MISSION, MYTH, RHETORIC, AND POLITICS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENTS OF AMERICA'S MISSION AND OF ITS UNIVERSALIST RHETORIC

1. The Frame of Reference

One of the most important events in modern times is the development of some small English colonies into a leading world power. Whether this happened with or without intent is a moot question for many reasons, the first one being their different beginnings. The Virginians put their emphasis on "battering" their lot, the Pilgrim Fathers wanted a total "separation" from England, and the founders of Massachusetts were eager to establish a "model", which would attract "the eyes of all people".¹ There were circumstances, however, which affected all people alike. Daniel Boorstin speaks of the "givenness" of the land as a source of the American sense of self-sufficiency and of "Manifest Destiny".² But the belief in being "destined" to spread across the entire continent cannot be clearly distinguished from the universal mission and the belief in being destined to become a world leader. The "givenness" of the land can also be understood as an idea, which can be related to many ideas brought along from Europe. The idea of a special, unique, and exceptional "mission" was familiar to English people of the Tudor and Elizabethan Age, like the idea that God had "given the Heritage of the Heathen" to the English nation. The size, richness and relative emptiness of America was a great incentive for the invention of a "promised land". If nature and nature's God had provided a covenanted people with such a land, this challenge could be considered as an "errand into the wilderness" and as a mission to turn "the uttermost west" into "the foremost possession of Christ". His "pure ordinances" had to be a part of the Work of Reformation, of God's Work of Redemption and of the "fulfilment" of the "promises" pronounced by the prophets of ancient Israel. God had given them the "New Canaan", in order to transform it into a "New Eden". This work would attract "the eyes of all people", but especially pious people who were suffering from the oppressions in "the wilderness of the world". While the Old World was receding into darkness, the dark west, "the domain of the devil", which it had become after the expulsion of Adam and Eve, was destined to become "the brightest land" and the "dawn of the millennial day". The founders and promoters of the American model would become "the vanguard" of a universal society. These stereotypes gradually developed into a rhetorical pattern, because they were used in thousands of sermons, orations, messages, tracts, and voluminous books produced during the course of American history. They can

¹ Ernst Fraenkel, USA - Weltmacht wider Willen (Berlin, 1957); William Applemann Williams, Der Welt Gesetz und Freiheit geben. Amerikas Sendungsglaube und imperiale Politik (Hamburg, 1984).
still be heard today, though chiefly at festive occasions in the form of reductionist "fetishes" and secularized variations.3

The continuity and persistence of these ideas and myths and of their patriotic rhetoric proves that Americans are fond of mythical ideas and of verbal magic. The "nation under God" can be called "a nation with a soul of a church". It has also been said that "America", which means many different things, is also "words" and "built on a rock of dogmatic affirmations". American culture has a "rhetorical character" which comes out in the widespread belief in the power of a word to bring about the desired result. It belongs to the American frame of mind and "style" to express the national consensus in a way which strengthens the sense of mission and the belief in the universal chances of an "all-encompassing humanism".4

At festive occasions a public spokesman is expected to give a "grand" and "solemn" meaning to the nation, and it must have a look which can also attract other people. The universalist rhetoric consists of a complex network of richly symbolic "basic" utterances, mixed with rather simplistic, "highfalutin", mythical and virulent expressions, which make up the major part of America's "civic religion". The term was first used by J.J.Rousseau and became known to the fathers of the American Revolution. During the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin appealed to the deputies to turn to God as the master of history who "governs in the affairs of man" in such a way that "no empire can rise without his aid", the "future national felicity" being tied to His "superintending Providence".5 The American sense of mission can be traced back to Judeo-Christian roots, especially to biblical prophecy. Nicholas Noyes, a New English Puritan divine of the seventeenth century defined New England history as "postdated prophecy" in the sense of a fulfilment of biblical promises and of expected higher fulfilment. Large portions of the American myth, which the preachers merged with actual historical events have a biblicistic design.6 No other people or nation outside of Israel has lifted its own history so consistently up to the level of myth by making use of a rhetorical framework derived from Scripture. The Puritan divines sensed


very early that in this respect the wide New World provided a much greater opportunity for them than the Old World had done for a Wyclif, a John Hus, a Martin Luther, a Thomas Müntzer, and a John Calvin. The uprooted immigrants, who listened to the beautiful inventions of the mythographers, liked to hear that they were involved in something vastly great.

When Cromwell ignored the New English "model" and when the Stuarts endangered their charter, the people of New England put more emphasis on the "errand" to transform the Indian wilderness into a religious and civic commonwealth, but they also went on visualizing the New World as the "garden of the world", the new "Eden", the "realm of righteousness", a "new heaven and a new earth". Their intellectual exertions culminated in books like Cotton Mather's "Magnalia Christi Americana" (1702) and Jonathan Edwards' "Work of Redemption" (1739/1777). And thousands of patriotic sermons, religiously tainted Fourth-of-July orations, and Presidential addresses contain the "mission" to serve humanity and to establish a better world: It caused President Bush to finish his address to Congress about the end of the Gulf War with the words:

We went halfway around the world to do what is moral and just and right... We lifted the yoke of aggression and tyranny from a small country... and we ask nothing in return... We are Americans. May God bless this great nation - the United States of America.

This is a way of concluding an important address which is very well received by patri-otic Americans. It is part of a topical way of speaking which is intimately tied to the spiritual and moral values prominent in American history. Many of the first settlers saw themselves as players in a foreordained divine drama, and they tried to relate themselves and their role in the drama to the rest of the world. "The eyes of all people are upon us", John Winthrop said in 1630 to his fellow Puritans aboard the Arbella on their way to the New World. The words spoken by Winthrop were repeated many times with minor variations to suit the occasion. "The eyes of all humanity are fixed on us with anxiety as their only hope", said Thomas Jefferson in 1802. "The eyes of all nations are fixed on our Republic", President Jackson said in 1829. "The longing eyes of millions of people are turned on our bright example", "the eyes of all civilized nations are gazing upon us", other public spokesmen kept repeating during the Jacksonian period and during the following periods of American history. When they were making use of this topos, they were likely to relate it to other topoi like choosen-ness, mission, and destiny. Good patriots were expected to express the conviction that good Americans were not merely taking care of their own interest, but that they were also engaged in a work for all of mankind, or that they were trustees of a sacred treasure in which all lovers of liberty had a stake.8


Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the universalist rhetoric was often used in support of a policy of "keeping aloof" from the "evil old world" and of not getting "entangled" with the "bellum omnium in omnia of Europe" (Jefferson). But a policy of moral interventionism was often vaguely implied. As early as 1845 a United States Senator criticized the "Macchiavellian power politics" of the Old World while he came out in favor of continental expansion. The American concept of righteousness was above "the old black-letter international law" which made a big distinction between "aggressor" and "oppressor", and was not interested in promoting an "international order of human dignity". As time went on people also began to talk about the need of linking the policy of taking care of "the national interest" with a moral concern about "the interdependence of peoples" and about the humanitarian component of "the international interest". The universalist phrases in the rhetoric of mission stimulated discussions of man's fate and character and the chances of a world-wide expansion of republicanism, liberty, and democracy. But the flamboyant and vague utterances about "serving humanity" leave it wide open whether the nation was tending toward more "isolationism" or toward more "interventionism". President Wilson was aware of the problem arising from the excessive talk about engagements on behalf of "the well-being of mankind". As a political scientist he knew that the use of universalist rhetoric, the promotion of humanitarian goals, and the pursuit of the national interests are three different things. "Realpolitik" was always being practised though it was veiled by the rhetoric. "We have

American History and Politics (L.N. Shannon); 1853 The Moral Mission of Our Country (C.M. Taggart); 1853 The Destiny of America (W.H. Seward); 1855 America's Mission (C. Wadsworth); 1872 The Mission of the North American People (W. Gilpin); 1919 America's Mission to Serve Humanity (F. Moss); 1935 Manifest Destiny (K. A. Weinberg); 1950 "The American Mission" (B. Rossiter); 1953 "Errand into the Wilderness" (P. Miller); 1957 The American Idea of Mission (E. B. Burns); 1959 The Metaphysical Foundations of American History (R. van Zandt); 1963 Manifest Destiny and Mission (F. Merk); 1965 The Theology of Mission in the Puritan Tradition (S. H. Rooy); 1966 The Almost Chosen People (R. B. Nye); 1967 Missionsbewußtsein und Völkerrechtsdogrin (K. Krakau); 1968 The National Purpose (J. K. Jessup ed.); 1968 Redeemer Nation (E. L. Tuveson); 1974 City on the Hill (L. Baritz ed.); 1974 The New Heavens and New Earth (C. Strout); 1978 The Typology of America's Mission (S. Bercovich); 1980 Empire as a Way of Life (W. A. Williams); 1982 Magnificent Destiny (P. I. Wellman); 1986 Missions in Conflict (R. von Bardeleben ed.).


shown ourselves akin to all the world, when it came to pushing our advantage.\textsuperscript{12}

In recent years the rhetoric has become more realistic and honest, and the language about America's "world mission" has been toned down somewhat. More diplomats and statesmen discuss issues in terms of realpolitik, and some political scientists pay attention to the possibility of using patriotic rhetoric as an expression of wishful thinking or as a tool of propaganda and clever psychology.\textsuperscript{13}

"Sacaë" and one of the "ten lost tribes of Israel". Another legend turned England into the "land of the holy Grail", which Joseph of Arimathia brought to "Britannia" or to the land of "Brith", which is the Hebrew word for "covenant with God". In 1393 the Lollard Walter Brute started the myth that Britannia was destined to become "the fifth and final monarchy" of "the Son of Man":

All people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away... And the kingdom... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High... And all dominions shall serve and obey him (Dan. 7:14,27).\textsuperscript{15}

The Hebraism resulting from these "strange conjectures" made many Englishmen believe that they were singled out by God and Providence to be another "Israel", a "chosen and peculiar people", and to take the lead in the cause of Reformation.\textsuperscript{16} After the destruction of the Spanish Armada (1580) they

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\textsuperscript{12} Woodrow Wilson, "Democracy and Efficiency," \textit{Atlantic Monthly} 87 (1901), 293.
\textsuperscript{13} Morgenthau, "Another 'Great Debate'" (note 10), 975-76.
began to talk about British leadership in battling and defeating "the four beasts", the rule of "Babylon" and of the "Roman harlot". Sir Walter Raleigh's taking possession of a strip of Spanish America which he called "Virginia" (1584) in honor of the "Virgin Queen" was interpreted as a proof of their mission to bring the "true" light of Christ to all peoples, nations, and languages. In the same way in which ancient Israel had been graced by God to be "the light of the Gentiles", "to go forth to them that are in darkness", and to bring "salvation unto the end of the earth" (Jes. 49:6-9), God was now assigning his "British Israel" with the task of fulfilling the prophecies of Jesahiah, of Daniel, and of the Book of Revelation. Conforming Anglican clergymen as well as non-conforming Puritans of the Elizabethan Age were making use of the typological exegesis by referring Bible texts to England:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house (Matt. 5:14-15).

Renowned Elizabethan scholars like the "hydrographer" John Davis supported the clergymen in their attempt to create a new sense of national identity and of a universal mission:

Wee of England are the saved people by the eternal and infallible presence of the Lord predestined to be sent unto these Gentiles... to give light to all the rest of the people.17

John Foxe, John Milton and others appealed to the "elect" and "chosen" nation, not to "forget her precedence in teaching nations how to live".18 In 1613 the Anglican clergymen Samuel Purchas used the same rhetoric when he appealed to the nation to support "Phoebe", as he called King James I, in his undertaking to bring the light of Christ and of Protestantism to the heathens in Virginia and send it "round the globe".19

When the Winthrop group of English Puritans settled in the northern part of Virginia or "New England", they were aware of these English precedents, adding however that "the saving remnant of God's people" had been brought out here to devote their best efforts to that mission, to develop it further and to make it "new".

3. The New England Way

The Pilgrim Fathers who went to America in 1620 were "separatists", i.e. they had left the Church of England and were determined to leave the "evils of the old world" behind forever. The founders of Massachusetts-Bay had their troubles with the Anglican bishops but remained in the Church, though they were hoping that their charter of privileges and their new "way" would serve as a model and that England would cease to be "lukewarm Laodicea" (Rev.3:14-16). Their way of being in covenant with one another and with God

19 Samuel Purchas, His Pilgrimage (London, 1613), 183.
(Jer.50:5) was meant first of all as a way to complete the Work of Reformation, or as an attempt to take the lead again "in this sacred matter, as during the time of Wyclif". If they succeeded, their enterprise could become the turning point in history, and if they failed, the "predestined" course of history in the sense of "God's Work of Redemption" would be interrupted, and they would be cursed by those who had had their eyes on them as their last and best hope. But the Puritan divines, who could be very harsh in their way of dealing with the English "Laodicea", abstained from celebrating their "exodus" as a "flight" from "the Egypt of England", and when John Endecott, the leading man in Salem, cut the cross of Saint George out of the English flag, he was punished by the Boston Court.

After the downfall of Puritanism in England and the Restoration of the Stuart dynasty (1660-1688), the covert tensions between Old England and New England became very noticeable, and The New England Way became more centrifugal and more "American". It became the first phase of "The American Way of Life". The return of the Stuarts convinced the New England "saints", that God had "removed the candlestick" from the East to the West and that he was preparing a place in the West where the latter-day events could begin. William Stoughton said in 1670 that New England was becoming more aware of its "advantage and privileges... We have had the eye and hand of God working everywhere for our good... And now it is not long before the Lord will finish his great work in the world." It became customary among clergymen to say: "We are the people that do succeed Israel" and to preach on the text "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). The light over God's "American Israel" would shine brighter than anywhere else, because it had moved toward the uttermost west where it had been so well received by God's people. One could hope that "the trumpet" of Revelation would be sounded first in America. To be sure, "Jeremiads" had to be listened to ever so often, because the prophets, especially Micah, demanded that God's people humbled themselves and repented their "betrayals of the covenant", but such sermons ended in an affirmation of a rising scale of spiritual and worldly fulfilments. The sermons, tracts, poems, and bulky books produced a vivid sense of righteousness, of civic pride, of mission and of destiny, which was often expressed in universalist terms. Five aspects of


21 Records of the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (Boston, 1853), I, 137.


24 Increase Mather, A Fast of God's Chusing (Boston, 1678), 12.

this mission have to be dealt with more particularly: 1. Taking the lead in the Work of Reformation, 2. promoting the entire pattern of God's house, 3. the mission to the Indians, 4. showing the way toward the final goal, and 5. fighting for the cause in "just" wars.26

4. The Religious Mission

Shortly before Winthrop's departure to New England Francis Higginson preached to the group of Puritan settlers about the need "to practise the positive part of church reformation and propagate the gospel in America".27 In another sermon the settlers were told to put "religion" first, not "trade", as the Virginians did, and "to cleare up to the world these truths we profess about the kingdom and government of Christ in his Churches, which is the great work of this age, and of this nick of time."28 The king remained their highest authority, but he was not to be talked of as "Phoebe". Their only "light" was Jesus Christ, "the shortly expected king", who possessed "the keys of the kingdom". The "saints" were also referred to 1.Sam.4:5ff and to the danger of forfeiting "the ark of the covenant" and Israel's future glory if God's people were not obedient to him.29 Neither "England nor Germany nor Virginia", but "only New England" had the right to propagate the doctrines of the reformed Protestant religion and to summon all nations to join New England in the task of completing the work of Reformation.'

... the God of Israel is among us... ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies... He shall make us a prayse and glory...: for wee must consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon an Hill, the eies of all people are upon us.30

Sentences like these and their frequent repetitions and variations became an important part of the Puritan rhetoric used at festive occasions. They also became a part of the American myth, which includes a belief in a universal mission and destiny. For the Puritan divines of the 17th century the New English commonwealth had an exceptional and sacred quality. Its history was "providential", "God-designed", and inescapable. The things "propesed in Scripture" would "come to pass". The Congregationalists, who were expected to listen to the long sermons twice a week and to practise "church discipline" learned to believe that they were participating in the all-important and universal "Work of Redemption and Salvation". The text of the first "Electron Sermon" (1638) was based on Jes.2:2-4, a text which became very important


29 Increase Mather, Ichabod (Cambridge, MA, 1702), 87; [R.O. and C.D.], New-Englands First Fruits (London, 1643), 18-19.

in the development of America's world mission and universalist rhetoric:

...the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say... out of Sion shall go forth the law...and (the nations) shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.31

Almost from the beginning, the New England divines expressed the hope that their model would "advance the kingdom of Christ" everywhere. In 1647 Nathaniel Ward, who called himself a "simple cobler of Aggawam in America", sent his tract across the Atlantic with the expectation that the news about the American undertaking would reach "all peoples, Nations, and languages".32 A few years later John Eliot sent a book across, devised for "setting up the Kingdom of Lord Jesus in England".33 A similar message was expressed by Edward Johnson: The enterprise will "brighten" the realm of religion and state-craft in many places, because it is the glorious antitype of "the Lord's house" described in Jes.2:2-4, and will "be set as lights upon a Hill more obvious than the highest Mountaine in the world."34

The Restoration of the Stuarts caused feelings of estrangement and alienation, and the fear of losing the charter of privileges and enfranchisements toned the language down, but on the whole it remained forthright. The people of New England were "a special people" and "the only upright children of Abraham". God had "sifted a whole nation, that he might send choice grain into this wilderness". He had "singled out New England... above any nation or people in the world". Upright Christians "in all other places... have heard of the Lord's providences" toward New England and "expect great things", the "Lord's own expectations" being "most solemn and awful".35 John Eliot proposed "a way" to bring "all Christian nations unto an Union of the Faith and Order of the Gospel".36 Uriah Oakes, President of Harvard College, was sure that the "New-English Israel" would become a universal model:

As a City upon a hill you have, to a considerable Degree, enlightened the world as to the pattern of God's house... This our commonwealth seems to exhibit a little model of the

31 Thomas Shepard, "Election Sermon" (1638), New England Hist. and Genealogical Register 24 (1870), 361-366.
32 Nathaniel Ward, The Simple Cobler of Aggawam in America, willing to help mend his Native Country, lamentably tattered, both in the upperleather and sole, with all the honest stitches he can take (London, 1647), 17, 58-59.
Samuel Danforth, A Briefe Recognition of New Englands Errand into the Wilderness (Boston, 1671).
36 John Eliot, Communion of Churches (Cambridge, MA, 1665), 6. This is the first privately printed American book.
kingdome of Christ upon Earth... This work of God set on foot and advanced to a good
Degree here, (will) spread over the face of the Earth... You have been a Candle on the
Candlestick that giveth light to the whole house... happy art thou, oh New-English
Israel! 37

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 encouraged Cotton Mather to combine "the idea of
the reformation of England" with the idea of liberty and of "REVOLUTION". What had
been achieved in New England could also be achieved in Old England and elsewhere. 38
New England had received "the fullest light" from the Gospel and therefore had the duty
to "impart its illuminations" to others. Each congregation was a part of the Militant
Visible Church, consisting of a company of "saints by calling". They had to accept the
"discipline" of the "Church-Society" and help to turn it into the universal model. Mather's
magnum opus repeated many "forthright" phrases and helped to turn them into a
rhetorical pattern. "We are the seed which the Lord has blessed". "Only this people is wise,
an holy and blessed people". The people of New England has been "sifted" from other
nations and appointed to rise "above any nation or people in the world". They have been
"made instrumental to bring the Truth into publick view, whereby the world might fare
the better for it." 39

5. The Political and Social Mission

The way of presenting the mission to the Congregationalists also stressed the political
and social value and the universal significance of the model. The citizens were expected to
be "thrift and frugal" and to feel "uncomfortable" in the presence of prosperity and
luxury. Superficial readers of Max Weber's "Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des
Kapitalismus" sometimes leap to the wrong conclusion that the New England Puritans
took their economic success as a "sign of God's blessing and salvation". They get a dif-
ferent view of this matter if they read some of the Jeremiads "designed to stiffen the virtue
of the prosperous and successful by assuring them that they had failed." 40 To be "virtuous"
meant to be "humble and righteous" in all their undertakings and to increase the mate-
rial values entrusted to them by making that kind of profit which leads to the thriving of
the congregation, the community, the com-

37 Urian Oakes, New-England Pleadeth With (Boston, 1673), 23.
39 Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana: or the ecclesiastical History of New-England,
from its First Planting in the Year 1620 uneto the Year of the Lord 1698 (London, 1702,
reissued Hartford, CT, 1855), I, 45; II, 5, 50 ss., 426; John Davenport, Another Essay on
Baptism (Cambridge, MA, 1663), A 2;

Stoughton, "New Englands True Interest" (note 35), 17, 21-22.
and Francis J.Bremer eds., Puritan New England (New York, 1977), 366; see also Kurt
153: "Weber's thesis is untenable". K.S.
 proves that economic prosperity increased in New England "after" strict orthodox Calvinism
gave way to the Great Awakening and to the Enlightenment. But as late as 1759 Puritan
divines preached about "the dreadful effects of Prosperity" and deplored that "the Nation of the
Jews" had valued "temporal Prosperity" too highly. Cf. Amos Adams, Artillery Election
Sermon (Boston, 1759), 5-8, 10.
monwealth, and "the kingdom of God". Their position in "the Lord's vineyard" required them to be laborious, to despise "slothful ease and idleness", and not to brag about their successes and their ability to buy luxuries if they wanted them. It was part of their laborious life to be socially and politically active, in order to prevent social and political disorders, oppression, schisms, riots, hunger, misery, and unjust wars. Since Winthrop's first sermon on the "model of Christian charity" they were also expected to practise brotherhood, to be "knit together in this work as one man", and to strengthen church discipline and civic virtues. Such a behavior would lead them to a success which would attract the eyes of all people and keep them from becoming a "by-word" for failure "through the world". After a few years in office Governor Winthrop reported to England that they had been able to produce and practise more "positive laws" than had been passed by Parliament "in many hundred years". This may be called the beginning of "the American brag". When Hugh Peters revisited London in 1645, he said in a sermon that New England did not know of any "beggars" and "drunkards", and he added the question: "Why should there be any beggars in 'your' Israel, where there is so much work to do?" At the end of the Thirty Years' War Thomas Shepard saw the Old World as a group of nations troubled by dishonesty, cunning, fraud, oppression, poverty, and war, while New England was enjoying brotherly love, peace, and prosperity. John Cotton had another version: "The wilderness of the world" is crowded with "unclean and wild beasts", while New England is coming closer to "the garden of the world". Its groundwork was laid in "the garden of the church", which, "by the light of nature", is also a sure foundation of the state. The state has to be accommodated "to the pattern of God's house", and not the other way around. All people who cannot come to terms with this concept are invited "to keep away". Christ, "their only Lawgiver", is "the only right heir of the Crown of England (a), and of all other Nations also (b)". People ought to accept Him and the Bible as "their onely Magna Charta, by which you should be ruled in all things." When Cromwell became Lord Protector of England, John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew asked him "to overthrow Antichrist" and to establish "Scripture Government and Law" after the New English model.

Edward

41 Winthrop, "A Modell" (note 30), 41 et ss.
43 Hugh Peters, Good Work for a Good Magistrate (London, 1651), 32.
44 Allin and Shepard, A Defence (note 28), passim.
48 John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Tears of Repentance, Or, A Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel among the Indians (London, 1653). After 1660 Eliot, Mayhew and many others had to talk in a different language, especially in regard to the state. Eliot was called into court, where he signed the statement that "forms of civil government" which were not "expressly deduced from Scripture" also had to be accepted and acknowledged "to be of God". Cf. James F.Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy. The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism,"
Johnson asked his readers to judge for themselves whether they had not been predestined by God to "create a new Heaven, and a new earth, in new Churches, and a new Commonwealth together." The "little remnant" called "the New-English Israel" had acted as "the forerunner of Christ's army". They will struggle on, "till all opposers of Christs Kingly power be abolished". All nations will then be able to admire "the most wonderful works that ever the sons of men saw." The enterprise was bound to cause "great alternations in the kingdoms of Europe". New England's mission had several dimensions, but the "well-being of mankind" was the highest goal. "We were made instrumental to bring the Truth into publick view, whereby the world might fare the better of it." God had delegated his "causal power" to the New England Puritans, "that they may be his instruments... in partnership and fellowship with Himself... yea co-workers with, Himself." What the "Eleutherians" of ancient Greece had started in the way of installing liberty as the principle of the inner law, New England was now doing in the interest of all mankind. Its revolutionary type of religious and political reformation was expected to lead to a "deliverance" from "the Nebuchadnezzar of the Western Babylon".

The New England Puritans were determined to stay aloof from the foreign affairs of the mother country and her struggles with the "Romish Babylon", but they could not prevent their becoming active belligerents in those military engagements of the British homeland and empire which were not confined to the European continent, i.e. the War of the Austrian Succession, the War of the Spanish Succession, and the French and Indian War (1754-63). During this latter war, Rev. Jonathan Mayhew delivered several sermons about the need of the colonists to develop more civic pride, because they were foremost in their concern for the well-being of mankind. Ancient Israel, which had been God's people, lost His "more immediate care" because of the betrayals of the covenant alluded to in Jer. 31:32. Ancient Israel never entered into a new covenant made with "their inward part" spoken of in that Bible passage. The American covenant did not have any of the ancient "vestiges of human imperfection". It was "molded and modeled wholly by the immediate dictates of heaven", and because God had foreseen the negative development of the ancient Israel, he did not expect "the other nations" to see in it a "type of heaven" and imitate it. "Only" God's American Israel had received a world mission, and the people who had their eyes on this glorious undertaking would not be disappointed.

in: Vaughan and Bremer, eds., Puritan New England (note 40), 72.


51 Cotton Mather, Eleutheria (note 38), 34.

52 Jonathan Mayhew, Discourse on Rev. 15:3-4 (Boston, 1755), 69. See also his Two Discourses Delivered October 25th, 1759 (Boston, 1759), 25.
6. Mission to the Indians

Another source of the American sense of mission and destiny is the idea that the discovery of America is a result of God's providence and the beginning of the last act of human history in the sense of a history of salvation. "Christopherus Colombo", the "Christ-carrier" and the "dove" of peace, brought "the light of the world" to the dark western shore. Columbus himself used this language after his third voyage because a bishop had spoken of him in this way, and Juan de la Cosa added such a drawing to his map of the discoveries.53 In Jacques Cartier's report on his "Deuxième Voyage" (1534) the Indians became an indispensable link in the History of Salvation and the "completion of time".54 When Edward Hayes commented on Cartier's discoveries in 1589, he added the Protestant sense of urgency in regard to the "Latter-Day Events".55 In 1600 the Anglican Bishop George Abbot described the role of Columbus in these words:

God therefore remembering the prophecie of his sonne; that the Gospell of the kingdom should, before the daie of judgement, be preached in all coasts and quarters of the worlde: and in his mercie intending to free the people... did raise up the spirit of a man worthie of perpetuall memorie (one Christopherus Columbus, borne at Genua in Italie) to set his mind to the discoverie of a new worlde.56

Some promoters of the colonial endeavors associated the discovery of the New World with the "heliotropic idea". God created the light in the terrestrial paradise, which the medieval mappae mundi located outside the coast of eastern Asia, and He started his Work of Redemption in Jerusalem, where the apostles began their missionary work which was predestined to come to an end in the uttermost west. This western direction of the circular progress of the gospel was not generally accepted. Thomas Browne called it a "vulgar error" and other critics pointed to the missionary work of St. Thomas in India, to "Prester John" and to the work of the Nestorians in Asia. John Donne liked to use the words "east" and "west" metaphorically and metaphysically. The light and the sun are "testimonies of God's love to us, in the cast, in our beginning", and it stays with us "to our west, to our ends". As far as Great Britain was concerned, it was its "Apostolical function" to take the missionary work away from the "Papists" and preach the gospel "to all men" and do this soon, "before the end of the world comes". This work would turn "the Suburbs of the old world" into a "Bridge, a Gallery to the new". In Donne's words: It was God's command "to joyn all to that world which shall never grow old."57 The Indians were in-

54 Ibid. 317.
55 Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations (1589), 12 Vol. edition (Glasgow, 1903-05), VIII, 36.
56 George Abbot, A Brief Description of the Whole World (London, 1600), G 4°.
cluded in this command. There were many different opinions about this difficult task, but all agreed that the light of Christ would not "shine through the whole world", if the gospel had not been "preached even to them". Before the Day of the Lord could come, all had to be brought under one head.

... consequently the Indians must needs bee gathered in before that day: and any man may make the conclusion that this is the houre for the world, and consequently of our duty to endeavour the effecting that which God hath determined; the opening of the eyes of those ignarant souls and discover unto them the glorious mystery of Jesus Christ.58

Thomas Fuller and other Englishmen were wondering whether the planting of English colonies in America would mean the "sub-planting" of England. Some enthusiasts seemed to be "more willing to endure American than English savages". But, as far as the "Israel of Great Britain" was concerned, the theologian Joseph Mede, Dr.Twisse and others were sure that the gospel was not leaving England and "fleeting westward". The American plantations were not going to be come "the place of New Jerusalem".59 Apparently they were afraid that the English exceptionalism was going to develop into an exceptional American exceptionalism.

Most of the settlers who lived close to the Indians were afraid of them and developed the stereotype "The only good Indian is a dead Indian". The Puritan divines were divided in their estimate because they could not agree upon the matter of their origin. Were they "pre-Adamites", descendants of "Gog and Magog", of Ham's son Canaan, of "the ten lost tribes of Israel", "Children of the devil", or just "miserable savages", "decoyed hither" by the devil, "to provide himself a seed over which he might reign securely" in order to prevent the completion of God's Work of Redemption?60 Cotton Mather, the most influential New England theologian, sided with those who made a typological use of Gen.9: 25,27 and considered the Indians to be "Canaanites":

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren... God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem: and Canaan shall be his servant.

If God gave the Canaanites to the enlarged house of Japhet, the Indian was the ideal "serviceable man". But why did they come over to America? They probably "fled thither for fear of Joshua". What counted most for Mather was their descent from Adam and Noah. This meant that they were part of mankind and


60 Blanke, *Amerika im engl. Schriftum* (note 53), 201-08, 272, 315-32 ("Missionsgedanke und West wanderung der Kultur").
should be converted to Christ, though the devil would leave "no Stone unturned" to prevent that "Christ should be known, and Own'd and preached in this Howling Wilderness". To reach this goal, God might even "put a rod into the hands of base Indians and bid them scourge his children" who neglected their missionary work. In 1698 only 2500 "praying Indians" could be accounted for. But the work had to go on. An "India Christiana" had to be established, and Cotton Mather was convinced, at least he said so, that the light of Christ would be shining "brightest" in a region "which it rose latest upon".

Cotton Mather was also familiar with the idea that the Indians, or at least some Indian tribes, were Hebrews and the "remnant of His people", for whom he provided a "highway" during their Assyrian captivity which enabled them to reach a country "toward the west" (Isa.11:14,16; 4. Ezra 13:40-45). John Elliot, the "apostle to the Indians", Roger Williams, who translated parts of the Bible into an Indian language, Thomas Mayhew of "Martha's Vineyard", Judge Samuel Sewall, and others were very fond of this legend first published by a "Peruvian Hebrew". If the Jews were "the last ones to come to Christ" (Cf.Rom.11:25), the conversion of "Hebrew Indians" would be "the first fruits of the glorious harvest of Israel's redemption".

4.Ezra 13:40-45: In regard to the Fourth book of Ezra Luther says in his Introduction to this "apocryphal" book that it was probably written in 90 A.D. by a "cabalistic Jew" who had converted to Christ. In his Introduction to the thirteenth chapter he says that Ezra's "dream" is dealing with the destruction of all nations that have oppressed the children of Israel who will be reunited in their native land before the day of doom. Verses 40-45 deal with the last king of the state of Israel, Hosea, who was captured by Salmanassar V from Assyria 722 B.C., and with the flight of the "ten tribes". After a year and a half of travelling they arrived in a land "where no man had ever lived before", named "Arsareth" (45). Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon turns the name into "Deseret". The leading newspaper of Salt Lake City is "The Deseret News". The theory of a Hebrew origin of the Indians became popular after 1644. Antonio de Montecino, alias Aaron Levi, reported to the Jews of Amsterdam about his encounter with an Indian from one of the ten tribes living in Peru. Manasseh ben Israel wrote a book about the matter and about the reunification of the twelve tribes called The Hope of Israel (London, 1650) based on Isa.11:12-16. Some 16th century writers see in the word "Peru" a cabalistic misspelling or metaphesis of the Biblical "Ophir". Ophir, the son of Joktan and grandson of Eber or Hebrew (Gen.10:29), went into a far country from where King Solomon got most of his gold, as Columbus and other discoverers pointed out in their reports. Cf. John Dee, The Great Volume of Famous and Riche Discoveries, Wherein is also the History of King Solomon, every three yeares of his Ophirian voyage... (1577), Brit.Mus., Cotton Ms., Vitellius, C.vii. Mark Lescarbot, Nova Francia..., tr. by P.Erondele (London, 1609), 43-50; Edward Brewood, Enquiry Touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions (1616), 3rd ed. (London, 1635) 103 (on Esdras or Ezra); Hannon L'Estrange, Americans no Jews... (London, 1652); Thomas Thorowgood, Jews in America, or Probabilities that the Americans are of that Race made more probable (London, 1660), 23, 27, 41. John Elliot and Samuel Sewall were very fond of the idea while Cotton Mather kept away from it. Today the matter of the twelve tribes touches upon the existence, shape and extent of the State of Israel, which is sometimes called "the fulfillment of a two thousand years old dream," Simon Wiesenthal, Sails of Hope: The Secret Mission of

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61 Cotton Mather, The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690), 20; The Wonders of the Invisible World. Observations... upon the Nature of the DEVIL (Boston, 1693), 42; Magnalia Christi Americana (Boston, 1702). In a dedicatory poem Mather is referred to the origin of the Indians. "Tradition leaves us in the lurch", whether they came from "Japhet, Shem or Cham"; India Christiana... (Boston, 1721). The book hardly merits this title because of the small number of converted Indians Mather is dealing with.
The "hardened Jews" whose covenant had been "null"ed or at least "suspended" by God, would "look out of the Prison-grates" of their "impenitence", when they discovered that there were people in America who were "not only praying but fighting" for them, in order to remove a "great block" out of the way to "the glorious nuptials of the lamb". 63

In his "Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica" Judge Sewall devoted many pages to the thesis that "the conversion of the Hebrew Indians" was "the penultimate step" to the prophesied conversion of the Jews and to the beginning of the Lord's Day. There is also a poem by Sewall about this matter:

Once more Oh God, vouchsafe to shine
Make haste with thy Imperial Light...
Give the poor Indians Eyes to see
The Light of Life...
From hard'ned Jews the Veil remove...
So false Religion shall decay,
And Darkness fly before bright Day...64

Sewall had the instinct to grasp the metaphysical dimension which this strange conjecture added to American history. But because he did not want to offend the feelings of those who were fighting the Indians, he favored the theory of different origins. Some were Semites, others Canaanites. Some English Japhetites "dwell in the tents of Shem", while others used the Canaanites for "servants" (Gen.9:27). All had to be converted to Christ, so that American history became the consummation of an ancient scheme. The ten tribes of Israel would be reunited with the tribes of Juda and Benjamin, and with the "dawning of the millennial Day" God's American Israel and "the seed of Abraham" would become "a light to the Gentiles... unto the end of the earth".65

Sewall's work was of particular interest to all American Hebraists and to Joseph Smith, the author of "The Book of Mormon" (1830). According to Sewall God intended to write "the name of the New Jerusalem" upon an unknown American location, because he would rather "TABERNACLE in our Indian wigwam" than in a magnificent Old World surrounding. Daniel had envisioned "the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan.11:45). Books written by Jonathan Edwards and by his son on various Indian languages, James Adair's "History of the American Indians" (1775), Robert Brothers' "The Restoration of the Hebrews to Jerusalem" (1785), Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews, or, The Tribes of Israel in America" (Poultnay, Vt. 1823) and devicus other publications produced an interest in an "American" Hebraism, paved the way for Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, and strengthened the conviction of pious patriots that from times immemorial America had been "God's base of operations". The phrase causes some people

Christopher Columbus (New York, 1973), German ed. (Göttingen, 1984), 199.

63 Johnson, History of New England (1654), (note 34), 271; see also Increase Mather, The Mystery of Israel's Salvation (Boston, 1669), 12.

64 Samuel Sewall, Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica Ad Aspectum Novi Orbi Configurata: Or, of the New Heaven upon the Earth (Boston, 1697), 5, 35, 48; Ola E. Winslow, ed., American Broadsid Verse. From Imprints of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (New Haven, 1930), 100.

to smile, but it is accepted by many as a useful political topos.66

In comparison with the wars against the Indians, the mission to the Indians was only a minor matter. One contemporary called the "Indian tracts" about bringing home "the first fruits" mere rhetoric and "a plain cheat".67 Relatively few conscientious clergymen kept asking the question whether God was not getting very angry with "His people", who talked so much about the "grand errand" to make "the wilderness blossom as a rose", but did very little "towards the conversion of the Indians".68

7. Showing the Way Toward the Final Goal

The mission to the Indians sometimes brought the Puritan clergymen into a theological predicament because there was no agreement on the question whether the conversion of the Indians, their enslavement and annihilation or both had to be called "an indispensable step" toward the latter-day events. The differences in the attitude toward the Indians are an example of the dialectical "richness" of Puritan thought and of the difficulties resulting from a more literal or from a more literary interpretation of Scripture.69 When the New Englanders achieved a greater sense of material security in the late 17th century, their idea of mission and their theology underwent a slight change. The doctrine of original sin, pre-destination, and pre-millennialism – Christ’s second coming followed by a thousand years of happiness ending in the unbinding of Satan – subsided into the background, and more Puritan clergymen discovered secular meanings in the gospel. They also made use of emblems, allegories, and symbols in their sermons, ignored many of the controversial details of the apocalypse and put the emphasis not on original sin and salvation through Christ, but on man’s responsibility for his deeds, on the chances of participating in life more fully, and by discovering many "things made new" (Rev.21:5) under the "old heaven" and in the world that people were used to.70

During most of the seventeenth century the New England Puritans accepted the concept of original sin. Having fallen into a state of sin, man depended on God’s grace and on his "great design", which he had clearly or


67 Hugh Peters as quoted by Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America. Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (Chapel Hill, NC, 1976), 249.

68 Solomon Stoddard, The Question whether God is not Angry with the Country for Doing So Little towards the Conversion of the Indians (Boston, 1723); Ezra Stiles, Discourse on the Times (Boston, 1761), 126.


cryptically "revealed" in a way which could never be fully reasoned out by any Pope, preacher, or synod. The pre-destined details of God's great design included all parts of creation, natural law, and the course of human events. Even "God's people" who believed that they had been made "instrumental" for the promotion of His Work of Redemption and for speeding up the "dawning" of the "millennial Day" could not influence the outcome of what He had planned. But their sense of mission and civic pride enabled the Puritan divines to predict a glorious order of things. During the 17th century almost no one called it a new world of "universal and everlasting peace". Every look behind the scenes revealed a constant struggle in this world. In the Puritan view the universe was a gigantic "battleground" for divine and satanic forces. But there was a tendency, which became noticeable even during the 17th century, to play down or ignore the fearsome features of the apocalypse, "the fall of Babylon", "the four beasts", "the outpouring of the seven vials of God's wrath", "the day of doom", "the last judgment", and "the general conflagration". Among the "Things to be Looked for" Cotton Mather discovered many horrible ones in "the wilderness of the world" on the other side of the Atlantic. He was happy to note the "speedy approach" of the devil's total defeat. The wars in Europe and elsewhere were a sign of Babylon's "Devillish Wrath against Mankind". God's people ought to be happy to note that the devil himself was "Broiling un-der the intollerable and interminable Wrath of God".

Some sermons were meant to produce an "apocalyptic wakefulness" in general, but more in particular in regard to the features which could strengthen the optimistic belief of God's American Israel to overcome "temporally-rooted anxieties".

Edward Johnson praised the "seven" leading congregations in such a way that they became the antitypical fulfilments of the Jewish temple with its seven-armed candlestick. More glorious fulfilments were expected everywhere in the world, for which "the Lambe is preparing his Bride". Upright people "throughout the world" who became aware of the New English model, "Dutchmen, Frenchmen, and Germans", after them "Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese", "Turks", and finally "the Jews" would receive and experience "the light of Christ" as a cleansing fire, "till all opposers of Christ's kingly power be abolished". Church and commonwealth "together" are part of the "new heaven and the new earth" (Rev.21:1). Johnson leaves it open what is meant by this phrase which had become a stereotype, and he does not deal with the "general catastrophe" and "day of doom". When Babylon falls to make room for a universal empire related to Daniel's fifth and final monarchy, history will have come to an end. The Puritan sermons leave it open

71 Here is one example: Samuel Richardson, Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1675), 1.

72 Cotton Mather, Things to be Looked For (Boston, 1691), 11; see also his The Fall of Babylon (Boston, 1707), 2, 17, and A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), 29.


74 Johnson, History of New England (note 34), 6-7, 32, 58, 236.
whether it lasts a thousand years or forever. There were also some setbacks, but they were almost ignored, e.g. the "Fifth-Monarchy-men" who were afraid of the Stuarts, emigrated to the Palatinate in order "to erect a new New England on the banks of the Rhine".75

Many sermons refer to "the Lord's special advantages and providences" for New England, and they all seem to end with the refrain: "Now it is not long before the Lord will finish his great work in the world."76 Hubbard's "History of New England" outlines a spiraling process from creation to recreation, from the garden of Eden to the new garden of Eden via the history of New England.77 America is the place of the "New Jerusalem", though there is no agreement on its exact location. Samuel Sewall speaks of a place in "America Mexicana" because the high mountains of the west could be viewed as the antitype of "the glorious holy mountain" of Dan.11:45.78 Cotton Mather's "Theopolis Americana" is located in New England.79 Increase Mather's America is "Immanuel's Land", where God caused, "as it were"(!), the New Jerusalem to come down "from heaven". "Where was there ever a place so like New Jerusalem as New England hath been?" It is a "matter of deep meditation" for all people, "that such a Type and Emblem (!) of New Jerusalem should be erected in so dark a corner of the world."80 New England "anticipates" the glorious world to come, because America was the place of the Garden of Eden, as Columbus had "discovered", or, as John Locke put it, "in the beginning all the world was America".81 The New England Puritans had brought "Christ into his inheritance", which made the devil "practically assailable" in his "temporary domain". "The forerunners of Christ's army" were bound to defeat the devil here once and for all.82

Shortly before the middle of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards promoted the belief in a gradual postmillennial approach to the last goal of history, "foreshadowed" by the "reawakenings" and "spiritual and material" developments in God's American Israel. Edwards emphasized the "sovereignty" of God, and He was in favor of preaching Jeremiads about God's wrath and his punishments for "sinful men", but as for "the general conflagration", he was sure that God would not destroy his own creation. God "will burn away all iniquities and injustices"

75 James F.Maclear, "New England" (note 48), 85.
76 Stoughton, "New Englands True Interest" (note 35), 85.
79 Cotton Mather, Theopolis Americana. An Essay on the Golden Street of the Holy City... with Some Good Hopes of Better things to be yet Seen in the American World (Boston, 1710), 44.
80 Increase Mather, A Discourse Concerning Faith and Fervency in Prayer and the Glorious Kingdom of Lord Jesus Christ (Boston, 1710), 52.
81 John Locke, Two Treatises on Civil Government (London, 1949), 140. Like Montaigne before him Locke admired the Indians for preserving the "state of nature", or the "Golden Age", when men were free from the "amor acceleratus habendi" and did not know money.
82 Johnson, History of New England (note 34), 236.
until the power of evil has been "perfectly and eternally vanquished".

Then shall all the world be united in one amiable society. All nations, in all parts of the world, on every side of the globe, shall then be knit together in sweet harmony.83

Edwards was also sure that this development would begin in America.

... if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear most likely... to be the place where the work [of redemption] shall principally take its rise... What is now seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day.84

Such postmillennial leanings are also noticeable in the Artillery Election Sermons preached during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). In 1758 Thomas Barnard encouraged the soldiers to believe in man's ability to improve their lot and thereby to cheer up their spirits. This did not mean, however, that they should hastily conclude anything about the beginning of the glorious end. "The consummation of all things" is not at hand. The ultimate amelioration of society and the realization of "substantial pleasure of Peace and Love" will take place, though it takes more time to reach that goal.85 A year later Rev. Amos Adams expressed himself in a similar way:

The whole Tenor of prophetic Revelation evidently points us forward to a more glorious Day upon Earth, when Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, shall be King over all the earth... to bring on that most perfect state of the World, in which the noblest Designs of God's Love in this World, will be fully accomplished.

Though this "never ending 'Golden Age'' will take "Ages to commence", the belief in the probability of reaching such a final goal belongs to America.86

These quotations may indicate that the "last Puritans" were about to combine their belief in Scripture with a belief in a development toward a perfect world order. This tendency became more noticeable during the following decades. Enlightened Americans liked to utter their conviction that providence had "singled out America as the glorious renovator of the world".87

8. Fighting for the Just Cause

The frontier experience provided the New England settlers with a strong penchant for

83 Jonathan Edwards, *The Millennium, or, The Thousand Years of Prosperity, promised to the Church of God in the Old Testament and in the New, shortly to commence and to be Carried to Perfection* (Boston, 1758), 99; see also Works, ed. S.E.Dwight (New York, 1830), I, 380; II, 25, 272; III, 168.


realism, particularly in their dealings with the Indians. It was in their interest to believe that the Indians were "Canaanites", because the "New Canaan" had been given to "Christ as His Inheritance", as the preachers assured them. From the very beginning of the Puritan undertaking, many sermons had encouraged the settlers to continue the work of "Joshua" and, if necessary, to act as "the Executioners of His Vengeance upon the Canaanitish Nation".88 We do not know how often the Bible was used for the purpose of rationalizing the pursuit of selfish interests. But the admirers of the Puritan tradition should not deny that the Bible served the American mission and American interests. If God's new Israel had the mission to complete the work of ancient Israel, the "Canaanites" had to give way. Another argument was the "right" use of the soil. The Indians did not obey God's command "to subdue the earth" (Gen.1:28). They merely "roamed around" as hunters. The English settlers possessed the "true title" for the possession of the "unoccupied" and "unused" land, and the Indians had no right to attack them as if they were "invaders". The "law of nature" was also on the settlers' side, and if the Indians became troublesome, the militia had to "smite" them "with the edge of the sword", to civilize and to convert them to Christ or to "destroy them utterly" (Josh.11:2). The world would be "so much the better for it".89

Wars are evil and have their origin in "the lusts of men", but the wars against the Indians were called "just wars" because they were a part of the good cause. The members of the militia were reminded of their duty to think and to act like Nehemiah, "fighting tool in one hand, working tool in the other" (Neh.4:17). They would never enjoy "full possession" of the "promised land", if they forgot the word that Jesus did "not come to send peace on the Earth, but the sword". "Great is the Honor which the Lord puts upon... those who give up themselves to the Service of God in such Exercises".90 Some of the engagements against the tribe of "King Philip" (1676-78) were unsuccessful. This induced the president of Harvard College to preach to the militia about the "Lord of Hosts" who "keeps some Nations and peoples subdued" in order to "teach Israel War". "Who sees not that God's Design is to humble proud New England?" But if His people repent and obey all the articles of the covenant, "Abraham in Arms" will become an "unconquerable all-conquering soldier" and achieve


89 Samuel Nowell, Abraham in Arms. Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1678), 8, 12, 14 ss.; Cotton Mather, Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1688), 14-22; cf. Evans Bibl. No 431.

90 Joshua Moodey, Souldiers Spiritualized. Artillery Election Sermon (Cambridge, MA, 1676), 3, 32; S.Nowell, Abraham in Arms (note 89), 13; see also Samuel Mitchell, Nehemiah on the Wall in Troublesome Times (Cambridge, MA, 1671).
an "absolute and unparalleled victory". Because of the alertness of the evil "enemies of the soul", it is "necessary for God" to teach His people war and to make them understand that "times of peace are times to prepare for war". This line was used again and again, e.g. in a sermon of 1674, and by Cotton Mather, the leading theologian, in his Artillery Election Sermon of 1686.

During the time of "King Philip's War" (1675-76) the old issue came up again whether a "just war" could also be conducted in an offensive way. And, of course, the answer again was 'yes'. Rev. Nowell argued that a war against the Indians could "include acts of offensive warfare", if they were "engaged in a league" and if it had been agreed upon to make an occasional use of offensive acts, though it would be better to stay on the defensive side in order to "speed up the approach of a peaceful world". Another Artillery Election Sermon emphasized the difference between Judaism and Christianity. While "the Jewish dispensation" justified "defensive and offensive" warfare, the "new dispensation" condemned offensive warfare. But during the long war against the French and the Indians (1754-63) this attitude changed. The French Roman Catholics were called representative of "the Beast" (Rev.) who used the "cruel Heathens" in offensive warfare, which forced the Americans to deal with the enemy in counter-offensives, until the war spiraled toward "the fall of Babylon". But before that event came to pass, the English colonists experienced the full "display of God's Power", which meant that He had given His consent to offensive warfare. Offensives and defensives were "salutary in their moral Effects", and both were a part of His "planning gradually to a Perfection".

The long and cruel war, in which several foreign nations were involved, made it manifest to the colonists that America was destined to be "the seat of frequent wars". Evidently foreign nations did not accept the Puritan theory that their gradual territorial expansion was nothing but "natural growth" and comparable to the growth of a young and healthy body - an argument which came close to the theory of "manifest destiny" of the 1840's: It combined the idea of natural growth with the idea of natural right, the true title of the land, and the mission of converting and regenerating the Indians with the idea of political gravitation and of an inevitable development of political leadership. The main argument for the Puritans was their right to accept their natural growth and their right to defend it. Under these circumstances it was "absurd to listen to that meek Sect", the Quakers, who re-

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91 Urian Oakes, The Unconquerable all-conquering & more then conquering souldier: Or the successful warre which a believer wagheth with the enemies of the soul: As also the absolute and unparalleled victory that he obtains finally over them through the love of God in Jesus Christ... (Cambridge, MA, 1677), 28.

92 Moody, Soul'diers Spiritualized (note 90), 40; Mather, Artillery Election Sermon (note 89), 41.

93 Nowell, Abraham in Arms (note 89), 3, 14.

94 Adams, Artillery Election Sermon (note 40), 11-12, 19; Barnard, Artillery Election Sermon (note 85), 11; see also Dunbar 1760, 17 ss., and Balch 1763, 6, 30. Full titles in Evans No. 8586, 9331, 7754, 8279.

95 Barnard (note 85), 17.

fused to fight. After all, they were defending "The Rights of Man". They were motivated by a "disinterested zeal for the public welfare and a sincere Desire to establish Peace among Mankind". They practised "fortitude and humanitarianism" in order to win "the favor of God and to win the war", while "mean and mercenary Designs resided in the Breasts of the Wicked" on the other side. It was "justifiable", "necessary", and "fit to lead the armies of Israel to Battle, when everything dear to them, as Men, English-Men and Christians" was in danger.

The voice of these Christian Englishmen was not identified with "the voice of God", but the sermonizers felt justified to use "the voice of God" and "the voice of His people" synonymously. "God and His people" were fighting in a just cause against "aggression", "persecution", "murder and massacres", "cunning", "false self-interest" and "treachery". The "love of their own country" was coupled with an "ardent Love of Mankind", a noble public Spirit and "the valour of Alexander", and it was "stript of brutal Rage and destructive Ambition". Their "Love of Mankind" even enabled them to feel "compassion" with their very enemies and "Mourn the Unhappiness of Mankind".

The Puritan mission required them to be engaged in a fight for a further development of the "human spirit", which was not "inconsistent" with soldiering, if the "human spirit" became and remained the "true basis of the military spirit", and if they put the mission of becoming "a ruler of man's spirit" above the task of obtaining a military victory.

Toward the end of the French and Indian War the English colonists were conscious of having obtained an important victory for "a righteous Nation". They liked to reiterate what they had so often heard in their sermons: They had "attracted the Eyes of all around them"; they had "humbled the proud Oppressors of the Earth"; they had stopped "the Progress of Tyranny and Usurpation"; and they had been an important instrument "in the Hand of the Mediator" "to prepare a Chosen Race for a State of refined Happiness". They would never die, but continue to "shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever."  

9. Conclusion

The focus of this study has been the development of the Puritan concept of mission. It began with a simple variation of the Elizabethan concept of mission and with the

97 Ebenezer Bridge, Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1752), 6, 16. See Evans Bibl. No. 6825.
98 Ebenezer Pemberton, Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1756), 4, 14, 19, 21; cf. Barnard 1758, 7, 11, 22-23, and Adams 1759, 23 (notes 40 and 85).
99 Pemberton (note 98), 7; Adams (note 40), 21, 28; Barnard (note 85), 20-21.
100 Jason Haven, Artillery Election Sermon (Boston, 1761), 13, 27-28 Evans No. 8878. The continuity of the rhetoric becomes evident if one compares Haven's sermon with the Fourth-of-July oration delivered by John Quincy Adams in 1821, when he pointed out that the USA might become strong enough eventually to fight and defeat "monsters". The nation might even become "the dictatrix of the world", but she would then cease "to be the ruler of her spirits". See J.Q. Adams, Fourth-of-July Oration (Cambridge, MA, 1821), 8.
101 Pemberton (note 98), 6 and 20; Adams (note 40), 32.
idea of a New England "errand" of and for the mother country and for International Protestantism. The completion of the work of reformation was the first goal of their mission. It was connected with the idea of a covenant for the establishment of a religious and civic model which would attract all people. A very sovereign deity who demanded strict obedience and discipline made them devote their best efforts to His "great design". An impressive number of diligent clergymen used their sermons also for the purpose of developing an American myth about a new "city upon a hill" which was destined to promote and speed up the approach of the latter-day events. When England ignored the model, the New England Puritans put more emphasis on their errand into the wilderness, but they also enlarged their vision of America's central role in the history of salvation. The universalist rhetoric, which became a part of the American sense of mission, was also a vivid expression of the psychological need of settlers who were suffering under cultural isolation. The idea of a universal mission and its rhetoric overcompensated a sense of loss into a sense of chosenness and exceptionalism. Its most effective tool was the typological exegesis of the Bible. God's new or last and best "Israel" would accomplish the mission to complete the work of reformation, to reestablish the Garden of Eden in America, and to pave the way for the millennium or for a glorious fulfilment of men's hopes.

Towards the end of the Colonial Period New England's mission which had begun as an errand for England and for Protestantism widened into a universal mission with an American model. "The first universal nation" with a new concept of mission was in sight. The new nation was the beginning of a NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM, a consummation of the ultimate amelioration of society and a new world order under American leadership.
Knud Krakau

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS UPON AN OLD THEME: 
THE TOPOI OF CHOSEN PEOPLE AND MISSION 
IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Given the wealth of literature on the subject any attempt to cover the evolution and meaning of these concepts - chosen people, exceptionalism (its secular version), and mission - in and for American history and culture\(^1\) in a short article would be futile and presumptuous. What one can do, however - on the assumption that every historian (or educated American) has some idea of them - is to develop a few critical thoughts, in a more impressionistic than systematic way.

1. Chosenness, Exceptionalism, Mission - A Creation of the American Studies Movement?

One may wonder at times where the reality of our phenomenon lies: in the American mind, in the American collective psyche, memory, or culture - or in the preoccupation of the American Studies scholars who perhaps in developing a mere construct simply indulge another form of "exceptionalist error", partly in order to justify their own existence? I refer to the World War II and post-war consensus periods which largely bred the American studies movement and its focus on American exceptionalism. Then for some time the Vietnam War seemed to have muted chosen people/exceptionalism arguments. In 1975 Daniel Bell proclaimed "The End of American Exceptionalism", and a year later political scientist Richard Rosecrance edited a book: "America as an Ordinary Country"\(^2\) America's loss of faith in itself after the War and the beginning of its (relative) decline had according to Bell turned the country into "a

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1 Among the many analyses and presentations of the subject perhaps the best still are, from more strictly religious (i.e. Christian protestant millenarian) perspective Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation. The Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago, London, 1968/1980); from a more broadly and also comparative cultural perspective Russel B.Nye, This Almost Chosen People (East Lansing, MI, 1966); from a secular perspective Daniel J.Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics (Chicago, 1953); a fine recent restatement is James H.Moorhead, "God's Chief Instruments." Americans and the Nation's World Mission, 1880-1920, yet unpublished paper read at the symposium on "Religion and Nationalism: Chosen People Themes in Western Nationalist Movements, 1880-1920," German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, June 1991.

nation like all other nations". But that death pronouncement, as so many others, may have been premature. After two Reagan administrations and the Gulf War Bell's formula no longer adequately reflects the American mood. Bell himself took up the theme again with a new piece of the "exceptionalism revisited"-type.  

These vicissitudes produced contradictory positions. The reassertive Carter-Reagan-Bush temper shines through sociologist Nathan Glazer's and historian John L. Gaddis' explicit endorsement of Wilson's internationalism when Gaddis in 1987 muses on whether the extension of democracy might bring an end to the Cold War. Political scientist Robert W. Tucker is even more explicit. He discusses "America's role" as "Exemplar or Crusader" in the intellectual mouthpiece of the Reagan Administration, The National Interest. The old theme all over:

...the United States was created not only to promote the freedom and happiness of its citizens; the new 'Empire of Liberty'... was also intended to serve the cause of freedom in the world... The contagion of freedom... cannot be confined to North America... [and a few pages later] Woodrow Wilson is, of course, the great expositor of... America's distinctive reason of state... our role or purpose...[But there was nothing new in Wilson] - The Wilsonian vision of a world made safe for democracy... is no different in principle from the vision of Wilson's predecessors. Or, ..., from Wilson's successors.  

Over the last decade or more we have witnessed the evolution of another discourse: on "America's decline", in the work of W.R. Mead, D.P. Calleo, P. Kennedy, H.R. Nau, J.S. Nye, Jr., and others. It might serve as a kind of counterpoint to the chosenness/mission discourse. But the two are entirely disconnected. The protagonists of the decline argument (whether pro or con) rarely take note of the other one at all. And scholars of the exceptionalism/mission hue, on the other hand, appear unaffected by the decline discourse. There may be two reasons. One is the structural difference between the two discourses. The other is the built-in immunity of American chosenness/mission thinking against the argument of national weakness: It was born in weakness and has always contemplated merely passive "conduct and example" or active intervention as two equally valid modes of implementing the national mission (cf sect. 4 below), depending on conditions of strength and mood. Hence, decline of American power today need not challenge the basic assumption of the exceptionalist myth. Thus, in his more recent piece Daniel Bell - a rare case - explicitly countenances the decline debate and, while recanting his earlier Vietnam-inspired skepticism, now pleads a cautious optimism based on concepts of a modern "civil society" where "State-society relationships" will productively

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3 For the quote from Bell see "The End of American Exceptionalism" (note 2), 222. His later article is "American Exceptionalism/Revisited: The Role of Civil Society," The Public Interest 95 (Spring 1989), 38-56.


5 Robert W. Tucker, "Exemplar or Crusader? Reflections on America's Role," The National Interest (Fall 1986), 64-75, at 64 and 70.
evolve as a new field for American mission by example. 6

As our two discourses run on parallel but unconnected tracks, mood shifts in American society - the Vietnam syndrome and back to Reagan, Bush, and the Gulf War - may have greater impact on the choseness/mission theme than America's decline (and the accompanying debate). In any case, the scholarly discourse on choseness and mission - and the concepts themselves - antedate, on the one hand, the consensus periods of War and Post-War (we need mention only Perry Miller), and on the other, it has forcefully survived the turmoil of the 1960's and 70's. In other words, Daniel Bell was wrong in his first (1975) article. The three or four dozen books and articles I looked at in preparing this paper came from an extraordinarily broad and rich range of scholarship: culture, religion (traditional and civil or public religion), literature, nationalism, foreign relations, international law, general and intellectual history, political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, even from that supposedly defunct but apparently revived concept "national character". 7 They are all part of a continuing discourse on America as chosen people and its mission and on the lineage and meaning of these concepts. Their common concern has been and is to ponder possible elements of unity and continuity in the perennial search for a collective American identity. That these scholars are, inevitably, builders as well as analyzers of American identity and mythology is perhaps easier to see from outside. But we cannot doubt the persistence and reality of these concepts as central elements in American thinking about America's place in the world and hence in America's mythology.

2. Comparative Approaches:
Exceptionalist Exceptionalism

The Chosen People concept is myth. No nation can live without myths. Myths give order and orientation to its members' vision of the world and define their place in it. They supply "a world image convincing enough to support the collective and the individual sense of identity". 8

Many nations have developed myths around concepts of choseness and mission (excepting apparently Switzerland where the

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6 Daniel Bell, "American Exceptionalism Revisited" (note 3), esp'y 53-56 and passim.


Eric H. Erikson, Young Man Luther. A Study in Psychoanalysis and History (London, 1958), 20. The context is the discussion of religion "as a source of ideologies for those who seek identities," of "the ideological," ib. 19. Here one would have to go into the broad body of literature on myth and culture, e.g. Clifford Geertz, Mircea Eliade, Claude Lévy-Strauss, and many others.
cuckoo clock was not strong or durable enough to provide the basis for a viable national myth). Their comparative study is a useful antidote to the temptation to indulge in self-deception. But even the comparative perspective leaves America with an exceptionalist approach to its own exceptionalism: whereas other nations - so the argument goes⁹ - develop their myths of chosenness and mission later in their history when they become powerful and begin to expand, America, lacking a common ethnic or linguistic heritage, constructs a national identity out of belief in its own uniqueness; secondly America unlike any other nation was deliberately founded on the myths of chosenness and mission: "We were a messianic nation from our birth,"¹⁰ and America has continued to live by them.

3. Problems of Transition and Continuity

The American myth of chosenness as originally built by Protestant Calvinist Puritan tradition rested on a specifically Christian corpus of broadly biblical ideas: the millenarian concept of the coming kingdom. American history was seen and experienced as redemptive or salvation history acted out in America, i.e. America served as its primary agent - the "New American Israel". Lyman Beecher in 1835 reaffirmed the conviction of Jonathan Edwards a century earlier "that the millennium would commence in America."¹¹ America was the beginning of the Christian millennium until the end of the world and final judgement. The companion concept of mission is not only a logical derivative. It is also directly anchored in these ideas: exalted position, chosenness entails responsibility, obligation, mission.

This double-edged myth has been part of New England history over the first century and more. The argument of all those scholars mentioned earlier: it is relevant - as myth - until today.

But the unresolved (unresolvable ?) issue is: How has it survived declension of faith in New England, then spread over the expanding and developing country, and finally evolved into the all-pervasive myth that so many see in it to this day; how did it survive the many (cyclical?) mood shifts in American history, some mentioned above, or the erosion of "Christian America" in the 1920's and 30's? Observers diagnosed if not total collapse of the historic Protestant hegemony then at least a "crisis of the Protestant establishment" in the 1920's "when the Puritan heritage lost its hold on the leaders of public life"¹² - a process

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¹² See discussion in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*
that has supposedly been followed again by mass revival of religion in the 1950's and possibly the 1980's.

The answer: "secularization" of the myth, may be the outcome; it is not the explanation. Heimert and Bercovitch point to the Great Awakening, and N. Hatch to the French Wars and the Revolutionary Era, as linkages between the early and the modern periods, between the religious and the secular realms. In Hatch's interpretation, the period of the French Wars and of the Revolution produced a new secular "civil millennialism" ("political millennialism" in M. Lienesch's words) which "advanced freedom as the cause of God" and "grew directly out of the politicizing of Puritan millennial history". It pictured, in millennial tradition, "the struggle of liberty versus tyranny as nothing less than the conflict between heaven and hell." Under the impact of revolutionary ideology redemptive history had as its object no longer the saving of souls but was seen "in terms of the cosmic advance of liberty and decline of tyranny". And the American republic as the permanent seat of liberty (add: democracy, progress, etc.) became "the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history". One author interprets the American Revolution as "in itself a religious experience" which then became for Americans the founding myth in the tradition of structural anthropologists Lévy-Strauss and Mircea Eliade.

Still others simply emphasize the spread of the strongly millenarian Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Baptist Churches in the South and West in the late 18th and 19th centuries as carriers and propagators of the millenialist world view - including its politicized versions.

But much remains to be done for us to really understand the transition "from sacred to profane America," to understand the marriage of Christian millenarian mythology (choseness and mission) to revolutionary

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16 Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty (note 11), 175.


enlightenment, to modern concepts of liberty ("the sacred cause of liberty"), of democracy, and of liberal capitalism. Lyman Beecher in his above-quoted 1835 text about the commencement of the millennium in America continued: "... it is by the march of revolution and civil liberty, that the way of the Lord is to be prepared", and from this "nation shall the renovating power go forth." And the marriage lasted. And as the campaign concepts travelled through the 19th century they picked up, and integrated, racism as an important new element. All of them were clearly visible in the major stages of this process: the Revolution, antebellum expansion, Civil War, imperialism around the turn of the century, World War I, then World War II and its aftermath to the Bush administration.

Long before reaching this final destination the elements fused into, and became core elements in, a vague and theologically non-specific broadly cultural mythology, a civil or political millennialism (Hatch, Lienesch) or what others have called civil or public or political religion.

The question here is whether this "secular religion" itself, or only its now increasingly frequent conceptualization, was a product of or reaction to "the 1960s when everything seemed to be coming apart, when coherence and direction both in the nation and in the self appeared elusive if not shattered [and] religion was seized upon as a possible source of unity amidst the chaos." Sociologists (Bellah and others) seem to lean towards this latter view, whereas historians (S.E.Mead) argue that we are dealing with an old historical phenomenon. This latter reasoning finds support in the argument that the multi-denominational character of American religion (today between 200 and 300 churches, religions, denominations) very early caused Americans to transfer the focus of an emotionally needed communal identity from the particular churches to an all-encompassing nation. The "chosen nation" took the place of

21 The Sacred Cause of Liberty is the book by Nathan O.Hatch (note 11). The reference to democracy in this specific context is in John F.Wilson, Public Religion in American Culture (Philadelphia, 1979), 32-33, chapt. 2.


23 Lyman Beecher, A Plea for the West (note 11), 120.


the community of the elect (redeemed): "... at the very time the denomination failed to function as the church, the nation came more and more so to function." The nation evolved "the soul of a church" because no one denomination could serve that function.27

The process which we call secularization of the concepts of chosenness/mission is a complex web of many threads, is fusion, interpenetration, functional transformation of and between the religious and secular spheres. Secular history will be given meaning in terms of religious experience and tradition; but the latter have become mythologized and divested of their original theological specificity to serve the emotional needs of a nation. Thus, e.g., a book on Methodist responses to American imperialism produces all the familiar rhetoric of chosenness/mission, even though the Methodist Church is considered among the least millenarian in America: God's American Israel; the renewed covenant; God-chosen nation; will of God to act through the agent of the U.S. - and the ensuing mission: the nation especially selected by God to serve a high and noble mission; providence; manifest destiny, divinely ordered; responsibility; trust from God; American statesmen as prophets of God, etc.28 But the congregationalist perspective in Josiah Strong comes out very much the same29 - as does Albert K.Weinberg's classic on "Manifest Destiny".30 Biblical image and rhetoric, analogy and typology, explanation and justification are widely used and fused and generally understood in a culture so profoundly impregnated with its public religion of chosenness and mission that presidential or other public references to its symbols and key words will be immediately appreciated by most audiences. Hence many contemporaries probably did hear in Adm. Dewey's guns (outside Manila 1898) "the voice of Almighty God declaring that [the Philippines] shall be free..."31

4. Modes of Mission

Whenever America accepts the "responsibility" of mission in the course of its history - from the early Puritans to our days - it made


29 Josiah Strong, Our Country. Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis (New York, 1885); id., Expansion under New World Conditions (New York, 1900).


31 A Methodist clergyman quoted in Mackenzie, The Robe and the Sword (note 28), 34, see also 94.
an important distinction regarding the two modes of implementing that responsibility: The passive mode insists on perfecting values and institutions at home. From that base America the "exemplar" will be sending out missionary signals (Winthrop's "City upon the Hill", Washington's Farewell Address). America acts upon the world through the power of its own "conduct and example" in realizing enlightened and advanced principles of human organization. The other mode is that of the "emissary" or America's activist missionary intervention in the world - the attempt to make it over in the image of the afore-mentioned principles (Manifest Destiny, Woodrow Wilson, or George Bush's New World Order). Niebuhr and Heimert capture the essence of both modes in one sentence: "The Declaration of Independence and our Constitution defined the mission. We were born to exemplify the virtues of democracy and to extend the frontiers of the principles of self-government throughout the world," or, "to spread the gospel of liberty."

The strength of conviction behind the missionary myth rested not only on its religious millennial background but just as much on the universalist claim of its secular-rationalist companion: liberty, republicanism, and democracy. The US was seen as "possessed of an idea which was capable of infinite expansion - namely, individual liberty and universal cooperation." As Richard Price rhapsodized from London in 1785:

... next to the introduction of Christianity among mankind, the American revolution may prove the most important step in the progressive course of human development. ... the revolution in favour of universal liberty which has taken place in America, a revolution which opens a new prospect in human affairs, and begins a new era in the history of mankind.

By contrast: German missionary ideology based on claims to racial Aryan superiority was, to say the least, hopelessly parochial.

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32 "Conduct and example" is from one of the most effective formulations of America's world mission through exemplary achievements at home, Alexander Hamilton's very first paragraph of the first of the Federalist Papers, *The Federalist*, Jacob E.Cooke, ed. (Middletown, CT, 1961), 3: "It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitution, on accident and force."

33 This is John F.Wilson's formula for the active or interventionist missionary mode, *Public Religion* (note 21), 29: "Two... patterns ... the exemplary ... the emissary." See generally ib. 28-44. Cf. also Lienesch, "The Role of Political Millennialism" (note 14), 449-52.


And the universalist enthusiasm behind the secularized version of the American chosen people/mission myth should not blind us to the fact that at times the all-too-easy identification of American political or other more mundane interests with "universal" values led (leads?) to frustratingly self-righteous pretensions for which Senator Albert J. Beveridge and his plea for annexation of the Philippines in 1900 perhaps still stands as an extreme though by no means isolated example.\(^{38}\) Even serious scholars have not been immune to the temptation to transgress the thin line which separates chosenness/mission arguments grounded on identification with universalist assumptions from outright arrogance of special privilege, status and power based on alleged superiority of cultural or political achievement. No wonder that more recently it was the Cold War that blinded intellectuals into such thought patterns. Wrote William Y. Elliott, one of the leading American political scientists of his generation as late as 1964:

...the people of Red China are not the equals of United States citizens in terms of capability for self-government or exercising the privileges of human beings toward moral development or in their power to affect the destiny of the world in the foreseeable future.\(^{39}\)

The vexing question remains: how to account for shifts from one mode (passive) to the other (active - or vice versa). Interpreters have been puzzled by the fact that imperialists and anti-imperialists around 1900, or Wilson the isolationist as well as Wilson the interventionist, have argued by reference to exactly the same basic mythology. One answer is that these observers have mistaken the myth-referents for causal policy determinants of the same order as political, strategic, or economic considerations, or broad cyclical mood shifts. But the chosenness/mission myth does not cause specific policies or policy changes. It is merely compatible with very contradictory causal factors and policies. But the issue is not causation. What we have here are broad explanatory cultural categories which do not determine policy but explain and relate actual policy decisions to a broad world vision and America's place in it (myth). Thus they offer unity and continuity of understanding and orientation (identity), hence psychic stabilization, with regard to concrete policy decisions, even where they are highly contradictory.

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38 Sen. Albert J. Beveridge: "...the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world... to do our part in the world-redeeming work of our imperial race... God... has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns... He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples... And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America,... We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace." *Congressional Record, Senate*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol.33, pt. 1 (Jan. 9, 1900), 704, 709, 711.

5. Myth of Chosenness/Mission and Heterogeneity of American Society

I alluded to this problem already in the context of the late 18th century relation of Puritan New England to other parts of the country. The solution then was: continuity through secularization, public religion, cultural-anthropological constructs.

But any discourse along these lines still very much assumes a degree of homogeneity in American society and culture which we all know does not exist. I do not claim to offer any solutions to these obvious contradictions. But I would like to raise some of the issues.

1. Do class distinctions matter in relation to our mythology? The myth has been produced and propagated by the middle classes, the colonial clergy, intellectuals later. What segments of the population at large did they reach? The millenarian churches did reach about fifty percent of the population in late 18th century America (but how many of them believers?), and there were and are other churches, socially more elitist (Anglican, Quaker, with membership among southern planters, urban merchants), and non-millenarian (Anglican, Quaker, Lutheran, Methodist, or Episcopal). Did or do these distinctions still matter? As one author concludes: "... the more millenialist denominations included virtually all the largest economic groups in the white social hierarchy." And the other more modern myth-producers: writers, journalists, politicians, above all presidents? How do or did the manifold audiences respond? There remain many questions unanswered. The myth, however, seems, or perhaps is made to appear through the efforts of all those scholars as well as interested parties, all-pervasive and transcending time and class. It probably serves (and is consciously being manipulated to serve) as a powerful agent for social integration if not - as one scholar argues - outright suppression of dissent among the less privileged classes which may not share its assumptions.41 And it also produces - given the racist elements it has absorbed - nativism and xenophobia. Convincing as the case may be for New England Puritans and perhaps their republican non-congregationalist white Protestant offspring: what about non-protestant churches and ethnic minorities?

2. Other Religious Groups. The Catholic church, once the anti-Christ in millenialist worldview, is now the largest single church in the country. It does not share the specific theological assumptions on which traditional chosenness/mission concepts rest. Yet it seems to have well adapted to the traditional myth42

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40 See Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic* (note 19), XV, for the quote and for the context.


- perhaps in corroboration of the public or
civil religion approach? - I know too little
about other religions. But their very existence
in great numbers appears to have contributed,
as noted earlier, to the growth of an American
civil religion whose basic tenets include the
chosenness/mission myth.43

3. Ethnic Minorities. The case of African
Americans is of primary interest here. The literature
referred to above as a rule simply ig-
nores them: as a reflection of racism or WASP
cultural "hegemony"? Black historian Vincent
Harding in 1976 raised the question whether
blacks can identify with the traditional
American missionary world view: "Is America
in Any Sense Chosen? A Black View", And
he gave a very moving highly personal an-
swer: "Americans , ... , have the opportunity
for chosenness... I believe America can be. I
am committed to see that America will be. In
the light of my ancestors, in the face of my
children, I can do no other."44 The answer
reflects determination to accept the dominant
American value system. In the imperialism
debate around 1900 another black professor
tried to qualify a similar position by eliminat-
ing the dimension of race. He held that the
American success in the Philippines (which he
supported as an "American jingo") stemmed
not from the momentum of the "conquering
Anglo-Saxon", but from the "spirit of
Christianity", therefore he could consider
himself a "Christian expansionist."45

It is important to note that African Americans
have developed a chosenness/mission myth of
their own - a version of redemptive history of
their own in America, richly elaborated, which
in traditional millennial categories sets not
America against the world but black against
white America.46

As for other ethnic and/or cultural minori-
ties, e.g. Latin Americans or Asians - again I
just raise the question. I have no answers.47

The growing group of Latin Americans is, of
course, tied up with the question about
Catholicism. One can easily argue (or specu-
late) two ways: the chosen nation/mission
myth can prove a powerful integrative force -

43 Robert N.Bellah, The Broken Covenant (note 25), chapt. II

44 Vincent Harding, "Is America in Any Sense
and Ronald Webers, eds., An Almost Chosen
People. The Moral Aspirations of Americans
(Notre Dame, IN, London, 1976), 119-130, at
130.

45 Quoted in Mackenzie, The Robe and the Sword
(note 28), 93.

46 Albert J.Raboteau, Exodus, Ethiopia, and
Racial Messianism. Texts and Contents of
African American Chosenness, paper read at the
symposium on "Religion and Nationalism"
(note 1). See also Handy, A Christian America
(note 12), 151-8; Martin E.Marty, Righteous
Empire. The Protestant Experience in America
(New York, 1970), 24-33; Manfred
Henningsen, "Schwarze Befreiungstheologie
versus weiße Ziviltheologie. Zur
Phänomenologie der politischen Religion in
den USA," in: Klaus-M.Kodalle, ed., Gott und
Politik in USA. Über den Einfluß des
Religiösen (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), 146-166.

47 The new book by Guillermina Jasso and Mark
R.Rosenzweig, The New Chosen People:
Immigrants in the United States (New York,
1990), unfortunately and inspite of its title,
does not provide any answers either.
but it may also decisively weaken in the process and become simply irrelevant.

6. Collective Anxieties and Mission

In American history millennialist surges are clearly related to periods of crisis - external or internal crises. The Indian, French, Revolutionary and the World Wars come to our attention or, on the other hand, the Revolution, the 1790's, or the 1890's. But I add: despite this positive correlation they are not an exclusive preserve of crisis periods. Yet, it might be worth while to look more closely into the strong currents of collective anxiety produced by periods of deep social, economic, or cultural upheaval and change, let us say in the 1880s and '90s, World Wars I and II and the post 1945 period. Compensatory emphasis on chosenness and mission would appear to be among the classical psychological mechanisms to deal with such insecurity and tension. These forces were clearly behind some of the missionary imperialism at the close of the century where the perceived problems of industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and overproduction seemed intractable to many and created serious doubts as to the future stability or even viability of American society and democracy. Josiah Strong\(^{48}\) is a good example. The social-imperialism school and recently Robert Dallek\(^{49}\) have argued along these lines. For the post-World War II decades things would appear to be more complex and involved. However, inspite of America's long-prevailing hyper-assertiveness after 1945 a similar sub-text is certainly discernible in some phases (the late 1940's or early 1950's, the post-Vietnam period). This would deserve further study.

7. Final Remarks from the Perspective of the History of American Foreign Relations

On a quite different level of argument let us briefly look at some of the consequences of the chosenness/mission myth from the perspective of the history of American foreign or international relations.\(^{50}\)

\(^{48}\) Josiah Strong, Our Country. Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis (New York, 1885), also Expansion under New World Conditions (New York, 1900).


a) Gesinnungsethik und Verantwortungs-
ethik

I am concerned that not only political decision-makers past and present who argue(d) the chosen people or mission case but also the American Studies scholars who reflect on these arguments are so preoccupied with motives, with conceptual and motivational patterns that they tend to ignore the consequences of action based on these patterns. This divorce is unfortunate. For the question persists even if the purity of the myth-related motives and the theological or historical consistency of the concepts of chosen-ness/mission remain unchallenged. These concepts should be re-interpreted, however, by taking into account their impact on others when they are used as bases for action. - Banal perhaps, but intellectual or moral honesty would appear to require as much. In discussing American expansion in the 1840's Michael Hunt writes (and his criticism if intended at all is barely visible): "Any taint of force or fraud that diminished the reputation of the United States as it acquired new territory was more than offset by the high purpose - the triumph of republican ideals and institutions - to which that territory would be dedicated." And it was a rare voice that in the context of the Vietnam War reminded his fellow Americans that the only morality that counts in international relations is the "morality of action" - not that of "high motives."

b) The Voluntarism Paradox and the Just War Revival

America had interpreted the creation of the American Republic as the successful escape from the European state system which - as America saw it - made war structurally inevitable and evolved the just-war doctrine as its justification. America would have none of this. It would, by contrast, be guided by principles of rationality and morality, of freedom of choice, i.e. freedom of will and action. Hence, it would usher in 'a reign of universal peace.' It would have no use for 'just war' rationalizations. - This same new voluntaristic principle, however, made it possible for the

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51 Michael H. Hunt, Ideology (note 24), 32. - More explicitly critical is James Chace with regard to the same time and issues and referring to Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, "Dreams of Perfectibility: American Exceptionalism and the Search for a Moral Foreign Policy," in: Leslie Berlowitz et al., America in Theory (New York, 1988), 254-5; "The means, not the ends, were the [real] issue" (254).

United States again to wage wars, as a matter of free independent choice, if only for causes, provided they were righteous or just or worthy enough. Among them rank missionary goals flowing from the chosen people concept. "People who think their cause is just", David Harvey recently remarked in a conference presentation, "cannot think of doing anything which is not just." The Spanish-American War was the "holiest of wars", or: "The Cause of liberty was the only cause for which they [American people] would have fought... The cause is won." And Woodrow Wilson saw in a sufficiently worthy cause the issue separating neutrality from intervention: "...you are looking for some cause which will elevate the spirit... some cause in which it seems a glory to shed human blood if it be necessary."


c) The Proportionality Principle

One of the standard arguments in traditional international law or international relations literature in the context of attempts to circumscribe international violence (similarly in domestic constitutional and administrative law) is that the principle of proportionality sets limits to acceptable i.e. community-sanctioned violence: The possible destruction of values, in order to be legitimate, must be proportional to the values saved/protected by the use of violence and may not exceed that limit. But this principle can function, if at all, only within a framework of generally accepted values, standards, and norms. In a situation characterized by (possibly, and even worse, competing) chosen people/mission claims it produces the opposite effect. Proportionality becomes the ultimate sanction and legitimation of, instead of limitation upon, any degree of violence. Elevating the level of values through exceptionalism/chosen people/mission arguments automatically raises the level of violence permissible for the protection of those values. It implies an open-ended invitation to ever more violence and is a sure prescription for chaos.
d) **One Contemporary Issue**

The Reagan and Bush administrations consciously raised the level of intensity of the ideological debate within the framework of the *chosenness/mission* myth - clearly for domestic reasons: to restore self-confidence after what was seen as the Vietnam and Carter "debacles." This strategy, however, creates two sets of tensions under given conditions. One is within and between sections of the public which appear definitely less willing to accept and act upon the *chosenness/mission* theme than earlier generations - perhaps for some of the reasons suggested above.

Second, tension arises between expectations raised by public missionary rhetoric on one hand and, on the other, by the unwillingness on the part of both administrations to follow through. In spite of their rhetoric (particularly Reagan's first administration) both republican presidents have, on the whole, followed internationally moderate and mission-neutral policies: perhaps excepting Nicaragua but including the decision not to attempt the direct overthrow of the new anti-Christ Saddam Hussein.

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**e) A Final and Timeless Issue**

Where part of the "self" includes or is defined as encompassing an expansive universalist (democratic) mission any challenge to that external dimension of the "self" may easily be seen as a threat to its existence and may pro-

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56 See Davis and Lynn-Jones, "City upon a Hill" (note 9), 32-33.

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