

Religious Myths and Visions of America

How Minority Faiths Redefined
America's World Role

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CHAPTER 11

Bahá'í Myths and Visions of America

The American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind. . . . For America hath developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. . . . Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1912)¹

Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1917)²

As the religious landscape of America continues to diversify, there is one new religion that seeks to unify: the Bahá'í Faith, which historically dates back to 1844.³ “The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions,” states the official Web site of the Bahá'í World Centre, located on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.⁴ Established in 189 independent countries and 46 territories, the Bahá'í community today numbers around 5.5 million members, who hail from across the world's races, religions, and nations, including over 2,100 different ethnicities.⁵ The Bahá'í Faith preaches a gospel of unity, and it has a global community to match and to model the potentialities of its grander vision. The distinctive nature of the Bahá'í Faith is its emphasis on promoting the oneness of humankind and

bringing about world unity. “In every Dispensation, the light of Divine Guidance has been focused upon one central theme,” proclaims ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1844–1921), son of and successor to Bahá’u’lláh (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith. “In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind.”⁶ This is the hallmark, the salient leitmotiv, the organizing principle, the moral basis, and the grand vision of the Bahá’í Faith as a whole. As such, Bahá’ís, whether in America or abroad, are described as the “bearers of a new-born Gospel.”⁷ A previously little-known religion, the Bahá’í Faith is emerging from obscurity, as the following newsworthy items will demonstrate.

On July 8, 2008, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee determined that two Bahá’í shrines in Israel—the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, located near Old Acre on Israel’s northern coast, possess “outstanding universal value” and should be considered as part of the cultural heritage of humanity.⁸ Joining such other internationally recognized sites like the Great Wall of China, the Pyramids, the Taj Mahal, Stonehenge, the Vatican, the Old City of Jerusalem, and the remains of the recently destroyed Bamiyan Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, the Bahá’í shrines are the first sites associated with a religious tradition born in modern times to be added to the list. Similarly, in 2007 the State of Illinois announced that the Bahá’í House of Worship in Wilmette (north of Chicago) had been voted one of the “Seven Wonders” of Illinois.⁹

Ideologically, the Bahá’í perspective on the destiny of America should be contextualized within the Bahá’í paradigm of unity, and, more specifically, within the Bahá’í view of “sacred history” (or as systematic theologians of Christian doctrine would term it, “salvation history”). That is to say, America will fulfill a world-unifying purpose consonant with a larger civilizational purpose for which the Bahá’í religion sees its own instrumental role. Briefly, the Bahá’í Faith is a world religion whose purpose is to unite all the races, religions, and nations into one common homeland. Bahá’ís are the followers of Bahá’u’lláh, who essentially claimed to be a world messiah, fulfilling what are believed to be convergent prophecies from historically prior world religions.¹⁰ In his epistle to Queen Victoria, written from his prison cell in ‘Akká, Palestine around 1870, Bahá’u’lláh proclaims: “That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith.”¹¹ This, in part, is a statement about how it is now time for the peoples of the world, as a whole, to recognize the essential oneness of humanity—and of the world religions as well—as the collective consciousness needed to bring about world peace, and that this process will ultimately validate all faiths.

The Bahá'í vision of the destiny of America is part of a grander vision of social evolution, affecting the planet as a whole, which, in the course of human events, will lead to a *Golden Age* of world unity—a unity characterized not by regimented uniformity, but by spectacular diversity within a morally and technically advanced global civilization. The unity that the Bahá'í Faith promotes is a guarantor of diversity by fostering social environments where diversity can flourish, thereby enriching the human experience. As the epigraph above suggests, America “will lead all nations spiritually.” What is the logic behind this claim? An even more basic question is this: What is the character of this new religion that makes such an auspicious claim regarding America?

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH¹²

Before “social justice” served as the secular philosophy of modern democracies, the great world religions had established ethical principles and social laws for the ennobling of individuals and the ordering of societies. The Bahá'í Faith claims to be “endowed with a system of law, precept, and institutions capable of bringing into existence a global commonwealth ordered by principles of social justice.”¹³ In the Bahá'í hierarchy of values, social justice is a cardinal principle. As a collective ethical orientation, the Bahá'í concept of social justice is intimately linked with the principle of unity. “The purpose of justice,” declared Bahá'u'lláh, “is the appearance of unity among men.”¹⁴ Unity, which is predicated on social justice, is thus the organizing principle of the Bahá'í system of values. As such, a Bahá'í theory of social justice can be articulated from the Bahá'í sacred writings themselves, and amplified by official Bahá'í statements at the diplomatic level. A brief historical sketch of the religion will render a phenomenology of its social justice/unity orientation more meaningful.

The Bahá'í Faith developed from its roots in the Bábí religion, a messianic movement originating within Shí'a Islam, yet bearing all of the earmarks of a new and independent religion.¹⁵ Bahá'í history dates back to the evening of May 22, 1844, in the city of Shíráz in Persia (now Iran), when a young merchant, Sayyid 'Alí-Muhammad, declared himself to be the Báb (1819–1850), or “Gate”—that is, a messenger from God sent to proclaim the imminent advent of one greater than himself. Religious and state persecution fell upon him and his followers, leading to the torture and religious martyrdom of many. After the Báb was executed by a firing squad of 750 soldiers in the barracks square of Tabriz on July 9, 1850, the majority of his correlative, the Bábís, turned to Mirzá Husayn-'Alí Núrí—known as Bahá'u'lláh (a spiritual title, meaning the “Glory of God”)—as the messianic figure whose imminent advent was the central religious message of the Báb.

Born to a high-ranking minister of the Sháh in 1817 Tehran, Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated in a subterranean dungeon in 1852—because he was a leader of the proscribed Bábí religion—then was exiled to Baghdad in 1853, where he remained until his subsequent exile to Istanbul (Constantinople) and Edirne (Adrianople) in 1863, and from thence to the fortress prison of 'Akká (Palestine, now Israel), where he arrived in August 1868. One of the signal events of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry was the public proclamation of his mission, the purpose of which was to unify the world through advanced social principles and new institutions. This proclamation may also be regarded as one of the first international peace missions of modern times. Beginning in September 1867, Bahá'u'lláh addressed individual and collective epistles to world leaders—including Queen Victoria, Kaiser Wilhelm I, Czar Alexander Nicholas II of Russia, Emperor Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX, Emperor Franz Joseph, Sultan 'Abdu'l-Aziz, Nasiri'd-Din Sháh, the presidents of the Americas collectively, among others—summoning them to disarmament, reconciliation, justice, and the “Most Great Peace.” Bahá'u'lláh also addressed the leaders of the Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths, calling them to religious reconciliation and recognition of Bahá'u'lláh as the promised messiah of all religions.

Upon his death in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh was succeeded, under the terms of his will and testament, by his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who further developed the Bahá'í community in gradual application of the laws and precepts that Bahá'u'lláh had laid down in his Most Holy Book (Arab, *al-Kitáb al-Aqdas*; Persian, *Kitáb-i Aqdas*). When he was liberated by the Young Turks Revolution in 1908, 'Abdu'l-Bahá traveled to Europe, North Africa, and North America to promulgate his father's principles of social justice and unity. A frequent theme of his public addresses was interracial harmony, interreligious reconciliation, and ideal international relations. He also promoted gender equality and the establishment of adjudicative organs to resolve international disputes. 'Abdu'l-Bahá lent great impetus to the spread of the Bahá'í Faith in America and abroad when he revealed his *Tablets of the Divine Plan* in 1916. After his passing in 1921, and in accordance with the terms of his will and testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi (who was studying at Oxford University at the time), assumed leadership of the Bahá'í world until his death in 1957. Based on the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* as a model for fostering systematic growth, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957) promulgated a series of expansive “Plans” for systematically establishing Bahá'í communities in a greater number of countries, territories, and locales—and had the charisma to inspire their successful completion.

In his most important work (*Kitáb-i Aqdas*), Bahá'u'lláh had called for the establishment of a local House of Justice in every community. To distinguish these from institutions with an agenda for political power, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave

them the temporary title of “Spiritual Assemblies.” Each nine-member local and National Spiritual Assembly, elected annually by all of the adult Bahá'ís in the respective local or national community, oversees the growth and welfare of the Bahá'í community within its jurisdiction, fosters unity among the various elements of society, and furthers the work of social and economic development.

In 1963, the Bahá'í world had become sufficiently internationalized to elect the first Universal House of Justice (the world Bahá'í governing body) in the Royal Albert Hall in London. With its Seat located in the Bahá'í World Centre on Mt. Carmel in Haifa, Israel, the Universal House of Justice—elected every five years by the members of all of the National Spiritual Assemblies from around the world—administers the affairs of the Bahá'í world and promotes Bahá'í principles of justice and unity worldwide. As publicly declared in its *Constitution*, the stated mission of the Universal House of Justice is, *inter alia*: “to do its utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations and for the attainment of universal peace”; “to safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals”; “to give attention to the preservation of human honour, to the development of countries and the stability of states”; “to provide for the arbitration and settlement of disputes arising between peoples”; “to foster that which is conducive to the enlightenment and illumination of the souls of men and the advancement and betterment of the world.”¹⁶ These are some of the duties of the Universal House of Justice that are mandated in its charter document. In fine, the Universal House of Justice works to promote ideal international relations through the application of Bahá'í principles and practices at local, national, and international levels.

The diplomatic work of the Bahá'í Faith is carried out by the Universal House of Justice, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC), and external affairs representatives appointed by their respective National Spiritual Assemblies. Ethics-based and religious nongovernmental organizations (RNGOs) are playing increasingly significant roles in their consultative collaborations with the United Nations. As an RNGO, the BIC represents a network of 182 democratically elected National Spiritual Assemblies that act on behalf of Bahá'ís worldwide. The BIC is the voice of the Bahá'í community in international affairs. The BIC focuses on four core areas, each of which encompass social justice issues: (1) promotion of a universal standard for human rights (2) advancement of women; (3) promotion of just and equitable global prosperity and (4) development of moral capabilities. The BIC also defends the rights of Bahá'ís in countries where they are persecuted, such as in Iran and Egypt.

As previously stated, Bahá'í communities are established in 235 countries and dependent territories, representing more than 2,100 different tribal, racial,

and ethnic groups. At present, the country with the greatest number of Bahá'ís is India, where its magnificent "Lotus Temple" just outside of New Delhi is now said to be the most visited religious edifice in the world. Although its adherents number only 5.5 million, the Bahá'í Faith is now the second most widespread of the world's independent religions, according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*¹⁷ and *Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year* (1992). The statistical distribution of Bahá'ís worldwide may be studied by consulting the *Britannica* yearbooks in their annual reports on religion.

Social justice is relative to prevailing social values. Yet out of this relativity, consensus may be reached by identifying common denominators. "Justice . . . is a universal quality," 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated in Paris on November 17, 1912. He added that "justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered."¹⁸ The Bahá'í ethical commitment to social justice is paramount. "The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice," Bahá'u'lláh writes, "turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee." "By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor," Bahá'u'lláh goes on to say. "Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes."¹⁹ The challenge for Bahá'ís, then, is to more systematically develop Bahá'í principles of social justice, to apply them within their own faith-communities, and then to offer these practiced precepts as a model for wider adoption. In his epistle to Queen Victoria (c. 1869), Bahá'u'lláh endorsed parliamentary democracy as an ideal form of governance:

We have also heard that thou hast entrusted the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people. Thou, indeed, hast done well. . . . O ye the elected representatives of the people in every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully.²⁰

Referring to his own mission as that of a "World Reformer,"²¹ Bahá'u'lláh promulgated social principles that are wider in scope than the process of electing governments. Democracy is more than the election of governments; it is the refinement of governments as well.

The Bahá'í community, in a measured participation in political democracy, eschews partisan politics as polarizing and divisive. While exercising their civic obligation in voting, individual Bahá'ís distance themselves from the political theatre of party politics. Embracing many aspects of democracy, they shun campaigning. Instead, Bahá'ís work within the body politic, applying Bahá'í principles to better society. These principles include, among others:

(1) human unity; (2) social justice; (3) racial harmony; (4) interfaith cooperation; (5) gender equality; (6) wealth equity (economic justice); (7) social and economic development; (8) international law; (9) human rights; (10) freedom of conscience; (11) individual responsibility; (12) harmony of science and religion; (13) international scientific cooperation; (14) international standards/world intercommunication; (15) international language; (16) universal education; (17) environmentalism; (18) world commonwealth; (19) world tribunal; (20) world peace; (21) search after truth; (22) oneness of religion; (23) love of God; (24) nobility of character (acquiring virtues); (25) advancing civilization (individual purpose); (26) work as worship; (27) ideal marriage; (28) family values; (29) model communities; (30) religious teleology (Progressive Revelation); (31) Bahá'í doctrinal integrity; (32) Bahá'í institutional support (the "Covenant"); (33) promoting Bahá'í values. These principles and practices work synergistically in concert to refine moral character, advance civilization, inspire new approaches to conflict resolution, and endow human consciousness with a vibrant vision of social harmony.

In its June 4, 1992, presentation to the Plenary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Earth Summit '92, Rio de Janeiro), the BIC has epitomized the foundation of social justice from a Bahá'í perspective: "The fundamental spiritual truth of our age is the oneness of humanity."²² (In Bahá'í terminology, "oneness" means "unity.") It follows that "universal acceptance of this principle—with its implications for social and economic justice, universal participation in non-adversarial decision making, peace and collective security, equality of the sexes, and universal education—will make possible the reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind."²³ Note the linkage that such Bahá'í statements strike between social justice and world unity. These principles are comprehensive and perhaps may best be studied within a framework suggested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself: "The teachings of Bahá'u'l-láh are the light of this age and the spirit of this century. Expound each of them at every gathering:

The first is investigation of truth,
 The second, the oneness of mankind,
 The third, universal peace,
 The fourth, conformity between science and divine revelation,
 The fifth, abandonment of racial, religious, worldly and political prejudices,
 prejudices which destroy the foundation of mankind,
 The sixth is righteousness and justice,
 The seventh, the betterment of morals and heavenly education,
 The eighth, the equality of the two sexes,
 The ninth, the diffusion of knowledge and education,
 The tenth, economic questions, and so on and so forth."²⁴

While space does not permit elaboration of these (and other) Bahá'í principles of unity, many are fairly self-evident. They provide a necessary context for understanding what lies behind the Bahá'í vision of the destiny of America. By Bahá'í standards, America will be measured by its ability to further unity at home and abroad, through developing an exemplary society while instrumentally promoting world order.

BAHÁ'Í MYTHS AS A "SACRED HISTORY" OF AMERICA

There are actually a number of passages in Bahá'í texts concerning the destiny of America. They are too numerous to treat here. While many, these statements reiterate salient themes. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, some of these themes will be highlighted. First, the term "America," as found in Bahá'í texts, needs to be contextualized geopolitically.

Various configurations of the term "America" have rather self-evident geographical distinctions, such as "the Americas," "the Continent of America," "North America," and then, "America," which by itself most often is a metonymy (or synonym) for the "United States of America." Similarly, the meaning of "America" in Bahá'í texts is context dependent, in that "America" variously represents: (1) the United States (including Alaska); (2) the United States and Canada; (3) North America; and (4) the Americas. In a talk delivered on September 5, 1912, at the St. James Methodist Church in Montreal, Canada, 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that Canada shares much the same destiny as the United States:

Praise be to God! I find these two great American nations highly capable and advanced in all that appertains to progress and civilization. These governments are fair and equitable. The motives and purposes of these people are lofty and inspiring. Therefore, it is my hope that these revered nations may become prominent factors in the establishment of international peace and the oneness of the world of humanity; that they may lay the foundations of equality and spiritual brotherhood among mankind.²⁵

This is a mission and mandate to both the United States and Canada alike, indicating that "international peace and the oneness of the world of humanity" and laying the "foundations of equality and spiritual brotherhood among mankind" is not the province of any one country alone, but—to varying degrees according to the respective capacity of each—of all countries. Returning to the meaning of "America" in Bahá'í texts, one passage that offers a prime example of a range of meanings that "America" adumbrates (i.e., the United States, Canada, North America, and the Americas) is as follows:

The Báb had in His *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá*, almost a hundred years previously, sounded His specific summons to the “peoples of the West” to “issue forth” from their “cities” and aid His Cause. Bahá'u'lláh, in His *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, had collectively addressed the Presidents of the Republics of the entire Americas, bidding them arise and “bind with the hands of justice the broken,” and “crush the oppressor” with the “rod of the commandments” of their Lord, and had, moreover, anticipated in His writings the appearance “in the West” of the “signs of His Dominion.” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá had, on His part, declared that the “illumination” shed by His Father’s Revelation upon the West would acquire an “extraordinary brilliancy,” and that the “light of the Kingdom” would “shed a still greater illumination upon the West” than upon the East. He had extolled the American continent in particular as “the land wherein the splendors of His Light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled,” and affirmed that “it will lead all nations spiritually.” More specifically still, He had singled out the Great Republic of the West, the leading nation of that continent, declaring that its people were “indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Most Great Peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind,” that it was “equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West.”²⁶

In this chapter, “America” will be understood to mean the United States of America. In a word, the place of America in the grand scheme of things is intimately bound up with the purpose of the existence of the Bahá'í Faith itself: world unity. It should be added that “world unity” is an outcome of an integrated approach to social and economic development, equitable management of world resources, the potentializing of human resources through advanced educational strategies, effective conflict resolution, and the spiritual awakening of societies as a whole. The earliest mention of “America” in the Bahá'í Writings occurs in a passage, the context of which indicates that “America” stands for what today would be commonly referred to as “the Americas,” or the Western Hemisphere. In 1873, Bahá'u'lláh addressed the rulers and leaders of the Americas in the single most important Bahá'í text, the Most Holy Book (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*):

Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein, unto that which the Dove is warbling on the Branch of Eternity: “There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful.” Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counseleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, wherewith all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. . . . Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the

oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.²⁷

This passage was written in 1873 or shortly prior to that. Serving as presidents (or as prime minister, as in the case of Canada) of the countries of the Americas in 1872 were the following (with nations listed alphabetically): Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, president of Argentina; John A. Macdonald, prime minister of Canada; Federico Errázuriz Zañartu, president of Chile; Eustorgio Salgar and Manuel Murillo Toro, presidents of Colombia; Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez, president of Costa Rica; Buenaventura Báez, president of the Dominican Republic; Gabriel García Moreno, president of Ecuador; Justo Rufino Barrios, president of Guatemala; Nissage Saget, president of Haiti; Benito Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, presidents of Mexico; José Vicente Cuadra, president of Nicaragua; Francisco Solano López, president of Paraguay; Manuel Pardo, president of Peru; Ulysses S. Grant, president of the United States of America; Lorenzo Batlle y Grau and Tomás Gomensoro, presidents of Uruguay; and Antonio Guzmán Blanco, president of Venezuela.²⁸ Here, the admonition to “bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor” would naturally devolve upon the United States of America, of which Ulysses S. Grant was president, as well as the other countries of the Western Hemisphere, as every nation has this obligation to safeguard and to promote the commonweal of its own citizens.

According to Shoghi Effendi, not only were “the Rulers of America” significantly “spared the ominous and emphatic warnings” that Bahá’u’lláh had “uttered against the crowned heads of the world,” but “upon the sovereign rulers of the Western Hemisphere” was conferred the “distinction” of exhorting them to “bring their corrective and healing influence to bear upon the injustices perpetrated by the tyrannical and the ungodly.”²⁹ “Had this Cause been revealed in the West,” Bahá’u’lláh is reported to have said in the untranslated portion of Nabíl’s Narrative (an authoritative account of Bábí and early Bahá’í history), “had Our verses been sent from the West to Persia and other countries of the East, it would have become evident how the people of the Occident would have embraced Our Cause.”³⁰ It is clear that Bahá’u’lláh saw greater capacity and receptivity to his sociomoral principles in the West than in the East. Above and beyond those passages that clearly foreshadow the “signs of His dominion” in the West, Shoghi Effendi points to the “no less significant verbal affirmations” in which Bahá’u’lláh, “according to reliable eyewitnesses,” had “more than once made in regard to the glorious destiny which America was to attain in the days to come.”³¹ So, while no direct writing by Bahá’u’lláh regarding the destiny of America is extant, reliable sources provide sufficient attestation of Bahá’u’lláh’s oral statements regarding America’s promise and future preeminence.

Subsequent to Bahá'u'lláh was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who, after his father, Bahá'u'lláh, had passed away in 1892, led the Bahá'í world until he himself left this mortal world in 1921, when he was succeeded by his grandson, the Oxford-educated Shoghi Effendi. Both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi had some profound thoughts about the destiny of America. In the course of their respective pronouncements on America, certain characterizations of American history and America's world role were articulated in order to register particular points, as the rhetoric and rationale of those comments occasionally dictated. Such glosses on America gave rise to sometimes idealized representations and, at time, generalized critiques of America as well—all of which, taken together, comprise what may well be described, for the purposes of this book at least, as the Bahá'í myths and visions of America.

According to historian Robert Stockman, American Bahá'ís, on the basis of these various pronouncements, have articulated a grand myth of America, which incorporates Bahá'í ideals: "The American Bahá'ís utilized the historic events and basic principles of their new religion to define a new myth of America, one that contained much of the confidence and optimism of the traditional Protestant view of America as a 'redeemer nation.'" ³² Stockman elaborates further:

Like any religious group, the American Bahá'ís have constructed a sacred history, or myth, about their country. This sacred history is primarily based on the values found in Bahá'í scripture and does not appear to be borrowed from American Protestantism or secular culture to a significant degree. However, the Bahá'í myth's concept of America's uniqueness, its view of the possible future greatness of America, and its consequent critique of current American social conditions bear some remarkable parallels to the Protestant myth. ³³

Here, by religious "myth," Stockman means a "sacred history." No one should misconstrue the meaning of the term, "myth." Stockman is careful to explain that the terms "sacred history" and "myth" are, here at least, used "synonymously." These terms denote a "theologically based understanding of the importance of the events of history." Since history cannot possibly record every single fact, consequently "historians must sift through facts and select only those that are most relevant to their studies." This selection process necessarily includes "a strong element of judgment and bias based on one's methods, ideological assumptions, and interests." A sacred history is no exception, for "it is distinguished by the use of theological beliefs as the primary selection criteria for the inclusion of facts." In Stockman's and the present writer's use of these more or less interchangeable terms, a caveat is in order: the "use of the word myth is not meant to suggest that a sacred history is untrue," but simply a way "to give religious meaning to mundane events." ³⁴

The specific parallel with the Protestant myth of America that Robert Stockman adduces is with America's world role as "redeemer nation." Earlier in the present book, the Protestant "master myth" of America has been described several times as a mandate "to colonize, Christianize, and civilize" and is closely associated with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. This would seem to be very different from the "redeemer nation" vision alluded to in the passages above from Stockman's work. It is important not to associate the Bahá'í view with the superiority and prejudice inherent in "colonize, Christianize, and civilize." Rather, the emphasis here is on America's redemptive role: Stockman particularly alludes to a classic work in American studies, Ernest Lee Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*,³⁵ in which the idea of redemptive mission—which has motivated so much of American foreign policy—is as old as the Republic itself. Tuveson traces the development of this aspect of the American heritage from its Puritan origins, and tracks the idea of America's mission and the millenarian ideal through successive stages of American history.

Americanist Deborah Madsen, succinctly recapitulates this notion of America as a "redeemer nation." America began as an experiment in theocracy (the reign of God). Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony believed that God intervened in human history to effect the salvation not only of individuals but also entire nations. Thus, the Puritans believed that the New World, and the Puritans themselves, had been singled out by God and were charged with a special destiny—to establish model Christian community for the rest of the world to emulate. Madsen explains that

this idea of ecclesiastical perfection combined with millennial expectations and gave rise to the theory that here in the New World the purified church would create the conditions for Christ's return to earth. The mission that inspired the Massachusetts Bay colonists was then charged with exceptional importance and urgency.³⁶

The New World is thus the last and best hope for a fallen humanity that has only to look to the sanctified church in America for redemption. Consequently,

America and Americans are special, exceptional, because they are charged with saving the world from itself and, at the same time, America and Americans must sustain a high level of spiritual, political and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny—America must be as "a city upon a hill" exposed to the eyes of the world.³⁷

In Madsen's view, exceptionalism is an integral and distinctive feature of the American experience: "This concept has generated a self-consciousness

and degree of introspection that is unique to American culture.”³⁸ The doctrine of America as a redeemer nation later developed into “an unquestioning belief in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, a profound commitment to the inevitability of American expansion and an uncompromising vision of America as the redeemer nation committed to extending the domain of freedom and America’s control over it”³⁹ as well as a “racialised interpretation of national destiny” (i.e., American Anglo-Saxonism).⁴⁰ Under this analysis, Stockman’s parallel is valid insofar as the Puritan ethic is concerned, but must be distanced from its pejorative transmogrification into the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Indeed, a Bahá’í view of America as a “redeemer nation” could only come about if America first redeems itself from the materialism and moral laxity that represents the very antithesis of the Puritan vision.

America is not the only country that is the subject of a Bahá’í sacred history. Stockman points out that there are Bahá’í sacred histories about other countries as well:

The American Bahá’í sacred history is not a unique phenomenon; Bahá’í sacred histories of Germany, Russia, China, India, Japan, Iran, Canada, and other countries undoubtedly have been created by the Bahá’ís of those countries, based on statements about those nations in the Bahá’í scriptures. A folk tradition is inevitable whenever the Bahá’í religion is introduced to a new culture or nation.⁴¹

As for the Bahá’í myth of America, Stockman further notes that “the creation of an American Bahá’í sacred history inevitably represents an act of social criticism as well, for some events in American history are negatively valued, such as America’s persistent streak of racism, its materialism, and its excessive and isolationist nationalism.”⁴² This is an important observation, because, as will be discussed below, there are certain American social problems that have drawn recurrent criticism in Bahá’í texts. For instance, the problem of racism in the United States is termed, in the Bahá’í Writings, as “the most challenging issue.” In an official position statement issued in 1991 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States⁴³—entitled, *The Vision of Race Unity: America’s Most Challenging Issue*—the problem of racism in America is framed so:

Racism is the most challenging issue confronting America. A nation whose ancestry includes every people on earth, whose motto is *E pluribus unum*, whose ideals of freedom under law have inspired millions throughout the world, cannot continue to harbor prejudice against any racial or ethnic group without betraying itself. Racism is an affront to human dignity, a cause of hatred and division, a disease that devastates society. Notwithstanding the efforts already expended for its elimination, racism continues to work its evil upon this nation.

The American audience is in full view here, where racism is characterized as fundamentally un-American, facially contradicting America's celebrated motto, which translates, "Out of many, One." Therefore, unity is faithful to the America ideal, whereas racism tears at America's social fabric. America has no spiritual destiny so long as rampant racism remains. The persistence of racism, even in its most subtle forms (what sociologists have termed, "polite racism"), retards America's social advancement, and vitiates its moral authority under the close watch of the community of nations. Further in this statement, the National Spiritual Assembly connects the fostering of racial harmony—seen as the divinely ordained antidote to racism—with the destiny of America:

Aware of the magnitude and the urgency of the issue, we, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, speaking for the entire U.S. Bahá'í community, appeal to all people of goodwill to arise without further delay to resolve the fundamental social problem of this country. We do so because of our feeling of shared responsibility, because of the global experience of the Bahá'í community in affecting racial harmony within itself, and because of the vision that the sacred scriptures of our Faith convey of the destiny of America.

America's prospective leadership in international affairs must be grounded in domestic social policy that other nations may regard as exemplary and as a model to follow. Of course, this cannot happen unless and until America succeeds in eradicating racism and promoting interracial harmony. Stockman registers one more point: "In this way the sacred history becomes a spur to Bahá'í efforts to reform society. It also helps American Bahá'ís to form an American identity that is congruent with the Bahá'í scriptures."⁴⁴ In other words, if America solves its racial crisis at home, it will then gain the moral authority to promote similar social cohesion abroad.

THE BAHÁ'Í EMANCIPATION/CIVIL WAR MYTH

The year 1912 was the year that 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to America. On just his tenth day in America—Saturday, April 20—'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Washington, D.C., and stayed until Sunday, April 28. On Tuesday morning, April 23, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Well over a thousand faculty, administrators, students, and guests⁴⁵ crowded the relatively small space of this modest chapel to hear him speak. In this historic speech, 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws on American history (or a certain view of it) in order to promote unity between the races: "The first proclamation of emancipation [the Emancipation Proclamation] for the blacks was made by the whites of America. How they fought and sacrificed until they freed the blacks! Then it spread to other places." 'Abdu'l-Bahá further states that

the Emancipation Proclamation was followed by the Europeans, and had a liberating impact on Africans as well, such that “Emancipation Proclamation became universal.”⁴⁶

In this general statement, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá evidently points to some of the political and social effects of the Emancipation Proclamation (and its later developments) as a reflex of American exemplarism abroad, as well as at home. To idealize the Civil War is to mythologize it. Here, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mythologizes the Civil War by essentializing it. This Civil War myth, like most myths, serves as a vehicle of a social and moral truth: the need for interracial unity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s observations, as quoted above, had their basis in later developments in the Civil War and beyond.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was promulgated—although Lincoln arguably had no constitutional authority to actually free slaves. (By dint of his authority as commander in chief, the Proclamation was technically a military order.) Its reach was not universal, as it legally freed slaves only in the Southern states. The Emancipation Proclamation was the precursor of the Thirteenth Amendment. On December 18, 1865, Congress’s Thirteenth Amendment freed slaves nationally. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, and thus radically altered the U.S. Constitution, as part of what some legal scholars call the “Second Constitution.” Ironically, ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment marks the first time that the word “slavery” appeared in the Constitution, even though the Constitution had explicitly protected slavery. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement, therefore, would presumably adumbrate the Thirteenth Amendment as an extension of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

Originally known as the “Abolition Amendment,” the intent of the Thirteenth Amendment was to give practical effect to the Declaration of Independence’s self-evident truths “that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Of course, such unalienable rights did not extend to aliens (noncitizens), which is why the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) had, perforce, to precede the Fifteenth, by granting citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the United States.

Under Section 2, which legal scholars call the Enforcement Clause, the Thirteenth Amendment was also supposed to eradicate any vestiges of forced labor (“badges and incidents of servitude”). Thus, to enforce the Thirteenth Amendment, Congress quickly passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (over President Andrew Johnson’s veto), the Slave Kidnapping Act of 1866, the Peonage Act of 1867, and the Judiciary Act of 1867. But a series of Supreme Court decisions during Reconstruction effectively emasculated the Amendment, through crabbed interpretation and curtailed application. With the splendid exception of peonage cases, the Thirteenth Amendment remained a

dead letter under segregationist Supreme Court rulings like *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which used color as a badge for discrimination while professing an “equal but separate” doctrine. One reason for this is that the Thirteenth Amendment was deficient in that it lacked any formal recognition of equality under the law. This defect would later be cured by enactment of the Equal Protection Clause under the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Thirteenth Amendment is far more than an emancipation law. Through its enforcement power, it is also a civil rights instrument, although rarely used. The social transformation that the framers of the Thirteenth Amendment had envisioned could only be achieved where the federal government could enforce freedom. Sadly, it took over a century for the Supreme Court to discover in the Thirteenth Amendment a fresh constitutional source of power for enforcing certain civil rights. The landmark decision of *Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer Co.*, 392 U.S. 409 (1968), restored the civil rights value of the Amendment and transformed it into a potentially potent civil rights instrument. *Jones* established Congress’s power to enact legislation against private racial discrimination. Today, the Thirteenth Amendment arguably remains a little-used, but potentially important, federal power for enforcing civil rights against all vestiges of slavery that reincarnate as racial discrimination. Alexander Tsesis, who may be today’s leading authority on the Thirteenth Amendment, observes that each new generation must reexamine the nation’s past, its core documents, and its moral progress as a constitutional democracy.

Such legislation, alone, cannot solve the racial crisis that continues to affect America, even though such discrimination has taken on subtle forms—what sociologists generally term, “polite racism.” Abolition of slavery, after all, is not freedom from all oppression. Slavery’s roots are deep in American history, and are not yet fully extirpated. Racism is a ghost of the slaver’s psyche, and legislation alone cannot humanify the heart. Bahá’í texts are fully alive to this problem, which is why, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Whites should “endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor,” referring to African Americans. “Differences between black and white will be completely obliterated; indeed, ethnic and national differences will all disappear.”⁴⁷ There is an element of prophecy in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prediction that racial, ethnic, and national differences would, in the future, vanish as socially repugnant. Just about any prophecy requires mechanisms for its fulfillment. Accordingly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá invites his audience to build on history by making history, in commencing a new era of racial harmony.

On Wednesday, April 24, 1912—the day after speaking in Rankin Chapel at Howard University—‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, at a Bahá’í-sponsored interracial meeting: “A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels—pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires. It is a source of joy and delight. In the clustered jewels of the races may the blacks be as sapphires and rubies

and the whites as diamonds and pearls. How glorious the spectacle of real unity among mankind! This is the sign of the Most Great Peace; this is the star of the oneness of the human world.” Throughout his travels and speaking engagements in the United States and Canada, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued to stress the vital importance of race unity for America and for the world.

THE BAHÁ'Í WILSONIAN MYTH

In the Bahá'í vision of America, America's world role is to foster ideal international relations. Such world diplomacy and international cooperation will, in turn, prove hugely instrumental in unifying the world (which, after all, is the principal purpose of the Bahá'í Faith). In its religious myth (or, sacred history) of America, several Bahá'í texts single out, for distinction, an American president who tried to do exactly that: Woodrow Wilson. Indeed, President Wilson was a “statesman whose vision both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have praised.”⁴⁸ These passages lionize President Woodrow Wilson by focusing exclusively on his legacy as an internationalist. Such praise is both deserved and controversial. Wilson is immortalized in history as an internationalist who championed the formation of the League of Nations (precursor of the United Nations). Historians generally agree that Woodrow Wilson, in so doing, was the first U.S. president to define America's world role. This largely explains why Bahá'í sources attach considerable religious significance to President Wilson. Yet Wilson was also a racist, which fact finds no purchase in the Wilsonian idealism given such prominence in Bahá'í texts.

Shoghi Effendi states that Wilson holds a special place as the most honored statesman in the Bahá'í writings:

To her President, the immortal Woodrow Wilson, must be ascribed the unique honor, among the statesmen of any nation, whether of the East or of the West, of having voiced sentiments so akin to the principles animating the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and of having more than any other world leader, contributed to the creation of the League of Nations—achievements which the pen of the Center of God's Covenant [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace.⁴⁹

Note that the passage distinguishes this American president as “the immortal Woodrow Wilson,” notwithstanding the fact that Wilson was an erstwhile racist. While racism is absolutely antithetical to Bahá'í principles of unity, the Bahá'í Woodrow Wilson myth is consistent with the function of myth-making in general, which is to confer meaning and inspire action. Myths, after all, are about storytelling in order to moralize and incentivize, not to memorialize the naked facts for their own sake. Here, the purpose of idealizing the past is to inspire an ideal future.

In a word, Wilsonian idealism is internationalism.⁵⁰ A comparison of Wilsonian idealism and Bahá'í principles shows a powerful resonance that is nothing short of resounding harmonics. Stephen Skowronek condenses and characterizes Wilsonian idealism as effectively as any of his predecessors have done, if not more so:

“Peace without victory”; self-determination; the equality of states; renunciation of indemnities and annexations; rejection of the balance of power; promotion of the community of powers, of collective security under a league of nations, of a world safe for democracy—these were the principles Wilson enunciated in 1917, and these were the principles that catapulted him into the top ranks of democratic visionaries in world history.⁵¹

On these resonances between Wilsonian internationalism and Bahá'í principles of ideal international relations leading to world unity, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, observed: “As to President Wilson, the fourteen principles which he hath enunciated are mostly found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and I therefore hope that he will be confirmed and assisted.”⁵² In ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s estimation, Wilson’s enlightened internationalism attracted divine favor:

The President of the Republic, Dr. Wilson, is indeed serving the Kingdom of God for he is restless and strives day and night that the rights of all men may be preserved safe and secure, that even small nations, like greater ones, may dwell in peace and comfort, under the protection of Righteousness and Justice. This purpose is indeed a lofty one. I trust that the incomparable Providence will assist and confirm such souls under all conditions.⁵³

Thus, in the Bahá'í view, President Wilson’s principles of internationalism were providentially inspired. According to Shoghi Effendi, the “ideals that fired the imagination of America’s tragically unappreciated President” were “acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace” by “‘Abdu’l-Bahá, through His own pen.”⁵⁴

Such is the Wilsonian Myth. Yet the Bahá'í writings do not idealize Wilson so much as they champion Wilsonian idealism.⁵⁵ In lionizing Wilson the statesman, and in overlooking Wilson the racist, the Bahá'í Wilsonian myth lives up to the purpose of a religious myth of America, as *idealized or sacralized history exemplifying key precepts and practices*.

THE BAHÁ'Í VISION OF THE DESTINY OF AMERICA

In 2001, there came a moment in time when the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (elected governing council of the American Bahá'í community) decided to offer *a perspective on the*

destiny of America as the promoter of world peace. At a time of national crisis following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the National Spiritual Assembly published a full-page display ad, “The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace,” which appeared on page A29 in the *New York Times* on December 23, 2001.⁵⁶ This 645-word document highlights six prerequisites for world peace: (1) promoting “universal acceptance” of the oneness of humanity to realize world peace; (2) eradicating racism (“a major barrier to peace”) to achieve racial harmony; (3) fostering “the emancipation of women” to achieve “full equality of the sexes”; (4) greatly reducing the “inordinate disparity between rich and poor”; (5) transcending “unbridled nationalism” and inculcating “a wider loyalty” to “humanity as a whole”; (6) overcoming “religious strife” to enjoy harmony among religions.⁵⁷ The full-page display ad was later reprinted in dozens of newspapers around the country.

While the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks are not explicitly mentioned in the proclamation, they are implied in the words, “At this time of world turmoil.”⁵⁸ How true this statement was. Americans, particularly, were still in a state of shock. America, under direct attack, was understandably alarmed. Thus “9/11” was, and remains, a deeply disturbing experience for the American nation. If the American Bahá'ís had anything to say, this was the time to say it: “The United States Bahá'í community,” the ad goes on to say, “offers a perspective on the destiny of America as the promoter of world peace.”⁵⁹

This Bahá'í proclamation introduces the American public to “Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith,” who, “addressing heads of state, proclaimed that the age of maturity for the entire human race had come.” This refers to what the present writer calls *the first international peace mission in modern history*. The proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh took place primarily in the years 1867–1870. During this time, Bahá'u'lláh addressed epistles to, *inter alia*, Kaiser Wilhelm I, Tsar Alexander II, Emperor Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX, Queen Victoria, Emperor Franz Joseph, Sultan Abdul-Aziz, and the king of Iran, Nasiri'd-Dín Sháh. Speaking of the peace proposals and principles of ideal international relations that Bahá'u'lláh communicated to the reigning pontiff and potentates, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá (Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, successor, and interpreter), commented: “These precepts were proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh many years ago. He was the first to create them in the hearts as moral laws. Writing to the sovereigns of the world, he summoned them to universal brotherhood, proclaiming that the hour for unity had struck—unity between countries, unity between religions.”⁶⁰ The Bahá'í Faith promotes peace as a direct extension of the fact that its founder, Bahá'u'lláh, dedicated his life to the cause of world peace and promulgated the principles necessary to achieve it.

The *Times* display ad places Bahá'u'lláh's messages to the kings and rulers of the world in this perspective: "The unity of humankind was now to be established as the foundation of the great peace that would mark the highest stage in humanity's spiritual and social evolution. Revolutionary and world-shaking changes were therefore inevitable." "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace" goes on to quote the following passage from the Bahá'í Writings:

The world is moving on. Its events are unfolding ominously and with bewildering rapidity. The whirlwind of its passions is swift and alarmingly violent. The New World is insensibly drawn into its vortex. . . . Dangers, undreamt of and unpredictable, threaten it both from within and from without. Its governments and peoples are being gradually enmeshed in the coils of the world's recurrent crises and fierce controversies. . . . The world is contracting into a neighborhood. America, willingly or unwillingly, must face and grapple with this new situation. For purposes of national security, let alone any humanitarian motive, she must assume the obligations imposed by this newly created neighborhood. Paradoxical as it may seem, her only hope of extricating herself from the perils gathering around her is to become entangled in that very web of international association which the Hand of an inscrutable Providence is weaving.⁶¹

This passage in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, by Shoghi Effendi, who, as "Guardian" of the Bahá'í Faith, led the Bahá'í world from 1921 to 1957, is part of a lengthy letter written December 25, 1938, to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.⁶² Here, the Guardian states that America will be so inextricably drawn into the vortex of international relations that she will be forced to assume a leadership role in the international community, not out of any humanitarian motives per se, but purely out of enlightened political self-interest. Notwithstanding, that enlightened self-interest will, in time, develop into an enlightened global interest.

The National Spiritual Assembly goes on to forecast the destiny of America as a future leader and catalyst of world peace:

The American nation, Bahá'ís believe, will evolve, through tests and trials to become a land of spiritual distinction and leadership, a champion of justice and unity among all peoples and nations, and a powerful servant of the cause of everlasting peace. This is the peace promised by God in the sacred texts of the world's religions.⁶³

However, the six prerequisites to world peace, mentioned above, must first be met.

This public message from the American Bahá'í leadership to the American people was a significant public gesture. The message goes on to quote from a

Bahá'í prayer for America: "May this American Democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace." The proclamation closes on an optimistic note, with this heartening word of encouragement: "During this hour of crisis," the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States concludes, "we affirm our abiding faith in the destiny of America. We know that the road to its destiny is long, thorny and tortuous, but we are confident that America will emerge from her trials undivided and undefeatable." With this message of hope and inspiration, the National Spiritual Assembly offers a fresh perspective on America that charts its destiny, prioritizes its social agenda, and conveys a forward-looking sense of purpose and resolve.

As previously stated, a number of passages in Baha'i texts address the destiny of America. One of these statements, apart from its exhortative tenor, contains a significant allusion to an earlier moment in Bahá'í history:

This nation so signally blest, occupying so eminent and responsible a position in a continent so wonderfully endowed, was the first among the nations of the West to be warmed and illuminated by the rays of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, soon after the proclamation of His Covenant on the morrow of His ascension.⁶⁴

The allusion to what took place "soon after" may be a reference to the first public mention of the Bahá'í Faith in America, which took place during the World's First Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893, commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America.⁶⁵ The paper, entitled "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," was presented on September 23, 1893.⁶⁶ While the paper was written by the Reverend Henry Harris Jessup, D.D. (1832–1910), Director of Presbyterian Missionary Operations in North Syria, it was George A. Ford, a longtime missionary to Sidon (in Syria), who read the paper on Jessup's behalf. The paper was part of a full day of addresses on the theme "Criticism and Discussion of Missionary Method."⁶⁷ This historic public reference to the fledgling Bahá'í religion is as follows:

In the palace of Behjeh, or Delight, just outside the fortress of Acre, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since a famous Persian sage, the Babi Saint, named Behâ Allah—the "Glory of God"—the head of a vast reform party of Persian Moslems, who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers. Three years ago he was visited by a Cambridge scholar and gave utterances to sentiments so noble, so Christ-like, that we repeat them as our closing words:

“That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled; what harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come. Do not you in Europe need this also? Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”⁶⁸

America’s future destiny was presaged by its finest moments in the past. Shoghi Effendi credits America with having played a preponderant role in both World Wars:

This nation, moreover, may well claim to have, as a result of its effective participation in both the first and second world wars, redressed the balance, saved mankind the horrors of devastation and bloodshed involved in the prolongation of hostilities, and decisively contributed, in the course of the latter conflict, to the overthrow of the exponents of ideologies fundamentally at variance with the universal tenets of our Faith.⁶⁹

As favorable an estimate as this is, Shoghi Effendi elsewhere portends a fire by ordeal:

The American nation . . . will find itself purged of its anachronistic conceptions, and prepared to play a preponderating role, as foretold by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in the hoisting of the standard of the Lesser Peace, in the unification of mankind, and in the establishment of a world federal government on this planet. These same fiery tribulations will not only firmly weld the American nation to its sister nations in both hemispheres, but will through their cleansing effect, purge it thoroughly of the accumulated dross which ingrained racial prejudice, rampant materialism, widespread ungodliness and moral laxity have combined, in the course of successive generations, to produce, and which have prevented her thus far from assuming the role of world spiritual leadership forecast by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s unerring pen—a role which she is bound to fulfill through travail and sorrow.⁷⁰

Note that this “world spiritual leadership forecast by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s unerring pen” will only come about after America experiences upheaval and consequent social transformation. It will not come easily. It has to be earned. America has to learn the hard way. What has prevented America from assuming a spiritual leadership role is its “ingrained racial prejudice, rampant materialism, widespread ungodliness and moral laxity.” Elsewhere, Shoghi Effendi revoices these same criticisms of America, which was “immersed in a sea of materialism, a prey to one of the most virulent and long-standing forms of racial prejudice, and notorious for its political corruption, lawlessness and laxity in moral standards.”⁷¹ These are retardant

conditions that must first be palliated by equal and opposite conditions of racial harmony, spirituality, godliness, and moral rectitude. This is where religion in general, including the Bahá'í Faith, can and should act as a catalyst in the moral and spiritual regeneration of America as a precondition to its ability to live up to its destiny, in the Bahá'í view of it, described by Shoghi Effendi in this signal passage:

Then, and only then, will the American nation . . . be in a position to raise its voice in the councils of the nations, itself lay the cornerstone of a universal and enduring peace, proclaim the solidarity, the unity, and maturity of mankind, and assist in the establishment of the promised reign of righteousness on earth. Then, and only then, will the American nation, while the community of the American believers within its heart is consummating its divinely appointed mission, be able to fulfill the unspeakably glorious destiny ordained for it by the Almighty, and immortally enshrined in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then, and only then, will the American nation accomplish "that which will adorn the pages of history," "become the envy of the world and be blest in both the East and the West."⁷²

While the destiny of America is well established in Bahá'í texts, one extended analysis of it is that of John Huddleston. As the International Monetary Fund's former chief of the Budget and Planning Division, British economist John Huddleston has contributed an analysis of the Destiny of America theme that runs through selected Bahá'í texts, such as those cited above.⁷³ According to Huddleston, "The Bahá'í view of the spiritual destiny of America is a logical development of the traditional American dream. It foresees a leadership role for America in the achievement of both the Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace."⁷⁴

The "Lesser Peace" and the "Most Great Peace" are Bahá'í terms that envision stages in the process of world peace, leading from the first efforts to covenant and codify international law to the full-blown emergence of world commonwealth of nations. The establishment of world peace will "be a gradual process" leading "at first to the establishment of that Lesser Peace which the nations of the earth, as yet unconscious of His Revelation and yet unwittingly enforcing the general principles which He has enunciated, will themselves establish."⁷⁵ The next stage is "the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowledgement of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."⁷⁶ This is "the essential condition" that will serve as the foundation for the "ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations."⁷⁷ On this foundation will the "Most Great Peace" be established. The Most Great Peace may be described as a future golden age in which "a world civilization be born, flourish, and perpetuate itself, a

civilization with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive.”⁷⁸

The Most Great Peace is not only about establishing a world commonwealth but is associated with establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, meaning the realization of Bahá’í principles and ideals throughout the world, and the emergence of the Bahá’í Faith as the world religion of the future. In so saying, a fundamental premise of the Faith is the “oneness of religion.” This means that all of the major world religions (and others lost to history) are iterations of the one Faith of God—that is, all revealed religions, in their pristine forms, are reflections of eternal spiritual reality as suited to the needs of humanity from age to age. Under the corollary doctrine of “Progressive Revelation,” the principles and teachings of the Bahá’í Faith are held to be ideally suited to this day and age, as well as into the foreseeable future. Features of the Most Great Peace will be highlighted at the end of this chapter.

In a cablegram dated April 26, 1942, Shoghi Effendi presaged America’s lion’s share in helping establish the Lesser Peace: “The great Republic of the West is inescapably swept into the swelling tide of the world tribulations, presaging the assumption of a preponderating share in the establishment of the anticipated Lesser Peace.”⁷⁹ Exactly how this will come about is not clear: “The distance that the American nation has traveled since its formal and categoric repudiation of the Wilsonian ideal,” writes Shoghi Effendi, alluding to Congress’s refusal to join the League of Nations, is

to every Bahá’í observer, viewing the developments in the international situation, in the light of the prophecies of both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, most significant, and highly instructive and encouraging. To trace the exact course which, in these troubled times and pregnant years, this nation will follow would be impossible.⁸⁰

Yet there is a shared understanding among Bahá’ís as to America’s capacity to assume a “preponderating share” in bringing the Lesser Peace into being.

America will also have a central role in bringing about the Most Great Peace, according to the Bahá’í view of the future. “Whatever the Hand of a beneficent and inscrutable Destiny has reserved for this youthful, this virile, this idealistic, this spiritually blessed and enviable nation . . .,” Shoghi Effendi asserts, “we may, confident in the words uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, feel assured that that great republic . . . will continue to evolve, undivided and undefeatable, until the sum total of its contributions to the birth, the rise and the fruition of that world civilization, the child of the Most Great Peace and hallmark of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh, will have been made, and its last task discharged.”⁸¹

These words are far more than prediction: they are spoken with religious conviction and with absolute confidence in their fruition.

“Indeed, the most important quality America brings to the world scene,” Huddleston observes, “is its sheer capacity to get things done.”⁸² Even more significant than “American know-how” and its “can-do” capabilities is the historic quality of the American experience itself, and its moral impact on other countries. Huddleston notes the worldwide influence of the Civil Rights movement (“the spark that illumined the world”) and how it has further prepared America for its world role: “In short, beyond the model of the US Constitution is an inheritance in the American political experience of an immense struggle to implement its true spirit through application of a systematic approach to human rights—an experience that is surely not matched in intensity by any other nation.”⁸³ Shoghi Effendi articulates those distinctively American qualities that endow it with the capacity to realize its spiritual destiny:

To the matchless position achieved by so preeminent a president [Woodrow Wilson] of the American Union, in a former period, at so critical a juncture in international affairs, must now be added the splendid initiative taken, in recent years by the American government, culminating in the birth of the successor of that League [the United Nations] in San Francisco, and the establishment of its permanent seat in the city of New York. Nor can the preponderating influence exerted by this nation in the councils of the world, the prodigious economic and political power that it wields, the prestige it enjoys, the wealth of which it disposes, the idealism that animates its people, her magnificent contribution, as a result of her unparalleled productive power, for the relief of human suffering and the rehabilitation of peoples and nations, be overlooked in a survey of the position which she holds, and which distinguishes her from her sister nations in both the new and old worlds.⁸⁴

Note here the outspoken recognition of the outstanding qualities and capacities that America possesses: international influence, economic and political power, prestige, wealth, idealism, productivity, and altruism. And so, given these recognized qualities, capacities, and potentialities, the Bahá'í writings are remarkably clear in their vision of America's mission and destiny. There are, however, great challenges facing the American nation that Bahá'í texts directly address. These are social deficits the solution of which will directly impact America's moral authority in terms of its world role. Among these social ills is racism, which is as persistent and pervasive as it is historic. “Racism is the most challenging issue confronting America” is the opening sentence in *The Vision of Race Unity*, an official Bahá'í statement published in 1991. Racism, in Bahá'í analysis, is the original sin of America.

(Many historians would agree.) Race unity is therefore a key to America's social salvation.

The Vision of Race Unity statement integrates racial harmony with America's destiny, as the two are coefficient with each other:

Aware of the magnitude and the urgency of the issue, we, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, speaking for the entire U.S. Bahá'í community, appeal to all people of goodwill to arise without further delay to resolve the fundamental social problem of this country. We do so because of our feeling of shared responsibility, because of the global experience of the Bahá'í community in effecting racial harmony within itself, and because of the vision that the sacred scriptures of our Faith convey of the destiny of America.

Thus, throughout the United States, Bahá'ís actively promote a message of race unity, equality of women and men, and other teachings that can help make America a better place.

Religious communities are proper objects of scientific study, where their professions may literally be measured against their actual practices. Like other faith-communities, Bahá'ís have faith that an ideal can become real. The efficacy of these Bahá'í endeavors have been documented in several sociological studies, such as in the 2006 monograph, *The Equality of Women and Men: The Experience of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, by Deborah K. van den Hoonaard, Canada Research Chair in Qualitative Research and Analysis at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, and Will C. van den Hoonaard, Professor at the University of New Brunswick and author of *Walking the Tightrope: Ethical Issues for Qualitative Researchers*.⁸⁵ On the race relations front, doctoral research on the Bahá'í community of Atlanta, Georgia, revealed that “nearly one-fourth were black or African American,” which is a significant demographic finding given the problem of self-segregation in American religious settings. The author of that study, a social scientist, observed that Bahá'í efforts to promote race unity in Atlanta “inform African American Bahá'ís in a way that Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X cannot.”⁸⁶

In fine, the destiny of America is to play a preponderating role in the political process of establishing the Lesser Peace, as well as to lead all nations spiritually in an evolutionary process culminating in the Most Great Peace and a great world civilization. This future golden age is spoken of in glorious terms by Shoghi Effendi, whose vision of it reads, in condensed part, as follows:

- The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united . . .

- This commonwealth must . . . consist of a world legislature . . .
- A world executive, backed by an international Force, will . . . apply the laws enacted by this world legislature . . .
- A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise . . .
- A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised . . .
- A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization . . .
- A world language . . . will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue.
- A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures . . . will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations . . .
- Science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop . . .
- The press will . . . cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public . . .
- The economic resources of the world will be organized . . . and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated . . .
- Racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and cooperation . . .
- The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed . . .
- The inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated . . .
- Universal recognition of one God and . . . allegiance to one common Revelation—such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.⁸⁷

One cannot be but struck by the sheer scope, grandeur, and maturity of this vision. It would appear that America—once successful in its mission to taking a leading role in bringing about world unity, which will develop in stages and progress as a gradual process—will gracefully become part of the framework of the world federation of nations that it has helped shape. A great catalyst in this process will be the burgeoning influence of Bahá'í principles that will further animate the progressive outlook of world leaders.

Obviously none of this will happen by magic. One might well ask: How will this noble vision ultimately be realized in the realm of the mundane? How will all this be expected to come about? The short, but not simple, answer is this: Beyond its emphasis on egalitarian social principles, the Bahá'í Faith's grand vision of world unity necessarily requires a human spiritual transformation at the levels of the individual and community is needed in order to put those principles into practice, involving “the spiritualization of human consciousness and the emergence of the global civilization.”⁸⁸

Overcoming racism and other social evils clearly requires both policy and personal change. Here, precept and praxis go hand-in-hand. Bahá'í principles of unity will be effective only to the degree that they are put into practice, both individually and collectively. The role of Bahá'ís in America is to purify the inward life of their own community, to assail the racism and other social evils in the American nation at large, and to offer in practice and principle the Bahá'í vision of world unity.⁸⁹ This is concurrent with the international relations role of America in establishing the Lesser Peace, a process that has little to do with Bahá'í efforts.

In the full-page display ad, “The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace,” which appeared on page A29 in the *New York Times* on December 23, 2001,⁹⁰ the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States quotes from a Bahá'í prayer for America, revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the full text of which is as follows:

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.⁹¹

Here, this Bahá'í “Prayer for America” envisions America’s world role, which is “to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace.” In their complementary role as a spiritualizing and socially leavening influence, the American Bahá'ís—individually and collectively—strive to do their part in realizing this noble vision. As Bahá'í philosopher Alain Locke (1895–1954) has said:

America’s democracy must begin at home with a spiritual fusion of all her constituent peoples in brotherhood, and in an actual mutuality of life. Until democracy is worked out in the vital small scale of practical human relations, it can never, except as an empty formula, prevail on the national or international basis. Until it establishes itself in human hearts, it can never institutionally flourish. Moreover, America’s reputation and moral influence in the world depends on the successful achievement of this vital spiritual democracy within the lifetime of the present generation. (Material civilization alone does not safeguard the progress of a nation.) Bahá'í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the *salvation of democracy*. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.⁹²

24. *Ibid.*, 221.
25. *Ibid.*, 306.
26. *Ibid.*, 307.
27. *Ibid.*, 308.
28. *Ibid.*, 309.
29. *Ibid.*, 310.
30. *Ibid.*, 311.
31. *Ibid.*, 312.
32. *Ibid.*, 313.
33. *Ibid.*, 315.
34. *Ibid.*, 317.
35. *Ibid.*, 319.
36. *Ibid.*, 301.
37. "Robert A. F. Thurman" Web site.
38. Thurman, *Inner Revolution*, 221.
39. *Ibid.*, 280.
40. *Ibid.*, 282.
41. Dalai Lama, qtd. Ann Frechette, "Democracy and Democratization among Tibetans in Exile." *Journal of Asian Studies* 66.1 (February 2007): 97–127 [107].
42. Dalai Lama, *Constitution of Tibet* (Delhi: Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1963). Qtd. Frechette, "Democracy and Democratization," 108.
43. Dalai Lama, *Constitution of Tibet*. Qtd. Frechette, "Democracy and Democratization," 108–109.
44. Frechette, "Democracy and Democratization," 105.
45. Qtd. Frechette, "Democracy and Democratization," 116.
46. Biographical facts based on Dalai Lama's official biographical sketch, "The Dalai Lama's Biography."
47. Dalai Lama, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Lecture, University Aula, Oslo, December 11th, 1989."
48. *Ibid.*
49. Dalai Lama, "Remarks by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Members of the United States Congress in the Rotunda of the Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., 18 April 1991." Bunson, *Wisdom Teachings of the Dalai Lama*, 226.
50. Dalai Lama, "Statement by His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama on His Visit to the United States, September 1995." Bunson, *Wisdom Teachings of the Dalai Lama*, 224.
51. Dalai Lama, "Buddhism, Asian Values and Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 10.1 (January 1999): 3–7 [4].
52. *Ibid.*, 4.

CHAPTER 11: BAHÁ'Í MYTHS AND VISIONS OF AMERICA

1. Qtd. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 [1938]), 87–88. See also 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Talk at Sanatorium of Dr. C. M. Swingle, Cleveland, Ohio, 6 May 1912. Notes by Sigel T. Brooks." *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust,

1982), 104. (“All the cities of America seem to be large and beautiful, and the people appear prosperous. The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement; its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching, *and it will lead all nations spiritually*. The flag of freedom and banner of liberty have been unfurled here, but the prosperity and advancement of a city, the happiness and greatness of a country depend upon its hearing and obeying the call of God.” [Emphasis added.]

2. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “Tablet to the Bahá’ís of the Central States.” *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1993), 79.

3. This claim excludes what historians and phenomenologists of religion call “new religious movements” (NRMs), which properly belong to larger religious categories, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (presented in Chapter 6), which is part of Christianity (marginally so by orthodox standards), or like the Nation of Islam (treated in Chapter 8), which is an Islamic movement based in the United States.

4. Bahá’í International Community, “The Bahá’í Faith.”

5. Bahá’í International Community, “The Bahá’í World Community.”

6. Qtd. and trans. by Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1991 [1936]), 36.

7. Shoghi Effendi, “America and the Most Great Peace.” *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, 81.

8. See official announcement, “World Heritage Site: Bahá’í Holy Places.” See also Bahá’í International Community, “Baha’i shrines chosen as World Heritage sites.”

9. Vince Gerasole (CBS), “Rare Wilmette Temple Makes Cut in ‘7 Wonders’ List” (April 30, 2007).

10. Christopher Buck, “The Eschatology of Globalization: Bahá’u’lláh’s Multiple-Messiahship Revisited.” *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Babi-Bahá’í Faiths*. Ed. Moshe Sharon. *Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions*, 104 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 143–178; idem, “A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahá’u’lláh and Cross-Cultural Messianism.” *In Iran*. Ed. Peter Smith (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986), 157–179.

11. Bahá’u’lláh, “Queen Victoria.” *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 2002), 91.

12. This section is primarily based on a prior publication by the author: Christopher Buck, “Baha’i Faith and Social Action.” *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*. Ed. Gary L. Anderson and Kathryn G. Herr (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), vol. 1, 208–213.

13. Bahá’í World Centre. “The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: Its Place in Bahá’í Literature.” *The Bahá’í World* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1993), 107.

14. Bahá’u’lláh. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1978), 67.

15. See Armin Eschragi, “‘Undermining the Foundations of Orthodoxy’: Some Notes on the Báb’s Shari’ah (Sacred Law).” *A Most Noble Pattern: Essays in*

the Study of the Writings of the Báb. Ed. Todd Lawson (Oxford: George Ronald, forthcoming).

16. Universal House of Justice, *The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1973), 5.

17. David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, A.D. 1900–2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

18. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911–1912*. 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969), 159.

19. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 3–4.

20. Bahá'u'lláh, "Queen Victoria." *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), 90.

21. *Ibid.*, 92.

22. Bahá'í International Community, "Sustainable Development and the Human Spirit." Based on the statement, "The Most Vital Challenge," presented to the Plenary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Earth Summit '92).

23. *Ibid.*

24. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by Marzieh Gail et al. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), 104.

25. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "5 September 1912. Talk at St. James Methodist Church, Montreal, Canada," *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 318.

26. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979 [1944]), 396–397.

27. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992), 52.

28. The author is indebted to Bahá'í scholar Peter Terry for compiling this list of heads of state of the Americas, who were contemporary with Bahá'u'lláh in 1872–1873. E-mail dated September 19, 2008. (Posting on the "Tarikh" listserve.)

29. Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour: Messages from Shoghi Effendi to the North American Bahá'ís, 1932–1946* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2002), paragraph 158.3.

30. Reported by the Bahá'í historian Nabil-i-Zarandí, qtd. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 263.

31. Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour: Messages from Shoghi Effendi to the North American Bahá'ís, 1932–1946*, paragraph 158.3.

32. Robert Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith and American Protestantism* (Th.D.: Harvard University, 1990). Abstract.

33. Robert Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited: The American Bahá'í Sacred History of America." Chapter 7. *The Bahá'í Faith and American Protestantism* (Th.D.: Harvard University, 1990), 1. The present writer is grateful to Dr. Stockman for his permission to draw from this chapter in his dissertation. Credit goes to David

Merrick, of Edinburgh, Scotland, for providing this chapter by e-mail, with Dr. Stockman's permission. The page numbering used here, however, does not correspond with the completed dissertation.

34. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 1, n. 1.
35. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
36. Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 3.
37. *Ibid.*, 2.
38. *Ibid.*, 2.
39. *Ibid.*, 165.
40. *Ibid.*, 165.
41. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 7.
42. *Ibid.*, 17.
43. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States is the annually elected governing council of the American Bahá'í community.
44. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 17.
45. Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 40.
46. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Talk at Howard University, Washington, D.C. (23 April 1912)." Translated by Amin Banani. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*. 2nd ed. (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 45–46.
47. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 46.
48. Louis Auchincloss, *Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000); A. Clements Kendrick, *Woodrow Wilson: World Statesman* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987); Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
49. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*. Third printing (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 36.
50. David Steigerwald, *Wilsonian Idealism in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
51. Stephen Skowronek, "The Reassociation of Ideas and Purposes: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition." *American Political Science Review* 100 (2006): 385–401 [396].
52. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), 311–312.
53. *Ibid.*, 109.
54. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 88.
55. Gregory S. Butler, "Visions of a Nation Transformed: Modernity and Ideology in Wilson's Political Thought." *Journal of Church and State* 39.1 (Winter 1997): 37–51.
56. National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of the Bahá'ís of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace." *New York Times* (December 23, 2001): A29.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*

59. Ibid.

60. Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy*. Ed. Isabel Fraser Chamberlain (Boston: The Tudor Press, 1917), 85. While no Persian or Arabic original exists to authenticate this statement recorded in English, its purport is accepted.

61. Qtd. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace" (December 23, 2001).

62. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 [1938]), 87–88.

63. NSA, "Destiny of America."

64. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 36–37.

65. Thanks to Steve Cooney of New Zealand for this suggestion. E-mail dated July 26, 2008. (Posting on the "Tarikh" listserve.)

66. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 256.

67. Henry H. Jessup, "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations." *The World's Parliament of Religions: An illustrated and popular story of the world's first Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*. Vol. 2. Ed. John H. Barrows. Chicago: Parliament Pub. Co., 1893), 1122–1126. Thanks to Reed Breneman for this reference, and also for pointing out that it was George A. Ford who read the paper on Jessup's behalf. E-mail dated July 26, 2008. (Posting on the "Tarikh" listserve.) See review by Eric J. Ziolkowski, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64.3 (Autumn 1996): 662–664, who notes that the editor of this collection had compared the two variant versions of Jessup's paper to produce a definitive text (663).

68. Jessup, "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," 1125–1126. These subsequently celebrated words of Bahá'u'lláh come from Edward G. Browne, "Introduction," in *'Abdu'l-Bahá, A Traveler's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*. Trans. Edward G. Browne, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 2: xxxix–xl. Robert Stockman points out that "Jessup did not reproduce the quotation exactly as Browne gave it." See *idem, Thornton Chase: The First American Bahá'í* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2001), Chapter 11.

69. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 37.

70. Ibid., 126–127.

71. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 19.

72. Ibid., 90–91.

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80. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), 89.
81. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 38.
82. Huddleston, "The Spiritual Destiny of America and World Peace," 117.
83. *Ibid.*, 132.
84. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 36.
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88. *Century of Light*. Prepared under the direction of the Universal House of Justice (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2001 [2003 printing]), 138.
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90. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace." *New York Times* (December 23, 2001): A29.
91. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Prayer for America." *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), 25.
92. Alain Locke, "America's Part in World Peace" (1925). Qtd. Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005), 241 (emphasis added). Under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *World Order* magazine has published two special issues on Alain Locke. See Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bahá'í Pluralist." Special Issue: Alain Locke: Dean of the Harlem Renaissance and Baha'í Race-Amity Leader. *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 7–36; Alain Locke, "Alain Locke in His Own Words: Three Essays" ("The Gospel for the Twentieth Century" [39–42]; "Peace Between Black and White in the United States" [42–45]; "Five Phases of Democracy" [45–48]; Alain Locke, "The Moon Maiden" [37]) *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 37–48 (previously unpublished essays, introduced by Christopher Buck and co-edited with *World Order* editor Dr. Betty J. Fisher); and (2) Christopher Buck and Betty J. Fisher, ed. and intro., "Alain Locke: Four Talks Redefining Democracy, Education, and World Citizenship." *World Order* 38.3 (2006/2007): 21–41. (Alain Locke, "The Preservation of the American Ideal"; "Stretching Our Social Mind"; "On Becoming World Citizens"; "Creative Democracy.")

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION: HOW MINORITY FAITHS REDEFINED AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE

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