God & Apple Pie

Religious Myths and
Visions of America

Christopher Buck

Introduction by
J. Gordon Melton

Interior of the main sanctuary of Rodef Shalom synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with American and Israeli flags flanking the *bimah* (elevated podium from which the sacred Torah scroll is read aloud during a synagogue service).

Dr. J. Leonard Levy (Rabbi of Rodef Shalom Congregation from 1901–1917), prepared a special Passover *haggadah* ("the telling" of Exodus, recited on the first two nights of Passover) that calls for placing an American flag on the *seder* (ritual and ceremonial dinner) table. Rabbi Levy's ritual includes this remarkable liturgical reading:

> *To us the United States of America stands as the foremost among nations, granting the greatest liberty to all who dwell here. Therefore we grace our table with the National flag. . . . The immortal Declaration of Independence is the Great Charter announced before Pharaoh by Moses. The Abolitionists are the product of the Bible . . . The Fourth of July is the American Passover. Thanksgiving is the American Feast of Tabernacles.*

(Image courtesy of Rodef Shalom Congregation Archives.)

for Nahzy Abadi Buck
and our sons, Takur and Taraz

Contents

Acknowledgments

I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow, and I have borrowed a lot.

—Woodrow Wilson (1914)[1]

Some extraordinary people helped make this book possible.

God & Apple Pie is the new title of the revised edition of *Religious Myths and Visions of America: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role*, originally published by Praeger/ABC-CLIO in 2009. The 2015 revised edition of *God & Apple Pie* is now published by Educator's International Press (EIP), and is distributed by International Publishers Marketing (IPM). My thanks to William ("Bill") Clockel, publisher, for taking the business risk of republishing a previously published title, under this revised edition. *God & Apple Pie* is published under a reversion of future rights agreement for a revised edition, kindly granted by ABC-CLIO on December 20, 2012. My thanks to Suzanne Paris (Rights & Permissions Coordinator, ABC-CLIO) for making this possible. The first edition was marketed primarily to libraries, not to trade bookstores. Now, thanks to EIP and IPW, *God & Apple Pie* is available in trade bookstores across the nation and is promoted internationally as well. The book that you are now reading was acclaimed by the *Journal of American Studies* reviewer as "an original contribution to American studies."[2] This revised edition updates the 2009 title, with the hope and expectation that *God & Apple Pie* will attract widespread interest, now that it is being sold in retail bookstores.

Endorsements

First, I wish to thank the following scholars for their respective endorsements of *Religious Myths and Visions of America*:

- Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor, School of Communication, University of Nebraska at Omaha—author of *Forgotten Founders: Benjamin Franklin, the Iroquois, and the Rationale for the American Revolution* (1982) and (with Donald A. Grinde, Jr.) *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (1991)—especially for his overall endorsement of my book:

  > *Religious Myths and Visions of America* is an intellectual feast, sparkling with original interpretations of how many religions have helped shape America's national character, from the Iroquois origin story, to Christian, Mormon, Black Muslim, and Baha'i beliefs, among others. This book will provoke insights and controversy for years to come.

- Todd Lawson, Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto—author of *Gnostic Apocalypse in Islam: The Qur'an and the Bábí Movement* (2009) and *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought* (2009)—with special thanks for his positive evaluation of this book's methodological contribution:

  > An experiment on the 'idea of America' with engaging results, this book examines the role of ten religions in redefining America's world role—a topic of importance given America's influence in world affairs. On the premise that America is both 'nation and notion,' this project is a breath of methodological fresh air. *Religious Myths and Visions of America* is a novel, imaginative, and rigorously scholarly contribution to comparative religion, worthy of serious attention and debate. Of general contemporary and historical interest to students, scholars, and thinking people everywhere."

- William E. Paden, Professor of Religion, University of Vermont—author of *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (1988/1994), and *Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion* (1992/2003)—notably for his comment on the timely relevance of the book:

  > Christopher Buck's new book is a timely and highly readable consideration of the way American religions have continued to remythologize the country. To this theme the author brings impressive research and notable facility in the comparative study of myth while at the same time presenting the material in an entirely accessible, lucid, and interesting manner. Few topics are more relevant today, in a time when the self-definition of Americans is such an influential force on the global stage.

- Jay Parini, D. E. Axinn Professor of English and Creative Writing, Middlebury College—author of *Promised Land: Thirteen Books That Changed America* (2008)—significantly for his insight that "America's idea of itself" is "central to our national psyche" and is therefore a key issue in American studies:

  > In this remarkable book, Dr. Buck examines the key religious ideas that have shaped America's idea of itself. It's a broadly informed and beautifully written work that reveals the various strains in American mythology and religion. This country has always had a visionary aspect, a sense of the numinous; this impulse has taken many different forms. I can think of no subject in American studies more central to our national psyche. This is an important, interesting, thought-provoking work.

- Andrew Rippin, Emeritus Professor of History (Specialist in Islamic Studies with an interest in the Qur'an and the history of its interpretation), former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Victoria, Canada—author of *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (2005), and editor of *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (2006) and *The Islamic World* (2008)—for his welcome assessment:

  > This is an ambitious and unique work, covering a broad range of religious visions of America in their global context. Buck's firm theoretical framework and rigorous documentation make this a significant contribution to contemporary discussions of the place, role, and future of the diversity of religions that make up America today.

- Richard W. Thomas, Emeritus Professor of History, Michigan State University—author of *Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress* (1993) and *Understanding Interracial Unity: A Study of U.S. Race Relations* (1996)—for calling attention to the connections between religion and race in the American context:

  > For those of us who have yearned for a more readable and scholarly book on the multifaceted ways in which minorities, be they racial, cultural, or religious, have 'redefined America's world role,' Christopher Buck's most recent book is a welcome addition to the fields of racial, cultural, and ethnic studies. Using myths and visions of minority faiths, Buck has introduced an engaging and fresh new approach to understanding and appreciating the influence of these faiths on America's role in the world. He does this by bringing these minority faiths from the periphery of scholarly discourse to the center of a new, more inclusive scholarly

discourse. Scholars have always known about the impact of race and ethnicity on religion throughout American history, but Buck's contribution is in the way that he explains the historical connections between race and religion and in the process of shaping America's role in the world. Above all, Buck keeps the reader engaged and intrigued in a study that reads like a good novel by a warm fire on a cold winter evening.

Scholarly Advice

For their assistance with the manuscript itself, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of these scholars as well:

- *Introduction:* J. Gordon Melton, Distinguished Professor of American Religious History of Baylor University's Institute for Studies in Religion, for writing his very fine Introduction to *God & Apple Pie*.
- *Chapter 2:* Barbara A. Mann, Ph.D. (Native American, Ohio Bear Clan Seneca), Associate Professor, Honors College, University of Toledo, for reading Chapter 2, and for offering constructive comments and advice. Mann is author of *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000, 3rd printing, 2006).
- *Chapter 2:* Donald A. Grinde, Jr., Ph.D. (Native American, Yamassee), Professor, Department of Transnational Studies, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, for reading Chapter 2, and for commenting favorably on it. Grinde is editor and author of *A Political History of Native Americans* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press/Sage, 2002 [Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2003]).
- *Chapter 2:* Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor, School of Communication, University of Nebraska at Omaha (endorser, see above) for reading Chapter 2, and for offering constructive comments and advice.
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field of research and recipient of the 1996 Outstanding Book Award, Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America.

- *Chapter 9:* Andrew Rippin, Emeritus Professor of History, Specialist in Islamic Studies (with an interest in the Qur'an and the history of its interpretation) and former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Victoria, for his assistance with Chapter 9, "Contemporary Muslim Myths and Visions of America."
- *Chapter 9:* Imam Abu Laith Luqman Ahmad, for his kind permission to publish excerpts from his essay and social commentary, "Islam American Style" (2004).
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- *Chapter 11:* Robert Stockman, Director of the Wilmette Institute, and Instructor of Religious Studies at DePaul University, for access to his Harvard dissertation cited in Chapter 11, "Baha'i Myths and Visions of America."
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Design & Production of *God & Apple Pie*

- *Cover Design:* Taraz Buck, for his superb cover design, which captures so well the "spirit and power" of *God & Apple Pie*.
- *Photographs:* David Smith, for contributing several photographs that enhance and add "visual rhetoric" to the "God and country" themes of *God & Apple Pie*.
- *Production:* William ("Bill") Clockel, for overseeing the production and publication of *God & Apple Pie*, and to Marianna Vertullo, for her professional work in the design and production of this book.

Professional & Personal

And, last but not least—for professional and/or personal support of this project—I am indebted to the following individuals:

- Bobbi Lyons, of Ontario, Canada, for preparing and proofing a manuscript text, in Microsoft Word, based on the first edition of *Religious Myths and Visions of America*, so that I could begin work on the revised edition (*God & Apple Pie*).
- Edward ("Ned") Walker, Ph.D, professor, Department of Entomology and the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, Michigan State University, for his research assistance.
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Christopher Buck
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Notes

1. Woodrow Wilson, "Woodrow Wilson: The Man," *Journal of Education* 79.16 (April 16, 1914): 427–428 [427].
2. Richard G. Kyle, Review of Religious Myths and Visions of America. *Journal of American History* 98.1 (June 2011): 279–280.

Introduction

Almost from the beginning of my many years of looking at the spectrum of religious groups that had been spawned in the United States over the last two centuries, I came face to face with churches that displayed their patriotism, often in seemingly inappropriate ways; preachers that denounced the evil that America had become; and still other groups that tried to consider in a serious and sophisticated manner the theological and cosmological significance of the country in which they resided and the meaning of being Americans. Such activity by groups brought me back to my own context as a young Methodist minister whose church's founders had felt compelled to add a statement on America in our Articles of Religion. As the church is being formally organized, which occurs on the heels of the American Revolution, they issued a formal statement of loyalty to the government of the new United States, part of a strategy of asserting loyalty by a group largely identified with the Tory cause during the years of fighting. As I took my initial seminary courses in Methodist history, I had to ask myself what it meant to make patriotic assertions amid the theological commitments to all the peoples of the world encompassed by God's grace. After all, I lived in a land not even known to exist by the biblical writers.

These beginning questions would lead fifty years later to a variety of observations about America and its place in the religious world. First, through the nineteenth century into the twentieth, America moved from a situation in which Christianity was the religion of a minority but nevertheless the dominant religion of the country (its only competition coming from a very small Jewish community and the steadily declining Native American religions) to one in which it is the majority religion by a large margin, but now faces competition from substantial communities of the world's religions from Hinduism and Buddhism to Islam and Western Esotericism. Not only is competition from the outside very real, but internally, the Christian community is divided into hundreds of denominations, some of which offer very distinctive visions of "True" Christianity—Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints—visions different enough that Christian spokespersons single them

out with harsh labels like "heresy" and "cult." Some would even be labeled "un-American" when, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, they challenged American sacred symbols by refusing to salute the flag.

Because they emerged from the Revolution into a relatively secular nation, the nineteenth-century Christians felt they had to articulate their place and role in this new kind of country that had been created by such an unchristian activity as revolution. Through the first half of the century, they argued about condoning such an unbiblical act which appeared, for many, to go against Jesus words of rendering unto Caesar and the Apostle Paul's admonition to be subject to the civil powers under which Christians found themselves. They had to find ways, on the one hand, to identify with ancient Israel in a context in which separation of church and state was an emerging reality, and, on the other hand, to find a new way to affirm the role of God in people's lives. They would find their answers in the long-term success of their evangelistic endeavors which decade by decade brought members into the church well ahead of the rate of population growth, and in the vision of America as a unique land, an inheritor of biblical promises to Israel with a destiny to be a light to the world's peoples and a key role in bringing into visible reality the kingdom of God.

That vision of America would have immense implications for all Americans. It would be integrated more or less self-consciously into Christian theology and become part of the Protestant Christian apologetic. It would become integrated into the all-important myth about race. It has undergirded the privileging those of Northern and Western European extraction—identified as the "real" Americans—and thus justify calling into question the Americanism of those of African, Asian, and Eastern European heritage. By the late twentieth century, it would force those adhering to other than Christian religions to add the task of thinking theologically about America to their list of "must dos" on their pilgrimage into the American mainstream. Occasionally, groups had to prioritize such ruminations as a simple survival mechanism when faced with attempts to deny them any future as American citizens, as was done to American Shintoists and Buddhists during World War II.

Secondly, while American religious history has been dominated by the Protestant Christian community, it became a widely diversified community. Starting with less than 20 denominations at its founding, by the end of the nineteenth century, some 300 Christian denominations had appeared, Judaism had begun its diversification, and a fledgling Esoteric community had emerged. Today more than a thousand Christian denominations dot the land, and easily many more groups, representatives of the world's rich religious heritage, now fill out the religious landscape, not to mention the still relatively small but very vocal atheist/humanist groups. They present a massive scene upon which even the most dedicated observer can scarcely attempt to get a handle. And all of two thousand religious groups have an opinion on America.

Some, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Children of God of the 1970s, denounced America as a rotting, failing system that has no ultimate place in God's coming kingdom and called believers to abandon it. On the other end of the spectrum, groups found in America a portal for entering the kingdom, resulting in their developing a heightened sense of patriotism. The "I AM" religious movement, which emerged as World War II loomed on the horizon, saw their founder as a reincarnation of George Washington and have continued their commitment to a divinely ordained America in the decades since. Both extremes, with multiple positions in between, would find their place in the nineteenth century in the Anglo-Israel movement, one of the more unique theological attempts to justify initially British, but then American, global expansion by identifying the Anglo-Saxon nations as the present-day survivals of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Anglo-Israelism found its way into numerous different church communities, none more so than Adventism, where it would finally emerge as a key element in the theology of televangelist Herbert W. Armstrong who would distribute hundreds of thousands of copies of his *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* book.

Far from being an interesting additional topic for the religious dilettante, the discussion, around the theological reality that is America, periodically bursts forth as an important item on the nation's agenda, from the place of prayer services in the White House, to the issuance of an annual government report on religious persecution, to the rise of contemporary terrorism. As one traces radical Islam, for example, one arrives at the writings of one Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian who spent some of his younger years in America, and came away with his own vision of a country mired in sin and decadence. He would posit America as the image of everything he hoped to escape in promoting the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Now, in all honesty, I must admit that over the years as I encountered all of the intriguing, even fascinating, ideas about America in the great cosmic scheme of things, I never got around to systematically gathering the different visions and trying to make sense of them in any detailed fashion. Thus, I have been more than happy to receive, and now with this modest introduction, pass along to my scholarly colleagues and the reading public the work of Christopher Buck. During his years of observation and research, he has surveyed the spectrum of visions of America that have energized and motivated the America's religious community, and has selected from among them a sample that both (1) represents the spectrum of opinion about America and its importance, and (2) highlights the more important visions of America that have shaped and are continuing to shape the way we understand this country we call home. His work calls us to become self-conscious about the assumptions we use in our day-to-day movements that massage the ways we approach our neighbors, our colleagues at work, and the politicians for whom we vote.

Buck begins with the visions of America present at the founding of the nation, aspects of which still strongly permeate the culture today, and have

found a new home among conservative Protestants in their innovative idea of a Christian America. Amid the Protestant context, we often forget the role of the Roman Catholic Church, which became the largest religious body in America in the 1840s and is now three times larger than its nearest competitor. At the end of the nineteenth century, a controversy on Americanism would erupt around Catholic visions of their place in a changing world that would drive it from participation in the nation's public square for a half-century, and molded its reentrance after World War II.

And then there are all the other-than-Christian religions, from Ahmadiyya Muslims to Zoroastrians, all of which possess their own vision of America that shapes their appropriation of life in the United States and guides their development as their place in the nation was challenged, then accepted, and most recently affirmed and even celebrated by the nation as a whole. We have watched as Buddhists have carved out a place as cultural peacemakers, Muslims have struggled with separation of religion and government, and Baha'is have tried to understand the communication of their founder, Baha'u'llah, with the presidents of the Americas collectively, and with 'Abdu'l-Baha's statements about the destiny of America in particular. All of this occurs in the ebb and flow of religious life. One day we envision the possible unity of America's religions only to be thrown up against the many harsh divisions, which motivates us once more to seek realms of agreement, which again highlights the array of issues that can drive wedges between those who accept the label "American" as part of their self-identity.

In conclusion, I can, as a scholar, reflect on the contribution that this book, *God and Apple Pie: Religious Myths and Visions of America*, is making to our understanding of the American mosaic and how various segments of the religious community have found their way to being American. As an informed citizen I welcome its information that allows me to empathize with and make informed decisions relative to those with whom I might align (or oppose) as I sally forth in the public square. And on a personal level, I welcome the author's invitation for me to meet anew the residents of my neighborhood, those who shop in the same stores I do, send their children to the same schools my grandchildren attend, and diligently work toward their own appropriation of the American dream.

J. Gordon Melton
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January 2015

Figure 1.1. The Civil War erupted on April 12, 1861 when Fort Sumter (Charleston Harbor, South Carolina) fell under Confederate artillery attack. Major Robert Anderson, garrison commander, surrendered the very next day. Soon after, on May 21, 1861, Currier & Ives, one of America's leading printmakers, copyrighted this lithograph of "The Spirit of 61," with the inscription, *"God, our country and liberty!!"*

Here, "Columbia," defiantly brandishing her sword and bearing the Union flag, is the spirit of America personified. Just as "Columbia" symbolizes America, so also can certain values—secular and religious—enshrine the very "idea of America."

(Public domain. Library of Congress. See http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ 2003674564/. Accessed January 12, 2015.)

Chapter 1

America: Nation and Notion

Nations provoke fantasy.

—Lauren Gail Berlant (1991)[1]

America is not a geographic so much as a visionary concept and entity.

—Kevin Lewis (1999)[2]

Any vital myth does not hide in the hinterland of a "realm of ideas" but impinges upon the life of a people as a spring of their action. To give serious attention to the myth of American destiny in its various forms is to heed the concrete courses of action that are excited by it and that in turn affect it.

—Conrad Cherry (1998)[3]

This book is about an unusual *religious* topic: the United States of America ("America").

"America" is, at once, nation and notion, country and creed, republic and rhetoric, entity and ideology, sovereignty and salience. In other words, "America" is real and abstract. There are secular ideas about America, and then there are religious perspectives on America. Given America's preeminent position in the world today, the present volume treats the relationship of the supernatural world to the world's superpower. In fine, this book is about Providence and principle—as these relate to America.

The proverbial idea of "God and country"—as applied to America—is presented in a wide array of religious texts that are the subject of this study. The idea of America, as a religious concept, is an intriguing social phenomenon—one that has received considerable scholarly attention in terms of American Protestantism, but yet remains to be fully explored with respect to America's other religions, which have been termed by James H. Moorhead as America's "minority faiths."[4] The study of how minority faiths have redefined America's sense of national purpose is what *Religious Myths and Visions of America* is about.

The fact that America is presented in a somewhat novel way in this study is perhaps the main claim for the book's originality and contribution to American studies. Beyond presenting these religious views of America, an effort will be made to make sense of them. What significance, if any, do these religious ideas about America have for the twenty-first century? Patterns will be identified and compared. At a deeper level of analysis, meaningful connections will be made, and a web of significance will emerge. At the end of this book, the reader will see America in a new light.

As the epigraph above says, "Nations provoke fantasy." Myths and visions of various nations are nothing new. Throughout history, peoples have had visions of their origins, destiny, and mission, as Donald White points out: "For Romans, the worldview was a Pax Romana embodied in a divine Caesar; for Arabs, it was Islam; for Englishmen, it was the imperialism of the 'White Man's Burden'; for Soviet Russia, it was Marxist communism."[5] In much the same way, visionary "America" has served as a source of social cohesion and has imbued the country with a sense of national purpose. "America" is a word that has taken on mythic proportions.

"America" is not in the Bible, nor in the Qur'an (the holy book of Islam), nor in the vast majority of the scriptures of the great world religions. Yet "America" today pulsates with religious significance. How is that possible? This is because some religions, in the modern context, have invested America with religious significance. As a survey of religions that have attached some kind of spiritual meaning to America—that is, "a theology of America"—it is precisely this ideological and social phenomenon that has determined the selection process for which religions have been included with the scope of this study, to the exclusion of others.

Not every religion in America has a religious view of America. Such faith-communities as the Quakers, the Amish, the Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians, to name a few, have not been represented in this book. The reason is simple: most religions do not have identifiably religious convictions about America. Those that do have been included in this book. Eleven religions have been selected for their distinctive perspectives on America: (1) Native American religion (Iroquois); (2) Protestant Christianity (the Puritans); (3) the Christian Right; (4) Roman Catholicism; (5) Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist); (6) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons); (7) Christian Identity (White nationalists); (8) the Nation of Islam (Black nationalists); (9) Contemporary Islam (especially Radical Islamists and Progressive Muslims); (10) Buddhism (Tibetan and Soka Gakkai); and (11) the Baha'i Faith. These eleven religions were not chosen because of *what* they say about America, but simply *because* they have something to say about America. If more such religions come to light, then a revised and expanded edition of *Religious Myths and Visions of America* may be called for. This book therefore invites serious reflection on what it means to be an American, particularly from a religious perspective.

The selection process, in the planning stages of this book, was not easy. The eleven religions privileged in this study neither have the same beliefs about America nor hold those beliefs with the same degree of religious conviction. American Judaism, for instance, exemplifies what is referred to as "Jewish Americanism" or what Jonathan D. Sarna calls the "cult of synthesis."[6] Apart from various prayers for America, however, there is little by way of any Jewish doctrine regarding America. Where are actual religious doctrines regarding America to be found? Clearly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) and the Baha'i Faith have clearly enunciated beliefs about the spiritual destiny of America. Similarly, although parochially with some concession to the social fact of religious pluralism, the Christian Right seeks to promote Christian values consistent with America as a "Christian nation." What most, but not all of these eleven religions do share is a sense of America's mission—or the "world role" to which America should aspire.

To recapitulate, the single most important criterion for the selection of a religion for inclusion in this study is that it must have something to say about America, whether positive or negative. One would think that this would include all of the religions that have specifically American origins. In the case of the Seventh-day Adventists, which is one of the most successful of America's indigenous religions, a conscious effort has been made by Adventists to distance the religion from any hint of American religious nationalism: "In Adventism, the American dream is reinterpreted; in Mormonism, Christianity is reinterpreted. Adventists have become un-American in an effort to be more truly American."[7] The result was a decidedly dark apocalyptic vision of America—a vision that, theoretically speaking, is germane and otherwise within the scope of this book. For instance, one Adventist, in 1851, interpreted the "two horns like a lamb"—a description of the Beast in Revelation 13—as denoting "the civil and religious power of this nation [America]—its Republican civil power, and its Protestant ecclesiastical power."[8] American religious power was viewed as corrupt for having instituted Sunday rather than Saturday Sabbath, which is a central issue considering the Sabbatarianism that has indelibly stamped Adventist identity.

Very late in the writing of the first edition of *God & Apple Pie*, the author came across this dissertation: Dawn L. Hutchinson, "Antiquity and Social Reform: Religious Experience in the Unification Church, Feminist Wicca and the Nation of Yahweh" (2007).[89] But it was really far too late to include these religions in the present volume. Therefore, a very brief mention will be made here of their respective visions of America. "The Unification Church," Hutchinson relates, "offered a way to purify the morally corrupt American society and the rest of the world through perfected families."[10] The Unification Church's vision of America was most optimistic in 1976, when America was celebrating the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence: "[Rev. Sun Myung] Moon saw the celebration of the bicentennial of America as an opportunity to stress the providential destiny of America."[11]

"Feminist Wicca," Hutchinson continues, "proposed a vision of a peaceful American society in which women and men shared power equally."[12] "The Nation of Yahweh," says the author regarding this separatist religion, "meant . . . to wage a war against the white establishment in the United States, one action at a time, dismantling the power structure of the persecutors of African-Americans."[13]

In *Myths America Lives By*, Richard T. Hughes, Distinguished Professor of Religion and the Director of the Center for Faith and Learning at Pepperdine University, presents five foundational myths of America: (1) the Myth of the Chosen Nation; (2) the Myth of Nature's Nation; (3) the Myth of the Christian Nation; (4) the Myth of the Millennial Nation, and (5) the Myth of the Innocent Nation.[14] These are powerful social myths that have largely shaped mainstream American identity. Moreover, these fives myths are predominantly representative of what may be called the Protestant master myth of America. Indeed, both Hughes himself and the writer of the foreword, Robert Bellah, write from a decidedly Christian perspective: "Richard Hughes writes as a Christian and so do I."[15] These foundational myths form what is called American civil religion, which may be defined as follows:

> American civil religion is an institutionalized set of beliefs about the nation, including a faith in a transcendent deity who will protect and guide the United States as long as its people and government abide by his laws. The virtues of liberty, justice, charity, and personal integrity are all pillars of this religion and lend a moral dimension to its public decision-making processes quite different from the realpolitik that presumably underlies the calculations of states not equally favored by divine providence. American civil religion is clearly an offshoot of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it is not confined to conventional denominational categories.[16]

While *Myths America Lives By* is a framing statement about American civil religion, the present volume treats a wider array of myths of America. The Native American, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Christian Identity, Black Muslim, traditional Muslim, Buddhist, and Baha'i religions each has its own special metaphorics (ideating images) of "the American experiment." These are communicated through religious *myths* and *visions* of America.

At the outset, it is important to define what is meant by religious "myths" by defining what myths are *not*. For our purposes, myths are not merely "tall tales" or travesties of truth. Rather, religious myths are tapestries into which the woof of social truths are woven into the warp of sacred narrative. In other words, religious myths are spiritual and social ideals are enshrined in narrative form. A religious myth, if not literally true, can therefore be called a "true lie." This is because the function of storytelling

is not to rehearse *historical fact*, but to convey *spiritual truth*. Just as Aesop's fables each had a "moral" to the story, religious myths are vehicles of moral values. This accords with Peter D. Salins's definition: "Myths are not mere fantasies or untruths. Myths are exaggerated or simplified representations of human traits and situations, paradigms of society and morality, that are based on some underlying truth."[17] Put more positively, myths "function as paradigmatic truths, informing social norms and categories used to describe identities."[18]

The "myth of America" exists in a variety of forms. Closely associated with the "myth of America" is a sense of national purpose, or "mission." Historically, the dominant myth of America has been the Protestant "master myth" of America. For instance, there were two biblical motifs that formed the historic taproot of America's sense of destiny: America's identification with ancient Israel and the Kingdom of God.[19] Beginning with the Puritans, the Protestant mission in America was to *colonize*, to *Christianize*, and to *civilize*. The Puritans have vanished, but vestiges of the religious meaning that they invested in America persist to this day. These religious visions of America, and the ideals that they enshrine, are part of a process that may be thought of as *the symbolic construction of America*. The idea of America has been summed up in this succinct statement:

> America's sense of itself always had a self-conscious, even ideological, side. First, the United States, founded by a rebellion against legitimate authority, had to explain and justify that rebellion to mankind. Then, the growing nation had to justify taking over a continent from its previous owners. Finally, it had to persuade the immigrants arriving on that continent that, in assimilating to the American nation, they were not being false to themselves, that Americanism was in some sense a universal creed to which all could be admitted.[20]

Common to most of these religious visions of America is some sort of belief in "God and country." Any belief that links God with America can rightly be called a "theology of America." Dean Hoge was the first to coin the neologism, "theology of America."[21] And so a religiously inspired perspective on America is typically a "theology of America," although this would certainly not hold true for a nontheistic religion like Buddhism. Thus, except for nontheistic religions such as Buddhism, religious views of America may generally be described as "theologies of America," as Hoge explains: "Any living religious community has theological views about many things, and these things include the nation. In America such views might be called 'theology of America'."[22]

Obviously, there is no single religious idea or "theology of America." Just as there are different religions in America, so there are sundry religious visions of America. By presenting a range of religious perspectives on America, this book invites serious reflection on what it means to be

an American. However, it is not enough merely to catalog these views on America. It is important to make sense of them as well. And in order to make sense of competing ideas about America, one may ask if these ideas reflect any *patterns*. If so, can these patterns be explained? This is where comparative method generally comes into play. This is a challenge since there is no well-defined "method" to follow, as Americanist Donald White points out: "The study of social myth has lacked coherent method."[23] Notwithstanding, the lack of consensus on method should not deter such a study from being undertaken. Often, the topic under study—and the questions that interrogate it—suggest an approach and method that intrinsically arise out of the very subject matter itself. That is the case in the present study.

In a word, America was founded on religious ideals and continues to be reshaped by them. The reader will discover that some of today's minority religions offer fresh ideas about America that enrich our understanding of the significance of America today, particularly as regards its place in the world today. To the extent that the minority faiths, as presented in this study, offer new ideas regarding America, one can say that *religions remythologize America*. In order to appreciate this concept of remythologizing, it will be necessary to relate minority religious visions of America to the Protestant "master myth" of America.

Civil Myths of America and Civil Religion

The *notion* of a nation is *nationalism*. American nationalism is an idealization of the character of America. The "idea of America"—to use academic parlance—has taken on mythic proportions. America has a national mythology, anchored in history but embellished by idealization. That mythic idealization has played a formative and sustaining role in "the construction of American nationhood."[24] Just as the American national character changes over time, as a function of social change, so do America's myths and symbols. Thus the late Canadian Americanist Sacvan Bercovitch wrote of "transformations in the symbolic construction of America."[25]

Nationalism and religion often combine to form religious nationalism, which typically takes on mythic proportions. "Religious nationalism is the fusion of nationalism and religion such that they are inseparable," according to Barbara-Ann J. Rieffer.[26] "It is a community of religious people or the political movement of a group of people heavily influenced by religious beliefs who aspire to be politically self-determining."[27] Religious nationalism can make great use of myth. "Myth is the primary language of historical memory," writes Richard Slotkin, "a body of traditional stories that have, over time, been used to summarize the course of our collective history and to assign ideological meanings to that history."[28] Political theorist George Schöpflin treats myths as an element in the formation and maintenance of

national identities, America being no exception. National myths function on both personal and social levels, according to Schöpflin, "so that individuals may construct their identities as individuals and simultaneously as members of a community."[29]

Nationalism incorporates myth.[30] Just as nationalism is an invented doctrine, so are myths. Myths are "true lies." The "lies" are the tall tales that myths tell, while mythic "truths" are the social precepts these tales convey. In other words, myths are fictions that serve as vehicles of truth. From this perspective, Mary Fulbrook states that "myths are stories which are not necessarily true, nor even believed to be true, but which have symbolic power."[31] Anthony D. Smith states that, "Modern nationalism can be seen in part as deriving from powerful, external, and premodern traditions, symbols, and myths, which are then taken up and recast in the nationalist ideologies of national mission and destiny as these emerge in the crucible of modernization"; Smith even speaks of "a symbiosis and even a fusion between the earlier religious myths and the nationalist ideal."[32] That symbolic power reinforces national ideology and thus national identity. As mythographer William Doty states: "Myths provide 'charters' insofar as they justify and exemplify the social order."[33] Myths capture social truths. While those truths are not the whole truth, they are the truths of a whole people.

Civil myths of America often have a religious dimension, reflecting a fusion of "God and country." Their hybridization has been noted by Anthony D. Smith.[34] Smith argues that nationalism "draws much of its passion, conviction and intensity from the belief in a national mission and destiny; and this belief in turn owes much to a powerful religious myth of ethnic election."[35] America, broadly speaking, has its myths of origin, myths of mission, and myths of destiny—the "master myth" being the collective Protestant myth of America, most famously secularized as American exceptionalism.[36] Thus one can speak of religious visions of America as a species of national myth. Traditionally, Protestant myths of America have served as the stained-glass windows of national ideals. They form a master myth of American destiny.[37] Protestant visions of America are a hybrid of religious and national myth, combining to form what has been termed "American civil religion."[38]

Sociologist Dean Hoge has outlined three basic civil visions of America, the first two of which originate in American Protestantism. The first vision of America is that of a model nation, a Puritan vision that "focused on making America an example to the world, a model society to show all the world what a godly and free nation can be."[39] The second vision "saw America as a chosen people with an obligation to work actively in the world to win others to American principles and to safeguard those principles everywhere."[40] Although weak at first, this vision was the direct precursor of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny: "It was clearly stated in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny,

that America's destiny was to settle the whole continent—and later, to bring freedom and civilization to all peoples."[41] Hoge also notes that this "activistic vision" of America "was a motivating source of the world Christian mission movement and of American expansionism in the late nineteenth century" in that "America would save the world for Christ or for democracy."[42] "A third vision of America's mission," Hoge goes on to say, "calls for internationalism based not on messianic ideas but on a posture of openness and cooperation, assuming that others have legitimate interests and identities and equally valid perceptions of truth."[43] Hoge connects this third ideal with Robert Bellah's ideal of a "world civil religion"[44]—a concept that the present writer will expand on in the "Conclusion" (Chapter 13). Examples of each of these three basic types of religious and civil visions of America appear throughout this book.

Religious Myths and Visions of America

Sociofunctionalism recognizes the fact that myths convey social and moral values. In the same vein, one may define a "religious myth of America" as an *"idealized narrative exemplifying key precepts and practices."* This is true insofar as the myth incorporates and conveys social values in an effective way. When a story is told, a truth is told. A narrative that is *descriptive in form* may be *prescriptive in function.*

America's national myth has Puritan origins, and religion has helped shape American identity ever since. A prime example is the doctrine of Manifest Destiny (the right of America to *colonize, Christianize, and civilize* the continent of North America). Nearly every American student learns of "Manifest Destiny"[45]—the American imperial myth. Manifest Destiny is the doctrine that Euro-Americans had a God-given right to conquer and colonize North America, and eventually to civilize and imperialize Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Manifest Destiny is a salient theme in American history that runs through the Indian Wars, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, the wars across the Arc of Rimland Asia, and beyond.

The present study treats religious myths and religious visions as complementary categories. The two typically go together. There is certainly overlap between religious myths and religious visions of America. Such myths, as previously said, are *descriptive in form* yet may be *prescriptive in function*. These myths are *thought-orienting*, whereas visions of America are typically *action-orienting*. That is to say, such myths and visions are prescriptive in function.

The Protestant myth of America—which has long reigned as America's master myth—is arguably being reshaped by religious visions of America held by minority faiths, as historian James Moorhead has suggested: "But

the point is that minority faiths themselves played no small part in the weakening of white Protestant hegemony. Their creativity in adapting and reinterpreting the symbols of American destiny broadened the framework of discourse within which citizens explained national identity."[46] While the religious "master myth" of America is Protestant, this myth is being improvised upon by alternative myths of America held by religious minorities, who have altered America's religious landscape, and by Protestants themselves. The question is *how*? How have minority religions dealt with the Protestant myth of America? First, according to Moorhead, minority faiths strove to understand the meaning of America and their place in it. Second, minority faiths could turn ideas originally derived from Protestantism to their own uses. Third, minority religions and the Protestant mainstream engaged in a complex pattern of contests and negotiations as together they redefined American identity. Minority religious visions of America have thus broadened—and continue to reshape—American identity.

A study in the new religious dimensions of American identity is one whose time has come. The myths and visions of America, as held by minority faiths covered in this volume, are productive of a view of America that is essentially reactive to the Protestant mything of America. These competing myths of America have been as undertheorized as they have been inadequately surveyed and compared.

Racial Myths and Visions of America

Perhaps the most salient theme among these minority myths of America is that of race. Indeed, the theme of race stands out as a defining feature of these visions and myths. In a sense, this was already predicted by David Wills, who has suggested that the "central themes" of American religious history are pluralism, Puritanism, and the encounter of black and white.[47] According to Paul Harvey, Christianity was a major catalyst in racializing America: "Christianity necessarily was central to the process of *racializing* peoples—imposing categories of racial hierarchies upon groups of humanity or other societies."[48] One may say that religions in America have dealt with racial categories in various ways. This is really a modern phenomenon, and one that is refracted in various religious communities as an epiphenomenon of the whole notion of "race." For purely illustrative purposes, while disclaiming any attempt to essentialize religions, certain patterns with respect to American religions and race begin to fall into focus once their respective visions of America are studied and then compared. On comparative grounds, therefore, one may venture the following "operative hypotheses," to be elucidated, tested, and refined throughout the course of this book.

Tentatively, one may say that Protestant Christianity had set a racial agenda during the colonial period. At the risk of oversimplifying, American Protestantism—by rationalizing and institutionalizing slavery in the South, and by formulating opposing rationale in the North—set the stage for racial ideologies that had social consequences of world-historical proportions. To this history and its persisting legacy, minority faiths have tended to "react" to the problem of race in their own ways. As for the minority faiths surveyed in this book, the Nation of Islam has idiosyncratically racialized America by mythologizing Blacks as "original" and thus superior. Equally as idiosyncratically as well as invidiously, Christian Identity has racialized America by mythologizing Whites as racially "pure" and thus superior. The Mormons have racialized America by mythologizing Native Americans as transplanted Whites, but since darkened, and Blacks as once cursed, but now eligible for priesthood (males). However, since 1978, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has now adopted a much more egalitarian stance. And the Baha'i Faith has reacted to a racialized America by representing race as America's most challenging issue, the solution to which is to harmonize the races and thus ultimately deracialize America.

The process of racializing and redefining race affords a prime example of a conscious flux in American identity and religious thought over time. Although not useful as a biological category, race has operated (and still operates) as a central determinant of social identity, in which the social world is literally seen in terms of black and white. America is not yet post-racial. The national mirror is slow to reflect social transformations, until the population is awash with a sea change in its demographics. Yet the country is now experiencing a profound transition, in which national identity has to "catch up" with its reconfigured multicultural and religiously plural social reality, both here at home and across the world. It will take time to erase race as an essentialist social construct, reared on the shaky foundations of superficial racial characteristics, such as skin color, in which biological difference is a figment (i.e. a pigment) of the imagination. Egalitarianism continues to act as an equalizing force, and religions are increasingly playing a role in overcoming the problems that historically resulted from the influence of racial doctrines, as religiously rationalized.

An operative thesis may be ventured in the chapters to follow: Over the course of American history, religious myths and visions of America tend to reflect an ever-changing American civil society, whether as a *function* of its social evolution or as a *catalyst* of it. That is to say, in the survey of religions undertaken in this book, the following operative hypothesis may be tested: *Religions remythologize America.* And further: *Religions re-envision America.*

Figure 1.2. John Gast's "American Progress" (1872)—published as the frontispiece in *Crofutt's Trans-Continental Tourist Guide* in 1874—iconically captures the spirit of "Manifest Destiny." (See Chapter 3 below.) Oil-on-canvas original at the Autry National Center, Los Angeles. "This picture was the design of the publisher," George Crofutt boasted, adding this pitch:

> *Is there a home, from the miner's humble cabin to the stately marble mansion of the capitalist, that can afford to be without this GREAT National picture, which illustrates in the most artistic manner all the gigantic results of American brains and hands? Who would not have such a beautiful token to remind them of our country's grandeur and enterprise, which have caused the mighty wilderness to blossom like the rose!*

(Public domain. Library of Congress. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97507547/. Accessed January 12, 2015.)

Chapter 1 Update: Reviews and Revisions

> <u>Religious Myths and Visions of America</u> *has many strengths. The author has defended his thesis with solid research. He has also made an original contribution to American studies.*
>
> — Richard G. Kyle
> Tabor College (2011)

> *This book, therefore, is not simply an analysis of ten different myths and visions of America but also provides an ideological map that accounts for faith-based understandings and actions in relation to the American presence globally. In this sense, this volume may be of interest to readers involved not only in Religious Studies, but also in Political Science, History, Intellectual History, American Studies, and Cultural Studies.*

> — Irén E. Annus,
> University of Szeged, Hungary (2012)[50]

Time to add a new chapter—on the "Christian Right"—and to update the existing ones.

Since 2009, when this book was first published, the reviews have been mostly positive. Two reviews stand out—I suppose because the reviewers considered *Religious Myths and Visions of America* to be outstanding. So, while admittedly self-serving, the first review that I would like to cite is by Irén E. Annus, an Americanist at the University of Szeged, Hungary:

> This book, therefore, is not simply an analysis of ten different myths and visions of America but also provides an ideological map that accounts for faith-based understandings and actions in relation to the American presence globally. In this sense, this volume may be of interest to readers involved not only in Religious Studies, but also in Political Science, History, Intellectual History, American Studies, and Cultural Studies. . . . In the course of the detailed and well-documented analysis of individual religions, Buck reveals a highly elaborate and in-depth picture of the various beliefs, which is indeed impressive.[51]

Even highly positive book reviews come with a criticism. (Academic journals, as a rule, typically require their reviewers include critical comments—the bad as well as the good—for the purposes of honest appraisal for a well-balanced and, therefore, a credible book review.) Professor Annus goes on to express one important reservation about *Religious Myths and Visions of America*:

> He argues that the original myth and vision of America as a nation was captured by the Protestant notion of manifest destiny. This has been challenged by the other faiths he examines "as responses to the challenges with pluralism and race, in which minority faiths—America's alternative religions—implicitly seek to transcend the legacy of Puritanism in shaping America's self-image" (221–22). It is these alternative understandings, he reasons, that have transformed the idea of manifest destiny into America's common destiny, an idea which, however appealing it may sound,

the Protestant view of America, namely, setting the tone. He also rightly mentions the influence of civil religion. However, he limits the impact largely to mainline Protestantism. Currently, the greatest influence of Puritanism may be on evangelical Protestantism, especially the Religious Right. Evangelicals evidence a conflicting view of America. On one hand, they push American "exceptionalism" and have "sacralized" many aspects of American culture (for example, its political and economic systems). On the other hand, they lament the loss of "Christian America" largely because of the nation's permissive attitude toward sexual openness, homosexuality, and abortion.[53]

Judging from the fact that I have quoted Richard Kyle at length, it's obvious that I am not about to dispense with my practice of offsetting block quotes. Even if doing so is a little bit off-putting to some readers, I continue to do so particularly when I feel that it is important to privilege the text by quoting it intact. Professor Kyle's second criticism, however, is one that I have taken to heart, by adding a new chapter, "The Christian Right's Myths and Visions of America." It's a short chapter, but an important one.

Now, in the interest of full disclosure, there was one negative review:

> In truth there can be no real analysis of the actual influence of these minority myths, because there is no theoretical framework for it and nowhere to place evidence for such influence. Some form of discourse analysis might have provided a useful way of gauging influences, or at least a means of analysing the interactions of myths.[54]

Here, the reviewer suggests no concrete method except for "some form of discourse analysis." Some readers may ask: "What, in God's name, is 'discourse analysis'?" That's a fair question. The simplest answer I can give is this:

Discourse analysis looks at not only what speakers say in conversation, but what they do. In studying the underlying dynamics behind the messages that are being conveyed, analysts are looking "beyond the sentence," as it were. Using a theatrical performance as an analogy, discourse analysis would then involve not only what is going on backstage, but how the audience is reacting as well.

"Discourse analysis" is a buzzword. The use of the term, "discourse analysis," practically requires its own discourse analysis. This is because it is such a wide-ranging field. It is more multidisciplinary than it is cross-disciplinary. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that discourse analysis involves "frames," "floors," "discourse markers," "sequence," "social practice," "schema," "script," "contextualization inferences and cues," "initiation," "intonation," "response," "micro-pause," "elicitation," "turn-taking system," "face work," "interpersonal distance," "transition relevant place," "imposition," "implicature," "preference organization," "adjacency pair system,"

"agonistic verbal interaction," "ritual adversativeness," "discourse strategies," "frame theory," "micro-construction," "dynamic speech act theory," "conversation analysis," "collocation analysis," "ethnomethodology," "knowledge structures," "interaction theory," "politeness theory," "locutionary act," "illocutionary act," "perlocutionary act," "power relations" (particularly important in critical discourse analysis), and so forth.

You get the picture. Critical discourse analysis is long and involved. It's complicated. But it's quite useful. However, such close analysis is outside the scope of this book, which is written for a popular, educated audience as well as for academics and university students.

The reviewer does not identify which discipline, nor which method, he would recommend. Therefore, this criticism is not really that constructive. A somewhat empty criticism, it is more of a broadside—a scathing philippic that, while serious and perhaps well intended, misses its target completely for lack of ammunition. Critical discourse analysis is so vast and diverse that to attempt to apply any particular method to the religious texts surveyed in this book would be to swallow the subject matter by the very method itself, if a suitable one could be found.

The term, "critical discourse," is dynamic and continues to transform with use. So I will not adopt a formal theoretical frame of discourse analysis, because what's important is to first "map the territory" by locating and identifying the relevant discourses themselves—the key narratives—by way of the survey of those minority faiths that have had something significant to say about America, whether officially or popularly. Here, as previously mentioned, we're not talking about individuals within faith-communities who made significant statements, except insofar as any of these individuals have represented what may be considered *expressive of a collective worldview* as it relates to America itself.

These are the discourses of interest. Loosely speaking, the methodology adopted in the present book is a *historical-diachronic* analysis, comparing how America, as "nation and notion," changes over time. As an analytic approach, a more formal comparative method (i.e., comparative discourse analysis) may well be adopted in the future, provided there is a sufficient interest in the discourses themselves, in the present. But, for now, let us proceed to map, locate, and identify narratives that operate as discourses on the idea of America, from the perspectives of "minority faiths" in relation to the Protestant "master myth" of America.

After this lengthy introduction, the reader is now about to embark on an adventure into the religious landscape of America, with special attention given to those religions that have official or popular collective beliefs about America. These perspectives on America's role in the world—and its purpose and place in the world today—invite serious reflection on what it means to be an American, and give pause for thought on how America can make a spiritual difference in the world today, beyond its obvious political power, economic influence, and military might. The "idea of America" is

both secular and religious, synthesizing to produce a "civil religion" that evolves over time.

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54. Daniel Grolin, *Review of Religious Myths and Visions of America. Baha'i Studies Review* 17 (2011): 195–197 [196].

Figure 2.1. Authorized by the Native American $1 Coin Act (Public Law 110-82), the United States Mint issued its "2010 Native American $1 Coin," commemorating the Iroquois "Government—The Great Tree of Peace." The reverse design features an image of the wampum "Hiawatha Belt" around five arrows bound together. Inscriptions: "Haudenosaunee" and "Great Law of Peace." From the official U.S. Mint description:

> *The Haudenosaunee Confederation, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy of upstate New York, was remarkable for being founded by 2 historic figures, the Peacemaker and his Onondaga spokesman, Hiawatha, who spent years preaching the need for a league.*

(Public domain. Image of currency.)

Chapter 2

Native American Myths and Visions of America

A voluntary Union entered into by the Colonies themselves, I think, would be preferable to one impos'd by [the British] Parliament. . . . It would be a very strange Thing, if Six Nations [the Iroquois Confederacy] of ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such an Union [of the American colonies], and be able to execute it in such a Manner, as that it has subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a Dozen English Colonies, to whom it is more necessary, and must be more advantageous; and who cannot be supposed to want an equal Understanding of their Interests.

—Benjamin Franklin (1750)[1]

Benjamin Franklin was right: the Iroquois Confederacy was a worthy model for America.

Franklin refers to the "Six Nations," the most well-known New World democracy prior to European "contact." The Six Nations was a consensus-based system of governance, and therefore democratic. The founding nations were five: Oneidas, Mohawks, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. Later, between 1710 and 1735, the Tuscaroras joined as the sixth full nation of the league. In Benjamin Franklin's day, the confederacy was known (and is still known today) as the "Six Nations." More were adopted into the league as incorporated nations, according to Barbara Mann: the Andastes (the Conestogas), the Conoys (Piscataways), the Delawares (Lenni Lenapes), the Eries (the Long-tailed Cat (or Lynx) Nation), the Honniasonts, the Kah-Kwahs, the Mahicans, the Munsees, the Nanticokes, the Neutrals (Wyandots of Canada, miscalled "Hurons" by the French), the Saponis, the Squawkihaws, the Susquehannocks, the Tutelos, the Wappingers, the Wenros (or Wenronhronons), the Wyandots (or Ywendats), and the Wyomings.[2]

The original "Five Nations" alliance was established by Deganawida (a.k.a. the "Peacemaker"). Whether this happened during the eclipse of

1142 or 1451[3] will be discussed further in this chapter. The Peacemaker was assisted by Hiawatha and Jigonsaseh (a.k.a. the "Mother of Nations" and the "Peace Queen").[4] The traditions surrounding the diplomacy and statesmanship of this "Peace Trio" (Deganawida, Hiawatha and Jigonsaseh) are legendary—literally. In other words, just as the Iroquois Confederacy was historical, so were its founders.

Among the other "firsts" attributable to Native Americans were the first visions of America—long before this land was called "America." Among the Iroquois (or Haudenosaunee),[5] America, prior to European contact, was known as "Turtle's Back" or "Turtle Island." According to the Iroquois origin story, the world took shape on a gigantic turtle's back, when a great Snapping Turtle offered his carapace, bearing the Earth above water, as he swam. The Haudenosaunee myths, legends and visions of America are as representative of Native American and Native Canadian worldviews as they are preeminent. They are also arguably foundational, in the sense that Iroquois civilization gave rise to a New World democracy that evidently influenced the formation of the United States of America.

The Turtle Island Myth and the Myth of "Mother Earth"

Before America became "America," one of the original names for North America was "Turtle Island." Originally, "Turtle Island" probably designated the region of the Northeast United States and contiguous territories in nearby Canada, and later came to represent all of North America. While the geographical reference is real, the name itself, "Turtle Island," is mythical. Today, the myth of Turtle Island is universally familiar to all Native Americans.

"Turtle Island" is an Edenic narrative about the origin of a sacred land, whether part or all of North America. A standard Eastern Woodland creation myth, the story of Turtle Island is the Iroquois' foundation myth. It is "history" in the form of a "story." It is a Haudenosaunee origin story—and perhaps the original religious myth of America. It has been a widespread myth practically from its inception. Historically, the basic elements of this myth are common to the Iroquois and Algonquin Nations of the Northeast, among others, such as the Tuskegee and Blackfoot, as well as the Inuit and the Athabascans of the Arctic and the Far North.

The Turtle Island myth is a variation of what anthropologists have termed "the Earth Diver Creation" myth, found throughout the eastern region of North America and even in California. The story of the Earth Diver is a common theme in North American Indian creation mythology, in which land is first formed from a mere handful of mud taken from the ocean floor by a heroic animal spirit that must dive to great depths for it. After the animal spirit succeeds in extracting this mud from the sea bed, the sediment itself is transformed into an island—land that emerges from the primordial

deep. In an article that is now considered a classic, Gladys A. Reichard has provided an analysis and a study of the diffusion and distribution of the Earth Diver myth. She cites documented versions of this myth from the ethnographies of a considerable range of Indian nations.[6]

Of all of these variations on the same basic myth, the Iroquois myth of Turtle Island itself exists in some 25 versions. These disparate traditions, harmonious in their core essentials, are authoritatively described by Barbara Mann.[7] These versions, notwithstanding their variants, share a core of nine essential elements: (1) Sky Woman, who dwells in the Sky World, becomes pregnant; (2) the Tree of Light, the *axis mundis* of the Sky World is uprooted; (3) Sky Woman falls through the gaping hole left by the uprooted "Tooth" tree, plummets through the vasty space, and lands on the back of a giant Tortoise, swimming atop the primal sea, her fall cushioned by birds; (4) after taking council, the animal spirits dive to wrest mud from the ocean floor, and the precious sediment is brought to the surface; (5) this generative soil is then transplanted on Turtle's back, and burgeons into a vast island; (6) Sky Woman's daughter begets Twins, the older Sapling (born before his twin brother) and younger Flint (who kills his mother in parturition); (7) as an Iroquois culture hero, Sapling liberates animals pent up by Flint and then secures corn; (8) Sapling and jealous Flint engage in a cosmic duel, an archetypal battle fought with deadly weapons—rushes or maize versus flint or antler; and, finally (9) Sapling vanquishes Flint, who is banished, while Sky Woman and Sapling return to the Sky World, promising to return on the last day of the world.[8] The first five elements of the core narrative may be summarized in more detail as follows.

(1) *The Sky World*: The original forebears of the Iroquois were the sky People. They dwelled in *Karionake*, "The Place in the Sky," otherwise known as the Sky World. The Sky World was a physical place that floated among the stars. The Sky World was the celestial prototype of Iroquoia, with the same geography. The familiar flora and fauna had their spiritual counterparts in the Sky World. There is a good reason for this: "The bedrock assumption of eastern cultures is that everything that exists, exists by halves. The cosmos is seen as naturally dividing into its two, complementary parts—Sky and Earth—which interact for harmony."[9] As above, so below.

There may be another principle at work in this myth as well. Consider the fact that the social order of the Sky World greatly resembled later Iroquois society.[10] Here, one clearly sees *cosmogony as sociogony*—that is, the Iroquois creation cycle is not so much an account of the creation of the physical world as it is an account of the establishment of Iroquois society, of its folkways and social mores. This essential function of Iroquois myth is noted by William Nelson Fenton: "The great cosmological myth spells out the duties that each was assigned to perform for the benefit of humankind; it tells how the first human beings on earth learned to adjust to the situation as they found it, and how they responded to crises later on."[11] Fenton's insight here is specific to the myth itself; it is not generalized to all myth.

But, on comparative grounds, the function of cosmogony as sociogony can be seen as fairly universal. In other words, accounts of the creation of the physical world from primeval chaos are representations of the functioning of ordered societies as bulwarks against social chaos.

(2) *Uprooting of the Tree of Light*: In the center of the Sky World was a sacred Tree. Atop the tree was a luminous orb that gave off light, illumining the Sky World. In the Onondaga version, this tree was called "Tooth," possibly alluding to the yellow dog-tooth violet. This light was soft, not harsh. Its light was not bright, but resembling twilight, with the half-light of dawn or dusk. The sacred Councils of the Sky World were held beneath the branches of Tooth. The "Tooth" tree is uprooted, leaving a gaping hole in the sky.

(3) *Sky Woman Falls to Earth*: Through this giant hole, Sky Woman cascades through the interspace to the world below. While Sky Woman was hurtling through the abyss toward the primeval sea below, the Sky People set Tooth, the Tree of Light, back into its place. Plunging precipitously without protection, Sky Woman was in great peril. As she hurtled through the mid-space between earth and sky, Heron and Loon came to her rescue. By interlocking their wings, they nestled Sky Woman in their feathery embrace and gently carried her as she descended to the world below. However, since that world was covered in water, there was no place to live, no land on which to hunt or cultivate. Without intervention, Sky Woman would not be able to survive.

(4) *Animals Dive to Bring Earth to the Surface*: Meanwhile, a giant turtle swam the primal seas. Alive to the danger that Sky Woman faced, the Great Tortoise summoned the Elder Animals to an emergency council. He offered his carapace as a dwelling place for Sky Woman. Among the Elder Animals, the valiant few who would exert themselves in their quest to save Sky Woman included Muskrat, Otter, Toad, and/or Beaver. They each made their dives in the watery depths. Rather than diving for pearls, they were diving for grains of dirt. In order to bring up mud from the ocean floor, each of these heroic spirits risked his life. In the Mohawk version, only Muskrat succeeded in retrieving a handful of this precious mud. But, in doing so, Muskrat sacrificed his life.

(5) *Earth Established on Turtle's Back*: The mud was then placed on Turtle's back. This spot of earth now in place, Heron and Loon could now set Sky Woman safely on her new abode below. Magically (that is, mythically), wherever Sky Woman ventured, the earth would keep spreading out before her, opening new vistas far and wide. As the land kept expanding, so every kind of plant sprouted up before her as well. This is how Turtle Island came into being.

Of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), third president of the United States (1801–1809), may have been aware of the original vision of America as Turtle Island. On January 10, 1802, Thomas Jefferson told a delegation of Wyandot, Ottawa, Chippewa, Powtewatamie, and Shawanese chiefs: "Your blood will mix with ours, and will spread, with ours,

over this great island."[12] The expression, "this great island" was not an appellation for America current among Euro-Americans. In other words, it was definitely *not* a widely used euphemism for the United States. One must look elsewhere for the meaning of this term and for whatever allusions it likely evoked in the minds of the audience. Here, Thomas Jefferson, in ostensibly encouraging fraternity (and even intermarriage) between the Creeks and the Euro-Americans, was evidently referring to Turtle Island. While this cannot be proven, it remains an attractive hypothesis. To this day, in fact, virtually all Iroquois still call North America "Turtle Island," as do most, if not all, Indian Nations. While certainly not the case in Jefferson's day, the Turtle Island myth is one of the best known of all Native American myths. And the myth of Turtle Island is closely aligned with the concept of "Mother Earth."

Since this myth depicts the creation of earth, or at least the creation of an inhabitable land, one might be tempted to regard Sky Woman as an incarnation of "Mother Earth," who is described in the next section of this chapter. However, Sky Woman is not the same as Mother Earth. Perhaps she might be thought of as the *mother of Mother Earth*. This would be a logical way to harmonize what are really two disparate myths. Suffice it to say that myths lead independent lives. They can inhabit the same spiritual universe. Each myth is the bearer of its own moral and social truths. And so the Myth of "Mother Earth" really bears no formal relation with the myth of the Sky Woman. Sky Woman is Edenic. Mother Earth is environmentalist.

The Myth of "Mother Earth"

The reverential idea of "Mother Earth" has become increasingly familiar in American popular culture. "Mother Earth" embodies what might be called a "gospel of environmentalism." It is a gospel without a narrative—morally rich and ethically sound—but without discernible roots in pre-Colonial American Indian mythology. "Mother Earth" is not a person but a symbol. She is Earth personified—the "spirit" or animus of our physical world today. Furthermore, "Mother Earth" is a myth without a story—and more metaphor than myth. The essence of this myth is that Planet Earth is our collective mother. Mother Earth transcends America itself. Mother Earth has geographic boundaries, but no national borders. It is one country. Just as we should respect our own mothers, by virtue of the fact that our mothers gave birth, nourished, protected, and raised us, so also should one respect Mother Earth, who, after all, is the source of being and sustainer of all life on earth.

A scholarly controversy has been raging over over whether the myth of Mother Earth—ostensibly a venerable, pan-Indian belief—is ancient or modern. Proponents of the modern origins of the myth argue that the Mother Earth myth appears to be a relatively recent invention promulgated by

scholars, popularized by the American press, and further promoted by Native Americans themselves. In a quest to find the historical roots of the belief in Mother Earth, anthropologist Sam D. Gill searched over 1,300 ethnographic records. He found only three sources for a Native American belief in a Mother Earth goddess. These were the sources from which the concept of Mother Earth was largely "invented" as the product of promoting and popularizing a once-obscure idea: "It seems that Mother Earth as a major goddess of the Indians of North America is a reality, but that she has become so only during the twentieth century."[13] Thus "Mother Earth" is more of a myth *about* Native Americans than it is a myth *by* Native Americans. If Gill is right, then here is a dramatic example of American religious mythmaking, suggesting that the promotion of Mother Earth is a post-contact phenomenon.[14]

Yet there is evidence that Native Americans anciently regarded the earth as a common mother. Consider, for instance, this statement by Iroquois Chief Cornstalk who, on June 1, 1776, remarked: "Our white Brethren who have grown out this same Ground with ourselves—for this Big Island being our common Mother, we and they are like one Flesh and Blood."[15] A reply, in kind, came from the American Commissioners for Indian Affairs to Delawares, Senecas, Munsees, and Mingos:

> We are sprung from one common Mother, we were all born in this big Island; we earnestly wish to repose under the same Tree of Peace with you; we request to live in Friendship with all the Indians in the Woods. . . . We call God to Witness, that we desire nothing more ardently than that the white and red Inhabitants of this big Island should cultivate the most Brotherly affection, and be united in the firmest bands of Love and friendship.[16]

What is remarkable here, from both Chief Cornstalk and the American Commissioners for Indian Affairs, is the common vocabulary, evidencing the interrelationship—indeed, the very confluence—of the myths of "Turtle Island," "Mother Earth," and "Great Tree," the last myth being the topic of the next section of this chapter. Citing these and other sources, Vine Deloria, effectively rebuts Sam Gill's argument:

> As a by-product of researching Indian treaties, I have come up with numerous references to Mother Earth. Of course, I did not find these references in ethnographic materials—I found them in minutes of councils and treaty negotiations . . . Indians were not sitting around in seminar rooms articulating a nature philosophy for the benefit of non-Indian students, after all. They were trying to save their lands from exploitation and expropriation.[17]

Deloria hastens to add that an abundance of other primary sources confirm the widespread, if not universal, indigenous belief in Mother Earth, but

"I am not going to reveal them for fear that Gill will use them in a revised version of his book and make even worse arguments to prove that white men originated them."[18] Bruce Johansen adds his own thunder to Deloria's lightning.[19]

The next section transitions from the myths of "Turtle Island" and "Mother Earth" to the legend of Deganawida. Here, the distinction between "myth" and "legend" is that myth is ahistorical, while legend presumably has a historical kernel, overlaid by mythical embellishments.

The Deganawida Legend

Traditional Iroquois history is divided into three epochs represented by three epic narratives: (1) the *myth* of Sky Woman; (2) the *legend* of Deganawida; and (3) the *history* of Handsome Lake, the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Seneca prophet. "Deganawida" is a name traditionally considered too sacred to pronounce. It's not as though the name is ineffable, as in the Jewish sacred name, called by scholars as the "Tetragrammaton," referring to the four letters, in Hebrew, YHWH, that represent one name of God in Jewish (and Christian) tradition. "Deganawida" is fine in printed form. But it should not be spoken, as a sign of profound respect. Native Americans customarily refer to this great statesman and prophet as "the Peacemaker." Deganawida is a legendary, yet historical figure, memorialized in traditions held to be sacred by indigenous peoples among the Iroquois Nations—and, generally, among Native Americans and Native Canadians today. The Iroquois were aboriginal inhabitants of nearly all of New York State, part of Pennsylvania, as well as the lands bordering Lakes Huron, Erie (down to present-day central Ohio), and Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River, in what are now parts of Ontario and Quebec in Canada.

The first epic, that of Sky Woman, was presented earlier in this chapter. The Deganawida tradition itself is quintessentially an origin-of-government narrative. The Deganawida epic is properly considered a "legend" in that there is a general consensus that "the Peacemaker" was a historical figure. While this legend exists in an estimated 24 recensions,[20] the most authoritative version is known as *Concerning the League*, which is said to be the original legend, or the most authoritative account, of the League of the Iroquois, otherwise known as the Iroquois Confederacy. This famous passage comes from one of the versions of the Deganawida Epic, which is the second of three grand cycles of tradition among the Iroquois:

> I am Dekanawida and with the Five Nations' Confederate Lords I plant the Tree of the Great Peace. . . . I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. Under the shade of this Tree of the Great Peace we spread the soft white feathery down of the globe thistle as seats for you, Adodarhoh, and your cousin Lords. . . . Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great

Peace, one to the north, one to the east, one to the south and one to the west. The name of these roots is The Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength. . . . We place at the top of the Tree of the Long Leaves an Eagle who is able to see afar. If he sees in the distance any evil approaching or any danger threatening he will at once warn the people of the Confederacy.[21]

The Iroquois Confederacy—which began as the union of five Iroquois Nations, to which a sixth was later added, evidently included a total of ten nations at later points in history. The Iroquois "League of Nations" united the Mohawks, Onondagas, Senecas, Oneidas, and Cayugas. In 1714, the Tuscaroras were adopted and, in 1753, the Nanticokes and Tuteloes were incorporated, expanding the League into eight Nations.[22] There is evidence that the Saponi and Conoy Nations were added later, enlarging the League into ten Nations—with the Delawares being given Iroquois protection, but without formal adoption. Historian Jay Hansford Vest explains: "Although the Haudenosaunee were never referred to as the Seven, Eight, or Nine Nations following the admission of other nations, including the Tuteloes and Nanticokes, it was referenced as the Six Nations after the Tuscaroras were added to the Longhouse in 1714."[23] As previously stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Andastes (the Conestogas), the Conoys (Piscataways), the Delawares (Lenni Lenapes), the Eries (the Long-tailed Cat (or Lynx) Nation), the Honniasonts, the Kah-Kwahs, the Mahicans, the Munsees, the Nanticokes, the Neutrals (Wyandots of Canada, miscalled "Hurons" by the French), the Saponis, the Squawkihaws, the Susquehannocks, the Tutelos, the Wappingers, the Wenros (or Wenronhronons), the Wyandots (or Ywendats), and the Wyomings were adopted into the league as incorporated nations.[24]

This League was remarkable in that it was probably the New World's first democracy, as mentioned previously. And, if not, certainly the Confederacy was the New World's preeminent and most influential democracy. Its greatest influence is said to have been its impact on the formation and structure of American democracy itself. In scholarly parlance, this idea that American democracy has roots in Iroquois democracy is called the "Iroquois influence thesis." While the Iroquois influence thesis remains controversial among scholars, it is a widespread belief among Native Americans.

The Iroquois influence debate notwithstanding, most scholars accept that Deganawida was historical. Huron by birth and Mohawk by adoption, Deganawida was a prophet, statesman, and lawgiver who, along with Hiawatha and Jigonsaseh, established the Iroquois "League of People of the Longhouse" (*Haudenosaunee*), also known as the "Great League of Peace" (*Kaianerekowa*). This League, in actual practice, was vested in a council of 50 peace chiefs, or "sachems" (a term used to distinguish these from other chiefs). Each successor to a League chief was chosen by a "clan mother"

presiding over the lineage in which the title was held. The governing council required unanimous consent to render each of its decisions. The symbol of the League was the Great White Pine, or White Tree of Peace, on the top of which perched a farsighted eagle. The historicity of the League of Five Nations is not in dispute, nor is the existence and role of Deganawida himself in the formation of the original Iroquois confederacy. The traditional legend, which survives in several versions, has variations that pose no serious challenge to the unity of the narrative. Mythic elements, of course, give the legend its charm and symbolic depth to this legend, which has a historical core.

The Peacemaker legend, in its basic form, is as follows: In ancient times, Tarenyawagon ("The Holder of the Heavens") saved the Five Nations from onslaught of the stone Giants. He conquered monsters and put the world in order. He gave laws for men to follow, taught the art of war, and provided for good fishing. Over time, the five tribes had a disagreement, and went their separate ways. Among the ancestors a child was born to a Huron virgin near the Bay of Quinte near Kingston, Ontario. This child was an incarnation of Tarenyawagon, entrusted with a great mission of peace. His first task was to cure the Iroquois of rampant cannibalism and revenge warfare ("mourning wars").

Tradition holds that Deganawida was born in what became Canada—near present-day Kingston, Ontario, on what is now the Tyendinaga Territory on the Bay of Quinte, a place chosen by Joseph Brant for resettlement of Mohawks who, during the American War of Independence, were allies of the British. The sacred name "Deganawida" means "two river currents flowing together."[25] His mother, a virgin, was told by a heavenly messenger in a dream that the child she bore was destined to plant the Tree of Peace at Onondaga (Syracuse, New York). On reaching manhood, Deganawida told his mother of the mission that the Great Spirit had chosen him to undertake, which was to bring the message of "the Good Message, the Power, the Peace, and the Great Law" to men, to establish peace founded upon justice, backed by force when needed to enforce law and order.

The time came for the Peacemaker to set out on his mission in a canoe, carved from white stone. (This may be a "miracle" that was added later to the legend as an embellishment under putative Christian influence, because an earlier version has Deganawida traveling in a canoe made of birch.) And so Deganawida crossed Lake Ontario. On the far shore, he set foot in the land of the Onondagas. There he found hunters whose village had been razed. They spoke of interminable warmongering, of the indiscriminate and heartless slaughter of innocents, and of horrific cannibalism.

Arriving at the waterfalls on the eastern side of the river, Deganawida encountered Jigonsaseh ("Fat Face"), the head mother of the Senecas. It was Jigonsaseh's practice to feed warriors, who passed by where she lived. The Peacemaker told Jigonsaseh to stop supporting the war parties. He then

imparted to her the gospel of "the Good Message and the Power and the Peace," as the basis of "the Great Law" set forth in *Concerning the League*: "This, then, is the reason we thank him, the one with great power, the one who is the Creator, for that which will now move forward, the Good Message and the Power and the Peace—the Great Law." This was a powerful Message, one that claimed to be divine. Jigonsaseh accepted Deganawida's message, and later became the Head Mother of the Haudenosaunee league of nations. This is what happened, according to Barbara A. Mann, Ph.D. (Native American, Ohio Bear Clan Seneca), Associate Professor, Honors College, University of Toledo:

> Knowing that he was unable to promulgate the peace by himself, the Peacemaker sought out allies in the south, the very first of them being that Great Woman, the Head Mother of the Cultivators. He approached her with respect, urging her to add his message of Peace to her message of Corn, and, after due consideration, she agreed. However, she also insisted that he include the strong political powers of women in his Great Law. In his turn, he agreed. The two forged an alliance, coordinating their efforts thereafter.[26]

In his first missionary journey before becoming a statesman, the Peacemaker came to one cannibal's lodge, that of an Onondaga warrior. Deganawida climbed the bark roof of the cannibal's dwelling and lay, chest down, by the smoke hole. Looking down, Deganawida's face was reflected on the surface of the water in the kettle below. After the cannibal had brewed his grisly stew of human remains, and as the warrior was about to eat his meal from a bowl made of bark, he suddenly beheld, in the boiling kettle, a face of striking handsomeness and serenity. Having no clue that this face belonged to another, the cannibal thought he saw a reflection of himself. This gave him pause for thought. On reflection, the warrior was struck by the nobility of the visage he saw, and how brutal was the life he had been living. Then and there, the warrior decided not to eat his victim. In utter revulsion, the cannibal emptied the kettle. By the fire, he brooded.

Then Deganawida climbed down, and entered the cannibal's dwelling. They talked. As they held converse, the Peacemaker convinced the warrior that eating other men was evil and vile. Together, they buried the victim's remains. Deganawida and the warrior hunted a deer and partook of the venison together. Deganawida then taught the warrior "the Good Message and the Power and the Peace"—and won over his first convert. Together, the two made plans to embark on a mission to bring the local nations into a peaceful confederacy. Deganawida told the warrior that the Great Spirit had ordained that antlers be worn as a sign of authority. And so the former cannibal accepted to work alongside the Peacemaker.

The greatest obstacle to the confederacy was Atotarho, chief of the Onondagas. Powerful and primal, Atotarho was a tyrant. Hideous to behold, Atotarho's body had seven crooks in it. His hair seethed with serpents. Deganawida then named his disciple, "Hiawatha" ("He Who Combs"), for Hiawatha's mission would be to comb the snakes out of Atotarho's hair. First, Deganawida, and Hiawatha successively won the allegiance of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Senecas. This is how Deganawida presented his Message:

> Thereupon Tekanawita [Deganawida] stood up in the center of the gathering place, and then he said: First I will answer what it means to say, "Now it is arriving, the Good Message." This, indeed, is what it means: When it stops, the slaughter of your own people who live here on earth, then everywhere peace will come about, by day and also by night, and it will come about that as one travels around, everyone will be related . . .
>
> Now again [?], secondly I say, "Now it is arriving, the Power," and this means that the different nations, all of the nations, will become just a single one, and the Great Law will come into being, so that all now will be related to each other, and there will come to be just a single family, and in the future, in days to come, this family will continue on.
>
> Now in turn, the other, my third saying, "Now it is arriving, the Peace," this means that everyone will become related, men and also women, and also the young people and the children, and when all are relatives, every nation, then there will be peace. . . . Then there will be truthfulness, and they will uphold hope and charity, so that it is peace that will unite all of the people, indeed, it will be as though they have but one mind, and they are a single person with only one body and one head and one life, which means that there will be unity. . . . When they are functioning, the Good Message and also the Power and the Peace, these will be the principal things everybody will live by; these will be the great values among the people.[27]

The Peacemaker then led the four Nations, now united under these powerful sociomoral principles, to the powerful sorcerer-chief of the Onondaga, Atotarho. In addition to his vile appearance and tyrannical abuse of power, Atotarho was also a cannibal. In order to transform Atotarho, Deganawida and Hiawatha sang the Peace Hymn. As the procession reached the Onondaga, Deganawida exorcised Atotarho of his evil spirits. Atotarho then accepted the Great Law of Peace (*Gai Eneshah Go' Nah*). Now the Iroquois Confederacy could finally be established. Deganawida and Hiawatha got Atotarho to agree to be the firekeeper of the newly formed League. Where formerly Atotarho was the principal opponent, he would now preside as its principal chief and could wield veto power at will. Furthermore, Deganawida and Hiawatha designated Onondaga as the capital of the Five Nations'

territory. After enlisting Atotarho's support, Deganawida planted the Great Tree of Peace in what is now Syracuse, New York, thus fulfilling the dream that was given to his mother.

That's the "men's version." An alternate version of what happened is recounted by Barbara A. Mann:

> As Jigonsaseh and Peacemaker gained followers (including Hiawatha, a formerly formidable foe), . . . only one priest obstructed their way. He was Adodaroh [Atotarho], the deeply feared and powerful shaman of the Onondagas, whose snake and cannibal cult had terrorized the people into submission for many years. Now, however, even Adodaroh's . . . once trusted lieutenant, Hiawatha, opposed him . . .
>
> Deeply angry, the old priest withdrew to an island that could be approached only by canoe. Twice, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha attempted parley, but twice the old man called up the winds to blow their canoe back to shore. Finally, Jigonsaseh gave the pair a powerful medicine song to calm the waters and call the ancestors. Singing her song, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha were able to approach Adodaroh, but, instead of killing or threatening him, they carried Jigonsaseh's message: If he would come over to the side of Corn and Peace, they would make him the first chairman of the Men's Grand Council of the League. Seeing his chance to retain status, the wily old man accepted their proposal.
>
> At that point, Jigonsaseh . . . sanctioned each lineage chief, putting the horns of office on his head and announcing his election to office. . . . Early male anthropologists heard only the men's versions of the traditions, not realizing that there were equally important women's versions as well.[28]

There, at Onondaga, Deganawida planted the great Tree of Peace: a great white pine with white roots extending in the four sacred directions, to guide men everywhere who desired to trace peace to its source. Atop the Tree, he placed the farsighted eagle, ever vigilant and watchful of any approaching danger. Beneath the Tree of Peace, Deganawida opened a cavern into which he cast weapons of war. This was the culmination of his mission. No matter how visionary, resourceful, and effective, Deganawida's work was not merely the product of enlightened statesmanship and effective diplomacy. It was a sacred undertaking. He had achieved the sacred purpose for which he was commissioned by the Great Spirit.

In solemn ceremony, Deganawida then placed antlers on the heads of the 50 chiefs (sachems) representing the Five Nations. The respective names of each of these chiefs would be passed on to the chiefs who succeeded them). Deganawida then delivered to the sachems the canons of the Great Law, the Constitution of the Five Nations. In assessing the historical and cultural significance of the legend of Deganawida, Paul A.W. Wallace had this to say:

The legend that grew up about him [Deganawida] long served as a guide to Iroquois conduct, at home and abroad. In its various recorded versions it now appears a strange medley of religion, mythology, constitutional law, wisdom literature, animal lore, and folk custom. But the core of the narrative, which describes the practical steps taken by Dekanahwideh [sic], the Heavenly Messenger, to establish a firm League of Nations under the Tree of Peace, *has a grandeur of conception unsurpassed in popular tradition anywhere in the world*.[29]

To this day, the Confederacy is officially known as *Kayanerenh-kowa* ("the Great Peace"), a term that describes its sacred purpose. The League is also known as *Kanonsionni* (the "Longhouse"), a designation that describes both its constitutional structure and its geographical extent. This Longhouse is highly symbolic: Typically, the Iroquois longhouse is a dwelling built of saplings and bark, in dimensions of some 80 to 100 feet in length. Although each was within its own bark-partitioned section, several families of the same lineage occupied it. At the center of the longhouse was a hearth fire. All relatives of the extended family were under the watchful supervision of an elder matron of the lineage. By analogy, the Five Nations took counsel together in the sacred longhouse as though they were members of one family. Their meetings were actuated and guided by a pervasive sense of unity. And so it is that the social and political organization of the Five Nations is traditionally ascribed to Deganawida.

The Iroquois Influence Thesis: Myth or History?

The "Iroquois Influence Thesis" has been advanced by several scholars—with Donald A. Grinde and Bruce Johansen[30] in the forefront—and by segments of the popular media. As stated in the previous section, the Iroquois (a French name) or Six Nations (an English name) Confederacy (who called themselves Haudenosaunee, "People of the Longhouse") maintained a federal league of nations for several hundred years before Europeans arrived in their homeland. Their example was not lost on Benjamin Franklin, who cited their model approvingly about the time he proposed the Albany Plan of Union (1754), a precursor to the Articles of Confederation and U.S. Constitution. This example, along with other anecdotes that constitute evidence from which the "Iroquois influence" thesis may be inferred or deduced, have led to a pointed debate in our own time over their role in the evolution of democracy on a worldwide scale. Advocates insist that this example should be studied in the context of other influences, while opponents often argue that the Iroquois are being incorrectly advanced as a singular example. The Iroquois influence thesis holds that the Iroquois Confederacy, founded by Deganawida, helped shape American democracy. More to the point, the Iroquois influence thesis asserts that the

U.S. Constitution was partially modeled on the Iroquois Constitution. As the reader might expect, this thesis has sparked a vigorous scholarly debate. On what evidence is the Iroquois influence thesis based?

While it was the product of Constitutional Convention in 1787, the U.S. Constitution itself evolved from earlier constitutional agreements. A key figure in that process was Benjamin Franklin, who was greatly impressed by the Iroquois Confederacy. Franklin's advocacy of the League as a prospective model of governance begins with a speech by an Iroquois notable, which Franklin published. In 1742, at the council of Lancaster (Pennsylvania), colonists succeeded in gaining the friendship of the Iroquois, and agreed to treaty. Two years later, in confirming their treaty, the colonists were advised by Canassatego, an Iroquois chief of the Six Nations and one of the 50 sachems of the League, to unite. On Friday, July 4, 1744, in his closing speech, Canassatego recommended that British colonists form a union based on the League of the Iroquois:

> WE have one Thing further to say, and that is, We heartily recommend Union and a good Agreement between you our Brethren. Never disagree, but preserve a strict Friendship for one another, and thereby you, as well as we, will become the stronger.
>
> OUR wise Forefathers established Union and Amity between the Five Nations; this has made us formidable; this has given us great Weight and Authority with our neighbouring Nations.
>
> WE are a powerful Confederacy; and, by your observing the same Methods our wise Forefathers have taken, you will acquire fresh strength and Power; therefore whatever befals you, never fall out one with another.[31]

The official name of the treaty concluded at Lancaster was *A Treaty Held at the Town of Lancaster, By the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of the Province, and the Honourable the Commissioners for the Province of Virginia and Maryland, with the Indians of the Six Nations in June, 1744.*[32] Both the Treaty and Canassatego's speech were published by Benjamin Franklin. In 1751, Franklin wrote to James Parker, his New York City printing partner, with this comment on the Iroquois League:

> It would be a very strange Thing, if six Nations of Ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such an Union, and be able to execute it in such a Manner, as that it has subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a Dozen English Colonies, to whom it is more necessary, and must be more advantageous; and who cannot be supposed to want an equal Understanding of their Interests.[33]

Although Franklin called the Iroquois "Ignorant Savages," let us see what he really meant by this term:

SAVAGES we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility; they think the same of theirs. . . . Having frequent Occasions to hold public Councils, they have acquired great Order and Decency in conducting them. . . . He that would speak, rises. The rest observe a profound Silence. When he has finished and sits down, they leave him five or six Minutes to recollect, that if he has omitted anything he intended to say, or has anything to add, he may rise again and deliver it. To interrupt another, even in common Conversation, is reckoned highly indecent. How different this from the Conduct of a polite British House of Commons, where scarce a Day passes without some Confusion that makes the Speaker hoarse in calling *to order*; and how different from the mode of Conversation in many polite Companies of Europe, where if you do not deliver your Sentence with great Rapidity, you are cut off in the middle of it by the impatient Loquacity of those you converse with, and never suffer'd to finish it.[34]

Following the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the fledgling Republic was governed by the Articles of Confederation. It is here that the Iroquois influence thesis finds its greatest claim, because the Articles were based on an earlier document, known as the Albany Plan of Union. In 1754, Benjamin Franklin formalized his 1751 recommendation to James Parker in the "Albany Plan of Union," which was an important precursor to the U.S. Constitution. Franklin proposed the Albany Plan of Union as a model of governance under which the colonies might be united.

The Albany Congress was held from June 19 to July 10, 1754. As the name indicates, the Congress was held in Albany, New York. Benjamin Franklin was the most influential of the delegates present. Besides Franklin's presence and prestige, several Iroquois attended the Congress as well. Among these was a certain "Hendrick" (known as "Tiyanoga" among the Iroquois), who served as one of the principal representatives of the Six Nations at the Albany Congress.

Prior to leaving Philadelphia to attend the Congress in Albany, besides gaining the support of the leading political figures of his day, Franklin saw the need to rally public opinion behind his Plan for Union. He published an article, datelined Philadelphia, May 9, 1754, in his newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, urging the need for a union of the colonies and pointing to the fact that "our enemies have the great advantage of being under one direction, with one council, and one purse." This is a transparent reference to the Iroquois Confederacy. In a historic moment in journalist history, Benjamin Franklin illustrated the article by printing a political cartoon: a woodcut of a snake segmented into parts, representing the colonies, with the motto beneath: "JOIN OR DIE." This motto, "Join or Die," was used again to launch the American Revolution.[35]

Franklin began his Plan of Union proposal with this recommendation: "1. That the said General Government be administered by a President

General, to be appointed and Supported by the Crown; and a Grand Council, to be Chosen by the Representatives of the People of the Several Colonies, met in their respective Assemblies."[36] Proponents of the Iroquois influence thesis hold that Franklin's Plan of Union was loosely modeled on the Iroquois Confederacy. His proposed "Grand Council" was similar to the Iroquois Great Council, with 48 representatives, close to the 50 sachems of Iroquois. In fact, James de Lancy, acting governor of New York, expressed to those assembled his hope that there would emerge an agreement to form a union of states as powerful and prominent as the Iroquois League itself.[37]

While Franklin's proposal was approved by the Albany Congress, the Albany Plan of Union was not ratified by the colonial legislatures. Thus it never took effect. While Franklin's Plan was not ratified, it later served as the basis for the Articles of Confederation, which was, as mentioned earlier, a precursor to the U.S. Constitution. Thus, the Albany Plan of Union was a significant milestone in the evolution of the U.S. Constitution. At that stage in the events leading up to the adoption of the Constitution, Iroquois influence was arguably present. The debate is over just how influential that Iroquois presence really was.

Even if the Iroquois influence thesis is a myth without historical foundation, this myth has influenced the Congress of the United States of America. Indeed, the fact that the Iroquois influence thesis has enjoyed popular support is reflected in a Congressional resolution, passed in 1988. On September 16, 1987, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) introduced S.Con.Res. 76. On July 11, 1988, similar legislation was introduced by Representative Morris Udall (D-Arizona) in the House of Representatives as H.Con.Res. 331. On October 4, 1988, the House passed H.Con. Res. 331—*A concurrent resolution to acknowledge the contribution of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations to the development of the United States Constitution and to reaffirm the continuing government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States established in the Constitution*—by a vote of 408–8. By voice vote, the Senate agreed to H.Con.Res. 331 on October 21, 1988. That resolution reads, in part:

> Whereas the original framers of the Constitution, including, most notably, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are known to have greatly admired the concepts of the six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy; Whereas, the Confederation of the original Thirteen Colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself; . . . *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring)*, That—(1) the Congress, on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges contribution made by the Iroquois

Confederacy and other Indian Nations to the formation and development of the United States.[38]

In 2007, U.S. Representative Joe Baca and U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, respectively, introduced H.R. 3585 and S. 1852 to the House and Senate, to wit: *Native American Heritage Day Act of 2007,* "A bill to designate the Friday after Thanksgiving of each year as 'Native American Heritage Day' in honor of the achievements and contributions of Native Americans to the United States." This proposed legislation, in its current draft, acknowledges the contribution of the Iroquois League of Nations. This draft resolution reads, in part: "Congress finds that . . . the Founding Fathers based the provisions of the Constitution on the unique system of democracy of the six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which divided powers among the branches of government and provided for a system of checks and balances."[39]

Here, to invoke the words of one historian commenting on eighteenth-century history, "the mystique of Iroquois unity and power had taken on a life of its own."[40] The Iroquois influence thesis has indeed taken on a life of its own, as the Congressional resolution clearly illustrates. As one scholar notes: "Despite the highly speculative nature of the evidence, this misconception has become a shibboleth, one which has been given even the official imprimatur of the United States Senate (United States Congress, Senate Resolution No. 76 [Washington, DC: U.S.G.P.O., 1988])."[41]

The Iroquois influence thesis, in the estimation of one authority, "has become a revisionist narrative about the birth of the United States."[42] The purpose of this revisionist theory is that it allows for a multicultural understanding of how America came to be the republic that it is today. Whether revisionist or not, the "Iroquois Influence Thesis" represents a Native American vision of America. To the extent that the Great Spirit had commissioned Deganawida to establish the Iroquois League, then this revisionist vision of America has a religious dimension in addition to its primarily secular application. And to the extent that the Iroquois influence thesis has succeeded in gaining considerable popular support—as well as limited support in the Academy (that is, among a minority of scholars) and in Congress—then it has exerted its own influence on mainstream America. To this day, the United States of America Embassy carries Bruce Johansen's article, "Native American Ideas of Governance and U.S. Constitution," on its website.[43]

To conclude, this chapter has treated Native American spiritual (and actual) visions of America in four dimensions. (Native Americans do not have formal religions, but spiritual traditions.) It is safe to say that the myth of "Turtle Island" and "Mother Earth," as well as the Deganawida legend and the "Iroquois Influence Thesis," have taken their rightful place in American popular culture, in the halls of Congress, and in the ivory tower of the Academy itself.

Figure 2.2. Idealized statue of "Hiawatha," co-founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. Sculpture in National Park Seminary, in Silver Spring, Maryland. Photo by Jack E. Boucher, 2001.

(Public domain. Library of Congress. See http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/md1503.photos.216580p/.)

Chapter 2 Update: The Peacemaker's Message to America and the World

> *I am the Peacemaker and from the north I have come . . . The Creator sent me here on earth . . . He intended everyone to have a good mind on the earth you travel. . . . First, he intended all the people should be having peaceful thoughts in their minds. Then love will come from that . . . And if they do have love, then from it will come compassion . . . Each and every one of you has the power. Whatever power you have comes from what you have thought. Then that comes from a good mind. He intended you all to be helping each other.*
>
> — Deganawida (c. 1150 or 1450)[44]

The Peacemaker's message continues to be relevant today.

The Iroquois Confederacy is widely regarded as the oldest notable democracy in the New World and as a prototype of the United Nations. That recognition has become increasingly public. In 2010—a year after the publication of the first edition of *Religious Myths and Visions of America* (2009)—the United States Mint (the world's largest coin manufacturer) issued its "Native American $1 Coin" (as a "numismatic product" for collectors). On the reverse, this handsomely executed coin of the American realm features an image of the Hiawatha Belt, with five arrows bound together, along with the inscriptions "Haudenosaunee" ("People of the Longhouse") and "Great Law of Peace." The official description reads, in part:

> The Haudenosaunee Confederation, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy of upstate New York, was remarkable for being founded by 2 historic figures, the Peacemaker and his Onondaga spokesman, Hiawatha, who spent years preaching the need for a league. The Peacemaker sealed the treaty by symbolically burying weapons at the foot of a Great White Pine, or Great Tree of Peace, whose 5-needle clusters stood for the original 5 nations: Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca.[45]

True to its motto, "Connecting America through Coins," the United States Mint has drawn full public recognition of the contribution of the Peacemaker (Deganawida) and Hiawatha, to the founding of the first great New World democracy, well before the United States of America was established as a country. Even from a Native American perspective (if only from a vocal minority and not a majority), it's now time to make the teachings of the Peacemaker known, far and wide.

There was a dramatic instance of this back in 1992. Iroquoian ethnologist, Michael K. Foster, Curator Emeritus, Canadian Museum of Civilization, recounts how Chief Jacob ("Jake") Ezra Thomas (Snipe Clan) (d. 1998), a prominent proponent and interpreter of Haudenosaunee culture, in September 1992, took the unprecedented step of reciting the Great Law in English

(drawing much indigenous indignation thereby), in a nine-day event on the grounds of his home on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario, which attracted national media coverage. Some 2,000 people were present. Many were non-Iroquois, i.e., "whites." "Jake" repeated the event in June, 1994 ("The Great Law of Peace Recital"). Chief Thomas, responding to criticism, offered this justification, according to Foster:

> I think the white man needs to understand. It isn't that he's going to take the law and use it himself. . . . They already did! The 13 colonies already took the Great Law for their so-called Constitution. So what should we be afraid of? . . . If they want to learn it, they have a right to. That should have been done 500 years ago, to study and respect the Confederacy. Maybe we wouldn't have the problems we have today if they would have studied our people, and [would now] understand and honor and respect [us].[46]

Let me take the liberty of switching to a "first-person" voice here. What Jake Thomas is saying is quite important. It represents a radical departure from the traditional practice of safeguarding knowledge of the Peacemaker, which is the responsibility of the "Faithkeeper" of sacred indigenous tradition. Further to Chief Jake Thomas' perspective that increasing public awareness of the teachings of the Peacemaker would be a good thing, in November 2014, I submitted a 10,000-word article on Deganawida to the *American Writers* series.[47] At first, it was difficult to justify including Deganawida in the *American Writers* series, for the simple reason that the Peacemaker was not a writer, as there were no books or publications in an oral culture in that day and age. A critic may well ask: "How can Deganawida be considered a writer, when there was no writing prior to European contact?" And further: "How can Deganawida be considered a literary figure when there was no formal literature produced in his day and age?" My justification was simply that Deganawida was the "author" of a sacred tradition, the fullest and most complete version of which has been translated as *Concerning the League*,[48] and which may be considered of such universal significance that it is recognized as belonging to the class of "world literature."

Let me hasten to add that I cannot speak for Native Americans. The best that I can do is to represent some of their perspectives, as I best understand them. I've tried my best to do just that. In the process of writing on Deganawida, I received valuable input from the following scholars: Barbara A. Mann, Ph.D. (Native American, Ohio Bear Clan Seneca), Associate Professor, Honors College, University of Toledo, author of *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000, 3rd printing, 2006); (2) Donald A. Grinde, Jr., Ph.D. (Native American, Yamassee), Professor, Department of Transnational Studies, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, editor and author of *A Political History of Native Americans* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press/Sage, 2002 [Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2003]); (3) Bruce E. Johansen, Ph.D., Jacob J. Isaacson

University Research Professor, Communication and Native American Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha, author of *Encyclopedia of the American Indian Movement* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2013); and (4) Clifford F. Abbott (Linguist), Professor of Information and Computing Science at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, author of *Oneida Teaching Grammar* (University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, 2006). This was no warranty against any errors on my part, for which I take full responsibility.

As I understand it, a Native American perspective on America (referred to in Iroquois culture as "Turtle's Island") necessarily includes past, present, and future considerations. The Peacemaker may be said to represent all three Native American outlooks on America. As to the past, it's important to understand that the traditions surrounding Deganawida are more properly understood as "legends" rather than "myths." C.J. Taylor, a Mohawk artist and author of the handsomely illustrated children's book, *Peace Walker: The Legend of Hiawatha and Tekanawita*,[49] prefers the term "legend" in reference to the Peacemaker traditions, with the understanding that a legend is based on a historical kernel of facts, with mythic embellishments, which combine to convey spiritual and cultural truths, as well as distant memory of a great event in the past.

A Native American vision of America has both environmental and social dimensions. The social dimensions are quite obvious in history, when the Peacemaker, with Hiawatha and the Peace Queen, united the Five Nations—one appreciation of which is worth quoting at length:

> That International Relations has shown little interest in Indigenous peoples may seem odd to readers who know something of the many well-documented histories of Indigenous diplomacies enacted both within and without the colonial encounter. Long predating the arrival of Europeans in the Americas and elsewhere, networks of exchange and interaction existed, wars were fought, and conflicts were resolved in the routine course of relations between Indigenous peoples. For two centuries, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, to take but one example, stood as a paragon of peaceful relations between erstwhile antagonists—a concord still unmatched in profundity and resilience by even the most celebrated of Europe's diplomatic triumphs.[50]

The Peacemaker's significance for the present may be represented by indigenous diplomacy, and further by *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), adopted by the United Nations on September 13, 2007. The Peacemaker's legacy for the future may unfold in future representations at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and in other international fora. Deganawida's principles of good governance are relevant today. Assuming that, outside indigenous societies, the Peacemaker's system cannot be replicated, aspects of it can be adapted, ethically if not procedurally.

What does this mean for America? On April 17, 2008, Chief Oren Lyons, in his speech, "Looking Toward the Seventh Generation," at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, said, in part:

> There was a spiritual being, messenger we called "the Peacemaker" . . . and he laid down for us the whole constitution based on peace, the principle of peace and health, of equity, justice for the people and of unity, the power of the good minds and the power of the collective working together—one mind, one body, one heart, one spirit. And we've prospered under that instruction over these many years . . .
>
> When the Peacemaker finally had laid out the whole system for us, he said, "Now I'm going to plant this great tree of peace, this great white pine." . . . He said, "Make your decisions on behalf of the seventh generation coming." . . .
>
> And when the Peacemaker was instructing the leaders so long ago, he said, "Now into your hands I am placing the responsibility for all life in this world." And he meant all the trees and all the fish and all the animals and all the medicine and all the water and everything there is, all life, and that's a responsibility that has kept us here all these years. That's how we've survived . . .
>
> And so the instructions that our people had a long time ago still reverberate.[51]

The Peacemaker's message connects America with the rest of the world, just as Turtle Island is part of Mother Earth, and is a guiding light for the next seven generations and beyond. A parting thought: Turtle Island is real. Artistically at least, North America has all the contours of a turtle of oceanic proportions. Imagine the continent of North America as perched on the vast shell of Turtle's back. Now visualize North America, poised on the giant tortoise's carapace, as seen from the sky. From this vantage, east to west, Florida is the right hindleg. Baja California (peninsula in Mexico) is the left back leg. Central America (Mexico through Panama) is the tail. Alaska is the left foreleg. Nova Scotia is the right. The Turtle's head is left of Hudson Bay. Iroquois artists are fond of depicting North America in the image of the Turtle of Haudenosuanee lore.[52] All of this predates satellites, etc. Maybe Sky Woman, in ancient times, drew a picture! Mythic as Sky Woman and Turtle may be, their traditions convey an environmentalist message, grounded in reality.

Permit me to make a final point. This chapter has focused on Native American myths and visions of America, including the legendary, yet historical prophet and statesman, Deganawida ("the Peacemaker"), who arguably ranks among the great individuals of world history, and whose epic (replete with laws and sacred ceremonies)—as memorialized in the fullest published version, *Concerning the League*—properly belongs in the canon of world literature, taking its rightful place among "the great

books"of human culture. We considered the original inhabitants of Turtle Island, who are really the first Americans in North America (i.e., Native Americans, Native Canadians and the indigenous peoples of Mexico). Let's take a moment to reflect upon the history of hardships and injustices perpetrated on these sovereign nations at the hands of European-Americans, who claimed a God-given right to colonize, Christianize, and civilize the so-called *terra nullius* ("empty land"), unjustly justified by the doctrines of discovery, of adverse possession, of conquest, and of cession. Without going into legal and historical details, suffice it to say that this occupation of ancestral lands was not simply the naked assertion of land title by right, but the forcible relocation of Native Americans from their ancestral lands, accompanied by such draconian policies as that of forced assimilation—most notoriously implemented by government-funded and religiously-run boarding schools across "Indian country"—whose "mission" was to "Kill the Indian to save the man," as Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879, infamously said.

To the best of my knowledge, the U.S. government never apologized, nor offered reparations, for its policies and actions taken against Native Americans. The closest that the federal government ever came to making such an apology took place on September 8, 2000, when Kevin Gover—the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and himself a Native American (Pawnee)—apologized on behalf of the BIA on the occasion of its 175th anniversary. The irony here is that it took a Native American to apologize to fellow Native Americans for what the American government had done, pursuant to federal policies carried out by the BIA. The press reported that some 300 tribal leaders were present, some of whom openly wept during the apology, as it touched on such painful memories as the Trail of Tears (summer of 1838), the Sand Creek Massacre (November 29, 1864), the Washita River Massacre (November 27, 1868), the Wounded Knee Massacre (December 29, 1890) and a host of other tragic, and all-too-often genocidal, episodes in American history.

Having read the text of Kevin Gover's "Never Again" speech, I naturally wondered if the event had been videotaped. If so, then the video would certainly be of interest as a teaching tool for classroom use. There could (or should) be some popular interest in this signal event, even though the news story came and went. So I decided to request a videotape of the event. It took awhile, but eventually the BIA did send me a copy of the videotape on a VHS cassette. I later had the videotape digitized, and then posted it online. The video is public domain. Then, on February 9, 2004, I offered the first public showing of Kevin Gover's "Never Again" apology on video. In introducing this historic apology to the audience of students and faculty at Michigan State University (MSU), I spoke about all the "red tape" that I had to go through in order to obtain the video, which took persistent efforts for approximately a year or so. (Whereupon the MSU Director of the American

Indian Studies Program, Dr. Patrick LeBeau, was quick to quip: "We call that 'white tape'!") Two years later, I published a journal article on Kevin Gover's apology on behalf of the BIA in the *Wicazo Sa Review*.[53] I invite the reader to close this book now, and to view the video at this very moment.[54] More than taking a moment of silence, take this moment to reflect, as Kevin Gover's speech gives pause for thought.

Notes

1. Benjamin Franklin, "To James Parker" (Philadelphia, March 20, 1750). *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin. Vol. III, 1750–1759*. Ed. Albert Henry Smyth (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 40–45 [42].
2. Barbara A. Mann, "Affiliated Nations of the League." *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)*. Ed. Bruce E. Johansen and Barbara A. Mann (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2000), 7–10.
3. Barbara A. Mann, and Jerry L. Fields. "A Sign in the Sky: Dating the League of the Haudenosaunee," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21.2 (August 1997): 105–163. See also Bruce E. Johansen, "Dating the Iroquois Confederacy." *Akwesasne Notes* 1.3/4 (Fall 1995): 62–63.
4. Barbara A. Mann, "The Lynx in Time: Haudenosaunee Women's Traditions and History." *American Indian Quarterly* 21.3 (Summer 1997): 423–449.
5. The Haudenosaunee ("People of the Longhouse") were called "Iroquois" by the French.
6. Gladys A. Reichard, "Literary Types and Dissemination of Myths." *Journal of American Folklore* 34, no. 133 (July–September 1921): 269–307 [274–277].
7. Barbara A. Mann, "The First Epoch of Time: Creation Keepings," *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)*. Ed. Bruce E. Johansen and Barbara A. Mann (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2000), 83–97.
8. William Nelson Fenton, Chapter 2: "This Island, the World On the Turtle's Back." *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 35.
9. Barbara A. Mann, "Spirits of Sky, Spirits of Earth: The Spirituality of Chingachgook." *James Fenimore Cooper Society Miscellaneous Papers* No. 17 (September 2002): 1–5.
10. Mann, "The First Epic of Time: Creation Keepings," *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 85.
11. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 34.
12. Qtd. in Donald A. Grinde, Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1991).
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14. Sam D. Gill, "The Academic Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (Winter 1994): 965–975.
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Figure 9.1. "A cafe near the tobacco market, Durham, North Carolina." Photo by Jack Delano (May 1940).

The Jim Crow era was defined by legalized segregation, as shown in this picture. Under America's apartheid, the "separate but equal" doctrine was the law of the land from 1896 to 1954, when the Supreme Court's landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision overturned Plessy v. Ferguson. Jim Crow America set the stage for the rise of the Nation of Islam—a reactionary movement that promised to restore dignity and independence to oppressed African Americans across the country. However, the Nation of Islam's answer to enforced segregation was, and still is, self-segregation.

(Public domain. Library of Congress. See http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa/item/fsa1998006213/PP/. Accessed January 12, 2015.)

Chapter 9

Black Muslim Myths and Visions of America

The Kingdom of God is an egalitarian kingdom structured on truth, where each of us will be treated with fairness and justice. America could become the basis for the Kingdom of God.

—Louis Farrakhan (1993)[1]

How is God going to destroy America? What instrument is He going to use? . . . The Honorable Elijah Muhammad told us of a giant Mother Plane that is made like the universe, spheres within spheres. White people call them unidentified flying objects (UFOs).

—Louis Farrakhan (1996)[2]

A black man with a white mother became a savior to us. . . . A black man with a white mother could turn out to be one who can lift America from her fall.

— Louis Farrakhan (2008)[3]

The Nation of Islam has an apocalyptic and chilling interpretation of Ezekiel, Chapter 1.

The Honorable Louis Farrakhan, current leader of the Nation of Islam, interprets Ezekiel, Chapter 1—considered by some to be the most mystical and recondite chapter in the Bible—as, as a grim forecast of the destruction of America. America is in mortal danger of destruction—not by nuclear bombs, by "drill bombs," delivered from an arsenal in outer space.

Black Muslims believe that Ezekiel saw and described a giant spaceship, referred to as the "Mother Wheel" or the "Mother Plane." To punish America for its evils of past slavery and present racism, the Mother Wheel will remove Blacks and then destroy White America.[4] A member of one of the branches of the Nation of Islam (the "Five Percent Nation of Islam") is a

popular hip-hop artist, the rapper known as "Killah Priest" or simply as "Priest." Priest was interviewed in 1997 with questions that probed his religious beliefs.[5]

At that time, Priest was a Black Muslim. In the course of the interview, Priest was asked: "Why, then, do you rap so much about outer space?" To which Priest answered: "Because that's where we're from! Black people come from space. When you look at the sky, it's black." Priest then talked about UFOs (unidentified flying objects): "I'm talking about pure facts. . . . But space travel is real. . . . Ezekiel saw UFOs back then—only they were IFOs, because he identified them. . . . They were chariots of fire."

Alluding to the destruction of America that will be inflicted by the Mother Wheel, Priest invoked Isaiah and connected it with the destruction of America (although Priest does not explicitly mention America): "Isaiah 66:15—'the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots like a whirlwind.' He's going to come and wreak vengeance."[6] In one of his rap songs, "Madness," Priest speaks of the apocalypse as foretold by the Nation of Islam:

> I see prophecies unfold that was told by the prophets of old
> Looked up, I saw the clouds in Heaven roll
> Back like a gigantic scroll
> UFO's came down to damage the globe.[7]

This is a transparent reference to the "baby planes," which are small spacecraft whose mission is to drop their payloads of "drill bombs" on White America in a literal Day of Judgment for the Babylon that America has become. This chapter will enlarge on some of the central Black Muslim myths and visions of America that Killah Priest has invoked.

Black nationalism is a reaction to White nationalism. For decades, the leading Black nationalist movement in contemporary America has been the Nation of Islam (NOI), whose followers are known as "Black Muslims." Indeed they are Black, but are they Muslims? But that was not the point at all. There was a special reason for calling this religion "Islam": since Christianity was perceived as the "White man's religion," Islam was presented as an alternative religion—the "Black man's religion." The Nation of Islam had therefore appropriated the name of "Islam" as this alternative religion. Yet the teachings of the NOI, at first, had very little to do with traditional Islam.

The Nation of Islam's core teachings would appear, to ordinary Muslims at least, to have both congruities and incongruities with traditional Islam. For instance, while Whites may convert to Islam, they have never been allowed to convert to the Nation of Islam. As Malcolm X said in his 1962 speech, "Black Man's History," a Black Muslim, by definition, is black, and "the only ticket you need to get into Muhammad's Mosque is to be black."[8] This racial exclusion—this self-segregation is in an already-segregated

society—contributed enormously to the NOI's popular appeal among socially disenfranchised African Americans, who wanted liberation, since integration was not an option at that time.

During "America's apartheid" in the Jim Crow era, the Nation of Islam, adopting a prophetic voice with a shrill rhetoric to match, advocated a Black homeland, free of White oppression. Not surprisingly, the Nation preached (and still preaches) a Black gospel—a theology of Black liberation. Its prophets are "Master Fard Muhammad Allah" (God), Elijah Muhammad (the Messiah), and Louis Farrakhan (the Messiah's envoy), not to mention the stellar role played by Malcolm X. Today, despite its radical beginnings, the Nation of Islam's teachings have changed over time. Today, in fact, NOI doctrine and discourse may be described as moderate and somewhat egalitarian. This evolution is far more pronounced in the NOI's public rhetoric, but not so much in its private discourse. Nevertheless, the NOI has come a long way since Farrakhan's song, "A White Man's Heaven Is a Black Man's Hell."[9]

The "Lost-Found Nation of Islam" was founded by an itinerant peddler, Wallace D. Fard, also known as Fard Muhammad and, later on, as "Master W. Fard Muhammad." After being released from San Quentin Prison for having sold narcotics, he moved to Detroit in 1930. There, he peddled silk garments to Blacks, gained their confidence, and began to teach them their "lost" Afrocentric history. Fard was clearly influenced by the ideas of Noble Drew Ali (a.k.a. Timothy Drew), the Black founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), which introduced such Islam-esque precepts and praxis as the prohibition of pork, the use of Arabic personal names, and the emblematic display of the crescent-and-star motif. Drew, who was looked to by his followers as a prophet, foretold the apocalyptic annihilation of all Whites. Fard was, in fact, a member of the MSTA.

A figure shrouded in mystery, Fard either disappeared or died as of June 30, 1934. He was succeeded by Elijah Muhammad (originally, Elijah Poole, 1897–1975). The son of an ex-slave and Baptist preacher, Poole met W. D. Fard in 1931 at one of Fard's meetings on Hasting Street—the main thoroughfare in black Detroit—and believed he had found a savior for the Black race. Recounting that fateful encounter over 30 years later, Muhammad told *Ebony* magazine: "He [Fard] didn't have to tell me that he was Allah. I recognized him. And right there I told him that he was the one the world had been looking for to come [*sic*]."[10]

For a long time prior to this, Elijah himself had wanted to save his race. As a boy, Elijah witnessed a lynching. The victim had allegedly insulted a White woman. This was a horrible thing to witness firsthand, and young Elijah was deeply disturbed by it: "That event had impressed me so much that I cannot get over it; I did never [*sic*] forget it, not until this day."[11] As a youth, after listening to accounts of cruelty and suffering under slavery, Elijah used to say: "My grandmother, when I get to be a man, if the Lord

helps me I will try to get my people out of the grip of this White man because I believe that we will not be able to get along with peace under his government."[12]

Elijah Muhammad went on to lead the Nation of Islam from 1934 to 1975. In addition to its theology of a Black God and gospel of Black liberation, the Nation of Islam promoted self-reliance by encouraging the large-scale development of Black-owned businesses. In its heyday, the NOI was a successful and wealthy enterprise. Unfortunately, Muhammad's leadership was marred by moral contradictions in his own personal life. In January 1960, Elijah Muhammad's first out-of-wedlock child was born—the first of 13 illegitimate children whom he fathered over a seven-year period by seven different mistresses.

During his tenure as leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muḥammad attracted two converts who would become his most famous protégé's: Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. While in prison, Malcolm X converted to the Nation of Islam in late 1948, and he went on to have a colorful and controversial career. From his parole from prison in 1952 until his break with the Nation in 1964, Malcolm X helped the ranks of the Nation swell from an estimated 500 members in 1952 to 30,000 strong in 1963.

One of the lesser-known incidents in his life involved negotiations with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). In December 1960, Elijah Muhammad ordered Malcolm X to meet representatives of the KKK in Atlanta, to investigate their offer to Muhammad of a tract of land "so that his program of separation would sound more feasible to Negroes and therefore lessen the pressure that the integrationists were putting upon the white man."[13] Later, when he found out about Elijah Muhammad's sexual escapades, Malcolm X began to have serious doubts, not only about Muhammad's integrity in the wake of such moral turpitude, but about whether Muhammad was really a messenger of Allah, as he had claimed.

On March 12, 1964, Malcolm X announced that he was leaving the Nation of Islam. He went on to found the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and later, on June 28, 1964, the Organization of Afro-American Unity. On April 19, 1964, Malcolm X completed his pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca and became El-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, his new Muslim name. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated on the stage of the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem (with a strong suspicion that the NOI's paramilitary wing, the Fruit of Islam, was behind the assassination), thus ending a prophetic career as a social reformer.

Meanwhile, in 1955, Louis Eugene Wolcott, a former nightclub singer, joined the Nation of Islam. He was recruited by both Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. Wolcott first became known as Minister Louis X, and later as Abdul Haleem Farrakhan, and, now, the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan. When Elijah Muhammad died on February 25, 1975, many thought that Farrakhan would succeed him. But Elijah Muḥammad

had appointed his youngest son, Wallace Muhammad, as his successor instead. During his first three years as leader of the Nation of Islam, Wallace Muhammad (1933–2008), also known as Warith Deen Mohammed, gradually renounced the teachings of his late father and converted a great number of former members of the Nation into traditional Muslims. Having led the Nation of Islam into mainstream Islam, Wallace Muhammad changed the Nation's name to the "American Muslim Mission." In 1977, Farrakhan left the American Muslim Mission, and, having taken several thousand followers with him, reestablished the Nation of Islam under the name, the "Original Nation of Islam."

The Nation of Islam's rise to power and influence reached its peak in October 1995. The Million Man March, conceived and organized under NOI leader Louis Farrakhan, was the largest gathering of African Americans in U.S. history. The Million Man March was the crowning testimony to the power and influence of Louis Farrakhan as a Black leader and power broker. Yet, fairly recently, in fact, the Nation of Islam has come to embrace traditional Islam. Like the conversion of Malcolm X—from the Nation of Islam to traditional Islam—the NOI, in several major ways, has undergone a slow conversion to traditional Islam. Farrakhan finally led a transition of the NOI back to traditional Islam—culminating in his open espousal of classical Islam—when he ostensibly reconciled with Warith Deen Mohammed on "Saviour's Day" in February 1999. Yet, today, the Nation of Islam still maintains a distinct Black national identity, and has never disclaimed its Black nationalist myths, which are the subject of this chapter. The major religious myths of the Nation of Islam are the Yacub Myth, the Mother Wheel Myth, and the Destruction of America Myth, which is where jeremiad and apocalyptic rhetoric ultimately intermix.

The Yacub Myth

Although this myth sprung from the fertile imagination of Elijah Muhammad, it was Malcolm X who gave definitive expression to this myth in short form, as Terrill observes generally about Malcolm X's repackaging of Elijah Muhammad's teachings: "While a minister in the Nation of Islam, Malcolm crafted from the rambling revelations of Elijah Muhammad a hermetically sealed prophetic rhetoric—it called upon its audience to realign their values and behaviors with a foundational set of truths presented in and through that very discourse."[14] Just before Christmas in December 1962, Malcolm X delivered his vociferously anti-White sermon, "Black Man's History,"[15] at the Harlem's Nation of Islam's Mosque No. 7 in Harlem. On Malcolm's instructions, this speech was recorded by "Benjamin 2X" (now Benjamin Karim), one of Malcolm's most trusted and faithful lieutenants.

In "Black Man's History," Malcolm X restates Elijah Muhammad's esoteric teachings about the origin of races, beginning with the proposition: "The birth of the white race has always been a secret."[16] According to Malcolm X, Blacks came into existence 66 trillion years ago:

> The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that sixty-six trillion years ago our people were living on this planet: the black man was living on this planet. But in those days it was larger than it is now, and the planet Mars, that was off here beyond it, had an effect upon our planet then in the same manner that the moon affects us today.[17]

They were an advanced race. For eons, Blacks led a blissful existence. But their paradise suddenly ended 6,000 years ago when an evil Black scientist, Yacub (a.k.a. "Yakub"), was bent on creating the White race. When he succeeded, the White race, evil by nature, would rule over Blacks for 6,000 years.

Malcolm goes on to retell the fantastic tale of the origins of the White race, at the hands of evil Black scientist Yacub. Born in the year 8,400, Yacub discovered the law of magnetism at the age of six. As polar opposites attract, magnetism inspired Yacub to create a race that was the polar opposite of Blacks. By so doing, he would create a human magnetic force field. Yacub later discovered the secrets of genetics. This enabled Yacub to act on his wish to create a new race. When the book of Genesis says, "Let us make man," these were Yacub's words, not God's. Yacub accomplished this by means of a nefarious birth control law designed to favor light-skinned offspring over black-skinned infants. Yacub forbade Black couples to marry. But if one partner was brown in color, they could. If they gave birth to a black child, doctors were to "put a needle in its brain and feed it to a wild animal or give it to the cremator."[18] Within 200 years, no more Black babies were born.

After Yacub's death at age 150, this process of favoring lighter-skinned offspring continued. Thus the brown race emerged from the black, the yellow race from the brown, and the white race from the yellow. After 200 years, the brown race was destroyed, leaving only "a yellow or mulatto-looking civilization."[19] After a full 600 years had elapsed, "they had grafted away the black, grafted away the brown, grafted away the yellow, so that all they had left was a pale-skinned, blue-eyed, blonde-haired thing that you call a man."[20] But this was no man: "actually the Bible calls him the devil, . . . old Lucifer, Satan, or the serpent."[21]

Malcolm X concludes this segment of his speech in saying: "They had to murder off the black, brown, and yellow in order to get to the white. And right to this very day the white man by nature wants to murder off the black, brown, and yellow."[22] And further: "You're not using the right language when you say the white man. You call it the devil."[23] A further

instance of the anti-White invectives of this remarkable (and equally disturbing) speech is the teaching that Whites cannot walk truly upright, since they evolved from cavemen who crawled on all fours.[24] Malcolm X goes on to deepen anti-White antipathy by exciting feelings of repulsion for the moral depravity of the White race. Here, Malcolm X suggests that White women mated with dogs:

> Oh yes, this was the white man, brother, up in the caves of Europe. He had a tail that long . . . The Honorable Elijah Muhammad says . . . what the white man would do, he'd dig a hole in the hill, that was his cave. And his mother and his daughter and his wife would all be in there with the dog. The only thing that made friends with the white man was the dog. . . . It was then that the dog and the white man amalgamated. The white woman went with the dog while they were living in the caves of Europe. And right to this very day the white woman will tell you there is nothing she loves better than a dog. They tell you that a dog is a man's best friend. They lived in that cave with those dogs and right now they got that dog smell.[25]

Yacub would then teach this man "tricknology"[26]—the science of deceit. And so the White man is the devil. The White race is not only racist, but inherently murderous. The Nation of Islam has not repudiated these beliefs. No efforts are made to distance the Nation of Islam from this core mythology. Unabashed and unapologetic, this counter-racist mythology, equally bigoted, has taken on a life of its own, in foreseeable perpetuity.

The Mother Wheel Myth

The Nation of Islam developed an apocalyptic scenario that promised racialized retribution. To vanquish evil, the world must be freed of the White Devil. The White race will be obliterated, as Elijah Muhammad has stated: "According to the history of the white race (devils) they are guilty of . . . causing war among the people and themselves ever since they have been on our planet Earth. So the God of the righteous . . . has decided to remove them from the face of the Earth."[27] Under this vision of the end, God would judge between the "White Devil" and the Black man. Justice would then prevail, not as equalization, but in annihilation of the White man. Armageddon is thus to be a racial war[28]—an eschatology of reverse racism, if you will. (One may think about the NOI apocalypse as a functional counterpart to the "Racial Holy War" predicted by the Creativity Movement, as discussed in the previous chapter.)

How would all this take place? In one sense, the countdown to Armageddon began when the slave ship, "Jesus of Lubeck," captained by the

white devil, John Hawkins, came upon the shores of West Africa. "In effect, slavery brought the original people like a Trojan horse into the fortress of evil," Mattias Gardell observes, "giving the African American a key role in the approaching apocalypse."[29] Armageddon will be preceded by a kind of Black "rapture." Like faithful Christians being swept up into the air before Jesus comes on a mushroom cloud, Black Muslims will be transported by spacecraft to the Mother Wheel, their safe haven for the duration of the apocalyptic upheaval.[30] The White race, however, will be exterminated under a hail of bombs dropped by space warplanes that are sent out on missions of destruction by the Mother Plane.[31]

The "Mother Wheel" myth is based on Ezekiel's wheel of fire, originally derived from Elijah Muhammad's allegorization of passages from Ezekiel 10:2–11.[32] This is clear in Chapter 125 of *Message to the Blackman*, "Battle in the Sky Is Near." But the most extensive description is by Elijah Muhammad, in Chapter 58, "The Mother Plane," in his book, *The Fall of America*, available online, an excerpt of which will serve to illustrate this flight of imagination:

> The Mother Plane was made to destroy this world of evil and to show the wisdom and mighty power of the God Whom came to destroy an old world and set up a new world. . . . The same type of plane was used by the Original God to put mountains on His planets. . . . Allah (God) Who came in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad, . . . taught me that . . . He will raise these mountains to a height of one (1) mile over the United States of America.[33]

Elijah Muhammad says that the Mother Plane was taught by W. D. Fard himself. Be that as it may, this teaching is said to be grounded in Ezekiel's vision. This is Elijah Muhammad's exegesis of it, in brief:

> Ezekiel saw the Mother Plane in a vision. . . . According to the Bible, he looked up and saw this Plane (Ez. 1:16) and he called it a wheel because it was made like a wheel. A Plane that is wheel-shaped can turn in any direction, at any time. He admitted that the Plane was so high that it looked dreadful, and he cried out, "O wheel" (Ez. 10:13). Ezekiel saw great work going on in the wheel and four living creatures "and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." (Ez. 1:16). And when the living creatures went, the wheels went with them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels, were lifted up (Ez. 1:19).
>
>   In Ezekiel's vision concerning the wheel, he said that he heard the voice of one tell the other to take coals of fire and to scatter it over the cities; this means bombs. . . . Allah (God) taught me that these bombs are not to be dropped into water. They are to be dropped only on the

cities. . . . Allah (God) Whom came in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad, to Whom praises are due forever, taught me that the Mother plane is a little human-made planet.[34]

Elijah Muhammad goes on to explain that the "four creatures represents the four colors of the original people of the earth"—that is, "the four colors of the Black man (Black, Brown, Yellow and Red)."[35] Excluded here is the evil White race, which will be destroyed. This fate of the White race is not, however, absolute. Claude Andrew Clegg makes this important observation: "As one of the few major changes that Elijah Muhammad introduced into the Nation's overall belief system, over time white Muslims became eligible for salvation; however, their hereafter would supposedly be qualitatively inferior to that of blacks."[36] A "remnant" of the White race would be saved. This is hardly reassuring for Whites, as Clegg observes: "For the most part, the question of white redemption was academic insofar as so few would be able to contradict their wicked nature and save America by extending freedom, justice, and equality to the so-called Negro."[37] Those few Whites who would be saved, however, will only be converts to Islam.

The divine judgment executed by the Mother Wheel would pave the way for the promised golden age, a utopian vision that Black Muslims would dream of. This is the Millennium, which will be a Black paradise. The Black Nation will be raised upon the smouldering ashes of the vanquished Caucasian civilization. The remnant of humanity will number a little more than the 144,000 spoken of in the Book of Revelation. All vestiges of the old world will have been obliterated. In a mere 20 years' time, the very memory of American civilization will vanish from the minds of the saved. The new government will be "based upon truth, freedom, justice, and equality."[38] The Original People will be biologically enhanced, physically fitter. They will be "clothed in silk interwoven with gold."[39] Appearing as youthful 16-year-olds, Black people will have a life-span of a thousand years or longer.[40]

The Destruction of America Myth

A further development of the Mother Wheel Myth is the Destruction of America Myth. Again, this is the product of Elijah Muhammad's imaginative end-time scenario. However, the way in which Malcolm X relates it may be of more interest to readers. On December 4, 1963, Malcolm X would deliver his speech, "God's Judgment of America"[41]—later changed to "God's Judgment of White America." This was popularly known as "The Chickens Come Home to Roost" speech. The reason is this: shortly after making this speech, Malcolm was asked by the press for his opinion on the recent assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In response, Malcolm caustically remarked that Kennedy "never foresaw that the chickens would

come home to roost so soon." This callous quip set off a firestorm, leading Elijah Muḥammad to impose 90 days of silence on his leading spokesman. Remarkably, "God's Judgment of White America" incorporates hardly any of the elements of Elijah Muhammad's apocalyptic scenario, except to say that "the white world" would somehow come to an end, as this excerpt from the speech will serve to illustrate:

> When The Honorable Elijah Muhammad says "end of the world," he does not mean the end of the earth; he is referring to the end of a race of "world of people," and their removal from this earth: the removal of their world. There are many "worlds" here on this earth: the Buddhist world, Hindu world, Jewish world, Christian world—Capitalist world, Communist world, Socialist world—Eastern world and Western world—Oriental world and Occidental world—dark world and white world. Which of these many worlds has come to the end of its rope, the end of its time? Look around you at all of the signs and you will agree that it is the end of time for the Western world, the European world, the Christian world, the white world.[42]

This was public discourse. The nitty-gritty detail of the Black Muslim apocalypse was, in fact, reserved for private discourse, which FBI surveillance tapes would later disclose:

> LITTLE [Malcolm X] told this group that there was a space ship 40 miles up which was built by the wise men of the East and in this space ship there are a number of smaller space ships and each one is loaded with bombs. LITTLE stated that when ELIJAH MOHAMMED of Chicago, Illinois, gives the word these ships will descend on the United States, bomb it and destroy all the "white devils". According to LITTLE these bombs will destroy all the "devils" in the United States and that all the Muslims in good standing will be spared. LITTLE claimed that their Prophet ELIJAH MOHAMMED was sent to the United States 20 years ago to save the "Black people."[43]

The new information disclosed here is that Elijah Muhammad himself would give the order for the destruction to start. Note that Whites are not called "people," but instead are objectified—and demonized, quite literally—as "devils." The word "people" (with the connotation of "human") is reserved for "Black people" alone. This judgment, therefore, is not a judgment of individuals, but of races and religions. All good Muslims would be spared. The clear implication here is that Blacks who are not Black Muslims would not be spared. They would, however, be warned in advance of the impending doom. Not to be unjust, just how would all good Muslims be spared? In another FBI surveillance tape, Malcolm X is reported to have said:

First the planes would drop pamphlets written in Arabic and English explaining that they should get on to your own kind at once. He stated at this time the Muslims would have already left North America, and you would have to find a way out for yourself. He stated that next there would come a trumpet so piercing to your ears that it would drive men insane, pregnant women would have their babies, and some would drop dead. The last part of the destruction would be an airplane returning ALLAH to the Almighty God Himself. He would light a match that would cause a fire which no man could put out.[44]

America will literally be burned alive by divine conflagration. It was only during his stellar rise as a minister of the Nation of Islam, from 1952 until late 1959, that Malcolm X talked about the Mother Plane. Thereafter, he appeared to abandon that topic altogether. "As the profile of the Nation grew in the national press," Wayne Taylor observes, "Malcolm eschewed his earlier musings on the mother ship and shifted his focus to more earthly matters."[45] This raises a question: did Malcolm X simply shift his focus to more practical matters, or did he actually reject the myth of the Mother Ship? If so, would this not have signaled a departure from the NOI norm, or mark a crisis in faith? Taylor seems to suggest that both answers are true: "In his struggle to bring African Americans closer to a paradise on earth, Malcolm turned away from the fantastic visions and began to concentrate on creating brotherhood in the African Diaspora through political and economic strategies."[46] Still, for the seven years that he would teach his fellow Black Muslims about the Mother Plane, the result was electric, for it had such great appeal for the rank-and-file Black Muslim: "Malcolm's racialized vision of the Armageddon captivated an audience desperate for deliverance."[47] Yet, despite Malcolm's eschewal of it, the myth persisted having, as it were, a life of its own.

In fact, the Mother Wheel Myth was remarkably long-lived. Four decades after Malcolm's 1955 speech, Louis Farrakhan spoke at the Mosque Maryam in Chicago, on June 9, 1996, on the topic: "The Divine Destruction of America: Can She Avert It?" In no uncertain terms, Farrakhan said that God's "intention is the total destruction of America." Corrupt to the core, America is the Babylon whose destruction was foretold in the Book of Revelation, for "No city or people answers the description of a mystery Babylon better than the cities and the people of America." After describing various cataclysms that would take place, Farrakhan described a giant spacecraft called the "Mother Plane" (or "Mother Wheel").[48] His description of it reveals how meticulously Farrakhan had followed Elijah Muhammad's teaching.

Literally made in Japan, the "giant Mother Plane"—which White people have sighted and called unidentified flying objects (UFOs)—was foretold by the prophet Ezekiel, who described it as "a wheel that looked like a cloud

by day but a pillar of fire by night." This was the creation of "some of the original [Black] scientists" and "took 15 billion dollars in gold at that time to build it." This gargantuan warship, "made of the toughest steel," is "a half mile by a half mile," "is like a small human built planet," and is like a giant hangar, housing 1,500 smaller ships, each of which is equipped with three "drill bombs." "And the final act of destruction," Farrakhan warns, "will be that Allah will make a wall out of the atmosphere over and around North America." God will then "cut a shortage in gravity and a fire will start from 13-layers up and burn down, burning the atmosphere." America will then "burn for 310 years and take 690 years to cool off."[49]

All this might seem fanciful enough. Farrakhan, after all, was simply elaborating on what Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X had previously said. But one gets the impression that Farrakhan may have completely bought into the myth. In 1985, Farrakhan had a vision, in which he was actually taken up in this heretofore imaginary spacecraft. Mattias Gardell describes Farrakhan's reported experience as follows:

> In the vision, Farrakhan walked up a mountain to an Aztec temple together with some companions. When he got to the top of the mountain, a UFO appeared. Farrakhan immediately realized the importance of the moment. . . . Farrakhan, feeling a bit afraid, asked his companions to go with him but was corrected from the spacecraft: "Just you, brother Farrakhan." He walked and was placed next to the pilot. The spacecraft took off with Farrakhan, who knew that the pilot was sent by God and was to take him to the Mother Wheel. After being inside, he heard the well-known voice of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, which confirmed his being alive. Farrakhan was authorized to lead his God-fearing people through these latter days. The Messiah spoke many things and a scroll full of divine cursive writing was rolled down inside Farrakhan's head. The spaceship shot out of the tunnel and the pilot took the plane up to a terrific height and maneuvered the vehicle to allow Farrakhan to look down on the wheel. He saw a city, a magnificent city, the New Jerusalem, in the sky. Instead of going back to Mexico, the craft carried him with terrific speed to Washington, DC, and dropped him off outside of the city. He walked into the capital and delivered his announcement, the final warning to the United States government.[50]

Louis Farrakhan was certainly not the only one to believe in the actual existence of the Mother Wheel. Most Black Muslims, in fact, believed in the reality of this fantastic spacecraft after Farrakhan's verification of its existence. According to Dr. Vibert White, Jr., author of *Inside the Nation of Islam*, great excitement was generated in February 1984 on "Saviour's Day," an annual NOI event when, in his speech, Louis Farrakhan spoke of his

personal experience of the Mother Plane. This ignited a wave of interest and expectation throughout the Nation of Islam, as Dr. White further relates:

> When the Nation's ministers started to follow the lead of Farrakhan in lecturing at length on the Mother Plane, members of the Nation became possessed with the Mother Plane story. For instance, in Fruit of Islam classes that were held in the basement of the Final Call building in Chicago, a week did not pass before several brothers reported that they had seen the Mother Plane. In fact, it was not unusual for members to stay up all night looking and pointing out the Mother Plane. Strangely, as it sounds now, I reported that not only did I see the Mother Plane but, also, had a vision of the craft before observing it.[51]

This testimony shows how effectively this "technological monstrosity"[52] had captured the imagination of Black Muslims. Note how Dr. White's "vision" of the Mother Plane preceded—and probably preconditioned—his reported sighting of it. After the 1995 Million Man March, however, Vibert White became increasingly disillusioned with Louis Farrakhan, and critical of the Nation of Islam. Eventually, Dr. White left the Nation in 1996,[53] having been a member for some 20 years. Two years later, in October 1998, Dr. White embraced the Baha'i Faith, following a presentation by the present writer in the Baha'i Center in Springfield, Illinois.

As for Farrakhan himself, he apparently began to follow much the same course as Warith Deen Mohammed, in finding his way to authentic Islam. It just took Farrakhan a lot longer to do so. First diagnosed in 1991 with prostate cancer, Farrakhan faced a crisis in his personal health that some say may have precipitated a crisis of faith with respect to the teachings of his preceptor and predecessor, Elijah Muhammad. Without actually renouncing Elijah Muhammad's teachings, Farrakhan took a decisive move in openly committing himself to mainstream Islam. How sincere this move was is still open to question.

Writing for the Religious News Service in 1999, Arthur J. Magida, author of *Prophet of Rage: A Life of Louis Farrakhan and His Nation*, reported that Farrakhan was rumored to have distanced himself away from Elijah Muhammad's teachings in favor of traditional Islam, and was steering the NOI leadership in that same direction:

> While there has been no public statement by Farrakhan that he is divorcing himself from these central tenets of the Nation of Islam, he reportedly told a closed-door meeting here of Nation of Islam ministers from around the country in late January or early February that they should disregard the "old teachings."[54]

The far more public rapprochement came one year later. On February 25, 2000, during a Jumu'ah prayer service held at the McCormick Center as part of the Nation of Islam's Saviours' Day 2000 celebration in Chicago, Farrakhan and Deen embraced in a symbolic show of reconciliation.[55] Notwithstanding Farrakhan's show of solidarity with traditional Islam, Warith Deen Mohammed remained critical of the Nation of Islam. After his August 10, 2007, lecture at the Clinton Presidential Library, W. D. Mohammed told the press: "The time for those leaders who had that hate rhetoric has come and passed and they know it." He added: "For the last 10 years or more, they've just been selling wolf tickets to the white race and having fun while they collect money and have fancy lifestyles."[56] Warith Deen Mohammed passed away on September 9, 2008.[57]

The Nation of Islam is significant in part because it gave so many African Americans, whether Black Muslims or not, a renewed identity, and fired them with new hope and resolve. Despite its inchoate racism and the internal corruption of the NOI itself, NOI rhetoric served as the voice of an oppressed people, as a theology of liberation, and even as the conscience of America itself. Before its recent reconciliation with traditional Islam, the original message of the Nation of Islam was one of Black superiority and White inferiority, a Black God in place of a White God, and Black Nation to be set apart from any White nation.[58] The Nation of Islam preached, and continues to preach, a gospel of Black nationalism. In the Yacub Myth, the NOI had formulated a negative theology of America, perhaps more aptly described as a *theodicy* (explanation of the origins of evil and of "God's justice"). Over time, the Yacub Myth had become an embarrassment for the Nation. If not sheer madness, the myth was a social liability. Its ideology of Black supremacy, which was once a bulwark against White supremacy, ultimately became a barrier to interracial harmony. Over the years, though, the social message of the NOI has softened considerably as the Nation of Islam began to embrace traditional Islam.

As recently as February 24, 2008, Farrakhan said of a non-Muslim candidate for the U.S. presidency, Senator Barack Obama: "A black man with a white mother became a savior to us. . . . A black man with a white mother could turn out to be one who can lift America from her fall."[59] This single statement implicitly marks the utter abrogation of the Yacub Myth, *for Obama cannot be a "savior" if his mother was a White "devil"!* The wider implications of Farrakhan's endorsement of Senator Obama are equally clear: The Nation of Islam has largely abandoned, although not abnegated, its own religious myths of America, in favor of an egalitarian vision of America. However, as Chapter 9 will demonstrate, Farrakhan is still a firebrand of religious racism and anti-Semitism, although he is quick to deny it.
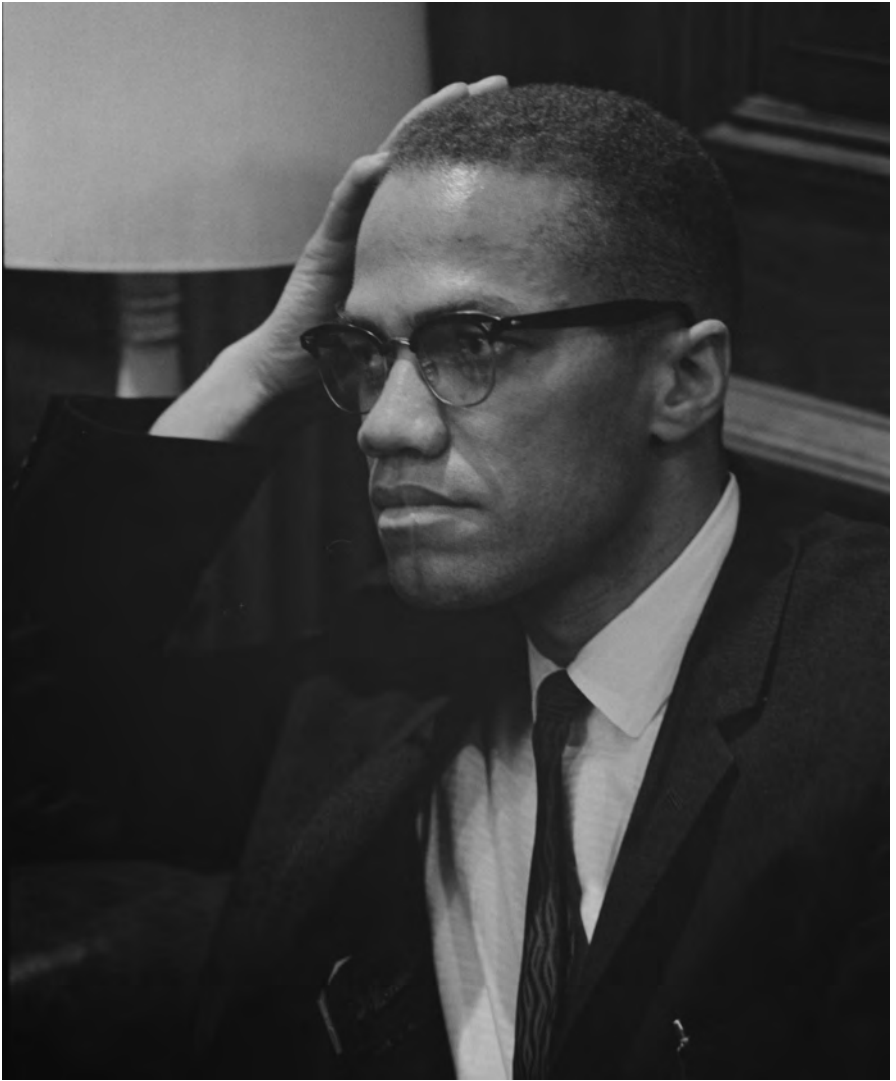
Figure 9.2. Malcolm X, prominent Nation of Islam minister, at Martin Luther King press conference on March 26, 1964. That same month, Malcolm X resigned his position in the Nation of Islam and renounced Elijah Muhammad over the latter's infidelities.

Later in 1964, having converted to Sunni Islam, Malcolm X went on pilgrimage to Mecca, where he met "blonde-haired, blued-eyed men I could call my brothers." Meanwhile, FBI informants reported that Malcolm X was marked for assassination by the Nation of Islam leadership. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated onstage in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom.

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Chapter 9 Update: Separation, Not Integration

> *Beloved followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad under my leader-*
> *ship: . . . Does not America need a messenger of God? . . . Elijah Muhammad*
> *spoke to a specific people under a specific condition in a specific country*
> *that needs to be guided and warned. . . . Master Fard Muhammad: I could*
> *not dishonor The Work that He did by denying Him.*
>
> —Louis Farrakhan (2014)[60]

Louis Farrakhan has warned President Obama: America is in danger, from a UFO.

Recently, the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan is less controversial. But he is more outspoken. As if to crank up the volume, many more videos of Farrakhan's speeches are now online than when this book was first published in 2009. By far, Farrakhan's most significant—and controversial—recent pronouncements are his lecture series, "The Time and What Must Be Done." Videos and transcripts of these speeches, in 58 parts, are immediately accessible online.[61] Part 58 is quite a finale. It culminates not only in a message to President Barack Obama, it also proclaims the divine authority of Farrakhan himself.

"The Time and What Must Be Done" series is a mythological gold mine of Black Muslim doctrines. In Part 41, "Guidance for Our President and Our Nation," Farrakhan announced: "Our world of Islam needs to be reformed! And that reform will not be guided by those in the East, that Guidance for reform of the Islamic world is coming out of the West—and we, The Nation of Islam, are that Light!"[62]

By what authority does Farrakhan speak? The answer is simple: he is empowered to speak with divine authority. Here's how it works; this is the flow of divine guidance: Farrakhan believes in the Prophet Muhammad. No doubt about that. That makes him a Muslim, for sure—except for the fact that Farrakhan does *not* acknowledge Muhammad to be the "Seal of the Prophets." That distinction, that title, properly belongs to Elijah Muhammad:

> "The Seal of The Prophets" means it is an individual that is "sealed with
> The Wisdom of God" that lets the world know that he is authentic. So
> they, Jesus and Muhammad, prefigured The Coming of "The Great Mahdi"
> and "The Great Messiah": Master Fard Muhammad and The Honorable
> Elijah Muhammad—who was given The Knowledge that Seals The Books;
> The Scriptures!
>
> I represent those Two Men![63]

Problem: Farrakhan is not entirely consistent here. Earlier he stated:

> Master Fard Muhammad: "The Mahdi" and "The Christ" are one and
> the same. . . .

> Master Fard Muhammad, Who is The Master of The Wheel . . .
> "Allah came in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad."[64]

Either way (whoever of the two is "The Great Messiah"), the "Seal of the Prophets" is not Muhammad, but Elijah Muhammad. He is also foretold by the Prophet Muhammad. "Does not America need a messenger of God?"[65] Farrakhan asks rhetorically? The obvious answer (or the expected response) is a resounding "Yes!" From this we gather that Elijah Muhammad is the Messenger of God to America: "Elijah Muhammad spoke to a specific people under a specific condition in a specific country that needs to be guided and warned."[66] Louis Farrakhan carries forward that divine mission to America. Another proof that Farrakhan is on a mission from God, with a message to America, is that there is a sign in the sky, the Mother Wheel.

This is no longer private discourse to be shared among Black Muslims, who are advisedly discreet, circumspect, careful not to divulge this information publicly. Private discourse is now public discourse. Farrakhan is a public figure, and his outreach is impressive. Given his recent public disclosures, with their extraordinary claims, it's surprising that Farrakhan has not attracted more public attention lately.

Farrakhan tweets. His audience is huge: 307,815 followers (as of October 7, 2014). His tweets are being rebranded as "The Twitter Sayings of the Honorable Louis Farrakhan." So it is no surprise that Farrakhan's tweets have taken on a canonical status as an extension of his teachings. To a certain extent, these tweets reveal how Farrakhan's mind works in real Twitter time.

His Twitter account tracks recent speeches and opinions. It also refreshes old videos and articles. This mix of new and old uses the old to reinforce the new. As a prostate cancer survivor, Farrakhan apparently has not mellowed as much as might be expected. He continues to bask in the adoration of his followers, and those charmed by his charisma. He is still a captivating speaker. His oratorical skills are finely honed and tuned into the emotional and attitudinal nerves of those receptive to his message.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is Alive Myth

One man's myth may be another man's reality. On October 7, 2014, Louis Farrakhan tweeted: "I don't represent a dead man! Not only is the Honorable Elijah Muhammad alive and well, he is in power now."[67] This is important. Not so much because it keeps the memory of Elijah Muhammad alive—by claiming that he is, in fact, alive and well and in control. That Elijah Muhammad is alive bolsters Farrakhan's own authority. He receives his messages from a messenger of God. As the chosen representative, Farrakhan delivers speeches and statements that may be considered to be messages from God.

in other words, Farrakhan speaks with prophetic authority. He has someone to be reckoned with. His messages should not be dismissed lightly. To do so would be at America's peril.

Farrakhan continues to speak with prophetic thunder. He is, after all, a thunderbolt from heaven. The "Seal of the Prophets" (Elijah Muhammad) has sent him. Farrakhan receives his orders from above. He continues to represent Elijah Muhammad, who is still alive—still powerful, still in control—who rides in a spaceship in outer space, and threatens America with destruction in the name of divine retribution for its racism.

The Mother Wheel Myth

The Mother Wheel Myth is the Nation of Islam's most central and vital myth, according to Stephen C. Finley: "The Wheel, and its adjectival modifier 'Mother' is central to understanding cosmology in Farrakhan's NOI." And further: "Louis Farrakhan's visionary experience of being carried onto the Mother Wheel—an unidentified flying object to the world outside the Nation of Islam (NOl)—was the most significant religious event of his life."[68] On Saturday, February 15, 2014, the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan aired the series finale (Part 58) of his year-long lecture series, "The Time and What Must Be Done." In this final broadcast, Farrakhan reaffirms the reality of the Mother Wheel, and calls upon President Barack Obama to open up Area 51 in order to reveal this massive UFO—God's "Calling Card":

> President Obama: Let's open up Roswell! Summon the scientists from all over the world to America under your auspices, and you go with them—along with Presidents Carter, Clinton, and with President Bush "41" and Bush "43," and look at what Allah sent to you, and study it!
>
> And if you think there can be a better world from the knowledge that Allah (God) introduced for us to use—why, that was like a man coming to you, giving you his card, and giving you his address and telephone number, saying, "If you'd like to reach me, just call me."
>
> Well, Allah (God) says: "I am sending you a Wheel—a few of them—as 'My Calling Card'." . . .
>
> Who is behind this Wheel? It is Allah (God) Who is introducing Himself to you, America. That He is present, now, and He comes to take over the rule of the planet and its people; and He is offering you a place, if you submit! But if you fight Him, then you cause Him to use the Awesome Power that He has to remove you totally, completely, irreversibly from the face of the Earth.
>
> Rulers of America: It's your choice. I say this as The Servant of The Great Mahdi and The Great Messiah that is representing this to you. . . .
>
> I am from that Wheel, and They Who are on that Wheel are my Guides and my Support! . . . My dear brother, President Obama: You can, from

your high office, help America to save herself, and the American people, from The Wrath of God. . . . [69]

The Mother Wheel Myth is alive and well, as of 2014. Louis Farrakhan should know. He was transported to the Mother Wheel. He now serves as the emissary of the "Great Mahdi" (Master Fard Muhammad) and the "Great Messiah" (the Honorable Elijah Muhammad). This myth implicates the Destruction of America Myth.

The Yacub Myth

The problem with America is that it has been dominated by the White race. A renegade Black scientist, Yakub (a.k.a. Yacub, Yacoub, Jacob), was responsible for creating the White race. In his lecture, "How Satan Came Into Existence" (Part 28), Farrakhan, by quoting his mentor, Elijah Muhammad, effectively recycles and reinvigorates a myth that purports to explain the creation of the White race as a result of selective breeding of recessive genes:

> The History of Yakub and The Origin of his "Made Man" . . .
> [Yakub] "learned, from studying the germ of the black man, under the microscope, that there were two people in him, and that one was Black, the other [was] brown. He said if he could successfully separate the one from the other, he could graft the brown germ into its last stage, which would be white."[70]

Judging from the title of this highly mythic sermon, the "Satan" that "came into existence" was the White race. The White race is about to be judged. America is about to be destroyed.

The Destruction of America Myth

In the final sermon of the "The Time and What Must Be Done" series, Farrakhan does not mince words as to the real danger and imminent threat that America faces:

> As the God of Ezekiel, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Muhammad, I, too, am backed by the same God Who backed the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. . . .
> Who is behind this Wheel? It is Allah (God) Who is introducing Himself to you, America. . . . But if you fight Him, then you cause Him to use the Awesome Power that He has to remove you totally, completely, irreversibly from the face of the Earth.[71]

This dire fate, however, may be averted.

Vision Of A Black Homeland

Integration won't work. Independence will.

One way that America can avert destruction by divine retribution is to give the Black man his due by way of reparations. Granting land to serve as a Black homeland, with continued support by the American government, would do the trick. This demand is reiterated in every single issue of *The Final Call* newspaper, which is the official organ of the Nation of Islam. Farrakhan recently reminded the public, as well as his Black Muslim audience, of this long-standing call for reparations:

> So, you are "separate," but very, very unequal. . . . So now, your desire is to integrate into the major colonial power—not completely separate from them? . . .
>
> This brings us back to the words of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad in "Point No. 4" of The Muslim Program that appears on the back page of each edition of The Final Call newspaper: We should separate; that America should look after us "in a separate state or territory for the next 20 to 25 years, until we are able to produce our own needs." . . .
>
> And you, America, should help us: . . . And then let our people have a vote as to whether they wish to form a nation of their own. . . .
>
> And if they offer you anything, look carefully into it, lest The Nation will no longer be tied to the principles that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad desired for us:
>
> To make us an independent nation on some of this Earth that we can call our own.[72]

This sounds like Farrakhan is advocating that the U.S. government should hold a referendum in which African-Americans would be offered the choice to form "a separate state or territory"[73] that would function as "an independent nation."[74] Here, Farrakhan is putting all his cards on the table: America can give Black people their own homeland, or face destruction. That's Farrakhan's message to President Barack Obama and the American nation.

These "principles" operate as ongoing demands. How seriously and forcefully Farrakhan will continue to press these demands remains to be seen. Make no mistake about these demands. They are clear and forceful: "We must be separated from our former slave masters, and we must by the order of Allah (God) become an independent nation."[75] By pressing a distinction between "independence" and "integration," the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan may be creating a false dichotomy.

Conclusion

Farrakhan's comments on current events keep him relevant. His opinions on the news are potentially newsworthy in themselves. Yet there has been little reporting of Farrakhan's recent opinions. He is now sidelined. The national notoriety that Farrakhan once enjoyed is on the wane. Even though he is in fine form as a speaker, Farrakhan has not reinvented himself, judging by the fact that he recycles the old Black Muslim myths, which become more and more outdated over time, as fewer are willing to suspend their disbelief in the colorful and fantastic mythology that animates the Nation of Islam's Black Nationalist ideology. Farrakhan continues to recycle myths that many consider to be as dysfunctional as they are improbable.

 If this analysis has merit, it may be all the more reason why Farrakhan is broadcasting his claim to divine authority: "I am directly from The Christ and The Messiah!"[76] The Prophet Muhammad, as well as the holy Qur'an, are still relevant. They are edifying. But Farrakhan's primary message is to America. In the final analysis, Farrakhan's mission is not so much about Islam as it is about reparations. But the quest for a separate homeland is a mission impossible.

Farrakhan warns that integration is colonizing in disguise. The former slave masters have created a system that will continue to repress Black people:

> "Separation," a familiar concept to America that now must be applied to The Black Nation.
>   We believe in "separation." We believe that integration is a hypocritical trick to make us think that our 400-year-old enemy has all of a sudden become our "friend." They'll let you into the bedroom, and keep you right at the door of the boardroom.[77]

African Americans require land. They need capital. They must start producing. Ideally, they should form a separate community. They should be self-sufficient. All the while, such an enterprise should be carried out under the divine guidance of Farrakhan, who is empowered by Allah to guide Black Muslims. He is on friendly terms with Muslim leaders. But they are the leaders of other Muslims, while Farrakhan continues to lead Black Muslims. For how much longer, it's hard to say.

The Nation of Islam's myths and visions of America have a certain interconnected "logic" that makes sense internally, if one is ready to accept these, lock, stock and barrel. There is no independent survey, at least that the present writer is aware of, that measures to what extent Black Muslims really believe in Yakub, in the Mother Wheel, and in all the related phenomena that Louis Farrakhan is reporting, especially as a message to President Barack Obama in the finale of "The Time and What Must Be Done" series.

That series of 58 sermons offers a rich mine for present and future research on the Nation of Islam. The series serves as a recapitulation of all prior messages, sermons, and writings of Elijah Muhammad, as well as of Farrakhan himself. This primary source material opens up windows of insights into the ideology and agenda of the Nation of Islam in an unprecedented way. It is up to others to judge whether or not the Nation of Islam has been represented fairly in this chapter.

Notes

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3. Sophia Tareen, "A Spry Farrakhan Sings Obama's Praises." Associated Press, February 24, 2008.
4. Michael Lieb, "'Above Top Secret': The Nation of Islam and the Advent of the 'Mother Plane'." *Criterion* 43.1 (2004): 2–11, 38.
5. Kelefa Sanneh, "The Secret Doctrine: A Conversation with Killah Priest." *Transition* 74 (1997): 162–182.
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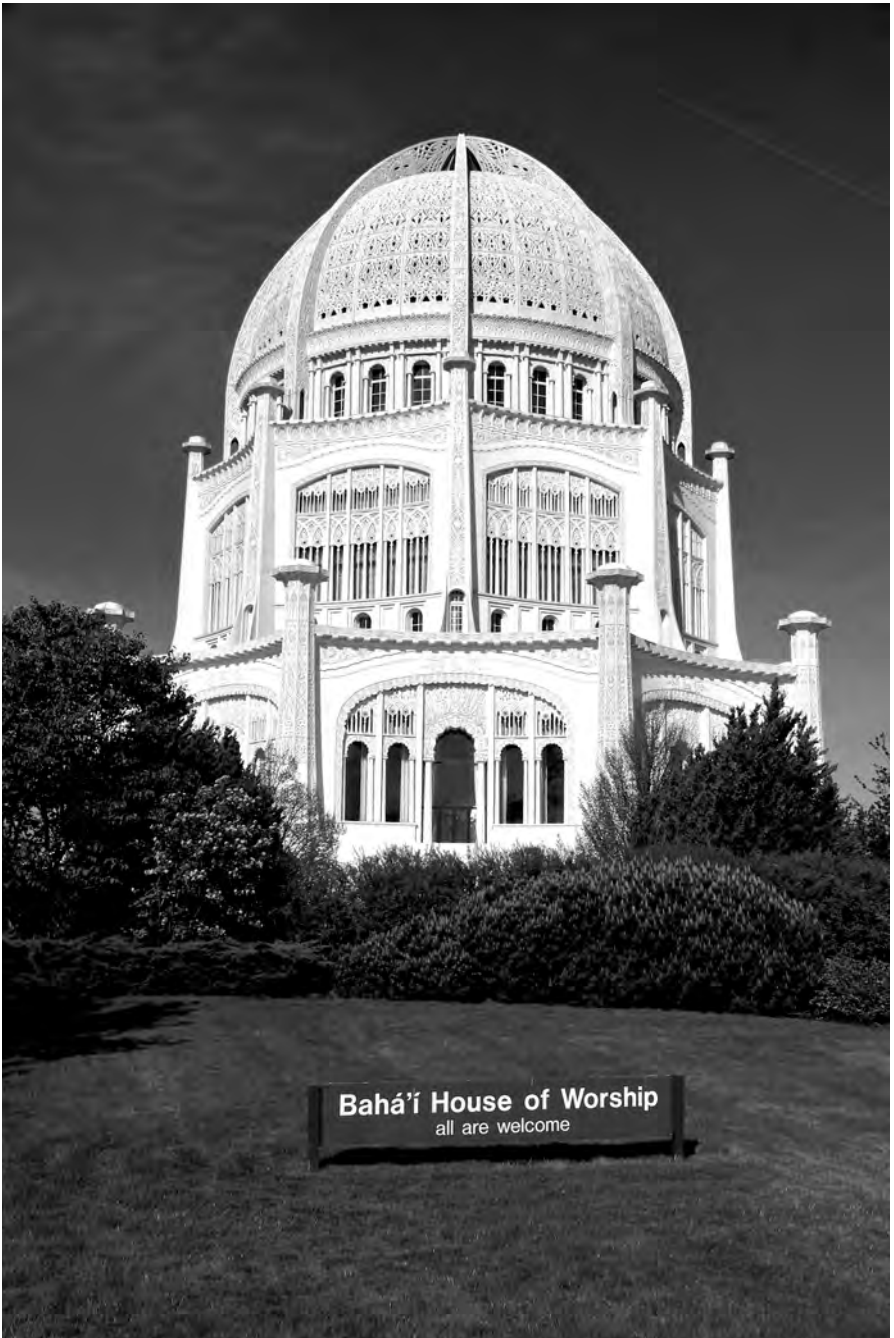
Figure 12.1. Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. Mission statement:
   "The central purpose of the Baha'i Faith is to contribute to global unity and help build spiritually and materially vibrant communities."
   See http://www.bahaitemple.com/. (Photo courtesy of David Smith.)

Chapter 12

Baha'i 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-Baha (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 plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.

—'Abdu'l-Baha (1917)[2]

As America continues to diversify, one new religion seeks to unify: the Baha'i Faith.

The Baha'i Faith, historically, dates back to 1844. "The Baha'i Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions," states the official website of the Baha'i World Centre, located on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.[3] Established in 189 independent countries and 46 territories, the Baha'i community today numbers around seven million members, who hail from across the world's races, religions, and nations, including over 2,100 different ethnicities. The Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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-Baha (1844–1921), son of and successor to Baha'u'llah (1817–1892), prophet-founder of the Baha'i 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."[4] This is the hallmark, the salient leitmotiv, the organizing principle, the moral basis, and the grand vision of the Baha'i Faith as a whole. As such, Baha'is, whether in America or abroad, are described as the "bearers of a new-born Gospel."[5] A previously little-known religion, the Baha'i Faith is emerging from obscurity, as the following newsworthy items will demonstrate.

On July 8, 2008, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee determined that two Baha'i shrines in Israel—the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, 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.[6] 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette (north of Chicago) had been voted one of the "Seven Wonders" of Illinois (see Figure 12.1).[7]

Ideologically, the Baha'i perspective on the destiny of America should be contextualized within the Baha'i paradigm of unity, and, more specifically, within the Baha'i 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 Baha'i religion sees its own instrumental role. Briefly, the Baha'i Faith is a world religion whose purpose is to unite all the races, religions, and nations into one common homeland. Baha'is are the followers of Baha'u'llah, who essentially claimed to be a world-messiah, fulfilling what are believed to be convergent prophecies from historically prior world religions.[8] In his epistle to Queen Victoria, written from his prison cell in 'Akká, Palestine around 1870, Baha'u'llah 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."[9] 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 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i Faith[10]

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 Baha'i 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."[11] In the Baha'i hierarchy of values, social justice is a cardinal principle. As a collective ethical orientation, the Baha'i concept of social justice is intimately linked with the principle of unity. "The purpose of justice," declared Baha'u'llah, "is the appearance of unity among men."[12] Unity, which is predicated on social justice, is thus the organizing principle of the Baha'i system of values. As such, a Baha'i theory of social justice can be articulated from the Baha'i sacred writings themselves, and amplified by official Baha'i 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 Baha'i Faith developed from its roots in the Babi religion, a messianic movement originating within Shi'a Islam, yet bearing all of the earmarks of a new and independent religion.[13] Baha'i history dates back to the evening of May 22, 1844, in the city of Shiraz in Persia (now Iran), when a young merchant, Sayyid 'Ali-Muhammad, declared himself to be the Bab (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 Bab was executed by a firing squad of 750 soldiers in the barracks square of Tabriz on July 9, 1850, the majority of his coreligionists, the Babis, turned to Mirza Husayn-'Ali Nuri—known as Baha'u'llah (a spiritual title, meaning the "Glory of God")—as the messianic figure whose imminent advent was the central religious message of the Bab.

Born to a high-ranking minister of the Shah in 1817 Tehran, Baha'u'llah was incarcerated in a subterranean dungeon in 1852—because he was a leader of the proscribed Babi 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 Akka (Acre, Palestine, now Israel), where he arrived in August 1868. One of the signal events of Baha'u'llah'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, Baha'u'llah 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 Shah, the presidents of the Americas collectively, among others—summoning them to disarmament, reconciliation, justice, and the "Most Great Peace." Baha'u'llah also addressed the leaders of the Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths, calling them to religious reconciliation and recognition of Baha'u'llah as the promised messiah of all religions.

Upon his death in 1892, Baha'u'llah was succeeded, under the terms of his will and testament, by his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, who further developed the Baha'i community in gradual application of the laws and precepts that Baha'u'llah had laid down in his Most Holy Book (Arab, *al-Kitāb al-Aqdas*; Persian, *Kitāb-i Aqdas*). When he was liberated by the Young Turks Revolution in 1908, 'Abdu'l-Baha 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-Baha lent great impetus to the spread of the Baha'i Faith in America and abroad when he revealed his *Tablets of the Divine Plan* in 1916–1917. After his passing in 1921, and in accordance with the terms of his will and testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha's eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi (who was studying at Oxford University at the time), assumed leadership of the Baha'i 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 Baha'i communities in a greater number of countries, territories, and locales—and had the charisma to inspire their successful completion.

In his most important work (*Kitāb-i Aqdas*), Baha'u'llah 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-Baha gave them the temporary title of "Spiritual Assemblies." Each nine-member local and National Spiritual Assembly, elected annually by all of the adult Baha'is and their delegates in the respective local or national community, oversees the growth and welfare of the Baha'i community within its jurisdiction, fosters unity among the various elements of society, and furthers the work of social and economic development.

In 1963, the Baha'i world had become sufficiently internationalized to elect the first Universal House of Justice (the world Baha'i governing body) in the Royal Albert Hall in London. With its Seat located in the Baha'i 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 Baha'i

world and promotes Baha'i 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"; and "to foster that which is conducive to the enlightenment and illumination of the souls of men and the advancement and betterment of the world."[14] 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 Baha'i principles and practices at local, national, and international levels.

The diplomatic work of the Baha'i Faith is carried out by the Universal House of Justice, the Baha'i 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 Baha'is worldwide. The BIC is the voice of the Baha'i 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 Baha'is in countries where they are persecuted, such as in Iran and Egypt.

As previously stated, Baha'i 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 Baha'is 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 seven million, the Baha'i Faith is now the second most widespread of the world's independent religions, according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*[15] and *Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year* (1992). The statistical distribution of Baha'is 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-Baha stated in Paris on November 17, 1912. He added that "justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered."[16] The Baha'i ethical commitment to social justice is paramount. "The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice," Baha'u'llah 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," Baha'u'llah 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."[17] The challenge for Baha'is, then, is to more systematically develop Baha'i 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. 1870), Baha'u'llah 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.[18]

Referring to his own mission as that of a "World Reformer,"[19] Baha'u'llah 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 Baha'i community, in a measured participation in political democracy, eschews partisan politics as polarizing and divisive. While exercising their civic obligation in voting, individual Baha'is distance themselves from the political theatre of party politics. Embracing many aspects of democracy, they shun campaigning. Instead, Baha'is work within the body politic, applying Baha'i 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) Baha'i doctrinal integrity; (32) Baha'i institutional support (the "Covenant"); (33) promoting Baha'i 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 Janiero), the BIC has epitomized the foundation of social justice from a Baha'i perspective: "The fundamental spiritual truth of our age is the oneness of humanity."[20] (In Baha'i 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 adminis-tration of the world as one country, the home of humankind."[21] Note the linkage that such Baha'i 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-Baha himself: "The teachings of Baha'u'llah 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."[22]

While space does not permit elaboration of these (and other) Baha'i principles of unity, many are fairly self-evident. They provide a necessary context for understanding what lies behind the Baha'i vision of the destiny of America. By Baha'i 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.

Baha'i Myths as a "Sacred History" of America

There are actually a number of passages in Baha'i texts concerning the des-tiny of America. They are too numerous to treat here. While many, these statements reiterate salient themes. Throughout the remainder of this chap-ter, some of these themes will be highlighted. First, the term "America," as found in Baha'i 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 Amer-ica," "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 Baha'i 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-Baha 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.[23]

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 Baha'i 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. Baha'u'llah, 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-Baha 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."[24]

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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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, Baha'u'llah addressed the rulers and leaders of the Americas in the single most important Baha'i 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 counselleth 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, whereat 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.[25]

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 Zanartu, 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.[26] 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 Baha'u'llah 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."[27] "Had this Cause been revealed in the West," Baha'u'llah is reported to have said in the untranslated portion of Nabíl's Narrative (an authoritative account of Bábí and early Baha'i 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."[28] It is clear that Baha'u'llah 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 Baha'u'llah, "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."[29] So, while no direct writing by Baha'u'llah regarding the destiny of America is extant, reliable sources provide sufficient attestation of Baha'u'llah's oral statements regarding America's promise and future preeminence.

Subsequent to Baha'u'llah was 'Abdu'l-Baha, who, after his father, Baha'u'llah, had passed away in 1892, led the Baha'i 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-Baha 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 Baha'i myths and visions of America.

According to historian Robert Stockman, American Baha'is, on the basis of these various pronouncements, have articulated a grand myth of America, which incorporates Baha'i ideals: "The American Baha'is 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'."[30] Stockman elaborates further:

> Like any religious group, the American Baha'is have constructed a sacred history, or myth, about their country. This sacred history is primarily based on the values found in Baha'i scripture and does not appear to be borrowed from American Protestantism or secular culture to a significant degree. However, the Baha'i 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.[31]

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."[32]

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 Baha'i 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*,[33] 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 a 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.[34]

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.[35]

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."[36] 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"[37] as well as a "racialised interpretation of national destiny" (i.e., American Anglo-Saxonism).[38] 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i sacred history. Stockman points out that there are Baha'i sacred histories about other countries as well:

> The American Baha'i sacred history is not a unique phenomenon; Baha'i sacred histories of Germany, Russia, China, India, Japan, Iran, Canada, and other countries undoubtedly have been created by the Baha'is of those countries, based on statements about those nations in the Baha'i scriptures. A folk tradition is inevitable whenever the Baha'i religion is introduced to a new culture or nation.[39]

As for the Baha'i myth of America, Stockman further notes that "the creation of an American Baha'i 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."[40] This is an important observation, because, as will be discussed below, there are certain American social problems that have drawn recurrent criticism in Baha'i texts. For instance,

the problem of racism in the United States is termed, in the Baha'i Writings, as "the most challenging issue." In an official position statement issued in 1991 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States[41]—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 Baha'is of the United States, speaking for the entire U.S. Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i efforts to reform society. It also helps American Baha'is to form an American identity that is congruent with the Baha'i scriptures."[42] 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 Baha'i Emancipation/Civil War Myth

The year 1912 was the year that 'Abdu'l-Baha came to America. On just his tenth day in America—Saturday, April 20—'Abdu'l-Baha arrived in Washington, D.C., and stayed until Sunday, April 28. On Tuesday morning, April 23, 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke in Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Well over a thousand faculty, administrators, students, and guests[43] crowded the relatively small space of this modest chapel to hear him speak. In this historic speech, 'Abdu'l-Baha 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-Baha 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."[44]

In this general statement, 'Abdu'l-Baha 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-Baha 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-Baha'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-Baha'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. Baha'i texts are fully alive to this problem, which is why, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha, 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."[45] There is an element of prophecy in 'Abdu'l-Baha'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-Baha 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-Baha said, at a Baha'i-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-Baha continued to stress the vital importance of race unity for America and for the world.

The Baha'i Wilsonian Myth

In the Baha'i 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 Baha'i Faith). In its religious myth (or, sacred history) of America, several Baha'i 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-Baha and Shoghi Effendi have praised."[46] 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i texts. Shoghi Effendi states that Wilson holds a special place as the most honored statesman in the Baha'i 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 Baha'u'llah, 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-Baha] acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace.[47]

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 Baha'i principles of unity, the Baha'i Woodrow Wilson myth is consistent with the function of mythmaking 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.[48] A comparison of Wilsonian idealism and Baha'i 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.[49]

On these resonances between Wilsonian internationalism and Baha'i principles of ideal international relations leading to world unity, 'Abdu'l-Baha, observed: "As to President Wilson, the fourteen principles which he hath enunciated are mostly found in the teachings of Baha'u'llah and I therefore hope that he will be confirmed and assisted."[50] In 'Abdu'l-Baha'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.[51]

Thus, in the Baha'i 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-Baha, through His own pen."[52]

Such is the Wilsonian myth. Yet the Baha'i writings do not idealize Wilson so much as they champion Wilsonian idealism.[53] In lionizing Wilson the statesman, and in overlooking Wilson the racist, the Baha'i Wilsonian

myth lives up to the purpose of a religious myth of America, as idealized or sacralized history exemplifying key precepts and practices.

The Baha'i Vision of the Destiny of America

In 2001, there came a moment in time when the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States (elected governing council of the American Baha'i 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.[54] 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.[55] 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."[56] 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 Baha'is had anything to say, this was the time to say it: "The United States Baha'i community," the ad goes on to say, "offers a perspective on the destiny of America as the promoter of world peace."[57]

This Baha'i proclamation introduces the American public to "Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i 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 Baha'u'llah took place primarily in the years 1867–1870. During this time, Baha'u'llah addressed epistles, *inter alia*, to 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 Shah. Speaking of the peace proposals and principles of ideal international relations that Baha'u'llah communicated to the reigning pontiff and potentates, 'Abdu'l-Baha (Baha'u'llah's eldest son, successor, and interpreter), commented: "These precepts were proclaimed by Baha'u'llah 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."[58] The Baha'i Faith promotes peace as a direct extension of the fact that its founder, Baha'u'llah, dedicated his life to the cause of world peace and promulgated the principles necessary to achieve it.

The *Times* display ad places Baha'u'llah'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 Baha'i 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.[59]

This passage in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, by Shoghi Effendi, who, as "Guardian" of the Baha'i Faith, led the Baha'i world from 1921 to 1957, is part of a lengthy letter written December 25, 1938, to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.[60] 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, Baha'is 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.[61]

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

This public message from the American Baha'i leadership to the American people was a significant public gesture. The message goes on to quote from a Baha'i 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 Baha'is 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'u'llah, soon after the proclamation of His Covenant on the morrow of His ascension.[62]

The allusion to what took place "soon after" may be a reference to the first public mention of the Baha'i 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.[63] The paper, entitled "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," was presented on September 23, 1893.[64] 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."[65] This historic public reference to the fledgling Baha'i 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."[66]

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.[67]

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-Baha, 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-Baha's unerring pen—a role which she is bound to fulfill through travail and sorrow.[68]

Note that this "world spiritual leadership forecast by 'Abdu'l-Baha'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."[69] 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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-Baha. 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."[70]

While the destiny of America is well established in Baha'i 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 Baha'i texts, such as those cited above.[71] According to Huddleston, "The Baha'i 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."[72]

The "Lesser Peace" and the "Most Great Peace" are Baha'i 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."[73] The next stage is "the spiritualization of the

masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowl-edgement of the claims, of the Faith of Baha'u'llah."[74] This is "the essential condition" that will serve as the foundation for the "ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations."[75] 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."[76]

The Most Great Peace is not only about establishing a world common-wealth but is associated with establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, meaning the realization of Baha'i principles and ideals throughout the world, and the emergence of the Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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."[77] 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 Baha'i observer, viewing the developments in the international situation, in the light of the prophecies of both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, 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.[78]

Yet there is a shared understanding among Baha'is 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 Baha'i view of the future. "Whatever the Hand of a beneficent and inscrutable Destiny has reserved for this youthful, this vir-ile, this idealistic, this spiritually blessed and enviable nation . . . ," Shoghi Effendi asserts, "we may, confident in the words uttered by 'Abdu'l-Baha, 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 Baha'u'llah,
will have been made, and its last task discharged."[79]

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."[80] 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 U.S. 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."[81] 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 [Wood-
> row Wilson] of the American Union, in a former period, at so critical a
> juncture in international affairs, must now be added the splendid initia-
> tive 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 ideal-
> ism 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.[82]

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 Baha'i
writings are remarkably clear in their vision of America's mission and des-
tiny. There are, however, great challenges facing the American nation that
Baha'i 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 Baha'i statement

published in 1991. Racism, in Baha'i 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 Baha'is of the United States, speaking for the entire U.S. Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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, Baha'is 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, Baha'is have faith that an ideal can become real. The efficacy of these Baha'i endeavors have been documented in several sociological studies, such as in the 2006 monograph, *The Equality of Women and Men: The Experience of the Baha'i 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*.[83] On the race relations front, doctoral research on the Baha'i 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 Baha'i efforts to promote race unity in Atlanta "inform African American Baha'is in a way that Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X cannot."[84]

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 Baha'u'llah, 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 coöperate, 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 coöperation . . .
- 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.[85]

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 in 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 Baha'i 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 Baha'i 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."[86]

Overcoming racism and other social evils clearly requires both policy and personal change. Here, precept and praxis go hand-in-hand. Baha'i

principles of unity will be effective only to the degree that they are put into practice, both individually and collectively. The role of Baha'is 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 Baha'i vision of world unity.[87] This is concurrent with the international relations role of America in establishing the Lesser Peace, a process that has little to do with Baha'i 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,[88] the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States quotes from a Baha'i prayer for America, revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha, 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.[89]

Here, this Baha'i "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 Baha'is—individually and collectively—strive to do their part in realizing this noble vision. As Baha'i 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.) Baha'i 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.[90]

Figure 12.2. Jenny Manybeads, a Diné (Navajo) Baha'i, embraced the Baha'i Faith in the 1950's. At the age of 100, she is pictured here, in 1984, in front of her hogan (traditional Navajo sacred home of wooden poles, tree bark and mud) in Dinnebito, Arizona. Rug weaver, herbalist, and midwife, Manybeads was affectionately called the "Grandmother of Big Mountain." She passed away on November 3, 1999, at the age of 115.

(Photo courtesy of David Smith.)

Chapter 12 Update: America and the "Golden Age" of Future World Civilization

> *This nation [America] so signally blest, occupying so eminent and respon-*
> *sible a position in a continent so wonderfully endowed, . . . may well claim*
> *to have, as a result of its effective participation in both the first and second*
> *world wars, . . . saved mankind the horrors of devastation and bloodshed*
> *involved in the prolongation of hostilities . . .*
>
> > *Nor can the preponderating influence exerted by this nation [America]*
> *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.*
>
> —Shoghi Effendi (June 5, 1947)[91]

America, in the Baha'i text above, exerts "preponderating influence" in world affairs.

True enough. But what about America's future?

The year 2012 marked the centenary of 'Abdu'l-Baha's historic visit to America and Canada. Baha'i communities across North America hosted special events in commemoration of 'Abdu'l-Baha's 239-day speaking tour in 1912. By commemorating events that happened 100 years ago, participants had the opportunity to take stock of progress made so far, and of work yet to be done. At this time, many Baha'is revisited the remarkable statements by 'Abdu'l-Baha and the role that America could prospectively play in furthering the social evolution of the planet. America, with its political, economical, scientific, and military might (not to mention its cultural influences as well), is in an ideal position to carry on its leadership role within the international community, where multilateral partnerships, exchange, reciprocity, and other forms of cooperation can make a significant difference in the course of world affairs.

That same year, Robert Stockman published an insightful retrospective history, *'Abdu'l-Baha in America*.[92] Then, in 2013, Palgrave Macmillan published a multi-author work, *'Abdu'l-Baha's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*, including an article contributed by the present writer, "'Abdu'l-Baha's 1912 Howard University Speech: A Civil War Myth for Interracial Emancipation."[93] By its subtitle, the reader is introduced to the concept of "interracial emancipation." This unfamiliar term invites explanation. Considering that racism is a psychological and social disease that affects both perpetrator and victim (albeit in different ways), not only does the victim of racism need to be freed, psychologically as well as socially, so also the

perpetrator needs to be emancipated from what could well be analyzed as a personality disorder that has become a character disorder when acted out.

This honored guest, 'Abdu'l-Baha, complimented his host, America, in an extraordinary way, as Shoghi Effendi highlights:

> "May this American democracy," He Himself, while in America, was heard to remark, "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 American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the tabernacle of the great peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind. . . . May America become the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment and all the world receive this heavenly blessing. For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. . . . May the inhabitants of this country become like angels of heaven with faces turned continually toward God. May all of them become servants of the omnipotent One. May they rise from their present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world. . . . This American nation is 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 for the triumph of its people. . . . 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. It will lead all nations spiritually."[94]

These words are far from empty flattery. Nor are they pious hopes or wishful thinking. They are pregnant with meaning. They are as much mandates as they are predictions. Their fulfillment is anticipated by Baha'is. Yet the circumstances under which the necessary conditions may be met require elucidation that, at best, must remain speculative. Where and when, one may ask, were these statements regarding the spiritual destiny of America made? One by one, their sources are as follows:

1. *"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'."* This mission statement, in which 'Abdu'l-Baha expressed his vision of America, was made on April 20, 2012, when 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed the Orient-Occident-Unity Conference, held in the Public Library Hall, Washington, D.C.[95] Shoghi Effendi has edited the words slightly (such as "unity" in place of "universality") from the notes taken by Joseph H. Hannen of the contemporaneous translation given on that occasion. On the same occasion, 'Abdu'l-Baha continued: "The American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the tabernacle of the great peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind."

2. *"May America become the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment and all the world receive this heavenly blessing. For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations."* The occasion was 'Abdu'l-Baha's talk at the Hotel Ansonia in New York on April 16, 1912. The text is based on a transcription of the English translation by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, which conveys 'Abdu'l-Baha's prophetic benediction: *"May the inhabitants of this country become like angels of heaven with faces turned continually toward God. May all of them become servants of the omnipotent One. May they rise from their present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world."*[96]

3. *"This American nation is 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 for the triumph of its people."*[97] Here, the occasion was a speech by 'Abdu'l-Baha on May 6, 1912 at Euclid Hall in Cleveland, Ohio. Shoghi Effendi has substituted "people" in place of "democracy," which probably captures the gist of the original more faithfully than the wording of the stenographic notes of the English translation given at that time.

4. *"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. It will lead all nations spiritually."*[98] These momentous words (based on the notes by Sigel T. Brooks of the contemporaneous translation) were uttered on the very same day, but at a different venue in Cleveland. This talk took place at the Sanatorium of Dr. C. M. Swingle,[99] located at 2120 Prospect Avenue in Cleveland (or, alternatively, at 8203 Wade Park Avenue N.E.). Dr. Swingle graduated from the Cleveland Homeopathic College in 1908 and, in 1909, was affiliated with the McFadden Sanatorium (the "Bernarr Macfadden Healthatorium") in Chicago.[100]

Based on this source-critical analysis, the foregoing quotations are Abdu'l-Baha's statements in the original Persian language, the contemporaneous English translations of which were recorded and are best characterized as "reported utterances." That is to say, the English translations may or may not be *verbatim* representations of 'Abdu'l-Baha's original discourses in Persian.

However, the gist is considered accurate whenever authenticated by Shoghi Effendi, under this operative principle: "The Universal House of Justice has asked us to affirm that the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted in the writings of the Guardian can be taken as authentic."[101] Apparently, this is an exception to the general rule elsewhere enunciated by Shoghi Effendi: "Nothing can be considered scripture for which we do not have an original text."[102] On the basis of this principle, the authentication by citation by Shoghi Effendi is one of purport—in which the statement is confirmed as historically accurate—even if that citation may or may not be a translation of the original words *verbatim*.

Thus 'Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy that America "will lead all nations spiritually" is considered authentic. The question remains as to what this statement means, and how (and when) this prediction will come true.

Baha'i teachings on the destiny of America are prophetic in two ways. Not only do they *foretell* America's future world role, they *forthtell* how America can best live up to its world role in promoting world peace and prosperity. The former depends on the latter. Before revisiting the Baha'i vision of America's mission, a brief comment on what is meant by "prophecy" will prove useful.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "prophecy," first and foremost, is "that which is done or spoken by a prophet; the action or practice of revealing or expressing the will or thought of God or of a god; divinely inspired utterance or discourse." This leads, in turn, to the more popular notion of "prophecy," i.e., "the action of foretelling or predicting the future; prediction, prognostication; an instance of this, a prediction." So a prophecy is not simply a mantic vaticination or portent of future events. Rather than a crystal ball, such "second sight" is foresight driven by insight. The future is a consequence of the present.

Fulfillment of prophecy does not come about happenstance. The conditions perforce must be ripe and right for anything of consequence to occur. So, in order for America to be a world leader and a catalyst for bringing about a sea change in international relations, America itself must take up that mission self-consciously. In other words, how can America help bring about world unity, unless and until America sees itself as instrumental in bringing about that goal? That, in itself, presupposes a vision of world unity as something desirable.

The Baha'i Vision of World Unity

In the first edition, this chapter closed with a quote from Baha'i philosopher, Alain Locke, who said: "Baha'i 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."[103] On September 13, 2014, Dr. Locke was honored in a special ceremony hosted by the American Association of Rhodes Scholars, in which his cremated ashes—stored for decades in the archives at Howard University—were, at long last, interred, with honor and distinction, at the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC. A nine-pointed star—a symbol of Baha'i identity—was engraved on the of Locke's dignified headstone.[104] In a way, this chapter update is something of a commentary on how Baha'i principles can contribute, in their own way, to ideally realizing "the fine professions of American ideals" in order to achieve the "salvation of democracy" by way of material and spiritual interventions.

Baha'i teachings call on America to play a leadership role in promoting "world patriotism." Asking America, as a nation, to actively engage in

promoting ideal international relations is really a call to all nations to do so, as their respective resources and commitments permit. America simply has a greater capability, given its unique role as the world's superpower, America, therefore, should do its part in helping usher in an era where America itself will no longer even need to play a leadership role once the infrastructure of world self-government, through a federation of nations, is put in place. Such infrastructures of world self-governance would (or should) be tasked with the primary responsibility of overseeing conflict resolution, of eradicating of extremes of wealth and poverty, of safeguarding political, economic, religious, and cultural rights, and of promoting harmonious relations within and between nations, races, religions, and genders, etc.

One way to foster unity is to break down barriers and to bridge divides. As Baha'i philosopher, Alain Locke, said: "No more progressive step can be made in our present civilization than the breaking down of the barriers which separate races, sexes and nations" (1930).[105] The Baha'i paradigm of world unity has recently been analyzed, in the form of a typology (or systematic classification) as follows:

FIFTY BAHA'I PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

I. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: (1) "Mystic Feeling which Unites Man with God"; II. FAMILY RELATIONS: (2) Unity of Husband and Wife; (3) Unity of the Family; III. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: (4) Oneness of Emotions; (5) Spiritual Oneness; IV. GENDER RELATIONS: (6) Unity of the Rights of Men and Women; (7) Unity in Education; V. ECONOMIC RELATIONS: (8) Economic Unity; (9) Unity of People and Wealth; VI. RACE RELATIONS: (10) Unity in Diversity; (11) Unity of Races; VII. ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONS: (12) Unity of Existence (Oneness of Being and Manifestation; (13) Unity of Species; (14) Unity with the Environment; VIII. INTERFAITH RELATIONS: (15) Unity of God; (16) Mystic Unity of God and His Manifestations; (17) Unity of the Manifestations of God; (18) Unity of Truth; (19) Unity Among Religions; (20) Peace Among Religions; IX. SCIENTIFIC RELATIONS: (21) Unity of Science and Religion; (22) Methodological Coherence; (23) Unity of Thought in World Undertakings; X. LINGUISTIC RELATIONS: (24) Unity of Language; XI. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: (25) Unity of Conscience; (26) Unity in Freedom; (27) Evolving Social Unities; (28) Unity in the Political Realm; (29) Unity of Nations; (30) Unity of All Mankind/World Unity; (31) Unity of the World Commonwealth; (32) Unity of the Free; XII. BAHA'I RELATIONS: (33) Unity of the Baha'i Revelation; (34) All-Unifying Power; (35) Unity of Doctrine; (36) Unity of Meaning; (37) Baha'i Unity; (38) Unity among Baha'i Women; (39) Unity in Religion; (40) Unity of Station; (41) Unity of Souls; (42) Unity in Speech; (43) Unity in [Ritual] Acts; (44) Unity of Baha'i Administration; (45) Unity of Purpose; (46) Unity of Means; (47) Unity of Vision; (48) Unity of Action; (49) Unity of the Spiritual Assembly; (50) Unity of Houses of Justice and Governments.[106]

This paradigm, while comprehensive, is not exhaustive. It illustrates the local-to-global importance of unity, from "individual to international relations." This is a special contribution of Baha'i teachings to contemporary religious thought and practice.

America's World Role—As a Dual Role

In the Baha'i view, America has a salvific purpose in the greater scheme of things. This "destiny" is not a given, as necessary conditions must be met in order for America's destiny to be fully realized. Such rhetoric is more motivational than it is clairvoyant. Baha'i pronouncements regarding America have a dual focus. One is on America as a nation. The other is on the American Baha'i community. The contributions of both are considered vital to progress toward world peace and prosperity.

The Baha'i vision of America has secular and religious dimensions. The secular dimension views America within the "Major Plan of God" leading to the "Lesser Peace" (a political peace among the nation-states of the world). The religious dimension views the American Baha'i community as part of the "Minor Plan of God" culminating in the "Most Great Peace" (a spiritual world commonwealth).

In fine, the Baha'i vision of America is that it will be "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" by "assuming the role of world spiritual leadership forecast by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's unerring pen."[107] In short, America will contribute to the rise of a world civilization which, in the fullness of time, will bring about a Golden Age.

The fact that Baha'i texts, previously cited, point to a greater potential for America to exert influence in the world in a spiritually significant way—just as America has done politically, scientifically, and economically—should not imply that America has any special distinction apart from its obvious potential. It is America's capacity that the Baha'i writings seek to inspire and potentialize. Ideally, the special contribution of the Baha'i Faith, in essence, is to promote the consciousness of human solidarity. Ideally, the special contribution of America, as a nation, is to apply that consciousness to the political, economic, and scientific tasks at hand. America, if it realizes its potential and arises to fulfill its God-given purpose, will realize its destiny, from the Baha'i perspective, in the following way:

> Whatever the Hand of a beneficent and inscrutable Destiny has reserved for this youthful, this virile, this idealistic, this spiritually blessed and enviable nation [America], however severe the storms which may buffet it in the days to come in either hemisphere, however sweeping the changes which the impact of cataclysmic forces from without, and the stirrings of

a Divine embryonic Order from within, will effect in its structure and life, we may, confident in the words uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, feel assured that that great republic—the shell that enshrines so precious a member of the world community of the followers of His Father—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.[108]

America, as a nation, and the American Baha'i community, cannot accomplish these goals alone. World peace and unity are global objectives requiring universal participation. The best, and most, that America can do is to do its part—and to inspire the rest of the world to do its part as well.

How America's Parallel Roles Intersect

America's world role is obviously independent of the Baha'i community which, in any case, prescinds from partisan politics (which Baha'is consider divisive and therefore judiciously avoid). As previously pointed out, President Woodrow Wilson was the first to clearly establish America's world role as a matter of foreign policy. The Baha'i writings honor President Wilson for his contribution to the eventual formation of the United Nations, which rose like a Phoenix on the ashes of its predecessor, the League of Nations. As also stated earlier, Baha'i texts not so much honor President Woodrow Wilson individually as they do his legacy of "Wilsonian idealism" in general, and, in particular, Wilsonian internationalism as it relates to America's world role. This may be illustrated by a second authentic prayer for America, an authorized translation of which was released by the Universal House of Justice and subsequently published in 2017:

> A PRAYER FOR THE CONFIRMATION OF
> THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
>
> O my God! O Thou Who endowest every just power and equitable dominion with abiding glory and everlasting might, with permanence and stability, with constancy and honour! Aid Thou by Thy heavenly grace every government that acteth justly towards its subjects and every sovereign authority, derived from Thee, that shieldeth the poor and the weak under the banner of its protection.
>
> I beseech Thee, by Thy divine grace and surpassing bounty, to aid this just government, the canopy of whose authority is spread over vast and mighty lands and the evidences of whose justice are apparent in its prosperous and flourishing regions. Assist, O my God, its hosts, raise aloft its ensigns, bestow influence upon its word and its utterance, protect its lands, increase its honour, spread its fame, reveal its signs, and unfurl its

banner through Thine all-subduing power and Thy resplendent might in the kingdom of creation.

Thou, verily, aidest whomsoever Thou willest, and Thou, verily, art the Almighty, the Most Powerful.[109]

The original Arabic text is available online.[110] A memorandum, "Prayers for America" (July 20, 2017) by the Research Department (an agency of The Universal House of Justice) accompanying the newly-authorized translation states: "The prayer in question is authentic, and its original Arabic text is held in the Archives at the Bahá'í World Centre. The manuscript includes the following heading in English: 'A Prayer for the confirmation of the American Government.'" When the two Baha'i prayers for America are read together, then America's ideal world role is clear: for America to "lead all nations spiritually" (as foretold by 'Abdu'l-Baha on May 6, 1912, in Cleveland) and for God to "bestow influence upon its word and its utterance," America must "upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity" and "promulgate the Most Great Peace," as urged by 'Abdu'l-Baha in his other prayer for America, given on April 30, 1912, in Chicago.

Shoghi Effendi's clear pronouncements on America's spiritual destiny are grounded not only in statements, both oral and written, by Abdu'l-Baha, but also in statements attributed to Baha'u'llah:

> [T]he Rulers of America were not only spared the ominous and emphatic warnings which He [Baha'u'llah] uttered against the crowned heads of the world, but were called upon to bring their corrective and healing influence to bear upon the injustices perpetrated by the tyrannical and the ungodly. To this remarkable pronouncement, conferring such distinction upon the sovereign rulers of the Western Hemisphere, must be added not only the passages in which the Author of our Faith [Baha'u'llah] clearly foreshadows the revelation of the "signs of His dominion" in the West, but also the no less significant verbal affirmations which, according to reliable eye-witnesses, He more than once made in regard to *the glorious destiny which America was to attain in the days to come*.[111]

Here, Shoghi Effendi confirms that Baha'u'llah spoke more than once of "the glorious destiny which America was to attain in the days to come." That said, America will not change the world by itself. To succeed, unilateral initiatives can best serve as a catalyst for securing multilateral agreements, raising the resources and steeling the resolve needed to follow through in constructing the infrastructures that can serve as the thew and sinew of a global system that can act equitably to effectively adjudicate international conflicts and arbiter mutually favorable outcomes.

Baha'u'llah created an institution for for the purpose of helping bring about world peace. This Baha'i institution is known as the Universal House of Justice. First elected by Baha'i representatives worldwide in 1963, the

Universal House of Justice acts pursuant to an explicit mandate. Baha'u'llah called upon the Universal House of Justice to promote world peace. In Baha'i parlance, this is referred to as the "Lesser Peace," which is distinct from the "Most Great Peace." In the *Tablet of the World* (1891), Baha'u'llah states:

> Whilst in the Prison of 'Akká, We revealed in the Crimson Book that which is conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world. The utterances set forth therein by the Pen of the Lord of creation include the following which constitute the fundamental principles for the administration of the affairs of men:
>
> First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.[112]

While the Universal House of Justice was ordained by Baha'u'llah as the international governing body of the Baha'i community, even now laying the groundwork for the Most Great Peace to come in the future, Bahá'u'lláh also called upon the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace, a political peace among nations. How the Universal House of Justice is supposed "to promote the Lesser Peace" is not explicitly spelled out. It presupposes some degree of respect and influence in the international community. Presumably, the role of the House of Justice is an advisory one. It may be called upon by governments in a purely consultative capacity. It is worth noting that, on the occasion of the 1986 International Year of Peace, the Universal House of Justice issued a public statement, "The Promise of World Peace."[113] While addressed "To the Peoples of the World," this statement is directed particularly to world leaders. "The Promise of World Peace" was first presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuellar, on November 22, 1985 by Baha'i dignitary, Ruhiyyih Khanum, wife of the late Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, Shoghi Effendi. Currently, the worldwide Baha'i community is represented in the United Nations through its nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Baha'i International Community (BIC), which has offices in New York, Geneva and Brussels. Thus it could be said that the Baha'is pursue a form of Wilsonian idealism by their active involvement in the United Nations vis-à-vis the BIC.

Since its initial presentation to the United Nations, "The Promise of World Peace" has been presented to heads of state and government leaders all over the world. At the same time, vigorous grassroots campaigns to disseminate effectively the Baha'i peace message at all possible localities were successfully launched. As a result, several million copies of the document have been personally given by Baha'is to civic and religious leaders as well as to ordinary citizens in most countries. No direct action was expected to ensue from "The Promise of World Peace." Ideally, it would serve as a

catalyst for the comprehensive peace program it articulates. "The Promise of World Peace" may be seen as the official Baha'i contribution to peace literature and to the peace process itself. The document draws attention to the fact that the Baha'i community—itself a social experiment in unity on a grand scale—represents a viable collectivity in which peace-related issues have been raised to the level of principle and creatively implemented.

The Universal House of Justice itself cannot bring about the Lesser Peace. But it can accelerate social forces that lead to international integration. The international Baha'i council nows orchestrates and overseas work that is currently being done at the grassroots level. The Baha'i world, in fact, is undergoing a profound transformation that may be characterized as a paradigm-shift in Baha'i culture and community life. Throughout the world, Baha'is reach out, in their own neighborhoods, to children, junior youth and youth, by organizing children's classes and "Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programs" for the moral and spiritual education of young people, and to instill in them a strong sense of purpose that is service-oriented. Since this is a universal Baha'i enterprise in which the Baha'is across the world are systematically engaged, it is not specific to the American Baha'i community. These processes are interrelated, as the Baha'i International Community has explained in its statement presented to the Third Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (Shandong University) on May 22, 2014:

> The Baha'i International Community is an international non-governmental organization that has been active at the United Nations and other international fora for over 60 years. The Baha'i community's association with the United Nations dates back to the League of Nations and has its roots in the global vision that animates the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. . . .
>
> As a global community, then, Baha'is are consciously striving to learn how populations of every kind and background can develop the capacity to take charge of their material, intellectual, social and moral development. . . .
>
> Local efforts to improve the well-being of individual neighborhoods, villages and communities carried out by Baha'is and their like-minded collaborators provide key grounding and insight for the Baha'i International Community's work at the United Nations.[114]

This last paragraph refers to a new paradigm of community-building within the Baha'i world, launched in 1996. Baha'i communities are now organized in "clusters." Each cluster encompasses communities in reasonable proximity in any given location. The current Baha'i program of community-building is essentially one of introducing spiritual concepts and practices, of developing interpersonal skills and instilling an orientation to community service. This is accomplished through the Baha'i "institute process"—where "institute" refers to the Ruhi Institute and the curriculum of "Ruhi books" that it has produced. One feature of the institute process is the formation of "study circles."

Participants in study circles are taken through a sequence of Ruhi books that feature brief introductions, key readings, and study questions. The questions are disarmingly simple and may on first impression, strike educated participants as rudimentary. This is because the study circles have been field-tested in rural villages in Third-world countries, to fine-tune the effectiveness of this approach at all levels of society. The program is informed by advanced pedagogy, in theory and practice. The institute process—of forming and facilitating study circles based on a sequence of Ruhi books accompanied by skill-building activities—is essentially a human resource development program.

Typically, the first social skill taught in the Ruhi sequence is that of "home visits." This is all about connecting hearts through face-to-face interactions that build friendships through acts of caring and sharing. The "home visit" is a surprisingly effective skill at the grassroots level. The sustained practice of home visits broadens the social basis of Baha'i outreach to the wider "community of interest," i.e., those who have expressed interest in engaging with the Baha'is and their community activities. Home visits are made to Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike. What matters is unity, not affiliation.

Another skill that is cultivated in this sequence of courses is the practice of holding "devotional meetings" in one's home, in which neighbors and friends are invited to worship together. The advantage of Baha'i worship conducted within homes is that they offer a heartwarming environment.

Another Baha'i community-building practice is hosting neighborhood children's classes (NCC) in local neighborhoods. In NCCs throughout the world today, children are taught moral and spiritual virtues, which are universal human and social values. Virtues transcend faith-commitments. Baha'i sponsorship of this process, while clearly known to the parents of the children being taught, is not necessarily stressed. Personal transformation is what counts. The Baha'i teachings are simply a vehicle for improving the quality of personal and social life.

Baha'is also establish junior youth groups (JYGs). As a social and economic development project on a world scale, the Baha'i-sponsored "Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme" helps young people develop spiritual and intellectual capacity, understanding their true identity as noble beings. While themes are explored from a Baha'i perspective, this is not done in the mode of religious instruction. Overseen by the Office for Social and Economic Development at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel, JYG "animators" are told, in fact, not to use junior youth groups as a means of direct teaching of the Baha'i Faith. Junior youth groups are led by "animators," who are typically a mix of youth and adults. Youth are considered essential protagonists in the community-building processes, in which they are taking on every role. In fact, there are a statistically significant number of youth from the wider "community of interest" (outside the Baha'i community), who are serving as JYG animators as well, some of whom have come up through the program themselves.

Engaging in service to one's community is an essential component of junior youth groups, which are all about moral and interpersonal "spiritual empowerment." By assisting the youth to develop in their hearts and minds their sense of purpose, values and commitment to the betterment of self and society, consciousness is raised and the local community is leavened by their influence. A set of beneficial values is instilled in a new generation, as they are equipped to make enlightened choices in life.

These avenues for the moral and ethical education junior youth are essential to the immediate future of Baha'i communities. Such moral and social uplift begins with the seeds of a few individuals in each locality. By cultivating in junior youth a habit of moral and ethical thinking, and of aspiring for a spiritual direction in one's daily life, this program has the power to create transformations at an early age to help shape them into dynamic agents of change. This program, still in its infancy, has untapped spiritual and social potential.

All of the activities described above are advanced through quarterly reflection meetings at the cluster level among all who are participating, for the purpose of learning from experience and formulating specific plans for the next quarter. There are various appointed coordinator roles at the cluster level that facilitate these processes.

The entire approach is coherent and systematic in nature, with an emphasis in developing a "culture of learning" that has a built-in capacity for innovation on an experimental basis. The dynamics of this collective learning system is continually being tested and refined. In the process, developing human capacity for worthwhile service is a cornerstone of this worldwide Baha'i program of outreach and community resource development. There are more than 3,000 clusters around the globe in which this pattern of community-building activities is proceeding in a systematic fashion, including a number of advanced clusters making great progress which have been designated as "learning sites," providing insights for applying their learning elsewhere. Also in advanced clusters, Baha'is engage, at all levels of society, in the prevalent "discourses of society" and in "social action" as well.

Taken together, these efforts progressively advance the work of spiritually empowering children, junior youth and youth, of expanding and consolidating Baha'i communities, of engaging in the public discourses of society, and of initiating social action. This is an evolving conceptual framework, a matrix that, through the process of learning from experience, becomes more elaborate over time. This concerted, worldwide endeavor has created a Baha'i culture that systematically learns to think and act in an integrative way.

At the wider community level, Baha'i communities still observe the "Nineteen-Day Feast," in which the members of the Baha'i community come together for worship, consultation, and fellowship. Thus, while there is a primary emphasis on the "core activities" (children's classes, junior youth groups, devotional meetings, and study circles), there is a complement of "essential activities" (Nineteen-Day Feasts, Baha'i Holy Days, etc.), along with Baha'i schools in various regions that offer deepening in various

Baha'i topics of interest, providing edifying enrichment. As the Universal House of Justice wrote in its letter of December 27, 2005: "To maintain focus [prioritizing "core activities"] does not imply that special needs and interests are neglected, much less that essential activities are dropped in order to accommodate others." What all these activities have in common is the process of fostering unity and encouraging service to others.

How does all of this relate back to America's world role, from the Baha'i perspective? By linking ideals and practice, the foregoing description of current Baha'i activities helps make tangible and real what Baha'i individuals, Baha'i communities and institutions are doing to advance the Baha'i vision explained throughout the chapter.

The spiritual destiny of America still inspires the minds and hearts of the America Baha'is. For instance, on December 26, 2014, the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Phoenix, Arizona, opened the 30th Annual Grand Canyon Baha'i Conference with a welcome letter that imparted this message:

> 'Abdu'l-Baha . . . refers to the America nation as "equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world."[115] Friends, fulfilling the destiny of this great nation as prophesied by the Master rests solely on our shoulders. Let us renew our love and our commitment. Let us wholeheartedly support our Institutions. Let us accompany one another. Let us accompany and empower the youth, junior youth and our children to walk the path of service.[116]

America's spiritual destiny, in the Baha'i view, is a two-track process, involving the Major Plan of God (America's domestic and international relations) and the Minor Plan of God (the contribution of the American Baha'i community, at home and abroad). The passage, quoted above, focuses on the latter approach to social transformation. Ideally, the energy of both processes will exhibit splendid moments of synergy in further spiritualizing America.

Notes

1. Qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990 [1938]), 87–88. See also 'Abdu'l-Baha, "Talk at Sanatorium of Dr. C.M. Swingle, Cleveland, Ohio, 6 May 1912. Notes by Sigel T. Brooks." *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i 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-Baha, "Tablet to the Baha'is of the Central States." *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i 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. Qtd. in and trans. by Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991 [1936]), 36.

5. Shoghi Effendi, "America and the Most Great Peace." *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, 81.

6. See official announcement, "World Heritage Site: Bahá'i Holy Places." See also Baha'i International Community, "Baha'i shrines chosen as World Heritage sites."

7. Vince Gerasole (CBS), "Rare Wilmette Temple Makes Cut in '7 Wonders' List" (April 30, 2007).

8. Christopher Buck, "The Eschatology of Globalization: Baha'u'llah's Multiple-Messiahship Revisited." *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Babi-Baha'i 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: Baha'u'llah and Cross-Cultural Messianism." *In Iran*. Ed. Peter Smith (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986), 157–179.

9. Baha'u'llah, "Queen Victoria." *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2002), 91.

10. 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.

11. Baha'i World Centre. "The *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: Its Place in Baha'i Literature." *The Baha'i World* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1993), 107.

12. Baha'u'llah. *Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1978), 67.

13. See Armin Eschraghi, "'Undermining the Foundations of Orthodoxy': Some Notes on the Báb's Sharí'ah (Sacred Law)." *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb, 'Alí Muhammad Shírází* (1819–1850). Ed. Todd Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami (Oxford: George Ronald, 2012).

14. Universal House of Justice, *The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), 5.

15. 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).

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

17. Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), 3–4.

18. Baha'u'llah, "Queen Victoria." *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2002), 90.

19. Ibid., 92.

20. Baha'i 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).

21. Ibid.

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

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

24. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979 [1944]), 396–397.

25. Baha'u'llah, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1992), 52.

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

27. Shoghi Effendi, *This Decisive Hour: Messages from Shoghi Effendi to the North American Baha'is, 1932–1946* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2002), paragraph 158.3.

28. Reported by the Baha'i historian Nabil-i-Zarandi, qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 263.

29. Shoghi Effendi, "A God-Given Mandate" (15 June 1946), *Messages to America* (Wilmette, IL: Publishing Trust, 1947), 91; idem, *This Decisive Hour: Messages from Shoghi Effendi to the North American Baha'is*, 1932–1946, paragraph 158.3.

30. Robert Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith and American Protestantism* (Th.D.: Harvard University, 1990). Abstract.

31. Robert Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited: The American Baha'i Sacred History of America." Chapter 7. *The Baha'i 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.

32. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 1, n. 1.

33. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

34. Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 3.

35. Ibid., 2.

36. Ibid., 2.

37. Ibid., 165.

38. Ibid., 165.

39. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 7.

40. Ibid., 17.

41. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States is the annually elected governing council of the American Baha'i community.

42. Stockman, "Redeemer Nation Revisited," 17.

43. Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Baha's Journey in America* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), 40.

44. 'Abdu'l-Baha, "Talk at Howard University, Washington, D.C. (23 April 1912)." Translated by Amin Banani. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*. 2nd ed. (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), 45–46.

45. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 46.

46. 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).

47. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*. Third printing (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), 36.

48. David Steigerwald, *Wilsonian Idealism in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

49. Stephen Skowronek, "The Reassociation of Ideas and Purposes: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition." *American Political Science Review* 100 (2006): 385–401 [396].

50. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), 311–312.

51. Ibid., 109.

52. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 88.

53. 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

54. National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of the Baha'is of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace." *New York Times* (December 23, 2001): A29.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *'Abdu'l-Baha 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.

59. Qtd. in National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace" (December 23, 2001).

60. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990 [1938]), 87–88.

61. NSA, "Destiny of America."

62. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America, 1947–1957* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), 36–37.

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

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

65. 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. Ziolkowsk, *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).

66. Jessup, "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," 1125–1126. These subsequently celebrated words of Baha'u'llah come from Edward G. Browne, "Introduction," in 'Abdu'l-Baha, *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 Baha'i* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2001), Chapter 11.

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

68. Ibid., 126–127.

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

70. Ibid., 90–91.

71. John Huddleston, "The Spiritual Destiny of America and World Peace." *Processes of the Lesser Peace*. Ed. Babak Bahador and Nazila Ghanea (Oxford: George Ronald, 2002), 107–161.

72. Ibid., 111.

73. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*. Rev. ed. (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980 [1941]), 123.

74. Ibid., 123.

75. Ibid., 123.

76. Ibid., 123.

77. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 55.

78. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), 89.

79. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 38.

80. Huddleston, "The Spiritual Destiny of America and World Peace," 117.

81. Ibid., 132.

82. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 36.

83. Deborah K. van den Hoonaard and Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Equality of Women and Men: The Experience of the Baha'i Community of Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: Art Bookbindery, 2006).

84. Michael McMullen, "The Religious Construction of a Global Identity: An Ethnographic Look at the Atlanta Baha'i Community." *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*. Ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek, London, New Delhi: Altamira Press, 1997), 236–237 and 227.

85. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991 [1936]), 203–204 (formatting added).

86. *Century of Light*. Prepared under the direction of the Universal House of Justice (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2001 [2003 printing]), 138.

87. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 34.

88. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, "The Destiny of America and the Promise of World Peace." *New York Times* (December 23, 2001): A29.

89.   'Abdu'l-Baha, "Prayer for America." *Baha'i Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, IL: US Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), 25.

90.   Alain Locke, "America's Part in World Peace" (1925). Qtd. in 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 Baha'is of the United States, *World Order* magazine has published two special issues on Alain Locke. See Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Baha'i Pluralist." Special Issue: *Alain Locke: Dean of the Harlem Renaissance and Baha'i 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.")

91.   Shoghi Effendi, "The Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour" (June 5, 1947), *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America, 1947–1957* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980 [1965]), 4–39 [35–36].

92.   Robert Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Baha in America* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2012).

93.   Christopher Buck, "'Abdu'l-Baha's 1912 Howard University Speech: A Civil War Myth for Interracial Emancipation." *'Abdu'l-Baha's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*. Ed. Negar Mottahedeh. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 111–144. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781137032010.0009. (Accessed November 10, 2014.)

94.   'Abdu'l-Baha, qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, 76–77.

95.   'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 36.

96.   'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 19–20.

97.   'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 103.

98.   'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 104.

99.   Editor's note, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 104.

100. *Cleveland Medical and Surgical Reporter* 17.12 (December 1909): 522.

101. Letter dated June 15, 2000 to an individual, qtd. in a letter by the Universal House of Justice, dated August 20, 2014, to the present writer. By contrast, so-called "pilgrim's notes" (i.e. statements of 'Abdu'l-Baha—or, later, of Shoghi Effendi—reported by Baha'is while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land) can never be authenticated in the absence of an original text.

102. Shoghi Effendi, letter, dated October 24, 1947, to a National Spiritual Assembly. Qtd. in a Memorandum, dated June 5, 2006, by the Research Department, to the Universal House of Justice, Baha'i World Centre. See http://bahai-library.com/uhj_authenticity_refresh_spirit. (Accessed November 1, 2014.)

103. Alain Locke, "America's Part in World Peace" (1925). Qtd. in Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 241.

104. Christopher Buck, "Laying a Great Man to Rest—the Final Interment of Alain Locke," BahaiTeachings.org (October 7, 2014); idem, "Sing the Ballad of Alain Locke—Burying the Black Plato," BahaiTeachings.org (October 10, 2014). See http://bahaiteachings.org/laying-a-great-man-to-rest-final-interment-of-alain-locke and http://bahaiteachings.org/sing-the-ballad-of-alain-locke-burying-the-black-plato. (Accessed November 10, 2014.)

105. Alain Locke, "Locke Holds Smashing of Humanity's Barriers Civilization's Present Need: Howard University Professor Views Elimination of Bars Between Races, Sexes and Nations as Necessity for Progress." *The New York Amsterdam News* (March 26, 1930): 11.

106. Christopher Buck, "50 Baha'i Principles of Unity: From Individual to International Relations." BahaiTeachings.org. See http://bahaiteachings.org/50-bahai-principles-of-unity-from-individual-to-international-relations. (Accessed November 1, 2014.) See also Buck, "Fifty Baha'i Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation." *Baha'i Studies Review* 18 (2012). (Published in 2015.) This paper was presented at Princeton University on February 21, 2014. See Buck, "Princeton University: 'Fifty Baha'i Principles of Unity.'" See http://bahaiteachings.org/princeton-university-fifty-bahai-principles-of-unity. (Accessed November 1, 2014.)

107. Shoghi Effendi, "American Baha'is in the Time of World Peril" (July 28, 1954), *Citadel of Faith*, 122–132 [126–127].

108. Shoghi Effendi, "The Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour," *Citadel of Faith*, 37–38.

109. 'Abdu'l-Baha, "A Prayer for the confirmation of the American Government." Authorized translation released by The Universal House of Justice. Qtd. in Christopher Buck, "A Baha'i Prayer for the United States Government," BahaiTeachings.org (August 24, 2017), http://bahaiteachings.org/bahai-prayer-united-states-government. Accessed August 27, 2017.

110. Original Arabic text (*Muntakhabātī az Makātīb-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahā* 2:313) online: http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA2/ma2-313.html.

111. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1947), 91. (Emphasis added.)

112. Baha'u'llah, "Tablet of the World," *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, 89.

113. Universal House of Justice, "The Promise of World Peace" (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, October 1985).

114. Baha'i International Community, "Contributing to an Ever-Advancing Civilization: The Baha'i International Community and the United Nations" (May 22, 2014). Third Nishan Forum on World Civilizations, Shandong University, Jinan, China. See https://www.bic.org/statements/Contributing-Ever-Advancing-Civilization-Bahai-International-Community-and-United-Nations. (Accessed November 16, 2014.)

115. 'Abdu'l-Baha, "6 May 1912, Talk at Euclid Hall, Cleveland, Ohio." *See Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 103. (Quotes added.) However, as previously stated, this latter version has the word "democracy" instead of "people" at the end of the sentence.

116. Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Phoenix, Arizona, "Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Phoenix, Arizona," *30th Annual Grand Canyon Baha'i Conference* (December 26, 2014): 3–4 [3].

CHAPTER 12

Conclusion: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role

Religious institutions play only a modest, indirect role in the development and implementation of foreign policy. But as moral teachers and the bearers of ethical traditions, religious communities can help to structure debate and illuminate relevant moral norms. They can help to develop and sustain political morality by promoting moral reasoning and by exemplifying values and behaviors that are conducive to human dignity.

—Mark R. Amstutz (2001)[1]

The very notion that America has a world role has its roots in American exceptionalism. Journalist Michael Barone captured the logic of U.S. exceptionalism when he opened his article in the *U.S. News and World Report's* June 2004 special issue, *Defining America: Why the U.S. Is Unique,* with this oft-quoted line: "Every nation is unique, but America is the most unique."[2] Throughout American history and in recent world affairs, American exceptionalism—"the perception that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions"[3]—has been a powerful myth indeed. It has functioned as a national creed. How that myth arose in the first place has much to do with the religious origins of America, beginning with the Puritans. How the myth of American exceptionalism has been defined—and will continue to be *redefined*—must also include the role of religious influences on competing social myths of American nationalism and nationhood. Not until the twentieth century,

however, was the myth of American exceptionalism sufficient to define a world role for America beyond exemplarism and "democracy promotion."

It was President Woodrow Wilson—awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919—who is almost universally recognized as having first defined America's world role geopolitically. "Woodrow Wilson . . . can be credited with having been the first to transform American exceptionalism into a universal public good," writes Edward Kolodziej, "to be enjoyed by all peoples as an outright gift of the American public and to harness American military and economic power to these global objectives of American-dictated world order." [4] On January 8, 1918, before a joint session of Congress, President Wilson formulated his celebrated "Fourteen Points" for a post–World War I settlement and the establishment of a stable world order. The fourteenth point of Wilson's visionary proposal called for the formation of a League of Nations: "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike." [5] In 1919, however, Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, despite an impassioned plea by President Wilson who invoked "the hand of God" at work in the creation of a League of Nations:

> It is thus that a new role and a new responsibility have come to this great Nation that we honor and which we would all wish to lift to yet higher levels of service and achievement. The stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God, who led us into this way. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and nowhere else.[6]

Of the Treaty's 440 articles, the first 26 set forth the Covenant of the League of Nations. Wilson's plea for the United States to join the League of Nations, however, simply could not overcome the isolationism and narrowing nationalism of his day. Although Wilsonian internationalism has been seen as essentially nationalist by at least one major Wilson biographer,[7] President Wilson was arguably ahead of his time. In 1919, there was little by way of *religious* consensus in support of Wilson's personal vision. Later in the twentieth century, however, religious influence in favor of America's world role began to be felt.

As the twentieth century progressed, there was increasing receptivity to the idea that America ought to play a greater role in international affairs—indeed, that America was destined for it, as the global spread of fundamental American values could be instrumental in shaping an emerging world order. In this sense, American internationalism could be thought of as *American exceptionalism universalized.* The time was right. Indeed, the twentieth century was

famously described as the "American Century" in 1941 by *Time* magazine publisher Henry Luce, who wrote:

AMERICA'S VISION OF OUR WORLD

What can we say and foresee about an American Century? . . . [W]hat internationalism have we Americans to offer? . . . It must be a sharing with all peoples of our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our magnificent industrial products, our technical skills. It must be an internationalism of the people, by the people and for the people.[8]

There is no religious rhetoric here. But the vision of America's world role is expressed with religious conviction.

While religious influences have not had a direct impact on U.S. foreign policy subsequent to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny,[9] religious perspectives have played a part in what Donald White calls "consensus beliefs" and the American "consensus perception of world affairs." White notes the transformative power of a public sense of American national identity: "The origin of the American role in the world was dependent not only on material elements *but also on intangibles.*"[10] White credits the emergence of a belief in America's world role to the power of public consensus: "The United States began its world role because of a consensus in the society over internationalism."[11] White further explains:

The emergence of the world role of the United States in the twentieth century depended on the will of the people. The conversion to an international outlook among the leaders of government and society became accepted by the mass of people of different occupations, home towns, political parties, religions, ethnic groups, and races, who, though divided by their separate interests, adopted *unifying concepts* to bring them together in a collective worldview.[12]

What about the twenty-first century? Can minority faiths collectively provide intangible yet persuasive "consensus beliefs" regarding America's world role? To address this question, a review of the dynamics of religious visions —favored truths animated by the power of religious myths—is instructive. Religious myths and visions of America are essentially *unifying concepts* among the adherents of their respective faith-communities. As such, one can say that the essence of this book can be summed up in three words: *Religions remythologize America.* This summation would be more complete with these three additional words: *Religions re-envision America.* Put together, this book demonstrates that *religions remythologize and re-envision America.*

Here, the *way* in which religions remythologize and re-envision America requires further explanation. First, the reader will recall that "America" is a

figment of the nationalistic imagination in that America is, at once, *nation and notion, country and creed, entity and ideology.* Thus the "idea of America," when religiously inspired, can give rise to a progressive religious nationalism that enriches American civil religion. To oversimplify, this is *Puritanism pluralized.*

However, all is not so bright and rosy in the mythic realm, insofar as America is concerned. Because of this historical and long-standing racial injustice, there are starkly pejorative visions of America as well. In the Nation of Islam, for instance, religious myths and visions of America are dark and foreboding, even catastrophic in outlook. Elijah Muhammad's and Louis Farrakhan's visions of the destruction of America—in an apocalyptic attack by the "Mother Wheel"—are menacing and chilling, not so much for their content as in the fact that people actually believe in the reality of these myths. Surprisingly, these scenarios have taken grip of the minds of not a few Black Muslims, who honestly *believe* these myths. (The present writer has personally met such individuals in Decatur and Springfield, Illinois, from 1997 to 2000.) In other words, these myths have imaginative reality. As a "true lie," the Mother Wheel myth may be understood and appreciated as a clarion call for America to make a renewed effort to promote racial justice and reconciliation in order to avert the further decay of American society.

This process of remythologizing is in evidence when racial and ethnic notions are brought into play. This study has shown that myths and visions of America can have a decidedly ethnic and racially referenced dimension. For instance, in Chapter 3, American exceptionalism was shown to have largely been the product of Anglo-Saxon ethnogenesis.[13] In other words, the greatness of America, expressed universally—under its nineteenth-century Protestant formulation—was a coded expression of Anglo-Saxon hubris, which, by virtue of the vaunted superiority of the White race, was decidedly exclusive. This overweening ethnonationalism represented a nativist expression of the dominant ethnicity.[14] This should come as no surprise really, for it is quite natural (although, by today's standards, not desirable) when one considers the relationship between ethnicities and nations, as Eric Kaufmann observes: "The nations of the world, almost without exception, were formed from ethnic cores, whose pre-modern myth–symbol complex furnished the material for the construction of the modern nation's boundary symbols and civil religion." [15] If nations—or, more precisely, nationalisms—were originally ethnic *constructions,* then it stands to reason that the *reconstruction* of nationalisms can be a function of subsequent multiethnic social realities.

From a certain perspective, racism in America can be seen as a historical consequence of privileging the Anglo-Saxon or White race as divinely destined to prosecute the Protestant mission to *conquer, colonize, and Christianize* the entire continent of North America, under the imperialist doctrine of

Manifest Destiny. While Manifest Destiny was, at one time, the prevailing vision of America as far as domestic and foreign policy was concerned, Manifest Destiny has since been discredited and is of historical interest only.

The subsequent history of the religious idea of America, therefore, can be analyzed, in part, as an evolution—protracted and painful—in the idea of the place of race and ethnicity in American life, *as religiously valued.* The evolution of American thought, with respect to the idea of America itself, is roughly a progression from religious—and often racial—particularism to universal inclusivism. That is to say, the religious idea of America represents a transformation of Protestant ethnoreligious homogeneity to multiethnic and multireligious plurality, reflecting a direct, albeit delayed and long-overdue, response to America's changing demography and religious landscape. Religious myths of America—true to changed historical circumstances and social dynamics—eventually give way to new myths and visions of America. The process of remythologizing therefore reflects progress in the social evolution of America.

This social evolution, in terms of the broadening mind-set it directionally represents, remains as incomplete as it is perhaps inevitable. To the extent that America succeeds, in time, in overcoming racial limitations will America's world role become a morally authentic enterprise. In that world microcosm and social laboratory known as "America," such a transformation of the American ideal is arguably a major consequence of the influence of minority faiths. The end result is the deconstruction of the Puritan and Anglo-Saxon sense of divine election, but without devaluing the essential mission of America to become a "city upon a hill"—that is, as an exemplary society that may serve as a social model for other societies to emulate.

Religions remythologize America to the degree that the old myths are rendered obsolete when new myths of America take their place. Generally speaking, one can say that, over time, religious myths and visions of America are largely products of their respective times and places. Within a given religious tradition, there will be change over time, in what Americanists regard as the evolution of American thought. These new myths, therefore, conform to new modes of thinking and valuation as a function of the evolution of American thought.

RELIGIOUS MYTHS AND VISIONS OF AMERICA RECAPITULATED

If lessons are to be drawn from American history and thought, then what significance, it may be asked, do religious myths and visions of America have for Americans today? Recall that historian James Moorhead had suggested that the Protestant myth of America—America's master myth—has been reshaped by minority faiths: "But the point is that minority faiths themselves

played no small part in the weakening of white Protestant hegemony. Their creativity in adapting and reinterpreting the symbols of American destiny broadened the framework of discourse within which citizens explained national identity." [16] Within this wider framework of discourse, new religious voices are heard and fresh perspectives are gained. In one sense, the wider framework of discourse of which Moorhead speaks implicates the end result: a universalizing of America's founding principles of equality and egalitarianism, as applied to all of America's constituents.

Of primary interest in this book has been America's "world role." By "world role," as previously stated, is simply meant *the part that America should play in world affairs.* It is time to bring America's world role, from the perspective of minority faiths, into sharper focus, and, perhaps, to take the "latest and greatest" expressions of those perspectives as exemplary. As the times change, so do religions. Therefore, this concluding chapter will recapitulate the more recent visions of America's world role, as respectively held by the minority faiths treated in the preceding pages, with reference also to contemporary Protestant visions of America.

Native American Myths and Visions of America

The original myths and visions of America were from Native Americans themselves, as exemplified by the Iroquois version of the Turtle Island Myth and by the pan-Indian Myth of "Mother Earth." Thus it is clear that religious myths and visions of America have existed ever since the colonial period and, in the case of the Iroquois myth of "Turtle Island," in the precontact period as well. The pan-Native American myth of Mother Earth, in fact, is a somewhat later development, and there is a very real sense in which the Mother Earth myth actually remythologizes the Turtle Island myth by transforming it from a nature-referenced narrative into a more environmentally value-laden perspective. Both myths are nature-based, to be sure, but the Mother Earth myth is more ecologically conscious because it was promoted and popularized as such in the course of its development.

As we are now in the "age of ecology," the "Turtle Island" myth itself is currently one of the great cultural symbols of nature-conscious environmentalism, as is the myth of "Mother Earth." These symbols have been absorbed by American popular culture quite apart from the original Native American context. Both "Turtle Island" and "Mother Earth" are ways of sacralizing (making sacred) the physical environment, or promoting a nature-inclusive spirituality. Because these nature myths have been so successfully and ubiquitously popularized, they now play a conceptual and symbolic role in "greening" other religions in order to promote respect for the environment and inculcate environmentally beneficent behaviors among their adherents.

This process has been called the "greening-of-religions phenomenon" [17] and the infusing of "environmental ethics" into traditional religious worldviews.[18] As one illustrative example of the renewed cross-cultural identification of "Turtle Island" with North America, consider poet Gary Snyder's reworking of the America's "Pledge of Allegiance":

> I pledge allegiance to the soil of Turtle Island, and to the beings who thereon dwell one ecosystem in diversity under the sun With joyful interpenetration for all.[19]

In 1975, Snyder's 1974 collection of poems, *Turtle Island,* won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1975. The assimilation of the myth (or at least the concept) of Turtle Island (as well as Mother Earth) is a testament to the revitalization and contemporary relevance of a Native American religious myth. Extrapolating from this myth, one can say that, from a Native American religious perspective, America's world role is to promote environmental ethics and ecological sustainability.

The Iroquois Confederacy is generally acknowledged as the first New World democracy. Given this priority in time, the Iroquois myth (or, because of its acknowledged historicity, the "legend") of Deganawidah may have had some influence on the shaping of the American republic, although this remains controversial, as the Iroquois Influence Thesis continues to be debated. Is it myth or history? The answers, either way, continue to be hotly contested. Notwithstanding, the reader will recall that, on October 4, 1988, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.Con.Res. 331—*A concurrent resolution to acknowledge the contribution of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations to the development of the United States Constitution and to reaffirm the continuing government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States established in the Constitution*—by a vote of 408–8. By voice vote, the Senate agreed to H.Con.Res. 331 on October 21, 1988. That Congressional resolution reads, in part:

> Whereas the original framers of the Constitution, including, most notably, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are known to have greatly admired the concepts of the six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy; Whereas, the Confederation of the original Thirteen Colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself; . . . *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring)*, That—(1) the Congress, on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges contribution made by the Iroquois Confederacy and other Indian Nations to the formation and development of the United States.[20]

The reader will also recall that, in 2007, U.S. Representative Joe Baca and U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, respectively, introduced H.R. 3585 and S. 1852 to the House and Senate, to wit: *Native American Heritage Day Act of 2007,* "A bill to designate the Friday after Thanksgiving of each year as 'Native American Heritage Day' in honor of the achievements and contributions of Native Americans to the United States." This proposed legislation, in its current draft, acknowledges the contribution of the Iroquois League of Nations. This draft resolution reads, in part: "Congress finds that . . . the Founding Fathers based the provisions of the Constitution on the unique system of democracy of the six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which divided powers among the branches of government and provided for a system of checks and balances." [21] Here, it can definitely be said that "the mystique of Iroquois unity and power had taken on a life of its own." [22] That the Iroquois influence myth has indeed taken on a life of its own, as the Congressional resolution clearly illustrates, is noted by one scholar so: "Despite the highly speculative nature of the evidence, this misconception has become a shibboleth, one which has been given even the official imprimatur of the United States Senate (United States Congress, Senate Resolution No. 76 [Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1988])." [23] From this, it can be extrapolated that the Iroquois vision of America is the promotion of the democratic way of life worldwide, in the interests of peace.

Protestant Myths and Visions of America

Today, there are largely liberal expressions of Protestant Christianity that seek to apply Christian principles to the social problems of the day. The idea that Protestant ethics, as it were, can be usefully implemented to improve social conditions can certainly be traced back to the Puritan origins of present-day America. As presented in Chapter 3, the Puritans established what has come to be regarded as the foundational myth of America. Their vision generated the greater—and perhaps grander—Protestant master myth of America: "The Puritans provided the scriptural basis for what we have come to call the myth of America." [24] Mimicking the style of the prologue of the Gospel of John, the famed Americanist Sacvan Bercovitch characterizes the Puritan myth of America so: "*In the beginning was the word, 'America,' and the word was in the Bible, and the word was made flesh in the Americans, this new breed of humans, destined to build a shining city upon a hill.*" [25] Here, Bercovitch's reference to "city upon a hill" alludes to the first definitive Puritan discourse on America, "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630), which is John Winthrop's speech to his fellow Puritans aboard the *Arbella,* on its voyage across the Atlantic to the Massachusetts coast. This homily was destined to become one of the most powerful,

pervasive, and persistent visions of America—the doctrine of American exceptionalism.

Generally, American exceptionalism sees America as a favored nation with a world mission. The Puritans were the first exponents of American exceptionalism. This Puritan myth has five key ideographs: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire.[26] These are *civic* American values. There are also *religious* American values, as expressed in ideographs that represent myths. Perhaps the best example of this is John Winthrop's celebrated ideograph: "Wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the Eies of all people are upon us." [27] Thus, in 1630, the Puritans constructed a national identity out of their own sense of uniqueness—that is, the Puritans aspired to establish a model society that would serve as a moral exemplar for the world to emulate. Thus, with respect to the Puritan Myth of America, it can be inferred that America's "world role" (although not expressed in those terms), was to be an exemplar society for all the world to behold, admire, and emulate.

For the vanquished, at least, the "Manifest Destiny" Myth was a perversion of the Puritan Myth of America. While some may say that Manifest Destiny is now disguised as hegemonic interests by the world's only superpower, it has long since been discredited. And while the legacy of "Jim Crow" racism persists in socially subtler forms, the "Curse of Ham" Myth has fallen by the wayside as a discarded myth as well. America's social sea change from Protestantism to pluralism and from racialism to interracialism, although demographically uneven and institutionally incomplete, was greatly catalyzed by the civil rights movement, which had social implications not only for America but also for the world. The social significance of the civil rights movement for the world at large was best articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his prophetic vision of "The World House":

> This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a large house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace. . . . The large house in which we live demands that we transform this world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood.[28]

While Dr. King's promotion of a "world-wide brotherhood" within the "World House" is not representative, much less central, to Protestantism in America generally, it remains as arguably the most prophetic Protestant vision of America. Complementing this world-encompassing vision is America's mission at home: "King believed that the mission of American Protestantism was not merely to make Christians of all Americans, but to

Christianize America." [29] Perhaps this reading of King is too narrow, in that King's metaphor of the "World House" is a panoramic vision of interfaith ecumenism.

One of the latest reformulations of Puritan providentialism is Stephen H. Webb's 2004 book, *American Providence: A Nation with a Mission*.[30] *American Providence* is arguably the finest "theology of America" published in recent years. Webb, professor of religion and philosophy at Wabash College, argues that all of history—and the history of each and every nation—should be interpreted providentially. Regarding America itself, Webb holds that God has chosen America, above and beyond all other nations, for a special mission: to complete the Great Commission (spread of the message of Christ throughout the world) by promoting political freedom (that is, the freedom of religion whereby people can freely become Christians) and evangelical Christianity. It is not America *per se* that is intrinsically significant, but its capacity to incarnate Christian virtues within a social order: "The significance of America has to do with what it believes in, not what it is. America is the dream that faith and freedom can be mutually reinforcing within a given social order." [31] Although America has a providential mission and destiny, it is Webb's conviction that Christianity has an even greater destiny in that it will emerge as the world religion of the future: "The destiny of Christianity, however, is much greater than the destiny of America. . . . Christians believe only one globalism will triumph in the end—and that it will be a globalism of the one true God." [32]

Catholic Myths and Visions of America

Although the Americanist Myth of America was put to an abrupt end by Pope Leo XIII, its legacy continues—not as infallible Catholic doctrine promulgated *ex cathedra*—but as edifying papal *dicta.* Recall that, on April 17, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI said to America:

> Today, in classrooms throughout the country, young Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and indeed children of all religions sit side-by-side, learning with one another and from one another. This diversity gives rise to new challenges that spark a deeper reflection on the core principles of a democratic society. May others take heart from your experience, realizing that a united society can indeed arise from a plurality of peoples—"*E pluribus unum*": "out of many, one"—provided that all recognize religious liberty as a basic civil right.[33]

Here, Pope Benedict XVI has charged America with the task of promoting "religious liberty as a basic civil right," in the hope that other nations will be inspired by the American model and establish freedom of religion in their own respective societies.

The reader will also recall how, on January 27, 2004, Pope John Paul II received Vice President Dick Cheney, who represented President George W. Bush, and said to him:

> Mr. Vice President, . . . I encourage you and your fellow-citizens to work, at home and abroad, *for the growth of international cooperation and solidarity in the service of that peace which is the deepest aspiration of all men and women.* Upon you and all the American people I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.[34]

No more explicit mandate could be given to America. In a word, America's world role is to promote Catholic values and principles of social justice, at home and abroad.

Jewish Myths and Visions of America

One of the significant findings of this book is that American Judaism, generally speaking, has fully embraced American values. What Jonathan Sarna calls the "cult of synthesis" might be more positively characterized as a "grand synthesis" of American Judaism and Americanism. Having reviewed the Jewish myth of America as "The Promised Land" and the Jewish "Myth of Columbus" as well, the reader will appreciate how Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism's respective myths and visions of America express elements of "Jewish Americanism" as part of a social phenomenon that Jonathan Sarna calls the "Cult of Synthesis." [35] In a very real and practical sense, Jewish Americanism functioned as an ideal survival strategy. Adoption of American values and the enjoyment of protection under the American system of fundamental rights and civil liberties had its advantages, not only for American Judaism at large, but for distinct communities within American Judaism. The American tradition of religious freedom operates to safeguard religious pluralism within American Judaism itself.

Take Reform Judaism, for instance. Founded in 1889, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) is the organized rabbinate (body of rabbis) for Reform Jews in America. In a December 1988 *responsa,* the CCAR declared: "We must now deal with this new state of affairs and support unity and pluralism." [36] While this is in reference to the divisions within Judaism itself, the principle doubtless generalizes to society as a whole. The reader will recall that the term, "cultural pluralism"—which, of course, adumbrates religious pluralism—was coined by Jewish philosopher Horace Kallen, in conversation with Alain Locke (first African American Rhodes Scholar, "Dean of the Harlem Renaissance," and "Bahá'í philosopher") at Oxford

University in 1907. Pluralism maintains the continued viability of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism within America, and has been offered as a model for the State of Israel to emulate.

As for America's world role, this is perhaps best expressed in the Jewish prayer for America, composed by Louis Ginzberg:

> May this land, under your providence, be an influence for good throughout the world, uniting all people in peace and freedom—helping them to fulfill the vision of your prophet: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they experience war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). And let us say: Amen.[37]

Here is a call for America and its people to promote "peace and freedom" throughout the world, in order to make Isaiah's future vision a present reality.

Mormon Myths and Visions of America

Of the minority faiths treated in this book, Mormonism arguably has the richest array of America-centered myths. Chapter 6 treated the Mormon Garden of Eden Myth, the Lost Tribes Myth, the Columbus Myth, the Constitution Myth, the Founding Fathers Myth, the Theodemocracy Myth, the America as Zion Myth, and the Mark of Cain Myth. The Garden of Eden was not in the Euphrates Valley of the Old World, but rather in the Mississippi Valley of the New World. From prehistory to modern history, Mormon scriptures present an exalted vision of America. "And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land," states the Book of Mormon, "by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose," [38] in reference to America's Founding Fathers. This short prayer for America is scriptural: "Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon the rulers of our land; may those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever." [39] Of these, the Theodemocracy Myth is the one most directly concerned with good governance. Taken together, these Mormon myths synthesize and mythologize distinctively American values, within a complex of equally distinctive Mormon values. These myths are not relics; they are alive and well. The Mark of Cain Myth, however, has been abandoned, although not officially repudiated.

America remains an exalted place, a chosen nation, in the Mormon worldview. As "the land of promise," [40] America has been "lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands." [41] Indeed, Brigham Young envisioned America's place in the future golden age to come: "When the day comes in which the Kingdom of God will bear rule, the flag of the United States will proudly flutter

unsullied on the flagstaff of liberty and equal rights, without a spot to sully its fair surface." [42] This, generally, may be seen as America's world role, in Brigham Young's conception of it, to promote "liberty and equal rights."

Christian Identity Myths and Visions of America

The Christian Identity movement is the name attached to what may be described as White nationalism's collective theology, as promoted by a loosely organized network of white supremacist groups whose presence is primarily maintained in cyberspace on various Internet sites. In Chapter 7, the Two-Seed Myth, the Mud Races Myth, the Lost Tribes Myth, the White Homeland Myth, and the Racial Holy War Myth were presented. In "The Role of Religion in the Collective Identity of the White Racialist Movement," Iowa State University sociologist Betty A. Dobratz observes that, because the White supremacist movement actually has three competing religions—Christian Identity, the World Church of the Creator (anti-Christian), and neo-pagan Odinism—there is no definitive religious expression of that movement. "Religion could be a crucial ingredient in a group's identity when the group shares a distinctive religion," Dobratz writes. "However, in this movement, various religious beliefs are competing, and no one common belief has emerged." [43] In other words, Christian Identity myths, while distinctive, are not necessarily definitive. To the extent that the Christian Identity movement can be said to have a unified vision of America, it follows that America's "world role," if any, is to preserve the purity of the White race and to establish a Whites-only homeland. In its failure to dissociate Whiteness from Christianity, Christian Identity represents the extreme of religio-racial mythologizing, in the very antithesis of Christian universalism.

Black Muslim Myths and Visions of America

Like the Mark of Cain Myth in Mormonism, the Yacub Myth, the Mother Plane Myth, and the Destruction of America Myth have largely been abandoned, although not repudiated. The Nation of Islam, predicated on Black nationalism, formerly entailed what is fair to characterize as "religious racism." But times are changing, and, over the course of the past three and a half decades, Louis Farrakhan has changed considerably himself.

In his 1993 chapter, "A Vision for America," Louis Farrakhan proclaimed that America, although not the land of promise for African Americans, had the potential to become so: "The Kingdom of God is an egalitarian kingdom structured on truth, where each of us will be treated with fairness and justice. America could become the basis for the Kingdom of God." [44] America, although a professedly Christian country, has "missed the message of Christ,

or has yet to receive His true message." [45] This can be achieved, according to Farrakhan, by "righteousness, justice and peace," which, when practiced, can "form the basis of the Kingdom of God on earth." [46] However "egalitarian" this message may sound, however, there is a catch. In 2007, in an interview with *The Final Call* newspaper (an official Nation of Islam publication), Farrakhan was asked:

> After Saviours' Day 2007, you delivered a series of spiritual messages under the general title of "One Nation Under God," culminating with your message "Come Out of Her, My People" delivered at the 12th Anniversary Commemoration of the Million Man March on Oct. 16, 2007 in Atlanta, Ga. What is your statement to Black America about the significance and prophetic meaning of these messages for our survival?

Farrakhan's answer, although surprising at first to outsiders, should ultimately come as no surprise, given his long-standing patterns of thinking:

> Allah (God) knows that we need prayer, but if we don't separate from an enemy bent on our destruction, prayer alone will not help us to survive. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad points out to us in the scriptures of Bible and Qur'an that the day has arrived for our separation, and the enemy has used integration as a hypocritical trick to make those of us who have been under his foot for 400 years think that our 400-year-old enemy has all of a sudden become our friend. We must wake up to the time and what must be done in such a time. *It is not a time for integration; it is a time for us to separate from our former slave-masters* and their children and go for self, do for self, and build a Nation under the Guidance of Almighty God.[47]

Farrakhan maintains "there can be no peace between us and our former slave masters and their children as long as we do not go along with the status quo. When we demand Justice, Freedom and Equity, we excite the worst in our slave masters and their children." [48] Speaking of recent hate crimes committed in 2007 "throughout America by evil White people bent on teaching us a lesson," Farrakhan warns: "We must unite or suffer the consequences, for these events are going to multiply at such a pace that every Black person in America will see the face of a beast that has been masquerading as a friend." [49] To make matters worse, Farrakhan still adheres to a Jewish conspiracy theory. In the same 2007 interview, Farrakhan said that "the Zionists have worked their way into control in America, Britain, France, Germany and other countries of the world." [50] As for America itself, in 2007 Farrakhan predicted, in his "absence" (presumably after his death) "you see the horrors of the fall of this Great Mystery Babylon—the United States of America." [51] Farrakhan, and therefore the Nation of Islam that is still under his shadow,

holds a deeply conflicted vision of America, inauthentically promulgated in the name of the religion of Islam—to the extent that religious racism devalues the polished rhetoric of faith-based egalitarianism.

Contemporary Muslim Myths and Visions of America

Before all else, it is important to point out that there is no single Muslim perspective on America. Notwithstanding this fact, America receives considerable criticism from abroad, as the "Great Satan" Myth amply demonstrates. That myth was answered by the opposite and equal "Axis of Evil" counter-myth. In other words, the arrow quickly flew back at the archer, so to speak. The result is reciprocal demonization. Quite expectedly, the Great Satan Myth has created problems for Muslims in America. Is an American Muslim somehow "satanic" by virtue of being a citizen of the "Great Satan"? Reciprocally, are Americans to understand that Islam, as understood in the contemporary Muslim world, intrinsically anti-America? The answer to both rhetorical questions is obviously negative. However, largely as a consequence of American foreign policy considerations, American Muslims are as conflicted about America as they are diverse with respect to their range of "responses to modernity," as discussed in Chapter 9. By no stretch of the imagination does Radical Islamism represent mainstream Islam. Yet one would hardly reach this conclusion if based on what the popular media represents.

As the "Great Satan," America has no positive world role from the Radical Islamist perspective. While the "Axis of Evil" counter-myth does imbue America with a world role in promoting democracy and freedom in the Middle East and around the world, this vision arises out of a context completely foreign to the Muslim world. Efforts to dispel the "Great Satan" Myth and to minimize the fallout from the "Axis of Evil" Myth are focused primarily on the issue of whether America is anti-Islamic or pro-Islamic. As such, America has no positive role even from a moderate Islamic perspective. Might America have a world role from the perspective of "Progressive Islam"?

The most vocal proponent of Progressive Islam is Omid Safi, associate professor of Islamic Studies and Director of Middle East and Islamic Studies at Colgate University, in Hamilton, New York. Co-chair for the Study of Islam Section at the American Academy of Religion, Dr. Safi has edited the 2003 multiauthor work, *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism.*[52] Progressive Islam is defined, in part, as follows:

> Progressive Muslims espouse a critical and non-apologetic "multiple critique" with respect to both Islam and modernity. They are undoubtedly postmodern in

the sense of their critical approach to modernity. That double engagement with the varieties of Islam and modernity, plus an emphasis on concrete social action and transformation, is the defining characteristic of progressive Islam today.[53]

As for Safi and the Progressive Muslim movement, there has been some debate about the group in its blurring the line between academic and confessional.[54] Does Safi represent the voices of academics or of "Progressive Muslims" themselves?

"Progressive *ijtihád* (reasoning)" is the hallmark of the movement. As a "global phenomenon," Shafi distances himself and the movement from any explicit association with America, as it "would be a clear mistake to somehow reduce the emergence of progressive Islam to being a new 'American Islam.' "[55] Shafi points to the fact that "Progressive Muslims are found everywhere in the global Muslim *umma* [community]."[56] Because "almost all progressive Muslims are profoundly skeptical of nationalism," they "instinctively and deliberately reject" and attempt to "transform it into an 'American Islam' commodity to be exported all over the world."[57] They also studiously avoid "appropriation by the United States' administration, which has used the language of reforming Islam to justify its invasion of Muslim countries such as Iraq."[58] Proponents of Progressive Islam "promise of ushering in a real paradigm shift in the relationship of Muslims to both Islam and modernity."[59] Even so, Progressive Islam has not defined a world role for America. To do so would be to defeat the universal outlook and scope of Progressive Islam as a reform movement within the contemporary Muslim world itself.

Buddhist Myths and Visions of America

Apart from Robert Thurman's "ten planks" as presented in an appendix in his Buddhist manifesto, *Inner Revolution,* and beyond Daisaku Ikeda's vision of the "Second American Renaissance" as heralded in *Songs for America,* what unifies the visions of the Dalai Lama, Robert Thurman, and Ikeda is the goal of establishing democracy on the order of enlightenment principles. According to one commentator, "Buddhist Democracy refers to a parliamentary democracy in which every individual has been awakened to the Principles of Buddhism."[60] While there is a great difference between Soka Gakkai and Tibetan Buddhism, both are agreed that democracy, enlightened by Buddhist precepts and praxis, combine to form the most potentially ideal form of governance for the world.

In 1991, the Dalai Lama, who has promoted the concept of a "Buddhist Democracy" among his fellow Tibetans, said that "America has the potential to make this world straight."[61] By this, he meant America's world role—

primarily economically and politically. In 1995, the Dalai Lama further elaborated:

> The United States must not underestimate its role in the world today. As Americans you should be proud of your heritage, proud of the values upon which your Constitution is based. Accordingly, you should not shirk from your responsibility to bring those same fundamental rights and freedoms to people living under totalitarian regimes.[62]

America's world role, therefore, is to promote enlightened democracy.

Bahá'í Myths and Visions of America

The Bahá'í Emancipation/Civil War Myth and the Bahá'í Wilsonian Myth are retrospective perspectives within the Bahá'í vision of the destiny of America—which vision is primarily prospective in that it is forward-looking, focusing on America's world role in promoting world unity. The Bahá'í Faith defines a world role for America, which is to play a leadership role in creating an emancipatory future for societies globally. However, the Bahá'í religion studiously eschews any involvement in partisan politics, which is seen as fundamentally divisive. Bahá'ís are therefore apolitical, while working with "the body politic" in trying to broaden and heighten "the consciousness of the oneness of mankind": "In every Dispensation, the light of Divine Guidance has been focused upon one central theme," writes 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "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." [63] One particular Bahá'í text develops specific reasons for the spiritual leadership that America has the opportunity and, in a sense, the moral obligation to exercise:

> On the other hand is a nation that has achieved undisputed ascendancy in the entire Western Hemisphere, whose rulers have been uniquely honored by being collectively addressed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas; which has been acclaimed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "home of the righteous and the gathering-place of the free," [64] where the "splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled" [65] and belonging to a continent which, as recorded by that same pen, "giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement," [66] whose "future is even more promising," [67] whose "influence and illumination are far-reaching," [68] and which "will lead all nations spiritually." [69] Moreover, it is to this great republic of the West that the Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh has referred as the nation that has "developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations," [70] and which "is 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 for the triumph of its people." [71] It is for this same American democracy that He expressed His fervent hope that it might be "the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement," "to proclaim the unity of mankind," and "to unfurl the Standard of the Most Great Peace," [72] that it might become "the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment, and all the world receive this heavenly blessing," [73] and that its inhabitants might "rise from their present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world." [74] It is in connection with its people that He has affirmed that they are "indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace and proclaim the oneness of mankind." [75]

This is a remarkably visionary statement. Observe how Shoghi Effendi's vision of America goes far beyond a nationalistic civil religion. This vision transcends national boundaries, overleaps vested national interests, and addresses the interests of the widest "body politic"—the planet Earth itself.[76] In addition to the Bahá'í Faith's emphasis on egalitarian social principles, a human spiritual transformation at the levels of the individual and community is needed in order to put those principles into practice. 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.

Among the American Bahá'ís, it may be said that the Bahá'í community has its counterpart of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Bahá'í philosopher Dr. Alain Leroy Locke (1885–1954). Of Locke, Martin Luther King himself said: "We're going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe." [77] Interestingly, Locke developed a philosophy of democracy in nine dimensions. Locke's grand (though not systematic) theory of democracy sequenced local, moral, political, economic, and cultural stages of democracy as they arced through history, with racial, social, spiritual, and world democracy completing the trajectory. Adjunct notions of natural, practical, progressive, creative, intellectual, equalitarian democracy crystallized the paradigm. Seeing America as "a unique social experiment," Locke's larger goal was to "Americanize Americans" [78] and to further democratize democracy itself with the simple yet profound message that equality is the bedrock of democracy: "Eventually, however, just as world-mindedness must dominate and remould [sic] nation-mindedness, so we must transform eventually race-mindedness into human-mindedness." [79]

The Bahá'í perspective on the destiny of America is a singular example of how minority religions, as James Moorhead rightly observed, have

contributed and can presently consecrate their own religious myths of and visions of America for the social benefit of America as a whole.

AN OVERVIEW OF AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE

In the chart below, America's world role—as defined by Protestantism and as redefined by the minority faiths treated in this book—presents a convenient, albeit oversimplified, representation of the results of the investigation conducted over the course of this book. The reader will note points of convergence among the more progressive minority faiths, where America, ideally, would serve as a particular instrument of a universal purpose. Here, the very notion of Manifest Destiny (the right of America to *conquer, colonize, and Christianize* the continent of North America) is replaced by a concept of what might be thought of as a "common destiny"—an overarching, cosmopolitan worldview. This is perhaps best seen in a conspectus of the various visions of America's world role as recapitulated in Table 12.1.

FINAL REFLECTIONS: A WORLD CIVIL RELIGION?

Is there some larger significance to the existence of these myths and visions of America? Without wishing to state the obvious, the religious myths and visions surveyed here deal with some of the perennial problematics in the American experience. They operate as social commentaries on the realities of American life, especially as measured against the ideals of American civil religion—which is where these myths intersect in the public sphere and in civil discourse. These religious myths and visions of America present a full range of mythic and ideological possibilities. To the extent that myths are vehicles of social truths (and thus function as "true lies" [80]), the myths themselves may be compared. From this comparison, certain salient characteristics will fall into focus, which will be briefly touched on here.

Taking an inventory of the ten religions covered in this book, two negative themes stand out: *racial prejudice and religious prejudice.* The obvious examples of these are the religions presented back-to-back in Chapters 7 and 8, that is, Christian Identity and the Nation of Islam. Christian Identity has always been considered radical, and it can never become mainstream. Its proposed homeland (the Northwest Imperative) is, in a sense, the logical outcome of Identity's Two-Seed Myth, the Mud Races Myth, the Lost Tribes Myth, and the Racial Holy War Myth.

In somewhat the same way as Identity represents an extreme form of white nationalism, the Nation of Islam is a species of Black nationalism, as the Black Muslim Yacub Myth, Mother Plane Myth, and the Destruction of America Myth bear out. However, their functional parallelism is a case of

Table 12.1   America's World Role as Defined by Protestantism and Minority Faiths

MINORITY FAITH	AMERICA'S WORLD ROLE
Native American Religion	To promote environmental ethics and ecological sustainability throughout "Turtle Island" and beyond. In the heritage of Deganawidah, to advance global democracy in the interests of world peace.
Protestantism	To promote originally Puritan values of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire. To promote global democracy. To promote "worldwide brotherhood," as expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King's vision of "the World House."
Catholicism	To promote "religious liberty as a basic civil right." To foster "the growth of international cooperation and solidarity in the service of that peace."
Judaism	To promote unity and pluralism "uniting all people in peace and freedom."
Mormon	To promote liberty and equal rights. To strengthen the foundation of society by fostering family values.
Christian Identity	To preserve the purity of the White race. To establish a Whites-only homeland.
Nation of Islam	To realize America's potential to become the "Kingdom of God on earth"—"an egalitarian kingdom structured on truth, where each . . . will be treated with fairness and justice." However: "It is not a time for integration; it is a time for us to separate from our former slave-masters." (2008)
Contemporary Islam	Radical Islamism: No positive world role for America. (Progressive Islam: No definitive world role for America.)
Buddhism	To "bring those same fundamental rights and freedoms to people living under totalitarian regimes" and "to make this world straight." (Dalai Lama) To cultivate "a renaissance and enlightenment science [of] our times." (Robert Thurman) To promote a "Buddhist Democracy." (Dalai Lama, Thurman, Ikeda)
Bahá'í Faith	To "lead all nations spiritually" in order to "unify the world."

two lines diverging. Although they may have functionally intersected in the past, their current directions are increasingly divergent. This is because of the Nation of Islam's relatively recent reconciliation with mainstream Islam. Black Muslims are still Black nationalists, but they have quietly put Elijah Muhammad's racist myths (shared by Malcolm X in "Black Man's History") behind them. The dramatic change that took place when Malcolm X—after his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he personally witnessed a brotherhood of peoples of all races united by their common identity as Muslims—came to a

realization that all whites were not "devils" as Elijah Muhammad had maintained. This is the Malcolm X that America has come to know and honor. The earlier Malcolm X would brook no tolerance in American mainstream society today.

The Protestants, collectively speaking, forged the "master myth" of America. Under its secularized corollary (albeit with much Christian support), the Manifest Destiny Myth, when translated into Congressional policy and duly executed, amounted to wholesale genocide of entire populations of the American Indian, and generally had a devastating impact on all things Indian. As racial prejudice sought religious sanction in the "Curse of Ham" Myth, it was effectively challenged by the African American Exodus Counter-Myth, which functioned to insulate African American Christians from the further impact of what may be described as essentially White forms of "Christianity," and to produce an African American theology of liberation in its wake. The Latter-day Saints' Mark of Cain Myth and, to a lesser extent, the Lost Tribes Myth are vestiges of racist beginnings that have effectively been renounced by the Latter-day Saints, but without overt repudiation. It would take something similar to the 1978 revelation received by LDS president Spencer Kimball to overturn some of the entrenched racial attitudes that overtly persist in Christian Identity and that covertly persist in the Nation of Islam, although it is expected that such vestiges of anti-White sentiment will subside within a more racially egalitarian America.

Religious prejudice, the other pervasively negative theme, has run its course as well, although plenty of religious prejudice remains. Not only was Christian Identity motivated by racial hate, but by religious prejudice as well, particularly with respect to Jews. The irony is that Jewish source material— primarily, what Christians have traditionally referred to as the "Old Testament"—was taken up and reworked to serve the purposes of White nationalism. Adam became the progenitor and patriarch of Whites, while Satan had intercourse with Eve and spawned the reptilian non-White races. The same was true in Identity's appropriation of the Jewish Lost Tribes Myth. While Mormons were not anti-semitic, they also wrested the Lost Tribes Myth out of its originally Jewish context and made them American Indians, whose skin was originally white, but was later cursed with dark skin as a consequence of their unrighteousness. World unity—championed especially by the Dalai Lama's reformulation of Tibetan Buddhism and by the Bahá'í Faith—reconciles and resolves such racial and religious prejudices into a progressive and constructive agenda for the reconstruction of the world globally.

The alternative visions of America, presented by minority faiths, may be seen as responses to the challenges of pluralism and race, in which minority faiths—America's alternative religions—implicitly seek to transcend the

legacy of Puritanism in shaping American self-image. Wherever they embody egalitarian and progressive ideals, these minority faiths may be said to share important points of convergence. If visions of America's role in promoting an egalitarian, justice-based world are translated into reality, then, in effect, they operate as projects of universal emancipation. Progressive visions of America's world role, as held by some of the minority faiths presented in this book, have the potential and power to contribute to what White calls "consensus beliefs" and the American "consensus perception of world affairs."

Whatever the merits and demerits of these myths and visions of America, they serve to stimulate reflection on social policy at a national level, and on purpose at an individual level. "What does it mean to be an American?" is a venerable, yet surprisingly fresh question. The question itself, not to mention its possible answers, invites renewed thinking on the purpose for which, under various religious views, people were created and for which America is now the world's superpower. As presented in this book, these myths and visions of America serve as a mirror in which individual and national reflection may take place. True, the mirror may be distorted, but the mirror may also be refined such that it may one day reflect, not the world as it has been, but the world as it may become. America is something to be "religious" about, especially if one has the conviction that America—if it is to live up to its founding and quintessential values—is all about making the world a better place.

Recall that, in *Myths America Lives By,* author Richard Hughes had presented five foundational myths of America. Again, these are the following: (1) the Myth of the Chosen Nation; (2) the Myth of Nature's Nation; (3) the Myth of the Christian Nation; (4) the Myth of the Millennial Nation; and (5) the Myth of the Innocent Nation.[81] Perhaps—and this is tentative at best —the title should now, or in good time, be revised to reflect the past tense— *Myths America Lived By.* If this title is to be kept in its present tense, however, here is how these same myths might have been reshaped by America's minority faiths: (1) the Myth of the *Multilateral* Nation; (2) the Myth of the *Environmental* Nation; (3) the Myth of the *Multifaith* Nation; (4) the Myth of the *Ethical* Nation; and (5) the Myth of the *Cosmopolitan* Nation. This revisioning of the mission and destiny of America is actually the third of three basic types of American civil religion.

In Chapter 1, the reader will recall that Dean Hoge, sociologist at Catholic University of America, has outlined three types of civil visions of America, the first two of which clearly have American Protestant origins. The present writer will simply term these three visions of America as (1) Exemplarism; (2) Vindicationism; and (3) Cosmopolitanism.[82] In the first two instances, Henry Kissinger has characterized America's world role as both beacon and crusader.[83] These may be briefly recapitulated as follows.

(1) *Exemplarism:* The first vision of America is the Puritan vision, as first articulated by John Winthrop: "*Wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the Eies of all people are uppon us.*" [84] According to Hoge, the Puritan vision "focused on making America an example to the world, a model society to show all the world what a godly and free nation can be." [85]

(2) *Vindicationism:* From the vision of America as a model nation for other nations to follow led to a more proactive program of action, in which America's mission was to influence (or coerce) other nations to incorporate American principles of religion and good governance. This second vision, Hoge notes, "saw America as a chosen people with an obligation to work actively in the world to win others to American principles and to safeguard those principles everywhere." [86] Although weak at first, this vision was the direct precursor of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny: "It was clearly stated in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, that America's destiny was to settle the whole continent—and later, to bring freedom and civilization to all peoples." [87] This "activistic vision" of America "was a motivating source of the world Christian mission movement and of American expansionism in the late nineteenth century" in that "America would save the world for Christ or for democracy." [88]

The problem with Manifest Destiny is that the means justified the end, and great evils were perpetrated on Native Americans (i.e., the "First Nations," to invoke a Canadian term) not to mention pretextual territorial gains at the expense of other nations, of which the U.S.–Mexican War of 1846–1848 offers a prime instance in American history. This was America's first major conflict driven by the policy of "Manifest Destiny"—the doctrine that America, by dint of its divine destiny, had a God-given right to expand the nation's borders from sea to shining sea.[89] As a result of the U.S.–Mexican War, America acquired the northern half of Mexico—a vast territory that later became the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

(3) *Cosmopolitanism:* "A third vision of America's mission," Hoge goes on to say, "calls for internationalism based not on messianic ideas but on a posture of openness and cooperation, assuming that others have legitimate interests and identities and equally valid perceptions of truth." [90] Hoge connects this third ideal with Robert Bellah's ideal of a "world civil religion." [91] If America is to be reshaped as a multilateral, environmental, multifaith, ethical, and cosmopolitan nation, it may, in large part, be due to the collective influence of progressive minority faiths. This convergent influence may well be mediated through the instrumentality of commonly held "civil religion," which may be described as a "vehicle of national religious self-understanding." [92]

First described by Robert N. Bellah (professor emeritus of sociology and comparative studies at the University of California, Berkeley), American civil religion is itself in flux. In the conclusion of his seminal essay, "Civil Religion in America," Bellah foresees the emergence of a "world civil religion"

coefficient with "the emergence of a genuine transnational sovereignty." [93] This world civil religion would necessarily incorporate "vital international symbolism into our civil religion" whereby "American civil religion" would become "simply one part of a new civil religion of the world." [94] Obviously it would "draw on religious traditions beyond the sphere of biblical religion alone." [95] In other words, while American civil religion has Protestant origins and is a decidedly American phenomenon, a world civil religion would be international in scope and interfaith in nature.

Bellah's vision of a world civil religion has attracted genuine and widespread criticism. In his defense, Paul Nathanson, author of *Over the Rainbow: The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America,* notes that "Bellah believed that this process" of promoting a world civil religion "need not disrupt the continuity of American civil religion." [96] This is because the notion of a world civil religion is "based not on worship of the nation itself, but on an understanding of American history in the light of an ultimate and universal reality." [97] The emergence of a world civil religion would, in the American context, represent a shift from a *national* to a *global* perspective. These two perspectives need not be at odds with one another. A reconciliation is possible. This would necessarily entail an aligning of the two perspectives. "A world civil religion," Bellah concludes in "Civil Religion in America," is a world-embracing vision that "could be accepted as a fulfillment and not as a denial of American civil religion"—as "the eschatological hope of American civil religion from the beginning." [98] Bellah wrote this statement in 1967. Forty years later, in 2007, Bellah revisited his notion of a world civil religion, reflecting on the role that world religions may play in promoting such a common vision:

> But for the creation of a viable and coherent world order a world civil society is surely an essential precondition, and, dare I say it, any actual civil society will have a religious dimension, will need not only a legal and an ethical framework, but some notion that it conforms to the nature of ultimate reality. The biggest immediate problem is the strengthening of global civil society. As I will elaborate in my next post, I would suggest that perhaps the *religious communities of the world may have something to contribute to that global civil society,* and, indeed, that *their participation may be essential for its success.* [99]

Is there a harmonic convergence of the visions of America as held by Protestantism and as redefined by America's minority faiths? If so, it would look something like this: In the Native American vision of America's world role, America should promote environmental ethics and ecological sustainability throughout "Turtle Island" and beyond. In the heritage of Deganawidah, America should advance global democracy in the interests of world peace abroad and at home, beginning with healing and repairing the injustices of

the past and mitigating their continuing social and economic effects upon America's indigenous peoples in the present.

In the Protestant vision of America, America should foster the originally Puritan values of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire, and promote democracy globally as well, through enlightened exemplarism, vindicationism, and cosmopolitanism. The quality of that democracy will be greatly enhanced when America uses her influence to realize and bring into reality a "worldwide brotherhood," as foreseen in Dr. Martin Luther King's vision of "the World House." While the subtitle of this book is "How Minority Faiths Transformed America's World Role," it should be noted that it took the prophetic voice of a vocal minority—primarily African American civil rights leaders—to influence (although not wholly transform) the Protestant vision of America's world role.

Briefly, America fulfills its Catholic mandate by promoting "religious liberty as a basic civil right," and fostering "the growth of international cooperation and solidarity in the service of that peace." [100] Judaism's vision of America is that it promote unity and pluralism "uniting all people in peace and freedom." [101] The Mormon vision of America, *inter alia,* is to promote liberty and equal rights, and to strengthen the foundation of society by fostering family values.[102] (Joseph Smith's 1844 political platform of "theodemocracy," however, appears to have no real place in Mormon doctrine.)

America should brook no tolerance for Christian Identity's goal of establishing a Whites-only homeland. While eschewing, if possible, the self-segregation that Louis Farrakhan continues to advocate as of December 2007—"*It is not a time for integration; it is a time for us to separate from our former slave-masters*" [103]—America can take cognizance of the Nation of Islam's vision that America may realize its potential to become the "Kingdom of God on earth"—"an egalitarian kingdom structured on truth, where each . . . will be treated with fairness and justice." [104] Since contemporary Radical Islamism has no positive world role for America, and since progressive Islam has no definitive world role for America either, the Islamic mandate for America has not reached anything closely resembling a true consensus. Tibetan Buddhism's vision of America is to "bring those same fundamental rights and freedoms to people living under totalitarian regimes," "to make this world straight" (Dalai Lama), and to cultivate "a renaissance and enlightenment science our times" (Robert Thurman), as well as to promote a "Buddhist Democracy" (Dalai Lama, Thurman, Ikeda).

America will fulfill the Bahá'í Faith's vision of its great destiny when it arises to "lead all nations spiritually" in order to "unify the world." America will then be "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." [105] Only then will

> that great republic . . . 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.[106]

Civil religion can be the common ground of progressive religious values, which have the potential to exert a positive influence in the civic sphere. To the extent that civil religion incorporates the myth of America's spiritual destiny, that very myth will itself be subject to change and modifications, in accordance with the requirements of the times in which people live. "Part of the myth's resilience is due to the ability of Americans to adjust their religious sense of the nation's destiny to changed circumstances and altered expectations," Conrad Cherry observes. "It is reasonable to conclude that the same resilience will be evident in the future." [107] As social commentator John O'Sullivan puts it, America's "sense of itself" has always had to adjust to new historical circumstances and changed historical realities:

> America's sense of itself always had a self-conscious, even ideological, side. First, the United States, founded by a rebellion against legitimate authority, had to explain and justify that rebellion to mankind. Then, the growing nation had to justify taking over a continent from its previous owners. Finally, it had to persuade the immigrants arriving on that continent that, in assimilating to the American nation, they were not being false to themselves, that Americanism was in some sense a universal creed to which all could be admitted.[108]

The changed circumstances of today may be summed up in one word: *globalization.* Globalization refers to "both the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" and as "both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole." [109] It is further defined as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." [110] Ethical responses to globalization, which are essentially world order issues,[111] have given rise to a search for values of egalitarianism, equity, and sustainability—a worldview that some have called "globalism." As a response to globalization, globalism may be viewed as a reflex or extension of Kantian cosmopolitanism and as the "moral universalism of international relations." [112] Globalism, as a form of international ethics, may be considered to be the equivalent of a renewed cosmopolitanism that, today, views the world as an organic whole and advocates a global ethic commensurate with the needs of the twenty-first century.

Religions in America can and should translate their shared ideals into an American civil religion—and a corresponding ethic—that can help form a basis for the world civil religion that Robert Bellah envisions. To refine the point, religions ideally will remythologize and revision America in increasingly convergent and harmonic ways, offering an informal consensus on what may be called *proactive American cosmopolitanism,* where national interests are integrated with supranational interests, linking American foreign policy and the requirements of world order. If attuned to the needs of this day and age, these thought-orienting myths and action-incentive visions have every potential to serve as a spiritual mandate for America. Under the gaze of their ideals, universally minded religions can set the stage for the next quantum leap in the world's social evolution—transitioning from war to peace, from nationalism to internationalism, from religious particularism to spiritual universalism, from racial animosity to racial amity, from gender repression to gender equality, and from resource exploitation to environmental renewal. Universal values actually devalue uniformity and promote diversity. Where there is a common ground of universal values, unity can therefore be the *effect* of diversity.

Myths and visions of American have attracted the theoretical interests of scholars for generations. The late Canadian Americanist Sacvan Bercovitch was among the foremost of these scholars. Bercovitch wrote of "transformations in the symbolic construction of America." [113] What would happen if the three paradigmatic visions of America—exemplarism, vindicationism, and cosmopolitanism—were interwoven and transformed to meet the needs of the world of today and tomorrow? Telescoping these into the future, perhaps America can, one day, draw on the power of its moral authority (exemplarism)—if and when America resolves its race, class, and gender issues—to benignly and effectively exert its considerable political influence (vindicationism) for the promotion of global peace through world unity (cosmopolitanism).

For this ever to happen, the adoption of universal principles of good governance, of individual and group rights, of the equitable distribution of the world's wealth and resources, of environmental sustainability, and of an emergent cosmopolitan order, will stand as a set of self-evident moral imperatives. In all this, America's leadership in bringing about enlightened internationalism may be paradoxically characterized as a *unilateral multilateralism* —in which America *unilaterally* takes the initiative to foster the conditions whereby the community of nations works in *multilateral* concert, in an orchestration of sovereign powers for the global good. Whether this entails endorsing arbitration treaties, lending more authority to the Hague courts, or encouraging qualified disarmament, national interest and world order can be guided by the ethical principles offered by universally oriented religious worldviews.

Consider the example of President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), 1906 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who, in 1902, took the initiative in opening the international Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Although founded in 1899, the Court of Arbitration had not been called upon by any power in its first three years of existence. When the United States and Mexico agreed to arbitrate, before the Hague Tribunal, their differences over the Pious Foundations of California, this example was followed by other powers, thus rendering the formerly inert arbitration machinery operational. Roosevelt played a prominent role in extending the use of arbitration to international problems in the Western Hemisphere as well.[114] Such leadership in international affairs was guided by religious principle. Writing that American leadership must exemplify the "ideals of democracy, of liberty under law, of social progress through peaceful industry, of education and commerce, and of uncorrupted Christianity," Roosevelt was steered by the moral compass of Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O moral, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." [115] As President Roosevelt prophetically said: "Upon the success of our experiment much depends, not only as regards our own welfare, but as regards the welfare of mankind." [116] In fine, America's political, economic, and scientific power can also serve as a reflex of *moral power*. Will America—taking Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson as moral exemplars of American cosmopolitanism—*unilaterally* take a leading role in initiating the *multilateral* process of bringing about the following event, as presaged by one of the minority faiths, the Bahá'í Faith?

> True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained.[117]

In this remarkable religious text, written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1875, the cause of universal peace—the product of a stable and enlightened world

order—should be regarded as a "sacred" undertaking by peoples of all nations and faiths. In 1963—88 years later—Pope John XXIII opened his magisterial *Pacem in Terris* with these words: "Peace on Earth—which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after—can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order." [118] In other words, world order—that is, the state of ideal international relations described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "true civilization" and Pope John XXIII as "peace on earth"—is essentially a sacred task best served when based on the principles of justice and reciprocity advocated by the religions of the world, whether in America or abroad. Indeed, according to the Universal House of Justice (internationally elected Bahá'í governing council) in a message addressed "To the Peoples of the World" in 1985, "World peace is not only possible but inevitable." [119] In this document, the role of religion is made clear: "No serious attempt to set human affairs aright, to achieve world peace, can ignore religion." [120] America, in protecting *freedom* of religion while proscribing the *establishment* of religion, would do well to heed the enlightened cosmopolitanism of the minority faiths that promote it.

As a grand synthesis of the ideals held by America's progressive Protestant and minority faiths, American civil religion can play a preponderating role in inspiring a world civil religion that, in turn, universalizes these egalitarian values for all nations. As Pope John Paul II said to President Ronald Reagan in 1987, America has a great responsibility in the world today:

> The more powerful a nation is, the greater becomes its international responsibility, the greater also must be its commitment to the betterment of the lot of those whose very humanity is constantly being threatened by want and need. . . . America needs freedom to be herself and to fulfill her mission in the world.[121]

If America arises to accomplish this mission, then America will fulfill its world role and realize its prophetic destiny—*whether imagined or real*. America will have lived up to the grand destiny envisioned by the more optimistic religions surveyed in these pages. Then will the noblest myths of America have become reality and their grandest visions realized—in the new American cosmopolitanism of world unity which, in the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will "transform this world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood" [122] and by which, according to one Bahá'í text, "the oneness of the whole body of nations will be made the ruling principle of international life." [123]

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.

85. Deborah K. van den Hoonaard and Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Equality of Women and Men: The Experience of the Bahá'í Community of Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: Art Bookbindery, 2006).

86. Michael McMullen, "The Religious Construction of a Global Identity: An Ethnographic Look at the Atlanta Bahá'í Community." *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader.* Ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek, London, New Delhi: Altamira Press, 1997), 236–237 and 227.

87. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991 [1936]), 203–204 (formatting added).

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.

89. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice,* 34.

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.

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

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3. Harold Hongju Koh, "Foreword: On American Exceptionalism," 1481, n. 4.

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12. Ibid., 78 (emphasis added).

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15. Ibid., 439.

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61. 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." Matthew E. Bunson, ed., *The Wisdom Teachings of the Dalai Lama* (New York: Plume, 1997), 226.

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

64. Citing a text written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on February 2, 1917, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993), 62 (with a slightly different translation: "where the righteous will abide and the free assemble").

65. Citing a text written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on February 2, 1917, in *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993), 62.

66. '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.

67. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 104.

68. Ibid., 104.

69. Ibid., 104.

70. Ibid., 103.

71. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "6 May 1912, Talk at Euclid Hall, Cleveland, Ohio." See *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 103. However, this latter version has the word "democracy" instead of "people" at the end of the sentence, to wit: "This American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world and be blest in the East and the West for the triumph of its democracy."

72. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "20 April 1912, Talk at Orient-Occident-Unity Conference, Public Library Hall, Washington, D.C. Notes by Joseph H. Hannen." See *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 36." See *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 36. The text here states: "May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the universality [Shoghi Effend: "unity"] of mankind. May it be the first to upraise [Shoghi Effendi: "unfurl"] the standard of the Most Great Peace . . . ."

73. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "16 April 1912. Talk at Hotel Ansonia to Bahá'í Friends of New Jersey, Broadway and Seventy-third Street, New York. Notes by Ahmad Sohráb." See *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 19.

74. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 20.

75. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith* (Wilmette, IL: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 35, citing, in this final sentence: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* 37. Thanks to attorney Brent Poirier for referring the author to this text. E-mail dated July 27, 2008 (Tarikh listserve).

76. See Roshan Danesh has further explored the Bahá'í Faith and internationalism in his journal article, "Internationalism and Divine Law: A Bahá'í Perspective." *Journal of Law and Religion* 19.2 (2003/2004): 209–242. However, Danesh does not directly address Bahá'í texts that bear on the destiny of America.

77. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Address Delivered at Poor People's Campaign Rally." March 19, 1968. Clarksdale, Mississippi. Qtd. by James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968–1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 152, n. 20; Stanford University, "Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project."

78. See Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke." *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies.* Supplement XIV. Ed. Jay Parini (Farmington Hills, MI: Scribner's Reference/The Gale Group, 2004), 195–219; idem, Chapter Ten: "Philosophy of Democracy: America, Race, and World Peace." *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005), 241–266.

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80. "Myths can also be understood as true stories." Eddie S. Glaude, "Myth and African American Self-Identity." *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction.* Ed. Craig R. Prentiss (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 29.

81. Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By.* Foreword by Robert N. Bellah (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

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83. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 18.

84. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity." *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny,* 41.

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90. Hoge, "Theological Views of America," 128.

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96. Paul Nathanson, *Over the Rainbow: The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 398, n. 56.

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98. Bellah, "Civil Religion," 21; James A. Mathisen, "Twenty Years After Bellah: What Ever Happened to American Civil Religion?" *Sociological Analysis* 50.2 (1989): 129–146.

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103. "*It is not a time for integration; it is a time for us to separate from our former slave-masters . . . .*" FinalCall.com News, "Exclusive Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan" (December 2007). (Emphasis added.)

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