

1-1-2001

The myth of national unity: President George W Bush's rhetorical reconstruction of America

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THE MYTH OF NATIONAL UNITY: PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S
RHETORICAL RECONSTRUCTION
OF AMERICA

by

William E. Belk

Master of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun School of Communication
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2002

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Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
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July 16, 2002

The Thesis prepared by

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The Myth of National Unity: President George W. Bush's

Rhetorical Reconstruction of America

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Master of Arts in Communication Studies

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ABSTRACT

The Myth of National Unity: President George W. Bush's Rhetorical Reconstruction of America

by

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On Inaugural Day, President George W. Bush faced an unusually hostile audience. To reunite the nation, President Bush reached back to Americans' fundamental archetypal images, featuring the American founding myth. However, this reunification process was not complete until his speeches of September 14 and 20, 2001. Through his rhetorical transformation of worldwide terrorism into Evil, Bush reconstructed a broadly accepted image of America as Good and concurrently legitimated his ascendancy to the Presidency. However, myth also serves a less benign purpose of subtly promoting narrower ideology disguised as cultural tradition. Through analysis of Bush's three major speeches of 2001, this critique demonstrates how a seriously fractured audience can be rhetorically reconstructed, while simultaneously suggesting how rhetors may co-opt mythic images to covertly espouse a more narrow political agenda. Finally, it offers a method of extracting ideology and motive from those images in order to more fully examine and debate them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

[I]f students of communication could more proficiently explicate the saliently human dimensions of a discourse--if we could, in a sense, discover for a complex linguistic formulation a corresponding form of character--we should then be able to subsume that discourse under a moral order and thus satisfy our obligation to history. (Edwin Black 110)

On Inaugural Day, President George W. Bush faced a hostile and highly suspicious national audience, with a large portion of the American population, including a majority of African Americans, viewing his Presidency as being illegitimate (Washington Post, "Washington Post-ABC News Poll: The Bush Transit"). Although his unexpectedly eloquent inaugural oration was well-received and began the reconstruction of the American polity at its most fundamental basis, the unifying process was not completely successful. Public skepticism remained high, growing signs of economic recession weakened Bush's public support gained through his promised tax cut, and a divided Congress threatened any progress on the President's social agenda. In fact, when terrorists struck the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, they attacked a nation still very much divided and without a broadly acknowledged national leader embodied in the President.

And yet, within days of the terrorist attacks, Americans were firmly united behind a familiar rhetoric that tied past, present, and future. Lacking a basis in either policy or personal ethos, President Bush reached back to Americans' most fundamental archetypal images, featuring the founding myth of America as quintessentially Good, a Chosen Land guided by Divine inspiration. Through symbolic re-enactment of an idealized citizenry and characterization of the national assailants as the essence of Biblical Evil, President Bush invited his audience to continue America's social progress by reliving their national mythic past. This paper will argue that America's social and political divisions highlighted by the 2000 Presidential election were not fully healed until George W. Bush's speeches of September 14 and 20, 2001, in the aftermath of massive terrorist attacks on America. Through his rhetorical construction of worldwide terrorism as Evil, Bush finally completed his reconstruction of a broadly accepted image of America as Good and concurrently legitimated his ascendancy to the Presidency. Moreover, this reconstructed and reunified nation was fully mobilized to lead an international struggle to end worldwide Evil embodied in terrorist organizations. These beneficial characteristics have been exhaustively studied from within a variety of academic disciplines. Myth is one of the most ubiquitous of rhetorical forms, conveying shared values and special cultural purpose through familiar narrative and image that can provide powerful impetus for identification and unity. By connecting past and present, it also possesses the power to propel society into the future.

However, the extant mythic literature does not so fully explain the power of this rhetorical form to dominate so rapidly a societal world view and political discourse without significant public debate. Within a matter of days following the terrorist attacks, President Bush was able to set the nation along a course of fighting terrorism throughout the world as

part of a “timeless” battle between Good and Evil. This substantial shift in foreign policy, which also subsumed most aspects of domestic policy, was advocated by the president within the narrative of the nation’s founding myth. Kenneth Burke (1947) suggested that mythic narrative disguises and hides from view ideology, transmitting it to an audience in a manner that cannot not easily be debated. Within a totally different context, Ted Jelen (1998) cautioned that religious rhetoric was not well-suited for public discourse because its underlying justifications also are not debatable. However, this darker side of myth has not yet received systematic scholarly attention sufficient to develop a full understanding of this dynamic.

This study aims to add to our understanding of mythic rhetoric and public address in at least two ways. In addition to demonstrating the power of mythic narrative both to unify society and to dominate public discourse during periods of national crisis or confusion, it will examine the dialectic properties of myth in political discourse and suggest a process for unearthing the lurking ideology and inferred polity preferences from social and political myth. Here, I will suggest how rhetors may co-opt comfortable mythic beliefs to espouse covertly a narrow political agenda and finally offer a method of extracting a rhetor’s ideology from those images in order to more fully examine and debate them. The second aim is to demonstrate the capacity of creation myth to dominate public discourse in a manner that makes difficult the questioning of either the narrative or its underlying ideology. While previous scholars have observed that myth can fill a cultural vacuum with shared values and identity, no one has yet attempted to clearly demonstrate the process of how myth can actually dominate public discourse through its unassailable foundations.

Both of these phenomena are suggested in previous rhetorical studies, such as Hinds and Windt's analysis of Cold War rhetoric (1991); their recurrence in this situation suggest that reliance on myth may have a larger place in American political thought and rhetoric that requires our attention. By analyzing critically how particular rhetorical responses affect key historical moments such as the period under consideration here, we add to our knowledge of the interaction of rhetoric and history (Zarefsky 30-31). Eventually, by comparing similar situations and rhetorical strategies, we gain insight into broader human communication. While this study examines the effect of myth on American society during a particular crisis situation, there is at least some prior evidence (Hinds and Windt) that this interaction transcends the current situation to reveal a deeper truth about American society. Further study also may reveal this dynamic to be universal across cultures.

Due to the extremely fractious nature of the national audience following an especially divisive election, President Bush undertook to rebuild national unity on the basis of America's most fundamental mythic narrative and images. Despite some evidence that his inaugural address had some success in this regard, complete reconstruction of the American public did not succeed until his speeches in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. This study will examine this rhetorical process by focusing on President Bush's three major speeches of this period. Chapter 2 reviews the literature from several academic disciplines, focusing on the functions of myth, the development of America's special myth of creation and its use in foreign policy rhetoric, and finally, the role of religion in American public discourse. Chapter 3 outlines a theoretical perspective building upon Edwin Black's framework for analyzing rhetorical genres, expanded to consider audience and motive. Chapters 4 through 6 examine the situation, strategy and effects of Bush's

inaugural, National Cathedral, and Joint Session speeches, respectively. Conclusions and evaluation are offered in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This critical analysis draws from, and builds upon, a rich body of research from anthropology, psychology, rhetoric, history, and political science. Following a review of several theoretical perspectives on the definition and function of myth in society, drawing from anthropology, psychology, rhetorical criticism, and political science, this chapter surveys the historical influence of myth and religion in American social and political history and examine the effects of religion on public discourse.

Definition and Function of Myth

According to William Doty, myths are polyfunctional and polysemantic, both across cultural subgroups and across time (56-58). Arguing that they should not be considered on the same level as scientific examination, he suggested that myths “do convey a certain kind of knowledge but not so much the knowledge of the scientific laboratory as the knowledge of communal, even racial, experience that has proved itself useful and healthy” (61-62). In his 1986 mythographic study, Doty provided a comprehensive definition of myth:

A mythological corpus consists of (1) a usually complex network of myths that are (2) culturally important (3) imaginal stories, conveying the means of (5) metaphoric and symbolic diction, (6) graphic imagery, and (7)

emotional conviction and participation, (8) the primal, foundational accounts (9) of aspects of the real, experienced world and (10) humankind's roles and relative statuses within it.

Mythologies may (11) convey the political and moral values of a culture and (12) provide systems of interpreting (13) individual experience within a universal perspective, which may include (14) the intervention of suprahuman entities as well as (15) aspects of the natural and cultural orders. Myths may be enacted or reflected in (16) rituals, ceremonies, and dramas, and (17) they may provide materials for secondary elaboration, the constituent mythemes having become merely images or reference points for a subsequent story, such as a folktale, historical legend, novella, or prophecy. (Doty 1986 11)

Doty described myths as "not little but big stories, touching not just the everyday but the sacred or specially marked topics that concern much more than the immediate situation" (8), providing "primary, foundational material" (8) and "systems or patterns for signifying meanings, especially meanings of the past" (31). By supplying society's "root metaphors" and "ruling images", mythological language gives meaning to a culture's existence, past, present, and future, and provides the means for socialization (20).

While clearly differentiating cultural myths from "private fictions," Doty suggested we might find a close association between the two, as the former can be considered "socializations of private dreams" (13). It is from this relationship that myth draws its social power, coaxing individuals into striving for personal aspirations through participation in the mythic narrative (24). When the mythic goals no longer reflect individual aspirations, or

when individuals no longer feel they can personally achieve those cultural goals, myth loses power as a framework for cultural unity and identification. However, so long as individuals participate in their retelling and re-enactment, myths are regarded as “unquestionable truths” regardless of whether they are historically based (27).

Finally, myths provide both group and individual norms, by highlighting particular mythic social structures and behaviors (28) and conveying political and moral values. “creating a shared symbolic articulation of social patterns and relations . . . and blocking non-approved explorations of relationship or behavior or inquiry . . .” (29). Here, it serves a stabilizing and often conservative role by reinforcing approval of past accepted values and social practices.

Taking a psychological approach, Joseph Campbell suggested that the prime function of myth is to “supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward” (1968 11) and that this symbolization gives myth its vitality, “delivering not simply an idea, but a sense of actual participation” (1986 12). He argued that mythic symbols are not invented, “do not spring from or refer to historical events” (1997 163), but are “spontaneous productions of the psyche” (1968 4).¹

Campbell identified four primary functions that myths perform in society. First, they reconcile the conscious mind with prior existence. Second, they form a cosmological framework from which to understand the universe, wherein “all things should be recognized as parts of a single great holy picture” (1997 180). Third, they validate a specific social order, “authorizing its moral code as a construct against criticism or human emendation”

1. When they contain theological images of creation, they may take on the nature of “total acts,” in which situation, actor, and action coincide perfectly to produce total transformation (Burke 1969 19).

(1997 181). The fourth and most basic function is to socialize individuals “to the aims and ideal of their social groups” (182).

In an insightful observation significant to this study, Campbell differentiated between Oriental and Occidental mythological types (1997 14). Whereas the former explain the universe in terms of unending cyclical change patterned after nature’s seasons, Occidental mythology has a *telos*, or trajectory, embodied in the ongoing battle between light and dark, Good and Evil. Beginning with Zoroaster, this radically different world view assigned moral value to the opposing cosmic forces and invited man to join in the battle to defeat Evil. As Campbell explained, “We have here a potent mythical formula for the reorientation of the human spirit--pitching it forward along the way of time, summoning man to an assumption of responsibility for the reform of the universe in God’s name, and thus fostering a new, potentially political philosophy of holy war” (1997 14).²

Comparing the study of mythology to the elusive quest to learn from Proteus, Campbell contended that “[t]here is no final system for the interpretation of myths” (1968 381). Although scholars of rhetoric have generally viewed myth along the same general lines as Doty and Campbell, there has been considerably greater plurality among them. Perhaps most significantly for this study, rhetorical scholarship has extended the analysis of myth beyond definition and function to examine the critical issue of processes through which myth works.

Viewed broadly, myth is “any anonymously composed story telling of origins and destinies: the explanations a society offers its young of why the world is and why we do as

2. This, of course, forms a central tenet of most Western religions, including the Judeo-Christian tradition, and lies at the core of the American Puritan’s mission in the New World detailed later in this chapter.

we do” (Wellek and Warren 119). In recounting the myth, the rhetor invites the audience to participate in the story, usually one that heralds the society’s grander days (Lewis 283).

Myths, as stories or images about central events in a community’s past, represent “a society’s view of its own social contract with gods, ancestors, and the order of nature” (Frye 28), and thus provide a means of identification for members of society during periods of confusion, uncertainty, or crisis.

In a 1975 study, Waldo Braden suggested that “myth draws upon memory and imagination, that it results from a collective effort over a considerable period of time, that it represents an oversimplification of events, persons, and relationships, that its substance is more emotional than logical, and that it combines both reality and fiction” (116). In fact, he emphasized that this co-mingling of fact and fiction and its selective simplification of events, individuals, and broad concepts are particularly notable features of myth (116; also Bruner 279). In this regard, he quoted Walter Lippman, who observed that “[w]hat a myth never contains is the critical power to separate its truth from error” (115).

Wrapped in narrative form, myth highlights “character and action,” eschewing “a rational logic that emphasizes connections between problems and solutions” (Lewis 283). Thus, myths gain influence more from their retelling rather than their rationality. In fact, because myths are neither true nor false, but are simply accepted or not, they hold sway over a society’s imagination only so long as they are “accepted without reflection or questioning” (Braden 121).

According to Braden, myth is particularly potent in difficult times, when people “seek escape to a simpler existence” (119). Drawing upon Kenneth Burke, he explained that the common themes of cultural norms, values, and origins provide an effective although

perhaps complex means of establishing identification or consubstantiality (120-21). The force of identification is greatest when there is division in society, for without this feeling of separateness, "there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (Burke 1950 22). However, myths that are particularly central to a society may not need full recounting during troubling times in order to invite audience participation and identification; instead, because the narrative is so fully understood and believed, the rhetor may only need to allude briefly to mythic times, figures, or values for the audience to enthymematically complete the process (Braden 121). As Braden suggested, this strength of myth makes the task of identifying its presence especially difficult for the rhetorical critic.

Because myth relies upon beliefs and values already held within society, it primarily tends to "confirm, intensify, and amplify" existing sentiments (Braden 122). This suggests that myths may have an inherently conservative nature, although Braden only implicitly reached this conclusion. However, in a critique of the jeremiad in American public address, that directly relies upon founding myth for its rhetorical power, John Murphy did make this connection (409-412). Moreover, Murphy suggested that because myth rests upon widely-accepted traditional values, its activation may represent an attempt by the rhetor to control social behavior during crises by limiting the breadth of acceptable options under deliberation to those embodied in myth (412). In a study of Southern rhetoric, T. Harry Williams concurred, offering that "the myth of a perfect society was a powerful argument against change, against even considering whether there was any need for change" (7).

In addition to providing the means by which society can unify and identify with its core values, Kenneth Burke contended that myth is one level removed from ideology and also serves a less benign purpose of subtly promoting narrow social and political interests

disguised as monistic cultural tradition (Burke 1947; 1950 197-208). Thus, myth has a Janus-like effect of not simply uniting though recollection of common cultural heritage, but also explaining the past “in order to justify what happens in the present” (Northrop Frye 28). As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell suggested in her 1997 critique of President Nixon’s Vietnamization speech, when ideology takes on universal proportions by intertwining with myth, those who share in the beliefs and world view come to accept it as truth rather than as an idealized and constructed representation (204). The power of a single unifying creation myth to support even opposing political ideologies is aptly revealed in Walter Fisher’s analysis of competing versions of the American Dream in the 1972 Presidential campaign (1973).

In her research into American frontier myth, Janice Hocker Rushing adopted a somewhat broader approach to the definition and function of myth. In particular, she viewed myth as essentially progressive, propelling society forward as it refers to past greatness or values. According to Rushing, myths need not be the “big” societal stories referred to by Doty, nor do they require complete and transparent retelling in order to garner the desired audience response. Even the slightest reference to highly accepted and evocative myth can trigger an enthymematic response by a receptive audience, as she suggested in analyzing Ronald Reagan’s 1983 Star Wars speech (1986). Moreover, like Fisher, Rushing demonstrated the power of myth to harbor and promulgate diametrically opposite values, individualism and moralism, within the same basic narrative (1983 16).

In a 1990 essay, Robert Rowland proposed to codify a rather limited interpretation of both the structure and function of myth in rhetoric (Rowland 1990). In general, he offered that myths “provide answers to value-laden questions that cannot be addressed through

discursive forms” and that they “transcend ordinary life and provide meaningful grounding for that which cannot be supported rationally” (103). In providing “true” answers to these issues and crises, Rowland noted that this does not suggest that myths represent historical accuracy. In the context of myth, “true” narrowly means “accepted”, “treated as true” by society (103).

Acknowledging disagreement within the discipline, Rowland suggested that scholars adopt a perspective that reinforces the relationship between function and structure. In reviewing the extant literature, he advanced five commonly accepted characteristics of mythic structure (103-104). First, myths are a narrative or story “which symbolically solve the problem facing society, provide justification for a social structure, or deal with a psychological crisis” (103), not simply images or philosophical reflections. Second, main mythic characters must be of heroic stature, because “only a great hero can conquer evil” (104). Since myths explain only those great issues that society and individuals cannot solve on their own, it follows that the greater the crisis, the more heroic the mythic characters. Third, myths usually take place outside of normal historical time *or* during a time of great symbolic significance, taking willing auditors “out of history to solve the problems posed by history” (104). Fourth, and relatedly, myths usually occur either outside the normal world *or* in a place of great symbolic significance. Drawing upon Burke’s pentadic approach, “the scene should fit the act” (104). Finally, myths rely heavily on archetypal language, “the most powerful symbols in a society,” that may originate in the individual psyche or from common human or social experiences (104).

Based upon this analysis, Rowland opined that scholars should be more discerning in their use of mythic analysis to explain a particular rhetorical act and proposed a hierarchical

categorization to describe certain social stories. Within this schema, the term “myth” would be reserved for those accounts providing evidence of all the characteristics noted here. Those acts not viewed as true by society would be categorized as “folk-tales”, while the final category of “social narrative” would encompass all other stories lacking mythic form (105).

In response, Martha Solomon, Michael Osborn, Barry Brummett, and Janice Hocker Rushing voiced considerable opposition to Rowland’s views, not only on the basis of his substantive characterization of myth, but also the proposition that myth can only be defined in his terms. Suggesting that singular and narrow perspectives are reflective of dogmatism and intolerance, Solomon argued for greater plurality and warned that monolithic meanings would unnecessarily stifle rhetorical criticism, thereby limiting our understanding of human communication (119).

Osborn objected Rowland’s narrow categorization on many levels. Citing Rushing’s work on the Old West and Star Wars, he suggested that an audience need not take seriously a particular reference in order to believe in the myth behind the reference (123-24). Like Solomon, he also rejected a narrow categorization that might lead to critical narrow-mindedness and stagnation in critical approach (124-25), calling for a broader perspective than Rowland proposed.

Finally, Rushing suggested that Rowland’s approach too closely identifies with the critic’s needs rather than the audience’s perceptions (1990 137). Because myth can be viewed as an expression of the unconscious mind, “believability” is not a salient criterion (139). Moreover, she suggested that some “creative” myths, instead of leading a culture to its roots, may point to the future (140). Finally, she challenged the belief that myths provide

culturally-sanctioned solutions, offering instead that some myths simply reveal problems (140).

This debate demonstrated the need for open-mindedness and plurality of approaches with dealing with mythic criticism. Viewed in rhetorical terms, myth can take on not only many forms but can offer many meanings to the auditor and critic. This veritable kaleidoscope of function and meaning provides significant challenges and obstacles to the critic looking for crisp distinctions and stark revelations from mythic text.

The view of myth from the political science perspective is somewhat more homogenous. According to Murray Edelman, myth is “a particularly relevant form of symbol in the emergence of mass political movements” (53). Because myth is potent in fostering group identification during social crises, it can play a significant role in the development of national or cultural political groupings (54-56). In fact, he suggested that the telling of mythic accounts may actually be prompted by periods of great social tension or crisis, when “[n]either the enemy nor the benevolent leader in these situations can be viewed as a human being with complexities, ambivalences, and a potentiality for empathy. They are [instead] perceived as embodiments of a particular role,” thus allowing or even encouraging behaviors that would not otherwise be socially acceptable (62).

Here, Edelman pointed to the powerful characteristic of mythic language to create perception and spur action. Noting that myths provoke significant emotional response, he observed that “[i]f a few classic themes are surefire vehicles for engaging the emotions of large numbers of people, leaders will predictably interpret events in these forms, and their audiences will eagerly cooperate in creating the world in the same configurations” (77). Prominent in Edelman’s cataloging of mythic themes is the “outgroup” that is plotting

destruction and harm. He offered that “[w]hen such a myth is offered . . . anxious people prove eager to organize their perceptions of the world so as to reinforce the myth, and often do so with fervor” (77).

A close corollary to this is the theme of the benevolent leader leading society from imminent danger, as myths “catalyze uncritical attachment to established leaders, regardless of the particular policies they pursue” (78). These myths simplify a tense and conflict-ridden world, permitting “men to live in a world in which the causes are simple and neat and the remedies are apparent” (83). By participating in mythic themes of external enemies and heroic leaders, individuals “feel reassured by guidance, certainty, and trust” (83). Such mythic representations may externalize a society’s problems and tensions. Thus, according to Edelman, the confluence of an outside enemy, a benevolent leader promising victory, and a sacrificing public “enables people suffering from diverse sources of inner anxiety to assure each other that the fault is not their own but that of an identifiable enemy” (80). Significantly, “[t]o become attached to this myth is, then, to assume a particular political identity or role: the uncritical follower” (80). Edelman observed the close relationship between anxiety and the invocation of myth: the former conforms the slightest metaphoric reference into “vivid and intensely held beliefs” while the latter not only soothes anxiety but molds society into political action (80).

While the foregoing summary of the leading myth literature highlights greater agreement than dissension, it underscores two significant aspects. First, each scholarly discipline lends a slightly different perspective to the matter. From anthropology and psychology come the cultural and individual significance of myth, respectively. From rhetorical criticism come key insights in identification, participation, and ideology. Finally,

political science connects myth with political action and external threat. It seems apparent that no critical analysis of mythic use can be successful without being informed by all of these perspectives. Second, the debate surrounding Rowland's attempt to codify mythic analysis suggests that no single analysis, even one informed by a multidisciplinary perspective, can hope to understand fully the workings of myth on society and individuals. Thus, plurality of perspective not only may be healthy, it is probably absolutely necessary to understand completely the deepest meaning of any mythic account. From this point, we turn to the rhetorical history of America's founding myth, with particular emphasis on religious aspects and allusions to the nation's earliest days.

Myth and Religion in American Politics

The relation between myth, religion, and politics is a complex but central issue in American political and social life and is a critical nexus of this study. Throughout its history, America's domestic and foreign politics have been imbued with a sense of universalism that can be traced directly from the period of the nation's founding and even earlier in the Puritan experience. This convergence of politics and religion, wrapped in the narrative of America's founding sense of mission, has been exhaustively examined by a variety of scholars, including historians, communication scholars, and political scientists. This section focuses on three broad themes. First, it briefly sketches the broad outlines of America's founding myth, focusing on the key facets of individualism, community or moralism, and belief in Divine guidance of mission. Second, it examines the unique and complicated role of religion in American politics. It begins by tracing the unique origins of the Puritan polity that purposely commingled religious and political organization and, more

importantly, social and behavioral norms into a single organic community governed by moral code. Scholars and observers have suggested that this early experience, symbolized by the concept of National Covenant, ushered in religion's distinctive role in American politics. It also will examine the observations of Alexis de Tocqueville on the centrality of religion to American public life and the crucial use of religiously-based myth in framing the U.S. foreign policy. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the effect of religion on public discourse.

America's Founding Myth

Given the breadth and depth of America's mythical origins, and fully mindful of Burke's admonition that any mythical recounting is necessarily partisan, this review can at best only point to major threads popularly associated with "America's story." The mythology is replete with a panoply of heroes and villains, significant and cataclysmic events. It is a story of a chosen people delivered to a new Promised Land to work for the salvation of all mankind. Blessed with a bountiful land, Divine guidance and inspiration, a noble destiny, and eventually the modern world's first democracy, there were no limits to opportunity and greatness. These concepts largely are embedded in founding speeches and documents such as the Declaration of Independence, so much so that Jay Fliegelman aptly suggested that the efforts to define this new nation were as much rhetorical as they were political (3). This explication simply will explore three highly generalized themes, treating them separately while recognizing they inextricably are intertwined. Following treatment of the widely accepted belief in the spiritual origins of the United States, it will examine the dialectical themes of individualism and collectivism.

The Divine role in America's formation, nearly universally acknowledged by the Founding Fathers and embodied in the national motto, "In God We Trust," can be traced back to the earliest Puritan rhetoric (Bormann 1985 26-78; Bercovitch 1978 3-61; also Miller 1953 and 1956). These colonists settled the New World believing God had "sifted them as choice grain from the chaff of England" (Bercovitch 4), entering into a covenant with God to bring salvation to a decaying European society in return for opportunities afforded them in the new Israel. This special role in world salvation eventually led the Founding Fathers to, among other things, interject a sense of universality to their social concepts and at once meld religious belief into the fabric of the emerging secular democratic government and society. Thus, Jefferson attributed the new society's "inalienable rights" of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as gifts to the Americans from their Creator (Bellah 6). This belief that "God has led his people to establish a new sort of social order" (Bellah 8) led to the development of what Robert Bellah termed a "civil religion" focused primarily on the founding of the nation. Not meant to supplant Christianity or any other established church, this civil religion gave secular expression to these strongly held beliefs in the special purpose of the United States (Bellah 19) and provided society an institutionalized "collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things" (Bellah 8). From this perspective, God is activist, working through his chosen people to foster "order, law, and right" (Bellah 7).

The second theme, individualism or "materialism" (Fisher 161), while not universal, is still prevalent. Built upon the Puritan work ethic, it offers opportunity and reward in return for hard work, promoting "self-reliance, achievement, and success" (Fisher 161). For the early European settlers, America promised a new society free of the Old World's oppressive

social order, where “work, courage and initiative should not be cheated of their reward” and every worker could “enjoy the fruits of his own labor” (Bryant xviii). This theme also represents the revolutionary struggle against oppressive and overbearing government, championing free enterprise and individual competition. Drawing from its particular roots in the colonists’ religious practices and beliefs, this theme emphasizes individual morality, character, and action focused at the local (family and community) level to transform American society to meet its potential and commitments within the covenant.

Finally, the notion of collectivism or “moralism” (Fisher 161) is best expressed in the basic founding tenet that “all men are created equal,” reflecting both prevailing religious beliefs regarding individual worth and a rejection of the European social order largely based upon birth. Within this conceptual framework, government has a responsibility to secure and protect equality and the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These beliefs tend to find expression in charity, social tolerance, intellectual investment in public institutions as guarantors of the greater public welfare, and advocacy of movements dedicated to expanding and improving access to social and political rights.

As noted earlier, the spiritual or Divine aspect is ubiquitous in any rhetorical recounting of the Founding Myth, serving to instill a unifying sense of special or higher purpose. The remaining two concepts, individualism and moralism, generally also are omnipresent but to lesser and varying degrees depending on the occasion, speaker, or political motivation. Politically, they tend to exist in general opposition, the former reflecting a conservative approach to limited national government, emphasis on individual freedom, and insistence on individual responsibility while the latter, more liberal, philosophy echoes sentiments of activist national governments correcting social imbalances, emphasizing larger solutions to

societal ills, and focusing on collective responsibility for fostering individual prosperity (Fisher 166-168).

Co-mingling Religion and Government: The Puritan Experience

Because the belief in Divine inspiration is central to the American myth, it deserves extended explication here. The origins of America's close relationship between politics and religion can be traced to the Puritans' initial 1630 Atlantic crossing to establish the Massachusetts Bay colony. At that time, aboard the *Arbella*, colonial founder John Winthrop rhetorically framed the group's special mission to establish in the New World a pure model of church and state co-existence without the impurities and degeneracy currently embroiling Europe's sectarian strife (Bercovitch 1978 3-7). In his *Modell of Christian Charity* (reprinted in Miller "The American Puritans" 1956 78-83), Winthrop outlined the basis of a radically new society chosen by God to prepare the world for the Second Coming. Harkening back to the Old Testament Hebrews, the Puritans believed their providential calling involved establishing a "shining city on a hill" to serve as a moral beacon of salvation to a decadent world (Bercovitch 1978 6-9). Connecting the Puritans' sense of moral mission to its Old Testament antecedents, scholar Perry Miller has termed the New England colonial experience an "errand in the wilderness" (Miller "Errand" 1956). For these Massachusetts colony settlers, this special mission thus was both secular, in terms of establishing a colonial government and society in New England, and sacred, establishing a religious practice that would hasten the Biblical prophecies of the coming millennium. For the purposes of this study, two aspects of the Puritan church-state belief system seem

particularly poignant: the critical conceptualization of the National Covenant, and the relationship between the National Covenant and public behavior.

The English Congregationalists who settled the Massachusetts Bay colony believed God extended two entirely different covenants to His followers. The Covenant of Grace, the traditional covenant upon which Christianity was founded, was extended to a faithful individual follower who received God's sacraments in return for eternal salvation in the hereafter. A highly personal relationship between God and the believer, the Covenant of Grace was permanent and irrevocable. Once the individual entered into the covenant, through participation in the Church sacraments beginning with baptism and followed by communion, God's promised salvation was unconditional and not based upon future behavior on the part of the faithful (Miller 1939 365-397).

In addition to this private individual covenant, however, the Puritans believed God also entered into "National Covenants" with select groups who acted as cohesive social and political entities. So long as the group was publicly visible in the form of a church or nation, its special relation with God stood apart from its individual members' spiritual salvation. "As a people they are chosen because *by public act* they have chosen God. The prerequisite is not, cannot be, a flawless sanctity of all citizens, but a deliberate dedication of the community to a communal decision" (Miller 1953 21, emphasis added). Drawn from the Old Testament example of the Hebrews as God's chosen people, the National Covenant was distinct from the Covenant of Grace in at least three distinct and salient characteristics.

First and foremost, because the chosen community exists only in this world and does not pass as a group into the hereafter, the covenant necessarily also is an Earthly phenomenon. Commitment to God is symbolized not by individual participation in sacraments but in

collective moral public behavior. Second, because the group cannot receive rewards in Heaven or punishment in Hell, all recompense occurs on Earth. "Its obedience, in short, means prosperity, its disobedience means war, epidemic, or ruin" (Miller 1953 22).

Although wealth and good fortune might by chance come to an uncovenanted community, the covenanted group was bestowed these blessings by God in return for their Earthly efforts on His behalf. Finally, even a community once chosen by God could theoretically sink so low into depravity that this covenant could be withdrawn without jeopardizing individual members' Covenants of Grace. If collective public efforts were no longer adequate in the eyes of God, He might not only punish the group through temporary calamity but also could permanently return them to wandering through the wilderness without the benefits of His blessings.

It was to establish this National Covenant, a voluntary congregation of both believer and nonbeliever individuals dedicated to moral public behavior in return for God's Earthly blessings of wealth, peace and prosperity, that the Puritans arrived at Massachusetts Bay to build their "shining city on the hill." Although they originally planned to return to England with their perfected spiritual and political model, the Restoration of Charles II and return to prominence of the Anglican Church in 1660 forced a reformulation of their plans (Bercovitch 1978 68). Thereafter, the New England colonies themselves became an outpost of spiritual salvation and morality, increasingly disassociated from the depravities of the Old World. In a very real sense, then, the religious National Covenant quickly became the colony's political basis.

The second significant influence of the Puritan experience on American views of church and state is the centrality of moral public behavior in the maintenance of the National

Covenant. Because the National Covenant was both a religious statement and a means of structuring and evaluating the quality of social and political life, the church reluctantly came to share its traditional role as arbiter of moral public behavior with local colonial government. For the colony's founding generation, the large majority of whom were full members of the church, this merging of religion and governance was a natural occurrence (Miller 1953 68). To this devout group, moral secular government was at once public proof of their adherence to the National Covenant and at the same time a primary means of future progress toward a perfect moral society. Political and religious debate were seen as two lanes of the same road, inseparable by any significant measure. Therefore, the voice of the church was preeminent in secular political matters and was at times indistinguishable from the voice of local government. This environment, then, established in the New World not only the deep belief of special national purpose but also the mechanism of moral public behavior (arbitrated by the church) as the explicit means of demonstrating and retaining the national covenant. The purely secular outcome of this coalescence was, of course, God's continuing blessing in the form of collective peace and prosperity.

However, by the second generation in the mid-17th century, New England society changed in ways that significantly altered the tight convergence of religious and political outlooks. Economic prosperity of the New World in general and the New England colonies in particular resulted in a series of social, political, and economic changes that first threatened and later disrupted the homogenous religious-political perspective of the founding Puritans (see Miller 1953, pp. 27-67 for an extended discussion of these developments). While the founding generation represented a nearly united world view and participated almost exclusively in subsistence farming and local commercial activities,

economic prosperity soon attracted a large influx of mostly middle class entrepreneurs both from other colonies and from England. At first a marginal presence within the Puritan congregational community, this new group accumulated significant economic and political influence by the mid-1600s.

This increasing heterogeneity of the Massachusetts Bay colony significantly impacted the role of the Congregationalist church in secular politics and ultimately dissolved the symbiotic relationship between church and government. Because these newcomers generally did not share the Puritans' religious views, they were less likely to share the belief in the National Covenant or that moral public behavior could yield material prosperity. Driven either by other sectarian beliefs or more purely economic motives, this burgeoning middle class quickly entered local politics and soon threatened the Puritan church's authority as the source of the community's world view (Miller 1953 130-146; also Bercovitch 1978 17-19).

As this trend continued, the church found itself transformed from the sole authority on social, moral, and political issues to one of a growing number of competing interests. For many theological reasons (see Miller 1953 82-146), the Puritan congregation could not grow at the same pace as the larger population and still maintain its spiritual purity. Far from abandoning the concept of a political (national) entity chosen by God, these believers continued to live their secular lives in a manner that preserved the National Covenant. However, because the National Covenant depended upon the moral behavior of the entire polity to receive God's secular blessings, the Puritans soon found themselves in the position of persuading individuals outside the congregation of the importance of public moral behavior. Convening a Synod in 1679, Church elders led by Increase Mather constructed an

official list of immoral and sinful behaviors, largely rooted in pride and self-interest, that currently threatened the future of the National Covenant (Miller 1953 33-35). The catalogue included activities such as heresy; swearing and sleeping during sermons; Sabbath-breaking; decay of family discipline; increase in “angry passions” as indicated in the growing number of lawsuits; increase in illicit sex and alcohol consumption; the growing prevalence of lying; and finally, “inordinate affection unto the world” or materialism (Miller 1953 36).

This list of immoral behaviors was highly publicized within the Puritan churches and the general public. However, because the larger population did not share these core religious beliefs and thus inherently adhere to the strictures of the National Covenant, the force of moral suasion was not as successful as it had been on the congregation’s faithful. To overcome this growing diversity of opinion and resulting decrease in the church’s authority on matters of worldly morality, Puritan elders lobbied the colonial assembly to legislate these behaviors (Miller 1953, pp. 174-75), an effort that yielded uneven results. As an alternative, church leaders increasingly turned to the rhetorical form of the Jeremiad to make their case for continuing the national covenant.

The American Jeremiad is a distinctive rhetorical form that has manifested itself in public address throughout America’s history. It is rooted in the Puritan National Covenant and the fervent belief in being chosen by God to create a moral society not only for its own sake but for the salvation of all mankind. While the particular rhetorical form of the jeremiad is not central to this particular study, its recurring theme reflects the enduring potency of the underlying world view throughout American history. Its occurrences have been unevenly analyzed, with exhaustive attention paid to its 17th century origins and

evolution through the mid-19th century, but far less attention devoted to its more contemporaneous forms and occurrences (see Bercovitch; Miller 1939, 1953; Bormann; Howard-Pitney).

Maintenance of the National Covenant and normative public behavior constituted the fundamental core of the jeremiadic form (Bercovitch 34-45; Miller 1953 27-39; Bormann 1985 27, 38-39). Although the basis of what constitutes the National Covenant has evolved from this Old Testament perspective into what Robert Bellah (1967) termed America's "civil religion," the nearly exclusive focus of the jeremiad has been declension of society away from the covenant's normative behavior and the prospect of future redemption or relief from calamity if society rededicates itself to the appropriate public behavior. In its most basic form, this rhetorical form first lamented the calamities that had befallen society, then catalogued the specific societal behaviors that have caused the onset of these calamities, and finally held out the hope of future prosperity and progress if behavior is realigned with the ideals of the covenant.

Tocqueville on Religion in America

Visiting America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville cogently recognized the beneficial influence of religion on many fundamental aspects of American society but warned of the dangers of intrusion of religion into politics. Significantly, Tocqueville pointed to the Puritan experience as the fundamental basis for understanding America (Tocqueville 28-29), tracing their early efforts to use politics to support their religious beliefs and the reversal of this relationship by the time of his visit.

As Tocqueville viewed it, the New England colonies were founded not by seekers of fame and wealth but by intellectually-inspired Englishmen seeking religious freedom and new religious-political order, describing Puritanism as containing aspects of “the most absolute democratic and republican theories” in addition to austere religious principles (32). The New England colonists took extraordinary efforts to legislate behavior based upon their particular religious beliefs, “above all preoccupied with the care of maintaining moral order and good mores in society . . . there is almost no sin that does not fall subject to the censure of the magistrate” (38). He wrote favorably regarding the unique relationship between the “spirit of religion” and the “spirit of freedom” that were antagonistic trends in Europe but came to reinforce each other in colonial America (43). Tocqueville considered there to be a great affinity between religion and political opinion (274). He saw harmony between Christianity as practiced in America and democratic, republican political processes, so much so that he considered religion’s influence on social mores to be one of three primary factors supporting the maintenance of the American political system (265, 278, 405). In fact, he suggested that religion was the “first of their political institutions” because it facilitated the practice of freedom through its moderating influence (280). Specifically, he suggested that religious belief was essential in a republic because as political strictures are loosened, citizens’ moral bonds must be strengthened (282, 419). So strong is this relationship that Tocqueville contended that Americans consider them to be nearly identical, “almost impossible to . . . conceive of the one without the other” (280-81). However, while Tocqueville wrote admiringly about this New England colonial preeminence of religious belief in public life, he was not totally convinced of its long-term benefits. While he

observed that religion played a profound and beneficial role in developing social mores. he warned against the intrusion of religious belief and practice into the political process.

Myth in the Rhetorical Construction of U.S. Foreign Policy

Political scientist John Spanier, in the introduction to his text on U.S. foreign policy (1971), argued that the historic influence of geographic isolation and economic abundance resulted in America's inability to relate to international relations in a pragmatic political manner. This has resulted in a largely isolationist foreign policy in which "the United States rarely initiates policy; the stimuli that are responsible for the formulation of foreign policy come from beyond America's borders" (Spanier 17). In order to overcome a cultural aversion to international conflict, war "can only be justified by presuming noble purposes and completely destroying the immoral enemy who threatens the integrity, if not the existence, of these principles" (17). Because war is engaged for universal moral purpose, it thus becomes an all-consuming phenomenon. Compromise or accommodation with "immoral" adversaries would constitute a violation of principle (18-19), whereas "war allows us to destroy our evil opponent, while permitting us to keep our moral mission intact and unsullied by any compromises which could infect our purity" (19).

Concurring with Spanier, Philip Wander suggested that the invocation of "prophetic dualism," the belief that the world is divided into two camps of Good and Evil, is central to the development of post World War II U.S. foreign policy and its domestic support (342-344). Relating this phenomenon directly to Puritan rhetoric, Wander observed that prophetic dualism involves "religious faith, the faith of our fathers, the ideals of freedom, individuality, a militant God, and the existence of evil in the world" (344). He further

suggested that this mythic invocation is best suited and most influential “in moments of confusion, terror, or terrible disappointment” (344). Because its acceptance requires suspension of disbelief and reason, the appeal to America’s myth “dampens public debate.” for who can “argue with God’s will when it is clearly expressed?” (344).

Wander also noted that prophetic dualism, because it rhetorically constructs a world of Good and Evil with no middle ground, requires “overwhelming support”, cessation of public debate, and total dependence on existing political authority from a believing audience (345). Because this particular myth relies centrally on the belief of the Puritan mission, its prominence in public discourse not only quells deliberation or debate, but also raises the act of prayer and supplication to political significance (346).

Finally, Wander argued that reliance on the Founding myth has the pragmatic effect of tapping into a largely conservative and traditional segment of the American population. At the same time as it is cementing political consensus among adherents, the myth, because it relies on authoritative and unquestioned authority, at once robs any opposition of discursive language. He found both phenomena disturbing, since they replace ideology and policy with images, current reality with the past, and public debate with unquestioning (and unquestionable) silence (357).

In the construction and resurrection of the Cold War, we discern the nearly limitless power of mythical recounting to unite a nation toward a single purpose. In the case of America, that uniting myth is clearly related to Americans’ view of their mission to bring Good to the world. In examining the rhetorical roots of the Cold War, Lynn Hinds and Theodore Windt, Jr., documented the Truman administration’s early difficulty in developing a coherent foreign policy toward the Soviet Union and its reliance on the nation’s existing

“rhetorical stockpile” of images and description (31-87). They pointed to Churchill’s March, 1946, “Iron Curtain” speech as the beginning of a moral construction of the U.S. as “Good” and the Soviet Union as “Evil” (89-123), a development the authors suggest was critical to garnering national and international support for future policies. In describing the world as bipolar, Churchill urged his American audience to resume the Puritan mission to bring about world salvation, a mission still fresh in the minds of post-war America.

By constructing his speech in epideictic rather than deliberative terms, Churchill was able to invoke mythic images that superseded and circumvented public discourse. Once this mythic account of the current situation is publicly accepted, “it creates the reality of those events” (Hinds and Windt 101). As the authors proceed to demonstrate, this overarching world view not only takes on a life of its own, but soon subsumes all other issues and policies within its uncritical umbrella. The Cold War experience vividly bears witness to this power, as it successively colored Americans’ views on international relations (e.g., Korean and Vietnam Wars, Greece-Turkey conflict), domestic patriotism and the entertainment industry (McCarthy hearings), scientific and technological development (Space Race), and ultimately the strategic arms race. So potent was this imagery that it could be enthymematically resurrected in the mid-1980s by President Reagan, who reoriented his entire administration to force the collapse of “the Evil Empire.”

Religion in American Political Discourse

There is considerable disagreement concerning the appropriateness and effects of introducing religious rhetoric into political discourse. Stephen Carter argued that, because religions are independent and autonomous, they not only have a place in democratic

political deliberations but should be able to participate even on the basis of their relatively intolerant beliefs (30-34). Agreeing with Jefferson and Tocqueville that the strength of America's religious establishment comes from its independence from the state (38-39), Carter asserted that this independent force, even if it represents an unpopular minority, is an essential bulwark against tyranny of the majority following more popular (but socially destructive) beliefs. Rather than directly allying with the state, Carter instead proposed that religious interests, both institutional and individual, assert their beliefs in the public arena where these mores can compete in open debate with other religious and secular convictions.

While warning of the dangers of religion being used in politics, Carter also pointed to the civil rights movement to demonstrate how religious individuals and groups can weigh in on secular matters with sufficient moral force to foster positive social change. Citing not only the very public religious rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. (227-28) and Jesse Jackson (59), but also the 1953 threat of excommunication by the Catholic Archbishop of New Orleans against any Louisiana lawmaker who supported segregation legislation (64), Carter suggested this as a useful model for how religious morality can play an independent role in American politics.

On the other hand, Ted Jelen argued that religion tends to undermine democratic principles and practices, while religious involvement in the political arena also has potential negative consequences for religion in general (1998). Instead, he advocated a position that generally discourages the introduction of religious values into public discourse by broadly interpreting the Establishment clause, while at the same time significantly curtailing the constitutional protection of such expression under the Free Expression clause (9). He

arrived at this judgment, not on constitutional grounds, but through a series of ethical arguments.

First, Jelen suggested that judgments regarding social policy, in order to compete legitimately in the court of public opinion, require warrants or justifications that can be understood (though not necessarily agreed upon) by all participants in the debate, a characteristic he termed “public accessibility” (15-19). In particular, these justifications must be comprehensible to those who do not share the same moral vocabulary:

In order to engage in such a conversation or dialogue, one must attempt to find common premises on which one might base persuasion or agreement.

To do otherwise is simply to assert the superiority of one’s position and perspective, and such a strategy is incompatible with notions of democracy as self government (17).

While some scholars have suggested that America’s shared religious beliefs make religious justifications among the most publicly accessible, Jelen argued that no such consensus exists among Americans and that justifications based upon these grounds, when used in the public policy arena, are more likely to cause contention than agreement (21-22). Not only is there considerable diversity among America’s religious community, but more significantly, religious justifications must literally be accepted as a matter of faith and are not susceptible to independent objective verification.

Second, religious values are incompatible with public policy debate because they are based upon uncompromising principles. If a particular viewpoint cannot be shared with debate opponents and a middle ground cannot be found that satisfies all parties to the debate, the policy issue becomes polarized and postponed. Citing a “quite impressive” body

of research correlating religious values with intolerance and incivility, Jelen suggested that this problem is not limited to fundamentalist or evangelical religious groups or simply to questions of constitutional free expression (29-31). Because religious values related to such choices are at times grounded in perceived infallible religious documents or principles, adherents cannot compromise these positions in the public policy arena without a concomitant diminution of their value system. Conversely, political disagreements settled on the basis of uncompromising value systems (religious or non-religious) may provide short-term policy victories but serve over the longer term to weaken the very fundamental process of building majority public opinion.

Finally, Jelen argued that participation in secular political policy may undermine religious belief and practice (33-40), specifically warning of two potential adverse effects. First, the close association of religious practice and symbology with secular policy will tend to weaken the meaning of those practices among the faithful as they increasingly encounter them in non-religious settings. Moreover, as those values become associated with group (societal) behavior instead of individual commitment and faith, it will weaken the latter's critical role in maintaining religious institutions over time. He took exception with the concept of Americans being a "chosen people," because it relieves individuals of their individual religious obligations.

Jelen's second warning regarded America's significant religious diversity. Even if a particular religious value system held sway in a specific policy debate, it is likely to run afoul of divergent religious opinions each with their own set of perceived infallible values. In this environment, religious belief not only confronts secular, non-religious value systems

but also runs the risk of sectarian debate within the religious community itself or (less likely) the domination of one particular set of religious values over all others.³

Mary Seegers took issue with her co-author, Ted Jelen, by advocating that religion has a prominent, beneficial, and perhaps even necessary role in American political life. In making this assertion, she admitted there have been historical occasions when religious adherents have been intolerant of others' views, but suggested that this is outweighed by religion's role as one of America's most prevalent voluntary associations, its role as a source of charitable morality, and its ability to bring otherwise politically inactive citizens into public life (Seegers 54-55).

Arguing that the American historical experience of separation of church and state really only translates into *institutional* separation, Seegers concurred with Tocqueville and Carter that religious belief is an essential characteristic of American democracy (75-77).⁴ Far from being detrimental to the democratic process, Seegers believed religion enhances democracy by: (1) broadening political participation; (2) promoting citizenship and civic skills; and (3) transmitting moral values (80). Therefore, adherents should continue to bring their

3. Even with these reservations, however, Jelen did not propose that religious values be entirely banned from public discourse. Individuals who take their deepest values from religious constructs do have an equal right, and even obligation, to participate in socially significant public discourse (Jelen 40-41). They simply need to take care in making their judgments clearly understood, relying upon comparable publicly accessible secular value systems and justifications whenever possible and offering religious warrants for their policy positions only when necessary.

4. In a significant caveat, however, Seegers concedes that research indicating a high level of religious belief does not correlate directly to corresponding high levels of moral behavior. This suggests that although Americans value some type of religious belief system, they do not necessarily "practice what they preach" (Seegers 78-79).

religious values to the public square despite the potentially divisive outcomes suggested by Jelen.

Countering Jelen's assertion that no moral consensus exists based upon religiosity, Seegers pointed to survey data suggesting that a broad majority of Americans indicate that religion holds some importance in their lives (78-79). In this regard, she tended to concur with Tocqueville's observations that "[a]ll differ in the worship one must render to the Creator, but all agree on the duties of men toward one another...all sects preach the same morality in the name of God" (Tocqueville 278). Given the breadth, if not the depth of this common moral outlook, Seegers contended that American democratic discourse would be significantly diminished if this value system was to be arbitrarily dismissed.

Regarding Jelen's observation that religious believers are inherently intolerant of opposing viewpoints, Seegers pointed to an equally strong tradition of Christian charity and tolerance, rooted in both theology and philosophy, from which current adherents can draw.

Conclusion

As the preceding survey of literature demonstrates, myth is a polymorphous, powerful, and important rhetorical device exhibiting a variety of functions at many levels. The ideal myth serves the needs of individual and society, rhetor and audience, by at least providing meaning and identity to situation. Creation myths, such as the one recounted above, are ubiquitous in human society and are particularly value-laden narratives that can not only provide order and stability but also explain society's place in the world. However, invocation of myth also can lead to less benign consequences. The explication of America's founding myth, and its reappearance throughout the past three centuries, provides evidence

of both the positive and negative aspects of mythic narrative in social and political rhetoric. Finally, this body of extant literature provides the basis from which to develop a theoretical framework for analysis of George W. Bush's discourse, a task that will be undertaken in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter proposes a theoretical framework from which not only to analyze but, more importantly, evaluate the use of America's founding myth within the context of President George W. Bush's three major speeches of 2001. The primary focus of this chapter is the exegesis of the Janus-faced nature of mythic narrative in political discourse, its potential to unite and propel society forward along a conservative trajectory while disguising partisan ideology, abridging public discourse, and limiting the alternatives through which social progress is pursued. Finally, it offers criteria to evaluate the mythic narrative itself and the motivation of the rhetor. This perspective takes as its basis, and expands, Edwin Black's approach to rhetorical criticism offered as an "alternate frame of reference" in his 1965 critique of the neo-Aristotelian method (1978 [reprint] 132-137).

Black's approach assumes a limited, although unspecified, number of rhetorical situations and a corresponding limited number of rhetorical responses to any particular situation (1978 133). Working from these assumptions, Black suggests that rhetorical "transactions," as he terms them, might be analyzed according to three highly interrelated factors: situation, rhetorical strategy, and effects (1978 134). By situation, Black means the extralinguistic factors affecting both the rhetor and audience, including not merely the "historical" situation but also the audience's predisposition toward both rhetor and topic and

any other factor that might influence either the rhetorical act or the audience response to that act (1978 133). "Rhetorical strategy" is Black's term for the rhetor's response to the situation, specifically the "character of the discourse" interpreted through close textual analysis (1978 134). The final factor in Black's rhetorical transaction is "effects" (1978 134), although from his preceding criticism of neo-Aristotelian criticism we must deduce that he meant something quite different and much broader than the neo-Aristotelian concept of "effectiveness".

To Black's three transactional factors, I add "audience" as a critical element in understanding and finally evaluating a rhetorical act. Although audience certainly is implied in Black's conception of both situation and effects, it sufficiently important to the evaluative process of this particular analysis to warrant additional attention and explication. However, here we turn away from the physical audience directly participating in Black's rhetorical transaction to search instead for what he designated in an later essay the implied audience or "second persona" (Black 1970). During the course of close textual analysis, Black argued, the discerning critic can discover the rhetor's notion of the idealized audience, therein also unveiling the all-important ideology shaping the identity of the second persona (Black 1970 111-112).

In the following pages, I outline the details of this approach to analyzing President Bush's three major speeches of 2001. Although this discussion generally is organized along the lines of Black's three transactional factors, we must heed his admonition that rhetorical transactions are unfolding and dynamic processes and that, although the three factors can be segregated in the abstract, in reality or practice they inextricably form a Gordian knot that defies separation (1978 135-136).

Myth and Situation

Careful examination of the dynamic between mythic rhetoric and situation is a critical first step. Lloyd Bitzer (1968) put the rhetorical situation at the center of critical analysis, going so far as to assert that “rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence as a response to a question” (5). A rhetorical situation is one that a fitting rhetorical response is capable of altering. Under such conditions, a rhetorical response participates, gives meaning to, and many times completes the situation (10-12).

However, Bitzer’s approach to rhetorical situation does not fully explain why myth is invoked in some situations and not in others. Nor does it correspond to Black’s allowance for a variety, albeit perhaps limited, of rhetorical responses to a given situation. Moreover, the Bitzerian approach does not allow for a measure of responsibility or motive to be assigned to the rhetor. In Scott Consigny’s view, the rhetorical situation is unordered and indeterminate, forcing the rhetor to “find strategies for shaping the indeterminacies” (1974 177). Thus, the rhetorical situation does not call forth a particular response as Bitzer suggested, but rather invites the rhetor to participate in the disclosure or formulation of the exigence (179-181). For Consigny, then, rhetoric is an art wherein the rhetor is “able to structure novel and indeterminate situations such that fruitful issues ‘emerge’ from each,” a universal capacity that the rhetor can apply to a variety of rhetorical situations (179-180).

Because myth is inherently nondiscursive narrative, it may have a natural affinity for certain epideictic situations. Myth has power in epideictic speech because, first and foremost, it is a vessel carrying the shared community, heritage, and values suggested by Celeste Condit (1985), thus transporting the speaker and auditor to consubstantiality or

shared identity (Burke 1950 20-22) that is a fundamental goal of epideictic speech. To adequately explain the many functions of epideictic speech, Condit suggested examining a particular speech according to "its tendency to serve three functional pairs--definition/understanding, display/entertainment, and shaping/sharing of community" (288), where the first term of each pair represents the speaker's interests and the second term suggests the function served for the audience.

The prominence of "definition/understanding" is extant in rhetorical efforts to "explain a social world" that is "confusing or troubling" (Condit 288). By interpreting the world in terms with which the audience can identify, the speaker at once comforts the audience while simultaneously gaining audience acquiescence or legitimization of himself or herself in the role of "definer." In the case of political, and particularly presidential, rhetoric, the functions of "display/entertainment" take on a specific meaning. By being "on display," the president must appear to be "Presidential," that is, take on the persona of statesman and uniter. In occasions of great chaos, confusion, or uncertainty, the audience not only desires or expects this display, but actually requires it as a means of transcending the situation. The complementary function of "shaping/sharing community" is evidenced in the speaker's invitation to the audience to identify with specific values, symbols, and messages contained in the speech (Condit 288; also, Burke 1969 19-22). Through epideictic oration, "the community renews its conception of itself and of what is good by explaining what it has previously held to be good and by working through the relationships of those past values and beliefs to new situations" (Condit 289).

Myths may be called forth in certain situations of great societal confusion and uncertainty because they interpret the universe and convey society's special meaning.

cultural traditions, and moral values (Doty 1986 11). Doty observed that myths supply meaning to a culture (20) and confer both cultural and political values (11). They explain “why the world is and why we do as we do” (Wellek and Warren 119), representing “society’s view of its own social contract with gods, ancestors, and the order of nature” (Northrop Frye 28).

In fully explicating the complex role of situation in the rhetorical transaction, the critic first should attend to the primary physical conditions forming Bitzer’s exigence. However, a complete understanding of situation cannot possibly come from a simple recounting of the historical factors leading up to the rhetorical response, so we must broaden this factor on several fronts. First, the Bitzerian situation only takes into account the perceptions of the rhetor. Since myth initially works on the level of Burkean identification, it seems imminently reasonable to inquire regarding the audience’s perception of the situation. Identification works best when the auditor is searching for unity or sense of group, so limiting our inquiry to the rhetor’s perspective would mean missing the audience’s receptivity to messages of unity and identification.

Second, we must expand our inquiry beyond the immediate situational boundaries. If indeed there is a relatively limited number of responses to any given situation, it seems once again reasonable to look for tokens of these possible responses within a culture’s rhetorical past. Hinds and Windt (1991) described America’s “rhetorical stockpile” as a repository for common, familiar, and acceptable rhetorical responses to the emerging Soviet security threat of the early 1950s, while Phillip Wander (1984) noted the recurring themes of “prophetic dualism” in American foreign policy rhetoric. Moreover, as I will note later in this chapter, rhetorical acts, particularly those laden with myth, are not only considered responses to

situational exigence, but should also be understood as participating in the shaping of future rhetorical situations.

Thus, it seems the dynamic between situation and myth in public discourse is complex and rich, making it particularly fertile ground for the rhetorical scholar. Myth seems to be especially suited for epideictic situations imbued with crisis and confusion, wherein the audience is particularly susceptible to the narrative's images of unity, purpose, and cultural meaning.

Myth as Rhetorical Strategy

The critical perspective offered here presumes myth to be central to society's shared values, Doty's "big story" (1986 8), and believed by a substantial portion of society. It may not be suitable for understanding unbelieved or peripheral myths, although that remains to be discovered through future research. Once the relationship between situation and myth is fully explicated, the next step is to extract from the text a full accounting of mythic themes, sub-themes, and images (Braden 124). As nondiscursive narrative, myths rely upon "grand stories," heroes, metaphors, symbols, and images (Doty 1986 11; Joseph Campbell 1986 11). Here, the critic should be attuned to not only the basic narrative, but also to contemporaneous interpretations or regional variations that may affect how the audience engages that narrative.

Once the narrative and imagery are explicated fully, evidence of rhetorical attempts to strengthen cultural identification is the next step (Braden 124). The view of myth as a unifying agency finds nearly universal support in the literature. Both William Doty (13) and Joseph Campbell (1997 4, 163) reflected on the close relationship between public and

individual needs, with the former casting myth as “socializations of private dreams” (Doty 13). Waldo Braden concurred with Burke that myth provides an ideal message of identification, one which is particularly powerful during crisis or societal confusion, when people “seek escape to a simpler existence” (Braden 119). Murray Edelman and Phillip Wander also point to the potency of myth in fostering group identification during social crises, positing that the invocation of mythic accounts may be prompted by periods of social uncertainty or tension (Edelman 55-57; Wander 344).

Thus, the texts will be examined for evidence of identification strategies and inducements to consubstantiality. In its most basic sense, identification is itself a rhetorical transaction in which the rhetor attempts to induce the auditors to see that their interests, beliefs, and values are mutual (Burke 1950 20-21). Kenneth Burke suggested that identification is necessary to groups as a method of developing cohesion; simultaneously, it is important to individuals by promoting a sense of belonging and congregation (1950 20-22).

Here, Burke provides no clear guidance regarding the specifics of such identification strategies. However, the work of George Cheney in organizational identification may provide a useful point of departure. Building upon Burke’s writings, Cheney proposed three specific identification strategies to be used in the study of organizational communication (Cheney 148): (1) Common ground technique, wherein the “the rhetor equates or links himself or herself with others in an overt manner”; (2) Identification through antithesis, which is the act of uniting against a common outside entity, enemy, or foe; and (3) assumed or transcendent “we”, subtly using collective pronouns to suggest commonality of interest (148). In later research, James DiSanza and Connie Bullis, detected a fourth identification

strategy, the use of unifying symbols (351). Taken together, these four inducement strategies form the basis for applying Burke's theories to the analysis of these texts.

The next step is to deterrate the hidden layers of ideology buried beneath the mythic narrative. Burke suggested that myth is imagery of ideology, stripped of its deliberative and rational argument and, thus, motive. Evidence of its motive is masked and therefore not readily available for critical analysis (1950 198), making it ideally suited to epideictic occasions. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he demonstrated the process of reducing myth to an Ultimate term devoid of motive through Platonic dialogue, leading to a set of generalizations transcending "the bias of the competing rhetorical partisans" culminating in an Ultimate myth which is a "pure idea" (1950 200)¹. In doing so, Burke implicitly invites the opposite journey in which one can unveil ideology from within mythical imagery, thus exposing it and its partisan motivation to critical rational deliberation and analysis.

Here, we return again to the text, analyzing the mythic narrative, including major actors and key symbols, for their ideological significance. Admittedly interpretive and subjective, this analysis heavily relies upon an understanding of cultural history, the underlying uses of myth in political communication, and rhetor motive. This process not only promotes reasoned public discourse but also helps us understand the larger relationship between myth, ideology, and partisan politics.

1. Burke does not necessarily approve of this process of abstraction, calling it "scientifically questionable" because it actually substitutes one level of motivation (beyond ideas) for the existing level of motivation extant in the ideology itself.

Effects of Myth

Having fully explicated the rhetorical situation and strategy, we naturally inquire regarding the effects, closing in on the final factor of Black's rhetorical transaction. Here, there is good reason to reject the traditional neo-Aristotelian approach (Wichelns 1972) that would limit our investigation to the "effectiveness" of the rhetorical response. As outlined above, myth is a complex rhetorical strategy composed of both unifying images and latent ideology. Such complexity in form necessarily leads to polymorphous and perhaps even contradictory consequences. Many effects of mythic rhetoric may not even be fully understood by the rhetor, while others may be wholly unintended. In fact, these misunderstood or unintended effects ultimately may be far more enlightening to rhetorical scholars.

It would appear that mythic rhetoric operates to produce opposing sets of effects that co-exist in dialectic opposition. First, the rhetorical strategy acts as a means of gaining audience identification with the rhetor and their mutually shared cultural heritage and values, at the same time propelling society forward along a conservative trajectory. However, myth also acts as "a conservative breaking force" on society (Frye 28), as it limits the scope of future political discourse, precludes rational discursive deliberation, promotes latent ideology in the form of non-discursive imagery, and invites the rhetorical construction of an "other" group.

Identification becomes most important during situations when there is great cultural division, when group cohesion is lacking, or when there is confusion regarding social identity. Burke declared that without these circumstances, "there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (1950 22). While myth's main function is to call upon

existing beliefs and attitudes, Waldo Braden suggests that it acts “like a blank check into which the listener may fill in any meaning or feeling that he abstracts from what is pleasant while he ignores or forgets what is disturbing” (Braden 122). Thus it is that in some epideictic situations, when the audience expects, needs, and uncritically accepts, reassurances of unity and social meaning, myth is a powerful means of delivering familiar and reassuring messages of cultural purpose, values, and mission. Whereas earlier I discussed identification from the perspective of its use as a rhetorical strategy, here it is examined from the contextual evidence of its effectiveness in drawing the audience together. Physical and communicative evidence of societal unity can provide a solid understanding here.

Once it has unified the audience, myth then serves to “carry the human spirit forward” (Joseph Campbell 1968 11), moving beyond simple identification or sharing of interests to giving the audience “a sense of actual participation” (Joseph Campbell 1986 12). Thus, powerful myths, particularly in Western society, induce the audience to re-enact the mythic virtues and values in their own lives, “reorientation of the human spirit--pitching it forward along the way of time, summoning man to an assumption of responsibility for the reform of the universe in God’s name” (Joseph Campbell 1997 14). Thus, myths call the audience to action in the name of shared cultural values. Here again, evidence of this phenomenon can be deduced from the contextual record in the aftermath of a particular rhetorical transaction employing mythic narrative. While direct causal associations are troublesome, we can suggest the linkage from enthymematic slogans and symbols raised to justify ensuing societal activities.

It is precisely this uncritical and unquestioning acceptance and identification, particularly when the audience has gathered to hear a message of shared unity in troubled or confusing times, that gives myth its dialectic nature in rhetorical invention. There is ample reason to believe that the appeal to myth during such situations may have other, less beneficial, effects. Even as myths propel society forward to future progress, they do so only within the confines of traditional values, norms, and solutions, acting inherently as conservative agencies (Williams 1961; Braden 1975; Bercovitch 1978; Murphy 1990). Murphy has suggested that the activation of myth may actually represent an attempt by the rhetor to control social behavior during crises by limiting the breadth of acceptable options under deliberation (1990 412).

Moreover, at a time of national crisis or confusion when society most needs serious open public discourse, the dominance of certain mythic narratives may actually curtail public debate because of their basis in unquestionable religious authority. Myths not only are called forth as one of perhaps many available responses to exigence, but certain powerful and widely accepted mythic narratives, particularly those in which religious elements play a critical role, may influence the entire course of subsequent public discourse. Phillip Wander notes that "prophetic dualism," because it rhetorically constructs a world of Good and Evil with no middle ground, requires "overwhelming support" and cessation of public debate (1984 345). Heavily relying upon the belief of the Puritan mission, its prominence in public discourse quells deliberation or debate because it is based upon authoritative and unquestioned authority. It also robs any opposition of discursive language (Wander 346) as it replaces ideology and policy with images, current reality with the past, and public debate with unquestioning (and unquestionable) silence (Wander 357). Lynn Hinds and Theodore

Windt, Jr., also document the effects of developing a Cold War rhetoric based upon America's sense of Puritan mission and archetypal images of Good and Evil, which eventually precluded all other discussions of the nation's relationship with the Soviet Union (1991 31-87).

From a different theoretical perspective, political scientist Ted Jelen offers two additional reasons that may explain this phenomenon. First, because these rhetorical constructs largely are based upon religious beliefs, either latent or explicit, they do not offer warrants or justifications that are fully understood by all participants in public debate (Jelen 15-19). These religious or moral justifications literally must be accepted as a matter of faith. Because they are not susceptible to independent objective verification, they are inherently "undebatable" as the basis for public policy (Jelen 21-22). Second, because these religious beliefs are based upon uncompromising principles and are accepted as authoritative, their incorporation into powerful myth leads to the "uncritical acceptance" that is noted by a number of scholars. Once accepted, religiously-based myth essentially is unassailable and undebatable, because to do so is to challenge the very religious beliefs that serve as its foundation.² Here again, the contextual evidence is circumspect and may not be fully manifest. However, these phenomena can be suggested by the reduction or total lack of

2. A complete and detailed recounting of mythic narrative also sets the stage for enthymematic reverberations in subsequent rhetorical acts. Janice Rushing and others (e.g., Fisher 1973) have successfully employed mythic analysis without explicitly identifying traditional mythic narrative characteristics by arguing that, for the most powerful and resonant myths, the simple invocation of key tokens can trigger enthymematic responses in which auditors autonomously recall the fuller narrative (Rushing 1990 145-147). As Braden suggests, because the myth already is widely accepted by the audience, the rhetor need only suggest it "through a sign, a phrase, passing references, or a gesture" (1975 121). Rushing acknowledges that this phenomenon makes more difficult the task of rhetorical critic, since it requires a more complete understanding of the subtleties of the mythic narrative and its key images and tokens (1990 146).

criticism of policies or perspectives reliant upon mythic language. The literal lack of policy debate during periods of crisis or confusion that might otherwise foster such discourse might be suggestive of myth's power in this regard.

Finally, Condit notes yet another potential "dark side" of identification and community sharing, in that the community is often contrasted with "others," implying potential exclusion of some individuals from participation in the group. Burke takes a more determinate view by suggesting that the ultimate term "us" automatically calls into being its opposite ("them") (1960 187-88; 1968 9-13). This line of reasoning poses intriguing questions as we discover the American "us" described in Bush's inaugural and then try to determine who is excluded in the "them" that must be called into being.

Myth, Audience, and Motive: Moral Evaluation

Taking this hermeneutic approach to mythic text, although important, is only the foundational first step to more fully understanding the range of possible motives involved in its use. As a culminating step, we must apply what we have learned from the rhetorical transactions under consideration, using our understanding and interpretation of textual evidence to "subsume that discourse under a moral order" (Black 1970 110) and render evaluative judgments regarding the intended uses of that rhetoric. Black implies that such evaluation, in essence discovering the moral character of a particular form of public address, exemplifies the highest order of criticism, an "obligation to history" (Black 1970 110).

In undertaking such an evaluation, we necessarily turn our attention away from the texts because, as Edwin Black (1970) suggested, rhetorical invention has no innate character, no autonomous *raison d'être*, no intrinsic moral claim. He counselled critics to reserve moral

evaluations for the rhetors themselves, as “moral judgments are reserved for men and their deeds” (1970 110). Black exhorts us to take one final step and evaluate the rhetor’s implied audience or second persona (110). Assuming that a rhetorical act “will imply an auditor, and that in most cases the implication will be sufficiently suggestive as to enable the critic to link this implied auditor to an ideology” (112).

Once again, the nature of mythic narrative makes our task more circuitous, for Black assumed in this case a deliberative discourse wherein the ideological claims are readily available for examination. However, as we have already discovered, mythic narrative disguises ideology within its images, masking it from audience deliberation. Thus, the audience unwittingly and unknowingly comes to accept the underlying ideology by identifying with, and participating in, the mythic narrative. Because it is not independently available for examination, and because the mythic images are not subject to deliberation or debate, the ideologies embedded within myths are uncritically and unquestioningly accepted and transmitted from generation to generation through each new recounting of the narrative. Perhaps more significantly, the ideologies are in fact *enacted* by the narratives within which they are protected and shrouded.

In conclusion, Black’s “rhetorical transaction” framework, broadly considered and slightly adapted, provides a useful perspective from which to examine and evaluate the use of myth in certain political discourses. By considering situation, rhetorical strategy, effects, and finally implied audience, as factors in a dynamic process, we reach a deeper understanding of myth’s power in political discourse. Not only do we recognize the traditional role of preserving and transmitting traditional cultural values, norms, and

heritage, but simultaneously discover its power to limit debate and promote hidden ideology within the depths of its comfortable and accepted imagery.

CHAPTER 4

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

A young college student stood in the crowd, carrying several protest placards but uncertain which to raise (David Rosenbaum 17). Amidst the tightest security ever for a Presidential inauguration, angry protesters shouted “Hail to the Thief” (Barker and Kowalski A1), while a grim-faced man stood vigil outside the Supreme Court, his sign proclaiming “Crime Scene” (Clines 14). The parade route was transformed into “a gauntlet of demonstrators” offering “a primer” on American political dissent (Montgomery, “Parade Route Juxtaposes Pomp, Protests” A1). A national poll released only days prior revealed that nearly one-half of the electorate believed his Presidency to be illegitimate (Fletcher A26).

Yet, when President George W. Bush stood before the American people to deliver his inaugural address shortly after noon on January 20, 2001, he joined a rich tradition in American political and rhetorical history. Although not required by any statute, the occasion has become a vital symbol of the nation’s peaceful transfer of power, when “the nation listens for a moment as one people to the words of the man they have chosen for the highest office in the land” (Schlesinger, Jr., vi). With expectations honed from more than two hundred years of history beginning with George Washington’s first inaugural address in 1789, the audience anticipates messages of national unity, purpose, and shared values, along

with the broad outlines of the new President's governing philosophy. Through this rhetorical act, ideally, the American people symbolically unite behind their newly-elected leader.

However, as only the third man to gain the American Presidency without winning the popular election, Bush faced a difficult rhetorical problem not normally presented to American Presidents on the occasion of their first official public address. Following an election unique in the annals of American politics, replete with chads, dimples, and marathon court sessions at all levels of the judiciary, finally ended by a narrow and controversial U.S. Supreme Court decision, the American people did *not* come together as one and the Bush presidency was viewed as illegitimate by a sizable segment of the citizenry. Thus, the audience was ill-disposed to unite behind the man who had campaigned as a "uniter, not a divider." Moreover, without this national unity, Bush faced a dim prospect for delivering on his program of "compassionate conservatism."

Situation

When George W. Bush took the podium to deliver his inaugural address, he faced a rhetorical problem of major proportion. In the minds of many voters, he had stolen the razor-close election from his opponent in a bitter and extended legal battle. It was clear he would not take office with a mandate sufficient to move forward with his hallmark political philosophy of "compassionate conservatism." Many citizens, especially African Americans, considered his election to be illegitimate and believed he was unlikely to serve their interests. Doubts concerning his intellectual capacity and past alcohol misuse compounded the difficulty.

Culminating a bitter primary and general campaign, the election day itself was a rollercoaster of emotional events for the candidates and the nation, having a profound effect on Bush's later transition to the presidency and his inauguration. Despite a concerted and prolonged effort to emphasize national, and especially racial, unity during the campaign, the new president had received only 8 percent of the African American national vote and lost the national popular vote by nearly 300,000 ballots (Fletcher A26). By early morning on the next day, it became clear that both the national election and the race in Florida were too close to call and that the Florida results would ultimately determine the electoral college outcome. For the next month, the nation was gripped by a daily melodrama of charges, counter-charges, and marathon court sessions. By choosing legal recourse to curtail the process and preserve his slender lead, Bush was cast as the opponent of the electoral process by denying voters their rights of expression through the ballot box and being anti-Semitic and anti-African American for blocking recounts in these groups' specific precincts. By taking his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, Bush, the conservative states'-rights governor, preempted what many Americans believed to be a Florida state problem. Thus, although he was able to gain a narrow and highly controversial 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court decision that did not settle the fundamental issues but rather ruled on a narrower technical question, Bush won a classic Pyrrhic victory that destroyed his prize: the only national political office claiming to represent all of the American people.

While the inauguration is highly symbolic of a peaceful and legitimate transfer of power, the American population was deeply and publicly divided on this particular issue as President Bush prepared for the inaugural festivities. According to a *Washington Post-ABC News* poll (Washington Post, "Washington Post-ABC News Poll: The Bush Transit")

conducted during two weeks before inauguration and released four days prior to inauguration, 40 percent of Americans believed Bush was not elected legitimately¹. African Americans, in particular, harbored serious bitterness, resentment, and suspicion toward the new president. Eighty-three percent of African Americans did not consider Bush to have been legitimately elected, over twice the national response in the same survey question. Over 50 percent of African Americans believed Bush would be a “below average” or “poor” president, while 59 percent believed he could not “deal with the big issues facing this country,” and 64 percent thought he would “work against the interests of Blacks” (*Washington Post-ABC News Poll*, January 11-15, 2001), giving Bush’s political and ideological opponents an opportunity to raise the specter of 1960s racism and the promise of a revived civil rights campaign (Montgomery, “Simmering Election Anger Incites Rights Leaders,” A10)².

In a self-styled “emergency summit,” prominent African American leaders met in Washington during the first week of January to denounce the elections as racist, develop strategies to bolster African American voter registration, and plan inauguration day protests. While political scientist Ronald Walters characterized the presidential election as “theft,” Al Sharpton broadened the protest to include not simply the Bush and the Republican Party

1. Source: A Washington Post/ABC News poll based upon 1,513 telephone interviews with randomly selected adults, conducted January 11-15, 2001. Margin of error was plus or minus 3 percentage points. Complete survey results can be found at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/vault/stories/data011701.html.

2. Democrats generally echoed this resentment, although perhaps on more narrowly political grounds. While nearly three-quarters assessed the Bush presidency as illegitimate, 49 percent believed he would perform either “below average” or “poorly” as president. By comparison, only 9 percent of Republicans and 37 percent of Independents shared a negative view on Bush’s legitimacy, with 4 percent of Republicans and 27 percent of Independents forecasting a “below average” or “poor” performance (*Washington Post-ABC News Poll*, January 11-15, 2001).

but the entire power structure: “What is worse than a robbery is to catch the robber, go to court and the court rules there was no robbery” (quoted in Montgomery, “Simmering Election Anger,” A10).

As the gray dawn broke across the capital on January 20, 2001, thousands gathered for the largest inaugural demonstrations since Richard Nixon’s 1973 inauguration, facing the tightest security ever for a presidential inaugural (Rosenbaum 17). Along the parade route, “all mailboxes, trash cans and other receptacles where explosives could be hidden” had been removed, parade viewers passed through security checkpoints, and police patrols were evident from every vantage point (Rosenbaum 17). The parade route was transformed “from the familiar flag-waving corridor into a gauntlet of demonstrators” promising to offer Bush “a primer on American dissent at the dawn of the new millennium” as his limousine travelled up Pennsylvania Avenue to the reviewing stands (Montgomery, “Parade Route Juxtaposes Pomp, Protests,” A1). Hundreds of citizens used the occasion to voice opposition to a variety of perceived wrongs, including disenfranchisement of African American voters, capital punishment, global trade, abortion, and civil rights (Rosenbaum 17). Bush photographs competed with “Which One Won?” cups for attention in souvenir kiosks (Clines 14). Although most protesters demonstrated peacefully, incidents were reported ranging from tire slashing and paintball throwing to attempting to break through police barricades (Barker and Kovalski, A1).

As Bush took to the podium, he gazed out across the Capitol grounds and Mall on a crowd of more than 300,000 representing two Americas. In the immediate foreground were his cheering supporters, while on the sidelines protestors chanted “Hail to the Thief” and “Re-elect Gore” amidst nearly 7,000 law enforcement officers (Barker and Kovalski, A24).

On the following day, the front page of the *Washington Post* juxtaposed photographs of the new president embracing his proud parents with those of medics tending to the injuries of a demonstrator struck by police³.

Presidential inaugurals, part of “a process through which the covenant between the president and the people is renewed,” constitute a specific sub-genre of epideictic discourse (Campbell and Jamieson 15). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Celeste Condit (1985) suggests examining epideictic speech according to three functional pairs--definition/understanding, display/entertainment, and shaping/sharing of community (288). Two of these pairings are of particular interest for this analysis.

The dominance of “definition/understanding” is extant in rhetorical efforts to “explain a social world” that is “confusing or troubling” (Condit 288). The inaugural speech “unifies the audience by reconstituting its members as a people,” thus providing a fitting denouement to spirited election campaigns comprised of both personal and ideological clashes (Campbell and Jamieson 15). Great inaugurals strive to reconstitute “the people” in a particularly poignant manner, creating an image of the citizenry specially suited to the challenges ahead.

The complementary function of “shaping/sharing community” is evidenced in the speaker’s invitation to the audience to identify with specific values, symbols, and messages

3. This scene was replicated in many American cities. In Tallahassee, where post-election anger perhaps was at its greatest, protestors demonstrated against the voting irregularities, racial issues, and the ascendancy of the Republican Party. As noted by Rev. Joseph Lowery, head of the Black Leadership Forum, “we’re here to proclaim that the mean-spirited, retrogressive forces that run the Republican Party are not now invisible, they have become visible” (Pressley, A22). Jessie Jackson’s Rainbow/PUSH Coalition staged the most publicized inaugural protests, with an estimated 100 busloads of demonstrators from throughout the nation joining forces to denounce the “selection, not election” of the new president, hoisting placards proclaiming “We Were Bush-Whacked” and “The NAACP Says, We Won’t Forget” (Pressley, A22).

contained in the speech (Condit 288; also, Burke 1969 19-22). In the inaugural situation, the audience has come to expect a reaffirmation of traditional values and ideals (Campbell and Jamieson 19). New presidents demonstrate their worthiness for office by “showing that the traditions of the institutions continue unbroken in them” (19). Here, however, the president has considerable latitude for invention. This also is an opportunity to call forth an idealization of national character and ideology, what Edwin Black terms the “second persona” (1970), and invite the audience to accept this idealization.

Accordingly, inaugural addresses respond to rhetorical situations wherein the audience yearns for meaning, past, present, and future. In fact, it expects and is especially receptive to messages of unity and community. The more momentous the occasion, the greater the crisis, uncertainty, or disunity, then the stronger the need for meaning and the more receptive the audience becomes to messages of communal identification. It is under precisely these circumstances that myth, a universal unifying symbol set, becomes most powerful as a means of promoting partisan ideology.

Thus, Bush’s rhetorical problem was framed by his situation and audience. He lost the popular vote by a slim margin and the subsequent legal contest left the nation bitterly divided. African Americans, in particular, felt disenfranchised and estranged from the new president. And yet, he would need to unite the disparate groups, throughout the nation and in Congress, to move forward on his agenda of “compassionate conservatism.” The Presidential inaugural address provided an apt and time-honored occasion to achieve the former. Use of the founding myth of America provided Bush an opportunity to couch his political philosophy and agenda within a unifying message that his divided audience gathered to hear.

Rhetorical Strategy

For Bush, “America’s story” and its founding myth at once provide a celebration of common heritage and identity, explain the chaos and inequalities of the current condition, and provide the path to future greatness. He recounted a nation created and guided by God and called for restoration of the founding ideals to reclaim America’s social and political promise, continue the social revolution, and bring unity to his current audience. As a first step, Bush’s specific narrative construction of “America’s story” will be fully explored, spotlighting Bush’s mythical characters, their significance, and actions. Within each of these categories, President Bush made rhetorical choices. Throughout this examination, I will search out the light of identification and unification messages while at the same time illuminating the shadows of hidden ideological meaning.

The overarching structural element of this speech is “the American story” (Bush 2001 “Inaugural” [6])⁴. Bush’s mythical America is a special place, settled by special people “united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals” [6]. It was founded upon distinctly individualist values that emphasized the opportunity to pursue personal goals (“The grandest of these ideals is that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born” [7]), but not necessarily a broad right of opportunity to achieve those goals. Achievement is left to the individual in this pursuit, not to society. His concept of equality stems directly from the *Declaration of Independence* claim that “all men [sic] are created equal,” endowed with “inalienable rights” of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” While “life” and “liberty” are sanctified in Bush’s mythical America, “happiness” in any of its manifestations is only guaranteed in so far as its pursuit, not its

4. Bracketed numbers [] indicate paragraph numbers within the text of the speech. See Appendix.

attainment. The latter is left to individual initiative and hard work, just as it was related to the early colonists through the Puritan rhetoric of the time. These hallmarks of opportunity and equality, summed in the larger concept of “freedom,” are joined by “our democratic faith,” “the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along” [10], to round out the ideastic trinity of mythical America.

These three precepts, unique in the annals of modern history, form the basis for “America’s story,” “a long story --a story we continue but whose end we will not see” [5]. Thus begins Bush’s recounting of America’s history, “the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not conquer” [5]. He celebrated the nation’s “faith in freedom and democracy” [9], leading first to its victories in two World Wars, “a rock in a raging sea” [9], and later as leader of the Free World during the Cold War era, “a seed upon the wind, taking roots in many nations” [9]. These clearly are images calculated to unify the audience through their shared sense of historical purpose.

However, because America’s story is one of a “flawed and fallible people” [6], “our nation has sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed” [8] and “after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel” [10]. In fact, Bush’s contemporary America is so divided “it seems we share a continent, not a country” [11], thereby suggesting that on the ceremonial occasion of this inauguration, Americans cannot come together “as one people.” What is lacking, in Bush’s judgment, is that equality of opportunity has not sufficiently resulted in equality of success in the minds of many: “While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise, even the justice, of our own country” [11]. Root causes of this sense of

injustice are limitations placed on individual ambition by “failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth” [11].

Suggesting that national unity and future prospects are endangered by this condition, Bush declared “[w]e do not accept this, and we will not allow it” [12]. The basis of reclaiming national unity and promise clearly is to be found in “principles that unite and lead us forward,” “ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens” [14, 15]. Although several minor characters take Bush’s stage, God, the idealized “American citizen”, and America’s children are central. The former two represent the covenant of America’s founding, while the latter symbolizes the promise of its future.

God. God is one of two central actors, revealed as the true ongoing author of America’s story, giving Americans their special sense of mission through the Puritan covenant, and ultimately legitimizing the Bush Presidency. As noted earlier, the spiritual or Divine aspect is ubiquitous in any rhetorical recounting of the founding myth, serving to stir a unifying sense of special or higher purpose. Although Bush introduced the “American story” very early in his speech, it is not until nearly the end that we clearly learn the ultimate significance of the saga. Bush recounted a letter sent to Thomas Jefferson following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, in which a friend asks, “Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?”⁵ [44], reflecting the belief among most Founders that the American Revolution was Divinely inspired. Bush reaffirmed this faith, revealing that “we are not this story’s author, who fills time and energy with his purpose”

5. According to John Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations (online), the poetic passage, “rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm,” comes from a Joseph Addison 18th century epic commemorating the victory of Lord Marlborough at Blenheim.
<http://www.bartleby.com/100/>

[46] but “we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image” [13]. Thus, the contemporary pursuit of mythical America’s ideals becomes not only socially significant but is sanctified through the original founding covenant. God’s work accomplished by the American citizens.

Finally, Bush used God’s relationship to “America’s story” to provide legitimacy that escaped his grasp in the election. Acknowledging “the peaceful transfer of authority [that] is rare in history, yet common in our country” [1], he professed both honor and humility standing before the American people, “where so many of America’s leaders have come before me, and so many will follow” [4]. Thus, he placed himself within the time-honored lineage of the American Presidency and in the role of leading a restoration of the covenant’s political and social ideals, explicitly offering himself as the focal point for rekindling the myth by “bring[ing] the values of our history to the care of our times” [41]. He concluded this argument by claiming “an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm” [48], implying a Divine legitimacy that transcends the current national disunity and gives spiritual solace at a time of national uncertainty. By strategically placing himself as spiritual and political leader of the “continuing storm” of American progress, not only did Bush assert his own legitimacy but also laid moral claim to establishing the boundaries, standards, and goals of public debate.

American citizen. Although God provides inspiration and guidance, Bush’s invented “American citizen” (second persona [Black 1970]) is central to restoring the Divine ideals of mythical America and coincidentally carrying out the new President’s political philosophy. Creation of a mythical American people, united in striving for justice, opportunity, and liberty, is central to Bush’s construct of a society “bound by ideals that

move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens" [15]. Indeed, these founding ideals become the essence of citizenship. He emphasized the centrality of this mythical citizenry, exhorting that "[w]hat you do is as important as anything government does" [42] and "[t]he most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone" [39]. Bush's idealized citizenry is active and participatory, "citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character" [42]. Identification of his current audience with their mythical forefathers at once becomes his unifying force for the present and propels the American story into the future. Thus, "[e]very child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them" [15].

By looking deeply into the psyche of this *dramatis personae*, we can begin to fathom Bush's concepts of political action, philosophy, and preferred policies. To restore the Founding ideals of justice, equality, and opportunity, Bush called on an idealized "American citizen" distinguished by civility, compassion, courage, and character. Of the four, *civility* is mentioned first, giving it preeminence in his vision. Noting that the stakes of future public debates will be great and that the level of disagreement will be high, Bush called upon Americans to match "a commitment to principle with a concern for civility" [17] as the only way to approach governing: "Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos" [20]. Characterized by "good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness" [17], civility marks a strong contrast to recent years of divisive and highly partisan national politics but also delineates the boundaries of acceptable public discourse and suggests the conscious exclusion of more radical rhetoric or policy alternatives (Scott and Smith).

The next exemplar is *courage*. Here, Bush initially harkened back to America's traditional courage in the face of "depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good" [22]. While he clearly committed American power to international engagement "by history and by choice," "shaping a balance of power that favors freedom" [22]. Bush's notion of courage was particularly relevant to the need to squarely confront unpopular and controversial issues at home, where "we must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations" [22]. Public education, social welfare programs, and tax reduction are programs Bush mentioned specifically in this regard.

Compassion, a hallmark concept of the Bush election campaign, is perhaps the most revealing characteristic of his idealized American citizen, for it is clearly meant to supplant the government's leading role in correcting society's ills. While affirming that government has a role in developing some policies to ease suffering and improve society, specifically mentioning "public safety and public health," and "civil rights and common schools" [32], it is clear that he viewed compassion as an individual, local community, and spiritual attribute. Thus, while government has specific responsibilities in this regard, "compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government" [32], "[w]hat you do is as important as anything government does" [42], and "[o]ur public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency that give direction to our freedom" [38].

As a means of implementing these community-based efforts, Bush advocated an important role for religious and spiritual organizations, even suggesting that "they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws" [33], presaging one of his early and

controversial policy initiatives that many critics suggested would fly in the face of the U.S. Constitution's separation of church and state. Reinforcing the notion of personal compassion and faith-based approaches, Bush mentioned Mother Theresa, "a saint of our time" [39], who spurned established institutions, religious and secular, to minister to India's poorest by successfully melding faith and social services at the local level, and alluded to a Biblical passage (Luke 10:25-36), "when we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side" [35], suggesting that assisting society's less fortunate is primarily a personal responsibility, not a government program.

The final pillar of Bush's new governance is *character*, which he directly related to "personal responsibility" [36].⁶ Clearly, the notions of freedom and liberty are not without personal cost, but rather require sacrifice and work in order to realize their benefits: "we find the fullness of life not only in options, but in commitments" [37]. Specifically, "children and community are the commitments that set us free" [37]. Making a veiled allusion to partisan politics of the previous eight years, Bush asserted that "encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats, it is a call to conscience" [37]. In closing this passage, he again elevated the role of the individual over that of the government by suggesting, "Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom" [38].

Bush did not merely exhort his audience to rise to these ideals but personally pledged to enact them in his own life, making a personal compact with the American people: "I will

6. He carefully avoided specific mention of the highly publicized character lapses attributed to his immediate predecessor in order to exemplify his call for civility in public discourse, and in fact had already publicly set aside this issue by suggesting we are all "flawed and fallible people."

live and lead by these principles: to advance my conviction with civility, to pursue the public interest with courage, to speak for greater justice and compassion, to call for responsibility and try to live it as well. In all these ways, I will bring the values of our history to the care of our times" [40]. Here, he offered himself as the national leader of this idealized American citizenry.

The importance of this rhetorically constructed American citizenry cannot be overemphasized. Bush's remedy for healing the nation's deep social divisions is in fact a participatory and responsible citizenry reflecting the Founding ideals, not the federal government: "When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it" [43]. Bush mentioned "government" only five times and repeatedly alluded to its limited role and responsibility: e.g., "compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government" [32]; "the most important tasks of democracy are done by everyone" [39]; and "what you do is as important as anything government does" [42]. Later, he declared that "our unity, our union, is the serious work of leaders and citizens" [42] suggesting a direct and personal relationship unmediated by government.

Children. If the mythical American represents the link between present and past, providing necessary characteristics to return to the ideals of Founding America, then clearly Bush views America's children as the promise for future social progress, the actors of future chapters in the story. Completing the theme of America's story, rooted in past ideals and revived in the present by his Presidency, Bush noted the preeminence of the nation's children as both the inheritors and promise of its future. In fact, in discussing each of the four characteristics of the mythical American, there is a clear social responsibility to future generations. Not only was education reform his primary domestic program, aimed at saving

“young lives” from “ignorance and apathy” [23], but “(E)very child must be taught these principles” of America’s great ideals [15]. “If we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism” [19], suggesting this would ultimately erode America’s great ideals, its leadership position in the world, and ultimately its ongoing pursuit of freedom, liberty, and opportunity begun by the Founding Fathers. Finally, Bush’s call for courage in confronting tough domestic policies was to preclude “passing them on to future generations” and “sparing our children from struggles we have the power to prevent.”

This featuring of America’s children thus also provides the final significant, although subtle, connection to mythical America. Thomas Jefferson was a powerful force as founder of America’s public education system, viewing the American Revolution as merely the tenuous opening act in a multi-generational play that depended on educating the youth in order to continue (Hellenbrand 11). In order to reinvigorate America’s social virtues in each succeeding generation, this Founding Father believed education including “science and virtue” was America’s only hope to surviving future domestic and international storms.

Thus completes President Bush’s view of mythical America and within it, his vision of a revived nation. It is a nation founded on higher purpose, a covenant between God and the American people, and still guided by Divine inspiration. It is a nation of moral conviction, individual opportunity, and equality in that opportunity. America’s greatness relies upon revival of the mythical American, an active citizen of civility, courage, compassion, and character. And finally, it is an ongoing social “storm” that depends upon its youth to continue the revolution. These are all common themes that Americans are accustomed to hearing on such occasions, strong images of identification and unification.

But what of the dialectic nature of this myth? If, as Kenneth Burke suggests, there is an ideology hidden in these images, meant to be passively accepted without deliberation, then what are its main postulates and what might they portend for the current administration? In good faith, we should begin with the President's own ideological construct. "compassionate conservatism," peeling back the layers of the unifying Founding Myth for possible meaning and likely courses of action. I will begin this process by first taking the ideological root. "conservatism," and extracting its manifestations from within the Myth.

Resurrection of myth, much like the jeremiad (Murphy 411-12), is a fundamentally conservative rhetorical strategy that relies upon a particular vision of historical American culture. Rather than looking forward, the myth looks to the past for both values and solutions. In doing so, it presents the audience a limited variety of options. In controlling those alternatives, the rhetor seeks stability even while heralding the mythical image of America's revolutionary heritage. Thus, even while calling for continuing revolution ("This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm" [48]), the use of myth places limits on the nature of future reform, in reality supporting the status quo (Murphy 411).

In explaining the early institutionalization of these limits by post-Revolutionary Whig rhetors, Sacvan Bercovitch suggested that "radicalism itself was socialized into an affirmation of order. If the condition of progress was continuing revolution, the condition of continuity (the Whig leaders insisted) was control of the revolutionary impulse" (134). As John Murphy noted, "When the founders contended that liberty needs to be 'freshly restored' in each generation, they meant that such 'revolutions' would be within the confines of the American covenant...Criticism and change served to restore and reaffirm

basic American values, not to overturn them" (Murphy 411). Thus, while Bush asserts an "ongoing storm" of America's continuing social and political revolution, his use of mythic images is an inherently conservative attempt to direct these social forces into a narrow channel of debate, precluding radical solutions in favor of tradition-based answers that at once preserve pre-existing social strata and political power structures.

This assessment is further supported by Bush's placement of "civility" as the preeminent characteristic of his Mythical American, leaving little room for more radical alternatives or expressions of opposition. Debate over America's future will proceed within the framework of its traditions. This insistence on civility can be viewed from two perspectives. First, it is a reaction to the decade of growing political partisan rancor within the governing establishment within Washington's beltway. Hence, it is a call for more "civilized" governance. Second, and far more significant, it is a clear signal that voices of "radical confrontation" advocating more extreme policy alternatives (Scott and Smith 2) not only will not be heeded but are in fact not part of Bush's vision of America. By limiting radical or unconventional voices, the call for civility favors the status quo and traditional solutions.

Thus, President Bush's view of the continuing revolution is seriously limited by America's social and political traditions, a furthering and deepening of the values of mythical America. Extreme voices of any political persuasion, including those of the conservative Right, threaten that traditional stability. In this regard, Bush's emphasis on educational reform cannot be overstated. Like the Founding Fathers, Bush sees America's social revolution as an ongoing process that makes each generation responsible for passing the original revolutionary ideals and social traditions to the next generation. "Failing schools" [11] become a threat to the very covenant that gave America its purpose; turning

“the hearts of children toward knowledge and character” [19] becomes the solution to renewing the covenant.

This singularly conservative approach emphasizes individual opportunity, initiative, citizenship, and activism while minimizing the role of government. While acknowledging government’s “great responsibilities” for “public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools” [32], Bush seems to transfer responsibility for ensuring social justice to the individual and community, thereby constructing the “compassionate” aspect of his “compassionate conservative” philosophy. Here he seeks to transcend the traditional American political bifurcation of “liberalism” and “conservatism” by addressing social injustices with federal policies that reinvigorate community social welfare efforts.

It is here that Bush most clearly reveals his fundamental political ideology as embodied by the term “compassionate conservatism,” pledging to “build a single nation of justice and opportunity” [12]. In this promise, he not only presents a unifying message for the entire citizenry but more importantly for the course of future national political debate, transcends the two political philosophies (individualistic and moralistic) identified by Walter Fisher in earlier Presidential rhetoric (1973) by attempting to supplant the two dialectical philosophies with a unitary synthesis. The traditional conservative promotion of individual effort and equality of opportunity is masterfully combined, not with government-sponsored social programs, but with community- and individual-based efforts to level the social and economic outcomes. If successful, he not only answers criticism of the traditional conservative philosophy but also co-opts the goals and future rhetoric of American political liberalism.

While acknowledging that “deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation’s promise” [28] and that “all of us are diminished when any are hopeless” [31], Bush suggests “compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government” [32]. Referring to “compassionate” acts of the Good Samaritan [35] and Mother Theresa [39], Bush believes “the most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone” [39] and “[o]ur public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom” [38]. Urging his audience to “serve your nation, beginning with your neighbor” and build “communities of service and a nation of character,” Bush asserts that “[w]hat you do is as important as anything government does” [42].

It should be acknowledged, however, that the mythical concept of equality of opportunity applies to all the people, not simply the privileged few. The early colonists were themselves outcasts of a privileged and hierarchical European social system. Their view of opportunity was simple: each individual, regardless of social status, deserved a chance. Some were able to capitalize on the opportunity, while some did not. Bush’s adherence to these principles might then lead to broader social, economic, and political opportunities for those who “doubt the justice” of the current system, but simultaneously reducing federal guarantees on equality of outcome. While this “compassionate conservative” view of social justice and social welfare might presage a minimized federal government role in this arena, they also explain Bush’s advocacy of faith-based social programs. For Bush, religious institutions “lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws” [33].

Effects

A complex oration provides a potentially diverse range of effects. President Bush stood before a deeply divided nation, a significant portion of which did not even believe he was legitimately elected. To provide meaning to America's current social climate, solidify his own legitimacy, and most importantly promote his political philosophy without exposing it to public deliberation by a divided nation, Bush consciously chose a traditional rhetorical form containing simple messages of unification, identification, and shared values, but which disguises political philosophy within the comforting images of myth.

Aesthetically, this speech received high praise and positive evaluation. Through poetic words and masterful images of America's grand past, a romanticized vision of the ideal American citizen, and a clarion call to entrust the future of the "grand experiment" in America's next generation, Bush exceeded all expectations of the occasion. His portrayal of the American myth, complete with unifying themes of justice, opportunity, democracy, and the central role of God, eloquently reminded his audience of their special place in the world and gave higher authority and legitimacy to his bitterly contested election.

For those citizens truly desiring to "listen for a moment as one people to the words of the man they have chosen for the highest office in the land," Bush provided brief solace and safe haven in comfortable and reassuring national self-image. Indeed, despite widespread protest surrounding the inauguration, reaction to the speech itself was overwhelmingly positive. Los Angeles Times writers termed the address "elegant in spots, impassioned in others" (Brownstein 1) and "brief but graceful" (McManus, Gerstenzang, and Anderson 1), while Washington Post reporters noted "his voice was strong, his delivery assured." (Balz 16). "[h]is remarks today were sprinkled with elegant locutions, artful syntax and alliterative

phrases” (Bruni and Sanger 16), and that the speech featured “humility” and “inclusive language” (Henneberger 16). A former Democratic Party speech writer observed that the inaugural address “was well written, smoothly delivered and muted in tone” while a former high school speech teacher, admitting that “[h]e inspired me,” gave the oration an “A” (Atlanta Journal Constitution B2). Noted political columnist William Safire suggested “[t]here was more philosophy in Bush’s well-delivered speech than met the ear” (Safire A19) and Senator Patrick J. Leahy (Democrat-Vermont) said, “I thought it had both a sense of history and a sense of country” (Los Angeles Times A15).

Despite this overwhelming endorsement of the speech, however, tracing its effects on the subsequent course of political debate is more problematic. Based upon the goals of this speech and the perspective outlined in the previous chapter, we should examine possible effects on subsequent rhetoric, on the perceived legitimacy of the Bush presidency, and on the Bush ideology and policy agenda. One of Bush’s expressed goals in his inaugural speech was to change the tone of debate in the nation’s capital, indeed to provide new meaning and direction to public life and political discourse. The hallmark of this goal was his call for public “civility”. In this regard, there were strong early indications of success that dwindled over time. In the immediate aftermath of the inaugural speech, news reporters and politicians alike echoed these sentiments (e.g., Allen 2001; Allen and Dewar 2001: “President Bush and Judges” 2001). In fact, Bush regularly was compared favorably on this count with his predecessor (“Cleaning Up” 2001) and contemporary political opponents (“Bitter Business” 2001). However, only three months after the inaugural address, commentators were willing to proclaim the death of political civility and Bush’s new era of bipartisanship (Harris and Balz 2001). Quoting administration advisors that the American

public was really more interested in results rather than civility, two experienced news reporters observed that “the institutional habits and perceptions of self-interest that tilt Washington toward partisanship” were not to be overturned by “a new face at the White House or a handful of friendly meetings with the opposition” (Harris and Balz A1). Convinced that Bush’s attempts at conciliation were more public relations than substance, Representative Richard Gephardt suggested that “[i]t’s now become clear there’s no effort at bipartisanship. It’s the same my-way-or-the-highway approach we’ve seen here [from Republicans] over six years” (Harris and Balz A1).

In terms of his perceived legitimacy in office, Bush seems to have made considerable, although certainly not unambiguous or unanimous, progress. A public opinion poll conducted immediately prior to completion of his symbolic first hundred days in office (Washington Post, April 2001) revealed a solid 63 percent overall job approval rating (higher than Clinton, lower than Reagan or George Herbert Walker Bush, at comparable periods in their respective presidencies), but the polling data showed very little, if any, statistically significant change in perceptions of the legitimacy of the election. Favorable ratings across a variety of questions and indices were lower among African Americans, although slightly improved from those of the pre-inaugural poll.

Finally, Bush’s inaugural rhetoric seems to have had very little positive influence on the new president’s ability to leverage his conservative political agenda. Not only did polling data suggest public disagreement with his policy priorities (Milbank, “Key Goals,” 2001), but perhaps more ominously, Bush faced stiff opposition from his own party leadership. A prestigious national figure who had mounted a bitter but failed grassroots bid for the Republican presidential nomination, Arizona Senator John McCain had been immensely

popular with many political observers suggesting only his iconoclastic approach to traditional political “business as usual” kept him from receiving the nod from party insiders. On the eve of the inauguration, McCain publicly threatened to “hold hostage” Bush’s policy agenda in Congress in order to gain presidential support for McCain’s signature campaign reform legislation. Despite Bush’s much publicized desire to promote quickly his public education reforms (e.g., Milbank, “Bush Makes Education 1st Initiative,” 2001), Senator McCain mounted an early and aggressive campaign following Inaugural Day to force his campaign reform legislation to the forefront of the Congressional calendar, virtually robbing the new president of any opportunity to build political momentum for his own agenda. As it would happen, neither man achieved his goal for approximately one year.

Bush’s faith-based initiative, arguably at the heart of his inaugural rhetoric, suffered a similar fate. Despite what some observers suggested was unexpectedly mild and open-minded reaction to Bush’s most radical policy proposal, federal funding of local religiously-based social service organizations, the proposal never really caught the public’s imagination (Steinberg 2001). In one of his earliest official acts, Bush established administrative offices in five Cabinet-level agencies, charged with developing procedures and safeguards for nationwide implementation (Milbank, “Bush Unveils,” 2001). However, the proposal not only drew opposition from liberal opponents but also from national religious leaders and organizations (Caryle Murphy 2001). This proposal, like most of Bush’s other priorities, essentially languished throughout the summer of 2001.

Thus, it would appear that President Bush’s extensive use of mythic narrative in his inaugural address, despite nearly overwhelming praise its aesthetic qualities, cannot be clearly associated with any substantial positive outcomes. Granted, the address directly

referred to only a small number of policy directions, but even these broad directions were not readily available to the new president. In fact, throughout the spring and summer of 2001, the only policy priority seen to fruition was his tax cut and even this turned out to be highly controversial as the overall national economy significantly deteriorated.

However, the inaugural speech may have had two substantial but less tangible effects. First, it established Bush perhaps for the first time as a competent orator capable of delivering a powerful national message of shared cultural values and meaning. This elevation of his personal ethos would be a valuable asset in the wake of the September terrorist attacks. Relatedly, this initial telling of the founding myth may have set the stage for later, more powerful, mythic narratives. If, as previous scholars have suggested, myths gain power through their retelling, it is entirely plausible that we should not set high expectations for their initial use in a particular crisis. In fact, Hinds and Windt (1995) demonstrated that the rhetorical construction of the Cold War into a struggle between Good and Evil required more than two years. Therefore, if the general power of mythic narrative follows such a pattern, we would expect to see more detailed explication and more substantial effects over time.

CHAPTER 5

“DAY OF REMEMBRANCE” ADDRESS

A September 10, 2001, public opinion poll carried ominous signals of eroding support for President Bush’s performance, with a majority of Americans willing to reduce the amount Bush’s much-touted income tax cuts to deal with the increasingly discernible signs of economic slowdown (Balz and Morin, “Poll Finds Public,” A1). Only three days earlier, White House Budget Director Mitchell Daniels, Jr., warned of the politically unthinkable--borrowing from the Social Security surplus to meet unexpected budgetary needs (Dana Milbank, “President, Republicans Try,” A7). While nearly 55 percent of polled Americans still approved of the President’s performance, this declining number mirrored concern over policy gridlock and the palpable return to partisan incivility between the branches of Federal government (Balz and Morin, “Poll Finds Public,” A1).

While some observers have opined that the tragic events of September 11, 2001, changed the direction of America, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that at most they represent a core exigence into which the American people and its leaders were suddenly and inextricably drawn, a new existence that required a new explanation and direction. While in hindsight it might appear that this national search for meaning inexorably resulted in a sudden and fundamental shift in American world view, symbolically represented by the

President's eventual de facto declaration of war on worldwide terrorism, in fact there was nothing inevitable in this transformation at all.

Working within the totally unexpected milieu of two coordinated catastrophic attacks against U.S. commercial and government epicenters, a third conflagration thwarted by heroic action in the skies over western Pennsylvania, and the serious prospect of untold future tragedy, President Bush made a series of either deliberate or instinctive rhetorical decisions that not only provided shape and meaning to this virtually unprecedented circumstance in American history, but at once offered a compelling sense of national unity and direction or telos. These rhetorical choices, culminating in Bush's first attempt to rhetorically shape a new American existence, were largely but not exclusively influenced by the terrorist attacks themselves. While the cataclysmic events of September 11 required a rhetorical response from the President, the actual nature of that response was at least as much conditioned by the influence of American cultural myth on both the rhetor and audience.

Although this influence proved less effectual in resolving the essentially domestic crisis of the 2000 presidential election and inauguration of George W. Bush, the Puritan myth's agency to unite and provide comfortable meaning became more clearly manifest with the advent of an external crisis. This chapter charts the evolution of Bush's initial rhetorical response to these events, not only within the circumstance of the immediate exigence, but also within the larger context of his rhetorical legacy. It then explicates and interprets his first extended attempt to provide meaning and direction to the American people, and indeed the world, through his September 14 address at the National Cathedral. Finally, it examines

the broad effects of his use of archetypal metaphor within the cultural myth narrative during this time of national crisis.

Situation

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 provided a catalyst to change the course of American society as few other single events have done. The sun rose to illuminate a nation still divided and uncertain about its priorities and direction. Despite successful negotiation to liberate the aircrew of a crippled military reconnaissance aircraft from a Chinese leadership that the new administration deliberately put at arms length, and recent passage of compromise tax reduction legislation that had been one of Bush's campaign hallmarks, the nation still had not come to accept fully the new President. In a late July public opinion survey, Americans were evenly split on whether the country should adopt the Bush agenda or that of the newly installed Congressional Democratic leadership (Broder and Balz A4). In fact, on that very morning, the latter were ensconced in a major strategy meeting, "plotting a fall offensive against the White House," with political observers predicting "a long, partisan autumn of warfare" (Woodward and Balz, "We Will Rally," A1).

Although the American public positively viewed George W. Bush's character (Broder and Balz A4), doubts still lingered about the performance of his all-star administration. Only the day before the attacks, Time magazine featured Secretary of State Colin Powell on its cover, suggesting that the administration's most popular figure had been pushed aside by more strident voices (Johanna McGeary). Conversely, Vice President Richard Cheney was generally criticized for being too closely involved in presidential decision making, some observers conjecturing that he in fact had become a surrogate for Bush in many policy

matters (Woodward and Balz, "We Will Rally," A1). Finally, Bush himself remained the critical unknown. Roughly 40 percent of surveyed Americans did not believe he could manage a major crisis (Broder and Balz A4). In previous foreign policy forays (e.g., Kyoto Treaty, ABM Treaty, NATO discussions), he demonstrated a propensity toward unilateralism and lack of interest in cooperating with even our closest allies (Woodward and Balz, "We Will Rally," A1).

However, before the sun would reach its apex over the American east coast, the entire nation was gripped by the unimaginable horror of devastating and highly symbolic attacks on America's global economic prowess and its worldwide military nerve center. Faced with images of fuel-engorged airliners impaling the World Trade Center's twin towers in maniacal succession, faceless Americans jumping to certain death as heroic rescue workers rushed to a similar fate inside the collapsing New York colossus, and an emblazoned aircraft fuselage protruding from the Pentagon, a riveted nation faced what William J. Bennett controversially characterized as a "moment of moral clarity" (Bennett 2001).

Although Solicitor General Theodore Olson later discovered that his wife was among the deceased airline passengers, it was Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who among senior administration officials most vividly experienced the attacks' sheer force as American Airlines Flight 77 caromed into the Pentagon opposite his office. As Rumsfeld instinctively hastened to assist initial rescue efforts, Vice President Cheney was rushed by Secret Service agents into the White House underground bunker (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Road," A1). General Hugh Shelton, due to retire as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the end of the month, ordered his aircraft to reverse course over the Atlantic and return to Andrews Air Force Base even as Transportation Secretary Norman

Mineta directed an immediate grounding of all air traffic. Secretary of State Powell abruptly ended his meeting with the new president of Peru, Alejandro Toledo, in Lima and departed for Washington, D.C. (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Road," A1).

Initial information of what appeared to be a major aviation accident reached President Bush as he arrived at an elementary school in Sarasota, Florida. Minutes later, as Bush sat listening to a student recital, presidential advisor Andrew Card delivered the news of the second airliner in New York: "America is under attack" (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Road," A1). In an immediate address to the nation, Bush echoed his father's famous words, vowing that "terrorism against our nation will not stand" and promising "a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act" (Bush, "Bush on Plane Crashes"). Although in a later interview, Bush recalled immediately and almost instinctively conceptualizing the day's terrorist attacks as the opening salvo of a war, his initial statement bears no evidence of this inchoate rhetorical construct. In fact, beyond a nebulous commitment of "the full resources of the federal government," his only specific reference was to the FBI's role in investigation and apprehension, strongly suggesting a law enforcement response rather than a military one (Bush, "Bush on Plane Crashes").

Shortly after noon, Bush delivered another brief and halting message to the nation from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. In this address, "those folks" of his previous speech became "a faceless coward," and "this act" was transformed into "these cowardly acts" and an attack on "[f]reedom itself" (Bush, "Bush Comments on Plane Crashes"). Although the nation's military now was on alert for additional attacks, he characterized the day's events as a national test of resolve, promising to "hunt down and punish those responsible . . ." (Bush, "Bush on Plane Crashes").

Although his public message continued to focus on giving voice to the enormous, and as yet untold, human tragedy. Bush nearly immediately engaged his senior staff in private discussions of retaliation and war preparation. In fact, in a later interview he recalled deliberately not using escalatory language in the immediate aftermath, calculating that his proper role was first to express that nation's grief (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Role" A1). When he received from chief White House speech writer Michael Gerson a proposed draft for his final national address of the day, Bush specifically eliminated Gerson's reference to "an act of war," explaining that he wasn't ready to discuss this with the public (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Role" A1).

Speaking from the Oval Office that evening, his first fully prepared and vetted address since the morning's attacks. Bush began laying the rhetorical groundwork to draw upon his inaugural use of mythic narrative and offer a transcendent meaning of the day's events, simultaneously using this symbology to begin uniting the nation under his personal leadership (Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"). Discarding earlier rhetoric placing the exigence within the realm of crime, Bush either deliberately or instinctively drew upon the nation's familiar rhetorical stockpile (Hinds and Windt 31-87), a compelling national mythic rhetoric embedded in his inaugural address and repeated on several successive occasions, a narrative that at once consoles, provides both cultural and situational meaning, reinforces national values, and unites the national audience.

Although a relatively short address, this speech revealed three nascent themes critical to determining the nation's response. First, the scenes of attack transcended from the literal and physical World Trade Center and Pentagon into "the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" (Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"). Indeed, suggested Bush,

the ultimate motive of the terrorists was not merely physical destruction and mass murder, but the demise of that very freedom and opportunity which Americans had universally championed since earliest colonial period. In response to this challenge to our very way of life, Bush affirmed, "None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world" (Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"). Second, the nation's response to these attacks would not be merely "find those responsible and bring them to justice." In announcing that the nation "will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them," he briefly and simply declared that America and its "friends and allies" would "stand together to win the war on terrorism" (Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"), a significant escalation of the response from law enforcement to national security. Bush would later explain that he wanted to introduce the concept of war but did not want to dwell on its import at this point (Balz and Woodward, "America's Chaotic Role" A1).

Finally, and far more momentous, the terrorist hijackers were elevated from Bush's earlier characterization as "cowards" to the embodiment of evil itself, as Bush employed the archetypal image at three distinct points throughout the speech (Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"). Not only were the attacks themselves "evil acts," but Bush further alluded to a more ominous force at work ("Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature" [Bush, "Bush Addresses the Nation"]). This final rhetorical construct struck a familiar chord with his domestic audience, an enthymeme that Americans quickly and willingly completed. Without explicitly drawing upon Winthrop's *Arbella* sermon and its associated myth of America's role and place in the world, Bush subtly closed with the 23rd Psalm: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for

you are with me” (Bush, “Bush Addresses the Nation”). While this Biblical passage is commonly referenced in troubled times, at the cultural level it also implicitly invokes the Puritan national covenant. This vision of a new world divided into Good and Evil was implicitly echoed by Secretary of State Powell during a press conference the next morning, when he warned other nations that there could be no middle ground in the war on terrorism (Perlez 2001, “Powell Says,” A17).

Throughout the next day, Bush struggled against his own bureaucracy to retain the simple, universal dimensions introduced in the Oval Office address. Prompted by counselor Karen Hughes on the morning of September 12 to attend to details, the President insisted on focusing on the “big picture”: “A faceless enemy has declared war on the United States” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1). During a National Security Council meeting, he continued the archetypal construction of Good and Evil, insisting that he would abide no international bystanders in the ensuing struggle: “You’re either with us or you’re not” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1). At the same time, however, he persisted in moving slowly to operationalize this cosmic battle by focusing first on Osama bin Laden, the suspected terrorist underwriter: “We don’t want to define [it] too broadly for the average man to understand” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1).

In a late morning meeting with reporters, Bush persevered by characterizing America’s new enemy as one “who operated in the shadows, who preyed on innocent people, who hit and then ran for cover” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1). Cautioning the American people to be patient, he ended by repeating his archetypal construction: “This will be a monumental struggle between good and evil. But good will prevail” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1).

Bush continued to frame the situation in terms of “war” rather than “terrorist attack.” despite concern from Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle that “war is a powerful word” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1). Late in the afternoon, he rejected a National Security Council staff draft proposal that abjured Bush’s universalism as too broad and unrealistic. Where the staff advocated eliminating “terrorism as a threat to our way of life,” Bush instead insisted on language that suggested protecting “all nations that love freedom” (Woodward and Balz, “We Will Rally,” A1).

On September 13, Bush turned his attention to preparations for the National Cathedral prayer service, an interdenominational observance whose inspiration is credited to Bush himself. Turning to Michael Gerson for the first draft, Bush insisted that the speech not only commemorate the fallen but also unambiguously reflect his own confidence in the ultimate victory over terrorism. In addition, Gerson focused on Bush’s characterization of the ensuing conflict in terms of Good and Evil and the president’s underlying religious conviction (Balz, Woodward, and Himmelman, “Afghan Campaign,” A1). Among his senior staff, at least Colin Powell had noticed Bush’s public displays of emotion over the past two days, concerned that a visibly shaken president might not evoke the nation’s confidence. Hours before Bush departed for the National Cathedral, Powell quietly passed him a note advising him not to think about anything especially emotional while at the podium (Balz and Woodward, “A Day to Speak,” A1). It was clear to all concerned that the early afternoon address would be Bush’s greatest rhetorical challenge.

Bush ascended the National Cathedral steps slightly after noon amidst pounding rain. The atmosphere inside the nation’s church was far more accommodating: in addition to clerics from many religious denominations, the pews were lined with past Presidents, the

current Cabinet, and many members of Congress. He and the First Lady were ushered to their seats alongside the two individuals who had been at his side on the Capitol steps during another rainy speech in January, George H.W. and Barbara Bush.

Rhetorical Strategy

In framing the tragic events for a grieving nation, President Bush implicitly returned to the mythic narrative of his inaugural address. Relying upon the enthymematic power of myth, he drew only from the shadows of the narrative, requiring the audience to draw from earlier iterations in order to complete the story. As was the case with the inaugural, Bush focused on the parties of the Puritan national covenant, God and the American people, while introducing an important third character in the form of "Evil". The insinuation of this final character, both disembodied and having the human form of terrorists, completes the myth by pointing to the opposite of Good represented by Americans, and provides the crowning meaning not only for the tragic events but also the course of American history.

Once again, Bush called upon the visage of God as an ultimate cosmic agent, this time capable of blessing "the souls of the departed" (Bush 2001 "Cathedral" [20])¹ and "comfort[ing] and consol[ing] those who now walk in sorrow" [19]. In assuring the "children and parents and spouses and families of the lost" that they "are not alone" [6], he at once declared national unity of grief but perhaps more importantly affirmed a more transcendent union promised in the Bible (Romans 8:38), that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, can separate us from God's love" [20].

1. Bracketed numbers [] indicate paragraph numbers within the text of the speech. See Appendix.

Whereas in the inaugural he asserted that God is the “true author” of the American story, here God is revealed more broadly as Creator of a world of “moral design,” wherein “[g]rief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time” but “[g]oodness, remembrance, and love have no end” [12]. With these words, Bush established God’s preeminent role in providing order and making sense of the world, “watch[ing] over our nation, and grant[ing] us patience and resolve in all that is to come” [19]. Moreover, by suggesting that “[g]rief and tragedy are only for a time” but that [g]oodness, remembrance, and love have no end” [12], Bush clearly expressed a Biblical millennialist view of the cosmic battle between Good and Evil. In Bush’s view, however, God is a mystery and His “signs are not always the ones we look for” [10]. In fact, “[w]e learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own” [10]. Thus, although his audience cannot yet make sense of mass murders of September 11, Bush offered that we may simply take solace that they were part of God’s cosmic telos for both the nation and the world.

Bush also raised the specter of another archetypal actor, almost unspoken, at once a nebulous force in the universe and physically embodied in the terrorist organization of Osama bin Laden. The “deliberate and massive cruelty” resulting in “images of fire and ashes, and bent steel” [2] was not merely an isolated attack but a war “waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder” [8]. Referring to this national assailant only indirectly as the “others” [8], Bush perhaps deliberately refrained from imbuing America’s attackers with a limiting sense of humanity, proffering instead an “evil” [7] antagonist of grander proportions. Rather than treat them merely as contemporaneous culprits, he cast the assailants within an age-old Manichaen conflict: “In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom” [18]. Unlike God’s mysterious purposes, Evil’s intentions are far more obvious and ominous: “They have attacked America, because we

are freedom's home and defender" [18]. By raising both cosmic actors and their respective motives to an archetypal zenith, Bush at once not only placed Americans within an ordered cosmology in which action has moral authority, but simultaneously offered all other people to join "this unity against terror" that "is now extending across the world" [17].

Although these archetypal figures and their prophetic universal struggle framed the import of the terrorist attacks, Bush used this occasion primarily to continue the rhetorical construction of the mythic America begun in his inaugural address. Whereas the former speech noted the desirability of those characteristics, Bush now observed that "adversity introduces us to ourselves," pointing to our true "national character" in the actions of victims, rescuers, and countless volunteers from all walks of life [13]. Drawing from the deepest Puritan beliefs of national covenant, that "doing" Good is more important than "being" Good, Bush offered a view of American character in action.

Foremost among these traits of national character were "eloquent acts of sacrifice" [14] that demonstrated Americans' "deep commitment to one and other" [15]. In every case mentioned, "one man who could have saved himself [but] stayed until the end at the side of his quadriplegic friend," the "beloved priest [who] died giving last rites to a firefighter," the two office workers who, "finding a disabled stranger, carried her down sixty-eight floors to safety, or the men who "drove all night from Dallas to Washington to bring skin grafts for burn victims" [14], these were individual acts of kindness, many ending in the ultimate sacrifice of life to aid another. Moreover, because this was an attack upon our defense of freedom, those who died on that fateful day, "men and women who began their day at a desk or in an airport," "people who faced death, and in their last moments called home" [3], "passengers who defied their murderers, and prevented the murder of others on the ground," "men and women who wore the uniform of the United States, and died at their

posts" [4], and "the ones whom death found running up the stairs and into the fires to help others" [5], all were martyrs who sacrificed their lives to a greater cause. Second, Americans exhibited what President Franklin Roosevelt earlier called "the warm courage of national unity" [15] (for Roosevelt's text, see Hunt 382). However, this newfound unity, which Bush had been seeking to foster since prior to his inauguration, was not to be constructed on the basis of political party or policy but grounded upon moral imperative.

As the archetypal figures in Bush's narrative had purpose, no less so did the American people. Declaring America to be "freedom's home and defender" [18], Bush affirmed a new "responsibility to history...to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil" [7]. Thus, he returned to the millennialist goals of John Winthrop and early Puritan settlers, to join the struggle between Good and Evil not only in the New World but throughout the world: "the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time" [18]. Nor was this merely to be a national struggle, but rather a "unity against terror [that] is now extending across the world" [17]. Pointing to a "steadfast resolve to prevail against our enemies" [17], Bush promised "it will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing" [8].

Effects

The tentative, almost hopeful, appearance of bright blue skies and warming sunshine as Bush departed the National Cathedral aptly symbolize the watershed qualities of this address. Situated at the difficult midpoint between the traumatic terrorist attacks and Bush's commanding address to Congress, this speech easily might be overlooked, particularly if judged through the limiting lens of neo-Aristotelian effectiveness. Primarily intended to console a grieving nation, the mourning continued unabated in the wake of soothing words of consolation. Also designed to shape meaning in tragic times, Americans

still did not fully appreciate the monumental significance of the present, much less the future. Thus, the National Cathedral address arguably is better viewed as a rhetorical foundation for the oration just one week later, a critical rhetorical event for both the President and the nation.

First, it established the credentials of President Bush as rhetor-in-chief in America's newest hour of crisis. Despite outstanding oratorical performances at the Republican National Convention and his inauguration, Bush still could not count upon the broad acceptance of the national audience. Recurring rhetorical faux pas during the campaign and throughout his early Presidency hampered his ability to connect profoundly with the American people. Concerns expressed by senior administration officials such as Colin Powell suggest the strong potentiality of oratorical miscarriage, preventing Bush's mythic message from developing fully. The importance of this success should not be underestimated. Despite early evidence that some elements of Bush's traditional opposition were deferring activities that might be considered attacks on the President (Kamen A25), other political adversaries were poised quietly to give voice to alternative directions (Harris A13; Carlson C1). Any misstep of word or deed on the part of the President might have emboldened these forces to strike out at his rhetorical construction of America's new reality.

This rhetorical re-construction of America's mythical purpose is the second prominent effect of this speech. When John Winthrop led his small band of Congregationalists to the New World in the early 17th century, they believed they had been chosen by God to create a new moral order to prepare for the Second Coming. This virtuous community was not to be content with its insular existence along Massachusetts Bay but should be a model for all to emulate. Their moral universalism carried through into the rhetoric of the American

Revolution. The Puritans' concept of national covenant combined personal faith and community action to bring moral order to the world. It is this imperative to moral action that has distinguished this mythic belief throughout American history. While Bush returned to this rhetoric in his inaugural address, so far as domestic equality was concerned, he had raised its broader universalism only in historical terms. However, his September 14 rhetorical construction "rediscovered" America's moral purpose in the world, once again defending freedom and liberty against a new international adversary. This mythical message of America's special purpose in the world was not only comforting and familiar but also provided a transcendent meaning to the events of September.

Finally, framing these events in archetypal terms and aligning the nation's purpose with that of God's had powerful but subtle influence on future policy and public discourse, growing stronger as the mythic narrative gained prominence and ascended a ladder of greater abstraction. Once the nation's new adversary was labelled as Evil, there could be no negotiation or compromise. At this level of archetypal abstraction, there can only be two groups of agents with no moral middle ground. By aligning the nation and himself with God's purpose, Bush effectively laid the groundwork to preclude either public deliberation or opposition to the war plans he would begin to articulate over the course of the following week, as any dissenters risked countering this moral claim of Divine guidance. Simultaneously, his message to other nations ("with us or against us") broadened the rhetorical construction to encompass all humanity.

These consequences would build upon the centuries' old mythic beliefs of the American audience and Bush's own previous rhetorical efforts to revive this sense of religious special purpose and simultaneously establish Bush as the legitimate prolocutor of this particular national errand. These nascent forces would gain potency throughout the

next week and provide the rhetorical foundation as the President appeared before a joint session of Congress for a *de facto* declaration of war based upon these moral imperatives.

CHAPTER 6

ADDRESS TO JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

Holding aloft the shield of fallen New York Port Authority policeman, George Howard, President George W. Bush solemnly vowed to the assembled members of both houses of the U.S. Congress, the American people, and the world, "I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent..." (Bush 2001, "Joint Session," [54])¹. His September 20 speech to a Joint Session of Congress not only defined his fledgling presidency but also completed Bush's rhetorical reconstruction and unification of the American people based upon the narrative of the nation's mythic origins. While his previous epideictic addresses recreated and updated the Puritan proposition of national covenant, the "errand into the wilderness" (Miller 1956), and Divine guidance, this oration projected both the mythical construct and the American people into the future, essentially beginning a new chapter of "America's story".

In many important respects, Bush's September 20 speech was the foreign policy mirror to his predominantly domestic inaugural address. In both cases, the President employed the rhetorical strategy of mythic narrative to unify the nation and concurrently co-opt Americans' need for shared meaning in order to gain unenlightened, and perhaps unconscious, affirmation of his policy initiatives, in this case a nebulous, all-encompassing, and seemingly interminable declaration of war against Evil throughout the world. This chapter examines the culmination

1. Bracketed numbers [] indicate paragraph numbers within the text of the speech. See Appendix.

of this rhetorical apotheosis, again beginning with an explication of the broad situation, Bush's strategy choices in responding to that situation, and finally the effects of this rhetorical form on the future course of American politics and public discourse.

Situation

Immediately following his inspirational address to the American public from the National Cathedral, Bush travelled to Manhattan to behold personally the physical and human devastation at what had become known as "Ground Zero." In one of the most visually enduring events in a period of strong visual images, the President climbed atop a disabled fire truck to address the chanting crowd of rescue workers. Responding to requests that he speak louder, he responded, "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon" (Balz and Woodward, "A Day to Speak," A1). He later spent a highly emotional two hours privately meeting with victims' families, noticeably sharing both their grief and their hope. The mother of missing Port Authority policeman George Howard pressed the President to take her son's police shield (Balz and Woodward, "A Day to Speak," A1), yet another visible icon of the past week's tragedy.

The journey that evening from New York City to the Presidential retreat at Camp David marked a significant transition point in America's search for unity, as Bush began to focus on the nation's future direction. Clearly, the tragic events of September 11 shook the nation to its core, violently wrenching it from a popularly believed, if not actual, insularity. All public voices immediately discerned the attacks as significant events in American life, with the Washington Post editorial board hastening comparisons to the Japanese attack on Pearl

Harbor and declaring "War" in its lead editorial headline (Washington Post, "War," A26). Only hours following the onslaught of devastation, political commentator George Will heralded the beginning of a new era in American history (Will 2001 A27). After several halting and ineffectual attempts, it was George W. Bush who dominated this search for meaning with his rhetorical construction of a timeless battle between Good and Evil. Early in the week, various mass media outlets began echoing Bush's initial archetypal construction (Washington Post, "Under a Cloud of Evil," C1) and by the end of the week The Washington Post declared that the nation had united behind a rhetoric of "prayers and patriotism" (Sanchez and Broadway 2001 A1). Finally, both the Senate and House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the broad use of force to respond to the attacks (Perlez, "U.S. Demands," A1). The only dissenting voice in either house was Representative Barbara Lee (D-California), who warned against open-ended and nebulous course ahead (Perlez, "U.S. Demands," A1).

Having successfully united the American people, established his own personal leadership credentials, and explained the current national tragedy in terms of a timeless Manichean struggle in which America was appointed by God to bring moral order to the world, Bush immediately turned to charting the nation's new course to re-engage Evil. In addition to explaining the present in terms of the past, myth also provides a comfortable path to the future. Thus, having united America firmly on the basis of its 1630 rhetorical roots, whence John Winthrop cast his Puritan followers as God's new Chosen People, President Bush spent the next week constructing America's new role in the post-Cold War world and the speech that would justify its new moral activism as well as apply this 17th century Puritan perspective to the modern world stage.

The first task at hand was to develop a comprehensive approach to this sweeping and all-inclusive world view, so Bush convened his “War Cabinet” on September 15 for a day-long discussion of the New World architecture and America’s response. Despite dissension regarding timing and tactics (Woodward and Balz, “At Camp David,” A1), there is no currently extant record indicating that any participants questioned Bush’s rhetorical construction. Following a day of often unfocused and wide-ranging deliberations, three primary themes gradually emerged. First, in the new rhetorical world of Good and Evil, nations would be judged by their actions (Woodward and Balz, “At Camp David,” A1), as Bush had previously declared to the world, “You’re either with us or against us.” Unlike the Cold War, during which each side’s strategy was to gain allies from among the ideological uncommitted throughout the world, in the cosmic war of Good and Evil there could be no middle ground for moral bystanders. Each nation would choose its destiny through behavior; those states and non-nation actors not actively waging war against Evil would be considered complicit with the dark side. Should no one else choose to join the fight against Evil, Bush made it clear that America’s historic mission would enjoin it to stand alone in this struggle (Woodward and Balz, “At Camp David,” A1).

Second, while the immediate focus of America’s response would be Afghanistan, the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden, the ultimate war against Evil had no limits in either time or space. At this initial meeting, CIA Director George Tenet unveiled his organization’s “Worldwide Attack Matrix,” foretelling a clandestine struggle against terrorism in 80 countries (Woodward and Balz, “At Camp David,” A1). Bush would later approve this plan, concurrently granting sweeping changes that “would give the CIA the broadest and most lethal authority in its history” (Woodward and Balz, “At Camp David,” A1). Bush

recalled in a later interview his view that this would be a war like no other in history, requiring more than simply conventional military efforts (Woodward and Balz, "At Camp David," A1).

Finally, Bush insisted that to sustain public support and ultimately prevail, his administration must make its explanation of the coming struggle as simple as possible (Woodward and Balz, "At Camp David," A1). Rather than publicly disclose Tenet's "Matrix," the President preferred to focus immediate public attention on the war's opening battles in Afghanistan while simultaneously conditioning public expectation to a later and broader struggle against Evil wherever it appeared. While his rationale for this approach is not yet clear, perhaps he calculated that the image of a simple but unspecified worldwide struggle against Evil and Terror would better capture the imaginations and support of Americans than a series of somehow related campaigns against scattered shadow groups.

Having directed his senior advisors to develop specific plans to implement the first two themes, Bush personally turned his attention to the latter goal, an explication of America's renewed mission in the world and the nature of the war to come. He had been invited to share this perspective with a Joint Session of Congress but decided not to accept that invitation until he was comfortable with his ability to express his new world view. Although both the New York Times (D.T. Max 2001) and Washington Post (Woodward and Balz, "Combating Terrorism"; Balz and Woodward, "A Presidency Defined") later chronicled the bureaucratic genesis of this critical text, Bush set the tone in a Sunday afternoon meeting with White House Counselor Karen Hughes, Communications Director Dan Bartlett, and Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. Hughes distilled the president's guidance into four simple thoughts: "Who are they? Why they hate us? What victory means? How will it be won?"

(Max 34). Unifying the nation and preparing them for future military conflict were his primary goals. While the speech writers' initial draft would receive extensive edits from senior White House advisors, from state and defense department officials, and from Bush himself, these cornerstones would remain.

Signs of adjustment to the New World of the struggle against terror also were visible outside the White House. Congressional leaders voiced approval for lessening restrictions on covert and clandestine CIA operations abroad, even raising the possibility of reversing a long-standing ban on assassination (Risen A1). The Pakistani government, the first convert in the new global war, warned the ruling Taliban of Afghanistan to surrender any terrorists within its borders, the opening ultimatum that would eventually lead to military conflict in central Asia (Burns A1). The New York Stock Exchange reopened on September 18 amidst fears of a massive investor panic that did not materialize (Norris A1). Meanwhile, details of a massive law enforcement investigation, spearheaded by the FBI, unfolded daily in virtually every media outlet in the United States. Amidst revelations of a detailed terrorist conspiracy covering months, if not years, law enforcement and immigration officials expanded their detainment of immigrants, prompting concern from civil libertarians and constitutional lawyers (Shenon and Toner A1). During a week of growing domestic and international perception that the world was on the brink of war, The New York Times editorialized that President Bush should strike a more deliberative tone in order not to further inflame the situation ("Wartime Rhetoric," A26). Finally, only hours before the President's speech, signs of burgeoning protest began to surface throughout the nation, including a statement issued by members of the National Council of Churches, candlelight vigils, and several college campus demonstrations (Pianin A4). Notably, these voices of

protest were not nearly so strident as those on the eve of Bush's inauguration and few, if any, were directed personally at Bush. One opposition voice ventured that the September 11 attacks were part of an ongoing cycle of retaliation. Foreshadowing Bush's vision of a timeless task of defending freedom, she asked, "Are we going to continue this in perpetuity?" (Pianin A4).

Reminiscent of Bush's inauguration, Washington DC was cloaked with unprecedented security as the President travelled the several blocks to share once again his vision of America. Not only were military fighter aircraft and helicopters circling overhead, but the Capitol itself was transformed into a fortress seemingly under siege (Milbank, "On Fortress Capitol Hill," A22). Massive concrete blocks stood a stark and forbidding vigil several blocks from the Capitol to stymie any would-be intruders, providing a first line of defense that also included additional concrete barricades, two wire fences, and a temporary barrier of Metrobuses (Milbank, "On Fortress Capitol Hill," A22).

Rhetorical Strategy

The Constitutional basis for entering into military conflict requires rhetorical action on the part of both the President and Congress, the former requesting and the latter providing a declaration of war. Drawing on the 1973 War Powers Resolution, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson define presidential war rhetoric as a genre that justifies "the introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated," with its central purpose being public and congressional legitimation of the President's proposed course of action (1990 101).

While the rhetorical form has adapted over time, Campbell and Jamieson identified five primary characteristics common to presidential war rhetoric, combining both epideictic and deliberative elements (105-119). First, the deliberative nature of the decision to resort to military force must be pervasive, convincing the audience that such recommendation is not offered lightly. Second, this decision is justified through a narrative chronicle explaining the nature and extent of the enemy's aggressive acts, "dramatiz[ing] and simplify[ing] the causes of war while providing evidence and arguments warranting the use of force" (111). Third, the audience is "exhorted to unanimity of purpose and total commitment" (105) using messages of national unity and universal purpose. Fourth, it seeks to legitimate the president as commander-in-chief with extraordinary powers. Finally, "strategic misrepresentation" plays a central role in the appeals.

Although this speech does not prominently feature the archetypal terms of Good and Evil, it is clearly organized around the continuation of the timeless war of "[f]reedom and fear, justice and cruelty" [54], a millennial "task that does not end" [52] in which freedom, justice, and liberty become secular substitutes for the archetypal metaphor of sacred Good, while fear, oppression, and terror are the physical constituents of Evil. This substitution of secular for sacred metaphor is necessary for the ostensibly deliberative nature of the address. However, this transference of images is successful due to his prior mythical construction which firmly established America as champion of Good and chosen by God to work for world salvation. Thus, sacred Good is once again aligned with secular democracy and individual freedom, as observed by Robert Bellah (1967), while its opposite is secularly manifested in terror. Indeed, given this address' rhetorical heritage, Bush need not explicate

the full mythic narrative, relying instead on references of “evil and destruction” and American freedom to allow his domestic audience to complete the enthymeme.

Faintly echoing the earliest Puritan experience, Bush’s address firmly placed Americans in “a different world” that “was brought upon us in a single day,” “a world where freedom itself is under attack” [11]. Bush’s version of the New World is the rhetorical heir to John Winthrop’s, and in fact finds its basis in Biblical scripture. “Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty” [54], constituent elements of Good and Evil, respectively, “have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them” [54]. As a result of the terrorist attacks, Bush’s New America is “awakened to danger and called to defend freedom” [5], returning to the secularized “errand in the wilderness” that also characterized America’s Cold War rhetoric, a period when the nation subsumed all in its struggle against the evils of international communism. His allusion to a sleeping nation recalled the fears popularly attributed to Japanese Admiral Yamamoto that Japan had “awakened the slumbering giant” with its 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. As is the case in the Bible, “the course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain” [54], suggesting a moral certitude of both purpose and destiny.

Unlike Winthrop’s New World in which the Massachusetts colony stood alone in its “errand in the wilderness,” George W. Bush’s New World more closely resembled the bipolar world of the Cold War, in which “[e]very nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” [29]. Like the Puritan national covenant, proof of commitment would be demonstrated through public behavior, wherein “any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime” [29].

President Bush's New World is not merely abstract construction. Building upon the Puritan myth and his own prior rhetoric, Bush featured the American people as champions of freedom and justice [5, 11, 23, 34, 50, 53] in the world. In this instance, however, they were not portrayed as sometimes flawed (as was the case in his inaugural) or as victims (as was the case in his cathedral address). Instead, he offered only images of courage ("rescuers, working past exhaustion" [3]), compassion ("the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers" [3]), and unity ("Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol, singing 'God Bless America'" [6]). In fact, the address is bracketed by archetypal images of his idealized American citizen, "passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground--passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer" [2] and "the police shield of a man named George Howard, who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others" [52]. Apparently, in the transformed world of Good and Evil, inaugural images of a "flawed and fallible people," most recently evidenced in American violence against mosques and "Arab-looking" people in the aftermath of September 11, are cleansed from the national memory.

However, this new struggle was one of universal proportions, which Bush characterized as "the world's fight," "civilization's fight," and "the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" [34]. In its struggle over Evil and terror, Bush noted that already the "civilized world is rallying to America's side" [36], foreshadowing later claims that the nation's supporters were not only "Good" but also civilized, representing a rhetorical counterpoint to our adversaries.

Recalling "the sounds of our National Anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate" [8], "South Korean children gathering to

pray outside our embassy in Seoul” [9] and “prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo” [9], he drew upon images of Great Britain, France, and South Korea as representing brave and successful struggles against previous Evils. The Brandenburg Gate now stood firmly in the democratic West after decades of occupying the no-man’s land of divided Berlin, and Egypt was the first Muslim nation to recognize the legitimate existence of Israel. These historical instances, of course, were previous major victories for Good, freedom, and democracy in which America played a commanding role. More generally, Bush also recognized the “moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America” [9], suggesting the potential that Good also might reside on these continents.

His depiction of America’s enemies, “enemies of freedom” [11], was both extensive and complex. In the first instance, freedom was attacked by “a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda” previously associated with attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa and the U.S.S. Cole [12], “traitors to their own faith” [22] who “practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism” [14], pervert “the peaceful teachings of Islam” [14], and “commit evil in the name of Allah” [21]. While going to great lengths not to alienate the Muslim community, Bush clearly implied that this particular manifestation of Evil was deeply rooted in perversion of traditional religious practice.

This terrorist network included links to “thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries” [15] “recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods,” “trained in the tactics of terror” in places like Afghanistan, and then sent “around the world to plot evil and destruction” [15]. Later, he extended the nation’s adversaries beyond this “radical network of terrorists” [21] to include “every terrorist group of global reach” [22]. In making this open-ended promise to rid the world of Evil, however, Bush offered no specific evidence of

these groups and avoided the question of who would decide the definition of “terrorism” or “global reach”.

Bush’s characterization of al Qaeda’s motives suggests the power of myth not only to mask any American foreign policy failures but also preclude their reasoned deliberation or discussion. At one point suggesting an organization pursuing regional geopolitical goals, Bush declared: “They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa” [24]. However, the terrorist attacks on America were not at all related to the nation’s decades’ long support for particular Arab regimes or to its role as primary guarantor of Israel’s existence. Instead, al Qaeda’s antipathy toward America is rooted in their more abstract and archetypal hatred of “our freedoms--our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other” [24].

Finally, Bush included as America’s enemies “any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism” [29]. In his careful construction, “continues to harbor or support” [29] plays a critical role, promising redemption for past sins to any nation that now allied itself with America. As was the case for Winthrop’s flock and their heirs, behavior alone would be key to demonstrating a community’s worthiness. Indeed, the Puritan’s national covenant was being extended throughout the civilized world to all who would prove themselves worthy. Here, he featured Afghanistan as “al Qaeda’s vision of the future” [15]. Not only had the ruling Taliban “brutalized” its own people [17], repressing women, restricting religious freedoms, and imprisoning citizens for “owning a television” or shaving a beard [17], but “it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying

terrorists” [18]. Bush issued an extensive and detailed ultimatum, warning that “[t]he Taliban must act, and act immediately” [20] or share in the terrorists’ fate:

Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in you country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating [19].

Despite his condemnation of the Taliban for being an oppressive regime, Bush limited his demands to protection of foreigners in Afghanistan and surrender of al Qaeda terrorists, suggested resumption of America’s Cold War policy of ignoring or in many cases condoning other nations’ domestic abuses in return for their active support for America’s focal international issue, then anti-communism and now anti-terrorism. Overreliance on this single issue to judge a nation’s Goodness would return the United States to a simplistic and bipolar foreign policy clearly reminiscent of the struggle against Evil communism.

In rhetorically constructing this war between Good and Evil, or at least re-engaging America in a millenialist “task that does not end” [52], Bush struck a chord of exceptionally high moral certitude. Declaring that “[f]reedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war” [50], he characterized the future in terms that faintly echoed John Winthrop: “The advance of human freedom--the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time--now depends upon us” [50]. While the immediate impetus for America’s return

to this struggle was the attacks of September 11, Bush offers the ultimate justification in his peroration, basing his prediction that "its outcome is certain" on the certainty that "we know that God is not neutral between" Good and Evil [54]. Whereas Bush asserted assurances of "the rightness of our cause" [55], this moral certitude of national righteousness contrasts starkly with President Lincoln's reflections at the end of the American Civil War on similar claims by both North and South: "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes." (Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural," in Hunt 200-201)

Having cast America's new mission in terms of moral purpose that derives its mandate from Higher authority, and relying upon the power of communal mythic belief in the national covenant, no additional specific approval was necessary. In fact, any voice of opposition or question might be considered as either complicit with Evil or as questioning God's purpose for America in the world. Moreover, by elevating the struggle to this archetypal level and placing America on the side of God, Bush at once absolved the nation of any responsibility for international wrongs past or present.

Thus, through his rhetorical choices President Bush returned the United States to a bipolar Manichean world of Good and Evil, freedom and terror, renewing the familiar national mission of bringing both sacred and secular salvation to the world. Through use of the Puritan myth of America's special place and purpose in the world, he simultaneously was able to unite the nation's citizenry around its fundamental cultural values, establish his own legitimacy as both President and prophet of this new errand into the wilderness, and finally propel the nation forward along its past course. Building upon earlier, increasingly

transcendent mythic narrative, this address successfully characterized this new open-ended war on terrorism in archetypal terms of Good and Evil, with broad, substantial, and lasting effects on American foreign and domestic policy, the Bush presidency, and public discourse over the coming months.

Effects

First and most immediately, this speech united the nation around a Presidency that was considered by most Americans to be illegitimate only nine months earlier. In casting the events of September 11 within an eternal struggle of Good and Evil and the Puritan myth of America's special mission to redeem a world plagued by Evil, President Bush painted a comfortable and hauntingly familiar picture for an American people desperately seeking the meaning of the horrific attacks. In its universalism, moral simplicity, and singularity of purpose, it was the world of John Winthrop, the Founding Fathers, Franklin Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan. In the current narrative, the "redeemer nation" pledged to world salvation, freedom, and justice now was juxtaposed against a group of radical Islamic terrorists bent on spreading Evil and destruction, heirs in the archetypal form to Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

According to a public opinion poll conducted immediately after the speech, 80 percent of people who heard the speech reported that it made them feel more confident about the future, while a record-breaking 91 percent approved of Bush's handling of the terrorist attacks (Morin and Drake, "Wide Support," A16), representing an astounding reversal in public opinion over the pre-inaugural poll. Russell Davis, a northern Virginia resident who had not voted for Bush, admitted that the President "succeeded beyond his expectations"

and had “risen to the task” (Strauss and Ginsberg 2001 B1). “It made me feel more safe. It made me feel they are definitely going to do something, and that everybody is joined together,” offered Charlene Thompson of Bradley, Illinois (Morin and Drake 2001 A16). Comparing Bush’s performance to that of Abraham Lincoln, Richard Busch suggested that “[t]his was the most powerful, thoughtful, reasoned, resolute, confident, moving, and important speech I have ever heard and, I’m sure, am likely ever to hear” (“Letters to the Editor” A23). James Gale “could not help but be moved by the words and solemnity of the occasion” (“Letters to the Editor” A23). Major retailers reported record sales of American flags in the weeks following the speech. Public school officials even noted a particular rise in patriotic display among teenagers, as schools and their attendees became draped in flags, hunting, and patriotic posters (Wax C1). This extraordinary level of unity and public support continued well beyond the initiation of combat operations in Afghanistan more than two weeks later (Morin and Drake, “Public Support Overwhelming,” A5).

This new expression of unity initially extended to what only weeks ago was a highly contentious Congress. In place of the traditional ritual of oppositional response to a Presidential address, there was instead a joint news release from Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) signalling solidarity with president (Milbank, “Fortress Capitol Hill,” A1). However, this phenomenon was far more complicated than the public reaction, as these expressions of support and solidarity in the immediate aftermath of the President’s address were short-lived and restricted to specific foreign policy issues. Constrained by patriotic feeling and the political reality of an unprecedentedly popular President, however, the eventual return to political debate was far

more restrained than was the case prior to the terrorist attacks and primarily limited to domestic issues.

The second effect, less rapid but far more significant, was the power of Bush's mythic narrative to promote a radical transformation of the geopolitical landscape. According to Washington Post reporter Dan Balz, by painting a bipolar world of Good and Evil, "freedom and fear," and challenging each nation to choose sides in the millennialist task of delivering the world from Evil, Bush's speech launched "his generation's version of the long struggle of the Cold War" ("Resolute and Focused," A23). While many of the world's leaders cautioned restraint in initiating military force, most of America's traditional allies voice unqualified support. European Union leaders met in emergency session to express "total solidarity" with Bush. The Czech Republic, Mexico, Egypt, Japan, and Israel quickly joined the civilized chorus, with former Evils Russia and China also lending their voices (Reid and Drozniak A18). Dramatically reversing its earlier position on NATO intervention in Kosovo, Beijing publicly supported U.S. military operations in Afghanistan ("China and Counterterrorism" A38). The first major act of redemption came as America turned to Pakistan, a military dictatorship banned in 1994 from contact with the U.S. military for its nuclear weapons policy, as its primary staging area for the first battle against Evil. As evidence that the archetypal struggle had subsumed all other foreign policy concerns, the Bush administration requested that Congress waive military cooperation restrictions for nations that sided with Good (DeYoung A1).

Because of the archetypal nature of Bush's rhetorical construction, every other policy issue quickly was subsumed. Only two weeks after promising visiting Mexican President Vicente Fox quick action on immigration reform, U.S. began to more strictly enforce entry

(Sullivan A32). Despite initial Democratic opposition to the Justice Department's sweeping anti-terrorism legislation, including new powers to detain for an unlimited time or deport foreign visitors and broader search and seizure provisions (Pincus A22), the *U.S.A. Patriot Act* passed with overwhelming support. The President's faith-based initiative, opposed by Congressional liberals, was immediately re-justified by the White House on the basis of the September 11 attacks; a spokesman for key opponent Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) predicted swift passage of key components of the proposal (Milbank, "Bush Turns," A7). Bush's Trade Representative, Robert Zoellick, long an advocate of trade promotion authority, suggested on September 27 that its passage was now "in the national interest" (Eilperin A5). Months later, a series of administration anti-drug television advertisements linked drug purchases to funding terrorist operations, a clear signal that now the "war on drugs" was to be subsumed within the "war on terror".

As sweeping as these consequences were, however, the fact that this fundamental change in world view occurred over a short period of weeks with virtually no reasoned public deliberation is the most trenchant effect of Bush's address. While it firmly united the American public by explaining the current crisis within the context of the nation's sacred past, Bush's mythic rhetoric did more than promising to "bring to justice" to the perpetrators of the September 11 bombings and working to make the nation less vulnerable to any successive attacks. Indeed, his reaffirmation of America's eternal errand immediately propelled the nation into an all-consuming future of the new war on terror and Evil which would include overthrowing foreign governments sponsoring terrorist groups; aiding or at least condoning other nations such as the Philippines, Russia, China, Israel, and Pakistan in their own anti-terrorism campaigns; building an enduring coalition of the "civilized" world

against the forces of Evil; and eventually reorganizing the executive branch of the federal government to manage this new messianic mission.

While many of the legislative details of this new world vision would be contested roundly in the form of Congressional debate over the privacy concerns in *U.S.A. Patriot Act*, the size and character of economic stimulus and military spending increases, and the particulars intelligence restructuring, there was a glaring paucity of national discussion over Bush's mythical premise. Simply put, the nation quietly and uncritically accepted this mythic narrative and, at the same time, the associated messianic ideology embedded within its story. Bush's particular rhetorical response invited the American public not only to think, or more accurately, feel, in terms of their shared communal values and heritage but to participate actively in their future revival, again taking a position of political, military, and ultimately moral, leadership in the world.

In this particular case, Bush's appeal to archetypal mythic images worked to preclude reasoned public discourse on two levels. First, and most fundamentally, because ideology and policy are masked below the surface of mythic image and narrative (Burke 1947), they simply are not readily available for deliberation. In accepting the mythic heritage as God's chosen people pledged to struggle for world salvation, America's present is at once linked to its past and future. In uncritically accepting its mythic past as its future, however, the audience unconsciously also ascribes to the subliminal ideology lurking below the surface of narrative and image. Because myth is a particularly powerful unifying rhetorical form during times of cultural crisis, it also carries significant potential to preclude national deliberation at these critical moments.

Second, and equally ominous for rational public discourse, because myth uniquely co-mingles sacred and secular, the former providing culturally accepted justification for the latter, it not only passively masks ideology but actively protects it from deliberation through its very foundation in unquestionable sacred authority. In Bush's narrative, secular patriotism is metaphorically linked to God's sacred purpose for the nation and Winthrop's national covenant, a prime example of Bellah's civil religion. In gaining overwhelming public unity and assent in the sacred mythic narrative, Bush at once constructed an unassailable overarching public policy which ultimately draws its authority from God's will for not only the American people but the course of world history and salvation. Thus, opposition to Bush's mythic world view and the specific policies therein derived is fundamentally denunciation of God's plan. To question his policies becomes both blasphemous and unpatriotic.

Those who challenged Bush's world view in public found themselves silenced or ostracized in various ways, as columnist Howard Troxler noted that Bush was suddenly protected by "a zone of noncriticism" in which it was now "unpatriotic, even indecent, to voice out loud any of the previous criticisms of him" (Troxler).² U.S. Representative Barbara Lee, the sole congressional dissenter in the "use of force" authorization, "received angry mail and even death threats" (Terrence Smith). Bill Maher, television political satirist, was fired for criticizing U.S. attacks on Afghanistan (Terrence Smith 2001), while

2. While opposition was not widespread, there were some instances at the margins of public discourse. One commentator lamented the rising current of "more patriotic than thou" attitude wherein "[i]f someone dares question the wisdom of the United States' actions on any rational basis, they are instantly labeled as unpatriotic" (Kaffine 1). Anti-war protestors in Seattle took it as "their duty to challenge Americans to think about the long-term ramifications...even if the public appears to not want to hear what they have to say" (Eskenazi). A series of demonstrations also were staged in Washington D.C., the largest of which included approximately 3,000 marchers in Dupont Circle (Fernandez B3).

journalists in Grants Pass, Oregon, and Galveston County, Texas, were fired for personal attacks on Bush's leadership (Terrence Smith). Writer Susan Sontag's commentary on "the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials" was pronounced contemptible by former Secretary of Education William Bennett (Terrence Smith).

Censorship of political criticism was particularly evident on the nation's university campuses, as several faculty were admonished publicly for questioning Bush's emerging policies on terror.

Thus, President Bush reconstituted the American people, initially cast asunder by a highly contentious presidential election and dazed by a day of terrorism that fundamentally changed "the American way of life." By successively reaching into the American myth of origin to reunify American society, he finally was able to return the nation to those mythic origins of a chosen people on a special errand, using the mythic narrative to join past, present, and future and co-mingle sacred and secular purpose. In relying upon the myth to unify and provide communal meaning in a time of extreme social confusion and anxiety, he also altered fundamentally the nation's foreign policy and many of its most important domestic policies without reasoned public discourse. In accepting the myth's sacred truths, the national audience also uncritically accepted its underlying ideology and, with them, a renewed activist role in the world. This path to the future was not debated in open public discourse because it was buried beneath the surface of the mythic narrative and images and because it claimed authoritative legitimacy in God's purpose that is not subject to rational debate.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

George Santayana counselled that those who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. The foregoing analysis of myth and cultural crisis suggests that those who look uncritically to the past for solutions may suffer the same fate. The Puritan myth of a chosen people and national covenant has surfaced in American public debate at many critical junctures in our history, but as yet we do not have a comprehensive theory of how myth influences public discourse, and through it, public policy. Black's rhetorical schema of situation, strategy, and effect (Black 1978 134-35) provides a useful approach for taking a broader historical perspective on how and when mythic narrative comes to dominate public discourse to the point that it excludes rational debate and alternative opinions, one manifestation of the level of intensity that Black intended to address with his alternative framework (Black 1978 136-37).

Myth plays a significant positive role in conveying culturally important values and providing unifying narrative, but this analysis has attempted to explicate more fully the darker power of myth in certain situations such as social or political crisis, suggesting its dialectic nature and power to disguise, and gain unwitting public assent for, political ideology and policies. Moreover, in certain situations it may substitute for, and ultimately supersede, constructive public discourse. While the foregoing explication admittedly addresses only a single example of the use of mythic narrative as the dominant discourse in

American social and political crisis, we can inductively draw a few tentative observations and conclusions as a point of departure for future research.

Myth and Situation

Several scholars of rhetoric, most notably Sacvan Bercovitch (1978), Lloyd Bitzer (1968), Edwin Black (1970, 1978), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1997), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson (1990), Scott Consigny (1974), and Celeste Condit (1985), have posited that recurring situations are a key point of departure in our understanding of human discourse. While mythic narrative may be a “fitting” response to a wide variety of rhetorical situations, both the literature (esp. Condit 1985) and this analysis suggest that it might very well spark the most intense response during times of extreme societal crisis or cultural uncertainty when the audience is more highly susceptible to simple and comfortable expressions of meaning that unite them while connecting the troubling present to the sacred past. It is possible that the extreme exigence of such situations precludes the luxury of rational deliberation and discourse, making simple and comfortable solutions appear more desirable.

This is not to suggest a common generic dynamic between all crisis situations and all myths. Analysis of each constituent can provide a guide to understanding this relationship. While particular myths certainly can dominate internal or purely domestic crises, they might also be divisive rather than unifying. In the case of the American Civil War, for instance, President Abraham Lincoln would not definitively claim God’s sanction for the North’s efforts to preserve the Union, because to do so risked placing the South in direct opposition to God’s Divine Will for the nation. While many prominent Abolitionists had no problem drawing this conclusion, Lincoln understood that Reconstruction would be far more difficult

if this rhetorical division was drawn (Ronald Smith 2002). Conversely, Adolf Hitler's repeated use of the Germanic cultural myth during the economic crisis of the Weimar Republic did in fact turn his nation inward upon itself, eventually resulting in genocide against its own Jewish population. In such instances, the myth would favor one segment of society at the expense of other subcultures, promoting domestic dissonance rather than unity. It is entirely reasonable to posit that, to be fully successful, certain forms of creation myth might need a situation of external threat or exigence in order to instill completely a sense of cultural identity. A crisis such as foreign invasion or severe and abrupt economic domination would allow an entire domestic population to unify around their collective mythic past against an external "other" without the danger of concurrently splintering the domestic culture.

Also, it is reasonable to suggest that the character of a particular mythic narrative makes it more or less compatible with specific crisis situations. Or, conversely, a rich and complex mythology may be selectively tailored by the rhetor to adapt a particular recounting of the narrative to the specific exigence it is intended to ameliorate. The American Puritan myth is such a tapestry of heroes and villains, morality and sin, identity and purpose. First, it provided the New England colonists, and later the broader American people, a strong sense of their past and cultural identity. Chosen by God to escape the evils and corruption of Old World Europe, they were the rhetorical descendants of the Old Testament Hebrews. Second, it explained the present in terms of the mythic past. The New England colonists had entered into a special covenant with God, agreeing to develop a model moral society, a shining city on the hill, in return for God's bountiful Providence in the form of economic prosperity and the seemingly endless natural resources of the New World. Third, it provided a path for the future. Perfecting a model society based upon moral virtue was expected to be an arduous

undertaking requiring the long-term efforts of everyone in the community. Once their society was perfected, the Puritans were committed to returning to the Old World in order to transform that corrupt society, leading the world toward final salvation. In this regard, the Puritan myth had one final characteristic not normally contained within cultural creation myths. The New England colonists, and their American descendants, held that their experience and values, first the moral Puritan society and later freedom, liberty, and equality, had universal application and pursued this with evangelical fervor.

Bush's reliance on the Puritan mythic narrative in the addresses under examination demonstrate its considerable adaptability to situation. The crisis of his election, although receiving intense media scrutiny, was exclusively a domestic issue primarily affecting the politically active among the electorate. In responding to this exigence in his inaugural speech, Bush focused on those aspects of the myth that explained America's shared values and special place as God's chosen people, seeking to unite his audience on this broad basis. In addition to affirming the continuing presence of Divine guidance, Bush highlighted the Puritan national covenant that required God's chosen people to strive constantly toward achieving the perfect moral community. In particular, he noted the nation's lack of progress in this task, a persistent theme of colonial Puritan rhetoric aimed at spurring the community to continue its efforts. Within the context of this narrative, he also was able to subtly intertwine his domestic policy preferences of individual and local community accountability and responsibility, community-based social welfare programs, and limited federal government.

By comparison, the September 11 attacks involved an external attack that touched all Americans, either directly or indirectly through fear of additional attacks, and had far more potential to unite the entire nation. The crisis of September not only was different in

character from that of the inauguration but also different in degree. In the former case, having suffered the largest single-day loss of civilian life in their history, the American people not only wanted but psychologically needed to hear an affirmation of their core values, special purpose, and spiritual future. The unanticipated and destructive nature of the attacks increased the intensity of the crisis, while its unprecedented character left the American public with no contextual reference. In responding to this exigence, Bush drew upon those aspects of the myth that emphasized America's special role in serving God's purpose of bringing salvation to the world, its advocacy of universal values, and its place in the eternal struggle between Good and Evil that preordains the victory of Good in order to prepare for the Second Coming. In uniting the nation against this external Evil, however, he abandoned the rhetoric, and ultimately the practice, of internal struggle for social perfection in favor of the external cosmic struggle of Good against Evil. In the latter circumstance, American society becomes "Good" by comparison to the Evil, not through its struggle to become Good, ignoring the original Puritan myth of struggling for social perfection and only then engaging in world salvation.

Finally, to the extent that his audience was willing to accept the message of shared unity and communal values during this crisis, Bush was able to establish, and later enhance, his own personal legitimacy as President. This function appears to have limits, though, since the message itself is most effective when delivered from a legitimated source. The New World version of this myth initially was narrated by leaders within the New England Puritan church who had gained their legitimacy directly from that central role in colonial society. Before that, the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament carried the Word to God's chosen people. Hence, creation myth may be most effective if narrated by a rhetor with some degree of existing legitimacy or ethos. This also might explain why Bush's inaugural,

despite its high marks for aesthetic quality from virtually every quarter, achieved only moderate results in unifying the nation around the new President. In fact, the point of national divisiveness was the legitimacy of the recent election, so it might be unreasonable to expect him to effectively deliver this, or any other, message of unity. By September, however, the harshest of this political opposition had faded and his consistent use of the mythic images in various epideictic occasions perhaps made this message more effective over time.

Myth, Ideology, and Public Policy

Ideally, myths such as the one under consideration here should not only link the past and present, but also point to the future. In addition to its widely acknowledged role as a unifying force during periods of crisis, or more correctly because of this function, myth also has a broad array of effects on public policy as it acts to propel society forward. It is precisely this power to gain acceptance and identification under these circumstances that makes myth a compelling rhetorical invention for promoting partisan ideology disguised within those identification messages. To provide meaning to America's current social climate, solidify his own legitimacy, and most importantly promote his political philosophy without exposing it to public deliberation by a divided and troubled nation, Bush chose a traditional rhetorical form containing simple messages of unification, identification, and shared values, but which disguises political philosophy within the comforting images of myth.

Within the domestic context of his inaugural address, President Bush was able to use the mythic narrative of hardworking, religious, and self-governing people to affirm his conservative agenda of limited government. Bush's story of an idealized America featured,

not liberal government providing social services and levelling opportunity, but activist citizens of civility, courage, compassion, and commitment, caring for their neighbors and self-regulating their affairs. It was a story of just causes and social improvement, as Americans struggled through the wilderness of slavery and social justice at home, fascism and communism abroad. God and local communities provided not only the social and political fabric for freedom and opportunity but also the moral basis for democracy. Individual and community action was placed on a level equal to government.

Bush later explained the September attacks within the larger mythical context of Good and Evil. The terrorists had struck at America because it was the "shining city on the hill" and Americans were champions of freedom and liberty, the secular constituents of the sacred Good. While providing cultural unity and shared meaning, his mythical construction also had serious ideological and public policy implications. First, Bush's construction of the events' meaning meant that America shared no responsibility for the attacks through its actions or policies in the world. At this level there is no other motive than the eternal Biblical struggle. While myth's main function is to ratify and intensify existing beliefs and attitudes and provide simple solutions from the past, it acts "like a blank check into which the listener may fill in any meaning or feeling that he abstracts from what is pleasant while he ignores or forgets what is disturbing" (Braden 122). Thus, myth allows both the rhetor and the willing auditor to escape the realities of current social problems for a fantasized view of their shared past. In fact, in Burkean terms, no action can be attributed to either the terrorists or the Americans since they were being guided, controlled, by larger cosmic forces. Second, through his interpretation of the terrorists as Evil rather than genocidal murderers or perhaps rational international actors with grievances against U.S. policy, Bush set into motion an all-consuming foreign policy aimed at the worldwide annihilation of Evil.

Under the influence of the Puritan myth, the identification of Evil in the world necessarily precludes an isolationist perspective; moreover, it fully justifies unilateral foreign policy and military action, since the struggle against Evil is a moral imperative that cannot be ignored on the basis of a lack of allies. Terrorists can be arrested and brought to justice, international groups can be negotiated with, but Good has no option but to eradicate Evil in all its forms and in all its places, by whatever means necessary.

This relationship between the dominance of the Puritan myth and emergence of an activist, even evangelist, American foreign policy has been a hallmark of the latter twentieth century, prominent in FDR's 1942 State of the Union message less than two months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, prevalent throughout the rhetorical construction of the Cold War, and a central focus for Ronald Reagan. While Lynn Hinds and Theodore Windt exhaustively studied this phenomenon within the context of Cold War rhetoric, its reappearance in the present context suggests the myth's more enduring influence on American militarism and warrants more extensive research from an historical perspective.

The confluence of the Puritan myth and an external threat is not simply a benign or neutral phenomenon. As the rhetorical basis for sustained American military involvement abroad for the past 50 years, it has had a significant influence on the character of international relations. Because of its universal and millennial aspects, the Puritan myth frequently has led Americans to view the world in stark bipolar terms of Good and Evil, a propensity that Phillip Wander (1985) called "prophetic dualism." Also, externalization of the myth in this manner diverts society's attention away from the necessary social work at home, the struggle to perfect the shining city on the hill. While the latter self-reflective focus dominated Bush's earlier mythic narrative, it was abandoned quietly upon the appearance of archetypal Evil. If the adversary is characterized as the essence of an

archetypal cosmic force, its opposite necessarily is called into existence. Through our own self-designation as Good, we erase any evidence of social inequality or injustice extant in American society, for to be flawed is to admit that we cannot vanquish the higher form of pure Evil. In explaining this phenomenon with regard to post-Civil War Southerners,

T. Harry Williams observed, "The cherishing of an ideal dream world in the past was both a reflection of the Southerner's capacity for unreality and a cause of his continuing reluctance to face the realities of the modern world: for obviously the myth of a perfect society was a powerful argument against change, against even considering whether there was any need for change" (7).

At the same time, however, the New England colonists perennially doubted their worthiness for God's errand. Even as the collective struggled toward the model moral society, members continually examined the behavior of their neighbors for signs of backsliding within their own ranks. The rhetorical form of the jeremiadic sermon symbolized their growing sense of internal unworthiness and the need for social control. In more recent environments, Americans imprisoned Japanese Americans and conducted endless investigations to unearth the Communists among us. The current circumstance very well could lead to similar self-examination.

Although the Puritan myth propels American society forward, also inherently act as a "conservative braking force on social change" (Frye 28), limiting the bounds of any deliberative discussion of alternatives by offering traditional solutions as the only acceptable ones. Inherently conservative in nature, its dominance during times of social crisis can have a limiting effect on social progress. Thus, while Bush asserts his advocacy of the "continuing revolution," his use of rhetorical strategy of Founding Myth subtly reveals his vision of the limited nature of that revolution. This superficial encouragement of

justice and social revolution, carried as it is in the inherently conservative and limited myth, represents a great Untruth perpetrated on the audience. To those groups and individuals feeling not fully enfranchised or not completely equal, the President's unspoken message is clear: their opportunity and equality are important social imperatives, but the instrument of their redemption will not be the federal government, at least under his administration. These citizens instead should seek redress to social injustice in their own personal redemption of character with assistance from their local communities. Moreover, any nontraditional, extreme, or uncivil remedies are viewed as outside the bounds of the Founding Myth and, as such, are un-American.

Bush's rhetorical interpretation of a world of Good and Evil in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks also relies upon past ideological constructions rather than promoting a deliberative examination of the present and future. Despite his and others' observations that these events represented a new reality for the American people, domination of the Puritan myth applies a narrow, restrictive lens from which to analyze the new situation. Because the attackers and their supporters are transformed into Evil, it is no longer necessary to examine their goals, motives, and beliefs. In the immediate aftermath, there was very little effort expended in trying to develop a new world view. Evil must be destroyed in the timeless conflict to prepare for the Second Coming and world salvation. Conversely, in asserting the moral rectitude of our own values and policies, we simultaneously avoid the necessity for self-reflection by simply relying upon the past for legitimacy.

Myth and Public Discourse

Finally, the emergence of Puritan myth in public discourse limits social progress not only by favoring solutions and values of the past, but also by asserting an extreme degree of

moral certitude and authority that actively precludes rational public debate of policy alternatives. During periods of extreme cultural crisis, the audience accepts the narrative of shared values, heritage, and meaning, totally unaware that ideology is buried within nondiscursive mythic narrative. In rallying around the mythic narrative as the basis for social unity, the audience also unwittingly endorses the ideology hidden beneath the shared images, difficult to discern, extract, and evaluate.

Perhaps more significantly, however, the very act of unpacking, parsing, and evaluating of its rational implications risks destroying the very foundation and legitimacy of the myth, which gains its power through uncritical acceptance. Myth, as a rhetorical form, is neither true nor false, it is simply believed. To accept the image and narrative of the Puritan myth means not only passively acquiescing in its associated latent ideology but also assenting to its authoritative foundation in God's Divine will. Thus, the true power of myth as a rhetorical form lies not only in its conveyance of communal values and meaning (Condit 1985) but the unassailability of its sacred foundations.

Advocating ideology and policy within the framework of unquestionable myth protects them in two interrelated ways. First, when presented to the audience during times of extreme exigence, they must be unconsciously embraced and endorsed in order for the audience to rally around the myth's messages of unity and meaning. In such cases, myth and ideology are presented to the audience as an inseparable package. Deliberating its policy ramifications means foregoing its unifying power at a time when society most needs it. To question Bush's call for an all-consuming war against Evil would have meant challenging Americans' special role as God's chosen people and the basis for our historical advocacy of universal freedom, liberty, and equality. While we can sustain public debate

over the time, place, and manner of this eternal struggle, questioning our leading role in that conflict undermines the foundations of mythic unity itself.

Second, accepting the myth as the foundation for social meaning and unity, with its own basis in the unquestionable religious authority of Divine Will, means that a public challenge of Bush's war on Evil ultimately becomes a tacit challenge not only of God's purpose but perhaps also of His very existence. As Jelen (1998) suggests, rational public political discourse cannot adequately address such topics. Religious justification is not subject to public policy debate; like its derivative myth, it is simply accepted or not accepted. To the extent that the mythic narrative continues to dominate, policy decisions can be deliberated only within the shared understanding of their authoritative religious derivation, seriously restricting the arena for proposed alternatives. Thus, in accepting mythic narrative as the basis for national unity during times of crisis, the American public is actively complicit in creating conditions within which the policies' ultimate authority becomes unassailable. This environment likely will exist so long as a significant vocal portion of society actively participates in re-living the myth, allowing the narrative to dominate public discourse and suppress alternative non-mythic (secular) perspectives.

Myth and Motive

Myth is only one of many rhetorical strategies available during crises. While any of a number of strong responses to the September 11 terrorist attacks likely would have had a unifying effect on Americans, Bush's rhetorical choices shaped the character of that new unity. In embarking on a construction of national unity from within mythic narrative, he not only provided the American public a familiar and popular self-image as the basis for that

unity but also gained virtually unquestioning public assent for a mythic world view of Good and Evil.

The final critical question regards rhetor motive in choosing this particular rhetorical strategy during severe national crises. Any President (or other political rhetor) who consciously chooses to mask that ideology from view in order to circumvent public deliberation invites, even deserves, our healthy skepticism and scrutiny. In his 1969 Vietnamization speech, President Richard Nixon juxtaposed his rhetorically created “silent majority” against the unruly and disruptive protesting youth (1997). According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Nixon deliberately but subtly implied “un-American” characteristics to the latter group while attributing patriotic and loyal motives to his constructed audience (1997). Bush repeated this strategy at the archetypal level, asserting that Americans are following Divine guidance in the eternal struggle of Good and Evil and implying that to do otherwise would be blasphemous. This interpretation casts light upon a final dark question for this President who campaigned as “a uniter, not a divider.” Inheriting a divided nation as a result of the contested election, Bush finally reconstituted the American polity through use of the Puritan myth, but at the cost of dividing the world into two moral camps. It remains to be seen whether the former ultimately relies upon the existence of the latter.

On the other hand, the return to sacred mythic narrative may simply be conditioned social response devoid of rhetor motive. Particular types of society or specific social exigences may intrinsically call forth mythic narrative. In this regard, Campbell (1997) and Burke (1947) urge a reappraisal of mythic narrative and its role in political discourse. Burke goes so far as suggesting the construction of regional myths not having their basis in specific cultural or national identity.

Either interpretation suggests a future role for scholars of rhetoric or political communication in promoting reasoned public discourse and debate. A critical approach that better explains how the strategy of myth in particular rhetorical situations leads to uncritical acceptance of ideology and simultaneously blocks rational public discourse not only will advance our understanding of this particular transaction, but also gird us against its capacity to disguise and gain unwitting acceptance for future political ideologies in the name of national unity. To understand the deeper dynamic at work, considerably more research and analysis is needed, especially combining the tools of historiography and rhetorical analysis.

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APPENDIX

PRESIDENTIAL TEXTS

Inaugural Address¹ United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

1. President Clinton, distinguished guests and my fellow citizens, the peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet common in our country. With a simple oath, we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings.
2. As I begin, I thank President Clinton for his service to our nation.
3. And I thank Vice President Gore for a contest conducted with spirit and ended with grace.
4. I am honored and humbled to stand here, where so many of America's leaders have come before me, and so many will follow.
5. We have a place, all of us, in a long story—a story we continue, but whose end we will not see. It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.
6. It is the American story—a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals.
7. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.
8. Americans are called to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws. And though our nation has sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed, we must follow no other course.
9. Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations.

1. George W. Bush, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 2001.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/inaugural-address.html>

10. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel.
11. While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise, even the justice, of our own country. The ambitions of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth. And sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent, but not a country.
12. We do not accept this, and we will not allow it. Our unity, our union, is the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. And this is my solemn pledge: I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity.
13. I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image.
14. And we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward.
15. America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.
16. Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion and character.
17. America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness.
18. Some seem to believe that our politics can afford to be petty because, in a time of peace, the stakes of our debates appear small.
19. But the stakes for America are never small. If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led. If we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism. If we permit our economy to drift and decline, the vulnerable will suffer most.
20. We must live up to the calling we share. Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos. And this commitment, if we keep it, is a way to shared accomplishment.
21. America, at its best, is also courageous.
22. Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

23. Together, we will reclaim America's schools, before ignorance and apathy claim more young lives.
24. We will reform Social Security and Medicare, sparing our children from struggles we have the power to prevent. And we will reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort and enterprise of working Americans.
25. We will build our defenses beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge.
26. We will confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors.
27. The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.
28. America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise.
29. And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love.
30. And the proliferation of prisons, however necessary, is no substitute for hope and order in our souls.
31. Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems, but priorities. And all of us are diminished when any are hopeless.
32. Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government.
33. And some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor's touch or a pastor's prayer. Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws.
34. Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty, but we can listen to those who do.
35. And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.
36. America, at its best, is a place where personal responsibility is valued and expected.
37. Encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats, it is a call to conscience. And though it requires sacrifice, it brings a deeper fulfillment. We find the fullness of life not only in options, but in commitments. And we find that children and community are the commitments that set us free.

38. Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom.
39. Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone.
40. I will live and lead by these principles: to advance my convictions with civility, to pursue the public interest with courage, to speak for greater justice and compassion, to call for responsibility and try to live it as well.
41. In all these ways, I will bring the values of our history to the care of our times.
42. What you do is as important as anything government does. I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort; to defend needed reforms against easy attacks; to serve your nation, beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens: citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character.
43. Americans are generous and strong and decent, not because we believe in ourselves, but because we hold beliefs beyond ourselves. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it.
44. After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson: "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?"
45. Much time has passed since Jefferson arrived for his inauguration. The years and changes accumulate. But the themes of this day he would know: our nation's grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity.
46. We are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with his purpose. Yet his purpose is achieved in our duty, and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another.
47. Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today, to make our country more just and generous, to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life.
48. This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.
49. God bless you all, and God bless America

President's Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance²
The National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

- 1 We are here in the middle hour of our grief. So many have suffered so great a loss, and today we express our nation's sorrow. We come before God to pray for the missing and the dead, and for those who love them.
2. On Tuesday, our country was attacked with deliberate and massive cruelty. We have seen the images of fire and ashes, and bent steel.
3. Now come the names, the list of casualties we are only beginning to read. They are the names of men and women who began their day at a desk or in an airport, busy with life. They are the names of people who faced death, and in their last moments called home to say, be brave, and I love you.
4. They are the names of passengers who defied their murderers, and prevented the murder of others on the ground. They are the names of men and women who wore the uniform of the United States, and died at their posts.
5. They are the names of rescuers, the ones whom death found running up the stairs and into the fires to help others. We will read all these names. We will linger over them, and learn their stories, and many Americans will weep.
6. To the children and parents and spouses and families and friends of the lost, we offer the deepest sympathy of the nation. And I assure you, you are not alone.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Our purpose as a nation is firm. Yet our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed, and lead us to pray. In many of our prayers this week, there is a searching, and an honesty. At St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on Tuesday, a woman said, "I prayed to God to give us a sign that He is still here." Others have prayed for the same, searching hospital to hospital, carrying pictures of those still missing.
10. God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own. Yet the prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral, are known and heard, and understood.

2. Bush, George. "President's Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance." White House 14 Sep. 2001. 27 Dec. 2001
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010914-2.html>>

11. There are prayers that help us last through the day, or endure the night. There are prayers of friends and strangers, that give us strength for the journey. And there are prayers that yield our will to a will greater than our own.
12. This world He created is of moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance, and love have no end. And the Lord of life holds all who die, and all who mourn.
13. It is said that adversity introduces us to ourselves. This is true of a nation as well. In this trial, we have been reminded, and the world has seen, that our fellow Americans are generous and kind, resourceful and brave. We see our national character in rescuers working past exhaustion; in long lines of blood donors; in thousands of citizens who have asked to work and serve in any way possible.
14. And we have seen our national character in eloquent acts of sacrifice. Inside the World Trade Center, one man who could have saved himself stayed until the end at the side of his quadriplegic friend. A beloved priest died giving the last rites to a firefighter. Two office workers, finding a disabled stranger, carried her down sixty-eight floors to safety. A group of men drove through the night from Dallas to Washington to bring skin grafts for burn victims.
15. In these acts, and in many others, Americans showed a deep commitment to one another, and an abiding love for our country. Today, we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the warm courage of national unity. This is a unity of every faith, and every background.
16. It has joined together political parties in both houses of Congress. It is evident in services of prayer and candlelight vigils, and American flags, which are displayed in pride, and wave in defiance.
17. Our unity is a kinship of grief, and a steadfast resolve to prevail against our enemies. And this unity against terror is now extending across the world.
18. America is a nation full of good fortune, with so much to be grateful for. But we are not spared from suffering. In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America, because we are freedom's home and defender. And the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time.
19. On this national day of prayer and remembrance, we ask almighty God to watch over our nation, and grant us patience and resolve in all that is to come. We pray that He will comfort and console those who now walk in sorrow. We thank Him for each life we now must mourn, and the promise of a life to come.
20. As we have been assured, neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, can separate us from God's love. May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own. And may He always guide our country.
21. God bless America.

Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People ³
United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

1. In the normal course of events, Presidents come to this chamber to report on the state of the Union. Tonight, no such report is needed. It has already been delivered by the American people.
2. We have seen it in the courage of passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground – passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me to welcome his wife, Lisa Beamer, here tonight. (Applause.)
3. We have seen the state of our Union in the endurance of rescuers, working past exhaustion. We have seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers -- in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. We have seen the decency of a loving and giving people who have made the grief of strangers their own.
4. My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union -- and it is strong. (Applause.)
5. 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. (Applause.)
6. I thank the Congress for its leadership at such an important time. All of America was touched on the evening of the tragedy to see Republicans and Democrats joined together on the steps of this Capitol, singing "God Bless America." And you did more than sing; you acted, by delivering \$40 billion to rebuild our communities and meet the needs of our military.
7. Speaker Hastert, Minority Leader Gephardt, Majority Leader Daschle and Senator Lott, I thank you for your friendship, for your leadership and for your service to our country. (Applause.)
8. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the world for its outpouring of support. America will never forget the sounds of our National Anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate.
9. We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America.
10. Nor will we forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 130 Israelis; more than 250 citizens of India; men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan; and hundreds of British citizens. America

3. Bush, George. "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," White House 20 Sep. 2001. 27 Dec. 2001

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>>

has no truer friend than Great Britain. (Applause.) Once again, we are joined together in a great cause -- so honored the British Prime Minister has crossed an ocean to show his unity of purpose with America. Thank you for coming, friend. (Applause.)

11. 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 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.
12. Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking: Who attacked our country? The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda. They are the same murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and responsible for bombing the USS Cole.
13. Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.
14. The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics -- a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinction among military and civilians, including women and children.
15. This group and its leader -- a person named Osama bin Laden -- are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction.
16. The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see al Qaeda's vision for the world.
17. Afghanistan's people have been brutalized -- many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.
18. The United States respects the people of Afghanistan -- after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid -- but we condemn the Taliban regime. (Applause.) It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by

sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder.

19. And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. (Applause.) Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. (Applause.) Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.
20. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. (Applause.) The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.
21. 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 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. (Applause.) The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. (Applause.)
22. Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. (Applause.)
23. Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber -- a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.
24. They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.
25. These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.
26. We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions -- by abandoning every value except the will to power -- they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies. (Applause.)

27. Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command --every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war -- to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.
28. This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat.
29. Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Applause.) From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.
30. Our nation has been put on notice: We are not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans. Today, dozens of federal departments and agencies, as well as state and local governments, have responsibilities affecting homeland security. These efforts must be coordinated at the highest level. So tonight I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me -- the Office of Homeland Security.
31. And tonight I also announce a distinguished American to lead this effort, to strengthen American security: a military veteran, an effective governor, a true patriot, a trusted friend -- Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge. (Applause.) He will lead, oversee and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism, and respond to any attacks that may come.
32. These measures are essential. But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. (Applause.)
33. Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents to intelligence operatives to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight, a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I've called the Armed Forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud. (Applause.)
34. This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.
35. We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world. The United States is grateful that many nations and many international organizations have already responded

-- with sympathy and with support. Nations from Latin America, to Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to the Islamic world. Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: An attack on one is an attack on all.

36. The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what -- we're not going to allow it. (Applause.)
37. Americans are asking: What is expected of us? I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat.
38. I ask you to uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith. (Applause.)
39. I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy with your contributions. Those who want to give can go to a central source of information, libertyunites.org, to find the names of groups providing direct help in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.
40. The thousands of FBI agents who are now at work in this investigation may need your cooperation, and I ask you to give it.
41. I ask for your patience, with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security; and for your patience in what will be a long struggle.
42. I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity. They did not touch its source. America is successful because of the hard work, and creativity, and enterprise of our people. These were the true strengths of our economy before September 11th, and they are our strengths today. (Applause.)
43. And, finally, please continue praying for the victims of terror and their families, for those in uniform, and for our great country. Prayer has comforted us in sorrow, and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead.
44. Tonight I thank my fellow Americans for what you have already done and for what you will do. And ladies and gentlemen of the Congress, I thank you, their representatives, for what you have already done and for what we will do together.
45. Tonight, we face new and sudden national challenges. We will come together to improve air safety, to dramatically expand the number of air marshals on domestic flights, and take new measures to prevent hijacking. We will come together to promote stability and keep our airlines flying, with direct assistance during this emergency. (Applause.)

46. We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home. (Applause.) We will come together to strengthen our intelligence capabilities to know the plans of terrorists before they act, and find them before they strike. (Applause.)
47. We will come together to take active steps that strengthen America's economy, and put our people back to work.
48. Tonight we welcome two leaders who embody the extraordinary spirit of all New Yorkers: Governor George Pataki, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. (Applause.) As a symbol of America's resolve, my administration will work with Congress, and these two leaders, to show the world that we will rebuild New York City. (Applause.)
49. After all that has just passed -- all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them -- it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. (Applause.)
50. 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. (Applause.)
51. It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal. We'll go back to our lives and routines, and that is good. Even grief recedes with time and grace. But our resolve must not pass. Each of us will remember what happened that day, and to whom it happened. We'll remember the moment the news came -- where we were and what we were doing. Some will remember an image of a fire, or a story of rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever.
52. And I will carry this: It is the police shield of a man named George Howard, who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. This is my reminder of lives that ended, and a task that does not end. (Applause.)
53. I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people.
54. 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. (Applause.)

55. 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.

56. Thank you. (Applause.)

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