

God Bless America: From a National Covenant to the Global War on Terror

Paul James

RMIT University

Religion has always played a role in nation formation, and continues to do so even in these late-modern and post-sacred times. The overall argument of the essay is that the nation formation involves both deep continuities and radical discontinuities with sacredly conceived ways of life. It is not wrong to say that religious evocation is bound up in the will to power, but it is important to recognize that there are much larger social reasons why religion is linked to the name of the nation. This essay thus resonates with Ivan Strenski's article in this volume when he argues that processes of legitimation go deep into the past. However, it adds another claim: namely, that religious evocation works as an act of legitimation because of the very nature of the community (the nation) in whose name the evocation is made. Read though the flickering screen of the globalising and postmodernising nation state with all its contradictions, it is hard to see any continuities-of-form here. The continuities at most appear as surface content, and even then only as points of reference, a Jewish Bible, a Christian cross, a slab of engraved marble. However, the postmodern/late-modern nation has all the ontological vulnerabilities of the prior dominant forms of polity. Despite unprecedented technical power, it still has to legitimize itself, at one level, through basic categories of human existence such as embodiment, placement and temporal transcendence.

Religion has always played a role in nation formation, and continues to do so even in these late-modern and post-sacred times.¹ One week after the attack, on the Saturday night, the world watched as the actors and singers from Hollywood and MTV mourned the tragic loss of life that occurred in attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The program, a telethon fundraiser entitled *A Tribute to Heroes*, was broadcast to 210 countries. Celine Dion sang 'God Bless America' and the evening ended with the now iconic video-image of the US flag flying silently over the debris of the collapsed towers. Clint Eastwood, affecting the same expression that he wore in his film *In the Line of Fire* (1993), spoke in suitably apocalyptic terms about 'ultimate triumph':

The terrorists who wanted three-hundred million victims, instead are going to get three-hundred million heroes, three-hundred million Americans with

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broken hearts, unbreakable hopes for our country and our future. In the conflict that's come upon us, we're determined as our parents and our grandparents were before us to win through the ultimate triumph — so help us God.

This is the response of an insecure nation undergoing change. In this context, only clichéd reversions to the Manichean Cold War rhetoric of the kind 'if you're not for us, you're against us' seem adequate to the momentousness of the new. George W. Bush's State of the Union address on 30 January 2003 is another case in point. On the eve of invading Iraq he said: 'We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers. Americans are free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity'. Apart from the obvious hubris hidden beneath the modest disclaimer that America did not create the liturgy of liberty, the speech like his 'Axis of Evil' notion evokes a sacred claim about what is at stake in the War on Terror. His speech ended with words that were at once clichéd and disturbingly powerful:

We do not know—we do not claim to know all the ways of providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history. May he guide us now. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Bush's evocations exemplify the overall argument of the essay that the nation formation involves *both* deep continuities and radical discontinuities with sacredly conceived ways of life. Put very crudely this double process could be understood in terms of an insecure secular and modern world looking back to a traditional time when life was simpler and the enemy was simply evil. In these terms 'God being on our side' is now evoked as an anachronistic public-relations exercise, a cynical use of religion to legitimize a push for extensions of global power. This line of analysis, however, does not quite work—and it not just because George W. Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard may actually believe in God. It is not wrong to say that religious evocation is bound up in the will to power, but it is important to recognize that there are much larger social reasons why religion is linked to the name of the nation. This essay thus resonates with Ivan Strenski's article in this volume when he argues that processes of legitimation go deep into the past. However, it adds another claim: namely, that religious evocation works as an act of legitimation because of the very nature of the community (the nation) in whose name the evocation is made.

Setting up a more satisfactory generalizing argument involves some substantial claims: first, the nation is an abstract community of strangers—secular and horizontal—that continues to *ground* its subjectivities in the very categories which in the modern world have been substantially reconstituted. Such grounding categories include relations of embodied connection (for example, the death of soldiers of the nation in war), times of sacred recollection (for example, commemorations of battles and moments of 'heroism'), and places of enduring

nature (for example, state cemeteries and cenotaphs). The use of the concept of *grounding* here is intentional. It marks a clear distinction from the prominent modernist theorists of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner (1983), Anthony Giddens (1985), and even Benedict Anderson (1991), who treat these categorical elements as the mere traditional *content*, refabricated for a modern context. By contrast, I am suggesting that these things still have categorical meaning as part of the continuing contradictory form of the nation-state as abstract political community. This lived *continuity* has become clearer as the modern connection between nation and state has become problematized. In the contemporary world, I argue, embedded ontological categories have continuing significance for the nation, even as such evocations become less and less relevant to the state. The discontinuity can be understood as a process of abstraction and reconstitution of prior ways of living in, and understanding, community and polity.

The nation-state and religious evocation

It is not however that religion itself, or even practices or texts projected in its name, are foundational for the formation of the nation and later nation-state. It is rather that calling upon God and calling upon the nation are not antithetical acts as the modernist theorists of nationalism tend to proclaim. They partake of the same process of abstracting from the ontologically grounded. By taking the (historically changing) place of religion seriously we can qualify the over-exuberant modernism of those who argue that the nation comes into being with the epochal translation of the sacred into the secular, that is, with the obliteration of the world of sacred nature-culture. In making this claim the motif of the communicable Word—covenant, constitution or Bible—can be as a signifier of a broader argument that for traditional communities to become nations it is necessary that at one level they be abstracted from the cultural immediacies of place and face-to-face relations. A second motif of the stone—in particular stones commemorating sacred ascension, transcendent mortality or moments of national glory—to signify the intimately related argument that nation formation rests on a deep contradiction between the radical abstraction of social relations and a recalling of (culturally framed) 'eternal' nature.

While Christianity finds a synthetic way of handling this ontological contradiction between transcendence and embeddedness in the notion of the Word-Become-Flesh, the nation, I suggest, takes a different if apparently parallel path. The *modern* nation becomes an abstract community of strangers, but one that draws on the subjectivities and ideologies of abstract attachment to embodied others (blood-become-sacrifice) and actual places (soil-become-territory). Unlike Christianity where Jesus is simultaneously God, God-Incarnate, and an embodied mortal man, no *one actual* person can stand in for the nation. National community, or more particularly each 'ordinary person' within it, potentially carries that embodied connection. Certainly the nation throws up abstracted icons. Female figures lifted out of history were the most serious contenders for this role.

Boadicea, Joan of Arc or Marianne became iconic figures with their historical and particularized bodies left behind. However, it is indicative of the contradictory nature of the abstraction of the nation that its only lasting iconic representative is the 'person' whose name we will 'never' know—the Unknown Soldier. This abstracted soul, who like Jesus dies for us all, preferably has no remains, no bones to identify *him*. However, unlike Jesus with his body gone and the stone rolled away, the soul of the Unknown Soldier dwells beneath massive slabs of stones, firmly located in place. Even the postmodern versions of these cenotaphs depend on the symbolic stability of eternal nature.

Australia, one of the 'Coalition of the Willing', provides a telling example that points up the contradictions of the nation-state. In July 2000, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the passing of the Australian Constitutional Bill—the signing of Australian semi-independence as an imperial colony—five Australian prime ministers, past and present, attended a service at Westminster Cathedral, London. As part of the celebrations Tony Blair agreed to build an Australian war shrine in the heart of London in recognition of the sacrifice of Australian soldiers who died defending Britain. Addressing parliament the next day and recounting the agreement, Prime Minister Blair by a slip of naming lauded not Australian but 'American servicemen and women'. It was a fitting finale to the ambiguously successful Australian attempt over the previous decade to make itself unique by revitalising its memory of those who had fallen in war. A central part of this process included belatedly following other countries of the world to find Australia's own Unknown Soldier. In the eulogy, Paul Keating spoke of a nation without modern nationalism:²

This unknown soldier is not interred here to glorify war over peace; or to assert a soldier's character over a civilian's; or one race or one nation or one religion above another; or men above women; of the war in which he fought and died above any other war; or of any one generation above any that has or will come later.

Similarly, the sculptors of the tomb spoke self-consciously of the monument's abstract design as inviting dialogue across times and places. Standing behind the head of the red-marble slab they placed four ten-metre pillars representing the primordial elements of fire, water, earth and air—the stuff of life and death. Here traditionalism met postmodernism. How do we know that the bones lying beneath the red marble, the person exhumed from a cemetery near the French village of Villers-Bretonneux, is an Australian rather than a German soldier? For some this is the question that cannot be asked, and for others is an irrelevancy. Either way, the Word and the stone are still there helping to explain to us the power and immortality of the nation.

In filling out this argument the essay turns to the United States, a nation that sees itself as an exemplary Nation. The narrative begins as the United States breaks away from Britain to establish a republic and then a nation-state. Here my argument will be that by the nineteenth century, the dominant culture of

postcolonial America was using the Bible as a point of legitimation rather than as a sign of a covenant between nation and God.³ This is not to suggest that the evocations became less intense. Quite the opposite. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the American Olympic basketball team could call a press conference to declare both their attachment to each other and their faith in the Bible. However, despite these nationalist evocations of the Book of God, it goes almost without saying that the new gods of Mammon, Global Capitalism and Liberal Freedom provided the dominant structural level of that rapidly changing national state as much as the others of the world.

All of this has the effect of qualifying Benedict Anderson's way of setting up his theory of the nation. While what I have been describing is a layered dialectic of continuity-and-discontinuity, a layering of ontological formations, he puts the pivotal emphasis on an epochal shift from traditionalism to modernism. Moreover, he focuses on a historically much later shift in the mode of communication—print—as it intersects with a new mode of production—capitalism. A fuller response to Anderson's path-breaking work would require working through the significance of other changing modes of practice beyond production and communication, including layers of transformations in the modes of exchange, organization and enquiry. However, for present purposes, all that I want to do is qualify the epochal tone of his argument that the national consciousness becomes possible only when 'three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men's minds' (Anderson, 1981: 36): first, the conception that a particular script-language such as Church Latin offered privileged access to the ontological truth; secondly, that monarchs ruled naturally as the divine legatees; and thirdly, that religious cosmology and history were indistinguishable. In beginning to qualify this proposition, it is worth remembering that it was Church Latin that gave us the connected concepts of *natus* and *natio*. The Bible, for example, is replete with the naming of peoples, communities who at one level continued to live as twelve tribes long after they were named, at a more abstract level, as an interconnected whole.

Evocating a nation: 'In God we trust'

Throughout the essay I have been careful to treat the nation and state as different phenomena, analytically separable even during the time of the classic *modern* nation-state when in the late-nineteenth century the nation as community and the state as polity came into a taken-for-granted hyphenated union. This section takes up this theme in relation to the United States of America as it broke away from British colonial rule. We move now to the Puritans of New England as they set out to establish a polity of the New Testament. In the period prior to the formal constituting of the United States in the eighteenth century, the Puritan 'settlement' of the Americas was defended, in Perry Miller's phrase, as the act of a 'Bible Commonwealth'. They saw themselves as forging a covenant with God.

Miller is worth quoting at length to compare with what comes later:

Long before they came to America, [the New England theologians] had become members of a school of doctrine now known as the 'federal' or 'covenant' theology. They revised or amplified pure Calvinism by defining the relationship between the predestined elect and his God not merely as the passive recipient of grace, as did Calvin, but as an active covenant, after the model of that between Abraham and Jehovah in the Book of Genesis. According to this doctrine, the saint was redeemed not simply by an infusion of grace, but by being taken into a league with God, an explicit compact drawn up between two partners, wherein the saint promised to obey God's will and God promised infallibly to grant him salvation. Starting with this notion of a personal and inward covenant, the theologians extended it to the church and state. They argued that a nation of saints, all of whom were personally in covenant with God, would also be in covenant with Him as body politic (Miller, 1967: 17).

Thus the New Englanders *as a community* had by a double act of free volition—migrating to North America and submitting to the laws of the Bible—made themselves into a chosen people in a promised land. In their religious-political tracts they, or at least their scribes, expressed the belief that had forged a covenant that could be enacted in a state. However, by the time of the American Revolution, the notion of a covenant with God was being overlaid by a self-framed contract, sustained through the laws of nature. The 'citizenry', or rather their ruling and writing classes, had discovered natural rights—God-given in basis, but 'self-evident' laws of nature nevertheless. These were laws that just required writing down by God-fearing rational scholars (and gentlemen) in order to become laws of state. Thus contrary to the claims of the modernist theories of the nation, here we find two cosmologies, the Biblical and the modern rational coming together, albeit in contradictory and overlaying ways. 'Americans had succeeded', Perry Miller says with muted irony, 'where the Jews did not, in recovering something of the pristine virtue... Yet once the machinery of national humiliation proved effective in producing the providential victory of the Americans, were they not bound to the prophecy that by their utilization of the form, they and they alone, would bring about a reign of national bliss?' (Miller, 1967: 103, 105). In other words, the 'citizenry' now written into existence by the Declaration of Independence were now, at the level of their communion in the abstracted state, set free from God to make their own way in the world. The constitution (in both senses of the word) of the abstract state became the highest expression of that freedom and the republic of 'these United States' (plural not singular) was about to be born. At this point, Liah Greenfield gets carried away into a swooning summation of the civic purity of this beginning: 'in a certain, analytic, sense', she says only partly covering her partisan tracks, 'the American nation is an ideal nation: the national element in it is challenged by the fewest counterinfluences; it is a more pure example of *national* community than any other' (Greenfield, 1993: 403). The evidence, including her own detailed narrative,

suggests otherwise. The United States is born not as nation or nation-state but as a republic in a complex intersection of continuities with the past and discontinuous new beginnings. The projected covenant with God waits until the middle of the nineteenth century to become the cultural evocation of an emerging nation and, during the same period, the contract with men (no women were there for the writing of the constitution) becomes the political codification of the federating unitary state. The state in effect rejects any such covenant while the nation makes it a contested expression of piety (Foster, 1996).

It is indicative of this tension that in the highest written document of state, the Constitution, the Bible is absent, as is the concept of 'the nation'. Even in the Declaration of Independence—written by a secret congress of strangers meeting in the home of a lecturer in scientific obstetrics—God is reduced to 'nature's god' (lower case). Nature's god is embedded within the first couple of paragraphs of the Declaration as it begins by naturalizing the break with the British Crown: 'in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them ...' (quoted in Wills, 1979: 374). This accords with Thomas Jefferson's contradictory modernism. He calls upon the Bible but writes, for example, with extraordinary relativism of the 'family God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, and the local God of Israel' (quoted in Grosby, 1993: 62). Here we are at the end of the eighteenth century and while the post-colonial republic has been formally signed into existence as the United States, there is a long way to go in establishing a nation-state.

While there is no demarcation point, no calendrical marker at which time we can say that the United States became a nation-state, it is possible to give some symbolic high points in the connecting of the secular-state/sacred-nation. In these the Bible is present, even if as rhetorical evocation rather than as indicative of the hopes for a Bible Commonwealth. Gary Wills, despite the postmodern title of his book *Inventing America* (1979) is brilliantly insightful here in his discussion of the Biblical overtones in Lincoln's Gettysburgh address of 1863. The speech begins: 'Four-score-and-seven years ago, our Fathers brought forth...' Why such a stilted style? Why four-score-and-seven? To hear the phrase in the context of Victorian America is to hear the biblical overtones, says Wills. There is no reason to immediately start counting back eighty-seven years from 1863 to get 1776. It allows Lincoln, in effect, to get around the issue that the date 1776 is no automatic marker of the beginning of the nation-state. In fact the thirteen original colonies had instructed their delegates to sign the Declaration of Independence on the basis that it did not imply a unified polity. Even more pointedly Lincoln was talking in the middle of a war of states that would by its end kill over half-a-million people. Why centre the nation on the phrase 'Our father's brought forth'? President Lincoln is drawing on the biblical references to Our Father and the faith of our fathers. As Wills puts it, 'Lincoln is talking about generation on the spot. The

nation is rightly called new because it is brought forth maieutically, by midwifery; it is not only new but newborn. The suggested image is, throughout, of a *hieros gamos*, a marriage of male heaven ("our fathers") and a female earth ("this continent"). And it is a miraculous conception, a virgin birth (Wills, 1979: xv)

At the very time of Lincoln's calling upon the language of redemption to connect a nation-at-war-with-itself, the Bible had ceased to be substantially more than a legitimating *signifier* of the state-nation. Though, as I argued earlier, the bureaucratic state and the religions-of-the-word grew up together, by the nineteenth century this had fundamentally changed. The state and the sacred had ceased to be symbiotic. Individuals continued to have faith, but the state-nation as a polity-community of liberal individuals was assuming a more urgent calling that the Kingdom of God. In the middle of that century as Congress voted to put the phrase 'In God We Trust' on the nation's currency and to recognise officially Thanksgiving Day as one of the nation's holy-days, the Bible had become a book to wave around at public meetings, cite passages from and swear upon, but not a book of instruction to guide the practices of the increasingly abstract state. In short, while the Word continued to be relevant to the nation, it became less and less important to the state. This development would reduce the Bible to a thing of national evocation as the nation and state were drawn together at the end of the nineteenth century.

Themes in the constitution of the nation

Now at a time when the rules of war are being rewritten, it is important to recognize that the mainstream American sense of its own exceptionalism has continuities that go back into through Lincoln to formation of the nation of America. There are lots of counter-examples to these themes, but it can nevertheless be argued that they continue to be dominant in mainstream thinking and practice. One continuing theme involves a 'mythical tribute' to the regeneration of peace through violence. It is the peace that always comes after the conflict, like the freeze-frame at the end of *Deer Hunter* or *Three Kings* (note the religious reference). From the Indian wars, the War of Independence to Vietnam and Kosovo, 'peace' is always the backgrounded but transcendental moment that links the community of fate across time.

A second theme is the essential virtue of acting to defend Truth, Infinite Justice and the (American) Way. Defence always requires action. Despite the failings (or heroism) of any one particular individual or institution in the United States, or even of the state itself, there is always an active figure of redemption. President Bush knows that he might be making a mistake in the particularities of his actions, but (connecting the two themes) given that an outsider has cut across the peace of the community of fate he has no choice but to act. He will be forgiven for acting wrongly, but he would not have been forgiven for appearing to acquiesce to an outsider's attack on American soil.

This brings us to a third theme, the ambiguity of an abiding sense of home soil and the projection of a frontier that has no boundaries. Having its roots in an expansionist ideology called the doctrine of Manifest Destiny first proclaimed in 1845, American national interest has long been defined in terms that treated extensions of its frontier as part of its civilising mission. With the first two themes we can, for example, rewrite them with Australian examples from Gallipoli to the doctrine of 'forward defence'. However, with this third theme of sacred-soil/extended-frontier the United States has an accentuated fear of the unbounded movements of others that goes beyond the fears that even mainstream Australia has evinced recently over the Tampa refugee crisis. The old domino theory and the necessity of defending the world against communists in Vietnam, was reborn against drug runners in Panama, against Arab expansionists in Iraq, and now against terrorists in Afghanistan. Australia follows the United States into crusades.⁴ By contrast the United States' government feels that it simply has to be there. Notwithstanding the occasional recurrences of American 'isolationism', the norm is for US leaders to feel an over-riding pressure to act in the world.

Carrying though the motif of the Declaration of Independence, I want to finish this essay with a contemporary example of an independence-day speech that I am fond of quoting. It comes from a film about aliens attacking the earth. In *Independence Day* (1996), Bill Pullman, President of the United States, speaks of the fourth of July becoming the rallying point for all mankind. This time it is the White House rather than the World Trade Center that has been destroyed. The President stands to address the assembled:

Good morning. In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join with others from around the world. And you will be launching the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind. 'Mankind'— that word should have new meaning for all of us. We can't be consumed by petty differences any more. We will be united in our common interest. Perhaps it's faith. Today is the fourth of July, and you will once more fight for our freedom. Not from tyranny, oppression or persecution, but from alienation. We're fighting for our right to live, to exist. And should we win the day, the fourth of July will no longer be known as an American holiday, but as the day when the whole world declared in one voice: 'we will not go quietly into the night, we will not vanish without a fight, we are going to survive'. Today we celebrate *our* independence day! (emphasis added).

The ambiguity of those tiny little words, 'we' and 'our', are the key to understanding the passage. It is striking how comfortably Hollywood translates fighting for transnational peace back into the heritage of one nation-state: *pax Americana*. We all know that the Fourth of July is not just another American holiday. It signifies the formation of the *modern* American nation. However, by the time we get to the last line, 'Today we celebrate *our* independence day', the ambiguous appellation 'our' has linked modern nationalism and postmodern cosmopolitanism in a comfortable pastiche that challenges nothing. It draws upon the spirit of *Pax Christi* but surrounds it with postmodern irony: 'perhaps it's

faith'. However, if the Bible is absent from the political faith-statement itself, it still lingers on around the edges. Just before the speech, one of the pilots who is about to fly into space to combat the aliens gets married under the sign of the Christian cross and 'in the sight of God', and just after the speech the other pilot hands his father a copy of the Jewish Bible covered by a skull-cap.

If you read between the lines of the set speeches in this and similar films, the speakers still assume that the United States sits at the helm of world politics, but supposedly no longer as the modern *homogenising* nation-state against the evil empire. It is now projected as, on the one hand, a postnational representative of a set of self-evident universalistic values and, on the other, as *the* exemplary open-textured nation and state. We are back, full circle, to the introduction to this essay. In the post-Reagan years, from Clinton to Bush or Gore, the exponents of this kind of 'postnationalism', move in two directions at once. They call on whatever is at hand to give spiritual and embodied depth to their vision of a world made peaceful for the market, and they underwrite the technological means of conducting human relations at a distance, from communicating with others to conducting undeclared and systematic acts of abstract violence. The wars over Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, for example—that is, put in less euphemistic terms, the waves of bombing from a great height as a way of resolving problems of great complexity—are an outcome of this process but not simply as acts of wilful domination. With the partial exception of the Second Gulf War, they are also a consequence of fearing the electoral backlash if their own soldiers die and too many come home in body bags to be buried in sacred soil. This is one of the contradictions of the present: our capacity to live with the systematic destruction of nameless people in places far away, and a heightened sensitivity to the death of a single person if we know their name and can see the image of their face.

Throughout the essay, I have been arguing about the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. Read though the flickering screen of the globalising and postmodernising nation state with all its contradictions, it is hard to see any of continuities-of-form here. The continuities at most appear as surface content, and even then only as points of reference, a Jewish Bible, a Christian cross, a slab of engraved marble. However, the postmodern/late-modern nation has all the ontological vulnerabilities of the prior dominant forms of polity—from traditional kingdom and absolutist state to the classical modern nation-state. Despite unprecedented technical power, it still has to legitimize itself, at one level, through basic categories of human existence such as embodiment, placement and the temporal transcendence. It is one way of handling the existential question of the transcendence of the community-polity despite the assured mortality of all who live within it. Those who speak for the nation will continue to do so—for good and evil. On the positive side, evoking the sacred will continue for so long as we give symbolic depth to our cultural differences from others and seek meaning and identity beyond the various banal, prosaic and individualistic claims that can be made about our place in time. On the negative side, these invocations will continue

to be used to rationalize violence insofar as we fail to interrogate the deeper sources of insecurity and tension in the world today. The War on Terror is not a clash of religions, but rather a clash of two lines out of modernism, both legitimising themselves in terms of their own traditional claims on the Truth. There is nothing intrinsically bad about politicians and peoples drawing on writings about faith, existence and transcendence, however in the context of a refusal to interrogate the sources of violence in the world today it has to be done without the criminal hubris of political leaders such as George W. Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard.

Endnotes

¹. The concept of 'post-sacred', like 'postmodern', carries the prefix 'post' in the sense of a formation that comes after and overlays prior formations without necessarily replacing them. The concepts *tribalism*, *traditionalism*, *modernism* and *postmodernism* (and variations such as *late-modernism*) are used as the most general terms of a matrix of overlaying ontological formations.

². Incidentally, Paul Keating was the one past Australian Prime Minister who refused to go to London to celebrate the anniversary of Federation.

³. Here sign is used in the Lévi-Straussian sense of a *lived sign* rather than as reflexively understood *symbol*. A symbol in the present argument is more abstract in its reach than a sign. The nation is built on an increasingly self-conscious process of symbolic construction layered over a matrix of primordial signs.

⁴. That term 'crusades' was withdrawn from the lexicon of the US establishment after the obvious reference to an earlier 'clash of civilizations' in the Middle Ages, Christian and Islamic, was pointed out.

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