Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism, and the City on a Hill Seen through

Winthrop, O'Sullivan, and Bush: Opportunities for Religious Peacebuilding

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ABSTRACT

A dominant theme in the story of the American, city-on-a-hill experience is manifest destiny, a term literally expressing a sense of a rightful, westward expansion across the continent in the late 19th century, but more broadly expressing a general entitlement granted, it is often understood, divinely to an exceptional United States of America. The origins, the political-versus-religious undergirding, and the implications of manifest destiny are widely discussed in the literature. Here I focus on three primary texts by John Winthrop, John O'Sullivan, and George W. Bush to argue that, even though Winthrop's and his fellow Puritan immigrants' understanding of their role in the new land was a far cry from that of O'Sullivan – who coined the term "manifest destiny" – the seeds of manifest destiny were brought with these first immigrants to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, later sprouting and blossoming in O'Sullivan's coining, and eventually bearing some of its many fruits Bush's foreign policy. Finally, I will discuss the sociological and other implications of the divine endorsement of such ideas.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his Second Inaugural Address, President Bush provides us this important reminder: "history runs [not] on the wheels of inevitability—it is human choices that move events" (Bush, 2005, para. 25). Human hands sow the seeds, the plow wheels of historical contingency turn, and fruits become seeds once again. And Bush is right that it is also human hands that tend the growth. Like all histories, the history of the United States as a city on a hill has meaning that is made and changed by countless such "human choices." One dominant theme in the story of America as city on a hill is that of manifest destiny.

As historians Isenberg and Richards have argued, this pro-westward-expansion idea is too-often used by historians to "paper over the messy contingencies of the mid-nineteenth century," viz. over the fact that it was not then the consensus that it is often now assumed to have been, but rather it was a proscriptive argument employed "as a matter of political contestation" (2013). Indeed, the significant *opposition* to westward expansion at that time is evidenced by the injunction in the very first line in "Annexation," the landmark article in which John O'Sullivan coined the term *manifest destiny*: "It is time now for opposition to the Annexation of Texas to cease" (O'Sullivan, 1845).

Other previous scholarship has debated the religious-versus-political origins of manifest destiny, and the evolving sense of American exceptionalism that accompanies it. Although Winthrop is often credited with being the first American exceptionalist, he was really neither an American, per se, nor an exceptionalist in the usual, comparative or empirical sense of seeing America as a country better than all the rest (Litke, 2013). As Litke has expounded, correctly I believe, Winthrop's sense of "American exceptionalism" was, rather, a sense that focused on the uniqueness of the Puritans' experience as an example (2013, p. 17). Inherent in this sense is their keen awareness of their *exposure* – to the elements, to the native Americans, and to God's wrath if they failed on their errand, an errand colorfully captured by Perry Miller as being performed as by an actor in a "theatre dark and empty, no spotlight working, and himself entirely alone" (1953, p. 16). The strong sense of the Puritans being on an errand for God, chosen for which as the Israelites were chosen for populating their new land, has unsurprisingly undergirded the sense in the literature that, as James Ceasar puts it, "there is one core understanding of the mission that

has been shaped mainly by Puritan religious thought" (Ceasar, 2012). Ceasar has argued, by contrast, that

this view is incorrect (2012), with the understanding that both religious and political strains run though the

American sense of exceptionalism.

However, even though, as Isenberg and Richards have argued, there was no manifest-destiny

consensus in the 19th century, and even though today, as Ceasar has argued, philisophico-political,

meanings of exceptionalism sometimes trump religious ones, the question remains, where did manifest

destiny and American exceptionalism come from – in Litke's sense of the unique chosenness of the

Puritan's experience – and what has become of them? In this paper, I will argue that the seeds of

manifest destiny were brought to the new land in 1630 on the *Arabella* with John Winthrop and in

particular with his "Modell of Xian Charity" (Winthrop, 1630),[1] and then sprouted and blossomed in John

O'Sullivan's "Annexation" (O'Sullivan, 1845), eventually bearing some of its many fruits in the imperative

for interventionalist liberty articulated in Bush's Address. I will focus on these three primary documents,

arguing that manifest destiny has been a powerful idea in American history, taking different shapes at

different times, but consistently an important part of the American taxonomy of identity, whereby

Americans tend to understand themselves and the United States as having a special destiny in the world.

Although the term "manifest destiny" was not coined by O'Sullivan until his 1845 "Annexation," whereby

he planted that term securely, if unwittingly,[2] in American soil, its seeds, I will argue, were brought here

much earlier, with John Winthrop. Finally, I will examine the sociological framing present in this history,

and argue that Providence, and indeed Christianity, are each interpreted and expressed by these authors

differently, and can each be vehicles in society both for peace and for violence, since neither of these

outcomes is inevitable.

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[1] The spelling in Winthrop quotations will be left in the form of the source cited, so that, for example, when the Model is quoted, the modernized spelling used in the version of the Model published by Rodgers (2018) is retained, but when *The Winthrop Papers* are quoted, the original spelling there is quoted. All reference to the Model are to the version published by Rodgers (2018, pp. 289-308).

[2] Anders Stephanson notes that this coining was doubly ironic insofar as, firstly, the enormous expansion that was associated with the term was taking place in the name of a liberty that was widely considered "to be 'Anglo-Saxon' in spirit or race," but yet the coiner of the term "was descended from a long line of Irish adventurers and mercenaries," and secondly, his term "earned him neither fame not glory, nor even notoriety [since] he died in obscurity, with typical bad timing, in 1895, when the term, along with [the] territorial expansionism [he advocated for] was about to experience a revival." See Stephanson, A. (1995). *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. Hill and Wang.

2. WINTHROP: MODEL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

Winthrop's "Modell of Xian Charity" was a lay sermon superficially similar to other sermons at the time, employing many common ideas and phrases, but was actually quite unique (Rodgers, 2018, pp. 91-95). Whereas typical sermons often culminated with a heavenward focus on the importance of faith, the Model, by contrast, contains two principally earthly concerns which Winthrop saw as essential for success in the Massachusetts Bay Colony: both the "journey beyond egotism [and the] journey across space" (Rodgers, 2018, p. 93), and the Model is emphatic that the former is required for the latter. Given that "[we] Christians are of one body in Christ," Winthrop wrote, "the ligaments of this body which knit [it] together are love[;] no body can be perfect which wants its proper ligament" (Winthrop, 1630, p. 299). Essential for their success, Winthrop stresses, was that his fellow Pilgrims recognize and embrace their mutual need of each other: "All the parts of this body [are] united [and] contiguous [so that] if one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one be in honor, all rejoice" (1630, p. 299). This was the crux of the essential "charity" he insists on – a brotherly love, characterized by selflessness toward one another.

In the passages that follow, Winthrop recognizes an aspect of human nature necessary for this love, which is to see oneself in the other, since "the ground of love is an apprehension of some resemblance in the things loved to that which affects it" (1630, p. 300).[3] The Latin expression of this observation that Winthrop used, "that maxim of philosophy, *simile simili gaudet*" (1630, p. 301), or "*like rejoices in like*," has well-known (and similarly catchy) expression in countless languages,[4] attesting to the largely universal truth it expresses about deep-seated human preferences toward ingroup similars, an observation supported by a wide body of psychology literature.[5] Interestingly, however, cultural and socioeconomic homophily has not been found in multinational sociological studies to explain ethnic homophily (Smith 2014). Nevertheless, Manifest destiny, of course, is vastly more than merely ingroup

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[3] Whether or not this is the "ground" of love, as in a *necessary* "foundation" of love, a "basis" of love, as opposed to merely a facilitator or catalyst for love, is debatable. I personally think that there is no absolute requirement for a likeness in order to love, no requirement for "some resemblance in the things loved." These very interesting, philosophy-of-love questions (Is likeness required for love? Is it *generated* by love?) are of course beyond the scope of this paper.

[4] Some examples are found here: https://lyricstranslate.com/en/idiom/similis-simili-gaudet.

[5] One of the leaders in this field is Yale psychologist Karen Wynn, who has found that normal, human, ingroup bias is so strong that prelinguistic infants, who already are known to prefer similar (ingroup) others to different (outgroup) others, will furthermore prefer even misbehaving ingroup to well-behaving outgroup. A lay summary of these findings is available here: https://www.youtube.com.mcas.ms/watch?v=FRvVFW85IcU. See also Mahajan Mahajan, N., & Wynn, K. (2012). Origins of "us" versus "them": prelinguistic infants prefer similar others. *Cognition*, *124*(2), 227-233. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2012.05.003 .

homophily, as I will elaborate, but to ignore normal, human, ingroup bias would not well serve this analysis of the sociohistorical texture of manifest destiny as an American theme, since such bias is present from the start, as evidenced by Winthrop's appreciation of it in his discussion of charitable love in the Model.

Several other important aspects warrant highlighting in the Model as the starting point for this analysis of manifest destiny. Consistent with Winthrop's emphasis on brotherly love being an essential "ligament" for the "knitting together" of the Puritans in the body of Christ, the Golden Rule appears prominently in the Model: Winthrop stresses that the Puritan should "love his neighbor as himself" (Winthrop, 1630, p. 292), should recall Christ's "general rule [in] Matth. 7.22 [sic]: Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye the same to them also" (Winthrop, 1630, p. 296), and should "make others conditions our own" (Winthrop, 1630, p. 307). The Golden Rule, so clearly manifest in the Model, also receives several nods from President Bush,[6] but, as we shall see, is largely indiscernible in O'Sullivan's "Annexation."

Another important aspect that must be considered in an analysis of these three texts is the belief in the doctrine of original sin, the basis of the belief that humans are generally sinful, or at least tainted with sin, a belief deeply held by 17th-century Puritans like John Winthrop (Rodgers, 2018, p. 40). Keenly aware that "Adam rent in himself from his creator" (1630, p. 301), Winthrop was certain that sinfulness was in their nature, and that their entire errand was always, therefore, held in delicate balance between success and failure. It is not that he utterly lacked confidence in general. Quite the contrary: although the Puritans were worried about backsliding, about failing to live up to God's expectation, they were certainly confident of one thing, viz., as Winthrop writes, that God "hath taken us to be his" (1630, p. 305), a phrase that Rodgers notes "was no casual expression. It radiated confidence" (2018, p. 44). But *that* was precisely what made the real possibility of failure so terrifying, trying their confidence that they could live up to the task. Because they were fully committed, and because theirs was a vengeful, angry God, already

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[6] For example, see paras. 15, 18, 21, and 22 in Bush, G. W. (2005). *Second Inaugural Address*. Retrieved June 2, 2021 from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-13. In particular, para. 21 references the very same Sermon on the Mount teachings that Winthrop is citing here (Matthew 7:12 [not 7:22]).

increasingly angry at England for her backsliding, and increasingly scrutinizing them, ready to punish their

failures, the stakes were high. Thus, Winthrop admonished, they

> "must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us.
> So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so
> cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a
> byword through the world [and] curses upon us til we be consumed out of the good
> land whither we are a going." (1630, p. 307)

Because the stakes could hardly be higher, the very real and confidence-shaking possibility of failure was

keenly felt, indeed.

3. O'SULLIVAN: "ANNEXATION"

At first glance then, O'Sullivan's "Annexation," an article utterly unconcerned with failure, brimming with

confidence at the anticipated and perceived guarantee of success at expansion – a success guaranteed by

virtue of being "the fulfillment of the general law" (1845, p. 3) – could not seem more different from the

Model. There is no sign of a vengeful God, and indeed, nothing to conceivably warrant punishment.

Whereas the Puritans of Winthrop's time were ready to accept the blame for their failure, O'Sullivan sees

neither the possibility of failure nor any cause for self-blame: that the United States and not Mexico

should have Texas is simply the "fulfillment of a general law which is rolling our population westward … by

a process perfectly legitimate on its own part, *blameless on ours*" (1845, p. 3, emphasis added).[7] Yet even

in the Model, infused as it is with brotherly love and charitable selflessness,[8] one can see seeds of

O'Sullivan's relatively more selfish manifest destiny. For example, Winthrop concludes by referencing the

"the land whither we go *to possess it*" (1630, p. 308) and that stance towards the lands – a stance of

possession – is reiterated in the next and concluding line of the sermon (just before the closing prayer):

"…we pass over this vast sea *to possess [the land]*" (1630, p. 308, emphases added).

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[7] Although "Annexation" was the first known use of the term "manifest destiny," this same language of blamelessness and appeal to a "general law" reverberates a few months after "Annexation," when O'Sullivan published an editorial in the New York *Morning News* in December 1845 (cited in Pratt 1933), in which O'Sullivan similarly notes that it was not only a legal right (for a discussion of how manifest destiny developed from the legal Doctrine of Discovery, see Miller 2008), but a Providential one: "Away, away with all these cobweb tissues of rights of discovery […] our claim to Oregon would still be best and strongest. And that claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us…"

[8] This selflessness is predominantly towards ingroup. Although Winthrop and other early colonists claimed, or initially sought, to be charitable towards outgroup Native Americans as well, this sadly turned out not to be the case as the years – and manifest destiny – unfolded.

Inextricably bound up with this sense of possession, however, is the aforementioned fear of failing

to deserve the possession. Hence Winthrop concludes his discourse with the example of the Israelites in

the Hebrew Bible as a warning against failure, referencing Deuteronomy 30:17-18: "But if our hearts shall

turn away so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced and ~~serve~~[9] worship other Gods, our pleasures,

and profits, and serve them, it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish" (308). O'Sullivan, by

contrast, countenances no such concern. We shall see, however, in the Evangelical Bush a return of this

sense of divine punishment for backsliding. But for now, it is important to highlight vis-à-vis O'Sullivan this

complicated conclusion of Winthrop's Model with its intermixing, on one hand, of a stance of possession

toward the new land – with the sense of *entitlement* that *possession* implies – and, on the other hand, the

keen awareness of human (Puritan) sinfulness whereby they ever risk lapsing into blameworthy failure, in

which case they would no doubt accept that God no longer willed their entitlement to the new land and

success therein.

What is most striking about the stance of possession – pace the worry of original sin preventing

them from possessing it well in God's eyes – is that the stance was not inevitable; it was not the only

stance conceivable toward the new land and its indigenous people. Instead of a stance of *possession*, for

example, John Winthrop could well have assumed a stance of *debt*, or one of *honoring*; instead, perhaps,

of one of *owner*, one of *guest*. All of these alternative stances are also consistent with the Christian

tradition, after all, and one wonders how American sociological and historical events might have

developed differently, what O'Sullivan's worldview might have been, had one of them predominated

instead.

But alas, it was a stance of possession, and a deliberate one, Winthrop the Puritan lawyer not

being one to leave such issues unconsidered: In 1628, a group of Puritan merchants was granted land in

Massachusetts and the following year the grant was confirmed by royal charter of King Charles, and

Winthrop was elected the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony (while still in England) (Watson, 2006,

pp. 487-488). Although the charter made no mention of the Indians who occupied the granted lands or of

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[9] Correction in original, as noted in Rodgers' version of the Model (Winthrop, 1630).

Indian land rights that might interfere with Winthrop's possession of this land, Winthrop was not only

aware of Indian presence, but had specifically considered the issue:

> As for the Natiues in New England, they inclose noe Land, neither haue any setled
> habytation, nor any tame Cattle to improue the Land by, and soe haue *noe other but a*
> *Naturall Right* to those Countries, soe as if we leaue them sufficient for their vse, we
> may lawfully take the rest, there being more then enough for them and vs. (Winthrop,
> 1629, emphasis added)

By *natural right,* Winthrop meant one of two rights that "God hath given … a twofould right to the earth …

a naturall right and a civil right. The first right was naturall when men held the earth in common … Then,

as men and cattell increased … this in tyme got them a civil right" (Winthrop, 1629, p. 120). According to

Winthrop, setting the stage for O'Sullivan, most land in America, having not been improved with cattle, for

example, was *vacuum domicilium* (empty space) and therefore Native Americans held no civil right to it,

despite their occupying it, and furthermore, Winthrop reasoned, God had prepared the way for the

Puritans by "consum[ing] the natives with a miraculous plague" (Watson, 2006, p. 489).   Here in particular

is seen the deep and earnest sense of covenant that the Puritans felt with God, a sense through which all

successes (including the successful clearing away by plague of the Native Americans) tend to be seen an

divine endorsement of the endeavor, and all failures as divine punishment. This sense of Providence was

(and continues to be) a very common, important, and potentially dangerous sociohistorical thread that we

shall follow through O'Sullivan and Bush and to the conclusion of this paper.

There is no convincing evidence that O'Sullivan could have ever read Winthrop's Model (Rodgers,

2018, p. 174), but the assumption of a natural right is found in both Winthrop's Model and in O'Sullivan's

"Annexation," although the natural right is more explicitly God-given in Winthrop and more vaguely

providential in "Annexation," which never even mentions "God"[10] in reference to "the fulfilment of our

manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our

yearly multiplying millions" (1845, p. 1), language not only coined in "Annexation," but echoed shortly

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[10] Elsewhere, O'Sullivan does mention "God" (although seems still to prefer expressions such as "Providence"); for example in his 1839 "The Great Nation of Futurity": "We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of *God* in our minds" and "the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High -- the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere -- its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by *God's* natural and moral law of equality"; see O'Sullivan, J. (1839). The Great Nation of Futurity. *The United States Democratic Review*, *6*(23), 426-430. https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm .

thereafter in O'Sullivan's December 27, 1845 editorial in the New York *Morning News*, which, as Pratt has pointed out (1933), caught the attention of Congress during debates over the fate of Oregon, launching the term into much wider usage.

Share as they might an assumption of natural or God-given rights to occupy lands already occupied by Native Americans, the Model and "Annexation" have markedly different foundational values. Whereas the Model is, as discussed above, deeply infused with charity as a core value, and Winthrop's deliberate and serious consideration reveals a degree of respect for the occupying Native Americans, no such charity or respect is found in O'Sullivan's "Annexation," whose foundational value is, by contrast, expansion, and whose language belies any real respect of occupying natives or competing interests of Mexicans. For example, O'Sullivan refers to the "preposterous" claim of Mexicans to Texas (1845, p. 2), to having "no obligation of duty towards Mexico tended in the least degree" (1845, p. 2), to the "perfidy and folly" of Mexico (1845, p. 3), and most disdainfully, to Mexico as "imbecile and distracted" (1845, p. 5).[11] Despite these differences in values, respect, and tone, the Model and "Annexation" are importantly similar in legitimizing their occupation of already-occupied lands.

Inherent in such legitimating is an undeniable sense of hubris, which is abundantly clear in "Annexation" and which is initially subtle – but clearer on closer reading – in the Model. Further complicating the conclusion of the Model, then, in addition to the stance of possession and the keen awareness of sinful failings that may spoil the errand, is a hubris, as Rodgers points out: Winthrop's implicit comparison between the Puritan voyagers to the new land and the children of Abraham becomes all but complete as he "appropriated the words of the Bible's chosen people as the Puritans' own. He borrowed their speech. He voiced the part," (52) and in doing so, fertilized the soil in which the likes of a proudly expansionist O'Sullivan would grow.

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[11] In an abundance of fairness, one should consider if these are difference of moral substance or merely tone. The elegant, refined, Puritan voice, after all, may well belie a devaluation or disrespect more profound than the braggadocious, unrefined, editor voice, but this is not my sense of these texts.

4. BUSH: "SECOND INNAUGURAL ADDRESS"

And a "healthy dose of hubris" is also something with which, as political scientists Fortier and Ornstein have noted, "virtually all second-term presidents start" (2007, p.2)." Although Bush was not overall a notable exception to this rule, his Second Inaugural Address contains a fascinating mixture of hubris and humility. His interventionalist imperative, so inherently hubristic in its call to dominate the world with our particular brand of government, to export our democracy (used by Bush largely synonymously with freedom) to "every nation and culture" (2005, para. 6), was so pronounced "with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom" (2005, para. 25), and so universal in scope, that the White House had to backpedal the very next day to assure "that the speech never was intended to signal a major change in U.S. policy or relationships" (Fortier, 2007, p. 90). Yet, at the same time, Bush humbly honors "customs and traditions very different from our own" (2005, para. 6), recognizes that "America's influence is not unlimited" (2005, para. 7), tells other (allied) countries that "we honor your friendship; we rely on your counsel; and we depend on your help" (2005, para. 15), admits that "our country must abandon all the habits of racism" (2005, para. 22), and, walking back prior statements,[12] states that the confidence is "not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation" (2005, para. 25).

Despite these tokens of humility, which serve a predominantly rhetorical function, the overall thrust of the Address shares two things with the Model and "Annexation": a sense of hubris (although to different degrees), and also the implicit argument that God is on their side, which is why they understand themselves to have prevailed and to continue to prevail, to manifest their destiny, which for O'Sullivan was unfettered, unlimited, Providentially endorsed, westward expansion, and for Bush is unfettered, unlimited, Providentially endorsed, global exportation of U.S. democracy/liberty, the seeds of each of which are seen in Winthrop's concluding paragraph, with its own variety of hubris, and especially with its stance of possession. (Yet, importantly, as we shall see below, of the two aforementioned aspects of

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[12] "Our nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world," George W. Bush, in a campaign speech in 2000. Cited in Rodgers, p. 272.

Winthrop's conclusion – possession and sinfulness – the latter counterbalances the former, providing a

check that is absent in O'Sullivan.)

But Bush does more than appeal to Providential endorsement; he casts his Address in millennialist

time by invoking the apocalyptic "day of fire" already in the second paragraph, setting the tone for the

rest of the address (and appealing to other born-again Evangelicals who saw 9/11 in an end-of-times light).

As such, he presents U.S. foreign policy as providentially part of God's plan. Thus, when he comes a few

paragraphs later to quoting Lincoln, two interesting things happen. First, as in Winthrop – and utterly

absent in O'Sullivan – there is an awareness of potential punishment by God for failure (in this case failure

to ensure freedom). And second, God is employed with a subtle but remarkably hubristic flourish:

Whereas Lincoln typically invoked God as a supplicant, Bush invokes God as an Evangelical fundamentalist

jingo, warning to "the rulers of outlaw regimes," lest he need deploy "America's [considerable] influence

… and … use it confidently in freedom's cause" (2005, paras. 7 and 13). As communication experts

Hartnett and Mercieca have noted, whereas Lincoln prayed in a humble tone, Bush threatened with

bluster and swagger, and so God has morphed from a sublime power above taking sides into a blunt

instrument of empire" (2007). Because, they note, Bush's rhetoric in this Second Inaugural Address does

not seek to change opinions, but rather functions "to punish outsiders and reward insiders," the Address

"constitutes a form of what Jennifer Rose Mercieca calls 'epideictic violence,' a form of speech meant to

celebrate certain values while mercilessly silencing opponents and disabling criticism" (Hartnett and

Mercieca, 2007, p. 612).

All three texts, human texts that they are, unsurprisingly display strong ingroup/outgroup biases

(cf. above and footnote 5): Winthrop's "brotherly affection" was homophily for ingroup-Puritan, not

outgroup-Native-American, brothers; O'Sullivan's humanity in "defence of humanity" was (ironically [cf.

footnote 2]) ingroup-Anglo-Saxon, not Native American, humanity; and Bush's rationale for exporting

democracy/liberty was to protect the ingroup homeland, and was expressed in a fundamentalist, us-vs-

them, epideictically violent way that "did not attempt to speak to or for the whole American people [nor]

seek to unite the nation's feuding factions, as Thomas Jefferson attempted to do in his 1801 first inaugural

address [which also presented the U.S. as a redeemer nation; cf. below and footnote 15] … rather, Bush's audience were those 'true believer' Americans who already supported his war plans" (Hartnett and Mercieca, 2007, p. 611).

Regarding the foundational values of these three texts, then, Bush's text rest firmly on the value of freedom, by which Bush largely means U.S.-branded democracy. Although there are strands of Winthrop's charity ("serve in a cause[13] larger than your wants, larger than yourself" [2005, para. 18] and "our Nation relies on men and women who look after a neighbor" [2005, para. 22]), and although there is a deep, central streak of O'Sullivan's value of expansion, clearly the most prominent value is liberty[14] in Bush's Address. Therein, he advocates for an international, interventionalist approach that is divinely endorsed in "a visible direction, set by … the Author of Liberty [i.e., God]" (2005, para. 25). Indeed, leading up to this address, Bush had commented that "our nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world."[15] In his Second Inaugural Address, this is a commission not merely *to be* a model, and not merely *to expand* westward, but rather *to intervene* in global affairs following 9/11, since "the best hope for peace in our world is the *expansion* of freedom in all the world … it is the urgent requirement of … 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 … in our world" (2005, paras. 4-6, emphasis added)."[16] Although each of these three manifestations of manifest destiny is quite different in degree and character over time, all speak to a special destiny – as a model, as natural growth westward, as an exporter of salvific (and defensive) liberty/democracy – that the U.S./America is understood to providentially have in God's world.

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[13] By which Bush likely means Bush's cause.

[14] Word stems "free*" and "liber*", occurring >50 times in the speech, are fourth-most-common, exceeded only by "the" (141 times), "of" (115 times), and "and" (108 times).

[15] George W. Bush, in a campaign speech in 2000. Cited in Rodgers (2018, p. 272). Cf. footnote 11.

[16] Bush's primary, or ultimate, goal here seems to be national security, with global freedom the secondary, or proximate, means to that goal, by exporting what he believes to be our better, redemptive, form or civil life, but he was not, of course, the first to understand the U.S. as a redeemer nation in the world: Stiles concluded his May 8, 1783 sermon that "America['s] purest body should … be converting the world" (cited in Cherry, p. 92). Thomas Jefferson in his 1801, First Inaugural Address said that "this [U.S.] Government [is] the world's best hope" (cited in Cherry, p. 107); Lyman Beecher understood the nation as, "in the providence of God, destined to lead the way in the moral and political emancipation of the world" (p. 10); Josiah Strong plead not, "'Save America for America's sake, but, Save America for the world's sake'" (cited in Tuveson, p. 167); Albert Beveridge concluded that "God marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world" (cited in Cherry, p. 120). See Beecher, L. (1835). *Plea for the West*. Truman and Smith. , Cherry, C. (1998). *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (C. Cherry, Ed. 2nd ed.). The University of North Carolina Press. , Tuveson, E. L. (1968). *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Midway Reprint ed.). University of Chicago Press.

As Anders Stephanson notes in his prologue (1995), "destiny" is the dominant term in "manifest destiny." All three texts reveal, in different ways at different times, that their authors framed their role in the world as one having a special *destiny*. "This vision," Stephanson continues,

> "has been a constant throughout American history, but historically it has led to two quite different ways of being toward the outside world. The first [as in Winthrop] was to unfold into an exemplary state *separate* from the corrupt and fallen world, letting others emulate it as best they can. The second [Bush's position] was to push the world along by means of regenerative *intervention*" (1995, p. xii, original emphases).

5. Manifest Destiny as an Ideology Made by Cultural Producers

Despite differences in the core values at the heart of their cultural frameworks, all three of these texts and their authors have functioned together, with their overlapping ideologies, over the course of history, to produce, modify, and maintain the culture of manifest destiny that exists today. While Bush and historians are right that history is contingent, historical sociologists strive to see more in history than contingencies, to "find patterns by looking across cases, down branching paths, or within complex sequences" (Clemens 2007), wherein causal mechanisms may be glimpsed among the historical complexity. As Clemens points out, one's location on a historical timeline and in the period's social institutions shapes futures paths of experience and social action, and this process is, I suggest, seen in the history of manifest destiny. Accordingly, Winthrop's seeds of manifest destiny in the final paragraphs of the Model, however surrounded by his core value of charity, have sprouted somehow, hundreds of years later in O'Sullivan's core value of unfettered (and uncharitable) expansionism, and finally blossoming into an interventionalist core value that Winthrop never could have foreseen, an altogether different fruit.

At each step in this historical process, the agents in question – Winthrop, O'Sullivan, and Bush – frame themselves against both the historical backdrop and the sociopolitical milieu of each of their presents and anticipated futures. Accordingly, the overlapping diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (Snow and Benford 1998) that take place are, like their ideologies/values, highly overlapping. Nevertheless, these three authors and their key texts analyzed in this paper do bear analysis via these three core framing tasks. To wit, a major problem perceived by (diagnosed by) Winthrop is the delicate

balance in which hung the entire Massachusetts Bay Colony project, ever threatened by their original sin and risk of backsliding. Winthrop's solution to this problem, was, of course the "Xian Charity" after which the Model is titled, and the prognosis guarded, perched as they were, as a city upon a hill, ever exposed and at risk.

While Winthrop's main framing is diagnostic, but with a view to prognosis, O'Sullivan's main framing task was prognostic, in response to his view of the diagnosis of unsated entitlement. And his solutions, strategies, tactics, and targets are spelled out in "Annexation," both specifically in his argument for the annexation of Texas, and generally, given his belief in "the fulfillment of the general law" (1845, p. 3) guaranteeing the anticipated prognosis of westward expansion.

And finally, going literally beyond the completed westward expansion, and figuratively beyond the diagnosis of Winthrop and the prognosis of O'Sullivan, Bush embodies Snow and Benford's (1988) third main framing task, viz. mobilizing framing. As discussed above, Bush's Address is a clarion call to mobilize support for intervention.

Given the many ways – only a few of which are examined here – that manifest destiny as an ideology has been framed and employed to various ends, and its meanings incorporated into culture along the way from the *Arabella*'s 17th century to today, the question then arises about what, if anything, of its meaning is maintained over time. If, as David Heise has argued, humans are meaning-maintainers, more than meaning-creators, "who continually reconstruct [their changing] world to fit intuitive knowledge generated from sentiments, within cognitive and logical constraints" (2002), then one would expect to see a common thread undergirding the cultural meaning produced by these texts. One such thread is the appeal to a divine Providence understood to endorse each victory, and punish each failure.

6. IMPLICATIONS

In the history of these three authors, each appeals to Providence. For Winthrop and the Puritans, God had providentially cleared their way with the "miraculous plague." Indeed, of nothing was Winthrop more confident, Rodgers notes, "than that they had a key part to play in God's scheme of history" (2018, p. 4).

O'Sullivan, even though sounding less "religious" overall, was abundantly certain that "our manifest

destiny [was] allotted by Providence" (1845, p. 1). And Bush's plan for exporting U.S. democracy/liberty

was endorsed by "the Author of Liberty" (2005, para. 25), by which, of course, he means God.

Throughout, there is a pervasive notion of this divine, capital-P, Providence invoked by all three, namely

God as the omnipotent power guiding human *destiny*.

Such appeals to Providence, however, as endorsement of one's successes (and punishment for

one's failures), are not only often idolatrous, as religion scholar Karen Armstrong as suggested,[17] but

hubristic and potentially dangerous: when God – divine Providence – is employed for such endorsement,

she explains,

> there is an inherent danger that people would imagine "him" as a larger, more powerful
> version of themselves, which they could use to endorse their own ideas, practices, loves,
> and hatreds — sometimes to lethal effect. There can be only one absolute, so once a
> finite idea, theology, nation, polity, or ideology is made supreme, it is compelled to
> destroy anything that opposes it. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 321)

Similarly, Hartnett has argued as an expert in globalization and social justice that "the habit of invoking

[Providential] U.S. exceptionalism encourages a dangerous form of rhetorical absolutism in which political

disagreements are escalated into eschatological threats to life itself, thus justifying a recurring pattern of

waging war in the name of nation and God" (2013). Instead of what he euphemistically calls the

"'enlightened' unilateralism" invoked by O'Sullivan in "Annexation," Hartnett has suggested that a wiser

narrative of our American role would be "neither to judge nor to save nor to destroy the world but simply

to live with and in it—humbly, multilaterally, peacefully, not as the exceptional giant but as one nation

among many" (2013). Certainly, the narratives we tell about ourselves matter tremendously, and this

observation gives rise to interesting questions, such as: What is the role or utility of the O'Sullivan

narrative? Can America be great without saying so? Might the U.S. be great*er* if Americans were not

always telling themselves the narrative of American greatness?

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[17] She refers to the "idolatry [that] has always been one of the pitfalls of monotheism. It is idolatrous, because it elevates an inherently limited value to an unacceptably high level." Armstrong, K. (2009). *The Case for God*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

All too often, inherent in the notion of manifest destiny is this kindred belief that Providence/God has not only endorsed the exploits of "the chosen ones," but has identified these "chosen ones" as superior beings.[18] O'Sullivan's "imbecile … Mexico" (1945 p. 5) and "perfidy and folly [of] Mexico" (p. 3) are overt, explicit examples consistent with his braggart tone, but even in Bush, albeit more implicitly, there is the surety of superiority of ingroup over outgroup.

However, Providence can also be associated with positive, transformative potential. Religious appeals to Providence, much like the "sacred rage" discussed in religious-peacebuilding scholar Scott Appleby's book, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (2000), can be a powerful force for both peace and violence. As important as ingroup/outgroup distinctions (biases) are to the theme of manifest destiny in these three texts, and indeed to people in general (cf. footnote 5), it is perhaps even more important to avoid a reductionist approach, lest one commit the same error that Appleby's fellow-religious-peacebuilding-scholar Atalia Omer notes in Samuel Huntington's classic "Clash of Civilizations," viz. rendering religion [or manifest destiny] as somehow ahistorical and unchanging (2015). Bush's War on Terrorism, which, though not mentioned by name in his Address, looms large in the post-9/11 Address and combines in unhelpful ways with his strong sense of Providential endorsement and his Evangelical sense of apocalyptic time, producing just such a reductionist, oversimplified, us-vs-them scenario. As Hartnett and Mercieca put it, "by combining apocalyptic time and God's endorsement to reinforce and perpetuate an imperial agenda, President Bush's second inaugural address strives to portray the United States' prosecution of the War on Terrorism as inevitable and unquestionable" (2007, p.611) which is ironic given his reminder toward the end of the Address (and at the beginning of this paper), that history is contingent, not inevitable.

Appleby's "ambivalence of the sacred" may be one of the most important foundations for religious peacebuilding (Omer, 2015, pp. 3-4). Whereas all three of these texts reveal a belief in Providence – what Appleby calls "a passion for the infinite," or a "sacred rage" – it becomes dangerous

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[18] As Stephanson notes, for example, we hear H. W. Bellows bellowing that the slothful Mexicans "will ultimately fall a political prey … to a superior [White, Anglo-Saxon] population" so morally superior as to be "out-loving" them, with their "weaker blood," in an eventual domination that "we regard with as much certainty, as we do the final extinction of the Indian races, to which the mass of the Mexican population seems very little superior." Quoted by Stephanson, A. (1995). *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. Hill and Wang.

only when "the dynamics of 'othering' and demonizing kick in" (2015, P. 36), demanding religiously justified destruction of the "other." However, Appleby finds in the "'ambivalence of the sacred' … a powerful source of nonviolent peacebuilding, compassion, and love of enemy."[19] As dangerous as Providence can be, therefore, and indeed has been in Winthrop, O'Sullivan, and Bush, it can also be a force in the service of religious peacebuilding. Similarly, the Christian sense of human sinfulness, blameworthiness, so palpably burdensome to Winthrop, and clearly present in Bush, but rather absent in O'Sullivan, can also act as a moral check on the dangers of these understandings of Providence, or divine endorsement. That O'Sullivan is unencumbered by this burden, leading to his "blank check" for domineering expansion, is itself perhaps yet more dangerous.

As Cornel West aptly put it,[20] however, "None us are [sic] pure … It's not a matter of being pure or pristine. It's a matter of [keeping] sight of the humanity of others." What this history of manifest destiny shows us is that we humans, who tend "to other" the outgroup, can look back and see the seeds of manifest destiny on the *Arabella*, mark one particular outgrowth in O'Sullivan's 19th-century expansion, and another in Bush's apocalyptically aware interventionism, and note that the very same sense of Providence, and the very same Christianity, though both interpreted and expressed so differently in these texts, can be vehicles both for peace and for violence, since neither is inevitable. These tendencies of ours towards religiously endorsed peace and violence – and not our right to expansionism – are our Providential destiny, and they are certainly manifest, and yet, manifestly open to our choices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[19] He is using "ambivalence of the sacred" to mean "the pre-moral, pre-interpreted, 'raw' (if always mediated) experience of the radical mystery of the numinous." Appleby, S. (2015). Religious Violence. In A. Omer, S. Appleby, & D. Little (Eds.), *Yhe Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (pp. 36). Oxford University Press.

[20] West is referring to racism, another common manifestation of the ingroup/outgroups biases broadly applicable regarding manifest destiny. West, C. (June 20, 2019). *Breaking News* [Interview]. https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1141882675491418112.

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