



Hope in the Face of Empire: Failed Patriotism, Civil International Publicity, and Patriotic Peacebuilding

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Woe to those wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!
—Isaiah 5:21

He looked straight into my eyes that night and said it: “America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire.”¹ That President Bush had to tender this assurance eyeball to eyeball to the nation and to the world surely indicates that the notion of “empire” merits investigation.

¹President George W. Bush, *State of the Union Address* (2004), is at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/print20040120-7.html. Four days after President Bush’s State of the Union disavowal of empire, Vice President Cheney, in Davos, Switzerland, again disavowed any U.S. ambition to empire and used a territorial definition of empire; see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/print/20040124-1.html>. The president first stated this disavowal in his now famous West Point graduation speech on June 1, 2002; see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>. He again denied empire on November 11, 2002, in a speech at a White House reception for veterans. “We have no territorial ambitions, we don’t seek an empire. Our nation is committed to freedom for ourselves and for others”; see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/11/print/20021111-2.html>. The West Point speech has become famous, first because there he started to develop “the Bush Doctrine.” Second, four quotations from this speech show up as official epigrams for four of the

The patriotism of empire is a failed patriotism that longs for empire as the way to achieve security. America needs instead a repenting patriotism, in the tradition of Lincoln, that recognizes public accountability and moves toward peacebuilding.

We will investigate this timely and weighty question through four turns. First, we will look at the state of the question. Second, we will display the basic features of the neoconservative empire.² Third, we will narrate briefly the long history of American empire as a story of “failed patriotism,” which continues in today’s neo-conservative movement and its influence on President Bush. Fourth, we will also remember that “American empire” is not our only or primary story line. We will ponder an alternative of American civic international patriotism. Within this tradition we will consider the three practices of repenting patriotism, global publicity, and patriotic peacebuilding, and Christian contributions to these.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

Examining empire has become a growth industry with many ways into the question. Michael Walzer, Princeton University’s left-to-liberal-leaning, Jewish political philosopher, notes, “In fact, there hasn’t been anywhere near enough of a debate” about whether or not there is an American empire.³ Is there an American empire? On the popular level Walzer says, “Of course!” However, he worries that “empire”—like “imperial”—is more “a term of denunciation” than “of enlightenment.” He prefers “hegemony,” “hegemonic,” and “hegemon,” because “empire” “needs extensive qualification if it is to describe anything like what exists, or what is possible, in the world today.”⁴ I use “empire” and strive for a clear note of denunciation within a wider melody of definition, description, and normative direction. A little denunciation is called for today, a little at least!

Jean Bethke Elshtain, the University of Chicago’s Bush-administration-leaning, Christian just war ethicist, notes that “some will argue that the kinds of interventions I call for...amount to imperialism.”⁵ Still, she reprimands people for “invoking the rather unhelpful imperialist tag.” It is likely that she does not want “empire” to frame the question. Rather than “invoking” empire she thinks that “we should reflect on the nature of interventions” and “simply get past the almost inevitable initial negative reaction to views that call on the United States to exercise robust powers of intervention.” “The doctrine that I will defend here,” she continues, “differs quite significantly from past imperialisms since it involves neither colonization nor the imposition of any permanent structure of proconsuls (as was the practice of the Roman Empire).” She seeks to develop the just war tradition’s criterion of “just cause” under the norm of “equal regard.” Her proposal is worth

nine sections of *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, which officially houses much of the Bush Doctrine; see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

²I offer a fuller analysis of the neocon empire, of the development and the dogma of “the Bush Doctrine,” and of the Iraq War in “God against Empire: Implicit Imperialism, Deliberative Democracy, and Global Civil Society,” *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 29/2 (2004) 9–60.

³Michael Walzer, “Is There an American Empire?” *Dissent* (Fall 2003) 27.

⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

⁵Jean Bethke Elshtain, “International Justice as Equal Regard and the Use of Force,” in *Anxious about Empire: Theological Essays on the New Global Realities*, ed. Wes Avram (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004) 130.

discussing but must be left for another time. However, she neglects completely the just war tradition's criterion of "legitimate authority." This neglect permits someone to drive an empire through the gaping hole that she provides in the just war tradition. Regrettably, her argument retains more than a whiff of war permissiveness.

Michael Ignatieff, Harvard University's centrist-leaning, practical philosopher of human rights, has coined the term "empire lite" to describe America.⁶ "America's empire is not like empires of times past, built on colonies, conquests and the white man's burden," he says.

The old European imperialism justified itself as a mission to civilize, to prepare tribes and so-called lesser breeds in the habits of self-discipline necessary for the exercise of self-rule. Self-rule did not necessarily have to happen soon—the imperial administrators hoped to enjoy the sunset as long as possible—but it was held out as a distant incentive, and the incentive was crucial in co-opting local elites and preventing them from passing into open rebellion.⁷

"The 21st century imperialism is a new invention in the annals of political science, an empire lite, a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known."⁸ Because of the grace notes of "an empire lite" "the moral evaluation of empire gets complicated," he argues.⁹

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Neither Walzer nor Ignatieff denies that America is some kind of empire. Even Elstain is likely to admit that America is some kind of empire, though her account "differs quite significantly from past imperialisms." Are these three being simply descriptive? From the prescriptive or normative perspective, what ought America be or aspire to become?

Ignatieff seems ambivalent. He knows that "[e]ver since George Washington warned his countrymen against foreign entanglements, empire abroad has been seen as the republic's permanent temptation and its potential nemesis."¹⁰ He also states clearly, "Those who want America to remain a republic rather than become an empire imagine rightly, but," he adds quickly, "they have not factored in what tyranny or chaos can do to vital American interests."¹¹ Is this just a realist codicil

⁶Michael Ignatieff, "American Empire: The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 January 2003, 24.

⁷Ibid., 50, 53.

⁸Ibid., 24.

⁹Ibid., 25.

¹⁰Ibid., 22.

¹¹Ibid., 55.

tacked onto an ethical assessment? It seems so, for he immediately notes, “The case for empire is that it has become, in a place like Iraq, the last hope for democracy and stability alike. Even so, empires survive only by understanding their limits.” He then concludes, “Only a very deluded imperialist would believe otherwise.” Perhaps Ignatieff is merely heeding Reinhold Niebuhr’s 1960 caveat, which Ignatieff in fact cites, regarding America “frantically avoiding recognition of the imperialism that we in fact exercise.”¹² It is likely that Elshtain too is heeding Niebuhr’s caveat as she argues for America’s “disproportionate burden” to enforce justice around the globe as equal regard for anyone being oppressed. This, she insists, rests simply on the “empirical fact” “at present” that “the United States is capable of projecting its power as no other state can.”¹³ Walzer looks “to construct a different kind of politics, adapted to the real power but also to the characteristic looseness of hegemonic rule.” This means instilling “more than a degree of courtesy for the rest of the international order and its nations.”¹⁴

So, Elshtain seeks to *convince* America how our new expansive interventionism, though “different from past imperialisms,” is moral according to just war tradition. Ignatieff seeks to *contain* imperial lite overreach and excess. And Walzer seeks not only to contain overreach and excess but also to *curb* hegemonic abuses. How are these much more than supplying, in varying degrees, cosmetic makeovers for the embarrassments of empire? I will seek to *convict* and *correct* America’s neocon empire by offering a *civilizing confidence* in a hopeful future for America in the world.

THE NEOCONSERVATIVE EMPIRE

Our portrait of the neoconservative movement will focus, first, on its vision of international order as empire, and, second, on its practices of statecraft as empire.

The Neoconservative International Order

The neoconservative movement aims to sculpt the future by controlling the form of U.S. internationalism. Paul Wolfowitz notes, “In a world where American primacy seems so overwhelming...[t]he ultimate test of foreign policy is how successfully it shapes the future.”¹⁵ During the last quarter century “the world [has] indeed been transformed in America’s image,” assert Robert Kagan and William

¹²Ibid., 24. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1959) 24.

¹³Elshtain, “International Justice,” 142.

¹⁴Walzer, “Is There an American Empire?” 31.

¹⁵Paul Wolfowitz, “Statesmanship in the New Century,” in *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, ed. Robert Kagan and William Kristol (San Francisco: Encounter, 2000) 312, 314. *Present Dangers* contains scholarly analyses by sixteen distinguished authors and continues to be the best single collection of neoconservative internationalist thinking, precisely because it is pre-9/11! Wolfowitz, as assistant secretary of defense under the first President Bush, was third in command at the Pentagon, and now, as deputy secretary of defense in President George W. Bush’s administration, is second in command at the Pentagon. G. John Ikenberry, Peter F. Krogh Professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice at Georgetown University, has concisely and insightfully articulated seven elements that form the neocon internationalist “new grand strategy” (see Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” *Foreign Affairs* 81/5 [Sept-Oct 2002] 44ff.).

Kristol.¹⁶ Neoconservatives seek both to strengthen and to extend this transformation. This will happen by “above all, preserving and reinforcing America’s benevolent global hegemony” (6). Under self-discipline, neocons never use the “e” word in public. This makes them even more successful sponsors of “empire.”

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The neoconservative movement denounces “a return to normal times” and deplors the notion that America would ever again be “a normal nation” (9–12). Neocons do not envision America being a mere “savior of last resort” for world peace or a “reluctant sheriff” enforcing justice (15–16). Those callings would signify an America far too weak and wimpy. Instead, they compare American power and prestige to that exercised when “Rome dominated the Mediterranean world” (6). Their America obeys a new calling with a preferred future. The “United States would instead conceive of itself as at once a European power, an Asian power, a Middle Eastern power and, of course, a Western Hemisphere power” (15–16). Above all, the neocon movement pursues a “unipolar era” (6). “A multipolar world...would be far more dangerous” than the unipolar world of American “benevolent global hegemony” (24).¹⁷ “Benevolent global hegemony” means “full-spectrum dominance,” as hegemonic theorists put it.

Neoconservative Aristocratic “Statesmanship”

Neoconservative “statesmanship” is deeply rooted in an aristocratic mode of life centered in three practices: first, maximizing the aristocrat’s own will by minimizing the rule of law; second, observing “linguistic discipline” to accomplish ends; and third, exercising “resolve” in all things.

Neoconservative “statesmanship” betrays an aristocratic ethos. Paul Wolfowitz says it bluntly. “Thus, foreign policy decisions cannot be subject to the kind of ‘rule of law’ that we want for our domestic political process” (334). Note the cleavage! Rule of law, domestically; internationally, not in the same way. Neocons desire an America that follows international rule of law only when it is expedient. This is the neoconservative movement’s first commandment. It is a matter of substance, not style.

¹⁶William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “Introduction: National Interest and Global Responsibility,” in *Present Dangers*, 5. (Page numbers in the text refer to articles in *Present Dangers* previously footnoted.)

¹⁷In international political philosophy, William Wohlforth, a noted “hegemonic theorist,” developed the warrants for a unipolar world; see “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security* 24/1 (Summer 1999) 5–41. Kagan and Kristol cite him favorably (22). Thomas Donnelly, formerly deputy executive director of Project for the New American Century and presently resident fellow at American Enterprise Institute, calls Wohlforth’s hegemonic theory “groundbreaking” (see Donnelly, “Brave New World: An Enduring *Pax Americana*,” *National Security Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute, 1 April 2003, at www.aei.org/publications/pubID.16710/pub_detail.asp).

Neocons deem America the most virtuous nation on the earth. William Bennett puts it simply. “Today, America sits at the summit. [We] elicit awe and admiration from every nation.”¹⁸ Here rests the soul of aristocracy. “Who, then, will rule the ruler?” is the classic Western question. Aristocrats have always responded that “law’ is embodied in the person of the ruler.”¹⁹ Neocon aristocrats respond that America has demonstrated itself and deserves to be “the man” of the world. We live autonomously; we set the agenda; we declare as “doctrine” that “you are either for us or against us.” Aristocracy has always practiced a culture of exceptionalism and assumption (289–290). But contrary to the neoconservative movement, America’s founders set our statecraft on a different footing from aristocracy. We are a nation “of laws and not of men.”²⁰ We do not desire aristocracy.

Linguistic discipline is crucial to neoconservative “statesmanship.”²¹ Expunge “indiscreet language”!²² Neocons learned this way back in 1992 when Paul Wolfowitz penned the now famous Pentagon draft of neocon grand strategy. America seeks “primacy and predominance” and will “maintain mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global scale.”²³ So now the practice of neocon linguistic discipline takes a classic page from the most famous modern aristocrat, Niccolò Machiavelli: “[E]mploy the fox...[and thereby] circumvent the intellect of men by craft...[H]e who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.”²⁴

Having learned that lesson, neocons now claim that America conducts itself by seamlessly blending its national interest with universal moral principle. Linguistic discipline means citing specious principles. The neocon triumvirate is liberty, democracy, and free-market capitalism. Many people find neocon rhetoric mesmerizing and difficult to criticize. This is because neocons intone these principles as abstractly and speciously as possible, and do so time and time again. What is needed by way of response is a threefold critical theory of liberty, democracy, and market economy.²⁵

Finally, aristocratic “resolve” rounds out the neoconservative ethos.²⁶ The experience of the British Empire is their counterexample. Briefly stated, “the British

¹⁸William J. Bennett, “Morality, Character and American Foreign Policy,” in *Present Dangers*, 304.

¹⁹See Plutarch, “To an Uneducated Ruler,” in *Moralia*, vol. 10, par. 780ff., trans. H. Fowler, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

²⁰John Adams inscribed this crucial antiaristocratic criterion in the opening clause of the original draft of the Massachusetts’ Constitution (1779), which became a national model. It now stands as the culminating clause of Part One (see <http://www.mass.gov/legis/const.htm>).

²¹James W. Caesar, “The Great Divide: American Internationalism and Its Opponents,” in *Present Dangers*, 41.

²²Wohlforth, “Stability.”

²³Max Boot, “Doctrine of the ‘Big Enchilada,’” *The Washington Post*, 14 October 2004, at www.newamericancentury.org/iraq-101402.htm.

²⁴Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) 25.

²⁵I offer a critical theory of democracy as a liberal form, an aristocratic-republic form, and a deliberative form in *Critical Social Theory: Prophetic Reason, Civil Society, and Christian Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

²⁶Donald Kagan, “Strength and Will: A Historical Perspective,” in *Present Dangers*, 337–362.

lacked the will” to maintain, strengthen, and extend their empire (350). The neo-conservative movement again takes a page from Machiavelli, this time from the penultimate chapter of *The Prince*. There Machiavelli narrates the myth behind the ancient aristocratic maxim *fortes fortuna iuvat*, fortune favors the brave. Lady Fortune is wild and “shows her power where valor has not prepared to resist her....[I]t is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman....She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her.”²⁷ These are the intellectual roots of the President’s epistemological resolve, his “stay-the-course” disposition, his “no-doubt presidency.”²⁸

THE FAILED PATRIOTISM OF EMPIRE—A BRIEF HISTORY

What exploded on 9/11 as a security crisis has, since March 2003, become a national identity crisis as well. The security crisis is not over, of course. The national identity crisis is not likely to abate soon. Does America desire empire? Many judge the Iraq War to be unjust. I do, because it is a demonstration war of empire. The President’s willingness to change his rationale finally rests on the wild war permissiveness that “our best defense is a good offense.”²⁹ As he says, in effect, “When America says, ‘We’re coming, we’re coming,’ Listen up, world!”

“the patriotism of empire comes from an identity that longs for empire as the way to achieve security”

An American patriotism of empire is not new. John Lewis Gaddis, Yale University national security historian, offers the following definition of empire: “a situation in which a single state shapes the behavior of others, whether directly or indirectly, partially or completely, by means that can range from the outright use of force through intimidation, dependency, inducements, and even inspiration.”³⁰ The patriotism of empire comes from an identity that longs for empire as the way to achieve security. The British invasion that started the War of 1812 led John Quincy Adams, as the secretary of state under President James Monroe, to develop

²⁷Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 35. For Machiavelli’s virtue of “resolve,” see Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 28–35, 38–42.

²⁸A good example is President Bush’s February 8, 2004 interview on NBC’s *Meet the Press* with Tim Russert. See <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618/>.

²⁹*National Security Strategy*, chap. III. For my analysis of the Iraq War as a neoconservative demonstration war of empire as well as a critique of the *National Security Strategy*, see Gary M. Simpson, “Hope in the Face of the *National Security Strategy*,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (2005) at <http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/>, as well as “God against Empire.”

³⁰John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 106. I depend on Gaddis for this historical account of American “empire.” This small 140-page book is well worth the reading! I, however, reject his point of view, as will become clear. In “God against Empire,” I recount four prominent justifications for empire often used in combination—an economic rationale, a human nature rationale, a national security rationale, and a moral rationale. I also offer a brief historical account of modern empires.

the “Monroe Doctrine.” Adams’s principle was to achieve security through expansion. Adams built his grand strategy for implementing this expansionist principle around three foreign policy practices: preemption-prevention, unilateralism, and hegemony-empire.

Preemption where marauders might exploit the weakness of neighboring states, or where that weakness might tempt stronger states to establish a presence; unilateralism, so that the United States need not rely upon any other state to guarantee its security; and, finally, hegemony over the North American continent, in order that the dominant international system there would reflect a preponderance of American power rather than a balance among several powers, with all the possibilities for wars, commercial rivalries, and revolutions that the latter arrangement had led to in Europe.³¹

President Andrew Jackson, both before and during his presidency, executed Adams’s expansionist empire by the preemptive-preventive practice of “dispossessions”—Gaddis’s distressing euphemism—carried out on Native American Indians. Presidents James Polk, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, and Woodrow Wilson, early on, would all, to varying degrees and with differing skill, execute Adams’s expansionist grand strategy of empire through preemptive-preventive, unilateralist, hegemonic practices. Adams claimed already in 1811 to his mother Abigail that America was “destined by God and nature” so to expand. A few years later he argued that “any effort on our part to reason the world out of a belief that we are ambitious will have no other effect than to convince them that we add to our ambition hypocrisy.”³²

Gaddis draws three conclusions. First, Adams’s expansionist strategy of empire is “surprisingly relevant.” Second, overall, President Bush “whether intentionally or not, has been drawing upon a set of traditions that go back” to Adams; the Bush Doctrine therefore “reflects a return to an old position, not the emergence of a new one.” This is what makes the Bush Doctrine neoconservative. It conserves this old expansionist tradition of empire. It is “neo” because it is now unapologetically both fully global and fully supportive of full-spectrum dominance. Third, Adams’s three expansionist practices of empire are and should remain America’s “default [practices]: when in doubt, fall back on these.”³³ Soon after 9/11, the president fell back precisely on this expansionism, and he does so again in his second

³¹Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*, 37–38. Gaddis draws a distinction between preemption and prevention: preemption means “military action undertaken to forestall an imminent attack from a hostile state”; prevention means “starting a war to keep such a state from building the capability to attack” (123). However, he notes that in the nineteenth century this distinction seems “to blur.” He uses “preemption” to cover the blur. Michael Walzer gives the modern classic account of the distinction between preemption and prevention and why just war tradition judges “preventive wars” to be unjust (*Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed. [New York: Basic Books, 1977, 2000] 74–85). Gaddis also argues that the Monroe Doctrine does not so much inaugurate a practice of isolationism, “a misnomer,” but rather a practice of unilateralism (24). While he uses “hegemony” in most of his account, toward the end he himself argues for an expanding “empire of liberty” (106–113). Gaddis notes how “surprisingly relevant” Adams’s expansionist grand strategy is (16).

³²Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*, 26–27.

³³*Ibid.*, 16, 31, 26, 31. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050118-4.html>.

inaugural address of January 20, 2005: “We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.”³⁴

“Who visits Washington D.C. as a patriotic exercise and goes to the John Quincy Adams memorial?”

Gaddis is right on the first two conclusions but wrong on the third, and so is the president. Who, I ask, visits Washington D.C. as a patriotic exercise and goes to the John Quincy Adams memorial or the Polk memorial or the McKinley memorial or the Teddy Roosevelt memorial or the Taft memorial? While their expansionist empire is one American tradition, most Americans, precisely on a commonsense level of American patriotism, visit a different set of traditions embodied in the likes of the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, and the World War II Memorial, among others. In fact, what exploded at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, as a national security crisis became ironically a hopeful opportunity for FDR. He repelled the tradition and practices of an expansionist American empire as failed patriotism. Instead, he led America in a more civic internationalist direction.³⁵

REPENTING PATRIOTISM, CIVIC INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY, AND PATRIOTIC PEACEBUILDING

Hope in the face of war always begins and ends with repentance. So does hope in the face of empire. “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” When this first of the Ninety-five Theses exploded off the pen of Martin Luther, few recognized how piercing and pervasive repentance is. Luther argued that its scope went beyond the private lives of individuals, families, and friendships, and encompassed ecclesial, socioeconomic, and political life as well. When he considered the question of war against the Turks using the just war tradition, he noted that Christians, even when there are only a few, should lead the way in continual national repentance and repentant prayer. Whether the war is just or unjust, whether it is won or lost, repentance is necessary. Accountability to God is paramount. Without repentance a nation can lose its soul, so to speak. Of course, the specifics of this repentance will vary depending with the case. Pastors have an obligation to preach, teach, and exhort such public repentance and repentant prayer, says Luther.³⁶

³⁴See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/print/20050120-1.html>.

³⁵For the FDR story, see Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*, 35–67.

³⁶For Luther’s understanding of how political accountability to God gets mediated through this-worldly media, see Gary M. Simpson, “Toward a Lutheran ‘Delight in the Law of the Lord’: Church and State in the Context of Civil Society,” in *Church and State: Lutheran Perspectives*, ed. John Stumme and Robert Tuttle (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) 37–44.

In American history President Abraham Lincoln picked up on the same biblical pervasiveness of repentance in the face of war. Already as a United States congressional representative, Lincoln implored “good citizens and patriots” to undergo “genuine repentance” and “to confess their [political] sins and transgressions” as a national practice of truth.³⁷ This was January 12, 1848, twenty months after President James Polk had declared war on Mexico. Shortly after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, and eight months before his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863, he issued a “Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day”:

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon....³⁸

Only by walking the path through national repentance could America begin “to bind up the nation’s wounds”; “to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations”; and to do so “with malice toward none; with charity for all.”³⁹

Reinhold Niebuhr claimed that the structure of nations and empires is built on two pillars. It has always been quite self-evident that nations and empires need “power,” no matter what international order is operative. Less self-evident, noted Niebuhr, is the necessity of “prestige” within whichever international order exists.⁴⁰ Prestige, or “soft power,” as it is known today, “is not just a matter of ephemeral popularity; it is a means of obtaining outcomes.”⁴¹ No doubt both power and prestige are necessary for nations, not to mention empires.

A critical theory of empire comes about, however, only when a third basic pillar is added to the international order of nations. That pillar is “publicity”—publicity not in the sense of public relations but rather in the strong sense of accountability to wider publics, to other nations as well as to the rapidly emerging publics of global civil society.⁴² America’s patriotism of publicity appears forthrightly in the Declaration of Independence when it declares that “a decent respect

³⁷Abraham Lincoln, “Speech in United States House of Representatives: The War with Mexico,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–1955) 432, 433, 431.

³⁸Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 6, 155.

³⁹President Lincoln’s memorable Second Inaugural Address of March 4, 1865, less than six weeks before he was assassinated; see <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=38&page=transcript>.

⁴⁰Niebuhr, *Structure*, 8–32, 66–88. Unfortunately, with this twofold structure of nations and empires Niebuhr is not able sufficiently to criticize empire itself as a structural basis for international order. Today, prestige is most often referred to as “soft power.” See especially Joseph Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Foreign Affairs, 2004).

⁴¹Joseph Nye, Jr., “The Decline of America’s Soft Power,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2004).

⁴²For the notion of civil society, see my “God against Empire,” and my “Puckering Up for Postmodern Kissing: Civil Society and the Lutheran Entwinement of Just War and Just PeaceMaking,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (November 2002), at <http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/search.asp>.

to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

Publicity as public accountability, both within nations and within an international order, comports most closely with repentance. The vigilance of nations, of international institutions, and especially of global civil society all contribute to the effectiveness of civic international publicity. It is publicity that makes for national and international truth and reconciliation processes, for instance. Can world Christianity hear a call from God and recognize a vocation of civic international publicity?

“Can world Christianity hear a call from God and recognize a vocation of civic international publicity?”

Without “publicity,” the power of strong nations remains unfettered and prone toward empire. Without “publicity,” the prestige or soft power of nations too easily becomes a mere tool of the power of empire. Without publicity, diplomacy, for example, can be used as merely a kinder, gentler form of “real” power, military power. A different kind of example is the December 26, 2004, tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean basin. Empires have always used natural disasters as opportunities to display their benevolence, generosity, and magnanimity. Historically, an empire’s benevolence is the coin of choice for building prestige and thus for building empire. Prestige ingratiates recipients efficiently, and this serves empire effectively.

When publicity becomes the coin of the international order, powerful nations become civic internationalists, and this opens the way for just peacebuilding practices.⁴³ Civic international nations abide by the international rule of law and thereby expand its scope and effectiveness. Civic international nations strengthen international institutions by mending them, not ending them. Under the vigilance of publicity, civic international nations proliferate international treaties and agreements that move beyond emergency benevolence by establishing stakeholder systems of economic life, which empower emerging nations and peoples and environments. Under publicity, stakeholder systems also meet the more proximate interests of powerful nations.

As publicity occupies a stronger central role within the international order, the just war tradition will again become the strong moral restraint on the use of power that it aspires to be. The use of power only when authentically necessary will then be honored and honorable. Ecumenical Christian churches have the potential to contribute significantly here. When war is waged unjustly, as (in my opinion) in the Iraq War, for instance, repentant patriotism in the open light of civic international publicity must confess public sins. People ask, “But we’re in Iraq now and we

⁴³See especially Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998). I add three additional practices to Stassen’s ten: prayer, public repentance, and publicity.

can't just leave, can we? We must 'stay the course,' as the President says. It would be even worse now if we left." Repentant patriotism refuses merely "to stay the course" that we have been on. In repentant patriotism, first, we admit we were wrong. We waged an unnecessary, and thereby unjust, war. We waged it as a demonstration war, to demonstrate our expansive and expanding empire. The United Nations inspections, in spite of their difficulties, worked, and were continuing to work. A civic internationalist order was more God-pleasing than empire, no matter how "lite." Numerous other specific confessions would follow. Second, given America's moral, not merely tactical, failure, we must then stay in Iraq repentantly to build just peace. In repentance we now stay with the full participation of the United Nations and under full UN and global civil society publicity.

Finally, increasing the vigor of civic international publicity also will transform "prestige," which has its roots in aristocratic modes of life, into just peacebuilding. Just peacebuilding sits more readily within deliberative democratic modes of life as well as within a civic international order. Here is an opportunity for the historic Christian peace churches and the historic just war tradition churches to collaborate vigorously in new ways for an era of civic internationalism. Here Christian churches together can innovate American patriotism through patriotic peacebuilding.

After discussing many things during a January 2005 interview, First Lady Laura Bush concluded, "But I also have this sense of our country, the big ship America, that might veer a little bit one way or the other way, but is very stable." While this response is in many ways quite sensible, it does not capture the historic internal conflict between an expansionist empire and the hope for a civic international nation. "Dear Mrs. Bush, hope resides in repenting patriotism, civic international publicity, and patriotic peacebuilding. I do hope the ship veers a little bit." Would that God would grant such hope.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

—Matthew 5:9 ⊕

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