The Demon in America's Sacred Narrative

America's religion contained by the eternally recurring apocalypse, and war is its ultimate sacrament

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America is a Religion. On July 4, 1776, the United States was baptized with these words "We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." By this oath, a nation was born and launched on its mythic passage of becoming. The founders—our "creators"—had imagined this was a nation, however. They had also drafted the story arc of a divinely ferrule journey, centering the United States as the culmination of this history.

This is America's sacred narrative. Since its founding, the United States has been fixated on this narrative. It has been the lens by which it has interpreted, parsed the wicked, and delivered a golden redemption to souls. While Russia, Britain, Germany, and Roma enabled the world to search of new colonies and conquests, America has steadfastly hewed to its unique sense of divine mission as "God's New Israel." Whereas the mythical narratives of other great powers were crudely self-centered, American scripture was universal—very. "Do Good to Steal."

Thus, among all the revelations unleashed by Modernity, the United States declares itself—in its own scripture—to be the traditional and pathfinder of Modernity's ever-unfolding revelations. Its mission is to lead the world into the baptismal, and redeemed, of all peoples designed and determined. The "sun, bent home of earth"

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This is the catechism of the American Civil Religion. In its twelfth verse, all this may seem the a ritual of self-serving vanity, yet the Civil Religion is the national article of faith for Americans. It is this Myth, which takes rhetorical form through what Americans take to be history. Yet this vision of history is not understood as a body of sacred historical texts, in many ways comparable to Islam's Hadith.

In place of the Qur'an, America has its Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Instead of the Sira and Sunnah, Americans read our Zeitgeist with America has the Federalist Papers, presidential bumbles beginning with Washington's farewell address, and traditions, stories, and sayings of the Founders—all the way to modern-day interpretations offered by successive Supreme Americans. Instead of Fiqh and its Shariah-based system, America has its own schools of jurisprudence to interpret and translate—in a sort of Talmudic Law—its scripture into the proper "ways to live a civil life."

We can only truly apprehend American Exceptionalism, and the Civil Religion that underpins it, if we understand the sacred nature of its Myth. For instance, one may assume that Americans look Abraham and Moses, or testimony? to the faith—but it was not so long ago that students in all American public schools read Scripture. The Pledge of Allegiance ("one nation") daily. Not only is America's national anthem a pure hymn, but its sacred words—Freedom and Democracy—are also chanted ritually by its people just as its ally Allah is by Muslims.

American Civil Religion is in many ways comparable to Islam. Its Holy Scriptures are intended to be a global community "by fire and sword", the United States has sought a no less relentless universalism.

Our sacred literature defines who we are, where we come from, and where we are going—and as this is the Islamic Ummah (Ummah), this form the etched of our national self. Moreover, like Islam, America's mission is also "rightly" universal. Unlike the Christian Commonwealth, America's mission is not redemption, but as fate of Islam, to be ruling, deliberately ordained for a global community "by fire and sword" the United States has sought a no less relentless universalism to its apogee century.

Our sacred literature defines American identity as a grand narrative are endowed by God to be ordained through a recurring series of ever-ascending epiphanic stories. A historical cycle of eratic struggles shaping America's mythic journey of becoming and continuing in an apocalyptic—"evolution" or "unveiling" (Apocalypse) unfolding. Within these apocalyptic cycles, the United States has been ordained by God to be the nation that will bring about the realization of eternal democracy. As with Islam, the American religion has eschatology as an ancient sin.

As such, the American story arc can only be fulfilled through battle. Every "peak life" moment in the American sacred narrative has been related through martial sacrifice and the transcendental power of victory in battle. From its founding moment to today, war has been the avid of America, and Moral-Ethic antagonist.

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Not only is each major American war regarded as a benchmark of progress and achievement, but the Civil Religion's sacred narrative has been encouraged to move the yardstick forward. While not every struggle succeeded, each drew both a backward the next big push. In all-consuming, so all powerful is the American sacred narrative that, in over 250 years, there has been no significant historical break in the unyielding American drive for ritual.

Sacred narrative rules forecasts. It rules what they think, say, and do. The question is, who controls this sacred narrative? Of course, the American Gospel is the creation of the American people. However much we believe—if we believe—that our Civil Religion is a divinely ordained, "sacred" and even reading, And yet as with the Constitution itself, we discovered, have the power to amend. Yet, given that the imperative for congress is carved into the Ur-tablets of American Civil Religion, sectarian innovation includes.

American Civil Religion is metonymically linked with the Reformation, Calvinist Christianity, and the Bloody Instance of Protestantism, with Islam's sacred narrative shaped and christened through the country's first and second Great Awakenings. Moreover, the Civil Religion's sacred reading became a vehicle for the transfiguration of our Protestant into Zion/Israel/the chosen people—indeed, even our contemporary "Liberal-Left Media" cannot escape its original Calvinist Christian roots.

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Time and again in American history, autochthonous native sects have tried to "revise" the sacred narrative, perhaps even transfigurating. What is more—gives the Bhadi reminiscent that Western America's national scripture—this revisionist profit must first pass through the valley of his beatitudinal and civil war.

The apocalypse that brings the promised Millennium to Mankind must necessarily pass through the valley of the American Civil Religion's sacred myth. If fables into everyone, we must be purified and made worthy aspects to act as the Chosen People. Purification and redemption are the essential aspects of expiation. Before a New Testament that is stainless must repent a corrupted Old Testament. Rebirth this requires passage through the cleansing fires of war. Indeed, Americans with the purifying, consecrating potential of the holy—and terrors—inherent in war is the demon that lurks hidden in America's sacred narrative.

This demonic possession with war has been hard-wired into America's very birth as a nation. The American Revolution compelled the new nation to carve out its own brothers and cut off its ancient kinship with Britain. The very Revolutionary War, which gave birth to the American Civil Religion, was also the transfiguration of our Protestant into Zion/Israel/the chosen people—indeed, even our contemporary "Liberal-Left Media" cannot escape its original Calvinist Christian roots.

In American Gospel, rebirth requires passage through the cleansing fires of war. Obsession with the purifying, consecrating potential of the trials—and terrors—inherent in war is the demon that lurks hidden in America's sacred narrative.

The Declaration also foreshadowed America's second divinely possession. The American Civil Religion's sacred Bible is preserved in sacrosanct ark that sacred increasingly out of control after 1865. Two wildly different, and yet rarely similar exceptionalisms, were thrown into a Manichaean Civil Religion that took on the paramount intensity of Europe's nefarious wars (1945-1989).

America's third possession with war emerged from nothing but the Cold War's global apocalypse. Here the United States had to confront not rival sects within the American Civil Religion, but rather the Ignorant Crusaders itself in a series of dark manifestations—Fascism, Nazism, Communism—which could only be defeated by the Light.

Since 1945, the United States has often confronted the new sectarian battles it faced with the Civil War, and the Cold War's global apocalypse—indeed, global. The core of America's sacred narrative—its self-understanding as divinely ordained, ordinated, and apocalyptic—is, in its intense religiosity, troubling. Yet Americans are wholly oblivious to such religious and its disturbing. Nevertheless, this sacred narrative has driven Americans in every generation, ranging from the Civil War to the Cold War's global arcs—an eternal recurrence that, even in our global culture.

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This brings us to our current predicament. Since 2004, a quickly growing new sect—"The Church of Woke"—has sought to transform and Idolize yours the American civil religion, to reign as the successor faith. Ironically, the fervor of the evangelical Christians the post-reformation of the First Great Awakening whose mentalities was confined to Nova Zeitch Sectarian/New Order of the Aging.

How did the American civil religion take shape? What is the lineage of the critical moments in which we find ourselves today?

The Four Pillars of American Righteousness

American Civil Religion is driven by four underlying beliefs and attitudes. It is a combination of Calvinist Christian Zion, Israel, and Chosen People. It is believed that the United States is a remnant from God, or Chosen Nation reminds us. America is charged by God to Christianize and this carries with it its authority, the American people serving as divine agents. With America's founding, this divine vision—above and outside, yet rising also within—becomes immanent in America's founders and its "sacred."

The second driver of American theology is its messianic idealism, which is rooted in an eschatological view of existence. America, it is believed, has been chosen—and the "exceptionalism" is based on the directionality and success of this mission—to lead the world into a Millennial Age of Peace. This Millennial Age is the triumphant and the nation must take it upon itself to overthrow and punish the wicked, to seek out and cast down Evil itself. This society is deep anointed ride in a "bad judgment" nation. Americans especially prone to adopting a Black-or-white mentality. America represents the Light, and the Light must triumph over the Darkness. This is the third pillar and foundation of American Righteousness.

Finally, as the dizzing cries of a lab, America represents God's chosen nation—the people having the holy charge of delivering on the promotional promise of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. America will thus shepherd Humanity through a mythic passage to the Promised Millennial Kingdom. These four moral frames are inevitable from our very being as Americans and form the core of our worldview even today.

Before examining these pillars of American Civil Religion in more detail, a word of caution. All nations have foundational myths and/or whether hereby or more lightly—they are all edged by them. America is not unique among nations. Yet it is unique in the way it has been able to hide its myths from its own people. This sacred narrative cannot fully capture the richness and diversity of an original ethos once rooted in ancient traditions. American culture remains a fount of interesting folkways and worldviews that will thrive in historical antecedents. Some have called these "Minute Men."

Yet time and again, overzealous elites, driven by extreme and utopian agendas, have successfully appropriated the Civil Religion and bend it to their faith and ostensible worldview, however at odds with contemporary narrative traditions in the American way of life.

Nevertheless, every generation from the founding forward has been ruled by an enforcing civil religion. If America's sacred narrative has been transfigurated by Modernity's ever-unfolding revelations, the American civil religion seem to Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan to George Washington—it nonetheless has captured the American identity, body and soul. How did a resurgent of colonial folkways, habits, and traditions have homogenize into the uncompromising and absolutist American Civil Religion we know today?

A minority of zealots, driven by extreme and utopian agendas, have successfully appropriated the American Civil Religion and bent it to their faith and universalist worldview. They are the masked coachmen of revolution.

The passion of America's birth—the Revolutionary upheaval felt by every citizen—offered a fantastical minority the perfect setting for capturing the American imagination with the promise of a "project" overturning a perfect condition for effecting a national metamorphosis.

Thus, out of the chaotic possibility of this milieu, a new religion and its sacred narrative were able to crystallize, while also creating the conditions for proselytizing a more passive and politically agnostic colonial society. A minority of zealots—identified in generations to come, like "The Sons of Liberty"—became the masked coachmen of the Revolution.

From late colonial America to our time, true believers have "driven" every generation of Americans. Yet, the Revolutionary Generation was the first. Believers are the complete dogmatics the mayhem of change, injecting their righteousness into the spiritual anarchy of the age.

1. Missionary America

The American Mission flows from a divine spring. Over time, the Puritan community that coalesced with Civil Law constituted the first missionary prime directive. America then became "a city upon a hill, where the eyes of all people" not only in America but around the world—gazed on its unique ideal. The resulting Missionary state has only one inner yearning: to bathe all peoples in the baptismal water of democracy, freedom, and rights.

This American Mission has been awakened and nourished four times. These—so called First and Second "Great Awakenings" were American national events galvanized by the spiritual force of Christian revivalism. Preceding the Revolutionary War, the Great Awakenings contributed to the "Sons of Liberty" with an organizing force, which influenced the shaping of America's Civil Religion.

The Second Great Awakening birthed new American sects—the Christian Science, the Shakers, and the Church of Latter-day Saints—and led both pre- and post-antebellum Protestant sectarian congregations, with the full expectation of an apocalyptic struggle ahead. The period of Reconstruction that followed was aimed at fulfilling a substantial narrative that would not simply redeem the enslaved, but also wash away the sins of America itself in a national baptismal bath.

Christian national apologists were then succeeded by a different kind of third Great Awakening, which was, in fact, a Second Great Awakening. The Civil Religion's perception of the Gilded Age and the prosperity of industrial life, a movement called the Social Gospel rose up to help Americans discover a new promise of salvation in the 1890s. This movement was a response to industrial capitalism's cause to be an endeavor, so that old Christianity might give birth to a new, Christian Socialism. Christian Socialism is the forerunner of Wholly secular Progressivism (which accepted Christian blessings on an enterprise that had no interest in God/Jesus/Jesus).

Despite ostensibly rejecting old Christian sectarianism, however, the secular directive of this new incarnation of Civil Religion would still have to the original, sacred Calvinist Zion. Only, all future American apocalypses could henceforth command and embrace as with a secular vision.

American Christian Zion retains redemption with conversion. Presentations about making the world "safe" on claimed by Woodrow Wilson in his Declaration of War speech, or Franklin Pierce's Reconstruction in Perspect (1870) in our time—are indicating, in fact, the rhetorical invocation of a "safe and secure" Christian Zion. Secular Progressivism's Millennial Age is concerning and remains and prime the sacred narrative's Zion.

This story arc began with the Second Great Awakening when Christian missionaries "proselyted out of the United States to the four corners of the earth." Yet, the Second Great Awakening was not the first. The Great Awakening had unfolded over nineteen hundred and catechisms in a secular voice, such as "conversion through instruction," education in democracy", and "American Civilization".

In fact, the Cult Ceremonies setting the cultural compass of American rule over the Philippines, made education in democracy and American Civilization the national holiday project of the day. Hundreds of American teachers (the "Thomasites") were sent to the Philippines to "teach democracy" and "Zion. Thus, school buildings become the Iconic Image of democracy building on an official "road map to Rome" to inspire their "nation-building" missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hence, the neon-call of the American Mission evolved from self-redemption to social redemption. Initially driven by Christian revivalism, America's missionary zeal soon proved to accommodate a secular, yet still sacred (reminiscent Dilbert) to Points made explicit use of this word with the world at back. The authority of this implicit covenant is still in full force today. No other world religions has proselytized its doctrines more aggressively.

II. Messianic America

American Revolutionary Christianity's dominant theme of theological bigotry stemped in Calvin's vision of predestination. It reflects a collective embrace of Christian Zion, Israel, and Chosen People. Thus, the Puritans, who declared that the American People were guided by "benign providence", and that their Mission had messianic dimensions.

It always considers the settlement of America with messianic overtones, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the dissemination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.

Hence, America is not only "messianic" in character—as in, "preserved by passion and stuff"—but manifests an implicitly biblical vision proclaiming its birth in the providential nature of its passage. A "chosen nation" divinely elected to act in the name of Providence as the world's Redeemer, the grand "Zion" of the Second Great Awakening. Indeed, Christian Zion's birth in America as the arm of God "ensured" the Revolutionary War's breaking the rupture of this messianic zeitgeist. Truth Without Consequences reminds in 1860:

> I am the chamber—I chant aloud over the pageant,
>
> I hand the new empire, greater than any before — to is a vision it comes to me.
>
> I chant America, the Mission — I chant a greater supremacy, ...
>
> And you, Liberatial of the world!

Or in Herman Melville's song in 1850:

> We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of settled things, to break a way path in the New World that is to be—the Pacific—the Millennial Ocean, whose billows roll round the globe, and whose tides are the ever-flowing waves of human hearts and destinies. Wherefore, indeed, the political Messiah had come. And he has come in us.

By the mid-19th century, America's ethos of Mission was fully infused with Christian Zion's Millennial Kingdom. Indeed, the Second Great Awakening's "New Ireland Eschatology" began mapped to crown an authentic American Christian voice. Moreover, remained this may seem from the realities of mid-19th century American politics of life.

III. Manichaean America

The idea of an eternal struggle of good against evil goes back to ancient Persia and the gnostic, dualistic religion of the prophet Mani (ca. 216). Mani's enduring theme: Along does control Prem Mani Christianity's and Islam's Satanism. I.e., Albigensian, Bogomils, and Paulicians). American Manichaeans have been a fixture in American culture since the Puritan Revolution. Mani's dualistic vision the center power of the Good and makes it Mani's interest in its left conceptions, the Aliens, the Stranger, and the demonstrated Other can then all at once—through the performance of national liturgy—be transfigurated into pure Evil.

In this reflection act, achieving this provides ultimate, official vilification. Religious faith creates a dispensation whereby the Other can be transformed into world corrupting evil. It is with this sacred injunction that America's gatekeepers of public opinion regularly accuse and ostracize dissenting American voices.

The original icon of American evil emerged with the American Revolution with the Revolutionary Generation's Manichaean Mission to overthrow the evil of the Revolutionary Late and Reform Intellect as the alleged agents of the primal Tyrant, George III. The Sun Freedom allure of turning Revolut into Ohio Anarchy in equal to American Second Apocalypse. During the Civil War, "Brother against Brother" became the war's everyday metric. Compared to the Revolutionary War, American apocalypse had turned to Civil War, expiation and atonement—repeating the body of the Democracy Church—because the Union's most urgent task.

Moving into the 20th century, a receding reconciliation was needed through the Great Depression and World War II. Manichaeans were, in fact, the Nazis—here—into the new Reich guaranteed by American progress. This is wholly in keeping with American's original formula for dealing with the primitive Other, whereby the Very—unforgiven perpetrators of just-original sin—were cast out and exiled from the City on a hill for eternity. Surrendered to the wilderness, the Other—the Nazis—were left to fend for themselves. Yet, the Nazis were also apocalypse of America's age of a disabled, pathology in the American sacred narrative: extraction or redemption.

America's sacred 20th century mission was to transform the world into a dwelling all-red and one-nation "nation" subrelated to the new personification of evil. Hence, America's primordial mission was, in conclusion, but Hitler, not Soviets, but Stalin, not Russian, but Putin. Evil personified as Antichrist—has been the bulk of America's Manichaeans in recent decades for close to a century.

IV. Millenarian America

Although this is not the commonest sense of the word today, "Apocalypse", as discussed earlier, means revelation—lifting the veil on God's Word and Plan. "Apocalypse" then, does not apply the end of the world but rather its culmination. "Of history is finally apocalyptic."

A particular apocalyptic outcome—premillennialism—is embedded in the American Civil Religion's DNA. Indeed, the Second Great Awakening's Americans have accepted Christian of "Underlying this unique sectarian of Millenarian" thereby ensuring America as the direction of "manifest destiny".

The sudden fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 ushered in a false dawn. America's ruling class was simply not prepared for such a serendipitous apocalypse.

Today, an "Hello, Pudding" American may consider: let alone accept, a lesser exclusion. For example, given the diagnosis of the American Civil Religion, a "Hello, Pudding" American may consider: let alone accept, a lesser exclusion. Becomes anathema. A vision of the "national interest" that is commanded from our sacred ethos, apostasy to apostasy. Let us consult our American scriptures. First, Revelation 14:8:

> And the angel flew in its wide sides the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
>
> Compare it to this verse from the Book of the Civil War—the Battle Hymn of the Republic:
>
> ...
>
> ...

> He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword.

Thus, in the wake of its second apocalyptic war, in 1865, with the polity purified and evil cast down, a new America could be born.

Each one of America's national crises, Americans believed, could imminently usher in a millennial age—a "*Novus Ordo Seclorum*", as prefigured and prophesied in Washington's words. The apocalypse and its revelatory power thus always point to the predestined end of our story arc—a heavenly mimesis in which the divine world is reflected on earth.

Hence, in 1945, some eighty years after the Civil War, the third American apocalypse was regarded as yet another providential opportunity to fulfill America's ordained prophecy. Even as the promise of a final judgment was left frozen by the Cold War and deferred for posterity to claim, the U.S. establishment began to flog a Millennium-in-Waiting: that there was still an impending "Free World" to be realized someday in a holy liberal international order.

The sudden fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 ushered in a false dawn. America's ruling class was simply not prepared for such a serendipitous apocalypse. They spasmodically declared a "New World Order" and celebrated the "end of history"—as though all mankind would simply bow down to America's great seal.

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Of course, the promised Millennium remains elusive still. But that has not stopped the U.S. foreign policy establishment from attaching existential stakes to every new war it wages, lashing onto them the divinely-sanctioned dreams embedded in America's mythic quest—always tantalizing—for spiritual fulfillment. Remarkably, the depth and breadth of America's civil religion rival any world faith—not only in the enormity of its theology, the power of its dogma, and the grip of its sacred literature, but also in its manically beneficent yet still brutal impact on humanity and history.

To better understand the American sacred narrative, it can be helpful to evaluate America's national story arc as one would do a TV series. As such, the American hit series has already been renewed for a number of seasons—even if ours is a sacred story organized around *apocalypses*.

As a universalist religion rooted from birth in *apocalypse*, America's 250-year lifecycle is wholly captured by its sacred apocalyptic arc, punctuated by three astonishing "revelations": its birth with the American Revolution, a baptism or purification in the Civil War, and a world redemption during the two World Wars—nearly fulfilled, yet forestalled.

So what might be in store in the new, possibly final, season? Where, in fact, are we heading in this operatic ordeal?

The Fourth American Apocalypse?

Americans still deny that their national ideology amounts to a civil religion. Arguably, Robert Bellah's big insight on the topic has had standing since 1973, cited intermittently in American mainstream media. Yet such acknowledgment is occluded and rare, and popular awareness is almost non-existent. Americans resolutely stonewall their civil religion for three reasons.

First, the United States was born in the fires of Enlightenment thought, where religion—especially the Roman Church—equaled superstition. Edward Gibbon—whose own epiphany came in the Roman Forum in 1775—pinned Rome's "Decline and Fall" squarely on the forces of "barbarism and religion".

Yet the Founders inhabited a milieu shaped by a Protestant zeitgeist, which ruled their lives. If Americans were to be champions of Reason—where "Science is real" and (in almost any dispute) "settled"—that Temple of Reason had to have its roots entangled in Calvinist Predestination. Of course, any "rightly-guided" American knows that his country is synonymous with *Progress*—America can never be *Medieval*. Hence, within an attitude entirely lacking in self-awareness, any regnant state religion—with its harsh religious law—would appear backward, primitive, or, as it is often said of Islamic fundamentalism, tantamount to "returning to the 14th century".

Furthermore, Americans—almost without exception—cannot conceive of religion in the absence of a formal, confessional "Church". Thus, even at the height of the Cold War, the evils of Communism were not identified as the sins of an alternate church. The Marxist-Leninist canon could not possibly be *theology*: instead, it had to be "ideology". After all, how could "godless commies" be religious? Add to this the fact that many on the Americans Left actually sympathized with the "idea" of Socialism and found it appealing for the United States if it was "done right". In other words, they believed that a healthy dose of American *democracy* and *freedom* would surely cleanse Marxism of its ills and distill its otherwise noble ideals. Socialism failed in Russia because it was not anointed by America's "good news"—an American version would have thrived.

Finally, an American confession of faith—the open enunciation that a national civil religion indeed does exist—would appear to void the Constitution's establishment clause. However, can the original American civil religion—as conceived by the Founders—credibly be called an established church? They would almost certainly say, *No*. After all, a civil religion is not a church—at least not in the way the Enlightenment understood religion. In the 18th century, "religion" meant an established state church. Canon law and common law were thus both within the prerogatives of the state, which the Founders understood as Parliament and the King. Owning the Church of England meant that the British state could—and did—tell people how to live and think, as evidenced by the Act of Uniformity, the Test Acts, and the penal laws.

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These are some of the reasons that some might resist framing the latest faith movement emerging from today's Fourth Great Awakening as another familiar, even classic, sectarian challenge to the civil religion. In fact, the "Awokening" is comparable to those aggressively-opposed evangelical sects embodied in the North and the South that thrust America into (internal) combat in the 1850s after the Second Great Awakening. And its provenance can even be traced back directly to the secular-socialist themes of the Progressive Era that were reflected in the Social Gospel.

Yet the growth of this virulent, new American sect goes much further, signaling the emergence of a putative new American church *for real*. Here, "Church of Woke" refers to a prospective legal edifice, which seeks to fundamentally revise and transform America's constitutional compact through semi-sacred, state-sponsored doctrines including "Critical Race Theory" (CRT), "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (DEI), "Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance" (ESG).

In the 20th century, state protection and privilege created a political proscenium over a coalition of three separate, secular-spiritual identity groups: Feminists, People of Color, and LGBT. Each of these sects has within them a gaggle of restive factions and denominations. This alliance of sects has merged into an "intersectional" political coalition that could be sustained so long as its shared agenda remains within reach.

Under the new Wokeist religion, the boundaries between the global and the local, the domestic and the foreign wither away, to be replaced by a proselytizing, totalizing, and imperial Americanism.

If their joint agenda were to be constitutionally implemented however, the Church of Woke would be able to transform American life: not only would it establish an apparatus of control over how ordinary citizens think and behave, but it would also ordain a new ruling elite as the new clerics of the Church.

The Church of Woke's efforts to consecrate the American ruling class—through an anointed corps of true believers—are less about breeding a new aristocracy but rather to preserve elite control over wealth and power in American life. In this respect, the Church does not simply seek to reinterpret (*ijtihād*) the doctrine, law, and scripture of the original civil religion like other sects in American history. It also represents a pathway for the ruling class to consolidate power and maintain the status quo. "Woke radicalism" is, perhaps, not so *radical* after all—but its extremism portends sectarian autos-da-fé and existential wars of civil religion like those characterizing late antebellum America.

In another sense, the rising and flexing Church of Woke more formally resembles—in its successful subversion of the state and its ruling elites—insurgent Christianity at the end of the 3rd century CE. What might alarm is that this faith movement has managed to capture the "Commanding Heights" of American Life in a little more than a decade. Yet this too points to a symbiotic relationship between church and state that is as timeless as ever. Just as the early Church captured the Roman aristocracy, so did those noble Romans seize the Church to reclaim their hold on power. The civil religion is as much a venal, as it is a sacred, tool of power.

The Church of Woke has, for the moment, captured the U.S. Federal State and the dominant institutions in American Life. Many historical antecedents of the Woke faith movement today, namely the pre-Civil War evangelical American Calvinist sects such as Slave Power and Abolitionists, also tried to appropriate the foundational American civil religion and transfigure it into an established state church in *their* image. Neither of these fanatical sects was ultimately successful. Yet in equating its movement theology and dogma to what should be (U.S.) law, Woke doctrine is indeed unleashing an American *Sharia* and demanding the establishment of a truly new American state religion—as understood by our 18th-century Founders—more forcefully than any other sectarian movement in American history.

In equating its movement theology and dogma to what should be U.S. law, Woke doctrine is indeed unleashing an American *Sharia* and demanding the establishment of a truly new American state religion.

How is all this relevant to America's engagement in the world, and more directly, to America's primacist foreign policy as evidenced by the war in Ukraine? Under the new Wokeist religion, the boundaries between the global and the local, the domestic and the foreign wither away, to be replaced by a proselytizing, totalizing, and imperial Americanism.

As an ersatz of the old American civil religion, the Church of Woke wields universalism with a vengeance, prosecuting its ideology at home and abroad in equal measure. Raising high the banner of Woke globalism, America's original "good news" is thus seamlessly replaced with a more virtuous successor vision. "Nationalism" and love of country will henceforth be judged as backward and primitive forces. "Populism" and agency of the people, so long celebrated as the soul of the American nation, becomes tantamount to autocracy, a medieval evil to be purged from the United States.

America's (domestic) "corruption" under such "reactionary" forces becomes linked to the heinous influence of foreign states and maligned international actors, such as Hungary or Russia infecting the American Body. Such Woke hysteria closely resembles the deadly bacillus of Red Scare Communism in the early Cold War, with Russia serving as the "Great Satan" in the liberal American establishment's global culture wars.

To the evil of a reactionary, barbaric, and Rainbow-phobic Russia—and to the larger looming threat posed to the liberal international order by a global autocratic axis—we must also add the apocalyptic terror the Church of Woke feels about climate change. Climate apocalypse is perhaps the greatest blanket dispensation ever devised by American universalism to justify U.S. global hegemony. In the cause of saving the planet, every American intervention can appear righteous. Notice how Dark-Side-of-the-Force autocrats are also fossil-fuel-using climate polluters, in league with the gas-guzzling killers (i.e., oil companies) in our own midst. In this light, foreign threats appear to only mirror the deeper threat at home.

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Ultimately, the strategy of the Church of Woke and its clerical class is to exploit an intersectional crusade against pagan backwardness, evil anti-genderism, and climate apostasy abroad—Russia, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, etc.—to justify a domestic jihad at home. Moreover, as it pushes its brand of Girl Boss Militarism, its parishioner group "tilts more female". In time, America's new "Woke Imperium" will forcibly bring all Americans—and the world—into the fold of the new Church, or so the believers hope.

It is this convenient symbiosis or identity between enemies foreign and domestic that is most troubling. In its fundamentally global quest for a fourth apocalypse—wherein converting all humanity means ensuring total American conversion as well—the Church of Woke rejects the old, original American civil religion and its central concern: *America*. While its U.S.-centeredness reveals a degree of historical continuity, its aspiration to globalize Americanism in order to create a homogeneous world state based on its ideology and universal values betrays and subverts the old civil religion.

The unfolding fourth apocalypse brought on by the "awokening" has always been different from earlier renditions (or seasons) of the American apocalypse in our national series. *Apocalypse Deferred* (1945-1950)—a sequel to Third Apocalypse—drove the United States into 60 years (1963-2023) of repeated and unrequited battlefield débâcles. Each episode culminated in a sacred war (Vietnam, the Afghan proxy war, Desert Storm, the 20-year Global War on Terrorism, and now the Ukraine proxy war) waged to fulfill the prophecy of a global democratic millennium—and each time the dream has slipped away. In turn, the fourth cycle in our narrative arc has been marked by apocalyptic desperation.

Consequently, American messianism has become a Manichaean caricature of itself, in which American "good news" has been replaced by the ever-present specter of Evil and the threat of force. The holy words, Freedom and Democracy, while still chanted, have become a hollow mantra. The American "gospel" no longer preaches about bringing redemption and expiation: it is now concerned with enforcement and punishment. The volte-face came in an instant, on 9/11 and with Guantanamo. The Third Apocalypse ethos of the Nuremberg trials and their majestic public display of democratic judicial review were discarded for summary justice. Almost overnight, America ditched "international rules" and "civilized norms"—and instead built out an archipelago of torture and arbitrary incarceration, without oversight or appeal.

We no longer seek guidance from a higher, forgiving authority, but from the wrathful Old Testament voice within ourselves. In the Woke iteration of American Manichaeism, Evil takes precedence over Good and is fervently personalized. With Milošević, Ghaddafi, Osama Bin Ladin, Saddam, and now Putin, evil can now be artisanally—if not always ethically—sourced. Hence, fighting evil as the antichrist becomes the pulsing rhetorical trope of this fourth season of America's sacred narrative. Without irony, the 20th anniversary of America's invasion of Iraq has, astonishingly, revived its most infamous meme— "The Axis of Evil"—without blush or shame. NATO's proxy war against Russia now sees it as a moniker of its virtue to embrace the rhetorical mantle of what was so recently adjudged America's greatest strategic débâcle.

If we, as Americans, are ritually caught up in a grand narrative beyond our capacity to apprehend, let alone control, what awaits us? Can we nudge this final story arc so as to avoid total calamity? Do we have any say or agency in our descending destiny?

Last Judgment(s)?

The United States is ruled by its civil religion, not ideology. Americans are driven by a sacred narrative. Yet the drivers are always a small band of fanatical elites—driving a story that can only be fulfilled in war.

Put differently, America is a hit series with a martial story arc punctuated by flares and fireworks. From launch to perigee to apogee, the "American Story" is now in its *fourth* season. The first three were lit by the fire of apocalyptic battles. Those ecstatic moments of victory and sacrifice were made sacred, and they are treasured as America's "peak life". Yet now, as the story arc descends, we have seemingly entered another great battle. Will this prove a new Revelation —our fourth apocalypse—or become Our Series' finale?

American Story: The Hit Series [*Warning: graphic religious content*] has a universal audience, and each season is anchored in an apocalyptic climax. Moreover, every single episode is marked by battle—which always defaults to the standard storyline—as programmed by our divinely-anointed Hollywood Producer. Each "Next Generation" episode has its very own sacred and transcendental, if often destructive, war. Each season's arc pushes the boundaries of Revelation toward a predestined series finale. The first three seasons were exhilarating, even ecstatic when reaching those sacred, "peak life" heights of victory and sacrifice.

But then, during the fourth season opener, around 1962, the grand story arc declined one or more degrees from its apogee, and by 1968, the descent was clear. True, in one episode—1981-88—retro-rockets decelerated its descent. Yet the downward path resumed. The story arc is not about American wealth or the pursuit of happiness. It concerns Revelation and Predestination and fulfilling America's Mission. The earlier episodes of the fourth season show how the apocalypse opportunity was abused (Vietnam), aborted (Soviet Fall), betrayed (Iraq), and squandered (Afghanistan).

Yet such lost opportunities pale before the battle now enjoined. What are mere strikes, small wars, counterinsurgencies, and coups d'états in the face of the reality that the United States now aggressively challenges the two largest and most dangerous of great powers, Russia and China? Moreover, from their "Commanding Heights", America's rulers have made this an existential confrontation: either Democracy and its "rules-based order" will dominate the world, or the "autocracies" will win. One hears the tocsin of an apocalypse. Is this episode to be the season's finale, or perhaps, the series finale? Questions abound.

Can Global War Drive America to Civil War?

America is today waging two wars simultaneously, one at home, the other abroad. By connecting the aims of the *inner* war (converting the nation to the Church of Woke) with the *outer* war (triumphing in the proxy war on Russia as proof of righteousness), the establishment now depends on victory in a foreign war to strengthen its political leverage to push their domestic agenda and maintain its power. So their thinking goes.

Yet, the United States has never before tried to escalate a global clash when consumed by an existential struggle within. On the contrary, during the American Civil War, Washington acted with extreme caution, even as Britain and France engaged in a proxy war against it.

Western audiences preen and squeal in delight over amazing Ukrainian triumphs of the Will, while narcissistically taking full credit for *their* victories, as if they were their own.

The duality of inner and outer war creates a mutually-destructive dynamic. If it prevails in Ukraine, so this logic goes, then the Woke Imperium will also be victorious at home. However, a negative dynamic could also occur. Defeat in the Ukraine war would mean political failure at home. Hence, NATO must win, and Ukraine cannot be allowed to lose.

If losing is unthinkable, in the face of defeat NATO has but one option: to escalate. Yet escalation, for a nation divided, also entails turning the dial on domestic conflict.

Can a Vicarious Apocalypse Lead To Real Armageddon?

There is a yet-unconfessed suspension of disbelief in America's fourth apocalypse.

For over a year, NATO has made war on Russia, cheered on this war, and demanded Russia's fall. Indeed, many in the war party go further than to exclaim, "*For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power*", and cry out for the Russian Federation's humiliation and even destruction. Yet at the same time, and often in the same breath, the war party insists that the West is not at war with Russia since there are no U.S. or NATO forces deployed in Ukraine: rather, we are only supplying arms to Kiyv. Many still strenuously deny that this is even a proxy war.

At the same time, however, the true boosters and tub-thumpers of the Ukraine war have loudly proclaimed it to be a bargain. Russia is to be brought down without a single NATO casualty. We drain our evil foe with the blood of willing Ukrainians. A deal! A steal! Moreover, thousands of Americans have bravely enlisted—as purely vicarious participants—to fight alongside Ukraine in the trenches of social media. These heroes of the 195th Keyboard Brigade—North Atlantic Fellas Organization (NAFO — check out their merchandise too!)—do daily battle against the American 5th Column of Putin Stooges and Russia Lovers.

All the while, Western audiences preen and squeal in delight over amazing Ukrainian triumphs of the Will, while narcissistically taking full credit for *their* victories, as if they were their own. If this indeed is the fourth American apocalypse, then it is truly a remarkable achievement. This is our expiation for all the head-pounding frustration and endless and for-naught blood sacrifice in those failed dirty war episodes we watched earlier in Season Four ("Apocalypse Deferred"). After the terrors of Tet, Khe Sahn, Desert One, Contras, Mogadishu, and Fallujah, the series now offers a bloodless epiphany. Hence, our hoped-for season finale is simply awe-inspiring: not a drop of GI blood is spilled!

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The United States can now fight its "greatest geopolitical foe"—but no Americans will die—only willing, sacrificial Ukrainians. Meanwhile, the great American virtual audience, insatiably snared in CGI games and addicted to "hot takes" on social media, bathes in the glory of imminent victory: cheering on every Ukrainian propaganda video, and every depiction of Ukrainians in a Fellowship of the Ring fighting Russian Mordor-Orc darkness.

As the winds of war began shifting toward the end of 2022, NATO's early, "easy war" strategic options to amp up aid—powerful weapons, Allied command and control, NATO C4ISR, top-shelf training—led Kyiv to rather magical mystery "wins" in autumn of 2022. Yet, by spring 2023, the weapons' cupboards have turned bare, and the Ukrainian army is bleeding out as the real Ukrainian hoplites are being shredded in a bloodletting exercise that recalls the tragic trenches of the First World War's battle of Verdun. Escalation options have narrowed.

Ahead, there are only more neon redlines for NATO recklessly to cross—even if they risk another World War. This is the downside of fighting a war on media adrenaline, defined by the infinite ecstasy of "vicarity". Yet this is no video game. When one is killed in real life there is no automatic respawning.

Series Finale: Impact Crater?

At the end of Season 3 (1961), the United States stood astride the world like a Colossus. "Ike" Eisenhower, General of the Armies of our third American Apocalypse, presided over a "Free World" imperium—*over all that mattered.*

Yet when he passed from the scene, his more youthful successors embarked on a series of corrosive, endless wars. Throwing off all ancient precepts against military intervention and foreign entanglements from their antecedents, the new men departed from hallowed American tradition. After decades of this, instead of palace courtiers playing at counterinsurgency—ignoring the communities whose sons were dying in their game—the wars of Season 4's final episodes are now crafted by an executive branch that believes it is given a carte blanche so long as it be parsimonious with the lives of its volunteer force.

The United States began and completed its fateful passage as the embodiment of (divine) Orders: from a "New Order for the Ages" to the "United Nations" to a "New World Order", and finally to a liberal "Rules-based Order". But these so-called Orders are a simulacrum for the demon that hides deep within the American sacred narrative and within us all: a fixation with the cleansing fires of war that has driven us to overreach and on the brink of downfall.

Ours indeed is a remarkable metamorphosis: from once-exceptional American "good news"—Humanity's redemption!—to the Unveiling of global tyranny.

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Kevin Morrissey Jun 2

Enjoyed your time line of the Christian heresies that have bedeviled us throughout our history. Well done.

LIKE REPLY

Kevin Morrissey Jun 2

Dr. Vlahos,

You can add misanthropy as the fifth pillar. Our regime's final mission seems to be The Abolition of Man. Ultimate liberation; transcending the oppressive limits of our humanity through absorption into the cyborg Utopia under construction. The revolution against God leads to hatred of mankind.

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