



“By the dawn’s early light”: The Flag, the Interrogative, and the Whence and Whither of Normative Patriotism

GARY M. SIMPSON

Today the flags are flying at half-mast. When doing so they disclose a nation in mourning. On this occasion we grieve the loss of seven astronauts who perished in the disaster of the space shuttle Columbia. Three months ago the half-mast flags signaled our astonishment that Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone could be swept away so swiftly into that dark night of death. And it still seems not that long ago that the nation’s half-mast flags proclaimed our profound shock that Manhattan’s Twin Towers and the vibrancy teeming within could be reduced to Ground Zero in the bleak twinkling of an eye. Much further back in time, I recall my year-long duty and honor to hoist and lower the Stars and Stripes on the pole in front of my elementary school and the month-long gravity of hoisting it to the top then bringing it down to half-mast at the assassination of our country’s thirty-fifth president, John F. Kennedy.

Tonight, prior to my daughter’s high school basketball game, the color guard

Francis Scott Key, Abraham Lincoln, Emma Lazarus, and Martin Luther King Jr. define a normative American patriotism that embraces self-interrogation; equality, hope, and repentance; worldwide welcome; and justice and solidarity. In the aftermath of 9/11 can such patriotism now proceed to civic internationalism or will it resort to the internationalism of empire?

will proceed in and all of the spectators and players will reverently rise, some to listen and some to sing the national anthem. “Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn’s early light...?” With poetic fanfare and aplomb we will address some unnamed “you,” though, pausing to reflect, we discover that each of us, the singers, is that “thou” who is interrogated.¹ Who is this “you”? What does it mean to be an “American”? To be a patriot?

Three times in verse one of his anthem Francis Scott Key places the national chorus under the sign of a question mark, under public interrogation. Indeed, both flag and nation await the clarity brought “by the dawn’s early light.” In the United States there seems an iconic entwinement of nation, flag, and anthem that cannot easily be disentangled, and perhaps should not be. Key’s interrogative approach anticipated the future-oriented and open-ended character of the United States and of American patriotism. We will explore the polymorphous phenomenon of American patriotism, both its whence and whither, in search of its normative features. As our exploration proceeds we will also notice that American normative patriotism, more so than the *de facto* patriotism that often prevails, entails an external and an internal dimension, an inter-national and an intra-national dynamic that need consistency.

THE WHENCE OF NORMATIVE PATRIOTISM—KEY’S INTERROGATIVE

Perhaps you recall from your fourth-grade social studies book those pictures of the different U.S. flags going all the way back to that first one with thirteen stars and thirteen stripes authorized by Congress on June 14, 1777. That flag, with its stars in a circle, flew officially until May 1, 1795, when Congress authorized a new flag with fifteen stars in five rows of three together with fifteen stripes—yes, fifteen stripes. Those two new stars and two new stripes honored the admission of Vermont (1791) and Kentucky (1792) to the union.

It was that fifteen star/fifteen stripe flag, oddest of all U.S. flags, that flew as the garrison flag over Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore, which raged September 12-14, 1814, and inspired Key. The Battle of Baltimore was critical to the outcome of the War of 1812. Less than three weeks earlier, four thousand British soldiers had captured Washington, D.C., and burned the Capitol, the President’s Mansion, and other governmental buildings. Fort McHenry and Baltimore, the third largest city in the country, were next on the British hit list. Fortunes looked bleak for the fledgling nation. British ships bombarded Fort McHenry, which stood sentinel over Baltimore’s harbor, for twenty-five hours, beginning at 6:30 A.M. on the 13th.² Bravely, commander Armistead refused to lower his jumbo

¹As a rarity the national anthem of the United States has the flag itself as its subject matter. For the words of the national anthem go to <http://www.usflag.org/the.national.anthem.html> [cited 13 May 2003].

²To view the famous 1816 J. Bower print of “A View of the Bombardment of Fort McHenry,” go to http://web8.si.edu/nmah/htdocs/ssb-old/6_thestory/6a_birth/fs6a.html [cited 13 May 2003]. Much of this historical review is available from that Smithsonian website.

Stars and Stripes signaling surrender. Frustrated, the British sailed away, having lost their most determined attack.

A week or so prior to the British fleet's attack, Francis Scott Key, a young lawyer, was sent by small boat under a flag of truce to the British armada, to its flagship *Tonnant*. Key's mission, along with a U.S. prisoner exchange agent, was to rescue an elderly and honored physician, Dr. William Beanes, who had been captured and who many feared would be executed. Key and the agent showed letters written by wounded and captured British soldiers testifying to the excellent medical care they had received from Beanes. The British admiral agreed to a release but would not implement it at the moment because the three Americans had overheard too much of the planning for the imminent attack. Key and the two others were kept under guard at sea until and during the September 12-14 bombardment.

During the last night of the attack Key became the young nation's watchman, interrogating the horizon and himself, restless for "the dawn's early light" to reveal "that our flag was still there," that America had still a future. Seeing the broad stripes and bright stars waving briskly over the Fort, Key, an amateur poet and hymnist, hastily wrote down his thoughts on the back of an envelope and finished his four-verse poem at his hotel in Baltimore. His brother-in-law had it printed and distributed as "Defense of Fort M'Henry," and on September 20, 1814, it appeared in the *Baltimore Patriot*. That October a Baltimore actor sang it publicly under the name "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Key's anthem musically knit together the flag with the new experiment in nationhood. Especially after the Civil War the fabrics of nation, flag, and anthem became ever more tightly woven within the public spirit.³ Beginning with the 1776 Declaration of Independence the normative content of patriotism had focused uniquely on "independence" from Great Britain and on "liberty" for the experiment in a *novus ordo seclorum* (new world order). On an intuitive level Key had placed the "interrogative" also within the constellation of norms of American patriotism. Still, independence and liberty remained the primary patriotic norms until, on November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln offered additional normative aspects to American patriotism. Lincoln also confirmed Key's intuition and firmly established the interrogative attitude as a key component of American normative patriotism.

EQUALITY, HOPE, REPENTANCE—LINCOLN'S MEMORIAL

Lincoln's address at Gettysburg, while ostensibly about the dedication of a cemetery and the durability of the constituted union, "remade" America's normative patriotism.⁴ Lincoln's opponents in both the North and the South saw the Civil War as a constitutional crisis and wanted to make the U.S. Constitution the issue.

³Not until 1931 did Congress make "The Star-Spangled Banner" the official national anthem.

⁴I borrow the word "remade" from Garry Wills (*Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Word That Remade America* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992]). For the words of the Gettysburg Address, see Wills, p. 263, or <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd/4403.html> [cited 13 May 2003].

Lincoln, however, aspired to alter the union’s Constitution from within. He did so at Gettysburg in 1863 by retrieving 1776: “Four score and seven years ago.” By recording the birth of our “new nation” as 1776, he consecrated the Declaration of Independence as our basic normative symbol rather than the Constitution with its many compromises, as important as it is and remains. In Garry Wills’s words:

[Lincoln] performed one of the most daring acts of open-air sleight-of-hand ever witnessed by the unsuspecting. Everyone in that vast throng of thousands was having his or her intellectual pocket picked. The crowd departed with a new thing in its ideological luggage, that new constitution Lincoln had substituted for the one they brought there with them. They walked off, from those curving graves on the hillside, under a changed sky, into a different America.⁵

At Gettysburg, Lincoln added “equality” to our normative patriotism, thus abolishing the slavery that the Constitution had countenanced. Even Lincoln himself, we must remember, did not enter that cataclysmic war with emancipation as his justifiable cause.⁶ Those 272 words, spoken in three minutes and memorized by legions of students each year, stitched “equality” into the cloth of normative patriotism. Still, Lincoln’s accomplishments that day did not stop with equality.

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Far beyond dedicating a cemetery in the midst of a nineteenth-century culture of death, Lincoln dedicated our patriotism to the cause, indeed, to the still “unfinished work” of equality. Not only, however, is equality an “unfinished work,” which it is. Seven score years after the Gettysburg Address, patriotism is still an “unfinished work.” American normative patriotism is still, to use Lincoln’s words, “the great task remaining before us.” This, too, Lincoln accomplished at Gettysburg. From now on, hope takes its place within the normative constellation that is American patriotism.

Since Lincoln, hope knits together the whence of American patriotism with the whither of our norms and values. According to Lincoln, 1776 “brought forth...a new nation” and anticipated, however dimly, “a new birth of freedom” some unimaginable score of years into the future. Here, joined forever with emancipation’s equality, lies Lincoln’s surpassing bequest. America’s originating patriotic norms bear within them a yearning to be remade ever anew.

Not surprisingly, Lincoln drew criticism, which quite ironically testifies to the

⁵Ibid., 38.

⁶For the Emancipation Proclamation and its contribution toward a more justifiable cause for engaging in a civil war, see http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/ [cited 13 May 2003]. For John Hope Franklin’s poignant interpretation, see http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_1993_emancipation_proclamation [cited 13 May 2003].

decisiveness of his accomplishments. A mere four days after the address, “original intent” critics at the *Chicago Times* lynched him: “How dare he, then, standing on their graves, misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare that negroes were their equals, or were entitled to equal privileges.”⁷ These critics regarded Lincoln as unpatriotic because he did not adhere to the *de facto* original intent behind the words of the Constitution. *De facto* “original intent” heirs in today’s academy still upbraid Lincoln for this transgression. The more politically astute and less suicidal among Lincoln’s detractors, like Edwin Meese and Robert Bork, no longer attack him directly, because he remains sacrosanct. Rather they disguise their reproach under the cover of a purely “constitutional” question.⁸ Lincoln’s accomplishments go precisely to the heart of patriotism because he bound together the whence of normative patriotism with the whither of normative patriotism.

Lincoln fixed this bond through the biblical rhetoric of new birth. On the grounds of “a final resting place,” in the midst of a culture of death, he proclaimed new birth: “a new nation...brought forth..., conceived..., and dedicated...shall have a new birth of freedom.” But, as Lincoln well knew, new birth in the biblical imagination comes always through the birth canal of testing, “testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”

Perhaps Lincoln thought it inappropriate at the graves of those dead soldiers to go beyond the rhetoric of “testing.” Still, he knew keenly that testing always brings a nation face to face with “the Almighty,” with a transcending interrogative, and such an encounter always means “repentance.”

Already eight months before Gettysburg, Lincoln had issued a Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day:

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.⁹

Lincoln asserted the biblical claim that a nation so blessed with liberty and equality “can long endure” only as it continually passes through the crucible of national self-interrogation and repentance, especially when that crucible comes in the shape of war. Since 1863 American normative patriotism would countenance only “repenting war.”¹⁰ “Genuine repentance,” as Lincoln put it, took an emphatic place within the normative constellation of American patriotism.

Already as a United States congressional representative, Lincoln understood

⁷Wills, *Lincoln*, 38-39.

⁸*Ibid.*, 39, 146.

⁹*The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 10 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1974) 6:155. Lincoln keeps to the theme of repentance all the way through to his Second Inaugural Address, his last speech (*ibid.*, 8:332-333). The *Collected Works* are available in electronic form (searchable) at <http://www.hti.umich.edu/l/lincoln/> [cited 13 May 2003].

¹⁰Wills’s felicitous phrase (*Lincoln*, 185).

that normative patriotism obligated citizens “to confess their [political] sins and transgressions” as a national practice of truth.¹¹ On January 12, 1848, twenty months after President James Polk had declared war with Mexico, Lincoln himself bore the prophetic burden, “as good citizens and patriots” must, to initiate “genuine repentance.”¹² American patriotism’s norm of repentance meant publicly engaging the president himself even—especially—in the midst of war on “the *very point*, upon which he [the president] should be justified, or condemned.”¹³ Lincoln:

Now I propose to try to show, that the whole of this [President Polk’s rationale for war],—issue and evidence—is, from beginning to end, the sheerest deception.¹⁴

After offering six pages of counterevidence regarding the justification for the war with Mexico, Lincoln implored the president to respond:

But if he [President Polk] *can* not, or *will* not do this—if on any pretence, or no pretence, he shall refuse or omit it, then I shall be fully convinced, of what I more than suspect already, that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong—that he feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to Heaven against him. That originally having some strong motive—what, I will not stop now to give my opinion concerning—to involve the two countries in a war, and trusting to escape scrutiny, by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightness of military glory—that attractive rainbow, that rises in showers of blood—that serpent’s eye, that charms to destroy—he plunged into it, and has swept, *on* and *on*, till, disappointed in his calculation of the ease with which Mexico might be subdued, he now finds himself, he knows not where. How like the half insane mumbling of a fever-dream, is the whole war part of his late message!¹⁵

“Lincoln would shrink not an inch from placing American patriotism biblically under God”

Even—especially!—a presidential declaration of war did not suspend national interrogation and “genuine repentance.” The justification, or not, of the war with Mexico was a crucial issue because life and death, good and evil, right and wrong stood in the balance; and the Almighty prohibits trivializing real earthly life. Lincoln would shrink not an inch from placing American patriotism biblically under God. Do we in our times of “testing” embody Lincoln’s repentant patriotism as the anthem interrogates: “Oh, say can you see...?” Will we retain Lincoln’s interrogative, repentant patriotism as we wave our truly precious flag awaiting “the

¹¹ Abraham Lincoln, “Speech in United States House of Representatives: The War with Mexico,” in *Collected Works*, 1:431-442.

¹²Ibid., 432.

¹³Ibid., 433.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 439-440.

dawn's early light"? Does Lincoln's repentant patriotism "yet wave" the flag in this "dawn's early light"? Lincoln's memorial to normative patriotism entails these three: equality, hope, and repentance.

WORLD-WIDENING WELCOME—LAZARUS'S PEDESTAL

Twenty years after Lincoln remade America's normative patriotism, a thirty-four-year-old, aristocratic Jewish-American woman picked up the hope and "unfinished work" and poetically enlarged our patriotism's normative capacity. Emma Lazarus, already a well-known poet by 1883, wrote her famous sonnet, *The New Colossus*, for an art auction to raise funds for the pedestal that now supports the Statue of Liberty.

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.¹⁶

Another score of years would pass before (sixteen years after she died) Lazarus's sonnet was engraved on Liberty's pedestal in 1903—words that had already captured the American patriotic imagination. Before she died, James Russell Lowell had written her that "your sonnet gives its subject a *raison d'être*." Indeed, Lazarus poetically moved American normative patriotism beyond the nativist proclivity for a single hegemonic race, ethnicity, class, and gender. American nativism began already in the 1850s with campaigns to restrict immigration and naturalization. American nativist culture and politics has its roots in Rousseau's politics of aristocratic republicanism, was fueled a century ago by Theodore Roosevelt's triumphalism, and has continued to be a force up to the present.¹⁷ Already in the post-bellum era of the nineteenth century it threatened to subvert Lincoln's re-making of normative patriotism around equality. American nativism has found a home not only in the South's Jim Crow but in various expressions and to various degrees throughout American political culture. The notion of an American "melting pot" rhetorically participates in nativist proclivities.

Lazarus learned the nativist sting in the anti-Semitism she experienced from her earliest years to her last. She also understood the breadth of nativism and the threat it posed to the whither of normative patriotism. No wonder she, an heir of Lincoln's remade patriotism, began her sonnet with a repentant refusal, a clarion "Not..."! America's fame is "not like" the "brazen" "fame" of the colossus of old that reaches out with "conquering limbs astride from land to land." With personal experience as pedagogue, Lazarus prophesies what she knows.

¹⁶For the full text of the famous poem, for an excellent resource for Emma Lazarus's life, and for a brief and competent critical analysis of her poetic contribution to American public life, see <http://www.jwa.org/exhibits/lazarus/> [cited 13 May 2003].

¹⁷See Michael Walzer's analysis of nativism and its different manifestations and of Rousseauian republicanism in "What Does It Mean to Be an 'American'?" in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, ed. David Hollinger and Charles Capper, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 2:391-393. For a brief critical analysis of classic republicanism, see Gary M. Simpson, *Critical Social Theory: Political Reason, Civil Society, and Christian Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 115-118.

Conquering, however, has never been confined to military might alone. It happens economically and culturally, and in these ways most craftily, as Lazarus knew: “‘Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!’ cries she with silent lips.” She reserved her most poignant criticism for the “pomp” that forms the pedestal for the entire edifice of aristocratic economy and culture upon which American nativism has often built. Empire and its colonial aspirations have, from of old, stood sturdily upon such pomp. Lazarus bids us turn repentantly away from this temptation.

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From this “Mother of Exiles,” however, “from her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome.” Lazarus generates a pluralist hospitality of the tired, the poor, the huddled that takes its place within the normative constellation of American patriotism. At the dawn of the twentieth century Lazarus dedicated normative patriotism, continually threatened by nativist proclivities, to that last “great task remaining before us,” as Lincoln had recorded it, “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

In the half century after Lazarus, American patriots would travel the world engaging justifiably in two world wars in order that such government, normed by worldwide welcome, would not perish from the earth. Nativism, nevertheless, would perdure, even flourish, here at home. It fell to another thirty-four-year-old American, this time an African American, to lead the unfinished work of hope against America’s persistent proclivity toward nativist patriotism.¹⁸

JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY—KING’S DREAM

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered “I Have a Dream” on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and again remade America’s normative patriotism. King saw himself—and the 250,000 people gathered there that day—as a “moral ally of, if not successor to, Lincoln.”¹⁹ King explicitly cited Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and implicitly retrieved the Gettysburg Address with his opening words: “Fivescore years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.”²⁰ Forthrightly, King retrieved Lincoln’s normative joining of freedom and equality

¹⁸See Walzer, “What Does It Mean,” for an insightful analysis of hyphenated Americanism and the role of toleration: “The hyphen works, when it is working, more like a plus sign” (397). Walzer offers a brilliantly concise, critical analysis of “five regimes of toleration” in *On Tolerance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

¹⁹This is Robert Franklin’s phrase from his 2003 unpublished Hein Fry Lecture at the several seminaries of the ELCA. Franklin calls “I Have a Dream” “the King-Lincoln juxtaposition.”

²⁰Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” at http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/ [cited 13 May 2003].

and named that joining “justice.” The denial of freedom to “millions of Negro slaves” in Lincoln’s day meant being “seared in the withering flames of injustice,” and the injustice one hundred years later was that “the Negro still is not free.” By retrieving the “withering” history of injustice, King practices Lincoln’s patriotic norm of biblical repentance. “But, we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt.” African Americans, prophesied King, stood “on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice.”

“I Have a Dream,” however, does not linger serenely with the whither of normative patriotism, though King surely recites and celebrates its richness. He marches further into the whence of American normative patriotism. Like Lazarus and Lincoln and Key, King innovates the normative capacity of American patriotism. Beyond freedom, equality, and justice, King presses normative patriotism toward “the solid rock of brotherhood.” Even to his long-oppressed fellow African Americans he speaks a prophetic word of warning: “We cannot walk alone.” Rather King bravely dreams “at the table of brotherhood.” Resting his faith on the word of the Lord according to the prophet Isaiah, King imagines that “we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together.” In such solidarity “we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.”

“King drew from Jesus’ telling of the Good Samaritan to enunciate solidarity as ‘a kind of dangerous unselfishness’”

In King’s very last speech on April 3, 1968, he returned yet once again to the norm of solidarity. He drew from Jesus’ telling of the Good Samaritan to enunciate solidarity as “a kind of dangerous unselfishness”:

Finally, a man of another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But he got down with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying this was the good man, this was the great man because he had the capacity to project the “I” into the “Thou,” and to be concerned about his brother.

Now, you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn’t stop....

But I’m going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It’s possible that those men were afraid. You see, the Jericho Road is a dangerous road....And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?”

But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” That’s the question before you tonight.²¹

²¹Martin Luther King Jr., “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” at the website in note 20.

WHITHER NORMATIVE PATRIOTISM POST-9/11?

The global and international texture of America’s normative patriotism will certainly be among the great questions within the United States over the next years and perhaps decades. What form of global solidarity will America’s normative patriotism take? Perhaps we are still too close to judge definitively whether the atrocious terrorist attack of 9/11 is epoch making or not. If epoch making, will we respond with a full measure of biblical repentance?²² And what is 9/11’s relationship with the 2003 Iraqi War, and is the 2003 Iraqi War the first in a series of wars, the beginning of relative perpetual war?²³

An influential group of “neo-Reaganite internationalists” is putting forth one of the foremost proposals for the global future of America’s normative patriotism.²⁴ These neo-Reaganites argue that over the last quarter century “the world had indeed been transformed in America’s image” and they seek to extend and strengthen that transformation (5). They seek a “unipolar era,” “above all, preserving and reinforcing America’s benevolent global hegemony” (6). They argue against “a return to normal times” and against the United States becoming again “a normal nation” (9-12) and, instead, compare American power to that exercised when “Rome dominated the Mediterranean world” (6). They do not envision America being a mere “savior of last resort” for world peace or a “reluctant sheriff” enforcing justice (15-16). Such callings would be weak and wimpy. Rather, the “United States would instead conceive of itself as at once a European power, an Asian power, a Middle Eastern power and, of course, a Western Hemisphere power” (15-16). They advocate pre-emptive “regime change” “as a central component” of American internationalism (27). In distinguishing themselves from isolationists, especially in the Republican Party, neo-Reaganites “regard military force as an instrument of foreign policy to be called upon when necessary to achieve our goals. A bit more abstractly, but no less importantly, [neo-Reaganite] internationalists find worth and dignity in the nation committing itself to this kind of enterprise” (27). No wonder the neo-Reaganites’ proposal for normative patriotism is funded by Theodore Roosevelt, who advocated “warlike intervention by the civilized powers [that] would contribute directly to the peace of the world” (23).

²²In the first of Martin Luther’s *Ninety-five Theses*, he argues: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (*Luther’s Works* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957] 31:25). Is not part of the vocation of Christian citizens to be a repentant leaven within public life?

²³When President Bush landed on the aircraft carrier USS *Lincoln* off the coast of San Diego in May 2003 to announce the end of fighting, he did so by announcing the end of “the battle of Iraq,” not the end of war. Further, in order to have the U. N. Security Council lift the sanctions against Iraq, the United States needed to declare not that it has liberated Iraq but that it now “occupies Iraq.”

²⁴Robert Kagan and William Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000). “Neo-Reaganite internationalists” is their term (pp. vii-viii) and is used interchangeably with neo-conservative and neo-con. The page numbers in parentheses in the text are from this book. Online neo-Reaganite internationalism is called “Project for the New American Century,” found at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/> [cited 13 May 2003].

Learning “to stop worrying and love the *Pax Americana*” is the neo-Reaganite American discipleship, so to speak (309).

Neo-Reaganite internationalism claims that “America’s benevolent global hegemony” will act out of the blending of principle with America’s national interest. The principles that they cite are democracy and free-market capitalism, and given the abstract way that neo-Reaganites time and time again intone these principles, it is hard to raise a quarrel with them. In fact, neo-Reaganites so monotonously and speciously intone these principles that one readily imagines that they hired an expert product advertiser to write this part of their script. For neo-Reaganites these intoned, abstract principles assure American benevolence, and this assurance legitimates their view that American military power remain unfettered by the restraints of international accountability or international institutions of law. This is why the United Nations plays absolutely no central constructive role in neo-Reaganite internationalism.²⁵ Indeed, as George Will has declared: “The United Nations is not a good idea badly implemented, it is a bad idea.”²⁶

“while neo-Reaganite internationalists nowhere use the word empire, theirs is the rhetoric of empire”

While neo-Reaganite internationalists nowhere use the word empire, theirs is the rhetoric of empire. Anticipating the American bicentennial a quarter century ago, theologian Richard John Neuhaus, an original Reaganite, did practice and indeed promote the rhetoric of “empire” as he examined “the embarrassing burden of empire.”²⁷ The neo-Reaganite rhetoric of empire partakes of the old nativist pursuit of the American “righteous empire” with its religiously intoned privilege of Providential benediction.²⁸ Is it any wonder that neo-Reaganites insist, “The main issue is not American ‘arrogance.’ It is the inescapable reality of American power in all its many forms.” And the “price” of this power, they say, is “jealousy, resentment and in some cases even fear,” which the flag will just have to endure.

Will the future of our flag and American normative patriotism conform to neo-Reaganite internationalism or will a different internationalism, a civic internationalism, become the whither of the flag and patriotism? A normative patriotism that embraces civic internationalism would flow more energetically from Key’s habit of self-interrogation; from Lincoln’s equality, hope, and repentance; from

²⁵Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, 32-37. Indeed, when it comes to “national interest,” the neo-Reaganites conveniently refuse to define “national interest” and instead conjure “a broad understanding” of American “honor and greatness in the service of liberal principles” (23).

²⁶George F. Will, “U.N. is proving itself to be a bad idea,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 16 March 2003, AA3.

²⁷Richard John Neuhaus, *Time toward Home: The American Experiment as Revelation* (New York: Seabury, 1975) especially 37-45. Even Neuhaus, however, judges Theodore Roosevelt’s benevolent imperial expansionism to be “among the more vulgar exponents of this logic” (43).

²⁸For this historic theme in America, see Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). For the neo-Reaganite discourse of Providence, see Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, 24.

Lazarus’s worldwide welcome; and from King’s justice and solidarity. A normative patriotism that embraces civic internationalism will welcome and not eschew the emergent global civil society with its multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious traditions of vibrant moral wisdom.²⁹ A normative patriotism of civic internationalism will welcome and not eschew the accountability to other nations and to civil-society institutions that accompanies leadership. A normative patriotism of civic internationalism will welcome and not eschew America’s flourishing as one nation among the nations under God.³⁰ “Oh, say can you see, by the dawn’s early light” the whither of our flag’s normative patriotism? ⊕

GARY M. SIMPSON is professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. He is the author of *Critical Social Theory: Political Reason, Civil Society, and Christian Imagination* (Fortress, 2002).

²⁹I have explored the public realm of civil society in Simpson, *Critical Social Theory*, 118-122, 134-145.

³⁰For my brief exploration of the Pledge of Allegiance along these lines see Simpson, “Christians and the Pledge of Allegiance: Accruing ‘Among the Nations,’” *Word & World* 22/4 (2002) 435, 437.