MacDonald King Aston

Fire Eater! Editor

The New Puritans

20 January 2005

(Originally published on Southernrights.tk)

In speaking of empire one is really debating the nature of evil. Empires are by their nature power structures whose final intent is the erasure of human worth, human dignity, humanity itself. Empires worship no God, admit of no ethical boundaries.

Cotton Mather

"I bomb, therefore I am." When Lincoln made the conscious choice to invade the Southern states and deliberately provoke the firing on Fort Sumter, he knew what he was doing. He may not have known the extent of the damage his choice would cause, but he knew death and destruction were the sum of his decision. So why did he make that decision?

Of course, we are taught in the American Empire that Lincoln was a “saviour” of a mythic “Union”. We are taught that he made that decision so “that government of the people by the people for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” If so, he made a terrible mistake, for government of the people by the people for the people no longer exists. What exists is the sordid Yankee Empire, whose interest in “the people” extends only so far as they are a revenue stream for its imperial ambitions.

It could have been otherwise. The London Times of 13 September 1862 wrote this about America’s rise to empire at the hands of Lincoln:

“The cloth of the Yankee Empire is cut from a mourning shroud.”

> "If Northerners...had peaceably allowed the seceders to depart, the result might fairly have been quoted as illustrating the advantages of Democracy; but when Republicans put empire above liberty, and resorted to political oppression and war rather than suffer any abatement of national power, it was clear that nature at Washington was precisely the same as nature at St. Petersburg....Democracy broke down, not when the Union ceased to be agreeable to all its constituent States, but when it was upheld, like any other Empire, by force of arms."

The struggle, therefore, against the Yankee Empire under whose fists we still remain poised, is a struggle against evil (and a struggle for the dream that was America). Now one of the peculiar things about evil is that it can not laugh. Laughter—humour—and evil seem unable to coexist. We don’t know why that fact is true, but I believe that evil simply can not exist in the presence of true, joyful laughter. (There is, of course, always the “evil laugh”, but then, that is not joyful is it?) If laughter is the outward expression of inward joy, then evil and joy are existentially inimical to each other. Evil fades before joy as joy fades before evil. The Yankee Empire—-have you noticed?—-also seems devoid of humour. Its centre of power in Washington, D.C., is deadly serious. Its Senators and Congressmen are deadly serious. The Supreme Court’s current band of bumblers, sartorially swathed in jet-black robes, is

deadly serious. The Empire's military is deadly serious. Its ambassadors are deadly serious. The cloth of the Yankee Empire is cut from a mourning shroud.

Welcome the New Puritans. For you Europeans who care to understand America, I can not stress strongly enough the importance of first understanding the Puritans who settled New England in the 1630s. The rulers, the overlords, the masters of you and of me and of most of the world, if not all of it, are deadly serious descendants of these original Puritans. (In the 2004 presidential race, for example, it is noteworthy that both George W. Bush and John Kerry went to the same Puritan university: Yale).

"Which superpower can you name that thinks its holy mission to the world is to "spread democracy"? Which empire can you think of that believes itself the chosen, whose manifest destiny is to colonise the world in the image of itself? "

Like the early New England Puritans from whose tits they have drunk their bubbling ideology, the New Puritans believe that they too have been chosen to revolutionise the world. They are, so they believe, the elect. When George W. Bush invaded Iraq, he did so, as he said, to "promote democracy", which, at first glance, is odd when you consider that not even America is a democracy. (Remember too that Bush broke his own law to invade Iraq, for only Congress can declare a war according to the US Constitution.) Upon reflection, however, the Bush babbling makes a certain, if not distorted, sense. For Bush, history is irrelevant to the matter at hand, and the matter at hand is what he and the Empire's minions call "democracy". Not the Athenian style, mind you, but another sort.

Bush honestly believed that what he called "democracy" is coterminous with the dominant American ideology. Bush believed in the Religion of America, what Robert Bellah called "a civil religion". He certainly did not believe in his own professed Christianity, because Christians are enjoined against the kinds of deeds Bush supported (infanticide, for one). Or perhaps it is better to say that for Bush, his Christianity was the same essence as his America. "God bless America" was his mantra, just as it is for all Presidents and all imperial aspirants. America, in Bush's mind, was God's Plan, his Calvinistic architectonic model for all time, expressly divined in the Declaration of Independence (no matter that independence no longer existed) and the Constitution of the United States of America (no matter that the document was no longer worth the rotting paper it was written on).

From this perspective, one can see how the Islamic fascists came to view the American Empire: as a Church Militant bent on enslaving them; if not physically, then culturally and economically. The New Puritans had come again, and this time their theocratic-imperialistic designs included the Islamic world. In a perverse irony, the New Puritans, including Bush, could not see beyond their own rhetoric. How many times did we see Bush on TV, cheerily exhorting his subjects to accept that "Islam is a religion of peace"? Those of us who had studied the great European wars between Christendom and Islam knew better, of course. Mohammed was, after all, the man who had cold-bloodedly murdered a village of Jews at Yathrib in AD 627. The centuries-old war between Christianity and Islam was simply rekindled from smouldering ashes, but this time the sword was wielded not by Crusaders (as so many Islamic fascists seem to think) but by the New Puritans, whose vaunted "City on a Hill" had come under attack.

Now, if you've done your studying aright, you know that one of the interesting facets of Puritanism, which traces its origins to Calvinism, is the chronic anxiety between its doctrine of the elect and the problem of how to determine who, exactly, is elected. Whom has the Puritan God chosen? The answer was a constant source of strain to the Puritans in 17th-century New England "where anxiety was not only normal but mandatory—hysteria, breakdowns, and suicides were normal." (The Puritan Origins of the American Self, Sacvan Bercovitch) Typically, the Puritans found it convenient to comfort themselves by figuring out who was definitely not chosen, and therefore probably not the elect. Who, the question presented itself, are the deviants? In the 17th-century, Puritans found deviancy under every rock and behind every tree in their New England paradise. From the Quakers to the Arminians to the witches of Salem, if a Puritan could not tell God's plan for himself, at least he knew whom God did not choose, an important point

for a people who viewed themselves as living under a national covenant with God. Such a people, naturally, must have regarded the Indians whom they found in "their" new country a bother. And so they did. As Bercovitch points out:

> "The Puritans, despite their missionary pretenses, regarded the country as theirs and its natives as an obstacle to their destiny as Americans. They could remove that obstacle either by conversion...or by extermination; and since the former course proved insecure, they had recourse to the latter."

Today, of course, the ideology is much the same but the scope has expanded. Not content are God's Chosen People to dictate their Yankee will merely to Indians or to those pesky Southerners. The New Puritans are on a global crusade this time. Just as the myth of America was invented by New England (at the expense of the South), the myth of America today extends to the entire planet.

Which superpower can you name that thinks its holy mission to the world is to "spread democracy"? Which empire can you think of that believes itself the chosen, whose manifest destiny is to colonise the world in the image of itself? A corporate world of monotonous McDonalds, IBMs, and Microsofts? The ugly New England Yankee mercantilist dream? More important (and dangerous), which country can you name that went to war against its own people to force them by violence to accept the Puritanism that now haunts the world like an unsleeping ghost? ("Democracy broke down," remember, "not when the Union ceased to be agreeable to all its constituent States, but when it was upheld, like any other Empire, by force of arms.") Which country, said Arthur Bird in 1899 "is destined to become the Light of the World", following its Puritan ideology into the mythic inevitability of progress?

As the New Puritans like to say: "Do the math." Then weep for what could have been. Again.