

A [sample entry](#) from the

Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature

(London & New York: Continuum, 2005)

Edited by

[Bron Taylor](#)

© 2005
All Rights Reserved

death of the nobleman. The death of a tiger, described as the king of the forest, is similarly commemorated.

In Mandailing society, the management of the environment is tied to the origin of clans and settlement, social structure, system of land tenure, governance and sense of territory. Mandailing society in the past and up to this day is a rural, agrarian and pastoral society. The main agricultural activity is paddy planting. Ownership of a plot of paddy land is critical to Mandailing social life as it defines one's standing and status in society.

In the Mandailing perspective, a territorial unit is only complete when it constitutes land and water. The land and water in a settlement is communally owned and its usage has to conform to the customs as well as the sanction of the council of nobles and elders.

The water systems in Upper Mandailing are a feat of traditional water management and engineering. An extensive irrigation system provides for religious, domestic, agricultural and other uses. As such, settlements are strung all along the streams and river banks, traversed by path and canals leading to the paddy fields. One can hear the water flowing twenty-four hours a day in a typical Mandailing settlement.

Mandailing settlements are always located near a spring, stream or a river, which is used for domestic, agriculture, fisheries and religious/ritualistic purposes. Each territorial unit has its own protected forest area, where agriculture, hunting and harvesting of forest products are prohibited. These are usually watershed areas, believed to be where the spirits lived.

Inspired by the traditional concept of protected areas, local communities in the Mandailing homeland have been overseeing the implementation of a river-protection program. The practice prohibits the harvesting of fisheries' resources close to human settlements for a stipulated period. Implemented in seventy settlements, Mandailing has the largest river-protection scheme in the province of North Sumatra.

The income derived from the harvesting of river resources is used to pay for the development of social facilities such as schools, roads and mosques, providing educational scholarships and administrative salaries, charity toward orphans, the poor and invalids, etc. The income generated by this community-based ecological resource-management program benefits the community directly.

Both mother and child "village republics" are autonomous in implementing their system of governance. The general rule is that the chief of the Nasution clan rules settlements in Lower Mandailing while the nobleman of the Lubis clan rules settlements in Upper Mandailing, but there are exceptions.

The Mandailing nobleman governs in council, in that he acts in concert with his counselors. The nobles and elders jointly carry out their duties and obligations of

governance and customary laws, which cover not only social and ceremonial matters such as marriage but also matters of local governance such as division of new paddy lands, rights of water and pastoral land, and so forth.

Although the territorial units were terminated by the Japanese imperial army in the 1940s, which meant that the nobles and elders lost their territoriality and powers to function effectively in Mandailing society, it did not wipe them out of existence, and to this day, the nobles and elders still play a recognized role as arbiters of the customs, although their authority is circumscribed.

Abdur-Razzaq Lubis

Further Reading

- Harahap, Basyral Hamidy. "The Political Trends of South Tapanuli and its Reflection in the General Elections (1955, 1971 and 1977)." In Rainer Carle, ed. *Cultures and Societies of North Sumatra*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989.
- Harahap, Basyral Hamidy. "Islam and Adat among South Tapanuli Migrants in Three Indonesian Cities." In Rita Smith Kipp and Susan Rodgers, eds. *Indonesian Religions in Transition*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1987, 221-37.
- Kartomi, Margaret. "Lovely When Heard From Afar": *Mandailing Ideas of Musical Beauty in Five Essays on the Indonesian Arts - Music, Theatre, Textiles, Painting and Literature*. Monash, Australia: Monash University, 1981.
- Lubis, Abdur-Razzaq. "Transformation of Mandailing Cultural Identity and Leadership." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 76 (2003), part 1.
- Lubis, Abdur-Razzaq and Khoo Salma Nasution. *Raja Bilah and the Mandailings in Perak, 1875-1911*, (Monograph No. 35). Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2003.
- Lubis, Dr. Z. Pangaduan. "Ideas of Governance in the Built Heritage of Mandailing, Sumatra." *Asia & West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation (AWPNUC) Newsletter* 5:3 (1999), 7-9.
- Traditional Buildings of Indonesia, Batak Simalungun and Batak Mandailing*, vol. 3. Bandung: United Nations, Regional Housing Centre, ESCAPE, 1973.
- Tugby, Donald. *Cultural Change and Identity: Mandailing Immigrants in West Malaysia*. St. Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1977.
- Tugby, Donald J. "The Social Function of Mahr in Upper Mandailing, Sumatra." *American Anthropologist* 61:4 (1959), 631-40.

Manifest Destiny

Coined by New York journalist John O'Sullivan in 1845, the term "manifest destiny" played an important, conten-

tious role in American territorial expansion during the nineteenth century, and has had a lasting but equally fractious impact on American self-understanding in years since. Components of the idea of manifest destiny have a long and influential history in the United States, appearing in the guises of religious and political discourse, as well as in both elite and popular culture before and after their constellation within O'Sullivan's editorial work supporting American annexation of Texas and Oregon. In its various usages, the term encompasses nature, geography and race as key determiners of American values and institutions. For its proponents, it has typically served to attribute a sacred quality to American lands, one achieved through the work of subduing both raw nature and "inferior" peoples.

The oldest, and perhaps most crucial, component to the idea of manifest destiny is millennial. Early European colonists, most consistently the Puritans of New England, drew frequently on the Bible's millennial traditions in order to frame both their own colonizing agendas, and their view of the new world landscape to which they had migrated. As a sacred enterprise, their establishment of Massachusetts settlements was an analogue of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt to the land of milk and honey. The *New Canaan*, to which God led English Puritans as his newly chosen people, was an appropriation of widely embraced English Protestant ideas correlating the Israelite and English monarchies. Thus the Puritans did not so much coin the analogy as they deprived England's establishment of the analogy's "proper" use. But while Church of England expositors had to make biblical language of the wilderness and the heathen tribes metaphors for papal power, the New England Puritans were able to carve out a Christian beachhead in real wilderness, "full of wilde beasts and wilde men," as the Plymouth colony's first governor William Bradford put it. Just as the establishment of Israel was necessary for the history of redemption culminating in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, New Englanders came to see their own wilderness enterprise as crucial to redemption's second phase. In a kind of divine balance of history, since – as theologian Jonathan Edwards calculated – the "other continent hath slain Christ, and has from age to age shed the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus," it was reasonable to conclude that God would use the newly settled one to bring history to its glorious end (in Cherry 1971: 56).

In the meantime, New Englanders transformed their physical surroundings, guided by the biblical injunctions of Genesis 1:26, and the Arcadian vision of a subdued and bountiful nature subject to human enterprise. At times, as in judge Samuel Sewall's 1697 musings on New England's millennial role, this vision of New World abundance stressed a notable harmony between humans, nature, and divine intention: "as long as nature shall not grow old and dote, but shall constantly remember to give the rows

of Indian corn their education by pairs: so long shall Christians be born there, and being first made meet, shall from thence be translated . . ." (in Miller 1956: 215). By contrast, the wilderness itself was often cast as a satanic realm where the divine aim was subverted.

Following the revolution, America's millennial role of playing host to the divine work expanded from providing the example of right religion practiced in the testing ground of the wilderness, to encompass the development of divinely approved political and cultural institutions as well. When earlier Puritans drew on the Mosaic covenant to speak about God's blessing of New England with abundance, that blessing was dependent upon their maintenance of right religious doctrine. In his 1795 Thanksgiving sermon, preacher Thomas Barnard – with little of the Puritan's ground for self-doubt – could simply assert that "we (Americans) are a people peculiarly favoured of Heaven." Such "favour" was most visible in the many "publick blessings" of prosperity obtained from still-fertile lands along the Atlantic seaboard (in Tuveson 1968: 31). The agricultural, industrial and technological achievement of the early republic over nature – for millennialists such as theologian Samuel Taylor Hopkins – was evidence of America's unique place in the economy of salvation. Americans, he urged, should expect such divinely sponsored advance that in the days to come

a very little spot will then produce more of the necessities and comforts of life, then [sic] large tracks do now. And in this way, the curse which has hitherto been upon the ground, for the rebellion of man, will be in a great measure removed (in Tuveson 1968: 61–2).

For Congregational minister Joseph Emerson (cousin of famed Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson), in 1818 the future promised such an easy marriage of human technology and divine intent in ensuring agricultural advancement that the chemist might little think "how much his labors conduce to bring on that happy state of things, that shall distinguish the Millennial period" (in Tuveson 1968: 68).

As Americans turned their territorial gaze across the Appalachians, they augmented biblical millennialism with Enlightenment ideas. Nature as the product of a rational deity justified their interest in the Mississippi River and its terminus in the Gulf of Mexico, in the peninsula of Florida, and even in Canada. As Samuel Adams put it in 1778: "We shall never be upon a solid Footing till Britain cedes to us what Nature designs we should have, or till we wrest it from her" (in Weinberg 1958: 22). Nature's intent for human beings, which Thomas Jefferson in the "Declaration of Independence" (1776) had framed as individual rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, could be expanded upon at the national level to include

independence and security from the harmful plotting of other nations, such as France and Spain. For residents of Kentucky this meant “the natural right of the inhabitants of this country to navigate the Mississippi” and to develop the region’s agricultural potential in accordance “with the immense designs of the Deity” (in Weinberg 1958: 25–6), and for Jefferson himself, natural right offered a sufficiently elastic basis for delimiting expansion. When nature intended Americans use of the Mississippi, it must also have intended them a port, he said, since “the right to use a thing, comprehends a right to the means necessary to its use” (in Weinberg 1958: 27). Such elastic rights, to some, suggested the reduction to absurdity of arguments based on natural design. Nevertheless, they enabled Americans to envision themselves within the first few decades of the nineteenth century as a continental power, and – as geographic knowledge replaced myths of the “Great American Desert” – to brush aside the constraints of western mountain ranges and arid lands. Thus the idea that nations were created within natural limits found little to recommend it until Americans had stretched themselves “from sea to shining sea,” as a patriotic hymn put it later in the century.

Publisher John O’Sullivan’s phrase, “manifest destiny,” coined in his mid-1840s *Democratic Review* editorials favoring annexation of Texas and Oregon, quickly gained great rhetorical power as a wide range of politicians, religious leaders, land speculators and others took it up. Opponents of the notion were themselves divided about America’s course. Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing considered the original Texas revolt of 1836 “an act of criminality” in itself, but also a precedent, he wrote to Senate leader Henry Clay, since “we cannot seize upon or join to ourselves that territory, without manifesting and strengthening the purpose of setting no limits to our empire” (in Graebner 1968: 48). A decade later, diplomat Albert Gallatin, Ralph Waldo Emerson and a number of Eastern liberals opposed war with Mexico, but most were slow to term manifest destiny simply “political clap-trap,” or to deny its underlying view of Providence, as did the *National Intelligencer* (in Graebner 1968: 239). Congressional opponents, such as Representative Charles Good-year, who in 1846 spoke of manifest destiny being a “robber’s title,” were basically intent on averting war with England, and softening U.S. claims to western Canada above the 49th parallel.

Ralph Waldo Emerson himself celebrated the energies expended in continent spanning, seeing “a sublime and friendly Destiny” guiding the human race across America, the future “home of man” (in Graebner 1968: 11). The construction of national railroads, binding people of one region with another, Emerson said, “introduced a multitude of picturesque traits into our pastoral scenery. The tunneling of mountains, the bridging of streams . . . the blowing of rocks, explosions all day . . .” were signs of

national promise and potential, making it possible for the race to tap the vastness of the land, which would be “physic and food for our mind, as well as our body” (in Graebner 1968: 6–7). Even Henry David Thoreau, opposed to so many of his fellow-citizens’ endeavors, felt “Nature’s magnetism” pulling him along the same continental trajectory. “Eastward I go only by force,” he famously acknowledged, “but westward I go free” (Thoreau 1975: 667–8).

The biblical arguments remained effective political justifications throughout the period – and seemed by many expansionists to have been thought sufficient to make England abandon its own interest in Oregon. Former president John Quincy Adams argued in Congress that since England was a Christian nation, it was bound to respect the relevance of Genesis 1:26–28 as the surest foundation of title. Whereas England only wanted Oregon for its Hudson Bay Company trappers, Americans claimed Oregon, Adams concluded, in order to “make the wilderness blossom as the rose, to establish laws, to increase, multiply and subdue the Earth, which we are commanded to do by the first behest of God Almighty” (in Graebner 1968: 109). But even those expansionists who did not draw upon biblical or Transcendentalist mandates spoke of America’s continental destiny with religious, ecstatic, fervor.

William Gilpin, first territorial governor of Colorado, was perhaps foremost – certainly most energetic – among expansion’s intellectual advocates. Gilpin’s writings, dependent upon the theories of the German explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, melded his scientific postulating about the “isothermal zodiac” – the global climactic belt within which empires had developed and moved ever-westward – with enthused descriptions of the American continent and the “pioneer army” he saw pushing across the Rocky Mountains in search of gold and fertile soil. The pioneer, for Gilpin, spearheads the vital portion of the “human current,” which

bears with it the immortal fire of civilization revealed to man. This central current has reached the Plateau of America, up which it will ascend to plant the sacred fires over its expanse and shine upon the world with renewed effulgence. Such is the resplendent era and the gorgeous promise unveiled to humanity. The arrival of this is *now* announced by the indefinite gold production and pastoral power of the interior, domestic region of our continent and country (Gilpin 1974: 53).

Manifest destiny’s advocates could only go so far in making religious or scientific appeals, however. If the English and the Americans might be expected to establish consensual readings of scripture, ponder the isothermal lesson, or merely to submit to diplomatic resolution of the

Oregon dispute – which President Polk achieved in 1846 despite Democrats' desire to war with England – this possibility was less expected of others who stood in the way of American expansion. In American dealings with Mexico, native tribes, and later with both Cuba and the Philippines, race thus became the key factor in determining the direction of achieving manifest destiny, and violence its often justified means.

As early as the 1820s, when Americans pushed into Cherokee and Choctaw lands, Christian land use seemed a practice that only Anglo-Saxons were capable of employing. Confronted by arguments that Indians were mere occupiers of the soil, and hence lacking any legal title to it, Cherokees and other southern tribes vigorously embraced the agricultural lifestyle and religion of encroaching Americans, and were then sued by the gold-hungry Georgians who wanted their lands – for violating treaty terms. As Governor Troup noted to the Georgia legislature during the debates leading up to passage of the 1830 federal Indian Removal Bill – which eventually solved the problem to the Georgians' satisfaction – “by changing the mode of life of the aboriginals upon the soil of Georgia,” by causing “her lands to be separately appropriated for the purpose of tillage,” and by promoting “every encouragement to fixed habits of agriculture,” the federal government and the Cherokees “violated the treaties in letter and spirit, and did wrong to Georgia” (in Weinberg 1958: 87). Efforts to “civilize” tribes were thus violations of “the laws of nature,” as one Georgia legislator put it, which “have fixed an insuperable barrier between the moral condition of the savage and the Christian” (in Weinberg 1958: 88).

The belief in Anglo-Saxon moral superiority gained ground as it was deployed not only in the taking of tribal lands, but also in conflicts with Mexico. Some supporters of the 1846 invasion of Mexico and the conquest of California envisioned Mexican citizens greeting American forces as liberators, and perhaps melding into the American population as their lands experienced the regenerative rule of republican institutions and the development of mineral and agricultural resources. The more prominent tendency after the war, as Florida's Senator Westcott complained in 1848, was to reject the idea that the U.S. should

receive not merely the white citizens of California and New Mexico, but the peons, negroes, and Indians of all sorts, the wild tribes of Camanches [sic], the bug-and-lizard-eating “Diggers” and other half-monkey savages in those countries as equal citizens of the United States (in Horsman 1981: 276).

By the end of the nineteenth century, carving out national boundaries and dispossessing tribes from their lands ceased to figure in forward-looking American imaginations. The wilderness-transforming energy that white Americans attributed to their Anglo-Saxon roots –

and which historian Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and President Theodore Roosevelt's *Winning of the West* (1907) claimed was defining of national character – seemed to have reached a terminus. However, Anglo-Saxon manifest destiny continued to shape American life. The push to open trade with Asia – key to Senator Thomas Hart Benton's imperial vision as early as the 1820s – and even to acquire Asian colonies, spread widely. By the century's end the vision was commonly accompanied by a racial justification of U.S. dominance in the Pacific. America's 1898–1901 war in the Philippines against first Spain, and then insurgent Filipino nationalists, was cast by its supporters in the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations as a repetition of the frontier struggle. For Roosevelt, Filipinos were “Apaches,” playing the same role in thwarting national destiny as Geronimo (in Slotkin 1992: 121). For Senator Albert J. Beveridge, opponents of U.S. military operations in the Philippines – arguing that whites could not successfully live in tropical environments – erred in concluding that the Anglo-Saxon race therefore had no obligations there. On the contrary, he told the Republican National Convention in 1900, “the general welfare of the world” demanded American rule, otherwise

this land, rich in all that civilized man requires, and these people needing the very blessings they ignorantly repel, should be remanded to savagery and wilderness. If you say this, you say that barbarism and undeveloped resources are better than civilization and the Earth's resources developed (in Cherry 1971: 142).

The need to subdue nature, in the course of the twentieth century, lost some of its focus as a theme in American discussions of national aims. Manifest destiny, however, did continue to be invoked, as in the arguments of President Woodrow Wilson for American participation in the First World War, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the Second. These weighings of America's unique responsibility had less to do with the conquest of nature, though, and more with what Wilson framed as the moral mission of American democracy. Nevertheless, America's mobilization in both wars was also nature's, since the country's abundant natural resources provided American factories with the material necessary to achieve victory. Although twentieth-century Americans did at times contest the implications of natural abundance, as in the conservation movement's debates about “finite” resources during the Gifford Pinchot era and then again in the 1970s, very few seriously advocated an overturning of the economic order that had been built on the basis of manifest destiny. Which is to say that Beveridge's 1900 challenge to anti-imperialists – that consistency would require them to give “Australia back to its Bushmen, and the United States to its

Indians” – has rarely been accepted, other than by tribal advocates themselves (in Cherry 1971: 148).

But if subduing nature became a given in the twentieth century, popular culture has provided an enduring context in which the task can be reappropriated, its urgency rekindled and its achievements often commemorated. The American landscape is full of memorials to manifest destiny, none more striking than Colorado’s Mount of the Holy Cross, which journalist Samuel Bowles was first to proclaim as a divine seal of approval upon American enterprise in *The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado* (1869), and which Yellowstone explorer and artist William Henry Jackson first photographed in 1873. Made a national monument in 1929, the mountain’s deep snow-filled couloirs offered several generations of pilgrims confirmation that nature itself spoke the gospel in America. Although its remoteness kept visitation at such low levels that the federal government removed it from the list of national monuments in 1955, and the permanent snowfields have subsequently melted in part, reproductions of the Jackson photograph and numerous paintings of the mountain circulated widely for long afterwards, and Climbers for Christ offered cyberspace images of the mountain at their website.

The remembered past, embodied in works of art and architecture, or in numerous historical and recreational sites, also preserves the vision of manifest destiny. Emmanuel Leutze’s gigantic mural “Across the Continent, Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way” (1864) hangs in the U.S. Capitol. Mass circulation prints of Fanny Palmer’s “Emigrants Crossing the Plains” (1868), or John Gast’s “Westward Ho” (1872) linked technology, American determination and divine inspiration – in Gast’s case by means of a gigantic, gauzy-gowned Goddess of Liberty floating above westward-moving citizens, telegraph wire and law book in her hands. The homes of westward-pushing or western-raised heroes such as Daniel Boone and Abraham Lincoln, battle sites such as Wounded Knee, the Little Bighorn, and the Alamo; monuments such as the Jefferson Arch and Mount Rushmore; and consumer theme parks such as Disneyland; are all centers at which tourists absorb the spirit of manifest destiny. Innumerable annual “Pioneer Day” celebrations – such as the “Laura Ingalls Wilder Days” in DeSmet, South Dakota – offer small-town and big-city residents the chance to connect heroic ancestral deeds with their communities’ needs of the present and hope for the future.

The preeminent icon of manifest destiny in the twentieth century was Hollywood’s archetypal American hero and most popular actor, John Wayne, who built much of his career reenacting the drama of manifest destiny. A brief consideration of his films shows the link between nature and national mission in twentieth-century guise. In Wayne’s westerns and war films, manifest destiny is repre-

sented as the just and overarching aim of the American people, while Wayne serves as its closed-mouth and hard-fighting but morally virtuous agent. The Wayne persona is most at home on horseback, passing confidently across the land, or nestled rifle-at-the-ready, against rock, tree or sand – though as Gary Wills (1997) points out, he also fills the frame of the interior shots in *Stagecoach* (1939) with the ease of a man of nature. He has enough experience with indigenous people to be on speaking terms with them, and to know their habits and aims, but generally avoids familiarity, and even when preventing imperial violence – as in *Rio Grande* (1950) – he upholds the aim of civilizing the savage and making the land into a secure home for Americans. As a heroic figure he rarely approves of run-of-the-mill religious expression, telling the whore in *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) – with whom he drinks but doesn’t sleep – “Don’t get religion on me” when she offers to pray for him, and ridiculing the preaching of Ward Bond in *The Searchers* (1958). Nevertheless, he embodies the muscular Christianity advocated by Theodore Roosevelt for urban Americans growing soft in the aftermath of frontier conquest. He casually refers to God as “Sir” in *Rio Grande*, and “the man upstairs” in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. At the center of his character is duty, and rarely does it lead him into conflict with official American power. His most conventional religious gesture is his performance of perfunctory but heartfelt funeral services, in which he returns to the Earth either unfortunate subordinates or enemies fallen in his conflicts over soil.

Though Wayne worked with several directors, and played a variety of heroic roles, these portraits cohere in ways that consistently underscore the centrality of manifest destiny to his persona and to an understanding of America as an ideal. Consider, for example, the thematic overlap between *Red River* (1948) for Howard Hawks, his *Rio Grande* trilogy for John Ford (1948–50), his self-produced *The Alamo* (1960), and such war films as *Flying Tigers* (1942), *The Fighting Seabees* (1944), *They Were Expendable* (1945), and *The Sands of Iwo Jima*. The westerns emphasize the righteousness of Wayne’s violence against Indians and Mexicans; the Pacific-based war films present racially uncomplicated portraits of the American fight against Japanese aggressors. But Wayne and his directors erase the historical gap between western conquest and Pacific war by a spatial assimilation; Texas, Arizona, a Pacific island, these separate pieces of Earth are the same under the sweep of Wayne’s gun. Overwhelmingly, Wayne’s violence – even that which is clearly brutal – fulfills a fundamentally religious function, providing what Richard Slotkin (1992) calls “regeneration.” In *They Were Expendable* – the story of U.S. Navy patrol torpedo boats in the opening days of World War II – the western and war story mix to provide a historical, or mythical, gloss on American possession of the Philippines. In one scene, when American defeat before the Japanese invasion

appears certain, Wayne's Lt. Rusty Ryan talks with Dad Knowland, an old boat-builder who refuses to flee. He sits on the front step of his tropical homestead, rifle and whiskey bottle in hand, and tells Ryan: "I worked forty years for this, son. If I leave it they'll have to carry me out," while the background music provides a chorus of "Red River Valley" – a folk-song from the end of the nineteenth century that helped romanticize the American annexation of Texas lands south of the Red River. Music also underscores the righteousness of the American cause in the final scene, as the Civil War's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" helps reconcile viewers to a shot of Wayne's boatless crew marching ragtag off to sacrifice themselves in the jungle. The familiar hymn enables viewer consent to the extension of America's redemptive role in the Pacific, as the land appropriated by one generation of manifest destiny advocates, and defended by another, is made meaningful through connection with the most important example of regenerative violence in American history – the chastened killing and massive dying that Lincoln declared "hallowed" at Gettysburg.

Howard Hawks' *Red River* connects the Western adventure with the biblical account of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, a point which Hawks' screenwriter, novelist William Faulkner, emphasized obliquely to a journalist in 1955 during the filming of *Land of the Pharaohs*. According to Faulkner "It's 'Red River' all over again. The Pharaoh is the cattle baron, his jewels are the cattle, and the Nile is the Red River" (in Hillier and Wollen 1996: 2). In "Red River," Wayne, playing the historic cattleman Tom Dunson, blazer of the Chisholm Trail, establishes his claim to land below the river by shooting without clear provocation or much explanation a Mexican *vaquero*, who challenges Dunson's presence on land his boss had received as a grant from the King of Spain. Justification comes from sidekick Walter Brennan (Groot), who remarks "That's too much land for one man. Why it ain't decent. Here's all this land aching to be used and never has been. I tell you, it ain't decent." The perfunctory killing, the *vaquero*'s brief burial, over which Dunson presides, and the branding of their small stock of cattle are sufficient to mark the land as home for the forward-looking Dunson, who plans to raise the largest herd in Texas and satisfy the American family needs for an abundance of beef.

In both films, American land, wherever it is, is home to American enterprise, violence establishes or maintains its original – and contextless – Anglo-Saxon appropriation, and American identity is framed as relentless, forward-looking and violence-bestowing determination to hold this land in the face of threats from non-Anglos. These twin themes of appropriation and defense of the land overshadow almost any other in Wayne's films, to the extent that his muscular Christian hero rarely appears as a mere worker of the land. And in an age where manifest destiny is already an accomplished fact, his hero is out of

step, harkening back to the time when nature's abundance was not yet assured, or still threatened by the nation's demonic foes.

Wayne's normative nostalgia often served to revive American ideals in challenging times, especially in films produced in the midst of the Second World War, or under the cloud of Cold War uncertainty, as were so many of his westerns. Their frequent reliance upon manifest destiny to establish the meaning of America's mission in the past and its role in the present ran up against the wall of defeat in Vietnam, however, a war which Wayne sought to reinvigorate in familiar terms with *The Green Berets* (1968). But the nature presented by southeast Asian jungles offered little that Wayne could depict as home for American enterprise. Sacrifice for soil comes through more successfully, however, as the Special Forces unit Wayne commands fights off a massive Vietcong siege of their central highlands compound, reversing the outcome of Mexican General Santa Ana's famous 1836 siege of the Alamo. Soil, sacrifice and the example of history mattered as well to President Lyndon Johnson, a Texan whose grandfather may have died at the Alamo, and to whom Wayne wrote in 1965 in support of Johnson's deployment of U.S. troops. For Wayne, the causes were the same, enabling him to use the justification his "Alamo" character, Davy Crockett, offered. "We don't want people like Kosygin, Mao Tse-tung, or the like" Wayne told Johnson, " 'gorin' our oxes' " (in Wills 1997: 228).

In the decades since, American popular culture has apparently abandoned Wayne's faith in manifest destiny and America's overcoming of geography through violence, though he remains Hollywood's most popular figure. Certainly the western saga, as a story of righteous conquest or personal and social redemption achieved through Anglo-Saxon subduing the land, has ceased to animate culture producers. Likewise, Anglo-Saxon racialism has lost its resonance as a public justification for resource extraction. Since Vietnam, Hollywood cameras have often captured war itself through a cynical lens. But the taming of the American landscape – the domestication of nature – that western expansionists first envisioned as the divinely commissioned destiny of the American people is reaffirmed through their endless journeying – moving, working, vacationing – over the country's vast transportation network, and their absorption of natural resources into the needs and designs of their daily lives. Bound by duty to wield a gun in defense of American enterprise, Wayne's characters rarely had time to share in the absorption of nature which this enterprise enables.

Perhaps this absorption has been secularized. However the forthright James Watt, Secretary of the Interior under President Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1983, certainly viewed America's consumption of nature within a decidedly traditional religious framework. In telling Congress that "my responsibility is to follow the Scriptures,

which call upon us to occupy the land until Jesus returns,” he brought back into public life the millennial assumptions regarding the American land and the American mission that had so shaped the idea of manifest destiny to begin with (Klein 1981: 22). By the century’s end that orientation had not lessened among the general public, though it was anathema to left-leaning journalists and environmental activists. In addition, the equation of moral purpose and political power that has guided America’s role on the twentieth-century international frontier was still leading early twenty-first century American policy-makers to sound biblical echoes, as it led Albert J. Beveridge in 1900, to wonder “When nations shall war no more without the consent of the American Republic: what American heart thrills not with pride at that prospect?” (in Cherry 1971: 153).

Matthew Glass

Further Reading

- Cherry, Conrad, ed. *God’s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971.
- Gilpin, William. *Mission of the North American People: Geographical, Social and Political*. New York: Da Capo, 1974 (1873).
- Graebner, Norman A., ed. *Manifest Destiny*. New York: Bobs-Merrill, 1968.
- Hillier, Jim and Peter Wollen, eds. *Howard Hawks: American Artist*. London: British Film Institute: 1996.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Klein, Jeffrey. “Man Apart: James Watt and the Making of God’s Green Acres.” *Mother Jones* 6:6 (August 1981), 20–7.
- Miller, Perry, ed. *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*. New York: Anchor, 1956.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Atheneum, 1992.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Selected Works of Henry David Thoreau*. Walter Harding, ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee. *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Weinberg, Albert K. *Manifest Destiny: A Study in Nationalist Expansion in American History*. Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1958 (1935).
- Wills, Gary. *John Wayne’s America: The Politics of Celebrity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- See also: Book of Nature; Disney Worlds at War; Emerson, Ralph Waldo; Holy Land in Native North America; Indigenous Environmental Network; Native American

Languages; Nature Religion in the United States; Thoreau, Henry David.

P A Manifesto to North American Middle-Class Christians

Preamble

It is time for an Ecological Reformation. The Protestant Reformation and Vatican II brought the importance of the human individual to the attention of Christians. It was a powerful revolution with many impressive religious and political results. But our current version of this model – the individualistic market model, in which each of us has the right to all we can get – is devastating the planet and making other people poor. This model is bankrupt and dangerous. We now need a new model of who we are in the scheme of things and therefore how we should act in the world.

The Individualistic Model

The model of human being as individual is deeply engrained in North American culture. Its goal is oriented to *individuals* – to their rights and desires. North American Christianity has also been focused on individual well-being, either as salvation of believers or comfort to the distressed. This model of human life supports that we are a collection of individuals who have the right to improve our own lives in whatever ways we can. We see ourselves as separate from other people, while acknowledging the right of others to improve themselves. But this is not a description of “the way things are”; it is a model, a *way* of seeing ourselves and nature. It is a way that is proving to be harmful to most of the world’s people and to nature.

There is very little public discussion of the key consequences of this model: climate change (global warming), the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, the extinction of other species, and the rapid decline in natural resources. We are being kept in denial about the seriousness of these major global issues by powerful business lobbies and timid politicians, *but also* by our own reluctance to disrupt the most comfortable lifestyle that any people on Earth have ever enjoyed.

The Ecological Model

The individualistic market model has failed us: it has limited religious viability and it is proving to be dangerous to our planet. We need another model of human life: we need an Ecological Reformation. An Ecological Reformation would base its model of human life on how reality is understood in our time. The picture of reality emerging from cosmology, evolutionary biology, and ecology today focuses on relations and community, not on individuals and objects. *We are all related*: we all came from the same beginning.