term the "Reagan Revolution" as "The Great Rediscovery" of American values and common sense, the president points to his restoration of American "givenness" and its international promulgation as "countries across the globe are turning away from ideologies of the past" to embrace the American "moral way of government ...the practical way of government. Democracy, the profoundly good," says Reagan "is also profoundly productive," in an inversion of American Puritanism similar to Lincoln's "humble" invocations of "God's will." Reagan leaves his office proud of the "resurgence of national pride" and the "new patriotism" for which he takes his share of credit. Finally, Reagan refers to the end of his reign "on this winter night," implicitly pointing to American maturity in God's grand design of history and to millennial imminence. The president invokes Winthrop's ideal of a "city on a hill," its realization a concern of Reagan's "all my political life." That realization now accomplished, the American city stands "tall, proud, ...God blessed," Reagan declares in congratulation of himself and, through himself, the nation.¹

Throughout his presidency, Reagan had continued the presidential role

¹"Text of President's Farewell Address to the American People," New York Times, January 12, 1939.

as High Priest to the nation, setting apart "holy" days and announcing national invocations of their god. 1982 was declared "The Year of the Bible" by the president and a joint resolution of Congress. In "Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation," published in The Human Life Review, 1983, Abraham Lincoln and his struggle for freedom were invoked by Reagan against abortion. President Reagan ushered in the Equal Access Bill of 1984, with an address that denounced the Supreme Court's decisions "banning" religion from American schools. "If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God," he said, "then we will be a Nation gone under." With the resolution for the National Day of Prayer, 1988, President Reagan invoked God, His blessings, and His guidance upon the nation, in priestly fashion, before leaving the American people with his own blessings.'

Strangely, George Bush, "the most centrist figure in the 1988 [presidential] campaign was licensed to become the most hysterical in his rhetoric," eclipsing the professional preachers to condemn the state of moral affairs in the United States. This was not, however, because of any "false" portrayals by Reagan of his own accomplishments, but because of the persistent "godlessness" of American "liberals" attacking the recently renewed civil religion.² Bush began his presidency typically, by connecting himself rhetorically and concretely to a Founding Father. In his Inaugural Address, Bush pointed out that "I have just repeated word for word the oath taken by George Washington 200 years ago, and the Bible on which I placed my hand is the Bible on which he placed his." Bush

¹Federer, America's God and Country, pp.528-531.

²Wills, Under God, p.69.

continued to invoke Washington as "the Father of our Country" and of the new president's sentiments: "he would, I think, be gladdened by this day; for today is the concrete expression of a stunning fact: our continuity these 200 years since our government began." Not only did Bush understand the significance of his words within a civil religious context, but he also knew well the significance of the day's occasion as national ritual. "We meet on democracy's front porch," he said, "a good place to talk as neighbors and friends. *For this is a day when our nation is made whole, when our differences, for a moment, are suspended*" (emphasis added). And then Bush declares his first act as president to be a prayer, asking his audience to bow their heads after the fashion of Eisenhower. Obviously Bush is an adept student of the civil religion and its symbolism, for he accentuates continuity and fidelity, not only with the civil religion but with particular symbols with which he wants to identify himself, here with Reagan, but only implicitly through Eisenhower, since Bush will have to remove himself from Reagan's presidency without revoking his connections to it.'

In his 1990 declaration of a "National Day of Prayer," President Bush again invoked continuity with the American Founders through the "great faith" in the principles of the civil religion that Americans now share with them. Bush calls down "Divine Providence" and its continued blessings upon the nation as he prays "for continued help and guidance from our wise and loving Creator"--an obviously Christian Creator now dwelling in the

¹George Bush, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1989, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.358-362.

founding documents of the national life.¹ Bush's "State of the Union" address, 1990, points to this founding as the president speaks of "America--not just the nation, but an idea, alive in the minds of people everywhere." Through this idea, all Americans unite in a continued participation in the Founding: "this nation, this idea called America, was and always will be a new world. Our new world." President Bush celebrates the success of the American mission abroad, the realization of the universal application of the Declaration of Independence, by quoting workers in Prague who begin their rallies at factory gates with "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"--good American citizens of the world, these workers in Prague.²

Bush calls Americans to reverence for a Ranger lost in action in Panama, and his symbolic embodiment of sacrifice as a national virtue. "Do not mourn for me," wrote the soldier before his death, "revel in the life that I have died to give you. I joined the army to serve my country and insure that you are free." Bush pays his respects to this soldier, "one of the first to fall," for "he carried the idea we call America in his heart."³ This soldier's sacrifice joined additional war dead in their impression upon their president and his civil-religious rhetoric. The

¹Federer, America's God and Country, p.84.

²George Bush, "State of the Union," January 31, 1990, Congressional Quarterly 48:5 (February 3, 1990), p.348.

³Ibid., p.350.

following year, while addressing the annual Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, President Bush is reported to have been "wiping away tears as he recalled praying at Camp David before ordering the start of the Persian Gulf War." Bush, his wife, and their minister prayed in tears together "for our boys" before the bombing, Andrew Rosenthal reports. "I feel very strongly about those kids who gave their lives for this country," Bush assured the Baptists in "a testimony of emotion, politics and faith" before "a cheering crowd of thousands." The president used the occasion to "once again ...call on the United States Congress to pass a constitutional amendment permitting voluntary prayer back into our nation's schools." In one "stroke" of prayer, the American president declared the righteousness of another "holy" war for democracy and set an example for behaviour by the nation.¹

In a speech before the National Religious Broadcasters, January 27, 1992, President Bush, grateful for their support during the Gulf War, told them that "I want to thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be a light unto the world." This, in anticipation of the coming presidential campaign, signalled that Bush might once again campaign on religious issues as he had done in 1988. Bush is said to have "revived" his religious themes in this speech, in which "he called for voluntary prayers in American schools, ...pledged to curtail 'the decline of the American family,' ...and cited the teachings of Jesus Christ as the moral

¹Andrew Rosenthal, "Shedding Tears, Bush Tells Baptists of Praying as Gulf War Nears," New York Times, June 7, 1991.

force behind the Persian Gulf War."¹ With this type of leadership, it is no wonder that Mississippi Governor Kirk Fordice declared the United States a "Christian Nation" later that year. In response to objections by Jews, it is reported, Republican leaders tried to "soften" the statement by drawing attention to American "tolerance" as a pillar of the civil religion. Fordice would have no part in the corrected version, however, insisting that "the less we emphasize the Christian religion the further we fall into the abyss of poor character and chaos in the United States of America." When South Carolina Governor Carroll Campbell Jr. tried to amend this to "Judeo-Christian," Ronald Smothers says, Fordice objected that "if I wanted to do that I would have done it."² This points to a fundamental animosity that lingers within the contest for control over the content of the civil religion in America, as fundamentalist sectarians consistently confront "secular" "Jewish" forces in their project of civil-religious reconstruction.

During the 1992 election campaign for the United States presidency, George Bush became increasingly strident and "fundamentalist" in his religious rhetoric, apparently pressured by the Religious Right's readiness "to take possession of the Republican Party." With five hundred and fifty chapters in fifty states, two hundred and fifty thousand members, and three hundred of the twenty-one hundred Republican delegates, the Christian Coalition alone was a potent political force. The

¹Andrew Rosenthal, "In a Speech, President Returns to Religious Themes," New York Times, January 28, 1992.

²Ronald Smothers, "Republican Leaders Act to Soften Remarks by Mississippi Governor," New York Times, November 20, 1992.

Coalition's members formed about one-third of the party's platform committee--working Republicans, thus powerful. President Bush, therefore, courted "their muscle." It was in this context, perhaps, that Bush joined intolerant anti-Democrat fundamentalist rhetoric with his own: "I was struck that the other party took words to put together a platform but left out three simple letters: G-O-D."¹ It was in the context of a rebuttal to this type of self-righteousness that Bill Clinton himself participated in, perhaps, the most self-righteous, however subtle, rhetoric of the campaign. Clinton's speech accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency "nine times evoked a religious image with his 'New Covenant,'" concluding with the usual, but meaningful nonetheless, "God bless you, and God bless America."² While Senator Lloyd Bentsen had been quick to tell Dan Quayle that he was "no Jack Kennedy" when an irreverent self-comparison was thought to have been made in the 1988 presidential campaign,³ nobody thought in 1992 to tell Clinton that he was no Jesus Christ.

Along with their prominent use in presidential politics and the national government, the invocation of Christian symbols in the civil religion continued, as usual, in state governments. In 1992, the legislature of Kentucky enacted a law allowing public schools to post texts of American history that have religious content, that is to post

¹"Mr. Bush Crossing the Line," New York Times, August 26, 1992.

²William Safire, "God Bless Us," New York Times, August 27, 1992.

³Dan Quayle, Standing Firm: A Vice-Presidential Memoir (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), pp.63-64.

civil-religious texts.¹ The State of Ohio announced, in a Governor's proclamation, May 7, 1992 as "A Day of Prayer in Ohio." The proclamation declared that it was following the examples of the Continental Congress in 1775, of President Reagan, and of President Bush--examples "fitting and proper"--in their observances of a "National Day of Prayer."² Iowa's Governor Terry Branstad joined in "the first international March For Jesus," addressing the crowd in Des Moines, one of one hundred and forty-two U.S. cities that now participate, with his belief in God and recognition of dependence on "the Lord" for guidance--"the Lord" being a safe term for civil-religious inclusiveness as it can indicate God or Jesus Christ.³

President Clinton subtly implicated Jesus Christ in the Easter resurrection symbolism of his First Inaugural Address. "In the depth of winter, ...by the words we speak ...we force the spring. A spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy that brings forth the vision and courage to reinvent America." Clinton quickly follows this renunciation of recent leadership with his own invocation of the Founders and their provision for American change. "Not change for change, sake" Clinton argues, "but change to *preserve* America's ideals" (emphasis added). Avoiding any perception of discontinuity, Clinton invokes the tenets of the Declaration of Independence, George Washington, the Revolution, the Civil War, Franklin Roosevelt in the Great Depression, and the civil rights movement, all

¹Federer, America's God and Country, pp.349-350.

²"State of Ohio, February 18, 1992, Proclamation," in ibid., pp.486-487.

³Ibid., p.304.

leading up to himself and his own place in America's grand design. And then, Clinton immediately reverts back in time for Thomas Jefferson's sanction of change as renewal in each generation. Clinton presents himself as ready to continue this heritage through "American renewal." "To renew America," Clinton continues, "we must be bold." Sacrifice is needed, "to do the work the season demands. ...I challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service." This re-dedication of the American spirit is closed with a scripture and the invocation of God's help: truly an optimistic and Christian speech of spiritual rebirth.¹

Billy Graham, now "America's pastor" and "chaplain to the White House," has been present at seven presidential inaugurations. Although he is said to have "built bridges" between Christians and Jews in America, his "personification of American Christianity" finally "distressed some" when Graham invoked "the Trinity in his inaugural prayer."² With the increased pressures placed upon the civil religion by Christians since the 1970s, American legitimacy is coming closer to requiring explicitly Christian language in civil-religious invocations--the implicit Christianity of sacrifice and rebirth, although resurrected for a time by Clinton, not being sufficient for the Christian right.

In his "State of the Union" address of 1994, President Clinton again voiced the call for American renewal, this time asking Americans to join

¹William Jefferson Clinton, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1993, West Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.366-369.

²Robin Toner, "'America's Pastor': At 74, Billy Graham Begins to Sum Up, Regrets and All," New York Times, February 3, 1993.

churches so that they might be better people all of the time, not just when chastened to righteousness by "God's hand": "Let us not reserve the better angels only for natural disasters" Clinton said in a strange twist on Lincoln's "better angels of our nature."¹ Congressional leaders continued to push throughout 1994, however, for explicitness in the civil religion and its public enunciation. Because Republicans seemed destined to take control of the Congress, talk of a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools increased, thus pressuring the president to conform, at least somewhat, by preserving his Christian appearance. Clinton announced that he supported prayer in the schools, that he gets personal comfort from reading the Bible and other religious books, to which he turns for guidance --thus struggling to preserve his public piety which was being eclipsed by that of the Republican "pharisees." Just as Republicans had tried to "soften" Governor Fordice's Christianity, so now Democrats worked to reclaim Clinton from his apparent openness of faith. Clinton, however, would not co-operate, asserting again that school prayer could be done without violation of the Constitution. There already existed in American schools many state-mandated moments of silence prayers in the South, as well as prayer meetings, Bible-reading, sports team prayers, and graduation ceremony prayers.² A constitutional amendment did, in fact,

¹Bill Clinton, "State of the Union," January 25, 1994, Congressional Quarterly 52:4 (January 29, 1994), pp.194-198.

²Gustav Niebuhr, "Books on Faith Are a Comfort, President Says," New York Times, October 4, 1994; Douglas Jehl, "Clinton Reaches Out to G.O.P. On School Prayer Amendment," New York Times, November 16, 1994; Richard L. Berke, "White House Tries To Clarify Stand On School Prayer," New York Times, November 18, 1994; Peter Applebome, "Prayer in Public School? It's Nothing New for Many," New York Times, November 22, 1994.

seem unnecessary in a "Christian America."

Clinton's 1995 "State of the Union" address begins by harkening Americans back to the Founders, once again: "We are keepers of a sacred trust," the president reminds Americans, "and we must be faithful to it." Fidelity to the American idea, "one idea," Clinton says, is America's challenge, and he then quotes the preamble of the Declaration of Independence--reminiscent of Bush's "State of the Union" and his Prague workers. No longer so optimistic of his ability to "force spring," Clinton tries to justify his thwarted attempts at change over the last years by invoking, once again, the language of renewal--this time as duty, rather than as opportunity. If his renewal must fail, he seems to reason, he can at least make the Republicans look hypocritical in their own renewal quest: "It falls to every generation since then [1776] to preserve that idea, the American idea, and to deepen and expand its meaning in new and different times." Clinton here stresses the changes that are forced upon Americans by circumstance, changes that require a progressive, expanding change in renewal, rather than a reactionary retreat to the past as he sees offered by Republican renewal.¹

In his assertion of the failure of past policies in present circumstances, President Clinton tries to resurrect his "New Covenant," a feeble retrenchment of his own given a failure to which he does not want to admit. Attempting to make his covenant palatable by cloaking it in certain tenets of Republican Party renewal such as decentralization of government, Clinton still tries to "sell" forgiveness, democratization,

¹Bill Clinton, "State of the Union," (New York: C.B.S. News, 1995).

and health care in a "real" Christianity that otherwise stands no chance against fundamentalist American judgement. Clinton turns, in closing, to a call for spiritual regeneration and church revival once again, praising the role of "religious leaders and their congregations" in the "New Covenant." Dramatically, Clinton recalls Americans to the paramount civil religious virtue of the 1950s golden era for which republicans all long--tolerance--in a scorching rendition of Christ clearing the self-righteous from the temple: "We have got to stop seeing each other as enemies just because we have different views. If you go back to the beginning of this country, the great strength of America, as de Tocqueville pointed out when he came here a long time ago, has always been our ability to associate with people who were different from ourselves, and to work together to find common ground. ...We must do more of that," Clinton demands, and "behave like Americans!"¹ If only saying it would make it really so: but Americans have never behaved like Americans, they have only talked like them.

This survey of American history has been but a sampling, albeit an authentically representative one, of the religious rhetoric that has pervaded American politics from "the beginning." There is far more left out than is included, but all of the key props to civil religion as an empirical phenomenon in America are noted. One might cross through American history again and again to find more "proofs" of the civil religion's existence, or even through one year's worth of contemporary political rhetoric if one is not so concerned with the historical

¹Ibid.

continuity and development of the civil religion. Still, this present exercise has been an endeavour to provide such continuity, explain the main lines of the civil religion's development, and to situate the reader somewhat within the religious symbolic content to understand the meaning of key references and invocations.

Although there are conscious, even adept, manipulators of these symbols, for most Americans, even American leaders, the symbolic complex constitutes American "givenness," understood intuitively, mythically, as common sense--and so is no religion at all, but a true expression of their nation and its "truths." Nevertheless, the challenge at the outset of this survey was to find in American history and politics the existence of a relatively cohesive religion according to Richard Neuhaus's formula. We have seen in this historical overview that the American Civil Religion does include the requisite crucial elements: 1) a cultic aspect that gathers members periodically to celebrate beliefs, events, and persons important to it, 2) "recognized leadership offices invested formally or informally with sacred authority," 3) the initiation and definition of members, 4) a creed, 5) a moral code that gives meaning to belonging and that connects individual action with group action, and 6) institutionalized expression of the above. There is, as Neuhaus says, "at least ...a conscious effort to knit these elements together under the 'sacred canopy.'" Indeed, we may confidently conclude that, for better or for worse, there exists an American civil religion.

¹Neuhaus, Time Toward Home, pp.194-201; "From Civil Religion to Public Philosophy," pp.101-103.

Conclusion: The Presidency, Renewal, and the Civil Religion Today

The President of the United States is foremost the symbolic embodiment of the nation, and only secondly the executive of that nation's will. This mythic concentration of national identity in the personage of the president legitimizes authority in the office of the presidency that goes far beyond the Constitution's limited proscriptions of powers.¹ In moments of crisis, as well as in moments of extralegal action on the part of the president, civil religious language is invoked to crystallize public opinion, and to unify it in a consensus that provides "spontaneous" legitimacy for presidential initiatives.

As the civil religion gathers all parties together in times of trial to create one American voice, the president symbolizes that unity and purity through his "impartial" stance as national leader. In his role as national priest, the president is the "foremost representative of the civil religion in America, ...the symbolic representative of the whole of the American people."² President Eisenhower viewed the role of the president as being "above the fray" in political terms, following the mythic example of George Washington,³ so that the office bestows a certain American "innocence" upon its incumbent, an innocence that tends to sanctify the presidential will--especially during the infamous first "hundred days" when a new president's innocence remains relatively

¹Anne Norton, Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), pp.87-88.

²Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, Civil Religion and the Presidency, (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988), pp.13-20.

³Neustadt, Presidential Power, p.122.

pristine. The perception of presidential innocence is mythically transferred onto the nation in a purging renewal and national rebirth every four years. The sanctification of presidential policy that derives from this innocence is difficult to maintain, however, as politics continually tend to force the president down into "the fray." It is then that dynamic presidents "use" the civil religion and its symbols to govern with the help of a rhetoric that strives either to "resurrect" themselves, or to remain "above the fray."¹ President Clinton, for example, as his presidency became increasingly mired in "politics," has adapted himself the more to his civil religious role as High Priest of the nation. Following the advice of political strategist Dick Morris, Clinton gave an address on Memorial Day, 1995, in Vice-president Al Gore's place and continued with "centrist pleas on issues such as school prayer (silence is OK)" as "the articulation of Morris's ideas of 'triangulation'--...a strategy of repudiating Democrats and Republicans alike so that the president stands equidistant from the parties like a triangle's peak."² Of course, joining the president at the peak of the American triangle is the all-seeing eye of God. Together, they watch over the nation.

In the role of "*pontifex maximus*"--supposed to be a prophetic role until mid-twentieth century when it became priestly--the president "affirms that God exists and that America's destiny and the nation's policies must be interpreted in the light of the Almighty's will. The

¹Pierard and Linder, Civil Religion and the Presidency, p.27.

²Matthew Cooper, "White House Watch: The Explanation," The New Republic (August 21/28, 1995), p.16.

rituals that the president celebrates and the speeches he makes reflect the basic themes of American civil religion."¹ Jerald Brauer asserts that "Americans eagerly respond to the idea of a 'godly' man in the White House," reminiscent of the original Puritan qualifications for office--piety and popularity. Brauer says that this perception by the American people of a priestly leadership assures the nation that God rules in the affairs of men, that politics is the business of sorting out God's will and doing it. With frequent public prayers and civil religious invocations, righteousness becomes self-evident in America, God's will known through "election," and American self-confidence reassured in its own righteousness, which "exalteth a nation." Thus the self-justifying, self-sanctifying civil religious rhetoric of American presidents, and even of hopefuls, is mythically absorbed by the nation as its own, preserving "the fray" as a righteous endeavour. The more a president's piety elevates him "above the fray," the more the entire "fray" is elevated with him, ever more closely approaching the divine.²

Barbara Hinckley maintains that the recent rise of religion in presidential politics is merely an increased overttness, a new explicitness in presidential language. The presidential office has always been associated with the revelation of God's will, she says, but earlier presidential speeches would shock us today with their frank party politics

¹Pierard and Linder, Civil Religion and the Presidency, pp.20, 24-25.

²Brauer, "The Rule of the Saints in American Politics," p.240.

and base, practical policy orientations.¹ Nevertheless, presidential rhetoric, even at its most "practical," always has embraced the mundane with divine language--every president but one having invoked God in his Inaugural Address (the exception being Jimmy Carter who most certainly was downplaying carefully his "born again" evangelical Christianity). Carter did quote from the Bible, however, neatly linking the quotation with his own initiation of American renewal, elevating it to a spiritual, biblical imperative.² While several presidents have prayed or alluded to prayer, and a few have quoted or invoked the Scriptures as American standards, every twentieth-century president has spoken of renewal, or of continuing renewal initiatives that they inherited. Most have legitimized change in terms that related it or themselves to the Founding Fathers. Nineteenth-century presidents also engaged in this language of civil-religious renewal, claiming continuity for themselves or their parties with the past more intimately even than for the nation as a whole. Presidential persons and parties did identify themselves with the country, or with "America," rather than the nation, perceiving themselves as the "true" version or manifestation of an American heritage and destiny. Only with the passing of the Civil War would the presidency begin to rise "above" sectional and party politics, as particular presidents strove towards a national self-

¹Barbara Hinckley, The Symbolic Presidency: How Presidents Portray Themselves (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp.6-9.

²James Earl Carter, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1977, East Front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.," in The Presidents Speak, ed. Lott, pp.337-340.

identification in the civil religion.'

Stephen Skowronek's recent portrayal of presidential politics as cyclical manifestations of "political time," in which presidents repudiate or articulate their predecessors according to the "political time" that they inherit, asks us to consider particular presidents according to the limitations inherent in the presidency itself. Presidents who repudiate predecessors have the easiest task, Skowronek maintains, as they can appeal to American ideals as "ancient truths" that stand in judgement of previous presidents. This would involve a "prophetic" invocation of America's civil religion, the judgement of the gap between ideal and actual America. Sustaining presidents, that is, presidents who are effectively part of an ongoing articulation of civil religious renewal, must constantly argue their own renewal and progression towards the actualization of American ideals, a goal that can never be reached and which, therefore, subjects them inevitably to "prophetic" judgement. Presidents that begin renewal quickly become priestly in their own self-assertion, once their prophetic invocation of the civil religion has unseated the rival incumbent. In this way a cycle of presidential rhetoric and politics is established within the context of civil-religious renewal, a cycle that can force presidents who might otherwise have been brilliant repudiators into roles of articulation and sustenance for which they are ill-equipped. Similarly, presidents that might have been marvellous priests can be forced to play the prophet's role. In this cycle of alternating priestly and prophetic politics, the language of legitimacy,

¹Lott, The Presidents Speak.

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PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

and of political persuasion, is the language of America's civil religion. Throughout, renewal is the common, persistent theme.'

Samuel Huntington combines this notion of "political time" with earlier discussions of religious revival and awakening. As we have seen, political renewal follows quickly upon the heels of religious revival in America. Huntington effectively combines the religious and political impulse within the civil religion, so that the lag between religious and political manifestations is eliminated--the two becoming one extended period of prophetic or priestly politics and religion together. Huntington perceives a cycle in which the gap between ideal and actual Americas drives prophetic or priestly invocations of the civil religion, thus, in turn, driving American politics. In periods of "moralism," prophetic invocations denounce actual America as falling far short of its promise, driving toward spiritual regeneration and institutional reform. Eventually, "cynicism" takes over as a stage in the cycle, and here Americans learn to tolerate actual America, tiring of the prophetic voice and its failure to raise America up to its own expectations. A third stage, "complacency," involves ignoring the shortfall of American life in approaching its promise. This ignorance soon turns to denial in a final stage of "hypocrisy" in which Americans celebrate their accomplishment of national destiny and promise in the midst of obvious failure. Again, prophetic voices begin to be heard invoking the civil religion against its priestly counter-part and, as Americans are moved to eliminate national

¹Stephen Skowronek, The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993).

sins, "moralism" returns and the cycle begins anew.¹

Civil religion becomes most potent in these closely linked stages of priestly hypocrisy and prophetic moralism, but remains vital through all stages, its language either driving or resisting change, hence the progression, of the cycle. Skowronek's repudiation periods can be linked to the prophetic civil religion and "moralism," while his stages of articulation and sustenance can be seen to follow the civil-religious cycle through increasing degrees of toleration-cynicism, complacency-ignorance and, finally, hypocrisy-denial in which presidential incumbents fight a bitter, but losing, battle to sustain their incumbency as the realization of the American Dream.

The language of renewal drives American political rhetoric because it brings with it legitimacy, in terms of the past--continuity with Founding Fathers and "tradition"--and in terms of the present--it appeals to living Americans and their immediate desires for renewed change and renewed relevance. Renewal is "democratic" in this sense, a feature that is emphasized in America by its accomplishment in civil religious terms--the language of the people in America, the democratic public philosophy. The key challenge for American democracy is order according to its proponents, the maintenance of stability amidst a multitude of public voices. America pursues stability through education and socialization into its civil religion--the effective creation of one public voice. As the single residence of both prophetic voices of challenge and of priestly voices of static resistance, America's civil religion harnesses debate within a

¹Huntington, American Politics, pp.64-70.

language that is supposed to be common to all Americans, a consensus of belief about American foundations, purpose, meaning, promise, and destiny. Within the limits of this consensus, Americans can safely "do" politics. Education and socialization, therefore, are directed towards conversion--a missionary effort for the making of good citizens within the parameters of this American consensus. Americans do not learn *about* America through the civil religion but learn, instead, that America is "true"--in religious terms, the one true living church on the face of the earth. Through renewal, this church is kept vital, a "sect" more than a church, in its ability to maintain a zealous commitment. Each generation, through socializing conversion, chooses to be American, rather than to be born or coerced into a church of their forefathers. Renewal and education become "efficient socialization" in America, far surpassing in efficiency that system now known as "totalitarianism"--often a misnomer for authoritarian militarism. Americanism is far more total in its grasp on its members' hearts and minds, in its ability to "efficiently" convert people to, rather than enforce upon them, its ways.¹ This totalism is accomplished, in large part, through civil religion--just as Rousseau had intended it.

A recent and growing perception of lost consensus has threatened American "givenness" and, thus, its "chosenness." Daniel Boorstin's recent admission that his own sense of American "givenness" might have been myopic due to a sheltered upbringing in which his own small world testified to him of the accomplishment of the American Dream, rings hollow

¹*Ibid.*, p.71; Smith and Lindeman, The Democratic Way of Life, pp.45, 72, 112, 148.

in his simultaneous condemnation of contemporary America for its apostasy from the American promise and its failure to revitalize and regenerate the American past.¹ Boorstin still believes in American "givenness," only he bemoans its loss. Such is the prophetic call in America today, the call for restoration and renewal. Once again, Americans insist on prophetically renewing the priestly religion "given" them by history, a chimerical realization of American promise.

President Clinton's inaugural invocation of renewal in muted Christian terms, a priestly-prophetic call in its celebration of itself as if the call were accomplishment, has been replaced by a more strident rhetoric of reactionary renewal by conservative revolutionaries, often Christians determined to enforce a catholic Americanism through legal coercion where they cannot convert. New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman delivered the Republican rebuttal to President Clinton's "State of the Union" address in 1995, announcing a revolution that is sweeping America. "In November," she said referring to the 1994 Republican Congressional victory, "the revolution came to Washington." Governor Whitman insisted that "we have won the battle of ideas in our states. Now it's time to win the battle of ideas in Washington."² These ideas are American ideas, aimed at the re-definition of American civilization and of its civil religion--following the pattern of "more advanced Republicans" as they, too, thundered towards union as "one nation."

¹Daniel Boorstin, Cleopatra's Nose: Essays on the Unexpected (New York: Random House, 1994), pp.192-193.

²Christine Todd Whitman, "State of the Union--Republican rebuttal" (New York: C.B.S. News, 1995).

Congressman Newt Gingrich and the Republican "Contract with America" arrived in Washington in the fall of 1994 on a self-declared "mission" to the American people, "to renew the American Dream." The "Contract with America ... was an effort to accomplish the mission as defined by House Republicans." As a "covenant," this contract bound all Republicans to a particular vision of American society, a vision of American civil religion legitimized with both invocations of the Founding Fathers and additional civil-religious symbols.¹ Gingrich advances this renewal as the salvation of American civilization, his party's recent success as proof of American unity; the Civil War is finally over, says Gingrich, as Republicans can run effectively in every part of the nation now. America has been Americanized in this view, yet stands assailed by voices of dissent and difference that would divide the nation. Gingrich declares himself and his party guardians of the "single Doctrine" that emerges from the Federalist Papers, de Tocqueville's Democracy in America, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence.² No "single Doctrine" can be found in this morass of American scripture, but only in their "single" interpretation as one version of the American Civil Religion, opened to "democratic" renewal by Republicans as never before: "and you can actually call. It's 1-800-TO

¹Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas, eds., Contract with America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Armey and the House Republicans to Change the Nation (New York: Times Books and the Republican National Committee, 1994), pp.4-6.

²Newt Gingrich, "Remarks by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Washington Research Group Symposium, Washington, D.C., November 11, 1994," in ibid., pp.181-196.

RENEW--T-O-R-E-N-E-W."¹

America is held by Republicans to be an idea, one idea, adhered to by the nation through its derivative American values; held virtually unanimously until the 1960s. Again, Republicans have idealized the civil-religious unity of the 1950s as the one, "true," American standard. Claiming their civil-religious heritage as the basis for renewal of this standard, Gingrich asserts an American mythology "that just happen[s] to be true" and, thus, "unique." American civilization is encapsulated in the speeches of the Founders, Abraham Lincoln, and the Roosevelts, says Gingrich, a civilization in speech that must be renewed in actuality.² This prophetic call to realize American ideals that are transparently priestly in their self-congratulation and self-celebration, although it is considered by a rising religious left and by a declining group of civil religion proponents to be a distortion of America's civil religion,³ constitutes the allegedly "real" face of the American Civil Religion as it has been handed down by its carriers.

Arthur Schlesinger's jeremiad, The Disuniting of America, its demand for a singular American vision in education and values, has been joined by a Republican call for a return to McGuffey's Reader in America's public schools, and for prayers in the schools--'after the example of Franklin Roosevelt', and as "would have been approved by" Franklin, Jefferson, and

¹Ibid., p.193.

²Newt Gingrich, To Renew America (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), pp.30-35.

³Jim Wallis, The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change (New York: The New Press, 1994), pp.35-37.

Lincoln--a 1950s' vision of nineteenth-century American piety.¹ In both cases, American civilization is thought to depend upon assimilation, indoctrination and conversion into the values of the American civil religion. American unity is sought, and espoused, by two "alternate" voices, Democrat and Republican acting in good citizenship within the parameters of American consensus to denounce "other" voices--again, reminiscent of antebellum America and its concern for unity, sought first through conversion in the Second Awakening, then through legal coercion and institutional reform and, finally, through civil war. In this sense, Schlesinger is merely another "more advanced Republican."

Prayer in the schools is an accomplished fact of the conservative revolution at the local and state levels, and now promises to be successful in some manner at the national level, either through a constitutional amendment or through legislation circumventing the courts as in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and its response to *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990).² Mississippi, for example, disobeys the Supreme Court by continuing to endorse Christian prayers and Bible study in public schools. History teachers teach biblical figures as historical accuracies, using the Bible as a required text. State Senators

¹Gingrich, To Renew America, pp.35-37, 144.

²In the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, Congress was moved by American political, church, and religious leaders to enact legislation that undermined the Court's 1990 interpretation of the "free exercise clause" in the First Amendment. The Court outlawed Native use of peyote for religious purposes, following the basic premise of Reynolds, considered an intrusion into American religiosity by legislators in the 1990s. See Brent Gilchrist, "And The Wall Came Tumbling Down" (Carleton Univ.: Unpublished essay, 1994).

are fighting for legislation to "legalize" these activities, but vow that prayer will continue in the schools no matter what the courts and laws determine. To stop prayer in the schools, they say, is to destroy "our way of life," American civilization as "renewed" by the conservative revolution. The only objection to reach the courts in Mississippi has been lodged by a Christian Scientist not opposed to prayer in the schools, but opposed to the explicit Christian nature of the prayers as requiring mediation through Jesus Christ, a requirement that contradicts the tenets of this American "Christian" denomination. Public ostracism and persecution of this one citizen by students, teachers, neighbours, and by local church and civil officials, threatens to silence dissent in the face of an overwhelming majority of support for prayer.¹ With national Republicans joined by a Democratic president in support of school prayer, the conservative revolution seems destined, indeed, to "take" Washington with this type of "religiosity."

At the Forty-Third Annual National Prayer Breakfast, President Clinton announced again that he finds "relief" in reading the Bible and quoted scriptures to "quiet" the harsh talk of American politics. After praying with Billy Graham, Clinton declared, "I need the power of God."² Well aware of that power's residence in the civil religion, and of that religion's potency for American legitimacy and motivation, Clinton is forced to be "religious" as the "more advanced Republicans" continue to

¹"Lisa Herdahl vs. Pontotoc County," 60 Minutes (New York: C.B.S. News, August 13, 1995).

²Gustav Niebuhr, "Clinton Says Psalms Bring Him Relief," New York Times, November 3, 1995.

shape the agenda in Washington. Only in the president's role as minister and High Priest can he hope to out-manoeuver, out-preach, and out-do the Republican onslaught of righteousness with his own public piety.

Whatever Clinton's success may be in this, civil religion is the currency by which the American people will choose their next president. It is the language by which Americans "spoke the nation into being" with the Declaration of Independence' and its revision in speech with the Gettysburg Address. It is the language of the American national song. "Words are not puppets," writes Kenneth Burke, "they also command." As a lever has its own properties independent of its function, so words have their own properties, creating a "world" in rhetoric regardless of intended "uses." While many Americans might have "used" the language of the civil religion to justify and sanctify policies or political initiatives, the language has become, nevertheless, a large part of the American "world." It is the language of revelation in America, and so must be understood by political scientists if they wish to be pertinent. Fluency is required of those engaged in American studies. "The 'voting' of poetry is essentially *non-parliamentary*," says Burke. While most "scientific" observers poll respondents in a "parliamentary" gauging of feeling and intent that is supposed to assist in foretelling "the course of history," the gauging of future trends according to a simple arithmetic "attitude of the public" represented by an "accurate cross section of the population" is fatuous, according to Burke. "As a matter of fact, the expression of the vote (if by 'voting' you mean this empty, passive,

¹Norton, Republic of Signs, p.9.

random process) tells you *nothing*. The future is really disclosed by *finding out what people can sing about.*"¹ Following Burke's advice, this project has been an endeavour to disclose the American song, its content and its currency in the civil religion. Whether or not that song discloses the American future remains a matter of American idealization. As Americans have "lived in the word," so the American future will continue to dwell within the civil religion. All else is un-American. Regardless of any manifestation of actual America, "true" America will persist in this "world" of language. As it has been for nearly four hundred years, the song remains the same.

¹Kenneth Burke, Attitudes Toward History (Los Altos, California: Hermes Publications 1937; 2nd ed., rev. single volume, 1959), pp.332-335.

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