

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

September, October 1990

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## The Messianic Character of American Foreign Policy

John W. Robbins

*Since President Bush ordered 200,000 troops to the Middle East, we have heard a great deal about a Moslem jihad or "holy war" against the U.S. and its allies. But it must be pointed out that Islam is not the only religion that believes in holy war; there is a form of counterfeit Christianity that does as well. In fact, this counterfeit Christianity has been a major factor in guiding American foreign policy since the end of the 19th century.*

*With the apparent end of the Cold War (several nations, including the world's most populous, remain Communist), the focus of American foreign policy has shifted, but its motive has not: Our government still intends to make the world safe for democracy, and it still believes that it is doing "God's work" on Earth. Until that belief and motive change, Americans will find themselves embroiled in one conflict after another. In fact, the international situation since the "end" of the Cold War may pose a greater threat to America and Americans than the missiles of the Soviet Union did.*

Political messianism was a prominent characteristic of nineteenth century philosophy. One need only recall the very influential German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), who believed that the State was God walking on Earth, to understand that the State had begun to assume the role of God in the nineteenth century, just as the Papacy and Roman State-Church had done in the Middle Ages.

Hegel was not alone in his idolatry of the State. The Frenchman, now largely forgotten, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint Simon (1760-1825), developed a system of thought he called *Nouveau Christianisme* (New Christianity) for the transformation of society. His followers declared that "the world has been waiting for a Savior... [and] Saint Simon appeared." But of all the nineteenth-century advocates of political messianism – Fourier, Fichte, Lamennais, Mazzini, Godwin, and so on – only one remains in the public consciousness: Karl Marx. Though they are now forgotten, their ideas of nationalism, racism, anarchism, Communism, imperialism, and socialism are still very much with us and influence our thinking even without our realizing it.

### *Kennedy and Harvard*

At the Widener Library at Harvard University there are murals showing American soldiers in World War I. The soldiers are knights on a crusade, and the following inscription describes the soldiers:

Happy those who with a glowing faith

In one embrace clasped death and victory.

They crossed the sea crusaders keen to help

The nations battling in a righteous cause.

"Righteous cause" is not such a far cry from "holy war," which was the phrase used by some American clergymen – Newell Dwight Hillis, to mention one – to describe World War I.

The message of "glowing faith," "righteous cause," and the image of crusading knights was not lost on one of the sons of Harvard, President John F. Kennedy. In his Inaugural Address in January 1961, President Kennedy, whose Administration came to be known as Camelot, outlined his messianic vision of American foreign policy:

"Let every nation know, whether it wish us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

"This much we pledge to those old allies and more. To those new states...

"To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If the free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

"To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge – to convert our good words into good deeds – to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas...

"To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope...

"Let both sides [East and West] unite to heed in all corners of the Earth the command of Isaiah – to 'undo the heavy burdens,... [and] let the oppressed go free.'...

"Now the trumpet summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation' – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself...

"Finally, whether you are citizens of America or of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on Earth God's work must truly be our own."

Kennedy's messianic vision, a holy war against tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself, a vision so informed by his Roman religion, has been the driving force of American foreign policy since the beginning of the twentieth century. His misquotation of Scripture, his invocation of God's blessing on his crusade, and his dogmatic assertion of falsehoods (e.g., "here on Earth God's work must truly be our own") are permanent characteristics of the messianic character of American foreign policy. This delusion, that the State or society, particularly the American State and society, must do God's work on Earth, is the essence of political messianism.

Though President Kennedy may have been one of the most eloquent advocates of political messianism, he was certainly not the first. There has been a messianic strain in American politics almost from the beginning, but it was always a minority view, relatively uninfluential until the twentieth century.

## *The War for Independence*

Throughout American history there has been a theme of political messianism, but it was a minor theme until the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. The most messianic of all figures were, of course, the clergymen. In 1776 the Reverend Samuel Sherwood of Connecticut declared that "God Almighty, with all the powers of Heaven, are on our side. Great numbers of Angels, no doubt, are encamping round our coast, for our defence and protection. Michael stands ready, with all the artillery of Heaven, to encounter the dragon, and to vanquish the black host."

The fundamental confusion between God's battle and the colonies' battle, between a divine cause and a human cause, between theology and politics, is characteristic of political messianism. In 1742 Jonathan Edwards had published "Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival of Religion" in which he anticipated the coming of the millennium in America. But where Edwards saw the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the means of bringing in the millennium, just thirty years later the millennium was to be ushered in by force of arms. The Kingdom of God became confused with the State. During the Dark Ages, it had become confused with the Church. But the messianic strain of thought in early America was muted, compared to what would come later.

## *The War of 1812*

During the War of 1812 John Stevens wrote, "Such a war God considers as His own cause, and to help in such a cause is to come to the help of the Lord."

The notion that God sides with nations or races is not a new idea; indeed, it was the error of the Jews in the time of Christ. One newspaper gloated when the war was over: "We have abundant evidence to believe it was a holy war, for the Lord has fought for us the battles, and given us the victories...."

## *The Civil War*

One early and major display of political messianism was the Civil War. In Newport, Rhode Island, the

Episcopal Bishop of Rhode Island, Thomas March Clark, delivered a sermon to the state militia as they left for the war: "Your country has called for your service and you are ready. It is a holy and righteous cause in which you enlist.... God is with us;...the Lord of hosts is on our side."

Julia Ward Howe, the famous hymn writer, was so inspired by the sight of a Union army camp that she penned the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* in the fall of 1861. It was to become the battle hymn of the crusade against the South. Its words bear repeating, for they clearly display the mentality of political messianism:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the  
Lord;

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of  
wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible  
swift sword,

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred  
circling camps;

They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews  
and damps;

I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and  
flaring lamps.

His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of  
steel,

"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my  
grace shall deal;"

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with  
his heel,

Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never  
call retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before his  
judgment seat;

O be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant,  
my feet!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across  
the sea,

With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and  
me;

As He died to make men holy, let us die to make  
men free

While God is marching on.

All the elements of Biblical imagery that are applied to the work of Christ and the Gospel in the Bible are applied to the Union armies in the hymn: the crushing of the serpent's head, the swift sword, the trumpet, the judging of men. The advance of the Union armies is the "coming of the Lord." Their battles are executions of "God's righteous sentence" against the South. And for the Gospel of peace, Howe substitutes a "fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel." Her eloquence surpasses even that of President Kennedy, and thousands of churchgoers who have never heard or long forgotten Kennedy's speech remember Howe's song by heart.

The Civil War, to a large extent, may be blamed on the clergy of both the North and the South. The *Methodist Magazine*, published in the North, declared in 1864: "We must take the moral, the sacred, the holy right of our struggle up before the throne of God. We must accustom ourselves to dwell before the divine throne, clothed in the smoke of our battles.... We have a right to plead and to expect that God will let his angels encamp about our army; then he will make our cause his own – nay, it is his already." On both sides of the war, it seems that the most rabid pro-slavery spokesmen and the most rabid abolitionists were clergymen. In 1861 a Northern Methodist clergyman, Granville Moody, declared: "We [the clergy] are charged with having brought about the present contest. I believe it is true that we did bring it about, and I glory in it, for it is a wreath of glory around our brow." This "great cause, God's new Messiah," in the words of the poet James Russell Lowell, was the bloodiest

war in American history, with over one million casualties.

Perhaps because he was not a clergyman, Abraham Lincoln seems to have been relatively free of political messianism. In his *Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day* on March 30, 1863, Lincoln took the view that

"Insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own."

In an extraordinary *Meditation on the Divine Will*, a private note that Lincoln did not intend for public consumption, written in September 1862, he put his thoughts on paper.

"The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party – and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His

purpose. I am most ready to say this is probably true – that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."

Lincoln understood the sovereignty of God in human affairs quite well. Therefore he did not claim, as the clergy did, that God was on the side of the North. He thought that at least one side (and he did not say which side) must be wrong, and both may be wrong. He regarded it as quite possible that God's purposes were quite different from the purposes of the combatants. He possessed none of the messianic fervor that had caused the war and would contribute to more wars in America's future.

### *The Spanish-American War*

The war that first expressed America's growing messianic vision in foreign policy was the Spanish-American War of 1898. Started by President William McKinley, the war resulted in America's occupation of the Philippines and the deaths of one hundred thousand Filipinos. In late 1902 McKinley told a group of Methodist clergymen how America began its intervention in foreign affairs:

"The truth is I didn't want the Philippines, and when they came to us, as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them. When the Spanish War broke out, [Commodore] Dewey was at Hong Kong, and I ordered him to go to Manila and to capture or destroy the Spanish fleet.... But that was as far as I thought then.

"...I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands, perhaps, also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light

and guidance more than one night. And one night it came to me this way – I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them [the islands] back to Spain – that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient – that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves – they were unfit for self government – and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace to do the best we could by them.... And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our mapmaker) and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States...and there they are and there they will stay while I am President!"

In this candid account of the origins of modern American foreign policy we can see the factors that have shaped it for the past ninety years: (1) lack of deliberation: "that was as far as I thought then"; (2) a sense of divine destiny: "they [the islands] came to us a gift from the gods," (3) the seeking of guidance in prayer, not the Bible: "I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance;" (4) the conviction that one's hunches (and in this case an alleged revelation) have divine sanction: "one night it came to me this way – I don't know how it was, but it came;" (5) national pride: "we could not give them back to Spain – that would be cowardly and dishonorable;" (6) the protection of commercial, not national, interests: "we could not turn them over to France or Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient – that would be bad business and discreditable;" (7) the inferiority of other peoples: "they were unfit for self-government;" (8) the conviction that destiny, duty, or fate mandates our interventions abroad: "there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all;"

(9) a desire to "Christianize" or "civilize" other nations by force: "to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace to do the best we could by them;" and (10) an arrogant assurance of our own righteousness: "And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly... and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States...and there they are and there they will stay while I am President!"

While McKinley captured all the major characteristics of our messianic foreign policy at the dawn of our imperial age, it was in January 1900, just as we became a world power, that a newly elected Member of the Senate, Albert Beveridge of Indiana, heralded the age of divine imperialism:

"The times call for candor. The Philippines are ours forever – country belonging to the United States – as the Constitution calls them, and just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon one opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling out our regrets, like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength and thanksgiving to Almighty God that he has marked us as His chosen people to lead in the regeneration of the world.... It is God's great purpose made manifest in the instincts of our race, whose present phase is our personal profit, but whose far-off end is the redemption of the world and the Christianization of mankind....

"This question is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic people for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle contemplation and self-administration. No! He has made us the master organizers of this world to establish system where

chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress, to overwhelm the forces of action throughout the Earth. He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples.... And of all our race He has marked the American people as the chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America.... We are the trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over few things. I will make you ruler over many things."

When Senator Beveridge completed his oration, he was greeted with "long and continued applause." Other Senators crowded around him to shake his hand. There was one dissenter, Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts, who understood, as few have done before or since, the blasphemy and perversion of Christianity that informed Beveridge's messianic vision. Senator Hoar rose to speak:

"I could hear much calculated to excite the imagination of the youth charmed by the dream of empire.... I could think as this brave young republic of ours listened to what the Senator had to say of but one sentence:

" 'And the Devil said unto Him, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

" 'Then Jesus saith unto him: "Get thee behind me, Satan." " "

Senator Hoar seemed to understand the wickedness of trying to "Christianize" the world in any way other than that mandated by Christ: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." But he was in the minority. Most thought that either preaching was not enough, or the Gospel needed to be changed, or both.

Senator Beveridge's delusions, that Americans are God's chosen people, that God's purposes are made

manifest in the "instincts of our race," and that America will regenerate and redeem the world, were not his alone: Many other Members of Congress gave similar speeches. Representative Gibson of Tennessee declared that:

"Our race has a mission. No devout student of history can misread it. We are the preachers of a new evangel of government; we are the missionaries of a new and higher civilization; we are the apostles of the New World to the Old; and a part of our mission is to evangelize Asia and the islands of the sea....

"The progress of our race can never be stayed. You can never fix its bounds. No one continent can suffice it. No one ocean can satisfy it. No one zone can contain it. No one hemisphere can circumscribe its powers and activities.

"The world is its area and the lands of the world its only boundary. Its destiny is to dominate the entire face of the Earth, to include all races and all countries and all lands and all continents."

However, one member of the Senate understood quite clearly what the Philippine policy meant. 'We have now to meet a greater danger than we have encountered since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth – the danger that we are to be transformed from a republic, founded on the Declaration of Independence, guided by the counsels of Washington, into a vulgar, commonplace empire, founded upon physical force.'

Many clergymen and religious periodicals held similar opinions at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The millennium was at hand. In fact, some of the most ardent, if not the first, supporters of American's messianic role in the world, were missionaries. The Reverend Josiah Strong, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance for the United States and a prominent Congregational minister, asked: "Why should an American missionary be 'a man without a country?'" A missionary from China recently said to me: 'You will find that all American missionaries are in favor

of expansion.'" Missionaries advocated government support of evangelism. The *California Christian Advocate* declared that the war against Spain "is the Kingdom of God coming!... Coming to poor Cuba – the sunrise of a better day for the Philippines! ... Oppression, cruelty, bigotry, superstition, and ignorance must down, and give a Christian civilization the right of way." The *Nation* reported that the "fervent Methodists, at the beginning of the war, resolved that it was going to be a righteous and holy war because it would destroy 'Romish superstition' in the Spanish West Indies." The *Pacific Advocate* cheered: "The cross will follow the flag.... The clock of the ages is striking."

Though not an American, Frederic Farrar, Dean of Canterbury, published his opinion in 1900 that "imperialism is a natural evolution of vital and aggressive Christianity."

The anti-imperialist Charles Francis Adams could not endure the "expansion, world-power, inferior races, calvinization, duty-and-destiny twaddle and humbug." He wrote:

"The clergymen have all got hold of the idea of Duty; we have a Mission; it is a distinct Call of the Almighty. They want to go out, and have this Great Nation [export] the blessings of Liberty and the Gospel to other Inferior Races, who wait for us, as for their Messiah; – only we must remember to take with us lots of shot-guns to keep those other Superior Races, – all wolves in sheep's clothing, – away from our flock. They would devour them; – but we won't. Oh no! – such ideas are 'pessimistic'; you should have more faith in the American people! – Such cant! – It does make me tired."

## *World War I*

Since the turn of the century the jargon of our messianic foreign policy has become more secular, but the policy has grown increasingly messianic. Rather than saving the world from the forces of reaction and anarchy, as President McKinley hoped to do in 1900, contemporary American foreign policy aims to save the world from poverty, tyranny, famine, underdevelopment, trade

imbalances, international debt, ignorance, illiteracy, terrorism, war, and expensive oil.

About five years before he became president, Woodrow Wilson, a liberal Presbyterian, changed his mind about the role of the church in the world. In his early days, he thought it the church's duty to preach the Gospel and save souls. The biographer and editor of his papers, Arthur Lisle, wrote, "Wilson's political thought first began to show signs of changing about 1907, and the first sign of this metamorphosis was a significant shift in his thinking about the role that Christians and the church would play in the world at large." Wilson wrote, "If men cannot lift their fellowmen in the process of saving themselves, I do not see that it is very important that they should save themselves.... Christianity came into the world to save the world as well as to save individual men, and individual men can afford in conscience to be saved only as part of the process by which the world itself is regenerated." The social Gospel had replaced the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Wilson's mind even before he had become president. His political views, his messianism, are an effect of this shift in theology.

In his war message to Congress in April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson declared that 'we are glad...to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples.... The world must be made safe for democracy." It was not simply peace that Wilson sought, but the "peace of the world." The Millennium is to be achieved, not through the preaching of the Gospel, but through war. This war, World War I, was to be "the war to end wars." Its purpose was to usher in the Millennium.

Instead, it ushered in Mussolini, Lenin, and Hitler. Instead of liberating the peoples of the Earth, it enslaved millions. In the United States, one of the nations least affected by the war, by November 1918 the federal government had taken over transportation (ocean shipping and the railroads), communications (telephone and the telegraph), and industry (manufacturing plants). It had entered the businesses of shipbuilding, wheat trading, construction, and the lending of money. It began to

regulate private securities; allocated the use of transportation facilities, foodstuffs, fuel, and raw materials; fixed prices; intervened in labor disputes and drafted 2.8 million men into the armed forces. An Act passed by Congress in August 1916, the Army Appropriations Act, contained the following paragraph placed inconspicuously between paragraphs authorizing the purchase of horses and the replacement of a bridge in Kansas:

"The President, in time of war, is empowered through the Secretary of War, to take possession and assume control of any system or systems of transportation, or any part thereof, and to utilize the same, to the exclusion as far as may be necessary of all other traffic thereon, for the transfer and transportation of troops, war materials and equipment, and for such other purposes connected with the emergency as may be needful or desirable."

The Lever Act, passed in August 1917, was entitled "An act to provide further for the national security and defense by encouraging the production, conserving the supply, and controlling the distribution of food products and fuel." By it, the president was unconstitutionally empowered by Congress to license, regulate, requisition, purchase, store, sell, take over and transport, all foods and fuels, and fix their prices. Eating schedules were published in newspapers prefaced by statements such as "Here is your schedule for eating for the next 4 weeks which must be rigidly observed, says S. C. Fundley, County Food Administrator."

Men were thrown into jail merely for questioning the constitutionality of the draft.

President Wilson believed World War I to be "the culminating and final war for human liberty." It was to be the first of a series of wars that have, so far, enslaved nearly two billion people, and slaughtered hundreds of millions.

The clergy did its best to support our First Crusade. The president of the newly formed Federal Council of Churches (which was later to be reorganized as the National Council of Churches) Frank Mason North, sounded the trumpet: "The war for

righteousness will be won! Let the Church do her part." The clergy certainly did its part. Randolph H. McKim, thundered forth from his pulpit in the nation's capital: "It is God who has summoned us to this war.... This conflict is indeed a crusade. The greatest in history – the holiest. It is in the profoundest and truest sense a Holy War.... Yes, it is Christ, the King of Righteousness, who calls us to grapple in deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power." Francis Greenwood Peabody declared the Germans to be "untamed barbarians." Newell Dwight Hillis, minister of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, approved a plan for "exterminating the German people [by] the sterilization of 10,000,000 German soldiers and the segregation of the women." That was Hillis' final solution. Henry B. Wright, director of the YMCA and professor at Yale Divinity School, offered guidance to overly scrupulous American soldiers marching in the First Crusade: "In the hour of soul crisis the [YMCA] Secretary can turn and say with quiet certainty to your lad and my lad, 'I would not enter this work till I could see Jesus himself sighting down a gun barrel and running a bayonet through an enemy's body.'"

The *Lutheran Quarterly* in July 1918 opined, "It [World War I] is a contest in the world of spiritual ideas, a clash between the spirit of the German god Odin and the Christian God as revealed in the character and program of Jesus Christ. The two ideals cannot have a forever. One or the other must perish. We know, as Disraeli said, that 'we are on the side of the angels.'"

The Social Gospel theologian at Chicago Divinity School, Shailer Mathews, argued for the identity of modern religion and patriotism: "...the real expression of democracy in religious thinking is outside the field of orthodox theology.... Only where the spirit of democracy is working is there creative religious thinking. Only there is the union of patriotism and the religion of tomorrow. For in democracy alone can the immanence of God be expressed in the terms of human experience.... Our patriotism dares to glory in its outlook and its hopes because it knows that the triumph of our land is the triumph of the cause of a better humanity.... For an American to refuse to share in the present war...is

not Christian. A religion which will keep its followers from committing themselves to the support of such patriotism is either too aesthetic for humanity's actual needs, too individualistic to be social, or too disloyal to be tolerated." Mathews wanted to extend the Social Gospel to the far reaches of the planet, and the defeat of the Kaiser was the first step. After that would come the League of Nations and religious intolerance.

Lyman Abbot, editor of *The Outlook* and a Congregational clergyman, asserted that "in this cause every Christian Church should be a recruiting office for the Kingdom of God." Liberal Presbyterian minister John Henry Jarett of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City promoted the sale of liberty bonds as a "consecration of our money to a sacred cause." Not to be outdone, Presbyterian clergyman John MacInnis of Syracuse called "every dollar and every service given to Uncle Sam for his army a gift to missions."

After the First Crusade, President Wilson worked tirelessly for Senate ratification of the Covenant of the League of Nations. He apparently thought that the messianic task was too great for the United States alone, and that an international organization would be needed to maintain the ultimate peace we had delivered to the world. After Wilson's efforts failed, one supporter of the League loudly lamented "the greatest tragedy since the crucifixion of the Savior of Mankind."

## *World War II*

Twenty years later, despite or perhaps because of the obvious failure of the First Crusade, President Franklin D. Roosevelt preached another. In December 1940 he delivered his "arsenal of democracy speech." Less than a month later, in January 1941, he announced a crusade for the Four Freedoms:

"In future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world.

"The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world.

"The third is freedom from want...everywhere in the world.

"The fourth is freedom from fear...anywhere in the world.

"This is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation."

This messianic purpose became the basis for the joint statement of principles issued by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in August 1941, even before the United States entered World War II. A month later, the Soviet Union and fourteen other nations had endorsed the Atlantic Charter. Apparently no one except Senator Robert Taft even smiled at the idea of Josef Stalin advocating freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from want and fear. Messianism seems to blind its hosts to the painfully obvious facts of totalitarianism.

At the end of World War II, the Charter of the United Nations was signed in San Francisco. Its messianic character is evident in its opening line: "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,...have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims." The salvation of succeeding generations is to be accomplished through collective political and military action. What was once to be achieved by the United States or the Anglo-Saxon race alone is now to be done collectively.

The Second Crusade ended more ignominiously than the first. Rather than establishing President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms everywhere in the world, thirty million people were killed, and Communism grew from dominion over 180,000,000 to dominion over 300,000,000. But the commitment to a messianic foreign policy continued undiminished.

## *Containment*

In 1947 two major programs were initiated: the Marshall Plan of economic aid to rebuild Europe, and the Truman Doctrine of military aid to countries threatened by Communism. In announcing his plan during a commencement address at Harvard University, Secretary of State George C. Marshall explained that "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos." The two programs, financial and military aid, have been major features of American foreign policy since World War II.

That same year, 1947, George Kennan published an anonymous article in *Foreign Affairs*, the prestigious and influential journal of the Council on Foreign Relations. The article argued for what was to become our foreign policy for the next forty years: the containment of Communism.

"It would be an exaggeration," he wrote, "to say that American behavior unassisted and alone could exercise a power of life and death over the Communist movement and bring about the early fall of Soviet power in Russia. But the United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power. For no mystical, Messianic movement – and particularly not that of the Kremlin – can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs.

"Thus the decision will really fall in large measure in this country itself. The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and

prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.

"Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear."

In Kennan's mind, and in the minds of countless foreign policy planners since 1947, both liberal and conservative, the messianic role of the United States in containing messianic Communism, while at the same time eliminating hunger, disease, and ignorance, is one that "Providence" and "history" plainly intended us to bear. This is the late twentieth century version of manifest destiny, with a twist of Hegelianism thrown in for good measure. The historian Garet Garrett summed it up this way:

"It is our turn.

"Our turn to do what?

"Our turn to assume the responsibilities of moral leadership in the world.

"Our turn to maintain a balance of power against the forces of evil everywhere – in Europe and Asia and Africa, in the Atlantic and in the Pacific, by air and by sea – evil in this case being the Russian barbarian.

"Our turn to keep the peace of the world.

"Our turn to save civilization.

"Our turn to serve mankind.

"But this is the language of empire. The Roman Empire never doubted that it was the defender of civilization. Its good intentions were peace, law and order. The Spanish Empire added salvation. The British Empire added the noble myth of the white man's burden. We have added freedom and democracy. Yet the more that may be added to it the more it is the same language still. A language of power."

## *Conclusion*

Two years after delivering his inaugural address, President Kennedy presented the commencement address at American University in Washington, D.C. He spoke the language of power, this time with a Wilsonian accent: "What kind of peace do we seek? ...not merely peace for Americans, but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time, but peace for all time."

His messianic vision was shared by President Reagan:

"The prophet Ezekiel spoke of a new age – when land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden and waste and ruined cities are now inhabited....

"Our dream, our challenge, and, yes, our mission, is to make the golden age of peace, prosperity, and brotherhood a living reality in all countries of the Middle East. Let us remember that whether we be Christian or Jew or Moslem, we are all children of Abraham, we are all children of the same God....

"If you take away the dream, you take away the power of the spirit. If you take away the belief in a greater future, you cannot explain America – that we're a people who believed there was a promised land; we were a people who believed we were chosen by God to create a greater world."

The messianic dream that the United States is a chosen nation, a nation with the mission of bringing

forth the Millennium, the golden age of peace, prosperity, and brotherhood, is a delusion of grandeur. An individual convinced that he had such a mission would either be elected Fuhrer by an equally demented populace, or confined to a rubber room. But when presidents and whole nations share the same conviction, few people see the meaning of the delusion. The mad never know they are mad.

Despite the secularization of our messianic foreign policy in the past 70 years, the recent emergence of the so-called New Right, heavily influenced by the messianic Roman State-Church, may indicate a return to the more explicit invocations of divine sanction for certain foreign policy actions. President McKinley, for example, was a novice in experiencing divine revelations compared to someone like Pat Robertson, who believes that God speaks to him and tells him what to do. Ordinarily, men who believe that God speaks to them would be humored, and perhaps confined, rather than taken seriously. But America has abandoned its Biblical moorings, and it has no way of judging the many claims of those who allege they are hearing divine voices. This appeal to revelation and guidance from sources other than the Bible is central to the whole theology of Pentecostalism, "evangelicalism," Romanism, and neo-orthodoxy. This belief in extra-biblical revelation poses a serious threat to the conduct of foreign policy and the well-being of the United States.

## ***Recessional***

*God of our fathers, known of old –*

*Lord of our far-flung battle-line*

*Beneath whose awful Hand we hold*

*Dominion over palm and pine –*

*Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet*

*Lest we forget – lest me forget!*

*The tumult and the shouting dies –*

*The Captains and the Kings depart –*

*Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,*

*An humble and a contrite heart.*

*Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,*

*Lest we forget – lest we forget!*

*Far-called, our navies melt away –*

*On dune and headland sinks the fire –*

*Lo, all our pomp of yesterday*

*Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!*

*Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,*

*Lest we forget – lest we forget!*

*If, drunk with sight of power, we loose*

*Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe –*

*Such boasting as the Gentiles use*

*Or lesser breeds without the Law –*

*Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,*

*Lest we forget – lest we forget!*

*For heathen heart that puts her trust*

*In reeking tube and iron shard –*

*All valiant dust that builds on dust,*

*And guarding calls not Thee to guard –*

*For frantic boast and foolish word,*

*Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!*

– Rudyard Kipling, 1897