

## ABSTRACT

### A Just and Sacred Warfare: The Symbiotic Relationship between American Civil Religion and The Just War Tradition

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Operating under the assumption that war is an inevitable necessity to define and defend a nation, how does humanity reconcile morality with the brutality of war? What is sought is a balance of the bloody battlefield with the moral mandates that make for a decent and well-ordered society and reconcile humanity to heaven. American Civil Religion has incorporated ideals in which a balance between brutality and morality can seemingly be achieved. I propose this set of principles operating as part of American Civil Religion is its own adaptation of just war ideology. Traditional notions of just war thinking have been distinctly interpreted and recapitulated in order to uphold the American identity. This study will explore the relationship between American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition (specifically the tenets of *jus ad bellum*) and will examine its implications on theoretical and practical levels, with particular emphasis on the rhetoric and rationale of President George W. Bush after the attacks of September 11, 2001. It will be discovered that American Civil Religion does and must incorporate principles of just war in order to appease the overarching demands of a just and sacred warfare that thereby uphold the myths and ultimately the identity of the nation.

A Just and Sacred Warfare: The Symbiotic Relationship between  
American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition

by

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A Thesis

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In his seminal work on the act of nation building and the notion of community, Benedict Anderson poses this question: “Which are we: beasts because we make war, or angels because we often seek to make it into something holy.”<sup>1</sup> In this concern, Anderson encapsulates the tension in which a nation exists and nationalism thrives. Assuming that war is an inevitable necessity to define and defend a nation’s borders and identity as a sovereign state, how does humanity reconcile morality with the brutality of war? This is a question that has confounded theologians, scholars and politicians alike for thousands of years. Ultimately what is sought is a balance of the grievous and bloody battlefield with the moral mandates that make for a decent and well-ordered society and moreover reconcile humanity to heaven.

This tension holds particular sway in American Civil Religion, which can be defined as an organic construct of values, loyalties, archetypes, myths and rituals that undergird the American experience. It is within these myths of American Civil Religion where a perception of innocence and a sense of chosenness undergird its very core and spur the nation and its citizens to uphold a carefully constructed status as champions for goodness, freedom, and justice in all matters of war and peace, be it internally within the country or externally among the other nations of the world. A definitive sense of American exceptionalism as perpetuated within the myths of the American Civil Religion

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 20.

potentially sets the viciousness of war and the superior virtue of the nation on a path of conflict; however, the civil religion has instead incorporated ideals in which a balance between brutality and morality can seemingly be achieved.

A guiding paradigm has been constructed within American Civil Religion in order to justify warring, uphold the accepted ideals of its myths, and maintain the sacredness of its identity. I propose that this facet operating as part of the American Civil Religion is its own adaptation of just war ideology. Just war thinking is not a modern or even American phenomenon, but rather it is a tradition that has evolved in the hands of thinkers for centuries to meet the demands of warring societies trying to rationalize the need for war with an innate moral imperative. What is distinctive is how the traditional principles of just war have been interpreted and recapitulated in order to best uphold the American identity. The intended result of this study is to show that the American Civil Religion does and must incorporate principles of just war in order to appease the overarching demands of a just and sacred warfare that thereby uphold the myths and ultimately the identity of the nation.

### *Chapter Descriptions*

The relationship between the Just War Tradition and American Civil Religion will be explored by offering an examination of the nature of the American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition as separate entities, an assessment of how they interplay, and an evaluation of how this relationship practically manifests itself through President George W. Bush specifically after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The second chapter of this thesis will provide a concise review of the literature on the matter. It will be shown that although there is much scholarship on the matters of civil religion, the Just

War Tradition, and also studies on the person and rhetoric of George W. Bush, no current scholarship has identified any interplay between these concepts. Chapter Three will delve into the nature of the association between these ideals and will discuss the social implications of war and how American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition are intertwined. The historical precedent for this relationship will further be considered. Particular attention will be given to seeing just how just war ideals play into the myths of American Civil Religion, serving as a device which keeps morality in check, lending transcendence to its cause, and upholding the sacredness of the nation state. Chapter Four will discuss the development of a unique American reinterpretation of specific principles of the Just War Tradition. In Chapter Five, the blending of just war ideology and the American Civil Religion will be practically considered through the rhetoric and rationale of President George W. Bush after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Lastly, the study will conclude with implications for further scholarship and future considerations regarding the overarching civil religious narrative in the United States.

#### *Specific Constraints on this Study*

In order to preserve the interdisciplinary approach to this thesis, a few constraints were established. This assures the research remained focused upon the central task of exploring the relationship between American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition. It must first be stated that this paper is not to be perceived as an attempt to determine if any of the historical battles of the United States, specifically the war on terrorism and/or the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, are just wars, nor does it seek to evaluate or make any claims regarding the validity of either action. Much of what has been said up to this point regarding just war throughout American history (particularly

the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan under Bush) has been done from a theological or ethical perspective. These attempts have sought to reconcile these dealings to the creeds of the Christian church or to pass judgment whether the war on terrorism can be considered a just war. In my research, I have taken great caution to focus specifically on sources that instead offer insight into when and how just war principles were utilized to justify Bush's military actions post September 11th to the American public.

Secondly, when focusing on the Just War Tradition, I will only deal with the elements of *jus ad bellum*, or right to war. These principles pertain only with those principles of consideration to make when considering when to go to war, and they will be further explored in the review of literature. While our argument could certainly be expanded and applied to the planks of *jus in bellum* (justice in war) and the *jus post bellum* (justice after war), inclusion of these tenets into our discussion could not be contained within the scope of a thesis alone.

It must also be clarified that this thesis is not a study on the personal faith of George W. Bush or how religion impacted his politics. While this is a fascinating topic that has been the subject of countless volumes of scholarship, I will not blur the line between civil religion and Christianity, nor will I delve into how Bush's personal faith was expressed in his rhetoric. More elaboration on the distinction between civil religious discourse and religious rhetoric will be offered within Chapter Five's discussion on the relationship between American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition in Bush's public rationale.

### *Clarification of Terms*

While a more comprehensive discussion on the complexities surrounding an authoritative definition of civil religion will occur in Chapter Two, let us first establish a general definition of American Civil Religion. I will assume that American Civil Religion is an organic construct of values, loyalties, archetypes, myths and rituals that undergird the American experience. American Civil Religion should not be simply equated with patriotism or nationalism but rather should be seen as an overarching narrative that unites Americans under a common purpose and collective identity. To prevent redundancy, I will adopt the abbreviation of ACR when discussing American Civil Religion. Additionally, discussion regarding the Just War Tradition will be abbreviated JWT and will deal solely with the traditional planks of *jus ad bellum*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Literature

A plethora of materials exists on the topics of the Just War Tradition and American Civil Religion, spanning across an array of academic disciplines such as philosophy, ethics, religion, political science, history, and sociology. Still, there appears to be no significant scholarship linking the ideas of JWT and ACR, much less exploring any practical implications of an association between the two. Therefore, some of the value of this thesis can be found in its unique contribution to our understanding of both fields. Because there are no specific studies discussing this association, it will be necessary to evaluate these notions separately before identifying the relationship and drawing valuable observations about its prevalence. The understanding we gain by exploring these fields as individual parts will provide a solid rational framework for comprehending how they operate as a cohesive whole.

#### *Civil Religion*

Many academics from a variety of disciplines have weighed in and attempted to place their finger on the phenomena of civil religion and in particular ACR; however the general consensus for the comprehensive scholar of civil religion is that no firm definition has or can be articulated to fully encapsulate the ideal. The term civil religion was first coined by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau within his work *The*

*Social Contract*.<sup>1</sup> Rousseau outlines several characteristics of what he deems as a civil religion that pervades the American landscape. Civil religion according to Rousseau possesses the assumption of the existence of God, the afterlife, the reward and punishment of good and evil, and the omission of religious intolerance. A populace marked by this civil religion accepts (whether consciously enumerated or intuitively) these four dogmas as the rationale supporting a true civilized society. He further proposes four distinctions regarding the possible nature of a civil religion's being and function within American society but ultimately rejects each as inaccurate or not entirely conclusive. For Rousseau, a flourishing civil religion is not and cannot be: 1) purely politics, 2) purely Christianity, 3) a corrupted Christianity that contests a sovereign's claim to undivided political authority, 4) a monotheistic theocracy that conquers and either proselytizes or commits genocide, or 5) a benign theocracy of a tolerant, national religion that is a product purely of enlightenment principles. While Rousseau respectfully looks to Protestantism for guidance in expounding and developing the concept, he does clarify that Christianity can and should not be synthesized into American Civil Religion.

Sociologist Robert Bellah brought life to the concept of civil religion in contemporary scholarship and renewed a fiery discussion on its role in American civic life. In his pivotal article "Civil Religion in America" published in 1967, and further in his work *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah coins the term civil religion to be the religious sense of each individual, and ultimately each society, that seeks to provide interpretation and significance to reality as citizens and as a nation and is expressed in collectively held

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1913).

beliefs, symbols and rituals. Bellah contends that the traditional insistence on separation of church and state has not excluded the political arena from incorporating a religious dimension and instead allows for this civil religion to lend transcendence to the nation state's identity and actions.<sup>2 3</sup> The important distinction is also made that although rhetoric speaks of God and evokes Biblical imagery, it is clearly not itself Christianity. In addition, he evokes the speeches of such figures as Lincoln to show that one must simply be moral and not even religious, further delineating civil religion from Christianity or any institutionalized, state-sponsored faith.

As part of the introduction to their celebrated anthology of essays entitled *American Civil Religion*, Russell Richey and Donald Jones thoroughly elaborates on five culturally and scholarly prevalent interpretations of civil religion.<sup>4</sup> These definitions of civil religion include the following: a folk religion derived from the people's way of life; a transcendent universal religion of the nation that reigns over the people as the overarching creed of the state; religious nationalism where the nation is worshipped as sovereign and patriotism abounds; a democratic faith wherein ideals such as democracy, justice and freedom are worshipped as human ideals; or a Protestant civic piety, where distinctly Protestant influenced ideals such as individualism, work ethic, pragmatism, a missional mandate, and to some degrees a sense of exceptionalism are celebrated as pivotal expressions of devotion to the nation state. As Bellah before them, Richey and

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<sup>2</sup> Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96, No. 1 (Winter 1967): 1-21.

<sup>3</sup> Robert N Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Richey, Russell E. and Donald G. Jones, eds. *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974).

Jones note the areligious disposition of civil religion and propose that ACR is the religious study that non-religious scholars and students could finally revel in.

William Herberg and Martin Marty both elaborate on the organic nature of civil religion and espouse views that would be considered folk religion under Richey and Jones' typology. Herberg embraces the term civic religion and determines that this it is a religion of validation for the American ways of life, not a faith system of denunciation on society.<sup>5</sup> In essence Herberg's civic religion is an expression of the ideas, values and beliefs of the culture, not an entity that wishes to dictate what is normative for the society. Marty further emphasizes that civil religion is not making a claim to exclusivity, for it is not the only religion in a society nor are its ideals the sole means to be a civil citizen.<sup>6</sup> His interpretation allows for one to both ascribe to civil religion and to his or her own belief system, i.e. Christianity. Because Herberg and Marty align with an organic, way of life civil religion, the concept does not remain static, allowing it to evolve, constantly shifting to incorporate culture and accurately express society.

This contention goes on to set the foundation for Marty's delineation of two sorts of civil religion that he labels as the priestly and prophetic modes. The priestly variety is most notably characterized by its operation under a deity that is easily fused with the gods and creeds of traditional faiths and its vocal celebration of the nation state and the American identity. Conversely, the prophetic mode is more humanistic in nature, calling

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<sup>5</sup> Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What Is It and Whence It Comes," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 77.

<sup>6</sup> Martin E, Marty, "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 139-140.

individuals to action, and placing accountability in the hands of the community. The deity is not necessarily eradicated from the prophetic civil religion but rather minimized, with particular concern paid to making sure the nation state does not become a god. Marty's priestly kind evokes similarities with his predecessor, renowned sociologist Emile Durkheim, who Bellah once referred to as the high priest of civil religion. Durkheim acknowledges that patriotism is the civil religion of modernity, however he urges a shift to focus instead on humanity and the action and rights inherent to the individual rather than the nation state, similar to what Marty upholds as priestly.<sup>7</sup> Where Marty departs from Durkheim is in Durkheim's urging for a nation to move beyond a tribal and national affiliation and align itself with a collective, transcendent conscience of humanity, which he advocates is the higher ideal. Marty's discussion of the priestly and prophetic harbors both negative and positive features to their respective types of civil religion, but the significance of Marty's argument lies in his assessment that American Civil Religion inhabits a tension between a priestly and a prophetic expression, depending upon political and civil leadership and cultural phenomenon.

Discussion of ACR cannot occur without remarking on the stories and myths that shaped the founding of the nation and underpin the American identity, missional purpose and overarching ethos of the American people. Throughout the chapters of *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah asserts that myth is not necessarily a story that isn't true, but rather a story that provides transcendence to cause and identity that helps individuals grapple with

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<sup>7</sup> Robert N. Bellah, ed., *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), x.

the significance of a nation's history and purpose.<sup>8</sup> Myths of origin are integral to any religion because they establish the literal and figurative basis of a nation, set precedence for traditional motifs and symbols of expression in public life, and inevitably becomes the hallowed, virginal spirit in which it seeks to recapture and recapitulate into its modern existence. Quickly Bellah offers that there is not a solitary myth of America's beginning, but rather an intricate, multidimensional narrative that interweaves several tales of genesis and carries a tension inherent with the varied perspectives of its storytellers.

In his article "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church'", Sidney Meade expounds on G.K. Chesterton's infamous answer to why America is a peculiar people with a specific calling among the nations of the world.<sup>9</sup> The myths of the ACR were derived, developed and ingrained into the American conscience through speeches and correspondence from political leaders, preachers, and court opinions written by judges seeking to interpret the intent of the founding fathers and establish precedent. Of special interest in the Meade article is his evaluation of the oral traditions of the myths, particularly in the hands of American clergy. Bellah and Meade contend because these myths have become religious in nature, both in the rhetoric surrounding their delivery and in the actual content of the story itself, the nation of America has become a sacred institution, and an overarching sense of "chosenness" has been entrenched into its citizens and has taken on a mythical existence of its own. Meade firmly rejects Herberg's insistence that civil religion is merely the American way of life and instead sees civil religion as upholding and

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<sup>8</sup> Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Sidney E. Mead, "The 'Nation with the Soul of a Church'," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 64.

perpetuating the morality and social order while viewing myth as a means of accountability.

Richard Hughes takes to heart Bellah's notion of a multifaceted mythical nature to America's existence, writing the preeminent work on the myths enshrined in the American Civil Religion entitled *Myths America Lives By*. Hughes deftly enumerates several of the myths that have taken hold in America history and those which still are perpetuated today.<sup>10</sup> Myths discussed include the Chosen Nation, Nature's Nation, Christian Nation, Millennial Nation, American Capitalism, and the Innocent Nation. Designating an individual chapter to each myth, Hughes concisely frames each one in its historical context, gives a commentary as to how the myth has informed the beliefs, symbols, and rituals of the American Civil Religion, and then offers a thoughtful critique on the repercussions the myths has in practical application to such arenas as domestic and foreign policy and race relations. Hughes discerns that each myth is not entirely fictitious or useless (with the exception of the Innocent Nation myth for which he cannot find any redemptive quality), but instead advocates a sort of myths in moderation approach, allowing the stories to remind Americans of their responsibilities as good citizens and to spur on reevaluation of the nation's values.

### *Just War*

It must be established that what is commonly referred to as "Just War Theory" is a misnomer of sorts, for the term "theory" suggests a static set of principles or comprehensive philosophy that is universally applied to explain a phenomenon or a fixed

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<sup>10</sup> Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

paradigm in which we may evaluate, measure and justify particular practices and actions. Instead, scholars are ever increasingly latching on to the recognition of a Just War Tradition, a term that accommodates the notion that just war continues to adapt and be honed to address the new challenges that modern warfare presents, such as terrorism, non-state actors, preemptive strikes, nuclear warfare, and the exponentially increasing growth and development in the arenas of globalism and international law. Furthermore, to assume just war as static and scientific would not allow us to recognize that these ideals can be and are reconsidered and recapitulated in light of the uniqueness of situations present in each culture and period of history, which therefore would not allow for its synthesis into ACR.

Additionally, by casting aside the delineation of just war as a theory, the tendency of treating just war ideology as merely a check list of actions utilized to determine if all the “proper” factors exist to deem a war just is significantly marginalized. Many modern just war scholars are growing ever vocal in their insistence that the Just War Tradition has been stripped of its spirit by the hands of crafty rulers seeking to give moral rationale through conditional provisions to pacify his or her constituency. Instead, just war must return to its original intent as considerable ideals which should serve as a determinant to warfare, rather than a moral license to ensue battle. Daniel Maguire places particular blame on those who have abused just war theory by stating, “The mischief of the ‘just war theory’ was that by putting the word *war* alongside the word *just*, it baptized war, making it seem rational and moral and good as long as certain rules are observed. It

helped to rationalize war.”<sup>11</sup> Maguire goes on to say that, “The ‘just war theory’ is the most common tool for deciding when a war is just...noble effort that it was, ‘just war’ theory’s main sin was its contribution to normalizing war, making war seem morally manageable and almost routine.”<sup>12</sup>

Andrew Fiala also takes issue with the hijacking of the concept by musing, “The just war theory has been described as an effort to make war morally possible. But the aim of the just war theory should not be to make war morally possible, but rather, to wonder whether war is morally possible.”<sup>13</sup> Fiala even goes so far in his rejection of just war as theory by labeling it instead as “The Just War Myth”, holding no pretense that war will ever be entirely moral:

If we believe that wars can be just-or that the wars we fight are always just-and if we believe the rhetoric of justification that politicians use in advocating war, then we will be more likely to go to war. And once we go to war, our love of country and our concern for our citizen-soldiers makes it that much more difficult to achieve the critical distance that would allow us to evaluate the justice of the war.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the ever evolving nature of the JWT, suffice it to say that countless volumes have been written by scholars through the centuries to address unique matters concerning just war in their time. In accordance with the scope of this thesis, I will provide an overview of the scholarship considered essential to the Just War Tradition, along with modern scholarship that speaks to contemporary issues of just war, with particular

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel C. Maguire, *The Horrors We Bless: Rethinking the Just-War Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Fiala, *The Just War Myth: The Moral Illusions of War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), x.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

pertinence to its relationship with the American Civil Religion. Additionally, the Just War Tradition is inclusive of three separate realms of principles: *jus ad bellum* or determining the right to wage war; *jus in bellum* which deals with proper behavior while engaged in war, and *jus post bellum*, which governs behavior in ending warfare. For the scope of this study, I will concentrate solely upon the principles of *jus ad bellum*.

A common contemporary misconception of just war thought is that it is strictly a product of a Judeo-Christian background. Although the JWT developed significantly through the writings of Christian thinkers, just war goes back even further to the classical thinkers who developed these ideas alongside the natural law traditions. It is the historian Thucydides who first addresses the moral implications of warfare in his commentary of the Greek armed battles, particularly that of the Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens. Thucydides is first to address issues of proper initiation and right intention as tempering what he considers proper warfare. Plato also takes heart with the warring Greeks, albeit the fundamental jest of the bulk of his writings do not touch war at all. He did however declare that a well ordered city shall be a priority and firmly advocates that peace brought on by the absence of war and manipulated authority is the foundational principle of such a noble social pursuit. Plato however cannot be considered a forerunner for pacifism, for he also believes that the responsible, peaceful city is at all times vigilant and ready for war.

Augustine's reference to morality and the Church in relations to war and peace introduces the necessity for a moral imperative that guides warfare by particularly asserting that love of neighbor should serve as a temperance and also motivation to the use of force. Thomas Aquinas within the *Summa Theologica* is responsible for providing

a clear delineation of the three principles of legitimate authority, just cause, and rightful intention that first gave structure to a particular ideology of just war.<sup>15</sup> Francisco de Vitoria later utilizes these three principles within his detailed justification regarding the Spanish treatment of the Indians and makes a significant contribution to the ideals of just cause and rightful intention, radically asserting that the Church does not have proper authority, right intention, or just cause to thrust Christianity by way of the sword, utilizing spiritual justification for taking land, property, and life.<sup>16</sup> It is Grotius, however, who purposefully sets out to establish a full rationale of just war by identifying the very tenets and conditions that a just war operation must embody. These criteria include: just cause for going to war, right intention in fighting, the last resort after all non-violent methods have been exhausted, victory must be possible, and peace must be established after the war is over.<sup>17</sup>

Grotius' five criteria have evolved into the most commonly held planks of *jus ad bellum* that just war scholars use to commence their discussion on just war theory in today's ethno-political climate. These contentions are succinctly summarized in Oxford scholar Andrew Goddard's primer on just war entitled *When Is War Justified?*. Goddard presents the five universally asserted principles by addressing three questions that arise

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/> (accessed June 2, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Francisco de Vitoria, *De Indis et De Ivre Belli Relectiones*, (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), <http://www.heinonline.org> (accessed November 1, 2009), 149.

<sup>17</sup> James W. Skillen, *With or Against the World? America's Role Among the Nations* (Lanham: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2005), 3.

when considering warfare: Why, When, and Who?<sup>18 19</sup> In asking the question of why shall war be waged, just war ideology begs that two considerations be paid: just cause and right intention. Just causes include protecting national sovereignty, defending human rights, or withstanding aggressing. Right intention demands that war not be propelled by pride or greed and must bear the overarching motive of peace and charity. Inquiring of when battle should commence, one must ponder if war is an absolute last resort and if the subsequent actions of war will have a high probability of success. Lastly, one must consider the status of the “who”-the proper or legitimate authority- to determine if war can be waged. It is these five concepts of *jus ad bellum*- just cause, right intention, last resort, high probability of success, and legitimate authority- that temper the American Civil Religion’s observance of the sacrament of war, guarding the sacredness of its myths and becoming the principles by which the nation holds itself accountable to in order to justify its actions to the American people.

*The Relationship between Just War and Civil Religion as Exhibited by George W. Bush*

George W. Bush has prompted volumes of literature on his person and his politics. In consideration of the more pointed scope of a thesis, I have made an earnest attempt to focus my consideration of literature on George W. Bush to those sources that address the following: 1) George W. Bush’s attempts to justify the war on terrorism, 2) Bush’s

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<sup>18</sup> There is some debate as to what principles are encapsulated under the heading of *jus in bellum*, the basis on which we evaluate the right to wage war. Most scholars consistently adhere to five basic principles for “pre-war” behavior, with some debating a sixth and possible seventh plank in the argument. Some scholars try to include the ideals of proportionality and just means under *jus ad bellum*, while some include it within *jus in bellum*. However, for the sake of this paper, I will adopt the designation of both as strictly principles of *jus in bellum*.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Goddard, *When Is War Justified?* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2003).

relationship with civil religion, 3) presidential rhetoric and 4) insight into the construction of his discourse surrounding the days proceeding September 11, 2001. Because of these restraints, I do not rely on works on Bush's personal faith or those specifically analyzing his foreign and/or domestic policy.<sup>20</sup>

The ideas of civil religion and just war in relationship with each other yield fascinating results in their practical application in American political life, which can be illustrated in the discourse of President Bush in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Perhaps the most notable work that addresses the just war element of these concerns is Jean Bethke Elshtain's highly contentious *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*.<sup>21</sup> In constructing her argument on the just war, Elshtain adopts an Augustinian approach emphasizing Christian charity towards one neighbor, acknowledging that both justice and force are not fundamentally incompatible with each other, for it is the principles of Just War Tradition that provide restraint and balance to each. Building on the idea of a civic society as the Augustinian ideal which must be protected, Elshtain sees America as responsible for carrying out just war against terrorism as necessary to uphold and cultivate this way of life throughout mankind, regardless to whether U.S. interference is desired. Elshtain argues that because there is no international body to guarantee the rights of individuals and societies, America is obligated to fill the vacuum and serve as guarantor, which for Elshtain is its God given mandate. In a world of numerous factions of NGOs trying to intervene in the

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<sup>20</sup> One work, Stephen Mansfield's *The Faith of George W. Bush* was included within the bibliography because of its discussion of Scripture passages within Bush's war rhetoric that are often utilized in other examples of presidential civil religious discourse.

<sup>21</sup> Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.

processes of world affairs, American efforts should be embraced as a prophetic and harmonious voice bringing much needed accountability. In her chapter regarding American power and responsibility, Elshtain mentions that the world is moving towards democracy and a universalizing of human rights; however she fails to outline whether this phenomenon takes place independently of American influence or if it is the political dominance of the U.S. that has caused this trend to occur.

Additionally, *Just War on Terrorism* makes the argument that the difference between a holy war and a just war is the ideal of limits; however she does not emphasize limits to U.S. military actions after Sept 11. Although she adheres to the conventional five planks of *jus ad bellum*, Elshtain's interpretation of last resort departs from the normative notion that all diplomatic efforts must be exhausted before war may commence. Instead she merely demands that other options are explored only to the point where a general consensus can be reached that success is not imminent in curbing the threat by diplomacy alone. This subjectivity, coupled with her Augustinian ideal of American motives regarding expansion and diplomacy has drawn the ire of several scholars, most notably Stanley Hauerwas, who with Paul Griffiths level a scathing rebuke of Elshtain's work as naïvely idealistic, perpetuating a dangerous exceptionalism in the application of the Just War Tradition in America.<sup>22</sup>

In 2004, Manfred Brocker, a German professor of Political Studies at the Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and at the University of Politics in Munich, published an article for the *Journal of Political Science* on the religious nature of President Bush's discourse. In the article entitled "Civil Religion, Fundamentalism, and the Politics and Policies of George W.

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<sup>22</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Paul J. Griffiths, "War, Peace & Jean Bethke Elshtain: An Exchange," *First Things* (October, 1 2003): 41-44.

Bush”, Brocker debunks the common assumption among foreign scholars and politicians that Bush’s rhetoric used to justify the military action in response to September 11, 2001 was merely an exercise of his Christian fundamentalist faith.<sup>23</sup> Rather, Brocker counters, this discourse was civil religious in nature, serving first and foremost a political function. This civil religious rhetoric was nothing unusual to the American political arena, as there exists a long historical precedence of such rhetoric by the office of the President. Nor, according to Brocker’s study, did Bush’s rhetoric fit the sociological characteristics of religious fundamentalism. Brocker’s work offers an enlightening foreign or “outsider” prospective to the lively discussion surrounding Bush and religion and is quite refreshing in its thorough analysis of fundamentalism and civil religion as separate and distinct entities.

Robert Ivie, Professor of American Studies & Communication and Culture at the University of Indiana, has been quite prolific on the topic of Bush’s wartime rhetoric. As early as 1980, Ivie had written on the rhetoric utilized in justifying American wars.<sup>24</sup> Ivie contends that the language of victimization infiltrates American political discourse, seeking to demonize the enemy and thereby providing the impetus for military action.<sup>25</sup> According to Ivie, this is innate within the character of democracy, particularly one

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<sup>23</sup> Manfred Brocker, “Civil Religion, Fundamentalism, and the Politics and Policies of George W. Bush,” *Journal of Political Science* 32 (January 2004): 95-124.

<sup>24</sup> Robert L. Ivie, "Images of Savagery in American Justifications For War", *Communication Monographs* 47, no. 4 (November 1980): 279-294.

<sup>25</sup> Robert L. Ivie, “Fighting Terror By Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, No. 2 (2007): 221-248.

wrapped in the exceptionalism of the American nation state.<sup>26</sup> Where he becomes problematic is in his treatment of Bush's religious rhetoric. Ivie does not mince words in his condemnation of Bush and his rhetoric surrounding the terrorist acts of September 11. Where Brocker would most certainly diverge from Ivie is when Ivie fervently contends that Bush's rhetoric is strictly appealing to a Christian base, and that he was waging a Christian war, crusading against the enemies of God.<sup>27</sup> Ivie sees Bush's discourse as scrupulous political strategy, carefully crafted to appeal to a Christian conservative audience on the basis of morality. Although this failure to differentiate Bush's personal faith and civil religion is problematic and faulty, Ivie's considerable insight on the language of victimization and the consequences of American exceptionalism make his work invaluable to this study.

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<sup>26</sup> Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, "Hunting the Devil: Democracy's Rhetorical Impulse to War," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37 (December 2007): 580-598.

<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Ivie, "The Rhetoric of Bush's War on Evil." *K.B. Journal* 1, no. 1 (2004). <http://www.kbjournal.org/nextphase> (accessed November 4, 2011).

## CHAPTER THREE

### A Budding Relationship Between Just War and Civil Religion

Warfare is unfortunately inevitable in the life of a nation state; however, through its waging, a society finds some semblance of cohesion and meaning. It is in this process of making sense of American conflicts that we see a symbiotic relationship form between the Just War Tradition and American Civil Religion. What we will discover is that the myths of the ACR such as that of Nature's nation and a sense of chosenness as God's people grew out of the justifications of its battles. Specifically, we will see that these myths were derived from this need to justify the wars that were integral to the country's settlement such as King Philip's War and American Revolution. These mythical narratives of American history enforce the American identity and sustain its continued purpose of spreading democracy.

#### *A Social Imperative to Sacrilize Warfare*

The act of war is a tragic, yet inevitable reality that all must face as members of society. How a nation reconciles war with its identity is a fascinating exploration into the ethos of the society that inevitably leads to civil religion to provide interpretation and understanding. Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle go so far as to assert that the notion of a civil religion is inextricably intertwined with war, for according to Marvin and Ingle,

civil religion is “patriotic piety” that serves the ends of declaring “who can kill and what for, how boundaries are formed, and what national identity is”.<sup>1</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich also echos this sentiment in her outright declaration that, “In fact, every aspect of the American Civil Religion has been shaped by, and forged in, the experience of war”.<sup>2</sup>

The act of war has been thoroughly romanticized, eulogized, and mythologized to such a degree that concepts of battle and bloodshed are tightly enmeshed within grandiose imaginings of Trojan horses, invincible warriors donning paint, and magnificent historical tales of bravery.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, as Daniel Maguire demonstrates, “War is so sown into the sinews of our cultural imagination that it crops up in the gentlest of contexts”<sup>4</sup>, for “[w]ith remarkable success, however, the disguisers and baptizers of war have framed it in such nontoxic tones...that we use it in all sorts of innocent and lovely contexts: ‘the war on poverty’, ‘the war on cancer,’ ‘the war on illiteracy,’ and so forth”<sup>5</sup>. Both these fantastical ideals and pedestrian adaptations of the term “war” have left us devoid of a sociological sense of warfare. Ehrenreich, in her work that explores the depth and complexity of the blood rites, provides a succinct, yet functional description of the nature of war by saying that “war is a means, however risky, by which

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<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997), 220.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Fiala, *The Just War Myth: The Moral Illusions of War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel C. Maguire, *The Horrors We Bless: Rethinking the Just-War Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

men seek to advance their collective interest and improve their lives”.<sup>6</sup> Maguire takes a very harsh view of war, deeming it socialized slaughter, and declaring: “People like to find settled, ritualized ways of doing things; and that’s what we do when we engage in the business of socialized slaughter.”<sup>7 8</sup>

Both Ehrenreich and Maguire properly highlight that war can never be divorced from its collective narrative. Furthermore, the act of war gives added cohesion to the social structure, unifying a community in an intense emotional bond and identity that cannot be replicated under any other context.<sup>9</sup> W. Lloyd Warner attributes much of this unity in times of war to the celebration of common symbols and goes on to make the following observation:

A common hate of a common enemy, when organized in community activities to express this basic emotion, provides the most powerful mechanism to energize the lives of the towns and to strengthen their feelings of unity. Those who believe that a war’s hatreds can bring only evil to psychic life might well ponder the therapeutic and satisfying effects on the minds of people who turn their once private hatreds into social ones and join their townsmen and countrymen in the feeling of sharing this basic emotion in common symbols.

The German term *Siegetrunkenheit* refers to the act of getting drunk on war, appealing to the notion that warfare provides “immersion in a cause that is greater than yourself”, seemingly suspending reality in order to participate in the sheer intensity and

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<sup>6</sup> Ehrenreich, 8

<sup>7</sup> Maguire, 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> W Lloyd Warner, “An American Sacred Ceremony” in *American Civil Religion*, edited by Donald G. Jones and Russell E. Richey (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 103.

emotionalism that only such an experience may impart.<sup>10</sup> Ehrenreich elaborates on the notion of unity in war and the necessity of this experience to the health of the society by taking a passage from Hegel: “In times of peace civil life expands more and more, all the different spheres settle down, and in the long run men sink into corruption, their particularities become more and more fixed and ossified. But health depends upon the unity of the body, and if the parts harden, death occurs.”<sup>11</sup>

The uniqueness of the experience of a community in times of battle is held in such high regard, that a sense of the sacred has been made manifest in the act of war, particularly within the rise of the nation state. Ehrenreich labels this process as the “democratization of glory”, the notion that in a democratic society, all citizens are urged to participate and therefore share in the glory that used to only lie with the warriors and elites.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, “[i]n the age of nationalism, patriotic ceremonies began to be designed, consciously or not, to give civilians the feeling that they, too, constituted a kind of ‘army’, united by common danger and bonded by rhythmic activities analogous to the drill.”<sup>13</sup> Holding war as sacred within a society also leads to the notion of sacrifice of individual human life for the sake of the society and a deific immortality that is perpetuated through the legacy of one that makes such sacrifice. It is this potential to be enshrined throughout history among one’s countrymen that lends willingness and a sense

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<sup>10</sup> Maguire, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Taken from Carl J. Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, (New York: Modern Library, 1953), 322, and quoted by Ehrenreich, 202.

<sup>12</sup> Ehrenreich, 190.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

of excitement to lay down one's life for the sake of the country. "For what is really true in any community is what its members can agree is worth killing for, or what they can be compelled to sacrifice their lives for. The sacred is thus easily recognized."<sup>14</sup>

The identity and cohesiveness of a society is intertwined with its warring behavior, and now that its members are giving their lives in battle for the glory of their legacy and of the nation, the stakes are even higher. A safeguard must be in place to make sure that the bloodshed is not in vain, a device of self-preservation of sorts, for the actions of war cannot be vile and futile, thereby tainting the nature of the sacrifice. Andrew Fiala best captures this sense of urgency to uphold goodness and intrinsic value to bloodshed: "Therefore, for many who have fought, for many who love those who fight, and for the rest of us who indirectly support the war effort, war simply must be just. It is impossible to imagine that we could be sacrificing our lives, our treasure, and our values for a false ideal." It is in this imperative that the ideals of the JWT were birthed, a fervent attempt to establish "what set of killing rules we will submit to".<sup>15</sup> Further, this need to sanctify our warring sustains the desire of a society to create the myths by which America lives.

#### *The Beginnings of the Relationship Between ACR and JWT*

A proper understanding of the term myth and its essence in interpreting identity is paramount to a thorough study of the American Civil Religion. This discussion cannot be considered comprehensive without remarking on the stories or myths that shaped the

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<sup>14</sup> Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, "Blood Sacrifice and the Nation", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 4. (Winter 1996) : 769.

<sup>15</sup> Marvin and Ingle, *Totem Rituals and the American Flag*, 313.

founding of the nation and underpin the American identity, missional purpose and overarching ethos of the American people. Within the chapters of *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah discusses that myth is not necessarily a story that is not true, but rather a story that provides transcendence to cause and identity that helps individuals grapple with the significance of a nation's history and purpose:

Myth does not attempt to describe reality; that is the job of science. Myth seeks rather to transfigure reality so that it provides moral and spiritual meaning to individuals or societies.<sup>16</sup>

Myths of origin are integral to civil religion because they establish the literal and figurative basis of a nation, set precedence for traditional motifs and symbols of expression in public life, and inevitably become the hallowed, virginal spirit in which it seeks to recapture and recapitulate into its modern existence. Bellah offers that there is not a solitary myth of America's beginning, but rather an intricate, multidimensional narrative that interweaves several tales of genesis and carries a tension inherent with the varied perspectives of its storytellers.

A study on this particular subject cannot be made without mention of Richard Hughes' book *Myths America Lives By*. Hughes takes to heart Bellah's notion of a multifaceted mythical nature and enumerates several of the myths that have taken hold in American history and those which are still perpetuated today. Hughes does an exceptional job in outlying the predominant myths that have arisen in the course of American history. He offers valuable critics concerning their impact on American society by advocating a sort of myths in moderation approach, allowing the stories to remind Americans of their responsibilities as good citizens and to spur on reevaluation of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 3.

the nation's values. For the purpose of this study, I will not delve into each myth in the same manner Hughes does in his work (to do so would be redundant) but will seek to highlight how the myths of chosenness and Nature's Nation set the framework in which we can see the American Just War Tradition and all subsequent myths being shaped and formed.

Where myths are most useful in the life of a nation state is in their ability to provide a unified social understanding to history and collective identity. The narratives that are woven together and passed to each generation make history relevant and purpose poignant. A myth's ideals have been integrated into mainstream society in such a way that it subconsciously enforces the American way of life; its observance has become reflexive rather than consciously considered. Inevitably, these myths arise out of the imperative to morally justify past actions, and most notably, the brutality of warfare. As these stories of our history are told to successive generations, the original intentions and atrocities of war are usually glossed over and replaced by carefully constructed justifications and the subsequent heroes that served the great moral cause. "How wars are remembered can be just as important as how they were fought and first described," Jill Lepore argues in her book, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*.<sup>17</sup> Justifying and interpreting war enables Americans of both the past and present to create for themselves the identity that best suits their political needs and one that they are most comfortable with.

I would then suggest that just war rationale and the myths of America are intricately intertwined, where the narratives that give the U.S. its purpose and identity are

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<sup>17</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), x-xi.

bred out of socio-political attempts to justify its warring, providing validation for the unique cultural demands that arise throughout the governing of the nation state. Perhaps the most adequate description of this relationship is that of the biological concept of symbiosis, where completely different organisms live together in such close physical proximity that they feed off each other and foster the others' growth and continued maintenance. To apply the adjective "symbiotic" to relations between just war principles and the myths of ACR implies that each of these entities, while often perceived as overlapping or intertwined, are separate notions with individual functions, but yet they exist so closely together that they strengthen and supply the other with the impetus to define and develop its healthy function within a society. Fiala hints at this dynamic by stating that "[r]eligious and political myths succeed when they satisfy our need to enjoy solidarity with others and when they fulfill our desire for a coherent story that provides life with meaning...just war...gives meaning to war and it allows us to believe that war fits within our religions and moral horizons."<sup>18</sup>

Just how was this symbiotic relationship developed and matured in the history of the U.S.? To answer this question, one must look to the imperative of chosenness and the emphasis of natural law and enlightenment principles that were central to the founding of America. The origins of the country are steeped in a unique melding of reason and religion. Europe's religious wars, so fresh in the minds of the colonists, gave the Enlightenment its biggest shot in the arm, for many saw an embrace of rationality over religion to be the antidote for the contentious, bloody battles that were throwing their societies into disorder. Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence propose that "creative

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<sup>18</sup> Fiala, 17.

interplay with the moderate traditions of Lockean liberalism, Enlightenment egalitarianism, and common-law definitions of political rights” led to the success of the American Revolution.<sup>19</sup> An appeal to reason and an innocuous deism was birthed out of a desire for inclusivity and an overarching spirit of harmony, unity, and toleration that would stand contrary to the perceived status quo of Britain. Thomas Jefferson was the most significant advocate of a more deistic approach, for it was his contention that a decent and well ordered society (along with true religion) could only exist where religion was practiced with minimal governmental restraint. “For Jefferson, God and true faith did not need official state religion; rather, the best religion flourished in an atmosphere of freedom and tolerance.”<sup>20</sup> It was vital for Jefferson that the structure of government did not rely on the Church for its authority, but rather rested upon a more universal mandate. Although the more deistic, Jeffersonian terms of “Nature and Nature’s God” left a sense of ambiguity in the Declaration of Independence, the prevailing Christian leanings of society’s political and spiritual leaders were quick to come along and identify who exactly they perceived “Nature’s God” to be.

Understanding the intermingling of reason and religion to justify America’s wars and to construct its myths demands that one examine the arguments of English philosopher John Locke. Locke in his *Second Treatise on Government* steeps the very identity of America in the notions of natural law. Even further, Locke attributes natural law in the concept of property rights to be dependent upon labor for its intrinsic value.

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 58.

<sup>20</sup> Garrett Ward Shelton, *Jefferson & Ataturk: Political Philosophies* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 52.

“It is labor then which puts the greatest part of value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything.”<sup>21</sup> For Locke and those that subscribe to the myth of Nature’s Nation, it is through the labor of man that nature is redeemed and brought into proper order:

God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational, (and labour was to be his title to it;) not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.<sup>22</sup>

Locke further elaborates:

[a]nd hence subduing or cultivating the earth, and having dominion, we see are joined together. The one gave title to the other. So that God, by commanding to subdue, gave authority so far to appropriate...<sup>23</sup>

Hence, it is this emphasis on labor and natural law that makes America distinct and pure, for the essence of the American experiment is the very spirit in which God has designed to reign over all of his creation. As Locke surmised: “Thus, in the beginning all the world was America....”<sup>24</sup>

To encapsulate this directive into the traditional just war terminology, for those ascribing to the myth of Nature’s Nation, God has given legitimate authority for man to labor on His behalf, and right intention was found in the preservation of the order and value intrinsic to nature. With such an influence as Lockean notions of natural law steeped in the concept labor, how could any nation state not embrace the idea that it must

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<sup>21</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter V, Section 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 34.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 49.

invest blood, sweat, and tears to the furthering and protection of the American ideal? Perhaps it is this ethos of labor to preserve, steeped all the way back in Locke's understanding of Nature's Nation, that underlines the American mandate to fight wars for the sake of spreading its gospel of democracy to all. America's battles are not seen therefore as acts of chaos and disruption, but rather war in Nature's Nation is seen as a mandate to restore social order so that liberty and individual rights may abound as God intended from the beginning of Creation. This too can be traced back to the following excerpt from Locke:

And here we have the plain difference between the state of nature and the state of war, which however some men have confounded, are as far distant, as a state of peace, good will, mutual assistance and preservation, and a state of enmity, malice, violence and mutual destruction, are one from another. Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature. But force, or a declared design of force, upon the person of another, where there is no common superior on earth to appeal to for relief, is the state of war: and it is the want of such an appeal gives a man the right of war even against an aggressor, tho' he be in society and a fellow subject.<sup>25</sup>

People of Christian faith did not see this emphasis upon natural law as the foundation of governance contrary to their notions of a world ordained by God and redeemed by Christ. Instead, this thought was embraced by religious and political leaders alike and served as a foundational aspect to justifying America's warring and in the creation of the myth of chosenness.<sup>26</sup> Early American Puritan leader John Winthrop negates that natural law and moral law are mutually exclusive in the following:

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch 3, Section 19.

<sup>26</sup> Neil L. York, "Our First 'Good' War: Selective Memory, Special Pleading, and the War of American Independence," *Peace and Change*, 15 (October 1990): 374.

There is likewise a double Lawe by which we are regulated in our conversacion one towards another: in both the former respects, the lawe of nature and the lawe of grace, or the morall lawe or the lawe of the gospel, to omit the rule of Justice as not properly belonging to this purpose otherwise than it may fall into consideracion in some perticuler Cases: By first of these lawes man as he was enabled soe withal [is]commaunded to love his neighbour as himselfe. Upon this ground stands all the precepts of the morall lawe, which concernes our dealings with men.<sup>27</sup>

Winthrop contends that humans must recognize that all of humanity lies under the natural laws of order and decency, and furthermore it remains the mandate of the Christian to bring all of humanity into acknowledgement of such. It is therefore the responsibility of humanity, in accordance to their covenant identity as God's people to take action to bring all under the law of nature and the law of grace. Herein lies the thrust of Winthrop's notorious mandate for America to be like "A City upon a Hill".<sup>28</sup>

Neil York illustrates how this marriage of reason and religion, coupled with the myths of Nature's Nation and chosenness was then utilized to then justify warfare:

Christian precepts could thus be joined with the divine guidance given to warring Israelites of the Old Testament, proving that God expected his people to defend themselves, against those seeking to exercise unrighteous dominion. 'There is nothing can afford such solid and rational comfort in any undertaking,' proclaimed William Foster in his 1776 sermon to Pennsylvania soldiers, 'as a firm and unshaken confidence that the Lord Jehovah is on our side, and the cause we engage in, is the cause of God'. Similarly, others argued, if God had made men to pursue happiness and expected them to do so, it was only logical that he granted them the right to protect that happiness. Logic-or reason-precluded any other conclusion because true religion would not contradict reason."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Winthrop, "On Christian Charity", Winthrop Papers, vol. II (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1931), pp 282-84, 292-95 and quoted in Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Neil York, "Our First 'Good' War: Selective Memory, Special Pleading, and the War of American Independence". *Peace and Change*, 15 (October 1990) : 375.

Attempts to justify war according to the principles that this sense of chosenness implies become what Bellah terms "...the fusion of passion and reason that, with such consistency, seems to have motivated the major actors in the revolutionary drama."<sup>30</sup>

Through its appeal to natural law, the myth of Nature's Nation sets up America to inevitably be the embodiment of heaven on earth. According to the narrative, because America is founded upon social order that God built into the world for every man to follow, it has fashioned itself to be the new Garden of Eden. Again, we see this myth intermingling with that of chosenness, for if America was to be a pure and undefiled representation of God's Creation, it is mandated to take seriously any threat to its security and social order and thereby act accordingly. Nowhere is this directive more noticeable than in King Philip's War. Native Americans were alleged to be evil, wild, savages in need of taming. In essence, they are perceived to be tools of the devil, their very existence an absolute peril to the order that they had been chosen by God to restore to the world. What ensued was a brutal, senseless, and bloody war, justified under the banner of rightful intention of protecting God's natural order under the legitimate authority bequeathed to them by God himself. Of course, the atrocities waged by both the natives and the English were tragically astounding; however, because the English were victorious, they were able to tell the story as they pleased, creating a myth that justified their warring and gave moral substance to their victory. The underpinnings of chosenness and a return to nature that pervaded King Philip's War were then utilized to gain support for the Revolution. Lepore comments:

The colonists' public and private commemorations of King Philip's War in the early years—the almanacs, the skulls on poles, the books, the stories told out

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<sup>30</sup> Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, 27.

loud, the bullet holes shown to children—were intended to keep the story of King Philip’s War alive for the edification of generations to come, but most public commemorations were also intended to keep a particular version of the story alive, a version that excluded alternate interpretations. They succeeded.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps it is Timothy Dwight’s 1771 poem as recounted by Jewett and Lawrence that most poignantly captures this prevailing sentiment cultivated by King Philip’s War that led America into revolution:

Hail Land of light and joy!  
Thy power shall grow  
Far as the seas, which round thy regions flow;  
Through earth’s wide reams thy glory shall extend,  
And savage nations at thy scepter bend...  
Then, then an heavenly kingdom shall descend,  
And every region smile in endless peace;  
Till the last trump the slumbering dead inspire,  
Shake the wide heavens, and set the world on fire.<sup>32</sup>

Both York and modern scholar George Marsden maintain that it is the American Revolution that established the paradigm in which the country would forever justify its warring and shape its identity. York states,

[t]he War of Independence was well on its way to becoming an essential ingredient in the creation of a national mythology...[t]he war became celebrated as the most dramatic moment in the birth of the nation. It was the anvil on which we forged our identity; it was the rite of passage producing our most heroic hero and our most villainous villain...<sup>33</sup>

Marsden goes on to add, “The American Revolution...is pivotal for considering other wars of America, since the patterns of nationalism and civil religion established at the

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<sup>31</sup> Lepore, 190.

<sup>32</sup> An excerpt of Timothy Dwight’s “America” as recounted by Jewett and Lawrence, 55.

<sup>33</sup> York, 377.

time of the Revolution became important elements of the mythology that determined America's behavior in subsequent wars."<sup>34</sup>

As American revolutionaries went to war with Britain, they were more concerned and diligent in justifying revolution rather than their means of accomplishing such feats.<sup>35</sup> Battle with Great Britain had already begun before the Declaration of Independence was drafted. The Declaration's intent was not to set out a preliminary framework which established that fighting would be conducted under the traditional notions of just war; instead, it was merely designed to justify the ongoing cause of rebellion against the king.<sup>36</sup> The focus of the Declaration of Independence was to proclaim the greatness of the cause, as is evidenced in its opening lines:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

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<sup>34</sup> George Marsden, "The American Revolution", in *The Wars of America: Christian Views*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### American Civil Religion's Interpretation of the Just War Tradition

As mentioned, the relationship between JWT and ACR may be deemed symbiotic in nature. These distinct ideals exist in such close proximity that they nourish each other and become integral to the other's development and survival. Through attempts to justify warfare, the myths of the American identity were developed. These myths were woven and spun to construct a narrative that continues to inform and influence the American identity and purpose still today. In turn, the accounts of war found within this American civil religious narrative reflect the development of a unique reinterpretation of the Just War Tradition. This American take on the JWT manifests itself in how it considers the traditional five planks of *jus ad bellum*: just cause, right intent, last resort, legitimate authority and high probability of success. This distinctiveness is most observable in the principles of just cause, where we will see the spread of democracy fused with the notion of human rights, and right intent, where we will examine the American association with its enemies. Brief analysis will be offered for last resort, legitimate authority and high probability of success. Furthermore, we will also see that this symbiotic relationship has had a profound impact on how we perceive the notion of the enemy and therefore results in a hubris or exceptionalism that undergirds American warring.

#### *Just Cause*

Starting with the Revolution, America began a pattern of exalting just cause as the paramount plank of the JWT. This is not to say that the other planks of *jus ad bellum* are

negated in their entirety, but rather, it appears that they are at least relegated to the periphery. Although historical JWT holds all principles equal to one another, it appears that burgeoning American just war conventions glorify just cause and set it up as the dominant concern and ultimately its divine mission on which the nation finds its purpose.

The ACR has asserted its uniqueness in its observation of just war ideals through its reinterpretation of the notion of what constitutes just cause *jus ad bellum*. Whereas conventional notions of just war ascribe three aforementioned just causes (resist aggression, to defend sovereignty, or to protect human rights), the current American interpretation of just war ideals asserts another just cause: spreading democracy to assure its particular brand of free for all mankind. While the American understanding of just war theory does not go so far as to declare it a fourth legitimate just cause, it does fuse together the notion of expanding democracy with the protection of human rights. This contention is attached to the American myth of the Millennial Nation, a myth which Richard Hughes summarized as the supposition that “the United States would illumine the globe with truth, justice, goodness, and democratic self-government and would thereby usher in a final golden age for all mankind”.<sup>1</sup> Asserting democracy as inclusive under the banner of human rights as a just cause has significant consequences to international perceptions and undermines the unilateral acceptance of America’s war practices, particularly as it pertains to the United States actions after September 11th in its war on terrorism and the invasion of Iraq. America has now elevated democracy to a status in which the overarching JWT and more specifically, the perception of human rights, does not universally recognize, and its “[p]olitical morality is used not only

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<sup>1</sup> Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 91.

to champion human dignity and self government, but also to justify the cause of freedom.”<sup>2</sup>

Elevating democracy as a just cause worthy of engaging in the sacred act of war coupled with the exceptional calling creates a powerful mandate of ACR. This imperative is that the United States holds the moral and spiritual fate of the world in its hands and is encapsulated in theologian Reinhold Neibuhr’s following declaration:

The real fact is that we are placed in a precarious moral and historical position by our special mission. It can be justified only if it results in good for the whole community of mankind. Woe unto us if we fail. For our failure will bring judgment upon both us and the world.<sup>3</sup>

The myths of the ACR feed into the desire for the United States to provide transcendence for supersession of the material sphere in attempts to cast itself as a spiritual entity, co-creators with God in the world and in history, fashioning the world in America’s image—the image of democracy. J. William Fulbright in his work entitled *The Arrogance of Power* describes this supposition as that which bolsters American exceptionalism, bred out of supernatural purpose and purity of virtue as follows: “...power tends to confuse itself with virtue and a great nation is peculiarly susceptible to the idea that its power is a sign of God’s favor, conferring upon it a special responsibility for other nations—to make them richer and happier and wiser, to remake them, that is, in its own shining image.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mark R. Amstutz, “Reinhold Neibuhr’s Christian Realism and the Bush Doctrine,” in *Christianity and Power Politics Today*, edited by Eric Patterson (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2008), 124.

<sup>3</sup> Reinhold Neibuhr, “Anglo-Saxon Destiny and Responsibility,” in *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Neibuhr*, edited by D.B. Robertson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1957), 187.

<sup>4</sup> J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1966), 3.

Just war within ACR then performs more than merely a functional, social purpose and instead serves a spiritual task, preserving the order of the heavens and even revealing twinges of the notion of America as Nature's Nation, the embodiment of natural law and societal order "the way God himself intended things to be from the beginning of the world".<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as Fiala suggests, "American wars are assumed to be good wars, justified by the ideals of freedom and democracy."<sup>6</sup>

### *Right Intention*

The ACR's interpretation of just war ideals to include spreading democracy as a just cause assures that the United States remains pure and undefiled in the process of carrying out its duty to democracy, for "[t]he idea of the ultimate sacrifice comes only with an idea of purity, through fatality".<sup>7</sup> The difference between slaughter versus sacrifice is the sacred innocence of the cause; to assert democracy as just cause is to assure that the deaths of soldiers are not morally deplorable or in vain. This assertion of innocence in war also sets up a dichotomy that grossly pervades current dialogue in justifying war within the United States: the notion of good versus evil. Anyone who seeks to disapprove of American actions by words of dissent or in acts of force are not simply in disagreement of foreign policy but instead are evil actors precipitating injustice by impeding the spread of democracy. Inevitably by insisting upon innocence as part of its identity and the sacredness of democracy, America constructs a victim mentality of sorts into its civil religion that feeds into the plank of right intention in *jus ad bellum*. A

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Fiala, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, 144.

right intention cannot be that of pride or greed; the victim seeking justice therefore plays perfectly in securing that America also affirmatively answers the question whether a right intention exists.

Embracing the label of victim serves three implications. First, the presence of a victim implies that there is a villain that has somehow disregarded basic human decency and safety. Secondly, empathy is engendered for the victim, and the aggressor is perceived with disdain. Third, claiming status as a victim entails that a harm has been done that necessitates redress, and in order to preserve the society, the plight of retribution for the victim must become the undertaking of all. In matters of war, playing the part of the victim is rhetorically expedient in establishing a universally accepted just cause. The illusion must be created that the United States is not the aggressor in matters of war, nor does the country relish in viciousness. Instead, arms are taken up honorably to seek justice for the victim and preserve the well-being of society. Robert Ivie further elaborates on this American proclivity for playing the victim: "...[A] people strongly committed to the ideal of peace, but simultaneously faced with the reality of war, must believe that the fault for any such disruption of their ideal lies with others."

Ivie offers a more telling examination of the language of victimization adopted in times of war within the United States. In his 1980 article titled "Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War", Ivie isolates three topoi utilized to cast America as the victim<sup>8</sup>. The first topos is that of force versus freedom, where America's advisories are seen as instigators, using force to physically ravage and ideologically restrain whereas similar attempts by American forces are seen as merely the pains of preserving

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<sup>8</sup> Ivie, Robert L. "Images of Savagery in American Justifications For War." *Communication Monographs* 47, no. 4 (November 1980): 279-294.

democracy. Secondly, the language of victimization often creates the dichotomy of irrational versus rational. Those perceived as the enemy are fighting to uphold an inferior, ignorant value system, impervious to their absurdity in light of the sophistication and reason of the United State's intentions. Aggression versus defense is the last topoi Ivie offers. Here he asserts that the battles waged by the aggressor are purely antagonistic, but America the victim is merely reacting to the threat (perceived or actual) of the enemy. What all three of Ivie's topoi have in common is that they rhetorically cast similar conduct (i.e. violence and control) into two different intentions. If perpetrated by the victim, the acts are seen as redemptive; if it is at the hands of the enemy, they are seen as oppressive. Clearly, this rhetoric of victimization is quite opportune for establishing right intention in America's conflicts. It is precisely this language that factored into how the aforementioned King Philip's War is perceived in American history. It is also the same rhetorical strategy we will see utilized by George W. Bush to assert a right intention for the War on Terror.

The notion of the innocent nation, coupled with the American distinction of chosenness further escalates the rhetoric of victimization into a spiritual discourse. By asserting American exceptionalism, warfare transcends a battle of flesh and blood and becomes a cosmic war involving the forces of good and evil. This supernatural perception further detaches the "victim" from the human element of warfare and makes brutality more easily rationalized. "Most notably," Ivie argues, "this rhetorical cycling between the extremes of good and evil alienates the nation from an aesthetic of humility and thus from identifying with a common humanity."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ivie, "Fighting Terror by Rite," 236.

The language of good versus evil in justifying war implies that combat fought with right intention in the ACR transcends territorial boundaries and ethnicities.<sup>10</sup> Adversaries are no longer strictly defined as a people group or a nation state; conflict can be engaged with ideologies and movements deemed evil (such as Communism, terrorism, or religious beliefs). America's status as a chosen people leads to the assumption that it operates as a divine agent. It is assured that its cause is just and that confronting evil is the most righteous (and selfless) of intentions. Thus, we can say that in the American Civil Religion's interpretation of JWT, right intention can be more fittingly described as sacred intention.

*Last Resort, Legitimate Authority and High Probability of Success*

Traditional notions of legitimate authority urge war to be declared by the rightful leaders of the nation state. It presumes that when faced with the prospect of conflict, the decision to wage war is reached by all necessary bodies of government and/or legal avenues. The American understanding of just war includes a sacred power that serves as the legitimating force. Within the American civil-religious narrative, the authority of an indistinct, transcendent Being is perhaps the most fundamental of ideals. Insistence upon such bestows a sense of accountability to both the political elite and general citizenry, consolation in times of distress and uncertainty, and lends transcendence to the cause of the country and its citizens. This divine authority is quite easily fused with the gods and creeds of traditional faiths. It is important to note that within the scope of the narrative, this Being is amorphous and is not associated with one particular religious group (despite

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<sup>10</sup> Rockmore, Tom. "On the So-Called War On Terrorism." *Metaphilosophy* 35, no 3 (April 2004): 386-401.

attempts by some to ascribe it identity). Nor should this manifestation of ACR be confused with a theocracy or church-run government. It is this sacred source of accountability that bestows the country with its exceptional identity and legitimates its actions. The divine sanction inherent in the ACR satisfies the need for legitimate authority in justifying war

Noticeably absent in ACL's interpretation of just war is a traditional contention of *jus ad bellum* - that of last resort. Whereas conventionally, the principle of last resort inferred that diplomatic and political means had been exhausted in attempts to avert going to war, this insistence simply does not exist within the current American discourse. This might suggest that an insistence of war as a last resort has been eclipsed by a fervor intrinsic to the just cause of spreading democracy. The sacredness of the cause, a transcendent legitimate authority, and the urgency of justice create a sense of immediacy and duty to engage in war when deemed necessary. Sometimes, this immediacy may marginalize more timely, conventional means of diplomacy. This is not to say that decisions regarding American military operations disregard the proper channels of war declaration dictated by the U.S. Constitution, nor does it imply that the United States has and will always jump into war prematurely. However, Congressional approval or United Nations involvement is a secondary concern and not necessary to fulfill the obligation of last resort. The American interpretation of JWT results in a different means of justifying war than may be universally recognized. While ACR implies that it is the duty of all to carry out its missional purpose of democracy, the country must never delight in warfare (for that may tarnish its innocence). Therefore, we can assert that the requirement of war as last resort has been replaced by the prerequisite of a public sentiment of reluctance.

The remaining plank of a high probability of success rests upon the interpretation of all the other just war ideals as explained by ACR. High probability of success is assumed because of the perpetuation of American exceptionalism. America is *the* chosen people, driven by a sacred cause and equipped with all the earthy means and divine guidance necessary to be victorious. Through its interpretation and fulfillment of the other four tenets of JWT, America's victory is not only probable, it is guaranteed. For if God is for the United States, who can be against her?

### *Conclusion*

While the principles of just war have been observed by many nations throughout history, what makes the Just War Tradition unique within America is how it has intermingled and intertwined with the myths of the civil religion. American Civil Religion incorporates just war ideology in order to preserve the myths upon which the American identity and missional purpose depend. In order for the blood offering to be found an acceptable and worthy sacrifice to the civil religion, it must be found pure, delivered by innocent hands fighting for a just cause. It is the principles of just war that the ACR has co-opted to provide a paradigm in which it may measure its actions to determine the just and therefore sacred nature to maintain innocence. Although many other nations and groups find themselves adopting the ideals of the Just War Tradition to legitimize their battles, the American use of just war is distinct because it is actually necessary to maintain the mythical identity and uphold ACR's great commission of democracy and freedom for all the world.

Maguire makes explicit that the ACR is quite guilty of misusing JWT to justify its actions and abandoning the original intent to limit, control and avoid war at all costs.<sup>11</sup> But what particularly indicts the ACR in its use of just war ideals is that JWT is not only utilized to validate the warring of the United States, but to sacralize it and furthermore maintain innocence in the process. The ideals of just war also lay grounds on which to rationalize the beastly nature of warfare that often demands that humanity go against its instincts, for “[w]ar not only departs from the normal; it inverts all that is moral and right: In war one should kill, should steal, should burn cities and farms, should perhaps even rape matrons and little girls... [i]n war men enter an alternative realm of human experience, as far removed from daily life as those things which we call ‘sacred’”.<sup>12</sup> Just war for the ACR reconciles the immoral and debase actions of war so seemingly contrary to the ethos of innocence within the civil religion and the sacred nature of the United States. For a country that exalts human rights, preaches the sanctity of democracy and declares itself the bastion of liberty and justice, just war standards go far in the attempt to bridge apparent paradoxes in going to battle and shedding blood to instill these principles by “giv[ing] meaning to war and ... allow[ing] us to believe that war fits within our religious and moral horizons.”<sup>13</sup> It is this insistence on and the assumption of innocence in its deeds and sacredness of purpose that results in America’s self exaltation as exceptional among the nations. The following from York summarizes this dynamic between American notions of just war and the exceptionalism that it breeds:

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> Ehrenreich, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Fiala, 17.

Yet we need to understand that just war doctrine, and the appearance of objectivity that it carries, can reinforce the tendency among nations to defend their wars and not only necessary, but as selflessly heroic. Instead of helping us to better understand ourselves, this doctrine can reinforce our natural tendency to develop selective memory and whether we know it or not, to indulge in a twisted form of historical special pleading.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> York, 386.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### George W. Bush: A Practical Example of the Relationship Between ACR and the JWT

In order to uphold the myths of the ACR, the principles of just war have been reconsidered in light of social and political exigencies. American reinterpretation of these tenets sacrilizes warfare and attempts to preserve the innocence of the nation's identity. Fully exploring the correlation between ACR and the JWT requires examination of its incarnation in the non-theoretical realm. Nowhere else is this more prominent than in the role of the President of the United States in times of war. Furthermore, there is no more timely an example than the 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States, George W. Bush. The situational exigencies surrounding the Bush presidency brought this relationship between American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition to a crescendo.

#### *George W. Bush and The Office of the President*

It stands to reason that ties between ACR and the JWT become most apparent in times of war, where the questions of physical combat are of an immediate and utmost concern. In times of battle, the president's role of Commander-In-Chief is emphasized, serving as chief officer of the nation's armed forces. However, there is another function that is accentuated during these situations –that is his (or her) function as president-as-priest to the American public. This presidential task demands that the justifications for war fit the conflict comfortably into the American civil religious narrative.

Within the narrative of ACR, the president serves the role of priest --- a mediator between the transcendent Being and all the people of the nation. The president operates

under the authority of the indistinct deity and functions as the interpreter of divine will. It is the role of the president-as-priest to then articulate and reiterate these principles to the people. In times of trouble and uncertainty, he or she acts as an intercessor for the people, beseeching the heavens on their behalf and offering the citizenry the comfort of the divine. Also as priest, it is the president who gives thanks and implores the transcendent's continued blessing and providence for the country.

There are two implications of the president-as priest-motif in the civil religious narrative that are central to the context of this study. First, as mediator, the president as priest must establish an aura of unity among the people of the nation. As a priest relates to his congregation, it is inherent to his role as the country's cleric to reaffirm a communal identity and shared purpose. Secondly, the president-as-priest becomes the narrator of sorts for the collective American story. The narrative of ACR is derived, developed, and ingrained into the American conscience through presidential rhetoric. Narrative functions as an interpretation of the past that contextualizes the present and informs the future. More pointedly, the American civil religious narrative grants individuals an identity by placing them within the American tradition and instructing them of their missional purpose as citizens of the United States. As the messenger of the people, it is the president who interprets history, dictates the context of current events, and provides a seemingly prophetic prospective for the future. Through his public discourse, the president-as-priest is responsible for recapitulating the civil religious narrative for the American congregation.

George W. Bush fulfilled his role as president-as-priest in quite a convincing fashion, as his rhetoric in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 can

attest. In the months immediately following, President Bush turned his lecterns into pulpits, using his opportunities to serve a dual purpose of offering solace to the American people and outlining the basic justifications for future military action. This led Howard Fineman to note that Bush's speeches resembled a "secular sermon on the strategic value of bestowing freedom upon the planet."<sup>1</sup> Peggy Noonan also picks up on this demonstration of the president-as-priest by remarking on the prayerful cadence of his discourse:

Bush is a pray-er. ... A prayer is among the most direct and succinct of communications. Bush speaks to the nation in a style that suggests he doesn't really think a public proclamation has to be fancier than a prayer.<sup>2</sup>

A glance into the massive volumes of scholarship reveals the numerous and highly charged opinions regarding several elements of George W. Bush's presidency. Bush's tenure in office was particularly fraught with criticism regarding the religious twinges to his war discourse. Although his language is jarring in its contemporary context, there is most certainly historical precedent for civil religious discourse. In an editorial for the *Washington Post*, E.J. Dionne points out that President Bush's rhetoric invoking providence and the hand of God in the days surrounding September 11<sup>th</sup> is not much different from other presidents.<sup>3</sup> Dionne goes on to urge President Bush to be more cautious than his presidential predecessors in utilizing this religious language because of the undercurrent of religious tension among members of Islam and in deference to the

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<sup>1</sup> Fineman, Howard, Tamara Lipper, Richard Wolffe, and T. Trent Gegax. "The Gospel According To George." *Newsweek* 143, no. 17 (April 26, 2004): 18-21.

<sup>2</sup> Peggy Noonan, forward to "*We Will Prevail*": *George W. Bush on War, Terrorism, and Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 2003. ), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Dionne Jr., E. J. "When Presidents Talk of God." *The Washington Post* (14 February 2003): A-31.

watching eyes of the world community-both friends and foes alike. Mr. Bush makes an especially interesting case study in the relationship between JWT and ACR because of the added dimension of his personal religious expression.

*Differentiating Between Religious and Civil Religious Discourse*

The study of Bush and ACR has been significantly stunted by a failure to establish what is religious rhetoric and what is the discourse of civil religion. Thus, much of the discourse used to justify war is misrepresented as merely expressions of his fervent evangelical faith. Manfred Brocker leads the charge in affirming that Mr. Bush's rhetoric in justifying the war on terrorism and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq is civil religious. Brocker argues that civil religious rhetoric was utilized for rallying public support for the war efforts among U.S. citizens. Bush is not acting strictly out of his religious beliefs when going to war; instead he relies on a balance of civil religious metaphors and actual political rationale to justify military operations.<sup>4</sup> "However, there are no grounds for the proposition that his motives for planning the invasion were specifically denominational Christian, given the array of realpolitik-related reasons from the U.S. point of view which advocated military intervention in Iraq."<sup>5 6</sup> The symbiotic relationship between the JWT and ACR under Bush is best captured in Brocker's

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<sup>4</sup> Brocker, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Brocker, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Brocker goes on to give several instances of "realpolitik-related reasons" such as Iraq's failure to cooperate with UN weapons inspections, and noncompliance with UN Resolution 1441 of November 8, 2002 because Iraq had evaded sanctions and did not meet obligations to disarm and disclose its weapons arsenal. Also cited is Colin Powell's speech before the UN Security Council where he attempted to establish ties between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

declaration: “Bush’s choice of religious metaphors remains in the category of American ‘civil religion,’ expressing a commitment to the ideals of democracy and human rights-intended to derive their effectiveness not from the use of force and hegemonial expansion, but from their own role model.”<sup>7</sup>

It would not have benefitted President Bush to speak religiously because offering a theological justification for war would have had a very narrow appeal to only those sharing his beliefs, never satisfying even a majority of the American public.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, asserting that Bush operated out of his own religious beliefs to justify war then assumes those who do not adhere to his worldview are excluded and even vilified. One does not have to look far for rhetorical examples of Bush emphatically thwarting this notion, particularly concerning Islam. A fundamental part of the narrative of ACR is characterization, establishing who are the protagonists and the villains and what it is that each side is fighting. George W. Bush’s address to Congress on September 20, 2001, accomplished just that. In this speech, we see a very definitive line drawn between good versus evil, and more importantly, the followers of Islam and the radical extremists such as Osama bin Laden who were responsible for the September 11th attacks. Here, he demonstrates that the Islamic faith is not intrinsically evil and that Muslims are not the enemy and cannot be treated as such:

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions

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<sup>7</sup> Brocker, 120.

<sup>8</sup> Rockmore, 392.

more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah.<sup>9</sup>

Bush makes it perfectly clear that the enemies in this battle are not those of the Islamic faith; the lines of good and evil are drawn in terms of violent acts stemming from radical ideologies and politics, and not on the basis of religion. Incidentally, President Bush's inclusive rhetoric towards Muslims incited Christian fundamentalists who accused him of promoting a false religion. If Bush's rhetoric of justification was in fact religious as some assert, then it was not successful because he could not even appease the very fundamentalist base to which he was supposedly speaking.<sup>10</sup>

Since it is incorrect to insist that Bush's rhetoric is exclusively religious, it is also inaccurate to say that he was trying to wage a holy war. The discourse of George W. Bush is instead that of the (American) JWT, for just war appeals to considerations based on reason to satisfy its demands. Conversely, a holy war is solely contingent upon divine revelation as sufficient validation for its battles. Although the JWT may have found its historical roots in religion and moral codes, it is still at its core an exercise in reason, urging that rationality rather than religious inclination be the means by which war is justified.

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<sup>9</sup> George W. Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress," September 20, 2001, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress\\_092001.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html).

<sup>10</sup> Brocker, 114.

### *Specific Rhetorical Examples*

As the priest speaking to his entire nation of congregants in the days following September 11, 2001, it was rhetorically imperative that President Bush brought clarity into such a tragic and chaotic situation. It is his function as president-as-priest to write the narrative in which the country will understand and make meaning of such horrific acts. A fundamental part of this narrative and any narrative is characterization, establishing who are the protagonists and the villains and what it is that each side is fighting. George W. Bush's remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Ceremony on September 24, 2001 accomplished just that. Bush's speech served three functions: 1) it fulfilled his role as president-as-priest, 2) it affirmed the just cause of evil, and 3) it began to establish a right intention of seeking justice by delineating the sides of good and evil.

President Bush's remarks first set out to provide comfort and foster national unity in his role as president-as-priest. The notion of collective grief runs rampant throughout his discourse. The speech begins by affirming "[w]e are here in the middle hour of our grief".<sup>11</sup> However, Mr. Bush immediately proceeds into harnessing these emotional responses into action. "Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: To answer these attacks and rid the world of evil."<sup>12</sup> Within this passage, he affirms the just cause of democracy found within ACR. President Bush's rhetoric does not merely call for

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<sup>11</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President from Speech at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Ceremony," September 14, 2001, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=218>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

revenge; rather, it reminds the American public of its ever-present sacred calling to be “freedom’s home and defender”<sup>13</sup>. Also within this speech, we see the first signs of the rhetoric of victimization that is key for affirming right intention:

War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder. This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing.<sup>14</sup>

Even this soon after the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Mr. Bush is not afraid to label the terrorist attacks as acts of war. Furthermore, the concept of American innocence is emphasized by clarifying that the United States did not instigate this battle, thereby making it a victim. “In Bush’s speech, an image has been created of a victimized nation, which created a new vision of unity that seeks an outlet for grief and anger. Bush uses these images to illustrate the need for action and response.”<sup>15</sup> It is now up to the American people to embrace the calling of their time. These remarks commemorating the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance were not delivered without creating their share of criticism. A September 22, 2001 article in *The Washington Post* titled “War Cry From the Pulpit” centered around several problematic observations. One notable critic of the speech was none other than ACR scholar Robert Bellah who called Bush’s rhetoric

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Tony Docan, Lisa Freitas, and Clay Holtzman, "George W. Bush’s ‘National Day of Prayer and Remembrance’ Speech: A Cluster Analysis of Bush’s Rhetorical Argument for Revenge," Conference Papers -- International Communication Association (May 23, 2003): 10.

“stunningly inappropriate” and said that his disapproval of the speech was “because basically it was war talk”.<sup>16</sup>

President George W. Bush’s address delivered to Congress on September 20, 2001, is particularly noted for its rhetorical flare, appealing to the aforementioned notions of just war and the support of the American people that uphold the civil religion:

*Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.*

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars -- but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war -- but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks -- but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day -- and night fell on a different world, a world *where freedom itself is under attack...*

...Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger *we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us.* Our nation, this generation will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.

... I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people. *The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them. Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice -- assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come.* In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America. Thank you.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bill Broadway, “War Cry From the Pulpit,” *Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), September 22, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Bush, “Address to Joint Session of Congress,” September 20, 2001, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attackedtranscripts/bushaddress\\_092001.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attackedtranscripts/bushaddress_092001.html).

The above excerpt is a rather blatant play on the notion of America as the innocent victim and its declaration of the sacred mission of spreading democracy that has been impeded in the face of terror. However, couched within the above excerpt is yet another appeal to the just war ideals that ACR adheres, for this statement also evokes the inevitable approval of the deity who surely allies with those bearing the just, sacred cause and fighting against the evil of earth. This perpetuates the rationale that because both the cause is right and God is on the side of the U.S. - the position of goodness and justice- then it must be inferred that America will succeed in its battles, thus satisfying another two planks of *jus ad bellum* - proper authority (God) and a high probability of success. Again, missing from this rhetoric is any consideration for the plan of last resort. This further nods toward the notion that last resort has been overshadowed by the zeal for executing the divine mission of spreading democracy to the ends of the earth.

This appeal to just war ideals goes so far as to pervade U.S. official policy on matters of national security under President Bush. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002 essentially equates the duty of national security with the mandate to spread democracy:

In pursuit of our goals, our first imperative is to clarify what we stand for: the United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them. Fathers and mothers in all societies want their children to be educated and to live free from poverty and violence. No people on earth yearn to be oppressed, aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police.

The NSS also leads off this section on “Aspirations for Human Dignity” with a quote President Bush gave to students at West Point on June 1, 2002:

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities.<sup>18</sup>

This telling statement also evokes the notion of right intention. This demand for democracy abroad is not serving of self-interest or a matter of nation building, but instead it is a moral imperative, transcending solely material motives to designate democracy a preservation of the natural order of earth as willed by the heavens.

George W. Bush's Second Inaugural Address delivered on January 20th, 2005, further presents a consistency in the rationale of just war and the continued embrace of the American mission to be purveyors of democracy in all matters domestic and abroad:

... We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. *The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.*

... America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and Earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation's security, and the calling of our time.

*So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.*

This is not primarily the task of arms, *though we will defend ourselves and our friends by force of arms when necessary. Freedom, by its nature, must be chosen, and defended by citizens,* and sustained by the rule of law and the protection of minorities. And when the soul of a nation finally speaks, the institutions that arise may reflect customs and traditions very different from our own. America will not

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<sup>18</sup> "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," September 2002. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/index.html>.

impose our own style of government on the unwilling. *Our goal instead is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way.*<sup>19</sup>

Under President Bush, just war is not solely waged by the arms of the nation nor does it play out only in the sphere of politics. Instead, this American interpretation of just war, inclusive of its embrace of democracy as just cause, calls each and every individual to a missional purpose to “help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way”.<sup>20</sup> It is in this insistence that the transformative nature of President Bush’s understanding of civil religion becomes evident, for he makes upholding the tradition of just war an individual responsibility, intricately intertwining the JWT within the fabric of ACR.

Out of the same rationale of the NSS of 2002 and bolstered by the Second Inaugural Address came the National Defense Strategy of the United States in March of 2005. Under the heading “America’s Role in the World” is the following statement:

America is a nation at war. We face a diverse set of security challenges.

Yet, we still live in an era of advantage and opportunity. We also possess uniquely effective military capabilities that we are seeking to transform to meet future challenges.

As directed by the President in his 2002 National Security Strategy, we will use our position "to build a safer, better world that favors human freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." Our security and that of our international partners-our allies and friends-is based on a common commitment to peace, freedom, and economic opportunity. In cooperation with our international partners, we can build a more peaceful and secure international order in which the sovereignty of nations is respected.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> George W. Bush, “Second Inaugural Address,” January 20, 2005, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/4463>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” March 2005, <http://www.defense.gov/news/mar2005/d20050318nds1.pdf>.

The Defense Strategy establishes at the outset that it models itself after the platform of spreading democracy as the chief security tactic in which American military might must be centered. Just war ideals as interpreted in light of ACR have been satisfied: just cause in spreading democracy, the right intentions in justice for all humankind, the proper authority in the president and ultimately in God who is on the side for all who fight for justice, and an assumed high probability of success, guaranteed by the blessings of heaven. The United States is now organized and prepared to pick up arms to fight its just war.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

When considering the assumption that just war theory alone could validate or invalidate a particular war, scholar Charles O'Donovan quickly retorts, "History knows of no just wars, as it knows of no just peoples."<sup>1</sup> While O'Donovan's statement is quite cynical in nature and even possesses tinges of frustration and downright futility, just war ideals are still valuable to pursue and are vital to framework of the ACR. The symbiotic relationship between American Civil Religion and the Just War Tradition is a fascinating attempt to rationalize the brutality war with America's self proclaimed unique, innate moral imperative. These principles reinterpreted in light of the myths of ACR have great potential to harbor a dangerous degree of exceptionalism or what Fulbright labels as "... the arrogance of power, the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission".<sup>2</sup> It would behoove Americans to reconsider its utilization of just war ideals, attempting to discerningly recapture the original intent of the JWT and seeking to contextualize these principles as a determinate to war, rather than an eager justification to validate its actions.

War possesses an innate brutality that humanity cannot escape. As we engage the process of protecting our borders and negotiating our collective identity as a society, history shows that it will not be an easy task. As struggle seems inevitable on earth, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Charles O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Fulbright, 9.

only natural that the human spirit would attempt to reconcile the bloodshed of war with its identity for the sake of moral and ultimately, heavenly validation. The myths of America should be perceived as mankind's attempts to redeem itself from the burden of its oppressive and oft-muddled reality, a sentiment T.S. Elliot captures quite poignantly in the following:

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.<sup>3</sup>

Justifying warfare and constructing myths of identity and purpose may be an innate part of humanity; however, they cannot and do not eradicate the imperative to do so responsibly. In the conclusion of his book on America's myths, Richard Hughes deems that all of the prevailing myths of America (with except of that of the innocent nation) do have redeeming qualities at their core that must be discovered and embraced. How then therefore does one apply responsibility to justification of war and mythmaking? Perhaps this begins with reevaluating interpretations of just war thought, holding each of the five plans of *jus ad bellum* with equal consideration in making rationalizations. The Just War Tradition must return to its original intent as a set of ideals that should serve as a determinant to warfare, rather than a moral license to ensue battle. Honorably constructing and considering American myths requires that we act not out of absolutes or arrogance, assuming that democracy modeled and given to the world by the United States is the best means of governance that must be thrust upon all civilization at all costs. By making all attempts to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly, the myths

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<sup>3</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," lines 42-46, in *Four Quartets* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1968).

that America lives by will be more as they should: captivating, inspiring tales of the strength and greatness of those that made her with their blood, sweat and tears:

The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
*Erhebung* without motion, concentration  
Without elimination, both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.  
Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Eliot, lines 70-82.

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