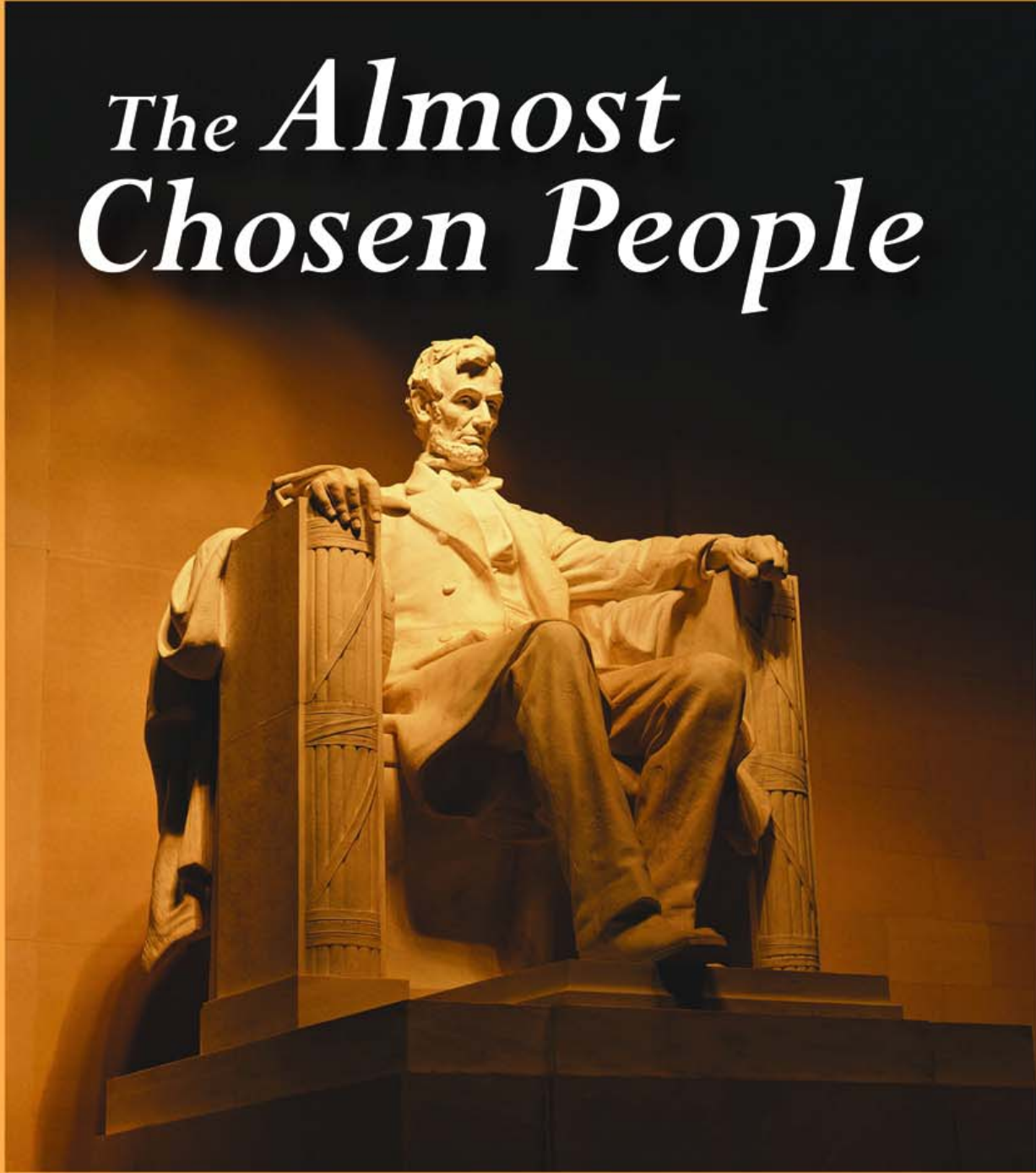


Huston and Kendra Smith



*The Almost
Chosen People*



Essays on Deepening the American Dream
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THE ALMOST CHOSEN PEOPLE

Huston and Kendra Smith

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IS IN the air. Former New York governor Mario Cuomo recently wrote a book titled *Why Lincoln Matters Today More Than Ever*, and there is a general sense that Lincoln does have important things to say to us. The title of this essay, in fact, is taken from a quote from Lincoln.

The context of that phrase is this. Shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln recalled the creative achievement of America's founders with these words: "Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Then, in the acceptance speech for his second term, after alluding to the achievement, which "held out a great promise to all the people of the world for all time to come," he went on to accept his approaching task with these words: "I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle."

It is difficult to imagine a more eloquent and clear statement of the American dream than these brief sentences that can be summarized as follows: The American dream, which holds out great promise for the future, is the dream of freedom and equality for everyone. And because of our extraordinary historical and environmental endowments, it *almost* seems as if God has chosen the American people to launch the American dream.

The Religious Foundation of the American Dream

When, in the seventeenth century, the Pilgrims stepped from their frail barque onto America's shores, they did so with the invocation "In the Name of God. Amen." They were the first of a succession of dreamers—William

Penn, George Fox, and Roger Williams come instantly to mind—who had visions of realizing the Kingdom of God on this “fairest portion of the earth.”

In the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards (who shares with Lincoln the distinction of being one of America’s two greatest theologians) further elucidated that dedication to the Kingdom of God. In his day, America was still a British colony, and the Church of England was the prevailing church. Edwards rejected the Church of England’s claim that the only way to salvation was adherence to its authority and rituals and argued for a direct relationship with God, unmediated by a priesthood. Some historians consider this break with age-old authority to have been a harbinger of the American Revolution. (“Bow down to neither priest nor king” was to become an American maxim when America won its independence.)

Edwards argued that individuals needed to face up to their self-centered sinfulness and make a sincere commitment to change their lives. His passionate preaching of this doctrine set off a firestorm of revivals on the eastern seaboard that came to be known as the Great American Awakening, and it contributed to the American dream by stressing the importance of personal, individual responsibility. In ringing rhetoric, he anticipated four key clauses in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address:

1. “*Upon this continent.*” “God has made,” Edwards said, “two worlds here below, two great habitable continents, far separated from the other. He created the newer of these to house the new heaven and new earth that the scriptures foretold.” We echo this sense of a “new heaven” centuries later. Driving across this continent is an impressive experience. We can only begin to imagine how it looked to settlers with its verdant valleys and streams, well stocked with fish and game—and, almost as important, empty of highways, cities, automobile exhaust, and billboards.

2. “*A new nation.*” For Edwards, as for Lincoln, the United States was a new *kind* of nation, one that had replaced the top-down rule and entrenched privilege of Europe with participatory governance. Unlike other nations, whose inhabitants shared the same history and language, in America people from many different countries came together to create something entirely different.

Edwards couched Lincoln’s point spiritually when he said, “Insofar as Christ’s kingdom is established in the world, so far are the first heavens and the first earth come to an end and the glorious new heavens and the new earth established in their place.” This gives us abundant reason to hope that, as Edwards always says and as Lincoln was to say after the

Civil War, “gradually, gradually,” America may prove to be the rosy dawn of that glorious day.

3. “*Conceived in liberty.*” Lincoln’s third point in his Gettysburg Address is that this new nation was brought forth, as we might say today, in freedom. It is this conception of freedom—not a shared ancestry, common language, or historical past—that makes America an absolutely different kind of nation. What brought it into being was an idea—or better still, the ideal—of liberty.

Here is how Edwards anticipated Lincoln’s third point. “Liberty in its true sense is a spiritual concept. Rational opinions can be excellent, but liberty is more than an abstract idea. It carries with it a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness which makes it pleasant to the soul. The divine light that liberty imparts to the soul is a taste, a desire, and a love for God and his purposes. It is a feeling of affection in the heart, an experience of relishing God’s beauty and holiness.” Implied but not explicitly stated in this quotation is the idea of community, for “we are all members of the Body of Christ.”

Edwards doesn’t even shy away from asserting that Americans share the glorified human nature of Christ himself because of their liberty and their participation in the spiritual community it creates.

They no longer have the fallen human nature of the Old Adam. They have been changed into the New Adam.

4. “*Dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*” Lincoln, like Edwards, understood that the new American nation had to have a spiritual purpose. And that purpose, in Lincoln’s view, was to establish a society in which both the freedom and equality of every member, rooted in the idea of the equality of all human beings in the sight of God, are recognized and maintained. Although Lincoln recognized that progress toward this goal was incremental and experimental, it has been a fundamental political impulse in American society. It is the American dream.

Central to that dream is the belief that an individual who makes the effort and has innate ability can rise above the circumstances of his or her birth. Stories abound of people of humble origins who have worked hard and not just prospered but triumphed. J. C. Penney, for example, was a boy from a family of modest means in Massachusetts who went to sea when he was fourteen, saw the possibilities of trade, amassed a fortune, created a merchandising empire, and built a “castle” in his hometown. The conviction that we Americans share, of being as good as anyone else, is so deeply ingrained in our identity that it is startling to see remnants of a rigid class system when we visit other countries. One summer in Italy,

we were surprised to see a woman confidently march to the head of a long line waiting in the post office. When we asked why this was permitted, we were told that she was a member of the old aristocracy.

Twinned in the American psyche with the triumphant individual is the ideal of the caring community and the parable of the Good Samaritan, who voluntarily gives help even though the recipient is of a different clan. In the eighteenth century, the vision of the caring community, a heaven on earth, brought forth some two hundred utopian experiments. One of these, a minor one, is part of Kendra's family history. In the late 1800s, her grandparents led a group of families to the California desert, where they intended to form a Christian commune while making the desert bloom. The venture ended not because of schism but because the artesian well on which they depended for irrigation brought up alkali, destroying the crops that had been greening with so much promise.

Jonathan Edwards was the prime shaper of the American dream in the eighteenth century and, as we have noted, set the tone for Abraham Lincoln and others in the nineteenth century. The American dream retained its spiritual fervor, albeit tempered by Lincoln's humanity and vision. For Lincoln, as for Edwards, equality and liberty were God-given, and the maintenance and extension of this birthright was our nation's spiritual task. In the twentieth century, however, in our view, the spiritual foundation (and with it the American dream) collapsed as if hit by a powerful earthquake. Before we pick up on that, we must take note of the fact that the history of the American dream is not all sweetness and light.

Three Shadows of the American Dream

The darkest shadows in American history are undoubtedly the "ethnic cleansing" of the indigenous peoples of this continent and the institution of slavery, but our historic struggles with extending suffrage to all citizens have also cast a pall on our American dream of equality and freedom.

More Native Americans were killed by the diseases Europeans brought with them than by bullets from their muskets, but the attitudes and actions taken against the surviving Native Americans are horrifying. There were times and places where native peoples were mercilessly hunted and bounties were paid for their scalps as if they were nothing more than the pelts of wolves. As late as the mid-twentieth century, Indian children as young as six were taken without warning from their parents and homes and all that they knew and loved and incarcerated in government schools,

where they were punished for speaking their own tongue. This ongoing destruction of their culture and way of life resulted in a demoralization akin to posttraumatic stress syndrome, manifested by apathy, depression, hopelessness, suicide, compromised immune systems, difficulty making decisions and long-range plans, vulnerability to addiction, and sporadic violence.

In 1835, in *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville, that acute French observer of the American scene, described the forced removal of the Cherokees (who had begun to assimilate to American ways and agriculture) from the Carolinas to Oklahoma:

It is impossible to imagine the terrible afflictions that accompanied these forced emigrations. By the time the Indians left their paternal lands, they were already exhausted and diminished. The country they hoped to settle in was already occupied by tribes that felt only jealousy toward the new arrivals. Behind them lay hunger, ahead war, and everywhere misery. In the hope of escaping their many enemies, they split up. . . . The social band, long since weakened, now broke. Already these migrants had no homeland; soon they ceased to constitute a people. At most a few families remained. Their common name was lost, their language was forgotten, and every trace of their origin disappeared.

Daniel Inouye, who chairs the Senate Committee on Native American Affairs, has said, "It does not please me to have to report that of the 800 treaties we signed with Indians, 400 were never acted upon. We simply filed them away—requiring, however, that the Indians live up to their concessions." He added, "And of the remaining 400 treaties, we have broken every one of them."

For Native Americans, our society seems to have adopted an out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach. It is ironic that among whites, there is a growing appreciation of Indian spirituality and adoption of some of Native American customs—vision quests, use of the talking stick and "smudging" with the sacred smoke of sage, and most laudably a concern that the earth sustain future generations. Still, awareness precedes concerted action, and awareness is gathering force. A hard-hitting milestone film, *A Seat at the Table: The Struggle for Native American Rights* (Kirafu Productions) and a companion book (University of California Press) were released in 2004, to great acclaim and enthusiastic public reception.

As for slavery, the other stain on our history, from antiquity to fairly recent times, a civilization that was not dependent on slavery was almost

as unimaginable as it is for us today to think of a society without automobiles. In 1800, two-thirds of the population of the world was enslaved outright or through serfdom or its equivalent. Nevertheless, the Atlantic slave trade and treatment of African slaves were infinitely more brutal than the practice of slavery in other cultures such as ancient Greece. The ships that brought slaves to this continent can only be compared to a concentration camp, where men, women, and children were packed into holds like insensate cargo, and only the strongest survived death from dehydration, disease, and malnutrition. Tellingly, a white man who killed another man's slave was indicted for destruction of property, not for murder.

The ancients did not feel it necessary to justify slavery, unlike our forebears, who rationalized its use as a method of converting "heathens." Taking an opposite tack, others argued that Africans had no souls and were therefore no better than beasts. Most widespread was the conviction that whites were superior to all other races, with the spectrum of worth matched to shades of skin color. Even Lincoln reflected this assumption of his times. Although he believed slavery to be wrong, he doubted that blacks could coexist as equals and felt that they should be returned to Africa. Such attitudes linger today, taking their most virulent form in the rantings of white supremacists. Although slavery was abolished, racism persists, from subtle discrimination to police brutality and profiling—what people of color sometimes ironically call DWB, for "driving while black."

Self-flagellation for past injustices is fruitless, but past unhealed wounds must be examined and cleansed. Creativity, sacrifice, and leadership are all required to make our society whole. The civil rights movement of the 1960s succeeded in many ways, ridding us of formal segregation and Jim Crow laws, but many Americans paid the price: the three young civil rights workers who were murdered and encased in concrete, four little girls dressed in their Sunday best who died in the bombing of a black church, the torture-murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. And there are so many unnamed others who remind us again of Lincoln when he decried, with the hyperbole of his earliest speeches, the shame of vigilante violence and "lynched bodies hanging from trees like Spanish moss."

The civil rights movement was not a political movement with religious overtones; it was a religious movement with political overtones. It gathered force in the mid-twentieth century with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). Out of these organizations emerged Martin Luther King Jr. He used his Southern Baptist oratorical style, with its familiar resounding

prophetic calls for justice, to mobilize millions to work for racial justice, climaxing with the 250,000-strong March on Washington in 1963.

Though the end of slavery and the overturning of mandated discrimination have enabled more blacks to move into the middle and professional classes and out of ghettos, the legacy of those earlier injustices is still palpable.

Many African Americans struggle to get out of the violent and chaotic urban ghettos where large numbers of them still live. Those of us who are more fortunate may believe that anyone with talent and gumption can surmount even the worst environment. But a directionless apathy is one of the legacies of racism. And even those blessed with functional families, who are motivated to study seriously for college and who manage to stay out of trouble, may still meet a violent end because they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, a tragedy so common it doesn't rate a line in the news.

Roland G. Fryer Jr., a prominent and esteemed economic researcher at Harvard who is African American, recalling his painful childhood, said he thought it was sheer luck that he was neither killed nor imprisoned like so many of his black brethren. And what is the price we pay for the simmering frustrations of those who have nothing to lose?

Then there is the shadow of the slow expansion of voting rights. The revolutionary idea of equality, which the writers of the Declaration of Independence called self-evident, originally did not include everyone. Males who did not own property were initially excluded from voting, and not until 1920 did the franchise include women.¹

The first viable community on American shores, that of the Puritans, was a theocracy. All theocracies that come to mind seem to be male-dominated, hard on nonbelievers and on women. Female heretics and witches suffered persecution and death. Uppity women were punished with ducking stools or the stocks, and women caught in adultery were made into lifelong pariahs, unlike their male partners. Although we believe that the American dream is at heart a spiritual one, the religion that has powered that dream has a shadowy side. It is a common feature of our history and our current situation that adversaries on every moral issue have appealed to religion for support and hijacked it in times of war to justify their actions. Nevertheless, religious idealism has also fueled the abolition of slavery, elimination of child labor and sweatshops, reform of the prison system and mental hospitals, and support for education.

When the framers of the Constitution had finished their work, Benjamin Franklin announced in words something like these: "Gentlemen,

we have given you a republic. The question now is, can you keep it?" Our answer is that despite our shadows and shortcomings, we have kept the republic and extended its freedom within our borders, and we have also been, as Lincoln hoped, a model for emerging democracies. But Franklin's question is still very appropriate as we look at the obstacles we currently face in realizing the American dream.

Erosion of the American Dream in the Twentieth Century

Our parents, born in the nineteenth century, grew up in a world much like that of George Washington—horses, wood- or coal-burning stoves for warmth and cooking, soap made at home from wood ashes and sheep tallow, hand pumps and windmills for water. There were no electric lights, no electric switches, no zippers, no plastic—none of what we take so much for granted. If our parents could have been catapulted into 2005 from the 1880s, all that we do every day with the press of a button would seem like miracles—as they do to foreigners arriving from less industrialized countries. When Kendra introduced a Tibetan refugee to the San Francisco Bay Area subway system, demonstrating how one inserts a card in a slot that opens a gate and then automatically pops up again, the Tibetan joked half-seriously, "In Tibet we would worship this." He meant, of course, that it seemed as much a miracle as changing water into wine. Twentieth-century Americans have worshiped the science that is the *source* of these miracles, trusting that it was the key to solving all human problems.

That trust was misplaced. Around the middle of the twentieth century, a group of notables such as Arthur Koestler believed that the communism they had ardently championed had let them down, and Koestler published a book titled *The God That Failed*. The "God" that has failed us in our time is science. One cannot clearly envision the future of the American dream without thinking about science and its effect on that dream.

To speak precisely, it wasn't science that failed us but "scientism." Science relies on the scientific method, which centers on systematic experimentation, to reveal and explain the workings of the physical universe. Scientism, by contrast, posits that the scientific method is the only reliable method of getting at truth and that the things that science deals with—material things—are the foundation of everything that exists. The assumptions of scientism are not scientific; that is, they are not supported by any scientific experiment. They are at best speculative hypotheses and at worst arbitrary opinions. The assumptions of scientism have led us astray. The foundation of things is not dead matter—which gives us the materialism

that has hung like a dead albatross around our necks—but consciousness. And the scientific method is *not* the royal road to truth; it is the royal road to truths about matter and nature, which is all it can encompass.

There is another way of stating this important point. Science is empirical, which is to say that it derives from what our physical senses report, mainly what we see. Everything mapped by science—all the way from the very small (quantum mechanics, where distances are measured in nanometers) to the unimaginably large (relativity physics, where distances are measured in light-years)—comes from what we see and logical inferences we make from those observations.

The problem, of course, is that while our physical senses are valuable, they are not the only senses we have. No one has ever seen a thought. No one has ever seen a feeling. Yet these are where our lives are directly lived. A succinct way of stating the fundamental mistake we have made is to say that we have mistaken an absence of evidence for evidence of absence of things other than the material. That is, what science cannot deal with through control and measurement is dismissed as unimportant or unreal.

This shift of faith from spirit to science in the twentieth century all but collapsed the American dream. The shift has disappointed us severely. As we look back, the theme of the Chicago World's Fair in the 1930s, "A Century of Progress," seems like a bad joke. Over the course of the past hundred years, technology has been directed toward Orwellian control of whole peoples, to the genocide and gas chambers of fascism, to the gulags and mass starvation of Stalin's Soviet Union.

Technology has brought us unparalleled comforts and ease and miraculous medical cures while at the same time dumping so many pollutants into the air, water, and soil that we have history's biggest uncontrolled experiment. We don't know what the proliferation of chemicals developed in the past fifty years—more than in all previous millennia—will do to us. And the pride of putting satellites and human beings into space is accompanied by nuclear-tipped missiles that can reach their targets from any point in the world within minutes. The acceleration of change in the past hundred years has been exhilarating but also dizzying and frightening. We don't know where we are going, but we are going there really fast.

Also disturbing is the sense of meaninglessness, an inner deadness, that seems to have arisen. Most of our society experiences feelings of emptiness and tries to fill them by eating, buying things, and seeking distraction in entertainment and spectacles. There is a numbness that can be mitigated by the intensity of sex and violence that saturate the media; tragically, escape is not always vicarious in this violent and sex-obsessed society.

The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century exploited this spiritual emptiness by offering the false religions of communism and fascism. Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, believed that a spiritual hunger underlies alcoholism, and some contemporary mental health workers are convinced that he was correct. We also believe that fear underlies many of the dynamics not just of our recent past but of our current struggles as well.

Heightened levels of fear arose after World War II with the arrival of the atomic bomb. Americans no longer felt secure within their great oceans and reacted to fear with aggression. Aggression and anger, at both a personal and a national level, are ways to suppress and deny fear and feelings of helplessness and vulnerability and to replace those emotions with the illusion of strength and control. Fear seeks a simply defined target, a demon that is the Other, and strikes out blindly. The demon in the latter part of the twentieth century was the Soviet Union, and certain Americans campaigned for a preemptive war. The USSR did indeed pose a serious risk, but our fear gave it a mythic weight that distorted judgment. Ronald Reagan dubbed the USSR the Evil Empire and spoke of an Armageddon between the forces of darkness (them) and the forces of light (us). The inflated fears of the Cold War resulted in actions that have come back to bedevil us: the CIA sabotaged democratic elections in Iran, Chile, and Guatemala because of their socialist agendas, and we armed Saddam Hussein's Iraq with biological and other weapons in his war against Iran.

We are devoting this much space to fear because it breeds aggression, which has been increasing in our society, from the schoolyard bully and youth gangs to how we behave as a superpower. Violence (which term we are using interchangeably with *aggression*) is also a reaction to inner deadness, but fear is the greater factor. If we are to understand the problems that face us in the twenty-first century and respond to them with wisdom and skillful means, we need to tolerate our feelings of fear and limited power without escaping through blind aggression or hedonistic escapism.

The American Dream in the Twenty-First Century

Gandhi said that people who think that politics has nothing to do with religion understand neither politics nor religion. He meant that unless religion is little more than a private solace to the individual, we must act collectively—politically—through the institutions that shape our world. If we acknowledge the worth of each individual, seeking a society that makes real the possibility of the American dream for each one, we must

participate responsibly and wisely through these institutions. The most important of these are religion, economic structures, education, and—presiding over all of these because it protects our security as individuals and as a community—government. Today none of these institutions is serving us well. Individual achievement and success are only a small part of the American dream of realizing our full potential as human beings within the sacred body of life. We depend on others for both our individual development and our communal well-being. Let us look briefly at each of these institutions.

Religion

All human societies give religion a prominent place. It energizes and frames the meaning of our lives. In America, it has sustained those who risked their lives in the Underground Railroad and the civil rights movement, through death marches and imprisonment, and in all our movements for justice. Human beings are capable of heroism and great endurance when they believe they are part of something larger and greater than themselves—in the Judeo-Christian tradition, God—and when they have the moral support of a spiritual community. Love—love of God and a responsible loving care for others—casts out fear. When love is central, religion is a beneficent engine.

On the other hand, when religion is primarily a defense against fear of the Other, of persons who have different beliefs or who look different or have different rituals or lifestyles, religion is an equally strong ingredient in causing disrespect at best and persecution and violence at worst. Where fear and a need for certainty rule, religion becomes authoritarian, intolerant, and militant. We see this in pockets of our own country and in others that fear our cultural influences as well as our military and economic domination.

Religion (which is to say Christianity) in America is currently hamstrung between liberals and conservatives (typically referred to as fundamentalists or evangelicals) who cancel each other out. Fundamentalists are similar in their insistence that the Bible be read literally, but they differ in their outreach. Some provide spiritual homes for persons who are adrift or addicted, while others present a legalistic and condemning face to the world. At one extreme of the religious spectrum are those who deny that we are responsible for our planet, who embrace an “end times” doomsday scenario, an Armageddon, claiming this as proof of their faith in God. On the other, more activist end are others who would throw out

judges and overturn the rule of law in the name of God. What is needed is an infusion of respect to enable people of differing beliefs to work together for justice and a caring community.

Liberals, in contrast, tend to be socially responsible but have lost their sense of transcendence, and more liberal denominations are losing members rapidly. The distinguished sociologist Peter Berger tells us that if anything characterizes modernity, it is a loss of the sense of transcendence—of a reality that exceeds and encompasses our everyday affairs. Universities incorporate that loss, and as clergy need to be educated, their university education dilutes their confidence in transcendence. Yet the conservatives' grip on transcendence is no stronger. Theology has thus transformed into ethical philosophy, while piety has turned into morality. As a result, the authority of religion has waned along with the mystery of the sacred. This situation has led, on balance, to a secularized America and a growing backlash against it in ultraconservatism. In the words of the novelist Saul Bellow, "It is hard to see how modern beings can survive on what they now get from their conscious minds, especially now that there is a kind of veto against impermissible thoughts, the most impermissible being the notion that human beings might have spiritual lives of which they are not conscious."

It would help to heal the breach between liberals and conservatives if we could shift the emphasis from belief systems to the spiritual virtues that all religions espouse: love or compassion that is not restricted to one's own tribe; generosity; forgiveness; justice tempered by mercy; respect and civility.

Government

Recent years have seen the growing conviction that government is no longer "of the people, by the people, and for the people" but an alien behemoth that arbitrarily throws its weight around. This attitude is reflected in the too often heard rationales for not voting: that a vote makes no difference and that all politicians are the same. The same cynicism is expressed when people say that we have the best congressional representative (or senator or president) that "money can buy." Political candidates who say, "It's not the government's money; it's your money" do us a disservice by strengthening the delusion that government—its debts and spending priorities—have nothing to do with our own values and responsibilities. Voting fraud and the destructive influence of money on politics have been with us since the earliest days of the republic, but apathy and cynicism are pernicious, and remedies that keep pace with chang-

ing technology can be found. Government is the way, *the only way*, that we as a people can act collectively to extend the blessings of the American dream, although religiously inspired movements have often provided the momentum that culminated in law (for example, the civil rights legislation of the 1960s).

Abraham Lincoln, in the 1859 speech in Illinois that thrust him onto the national stage, spoke eloquently of a danger that faces us now. When people no longer feel that government is representing and serving them, he said, citizens will stop participating in the political process. "There are always men of ability and ambition who will usurp power." Walter Lippman, a commentator reflecting the same thought in the 1950s, said that in the United States, it would not be a military general who took power but a Mr. Nice Guy. By this he meant that our cultural attitudes and our Constitution would protect us from a military coup, but a low turnout of voters and the general disinterest that confront us would replace a referendum on the issues with a popularity contest. Our constitutional blueprint is sound, but it is not encoded in our DNA. Apathy and cynicism threaten our liberty more than any external threat. We need to recognize that democracies are fragile and exceedingly rare in the world. The important thing is to care. By preserving the right to participate in the democratic process, we affirm the worth of each person and express our care for others and for the world.

Economics

We are a special kind of animal, and how we meet our animal needs reflects our sense of who we are, our connectedness to a community, and what we care about. Opportunity to fulfill one's potential is also linked to the economic system and its distribution of benefits. Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and Nobel laureate, suggests that a country's prosperity be measured not by its gross national product but by the quality of life (indicated by longevity and low infant mortality, the level of literacy, low rates of crime and extreme poverty, and care of the young, the elderly, and the unfortunate). To these measures we would add sufficient leisure for family life and spiritual cultivation. The United States, once a leader, has fallen steadily behind on all counts.

There are a number of reasons for this. Urbanization and the ghettoization of the poor have eroded our sense that our well-being depends, in the long run, on the health and well-being of everyone. How do we keep alive our obligation to be our brother's keeper when our brother is invisible to us?

Another reason is the cost of militarism. One often hears claims that we are the richest country in the world, and if one takes the dollar value of the gross national product and divides it by the number of citizens, that would seem to be true. But we spend on the military almost as much as all the other countries combined; and as more is spent on military power, less is invested in social needs that affect our communal body.

A third reason is the resurgence of market fundamentalism, a faith that unrestricted and unregulated actions based on self-interest will achieve an optimal distribution of goods and services. This requires some background. Ideologues like to burnish their theories by speaking of the science of economics, but economics is a matter of human arrangement codified by laws and governments. Since industrialization, these human-engineered systems have ranged from economies largely controlled by the state or an aristocracy to a relatively unregulated system that encourages individual initiative and risk taking—the free market or capitalist system. None has ever existed in pure form. Free market fundamentalists point to the triumph of the United States over the Soviet Union as proof of capitalism's superiority. But in making this claim, they overlook the buffers against greed that have been put in place: the social safety net, public subsidies of education and research that feed into industry, protections won by labor unions, and regulation of American banking and the financial market that was put into place to avoid catastrophic boom and bust cycles.

Both state-controlled economies and unrestrained capitalism carry within them the seeds of their own destruction. With top-down centralized control, corruption is inevitable, the allocation of resources is unrelated to realities, and the goods produced are out of sync with the wants and needs of the population. Without regulation, bigger businesses swallow up smaller ones until a growing concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands eliminates competition and imposes barriers to new ventures. This is what happened in the age of the so-called robber barons, when the *daily* income of some of our wealthiest tycoons was greater than the *lifetime* earnings of hourly workers in mills and sweatshops. Government interventions and organized labor reversed this trend and saved capitalism. But as we move into the twenty-first century, the disparity between the wealth of the top and the lower income brackets is expanding like a middle-aged waistline, and a third of families with children are struggling to provide basic necessities. Health care, nutrition, and housing do not come close to being adequate for those at the bottom, while incomes for the top 10 percent have tripled since 1973. Of the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States now has the dubious distinction of having the highest percentage of low-

wage jobs. The realities behind these figures mock the promise of “an almost chosen people,” a people with a potential for a level of justice and harmony that could be a beacon for the world.

It is the devout faith of market fundamentalists that the “laws” of supply and demand—each individual seeking maximum profit, unhampered by regulations or taxes—will yield rewards and goals that fuel productivity and that progressive taxes and aid to the poor are mere sentimentality that lessen incentives to work and achieve. Their claim that investment and prosperity are in reverse ratio to tax rates is not borne out by evidence. A 2004 report from the World Bank ranks developed countries according to the competitiveness of their economies in the world market and, additionally, as the places most favorable for doing business. The Scandinavian countries, with high taxes and the most generous safety nets, were among the top ten on both scores. Probably, the connection between tax policy and economic standing is indirect. By preventing a huge concentration of wealth, these countries avoid the corruption that concentrated wealth inevitably tends to breed. The reasons for the business-friendly climate of these countries are multiple, but it can be noted that businesses are not burdened with requirements to provide health insurance for their workers, and they draw on a workforce that is well educated and has access to universal medical care and dental care through the government. The issues of competition versus cooperation and privatization versus public must be resolved with care for the well-being of all and with pragmatism, not simplistic ideologies.

Globalization is the elephant in the living room that is going to be barely acknowledged here because of its complexity, yet it has a bearing on national security and education as well as national prosperity. Like nuclear power, globalization is a genie that cannot be put back into the bottle. It holds the possibility of great benefits, as well as the possibility of a sharper divide between the haves and have-nots. The challenge is to find ways to restrain capitalism’s self-destructive side while fostering its creative side through an unprecedented degree of international cooperation, not only for material welfare but also for a healthy, life-sustaining planet. In democratic states, specific interest groups pose a problem (for example, cotton growers receive more money for subsidies than is spent on foreign aid, edging cotton-growing African countries out of the market). We can hope that a newly fledged cooperative effort among affluent nations might support each country’s resistance to special-interest groups that sabotage the well-being of the whole. In a “global village,” the American dream can no longer be realized in isolation any more than our own country could exist half slave and half free.

Education

Protestantism's emphasis on the responsibility of each person for his or her own soul required knowledge of the Bible and hence a need for literacy. At one time, teaching, like the ministry, was regarded as a religious vocation. Biblical literacy, as a reason for education, was replaced by the need for an informed electorate, one that can be our "brother's keeper" through governmental policy. But there are other issues.

Isaac Asimov, one of our foremost science fiction writers, was asked in an interview shortly before he died what one thing would he like to see changed in this country. Affirming that our greatest resource is our people, on whom the future rests, he promptly answered that he would like to see funds for elementary education tripled or quadrupled. Not only is basic literacy mastered in the elementary schools, but an enthusiasm for learning is usually developed then—or never. The socialization and development of emotional intelligence—self-understanding and restraint, empathy, altruism, and an ability to resolve conflicts peaceably, all spiritual virtues ideally learned in the home—can be extended in the early school years. To some extent, teachers can make up for deficits in the family, but the child who has not been socialized and who has not learned to study by the fourth grade is almost certain to have behavioral as well as academic problems in the later grades. Such children are shut out of the American dream of fulfillment,—at great cost to society and all of us.

The state of public education in this country is enough to make one weep. An aging population—in Philadelphia, only 12 percent of adults have children in public schools—is one reason it is difficult to pass school bonds. Some states are looking to gambling casinos to support schooling, which suggests that the elderly more readily part with money for gambling than for education. This makes this makes us ashamed of our generation.

But there is hope. The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2002, has the goal of making schools in poor districts equal to those in more affluent neighborhoods and of making the teaching profession more accountable. There are flaws in the legislation and the funding has been less than promised, but its worthy aim is to raise the quality of schools in impoverished areas. The legislation has several blind spots. One is to focus entirely on schools without regard for the effects of poverty. Parents working two or three jobs at minimum wage to provide shelter and food are unable to give the nurturance and security that prepare a child for school. Children who arrive at school undernourished, tired because there is no bed or no quiet place to sleep, cannot respond to even the most gifted and dedicated teachers. Public investment in good pre-

schools and child care would pay large dividends. A substantial increase in the minimum wage, an increase rather than cuts in food stamps and Medicaid, a negative income tax, and a significant investment in adequate housing would do as much perhaps as money funneled directly to the schools.

Teachers are often blamed without recognizing their need for support and the value of inducements to work in difficult schools. Retaining good teachers is a far larger problem than dismissing poor ones. And the inflexibility written into the law unfairly penalizes some schools and hampers creative teaching.

National Security

Education and national security are inextricably combined in a globalized economy. According to a report written by the United States Commission on National Security for the Twenty-First Century, "Americans are living off economic and security benefits of the last three generations' investment in science and education, but we are now consuming our capital. Our systems of basic scientific research and education are in crisis, while other countries are redoubling their efforts. In the next quarter century, we will likely see ourselves surpassed, and in relative decline, unless we make a conscious national commitment to maintain our edge."

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, national security has never been far from our minds. Some of our reactions to fear have been paranoid, but even paranoids have real enemies. Dangers are multiple, but we have focused simplistically on Islamic jihadists. The terrorists who are a threat to us are reacting to the political oppression, corruption, materialism, and economic stagnation of their own countries by blaming the United States, in a way mirroring our own oversimplified worldview. It is our policies, not our values, that foment hatred. Our government has supported oppressive regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq and has conspired to overthrow a democratically elected president in Iran and to restore the Pahlavi dynasty to the throne.

But aid used creatively can be an effective way to encourage governments that make steps toward democratization. Where governments are corrupt, aid might be directed to nongovernmental organizations that help ordinary people start small businesses and build schools and locally trained and staffed health clinics. There are Americans who have raised their own money to do this kind of work, providing inspiring success stories that can serve as a model of what could be accomplished on a larger scale.

Compassion and self-interest are not in conflict. The wise use of trade can be effective. Trade embargoes have not democratized Cuba, Iran, or Iraq, whereas trade and cultural exchanges with China and Vietnam have brought about some openness and freedom in these nominally communist countries. Trade and aid, carefully designed, could help stabilize Afghanistan, benefiting that country while increasing American security. After the American invasion in 2002, the people of Afghanistan have returned to raising opium poppies in order survive. Our forces have destroyed poppy crops, but we have not opened our market to Afghanistan's wool, carpets, melons, and pomegranates, nor have we helped build transport systems to export the nation's products.

Although we may not think of it as a threat to our security, our dependence on fossil fuels, especially oil, puts us in jeopardy. The United States has about 3 percent of the world's oil reserves, and it is predicted that worldwide the last oil will be extracted in about fifty years. When the bar is closed, there will be no more drinks—and we have not begun detoxification. President Jimmy Carter announced in 1980, "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." His successors clearly agreed. With U.S. troops currently in the Middle East, South America, and Africa, we have turned our military into an oil-protection agency at an enormous cost. Steps to reverse our dependence on oil require the political will to confront powerful commercial interests, and technological solutions should be the Manhattan Project of the twenty-first century. No, we are not imagining a society of vegetarian saints in sandals, but we already have much more technology than we are using. We can develop alternative energy sources from sun, wind, the ocean, crops, hydrogen, and animal manure (methane)—this is a challenge but not science fiction. The Apollo Alliance, an influential umbrella organization of Green Party members and trade unionists, is convinced our country *could* achieve energy independence within a generation. Any country that achieves this breakthrough is going to be in a very powerful position. Other countries are pouring more money into research than we are.

At the heart of national security is the matter of nuclear bombs. The United States has six thousand nuclear warheads, each bomb twenty times more damaging than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima and killed two hundred thousand people. If just one of these bombs were used, all buildings would be flattened within a 20- to 60-mile radius, and all living things would be incinerated. The present administration has plans to "modern-

ize” nuclear weapons, yet nuclear bombs are militarily useless. Any nation that launched one of these would destroy much or possibly all of the living things on earth, so their use is morally and practicably indefensible. Self-destruction would almost certainly ensue. A hundred or a few hundred bombs would be sufficient as a deterrent to other nuclear powers. If we look at America’s planet-destroying potential from the perspective of other nations, we can understand why any responsible leader would seek to protect his people with a bomb to deter the United States. If we renounced a first strike, which we have not done, other nations would have some assurance that we are not preparing to obliterate them within seconds. Is it any wonder that terrorists regard us as a source of danger?

A Life-Sustaining Planet

All religions regard Mother Earth as sacred, but our actions as modern human beings do not reflect reverence. As our breath depends on a living body, so our security depends on the planet’s life-sustaining properties, a delicate balance of a nearly infinite number of elements and forces. Breathable air, drinkable water, fertile soil, the right amount of sunlight without too much of the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays, the right amount of rainfall in the right places at the right time, a right balance of microorganisms—all have blessed this planet, unique in our galaxy, possibly unique among the mind-boggling billions of galaxies, as a cradle for sentient, thinking, hopeful, aspiring beings. Complacently, we have tended to regard this balance as immune to human activities, despite evidence of threats.

It is hard for us to get our minds wrapped around the speed of recent change in the earth’s ecology. Take atmospheric carbon dioxide. For 160 million years the amount has been fairly stable, but in the last forty years, it has shot up by 18 percent, with the prediction that carbon dioxide will double in the next twenty years as a result of human activities, chiefly the use of fossil fuels and the clear-cutting of forests. Excess carbon dioxide causes the formation of a cloudy haze that acts as a thermal blanket covering the globe while reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the surface of the earth. The consequent global warming will have a number of harmful effects, among them less water for agriculture and a rising ocean level. Even the Pentagon has become concerned about how rising ocean levels might affect the Panama Canal.

Changes in average temperature worldwide seem abstract, but we begin to pay attention when large numbers of people die in unprecedented heat waves, as they did in France and Chicago in 2003. Cities have been relying more and more on air conditioning to offset the use of heat-conducting

materials in construction, but air conditioning is a catch-22. It is powered by fuel that expels carbon dioxide into the air and more heat, which is absorbed by brick and concrete. We need to capitalize on our knowledge of building methods that maintain comfort with little or no artificial cooling.

The proliferation of chemicals over the past sixty-five years is subjecting us to an uncontrolled experiment, with unpredictable consequences for our health and the environment.

- The increased incidence of breast cancer and autism is possibly related to the promiscuous use of new, inadequately tested chemicals; we just don't know.

- Nineteen states now warn residents against eating fish from any of their rivers and lakes, and all but two states counsel avoidance of fish from some of their waters. And because industrial mercury has leached into the ocean, we are advised to avoid some fish entirely and eat others no more than once a week, after years of being told that fish is one of the best heart-healthy foods. Some large marine fish that were once staples (in Massachusetts, the "Sacred Cod," stuffed, hangs over the state assembly room) have virtually disappeared.

- Pesticides unnecessarily poison our environment. One of the worst is methyl bromide, an extremely toxic fumigant used on strawberry fields that is dangerous to field workers and depletes the ozone that protects the earth from harmful ultraviolet rays.

- Nitrogen and ammonia from animal waste runoff are choking and killing our waterways. But there are creative solutions to this problem. On one farm, founded by an Austrian immigrant two generations ago, methane gas is extracted from the manure of several hundred dairy cows and used to run the heating and cooling machines on the farm, with more energy produced than the farm uses. The remainder of the manure is used to fertilize fields, and there is no stench! Water is purified for reuse, and procedures are followed that keep the herd free of mad cow and other diseases, eliminating the need for antibiotics.

- In addition to water, soil, and air, we need to save forests, which are the earth's lungs, producing oxygen, cooling the planet, preventing floods and erosion of fertile soil, and retaining water for use when needed.

The cost of reversing the trends toward turning this earth into a lifeless asteroid is huge, but the cost of not reversing trends . . . to finish the sentence is too dismal. A race for more and more weapons to compete for

shrinking resources (resources that could be sustained or increased) would mean that the world ends with a bang and not a whimper. Transnational planning, regulation, and collaboration in scientific research—always essential to scientific progress—are no longer nice ideals but the only way forward. That God helps those who help themselves and who follow the path of peace has never been truer.

Hope

Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, dourly observed that the world can support a lot more vegetarian saints than Hummer-driving idiots. It is true that the globe cannot indefinitely support the promiscuous consumption and waste that is called the American lifestyle. In fact, the American lifestyle is not even attainable for a third of Americans. However, changes in what we produce and how we live would not reduce our quality of life. Quite the opposite. Discovery of an alternative to disappearing fossil fuels, not an impossible dream, would revolutionize the world's economy. In the meantime, we already have knowledge that can be put to work. The biggest barrier is vested interests and absence of political will. Some of these actions have already been discussed.

Buildings that generate more energy than they consume and factories so safe that they need no regulation (that in fact expel waste water clean enough to drink) are not just on the drawing boards; they have been built. William McDonough and Michael Braungart, an industrial designer and architect respectively, foresee an economy based on energy that is ultimately from the sun, and not on toxic chemicals which they call anti-life.² To simply reduce the emission of poisons such as mercury is not the answer. We will cite some examples of the pioneering work of William McDonough and Michael Braungart because they have stimulated interest in other entrepreneurs, who have commented that going green is also, at this time, the color of money.

McDonough and Braungart have built a textile plant in Switzerland that used no mutagens, carcinogens, endocrine disrupters, heavy-metal contaminants, or chemicals that cause ozone depletion, allergies, or skin problems or that kill plants or fish. To do this, they screened eight thousand commonly used chemicals and ended up with thirty-eight. When inspectors measured the effluent water, they thought their instruments were broken because the water was pure. Workers have no need for protective clothing, and a garden club is using the textile trimmings as mulch. The fabric produced is safe enough to eat. It is a high-performance,

supremely comfortable fabric that has been selected for the upholstery on the new Airbus 380. McDonough is insistent that going ecological does not mean downgrading, nor does it mean sacrificing profits or downsizing employment. In another factory that his group designed, a furniture company, energy costs were cut by 30 percent and productivity soared.

A few more examples of the pioneering innovations that point to what our future can be deserve more space. William McDonough questions the need to knock down trees, which “make oxygen, sequester carbon, distill water, build soils, convert solar energy to fuel, change colors with the seasons, create microclimates and provide habitat.”³ Paper (which by volume is our nation’s biggest throwaway item) can be made, smooth and white, not from trees but from plastic resins and inorganic fillers. Such paper can be indefinitely recycled and printed with ink that is safe (unlike most ink). McDonough and Braungart have invented a process that floats the ink off the page to be recaptured for endless reuse.

The McDonough-Braungart team has developed building materials from a nontoxic polystyrene that can be used to build walls that are strong, lightweight, and superinsulating. The buildings can be heated and cooled for next to nothing and are so nearly soundproof that tenants cannot hear the people who live above or below them. The government of China has commissioned housing for some four hundred million people in the next twelve years using this technology. This same inventive pair plan to install enough solar collectors in China’s miles of marginal land to produce enough electricity to replace air-choking coal-powered generators. An enterprise of this scale would drop the price of solar energy dramatically. And for every job making solar panels, there would be four jobs installing and maintaining them.

They also plan to put gardens on roofs, which unlike traditional roofs will not degrade and require replacement every twenty years. They visualize cities that from the air will look like parks or farms. McDonough and Braungart planted a “green roof” of grasses for the corporate campus of the Gap that damps the sounds of jets from nearby San Francisco airport, absorbs stormwater, makes oxygen, provides habitat—and looks beautiful. They have done the same thing for the Ford Motor Company’s River Rouge plant, saving the company millions of dollars in stormwater equipment.

There can be a second Industrial Revolution, one that is designed. The first Industrial Revolution grew without plan or foresight, dumping tons of lung-choking materials into the air and poisons into the water, along with tons of waste. A second Industrial Revolution would restore the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants.

Conclusion

The word *dream* has two meanings. When Martin Luther King Jr. poured the power of his southern oratory into the phrase, “I have a dream” on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he was using the word in its sense of vision, and that is the way the word is being used in this project of Deepening the American Dream. But the word can also refer to the things that go on in our minds when we are asleep. If we switch to that meaning for a moment, we could almost say that in these opening years of the twenty-first century, the American dream has become a nightmare.

At some point, we are going to wake up and find that America’s envisioning dream is still with us, for it is in our bones. It is interesting that Huston may be the only surviving person who was in one of the three back rows (that were reserved for the public) at the founding session of the United Nations. And perhaps some of you may remember the song that came out of that session:

United Nations make a chain
 Every link is freedom’s name;
 Keep your hand on the plow, hold on.
 Hold on, hold on!
 Keep your hand on the plow, hold on.

This was a time of unbridled euphoria following the end of World War II. Our optimism is more sober now, with the recognition that we need a pragmatic patience and, in the words of George Washington, perseverance and spirit.

Some of you may be old enough to remember the song “Wasn’t That a Time,” which Peter, Paul, and Mary popularized:

Our Fathers bled at Valley Forge, the snow was red with blood,
 Their faith was forged at Valley Forge,
 Their faith was brotherhood.

Wasn’t that a time, wasn’t that a time?
 A time to try the soul of man,
 Wasn’t that a terrible time?

Brave men who fought at Gettysburg now lie in soldiers’ graves
 But there they stemmed the rebel tide
 And there their faith was saved.

Wasn't that a time, wasn't that a time?
A time to try the soul of man,
Wasn't that a terrible time?

The wars are long, the peace is frail, the madmen come again,
There is no freedom in a land where fear and hate prevail,

Isn't this a time, isn't this a wonderful time!⁴

We can think of no more fitting ending to this piece than the prayer the chaplain offered in the chamber of the United States Senate on Independence Day, 1943. It reads as if it were written today:

Our ancestors' God and ours, on the birth of national independence, we confess our dependence upon Thee. Without Thee, we are lost in spite of the overwhelming might of our national arms.

We thank Thee for those pilgrims of faith who came hither in their frail barque across mountainous seas, and who stepped upon strange shores with salutation to a new world, "In the Name of God. Amen."

The Nation here established, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all people are created equal, has acknowledged that Name above every name and revered it, has built its altars, reared its temples, and raised its steeples, emblems of a faith that points to the skies, and wings its sure and certain way to God.

Make that faith of the founders, we pray, real to us in the tempestuous days.

Save us from a freedom of speech that is so empty that we have nothing worth saying, from a freedom of worship so futile that we have no God to adore, from a freedom from want and fear with no creative idea as to how to use our plenty or our security for the redemption of our social order and for the salvation of our own souls.

Let all that is low and unworthy in us sink to the depths.

Let all that is high and fine in us rise to greet the morn of a new day, confident that the best is yet to be. Amen.⁵

Notes

- 1 Until the end of the nineteenth century, married women had virtually no legal rights, with neither control over property nor custody of children. There was a brief exception when in 1776, women *who paid taxes* were granted the right to vote in New Jersey. In 1807, this right was rescinded by the state legislature. Why? The legislature concluded that women had been voting for the wrong candidates. Women who were prominent in both the abolition movement and the struggle for voting rights were profoundly inspired by religion, despite the opposition of male clergy, who claimed that it was God's will that women be subservient to men, that women "listen and learn and pray" but be essentially invisible.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, leader of the suffrage movement, who had obtained the sort of classical education usually denied to women, wrote a nonsexist version of the Bible. Like most women then, and even now, women who managed to avoid internalizing a belief in their own inferiority were encouraged and supported in acquiring a good education by their fathers.

Gunnar Myrdal, author of a monumental study on racism in the United States, wrote that although discrimination against women was less toxic than racial discrimination, change would be harder to achieve. Whether or not Myrdal was prescient is uncertain, but Mel Hochster, a professor of mathematics at the University of Michigan, reports that numerous contemporary studies demonstrate continuing discrimination against women in academia. When Professor Hochster was appointed to a committee to investigate such studies, he had expected to find that only a few old-fashioned codgers would harbor such bias, and so he was

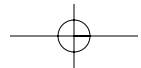
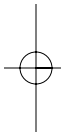
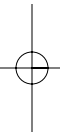
- surprised at the extent of unconscious sexism he found at all levels.
The divine right of kings is dead and gone, but the divine right of males
malingers.
- 2 See William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (New York: North Point Press, 2002).
 - 3 See Ann Underwood, "Designing the Future," *Newsweek*, May 16, 2005, p. 44.
 - 4 Lee Hays, Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred Brooks [Fred Hellerman], "Wasn't That a Time," by Lee Hays & Walter Lowenfels. © Copyright 1957 (renewed) by SANGA MUSIC, INC. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
 - 5 Rev. Frederick Brown Harris, prayer, U.S. Senate, 78th Congress, July 5, 1943.

The Authors

HUSTON SMITH was born to Methodist missionaries in China, which gave him an abiding interest in comparative philosophy and religion. He is internationally known and revered as the premier teacher of world religions and for his best-selling book *The World's Religions*. He was the focus of a five-part PBS television series with Bill Moyers titled "The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith" and has taught at Washington University, MIT, Syracuse University, and the University of California, Berkeley. The recipient of twelve honorary degrees and the author of fifteen books and over eighty articles in professional and popular journals, Huston Smith has also collaborated on the creation of acclaimed films on Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sufism and a recording, *The Music of Tibet*.

KENDRA SMITH, who met Huston Smith when both were students at the University of Chicago, has been a clinical social worker and has since her teens been committed to the study and practice of Buddhism. Her doctoral dissertation in psychology and other articles have explored comparisons of Western and Buddhist approaches to human growth and development. She is currently a student of the Diamond Heart training program of H. A. Almaas. She has a deep lifelong interest in social and political issues and was especially active, with her husband, during the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s.

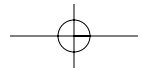
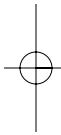
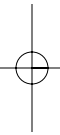
Kendra and Huston have three grown daughters and live in Berkeley, California.



Fetzer Institute

FETZER INSTITUTE is a private operating foundation that supports research, education, and service programs exploring the integral relationships among body, mind, and spirit. In the wake of September 11, 2001, we at Fetzer Institute have found ourselves, like many others, reexamining our purpose and mission with the hope that our efforts can be of greater relevance to the world. This inquiry has led to the communal development of a new mission: to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging global community.

Inspired by the vision of John E. Fetzer, the Institute's guiding purpose is to awaken into and serve Spirit for the transformation of self and society, based on the principles of wholeness of reality, freedom of spirit, and unconditional love. The Institute believes that the critical issues in the world can best be served by integrating the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of action and service in the world. This is the "common work" of the Fetzer Institute community and the emerging global culture. Please visit our website at www.fetzer.org.



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ANTHOLOGY ON
DEEPENING THE AMERICAN DREAM

**Deepening the American Dream:
Reflections on the Inner Life
and Spirit of Democracy**

Edited by Mark Nepo

A collection of reflections on the spiritual meaning of being American in today's world from some of our most respected thinkers: Gerald May, Jacob Needleman, Elaine Pagels, Robert Inchausti, Parker Palmer, and others. The book explores the inner life of democracy, the way citizens are formed, and considers the spiritual aspects of the American dream—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This thought-provoking volume of essays challenges us to ponder the American Dream and discuss the spiritual values that can help transform the country. The interplay between history, spirituality, and current events is what makes this volume such a soul-stirring experience. It is indeed hopeful and salutary that this cultural document puts so much emphasis on spiritual values as being crucial to the health and enduring value of democracy in the twenty-first century.

—*Spirituality & Health Magazine*

Deepening the American Dream communicates a determined and magnanimous solidarity to a fragmented age of confusion and escalating resentments. The collection is . . . a gesture of peace and goodwill that summons us to come together. It's a powerfully uplifting book that shines light in the direction of incarnate hope. That rare happening of people actually talking to each other. I highly recommend it.

—*The Christian Century*

ESSAYS ON DEEPENING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Essay #1, Winter 2003

Two Dreams of America

Jacob Needleman

As the inaugural essay in the series, the question is put: “Then, what of the American dream? Is it a vision or an illusion? Do we need to deepen this dream or awaken from it? Can anyone doubt the importance of this question? In one form or another, it is a question that has been gathering strength for decades, and it now stands squarely in the path not only of every American, but, such is the planetary influence of America, of every man and woman in the world. What really *is* America? What does America *mean*?”

Essay #2, Spring 2003

From Cruelty to Compassion: The Crucible of Personal Transformation

Gerald G. May

This essay is a compelling journey to the perennial bottom of who we are, at our best and our worst, and how to use that knowledge to live together from a place of spirit and compassion.

Essay #3, Fall 2003

Footprints of the Soul: Uniting Spirit with Action in the World

Carolyn T. Brown

This essay speaks deeply about the gifts and frictions that exist between our authentic self and the society we live in and grow in, and how returning to the well of spirit keeps forming who we are in the world.

Essay #4, Winter 2004

Created Equal: Exclusion and Inclusion in the American Dream

Elaine H. Pagels

In this essay the renowned religious historian Elaine Pagels provides a convincing exploration of the ways we have interpreted equality as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. More than ever, she says, we need to ask, who is included in the American dream? What do we make of this

dream in a waking reality? How shall we take this vision to shape our sense of who we are—as a people, a nation, a community? She calls us to deepen our understanding of the American dream and commit ourselves to extending it to all people worldwide who would share in its promises, blessings, and responsibilities.

Essay #5, Spring 2004

**Breaking the Cultural Trance:
Insight and Vision in America**

Robert Inchausti

This essay is a convincing look at how we see and, just as important, how living in America has impaired our deepest seeing, and how education is the sacred medicine entrusted in each generation with restoring that deeper sight that lets us know that we are each other.

Essay #6, Fall 2004

**The Grace and Power of Civility:
Commitment and Tolerance
in the American Experience**

David M. Abshire

In a time when our country is more polarized than ever, the former ambassador to NATO, an historian himself, traces the history of commitment and tolerance in an effort to revitalize the respect, listening, and dialogue that constitute civility. “Which, then, is the true America?” he asks, “The America of division or the America of unity? The America of endless public and partisan warfare or the America of cooperation, civility, and common purpose? The America of many or the America of one?”

Essay #7, Winter 2005

**Opening the Dream:
Beyond the Limits of Otherness**

Charles Gibbs

This essay explores America’s relationship with the rest of the world. As executive director of the United Religions Initiative, Rev. Gibbs proposes that “The future of America cannot be separated from the future of the rest of the world. There are no longer chasms deep enough or walls high enough to protect us or to protect others from us. So what do we do? We might begin by seeing ourselves as citizens of Earth and children of the abiding Mystery at the heart of all that is.”

Essay #8, Spring 2005

**The Politics of the Brokenhearted:
On Holding the Tensions of Democracy**

Parker J. Palmer

With his usual penetrating insight, Parker Palmer speaks to the conflicts and contradictions of twenty-first century life that are breaking the American heart and threatening to compromise our democratic values.

Essay #9, Winter 2006

The Almost-Chosen People

Huston and Kendra Smith

In this far-reaching essay, renowned historian of religion, Huston Smith, and his wife, the scholar, Kendra Smith trace the American sense of liberty as a spiritual concept that has both inspired us and eluded us through a checkered history in which we have trampled many in the name of the very equality and freedom we hold so sacred. They trace the erosion of the American Dream in the twentieth century and look toward our inevitable membership in the global family of nations that is forming in the world today.

Essay #10, Spring 2006

Prophetic Religion in a Democratic Society

Robert N. Bellah

Steering between what distinguished sociologist of religion Robert Bellah calls “Enlightenment fundamentalists” on the one hand and religious fundamentalists on the other, this essay argues against both the common secularist view that religion should be excluded from public life and the dogmatic view that would exclude all secular and religious views except one. Instead it proposes a more moderate, nuanced, and robust role for faith and religion in the common life of America and Americans.

ESSAYS ON EXPLORING A GLOBAL DREAM

Essay #1, Spring 2006

**Bridges Not Barriers:
The American Dream and the Global Community**

Abdul Aziz Said

As the inaugural essay in the global series, this leading peace studies educator and scholar examines both the American Dream and the emerging global community with insight into the complex state of international relations, while envisioning a shift in world values that might birth a common world based on the spiritual conception of love and cooperation.