

The Religious Typology of American Foreign Relations

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Let me begin badly: by apologizing for the puzzling title of my paper. I do not know whether the word “typology,” in this case modified by the word “religious,” has a Japanese analogue, or even whether it can be translated with any accuracy. It might make listeners feel better to know that these words would doubtless evoke puzzlement among American diplomatic historians, in whose ranks I count myself. But then, the very idea that religion has anything to do with U.S. foreign relations has long been alien to diplomatic historians. Even now, in an age wherein culture, defined broadly, has been admitted (however grudgingly) to the hearth and home of foreign relations history, religion has remained a beggar outside in the snow. We talk increasingly about race, gender, language, and even emotion as determinants of U.S. foreign policy. We have discovered the joys of post-structuralism and post-colonialism, the utility of mental maps, psychology, and world systems theory, and the salience of jazz and Broadway musicals, of novels, poems, and postage stamps from Cuba, of modern art and architecture, to our study of what was once sourly defined as the history of “what one diplomat said to another.” And yet, we have been reluctant to embrace religion to explain why makers of foreign policy think and act as they do.¹

I write from rueful personal experience. In 2000, the journal *Diplomatic History* published my article “Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations, 1947–1964,” in which I argued for the inclusion of religion as a category of analysis useful to foreign relations historians. More specifically, I claimed that religious thinking had shaped, though not determined, American policy initiatives in India and Pakistan during the early Cold War. Though there was no good strategic or economic reason to favor Pakistan over India, the United States did so anyway, largely because U.S. policymakers identified with Pakistan’s leaders, whom they judged manly, straightforward, and resolute in their rejection of communism. These traits, thought the Americans, were the result of the Pakistanis’ Islamic faith, monotheistic and therefore conditioning its adherents to choose between good and evil: there was one God, one truth, and one right way in the Cold War. Indian leaders, by contrast, were Hindus, believers in many gods, not one, and thus in many or relative truths. Such people could not be considered reliable allies in the struggle against evil communism. They were, the Americans decided, theologically promiscuous, and thus in other ways incapable of consistency or loyalty to a cause.²

My essay was followed by three “Commentaries” on it invited by the editor of the journal. In the first, Robert Dean was gracious, but tepid in his willingness to call religion only “one important aspect of the Cold War relationship” between the United States and South Asia. Patricia Hill, a self-confessed “‘culturalist’ and ‘gender-head’,” nevertheless found the piece “much less satisfying” than a “brilliant” article I had published some years earlier on the impact of gender on U.S.-South Asia relations. Religion, wrote Hill, “may not always be a variable that matters” in our analyses of international relations. “Where’s the beef?” complained Robert Buzzanco in his commentary. Like other cultural categories, religion seemed to Buzzanco irrelevant, incapable of measurement or evaluation as were “investment and trade figures” and “military aid amounts.” There were misperceptions, yes, in the U.S.-South Asia relationship. But none of what I had written had anything to do with power, which ought to be the chief concern of historians of U.S. foreign relations.³

The commentaries did not sway me, at least not the critical ones. I believe even more strongly today that religion must be considered in any serious analysis of U.S. foreign relations. In my view, religion has been artificially excluded from the list of reasons why Americans talk and act in the world as they do. This is the result of several things: the relegation, nearly five centuries ago, of religion to the realm of private, not state discourse (this came with the Peace of Westphalia, 1648); the special discomfort Americans feel at the public discussion of religion, which is supposed to be constitutionally separate from matters of state; and the triumph of instrumentalist and particularly realist models of explaining U.S. foreign policy, which seem to render religion “too diffuse, unwieldy, and imprecise for methodologically traditional diplomatic historians” to use, as Andrew Preston has written, and privilege also the quantifiable over the immeasurable, “investment and trade figures” over that which can be described but not added up.

Still, like it or not, religion has frequently been at the heart of how Americans think about and execute their relations with other people. Missionaries carried Christian values to Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries, and their message of personal responsibility, individual conscience, and the sanctity of hard work promoted state values of capitalism and democracy, though the latter always within limits. White Americans justified their expansionism into the North American West with reference to divine favor and a sense of holy mission that no Native American was, in their view, apt to understand. Cubans and Puerto Ricans and Filipinos were liberated at the turn of the century from Catholic overlords. Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt invoked the Almighty in their war messages; Harry Truman contrasted the American faith in God with the heartless atheism of the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush spoke of a “crusade” against Islamic terrorism. And there is no mistaking the high level of American interest at this moment in religion as part of

the political process. What Robert Bellah called “civil religion” is on display everywhere, as Americans ask themselves whether they are ready for a Mormon president, whether all candidates should at least make a pretext of going to church, or whether a personal story of trial and redemption (such as Bush told, and as other candidates try to tell) is a necessary prerequisite for leadership.⁴

I would like today to approach religion from another angle, going even further back in time than the Peace of Westphalia, to the founding of European settlement in North America. Like many seekers after the origins of American ideas, I start not with those who sailed into the James River in 1607, nor those who arrived at Plymouth in 1620, Pilgrims determined to cut themselves off from the apostates of the Church of England, but instead with the Puritans, who dropped anchor in Massachusetts Bay, off Boston, in 1630. These were deeply religious men and women, English Protestants who came to the new land determined to create a settlement that would provide a model of rectitude for the world to envy and emulate; they were particularly interested in reforming the Church of England, to which they proclaimed their loyalty, from a safe distance. They were not advocates of religious tolerance. They felt fear and contempt for the Indians whose land they invaded; when a smallpox epidemic killed hundreds of Indians, the Puritan leader, John Winthrop, proclaimed, “God hath hereby cleared our title to this place.” The Puritans are remembered most of all for something that happened before any one of them set foot in the new world. Aboard his ship, the *Arbella*, Winthrop gathered his people and delivered what would become perhaps the most famous sermon in American history. Liberally quoting scripture, Winthrop pleaded with his compatriots to “be knit together in this work as one man,” to “delight in each other, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our Commission and Community in the work.” Most memorably, Winthrop called the incipient settlement “a City upon a Hill,” a shining example of righteousness for the witness of God and humanity. Everybody, Winthrop implied, was watching them. They were obliged not to blow it.⁵

The image of the “City on a Hill” is very important in American history, and I will return to it later. But I would like today to discuss another Puritan legacy, one not so well known. It has to do with the word “typology” of my title. In its religious iteration, typology is the hermeneutic practice of early Christians to find in the Old Testament prediction, or prefiguration, of events and lessons in the New Testament. The connections between the two books made in this way might be direct: for example, the patient suffering of Job, on whom God visited a multitude of horrors, is said to prefigure the suffering of Christ on the cross. Or, the connection might be allusive—that Jonah spent three days inside a large fish predicted the three days Christ spent entombed following his death. The Old Testament event is the *figura* or type, while the New Testament event is known as the anti-type. Partly this was a matter of Christians insisting that the New Testament had precedence over the Old, though not to the point of eclipsing it

altogether, since the Old contained precursors of events in the New. Significantly, Christians viewed anti-types as fulfillments of their Old Testament types. Thus, if the lesson of Job's suffering was ambiguous, leaving readers uncertain whether God was merciful, the outcome of Christ's suffering was the uplifting notion that God had sent his son to die for the salvation of humanity. Christ's fate was resurrection, while poor Jonah just needed a bath.

The greatest of Puritan historians, Perry Miller, doubted whether his subjects practiced typology in North America. Martin Luther and John Calvin, their religious inspirations, had dismissed typology as foolish Catholic sleight-of-hand. (Miller explained the expulsion of the heretic Roger Williams from Massachusetts in 1635 as the result of Williams's attachment to typology; Williams, wrote Miller, "was a dog returning to the vomit of a decadent scholasticism.") But on this matter Miller has been corrected. Most historians of the Puritans believe that the Puritans continued to think typologically, particularly with regard to their own extraordinary position as refugees in a new world. That is, along with making connections between Old Testament types and New Testament anti-types, Winthrop and the others quickly found Biblical precedents for their errand into the New England wilderness. So, for example, did the rough exodus of the Israelites from Egypt prefigure the Puritans' Atlantic crossing. Boston became the promised land, or, more accurately as an anti-type, the place to which Christ would return to bring forth the millennium. Far from abandoning typology, the Puritans reinterpreted it in order to explain their situation, and to reconcile their religiosity with the pressures of remaking a church, and a world, from the remote and rugged shore of America.⁶

I will go further here, and arrive at last at my point. There is a typology of U.S. foreign relations. Just as the Puritans rendered Old Testament stories as prefigurations of Christ's life and teaching, and of their own mission as the worldly realization of prophecy, so have U.S. policymakers down the years inscribed Biblical narratives on their mental maps of the world—maps that have in turn guided them in their conception and execution of American foreign policy. Just how this process of inscription has occurred is, in the best tradition of the search for religious truth, a bit of a mystery. One could call religious typology a "discursive formation," or a context within which all foreign policymakers operated, though I confess I do not know exactly what is meant by "discursive formation" and I suspect that to call typology a "context" will not satisfy most historians. I would say more pointedly—and here I am paraphrasing myself—that makers of U.S. foreign policy do not shed their values and assumptions like raincoats at the office door. That is, men and women of faith, whatever their heads tell them about the need to separate personal from professional views and religion from their secular pursuits, are not able to put aside their cosmologies when they sit down to write memos; what they heard in church on Sunday morning lingers as they order their thoughts on Monday.

This is most obviously true of men and women of Christian faith, of whom a

large number have served as president or secretary of state. President William McKinley claimed that he sought divine guidance on the matter of whether to annex the Philippines, and when one night a voice told him to go ahead he recognized its heavenly provenance and did not hesitate. Woodrow Wilson, the son and nephew of Presbyterian ministers, invoked God frequently in his statements about foreign policy, while Franklin Roosevelt once proclaimed that he would always be two things: a Democrat and a Christian. The three most influential secretaries of state during the early Cold War—Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, and Dean Rusk—were all men of Christian faith. Acheson was raised in a rectory in Connecticut. “From the moral homilies of his father Dean acquired a sharp sense of right and wrong,” David McLellan has written. “The words of the Collect and the Book of Common Prayer made an enduring contribution to his thought.” Dulles was the son of a minister, and nearly came to the pulpit himself. He fought the Cold War as a religious contest between faith and Godlessness. Of the Korean War, he said: “We have borne a Christian witness. We need have no remorse. Also we need not despair. We have acted as God gave us to see the right.” Rusk, also the son of a clergyman, was a southern Presbyterian “with Calvinist overtones,” who worked, with a sense of divine mission and “a prayer on [his] lips,” to shore up the barricades against communist expansion, especially in Southeast Asia. Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Condoleezza Rice, were and are men and women of faith who made no effort to conceal its importance in their lives and careers.⁷

There are a couple of ways to trace the influence of Old Testament narratives in U.S. foreign policy decisions. The first is to take language seriously. When Biblical tropes are invoked, or when allusions are made to well recognized Bible stories, directly or indirectly, we can assume that such narratives matter to policymakers. The second, admittedly less precise, is to assume that religious people see their world in religious terms, and that when they are confronted with situations that resemble those faced by people in the Bible, they will respond in ways that remind them of how these stories played out, especially how the heroic actors in them performed. When officials imagined foreign policy enterprises as religious ones, they sanctified and naturalized them, lending their own behavior not just logic but righteousness. We face a crisis: what would Abraham or Moses or even God do? Decision-makers could tell themselves that they were not the first to confront such problems, and they were hardly the most righteous. But, like their Biblical forbears, they might enact narratives of sacrifice, vengeance, cleansing war, forgiveness, sin, and responsibility for others. Let me show how each of these Old Testament themes was embodied in American diplomacy by looking briefly at U.S. participation in World Wars I and II and the Cold War.

Let us consider first the theme of sacrifice. Those with a passing knowledge of the Old Testament know instantly where to look for this theme: Genesis 22, the story of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, because God has asked him to. At God’s command, Abraham takes Isaac to Moriah, where he

builds a sacrificial altar, binds his son (who submits to his bondage without complaint), then draws out a knife to cut his son's throat. Only then does God change the assignment, and provide Abraham with a ram to sacrifice instead; the journey and the altar shouldn't be a total loss, as my mother might say. God rewards Abraham with a promise to make his "offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven," which offspring will then "possess the gate of their enemies" —that is, be successful in war or conquest.

There are likely a number of episodes in U.S. foreign relations that suggest sacrifice, at least in the minds of the policymakers who deem themselves selfless and obedient servants of the Almighty. It seems to me that the decision of Woodrow Wilson to take the United States to war against Germany in April 1917 best represents an anti-type to the figura of the Abraham and Isaac story. Wilson, recall, was raised and taught by his Presbyterian minister father, and thus learned early the importance of Christian thought in a secular world. The special content of Wilson's religious training concerned the "covenantal tradition," which, according to a Wilson biographer, "harked back to the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and the agreement between God and his people, who, in exchange for their obedience and faith, would receive his blessings and protection." In college at Princeton, Wilson made with a classmate a "solemn covenant" to "acquire knowledge that we might have power," a revealing comment for the young man. On the verge of marriage in 1885, Wilson wrote to his fiancée that they should have "a compact" for their marriage, which he described as a "Love League (with only two members)" and including a constitution.

Wilson's decision for war, reached after months of soul searching and worry that the object of potential American sacrifice—not an innocent but a frequently exasperating Western Europe—might not be worthy of it, nevertheless invoked religious imagery when he made his solemn announcement before Congress and the American people:

To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Fine language, this. Do not forget, however, that God rewarded Abraham, the man of faith who was prepared to make the great sacrifice. We can assume that Wilson, who understood that a covenant was a reciprocal agreement, expected that the Almighty would help him possess the gates of the Germans. And he expected from those he rescued, especially the British and French, both gratitude and postwar cooperation in economic affairs and with the covenant of his League of Nations. He was offering to sacrifice America's sons; God helping them, they

could do no other.⁸

The Old Testament contains numerous stories of wrath and vengeance, not infrequently inflicted by God. The Almighty destroys an unrighteous world, sparing only Noah and his ark-borne zoo. In the book of Exodus He smites the Egyptians with ten awful plagues, and He allows Satan to afflict Job with “loathsome sores. . . from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” Most of all, we recall the destruction of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. These were wicked places wherein the Lord, despite Abraham’s vigorous bargaining on their behalf, found insufficient righteousness to spare them, though he did allow Lot and his family to escape. (Lot’s wife failed to make it.) God “rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire,” and when Abraham looked down upon the plain afterward, he “saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.”

To an historian of 20th century U.S. foreign relations, the Biblical account of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah recalls the bombing of cities, in Europe and Asia, during the Second World War, and inevitably some of the controversy that continues to surround both the ancient and modern acts. At Guernica and Shanghai, Warsaw and Rotterdam and London, Hamburg and Dresden, Tokyo, and of course Hiroshima and Nagasaki, civilians were targeted along with soldiers; people were spared only if they were fortunate, not righteous. The bombing of Hamburg in the summer of 1943 was codenamed “Gomorrah,” while the attack on Dresden that began on Valentine’s Day 1945 would sixty years later be linked, by a character in a popular science fiction novel, to the destruction of the Biblical cities by God’s Seraphim, who served as messengers to Lot. The French journalist Robert Guillain watched the fires envelop several neighborhoods of Tokyo during the American bombing of that city in March 1945. “All the Japanese in the gardens near mine were out of doors or peering up out of their holes, uttering cries of admiration... at this grandiose, almost theatrical spectacle” —latter day Abrahams serving as witnesses to the horror. And one could imagine that they were witnessing either Sodom or Tokyo: “The wind, still violent, began to sweep up the burning debris beaten down from the inflamed sky. The air was filled with live sparks, then with burning bits of wood and paper until soon it was raining fire.” The American general Curtis LeMay, who had orchestrated the attack, viewed it with satisfaction, and used it to justify more of its kind. If God could smite the unrighteous, so could he. And so could those who authorized and executed the atomic bombings. A year after he survived the bombing of Hiroshima, Toyofumi Ogura wrote a letter to his wife, who had died. “I have recently come to associate the destruction of Hiroshima with the fiery end of Sodom and Gomorrah,” he wrote. Hiroshima was a city that had grown wicked in its embrace of Japanese imperialism and its enthusiasm for the military, for which it had served as a base and port of debarkation. That was precisely the claim made by President Harry Truman and his Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Deluding themselves into thinking that Hiroshima was a military target

exclusively, the Americans saw the city's destruction as a fulfillment of destiny, the anti-type to the Biblical cautionary tale about evildoers getting their just reward.⁹

Destruction, vengeance, victory—that was the order of things for the United States during World War II. But war in the American vocabulary is never triumphant or glorious; it is rendered instead a necessary evil, undertaken (as Wilson undertook it) in sorrow not anger, and reluctantly, and with clear cause, as in Franklin Roosevelt's case in December 1941. Still, if war is not glorious for Americans, it nevertheless acts to cleanse the body politic of corrupting influences and to substitute for these moral virtue. Certainly the American Revolution had this quality. Those who made the Revolution were, as Robert Middlekauff has written, "heirs of [a] seventeenth-century religious tradition," and thus "imbued with an American moralism that colored all their perceptions of politics." So, too, were the War of 1812 and the Civil War acts, in part, of religious and moral regeneration for Americans who appeared to have fallen away from ideals established for the Republic at its founding. After each of these conflicts the polity felt morally rejuvenated, having shed the humiliating oppressions of the British by 1815 and the opprobrium of slavery by 1865.¹⁰

The Old Testament type followed here comes from the book 1 Maccabees. This would be an obscure part of the Bible—it is part of the Apocrypha—were it not the basis for the holiday of Chanukah, much beloved by Jewish children. According to the story, the Greek king Antiochus captures and despoils Jerusalem, and forces Jews, on pain of death, to practice Gentile customs. A Jew named Mattathias refuses to accept Greek control, and with his five sons, including the heroic Judas (or Judah) Maccabee, stages an armed revolt. The rebels, inspired as they are by God, defeat the enemy armies, tear down the pagan altars, "forcibly circumcise" the Jewish boys left uncircumcised by their previously cowed parents, and "hunt down the arrogant" to put them to the sword. Above all, the Maccabees restore the holy shrine of the temple in Jerusalem, purging it of its pagan corruption. This was a war for Jewish manhood. It was also one of purification from the pollution of alien influence.

The modern American anti-type of the Maccabean revolt is the end of World War Two and the political and moral restoration that followed. U.S. policymakers felt, of course, that they were engaged in a just war to free people from the oppression of Nazism and Japanese militarism. Their goal was liberation, as the Maccabees' had been. More than that, the Americans, along with their allies, decided that it would be necessary to purge German and Japanese societies of the unclean elements that had led them to disaster. The Nuremberg trials served this purpose in Germany, assertively extending the definition of war-maker or evil-doer well down the chain of command, but stopping short of punishing those whose crime was mere complicity. There were Nazis to be disciplined, but there were also good Germans to be saved—on which more in a moment. As for Japan, a distressing number of accounts have regarded the

bombs used to force surrender, including the atomic bombs, as sources of sacred fire that would cleanse the enemy of sin. There were no Nazis in Japan; the Americans held all Japanese culpable for the state's war crimes. Of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, President Truman said: "We thank God that it has come to us, instead of to our enemies, and we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and for his purposes." A dreadful country western song, "When the Atomic Bomb Fell," invoked Biblical imagery and a distorted sense of geography:

Smoke and fire it did flow,
Through the land of Tokyo.
There was brimstone and dust everywhere.
When it all cleared away,
There the cruel Jap did lay,
The answer to our fighting boy's prayer.

The original plan for the American occupation of Japan called for a "purge"—the word, which suggests the elimination of unclean influences, was used repeatedly—of almost 2.5 million Japanese military men, politicians, teachers, police officers, and heads of corporations. The idea of cleansing Japanese society persisted, as indicated in a casual comment made by General Courtney Whitney, who greeted Japanese officials in his Tokyo garden in 1946: "Gentlemen! We were just enjoying some of your atomic sunshine."¹¹

After cleansing war, indeed as an integral part of its process, comes forgiveness. One of the greatest of Old Testament stories is that of Joseph and his brothers, which occupies some thirteen chapters of the book of Genesis. Jealous of his cleverness and his status with their father, Jacob, Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery in Egypt. There, and despite the stigma of his Jewish faith, Joseph wins the favor of the Pharaoh as an interpreter of dreams and adviser on public policy. A terrible drought in Canaan forces Joseph's brothers to come to Egypt to buy food, the distribution of which has fallen to Joseph himself. The brothers do not recognize Joseph, but he knows them, and he torments them for a time even while feeling remorseful and emotional about seeing them again. In the end all is revealed. Joseph weeps and forgives his siblings, he is reunited with the aged Jacob, and the Pharaoh provides lavishly for the whole family: "for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours," he says.

The Americans never wept over vanquished Germany or Japan, but like Joseph they managed to find some magnanimity in victory. It seems to me that one of the lessons of the Joseph story is that the wronged or aggressed against—Joseph, the United States—cannot truly find peace in victory until he forgives whoever wronged him; magnanimity is in part about psychological self-restoration. That there was self-interest, then, in the Americans' decision to forgive the German and Japanese states, does not undercut my point. The Americans effected a rapprochement with Germany and Japan with astonishing speed. German scientists were spirited out of Central Europe to the United States

to work on rocketry and nuclear physics. De-nazification proceeded with the assumption that bad Germans could be found and punished while the good ones were helped to recover from the war. In a speech given at Stuttgart in September 1946, U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes announced that Germany, as “a part of Europe,” must be allowed to increase its production and nurture democracy, and reassured his audience that the “American people want to help the German people to win their way back to an honorable place among the free and peace-loving nations of the world.” And, as Petra Goedde has shown, U.S. forces occupying western Germany after the war cultivated German women and children, who were more numerous than German men and who could be made to symbolize the innocence that remained at the core of German society despite the war. Such efforts culminated in the Berlin Airlift of 1948 and 1949, in which American pilots organized parachute drops of candy aimed particularly at children. Candy bars likely worked as well as Egyptian grain to instill gratitude in their recipients and indicate that their donors were ready to let bygones be bygones.¹²

An analogous thing happened in Japan. There, in the interest of restoring Japanese economic stability and turning Japan into an anchor of western security on the Pacific Rim, the Americans reversed course in 1947 and, among other things, dramatically scaled back the purge of Japan’s wartime leaders. Occupation officials attempted to restore Japan’s export trade, essential to the nation’s prosperity, especially with the complementary economies of Southeast Asia. The Japanese, so recently despised by the Americans, represented during the war as cockroaches, rats, and apes, suddenly became in American discourse sweetly imitative, eager to please, and industrious, if occasionally mischievous. American military families arrived in Japan and became “unofficial ambassadors” of the American way of life, sharing with Japanese women in particular secrets of homemaking and child rearing and accepting the wisdom of Japanese women in the art of flower arranging, for example. American soldiers married Japanese women and brought them home, thus achieving the most intimate kind of reconciliation. While negative images of the Japanese persisted in American media, they were increasingly overmatched by cultural production that depicted the Japanese as loyal potential allies in the Cold War, not just forgiven but enlisted on the side of the angels in the struggle with communism.¹³

It was the Cold War that catalyzed the United States’ felt need to forgive recent enemies in order to resist new ones. The Cold War seems an anti—type for any number of Old Testament types, and it was frequently described using Biblical vocabulary and metaphor. I would like to go back as far as possible, or almost, to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve. Adam, the father of us all (if you believe this sort of thing), was created first. God thought he needed a companion, so the Almighty kindly put Adam to sleep before extracting one of his ribs, out of which he formed Eve. They were happy and innocent. But the serpent, described in the Bible as “crafty,” came to Eve and persuaded her to sample fruit from the

Tree of Knowledge, which God had forbidden his creatures to do. She shared the fruit with Adam, whereupon both of them knew good and evil, and were embarrassed at their nakedness. God found out, of course. He condemned the serpent to crawl forever on his belly, and He cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, made them mortal, and forced them to work for a living (“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”).

There is much to suggest that British and American policymakers construed the Cold War as a struggle between good and evil, and thus as fundamentally religious. Winston Churchill and Harry Truman divided the world in half, and spoke of the sinful other side in apocalyptic language that left no doubt about the seriousness of the split. The Cold War was called, more than once, a “crusade.” Communism, warned Billy Graham, the presidents’ favorite preacher, “is a religion that is inspired, directed, and motivated by the Devil himself who has declared war against Almighty God.” Dulles decried the Soviets’ “materialistic creed which denies the existence of moral law,” and likened the USSR to a “spider,” spinning “a beautiful web which shimmers in the sunlight, and he invites the fly into his parlor.” In his first inaugural address, Dwight Eisenhower told Americans that “forces for good and evil are massed and armed and opposed as rarely before in our history.... Freedom is pitted against slavery, lightness against the dark.”¹⁴

There is another, rather more subtle, way in which to understand the impact of Original Sin on U.S. Cold War policy. Let me get at it in a roundabout way. Many have argued that realism was the watchword of American policy during the early Cold War. It was George Kennan, the consummate realist, who imprinted U.S. policy with the doctrine of containment, which was predicated on a hardheaded view of the Soviets as opportunists in world affairs, influenced as much by their history under the tsars as by their communist ideology. Kennan’s theological counterpart was the Protestant thinker Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr did his share to polarize the Cold War. He came deeply to mistrust the Soviet Union, and even accused Eisenhower of foolishly embracing “a new pacifism and a new isolationism” when the president seemed to take seriously Soviet peace initiatives. Yet, on balance, Niebuhr’s understanding was more nuanced than that. The recent war had taught him that evil existed in the world; one could hardly view the carnage of battle, the killing at Auschwitz and Belsen, and the victims of conventional and atomic bombings and believe otherwise. There was, according to biographer Richard Fox, for Niebuhr “no simple dichotomy between an evil Soviet empire and a virtuous American democracy.” It was a hard world, with sinners on all sides. That was why realism made sense in foreign relations: given the impossibility of eliminating evil, it was possible only to try to soften its worst manifestations. So, you remove morality from the foreign policy equation and balance the equation pragmatically, checking power with power. Americans schooled on McGuffey’s reader had learned the first letter of their alphabet this way: “In Adam’s fall/We sinned all.” If all were sinners, a logical religious basis

for foreign policy was realism. Of true guilt or innocence, reflected Niebuhr and those like him, only God knew.¹⁵

That Americans, insofar as they followed Kennan and Niebuhr, established a realist foreign policy strategy is not to say that they abandoned morality altogether. Few policymakers accepted the judgment that both sides in the Cold War had sinned equally. If the unfortunate side of moralistic thinking was Americans' sanctimony about their own transgressions, a happier story was the sense of responsibility some felt for others, at least on their side of the Iron Curtain. The Old Testament story of Cain and Abel concerns two brothers, sons of Adam and Eve. Jealous that Abel is the favorite of God, Cain kills him. When God asks Cain where Abel has gone, Cain replies: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" Well, yes, if God's punishment of Cain—he is "cursed from the ground" and "will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth"—is any indication.

There was a generous side to U.S. foreign policy; recall that a qualified forgiveness for Germany and Japan emerged after the cleansing war. The Americans also showed a willingness to keep their postwar allies safe and fed. The Marshall Plan offered U.S. economic aid to cooperative European nations and, technically, the Soviet Union, though in fact that was never seriously considered. In his speech announcing the plan, Secretary of State George Marshall noted "the vast responsibility which history has clearly placed upon our country" to help others. The next year, the Truman administration conceived the idea of technical assistance for developing nations, part of an old fashioned missionary enterprise to help needy people by teaching them to help themselves and offering them a bit of money with which to get started. The program was called Point Four—an idea "from God," according to the wife of its author—and it passed Congress in 1950. The Marshall Plan and Point Four were not examples of altruism. The authors of both recognized that the United States would benefit if other nations' economies improved, and that economic improvement was a precondition for political stability. Neither are brothers' keepers altruists altogether: those who look after their siblings, actual or metaphorical, get help with the farming (as in Cain's case), another pair of hands in times of conflict, and the emotional satisfaction that comes with gratitude. Cain's killing of Abel was not just mean; it was stupid.¹⁶

I cannot claim that all of 20th century U.S. foreign policy came exclusively from Old Testament types. Clearly there were other reasons why the nation's bombing strategy, its occupation policy, and the Marshall Plan developed as they did. I am also aware that other nations in which the Bible does not routinely appear in the desk drawers of hotel rooms feel the need of sacrifice, vengeance, forgiveness granted and received, and responsible international behavior. In other words, religious typology is not a parsimonious argument. Yet we could as well say that strategic and economic explanations of policy also lack parsimony since all nations seek to ensure their own security and maximize their prosperity. And

Old Testament narratives seem to me likely to have influenced U.S. policy in particular ways. Note, for instance, that while Old Testament figures move constantly across borders and through frontiers and seem to have no fear of exploring, even conquering, empty space or that owned by other people, Hindu cosmology renders space a forbidding place, distant and dangerous and not at all a site for adventure, at least good adventure. One could no doubt draw contrasts between Judeo—Christian versions of vengeance and their Islamic or Buddhist counterparts, though newfound modesty prevents me from attempting to do so here.¹⁷

The mention of frontiers brings me back to the Puritans, and to the image of the City on a Hill, to which I promised to return. Some historians have argued that the City was an imperial image, the first expression of a hubris that grew steadily for centuries until deflated by the Vietnam War, and then only temporarily. While no one would gainsay John Winthrop's confidence, I do not think this is the right way to interpret the image. In fact, I would contrast it with the mythical inscription allegedly made by the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, on their arrival in North America in 1620. It read:

The Eastern nations sink, their glory ends.
And empire rises where the sun descends.

John Adams, the second president of the United States and a son of New England, knew these words. He recalled: "There was nothing more ancient in my memory than the observation that arts, sciences, and empire had traveled westward." Now that is an imperial vision, no less audacious for the ironic absorption of Plymouth by the Puritans at the end of the 17th century. It may well have been that the Puritan vision of a city on a hill, a place that taught by example of righteousness rather than by imperial expansion, never had a chance, for its founders and their heirs were ambitious people with disease and technology on their side and many opportunities to grow rich. That does not diminish the fact that there were two Christian visions of America provided at the beginning of the Encounter. It is for Americans nearly four centuries later to choose which one is more likely to make them prosperous, secure, and happy.¹⁸

Endnotes

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3. Robert Dean, "Tradition, Cause and Effect, and the Cultural History of International

- Relations,” *ibid.*, 615–22; Robert Buzzanco, “Where’s the Beef? Culture without Power in the Study of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *ibid.*, 623–32; Patricia R. Hill, “Religion as a Category of Diplomatic Analysis,” *ibid.*, 633–40.
4. Preston, “Bridging the Gap,” 787–89; Rotter, “Christians, Muslims, and Hindus,” 595; J. Bryan Hehir, “Religion, Realism, and Just Intervention,” in J. Bryan Hehir, et. al., *Liberty and Power: A Dialogue on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy in an Unjust World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 13; Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus*, 96 (Winter 1967), 1–21.
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