

45. *Konstitutsien di ershte radimmoer khevre bney Mordkhe Menakhem* (New York, 1910), 5–10; E. Verschleiser, "Di konstitutsies fun di landsmanschaften," in *Rontch, Idische landsmanschaften*, 44.

46. *Ritual of the Independent Order Sons of Benjamin* (New York, 1899).

47. See, for example, minutes, October 11, 1903, March 15, 1908, July 18, 1909, February 5, 1911, Records of Satanover Benevolent Society (record group 818); minutes, March 9, 1910, June 1, 1912, Records of First Mikuliner Lodge 556, Independent Order Brith Abraham (record group 828), both at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, New York.

48. See Bakst, "Ikh bin an oshmener," 168–69; Jacob Pfeiffer, "Meshoy-nediger idish in di fereynen un lodzhen," *Amerikaner*, November 22, 1907, 18; Jacob Massel, "Di id. ord. in Amerika—di frage fun 'idish' bay do konventionen," *Amerikaner*, March 5, 1909. This Germanic Yiddish came to be known as "Daytshmerish." See Leon Kobrin, *Fun daytshmerish tsu yidish in Amerike* (New York: YCUE, 1944); Christopher Hutten, "Normativism and the Notion of Authenticity in Yiddish Linguistics," in *The Field of Yiddish: Studies in Language, Folklore, and Literature*, ed. David Goldberg (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1993), 14–28; and Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 61–73.

49. M. Berger, "History of the Society," in *First Yeziarzaner Sick Benevolent Association, Fortieth Anniversary Banquet* (New York, 1938), n.p.

50. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 151–59. See also Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 115–217; and Clifford Putney, "Service over Secrecy: How Lodge-Style Fraternalism Yielded Popularity to Men's Service Clubs," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27, no. 1 (Summer 1993): 179–90.

Liberators for Colonial Anáhuac: A Ruminaton on North American Civil Religions¹

Randi Jones Walker

Behold here the motives of that mysterious likeness which give merit to a comparison with Jesus in the work the Supreme Author confided to [Hidalgo]: to save the American people, the continent of Anáhuac!

So spoke Padre Antonio José Martínez in 1832 in praise of Miguel Hidalgo on the tenth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Mexico. That same year, Francis Gray extolled George Washington, the hero of another independence movement. Washington was the "special instrument of divine providence for working out our political salvation, the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night which led us out of bondage."³ Two new North American nations attempted to create a national identity and a useable mythology, side by side, if independent of each other. In this essay, I present a North American view of what could loosely be called civil religion.⁴

Those of us citizens of the United States who grew up a long way from Boston or Virginia—home of the Pilgrims, the Founding Fathers, and the sites of the national mythology we learned about in school—may have more than one history in view. If our families are English-speaking whites, chances are they have adopted as their own the mythology that emanated from the Anglo-Atlantic coast. But, if we spend any time in the territory that was once northern Mexico, especially as children, the Pilgrims, the white-steeped Protestant churches, and the whole geography of the founding of the nation seems strange. It does not look like anything around us. The really old things around us are built of adobe; the churches are Catholic. The rest is far too new to be associated with those long past founding days. As a child growing up in Albuquerque, I always had the vague feeling that I was not being told some important story that would explain the things I saw every day. Something was missing.

All children use the national mythology of their people to help them find a place in society. That society is the fabric into which they are woven by complex interactions with the people around

them, whether familiar or stranger. National mythologies of origin make explicit the values undergirding those societies and the particular kinds of behavior that hold the fabric together and, in this way, give identity and meaning to individual lives. From a child's point of view, these mythologies are eternal and unassailable. They provide a seemingly safe ground from which to participate in the life of the community. But the mythologies themselves are constructed by the community. Religion provides the warp of the fabric, the foundational threads upon which the woof of the community's experience is woven to create these national mythologies. They are not eternal, though the religious motifs underlying them give them an aura of transcendence. At best, they evolve over time, and they can become inadequate as society changes.

What bothered me as a child, I now know, was the disjunction between the promises of the mythology and the real life of people around me. The society of the United States is too complex to be understood in terms of a single myth of origin, no matter how dominant. New Mexico is certainly not the only place where a single story is not sufficient, but it is one such place.

As people on the Atlantic coast constructed the myth of George Washington and the founding of the United States, the residents of the mountains of northern Mexico produced the myth of Padre José Miguel Hidalgo. I take it as the historian's task to stand at the boundary between these two American peoples and try to form a bridge of words between them, between our time and theirs. I do this as a member of one culture, the Anglo, and one religious tradition, the Protestant. But, as an Anglo Protestant, I do not take Boston as my vantage point—rather, I stand in Santa Fe. Perhaps from here the liberation of colonial Anáhuac will take a richer, less nationalistic form.

In order to explore this process of national myth-making with one eye on Boston and the other eye on Santa Fe, I have chosen to look closely at two panegyrics, one delivered in Santa Fe and the other in Boston. Panegyrics (elaborate public speeches in praise of a person or event) are an important vehicle for the creation of civil religion or national mythology. By comparing two panegyrics delivered in the year 1832, I want to compare and contrast these myth-making projects and, in the end, to suggest that both myths are important for understanding the history of North American culture. There are obvious differences in the two. They also share surprising similarities in imagery, ideology, and project. Looking at them together, we can gain a richer view of American religious and cultural history.

Coincidentally, the two panegyrics were delivered in the same year.⁵ The one preached in Santa Fe by Martínez, along with a

second Fourth of July sermon to be discussed later, are, to my knowledge, the only such examples from New Mexico. Of the many easily accessible similar speeches from the early nineteenth-century United States, Francis Gray's clearly illustrates the hero-making process of the time and has much in common with that of Martínez.

The heart of this essay is a comparison of the two speeches. The contrast of places defines the gulf between the two worlds. The lives of the speakers, leaders in their communities, also provide insight into their myth-making projects. The ceremonies in which each speech was set begin to shape for us some common ground for understanding the meaning of North American liberation from Europe for these two societies. Finally, the panegyrics themselves contain an unexpected number of shared symbols. These symbols help us to understand the shared hopes and values as well as the differences between the two societies.

The Settings: Santa Fe and Boston

Santa Fe and Boston were worlds apart in 1832. Santa Fe was a village situated in an international boundary zone, on the edge of the Republic of Mexico, in country contested by Spanish and Indian, feeling the already outstretched hand of the United States. A complex constellation of cultures existed cheek by jowl in the Rio Grande Valley. The long settled Pueblo people continued to hold their ancestral land, keeping the Spanish newcomers at arm's length as much as possible, though making common cause with them when other sets of newcomers, Navajo, Apache, Ute, French, or Anglo, impinged on their territory. The boundaries between these disparate cultures were permeable. Each had social and cultural ties to the other. Desert and mountain provided geographical isolation from the centers of political and economic power in central Mexico.

In 1832, the people of New Mexico shared the general hopes for social and economic improvement that independence from Spain promised. Twelve years after the struggle began, however, New Mexico was still burdened by its isolation, its provincial status, and its poverty. Except for providing the initial psychological lift, independence had hardly changed life in the far northern provinces. About the same time Padre Martínez was preparing his Independence Day sermon, Antonio Barreiro, legal advisor to the territorial authorities, published a report on the state of government, church, and society in New Mexico.⁶

According to Barreiro, the military in New Mexico was neglected and ineffective. Justice was nearly nonexistent, the nearest

court of appeals being a month's hard journey south to Durango. The church was in a worse state of neglect than before independence. There were not enough clergy. Almost every parish was without a resident priest.⁷ The territory was not independent; though it was represented in the congress in Mexico City, it was still governed as a provincial outpost. Iturbide's 1821 *Plan de Iguala*, a proposal for home rule that became a widely accepted blueprint for independent Mexico, proclaimed class equality for American-born Hispanic citizens of New Mexico. These citizens had the chance to hold governmental and ecclesiastical offices for the first time. This equality remained, however, out of reach for the slaves and Indians.

At the northernmost edge of Mexico, Santa Fe was neglected territory. However, it was also at one end of the prosperous trade route to Missouri, the Santa Fe Trail. Trade had been initiated with St. Louis during an economic depression in 1819.⁸ Regular trade with merchants from Missouri began in 1822 with the expedition of William Becknell, who sold a small supply of goods in Santa Fe for what both sides considered a good price. Lucrative business developed quickly, at least half controlled by New Mexican merchants.⁹ By the 1830's, New Mexico had strong economic ties to the United States, pulling the territory in the opposite direction from its political and religious ties to Mexico.

The people of New Mexico were isolated and poor. They were expected to rely upon themselves for civil services. Though they paid taxes to the government in Mexico City, they received little revenue to do this. This had fostered in them an independent spirit that particularly resisted the central government's attempts to exert control. New Mexicans especially resented paying taxes to a government that failed to provide for their defense against Indians and the encroachments of Anglo merchants. In 1832, for the citizens of Santa Fe, independence must have seemed more a dream than a reality. It had been a year of unrest throughout Mexico, with revolts against the Bustamante government in Mexico City. Barreiro, head of the Patriotic Commission, probably planned the Independence Day festivities as a measure to boost public morale and (according to Thomas Steele) his own political career as well.¹⁰ Martínez's panegyric served as a reminder of the dream; he hoped to provide a new sense of unity among a divided and discouraged people.

In contrast to Santa Fe, Boston served as a major seaport and was located at the center of things. It, too, was situated in a new republic, but the fruits of independence were more immediately available to its many citizens, most particularly the group gathered in Old South Church to hear the oration of Francis Gray. These also were

"criollo" class people—though they were the second generation after the revolution. Their parents had been the discontented American-born British citizens taxed without receiving benefits.

There were divisions, of course. The year 1832 saw the reelection of Andrew Jackson to a second term as President of the United States. Jackson's championship of the common people over the elites and his desire to broaden political opportunity, particularly giving the vote to citizens without property, flew in the face of the old Federalist ideas of representative government led by those with means and ability.

Tensions flared between North and South in 1832. The precipitating event was South Carolina's nullification of the federal tariff law. Underlying issues pointed to the deep divisions among the American people, between the manufacturing economy of the North and the agricultural economy of the South, and between those who viewed the Constitution as providing for a national government and those who viewed it as a contract among sovereign states. The question of slavery lurked in every corner of the debates over these issues. Washington, a southern Federalist, served as a more-than-convenient bridge over these troubled waters. In this year, southern pressure prevented the removal of Washington's remains to Washington, D.C. The grave of the Father of the Country would remain in southern soil.¹¹ Themes of unity and independence were in tension in Gray's society.

For all their differences, both Boston and Santa Fe were exploring a newly won independence. In cutting themselves off from European society, they needed to establish a national identity sufficiently strong to carry them through the chaotic years of organizing a new social and political structure. Both societies looked to a deeper past to provide them with essential symbols of life, transcendence, and virtue. The people of Mexico looked to the Aztecs. But Santa Fe was almost as far as possible from the center of Aztec heritage in central Mexico, and its usefulness was, therefore, diluted. The people of Boston, with their humanistic education steeped in the Greek and Latin classics, naturally looked to the era of antiquity for their useable past. Significantly, the Bible served both groups.

The displacement of the church from the center of things provided the other significant common aspect of the Santa Fe and Boston contexts. In Santa Fe, people wrestled with a serious shortage of clergy due to the secularization of the churches in the 1760's and the expulsion of the Spanish-born clergy in the 1820's. In 1848, New Mexico was taken over by the United States, and the church found itself separated from the state altogether under the Constitution. In Boston,

the question of the disestablishment of the Congregational church was a live issue in 1832 but accomplished fact the next year. Here, too, the church was being removed from the center, no longer to be the institution that made official meaning for society. If the church no longer provided the transcendent symbols and meaning that connected an individual to society, where would they emerge? Such transcending symbols arise in societies all the time. In the instances of these panegyrics, the symbols were still rooted in the religious traditions of the people. Even where the church was no longer clearly the state religion, symbols drawn from Christianity gave substance to a civil mythology. Moreover, symbols rooted more deeply than Christianity continued to have meaning and to be used long after their original religious connections were forgotten.

The Speakers: Antonio José Martínez and Francis Gray

Antonio José Martínez was one of the prominent citizens of Taos.¹² Considering himself part of the criollo class, he was comparatively prosperous but limited in opportunities for holding high office in government or church. In middle age, following the death of his wife, he had gone to the diocesan seminary in Durango to study for the priesthood.

Martínez's years at the seminary, 1817-1823, coincided with the struggle for independence in Mexico. At the seminary, he absorbed the ferment of the Enlightenment liberalism and nationalism that undergirded the independence movement. Enlightenment ideas from Locke, Hume, and Rousseau, filtered through the polemics of the French Revolution, circulated widely in Mexico and became part of Martínez's vocabulary. The books were forbidden by government and church, who were nevertheless unable to stop their circulation. There is evidence that Martínez read them. While in school, Martínez came to admire the hero of the struggle, Padre José Miguel Hidalgo.

Padre Hidalgo, like Martínez, was one of the criollo clergy. These priests were especially influential in the independence effort. They had the education to appropriate the ideas of liberation from abroad and local followers whom they could mobilize for action. These followers were drawn from the people of the parishes with whom they sat in their everyday lives. Hidalgo's passion came not only from his criollo experience but also from his intimate acquaintance with the situation of those in his parish. The people placed confidence in the clergy that they did not place in the colonial government.¹³

Back in New Mexico, Martínez played a role in shaping both

a sense of Mexican nationalism and a desire and appreciation for independence and self-rule. By the time Martínez delivered his sermon in 1832, he was not only a parish priest but had also organized schools and an orphanage. He operated a printing business and taught and practiced church and civil law. Sometime in the 1830's, he was appointed advisor to citizens of the United States living in the Taos area and served several terms as a territorial deputy to the Departmental Assembly in Santa Fe.¹⁴

Francis Gray was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1790, making him four years older than Martínez. He was a graduate of Harvard, practiced law, and served as private secretary to John Quincy Adams for a time. In the 1820's, he served several terms in the Massachusetts Senate, one term on the General Court, and, in 1835, served a term on the Executive Council. He was wealthy, known as a philanthropist, a popular writer, and an orator. As a Harvard Fellow, he was a natural choice for the occasion. Francis Gray was a Federalist, as were many intellectuals in New England, enthusiastic about the Constitution, about a strong central government, and about the new possibilities of the nation as it expanded, coped with waves of immigration from Europe, and experienced "the burden of plenty."¹⁵ Both Martínez and Gray represented the mainstream religious tradition of their cultures. Both of them presented their heroes clothed in the recognized authoritative imagery of their churches for the purpose of giving identity to the nation.

The Ceremonies

On Sunday, September 16, 1832, the province of Santa Fe celebrated the independence of the Republic of Mexico in style. A patriotic grand commission had worked for a month to prepare the festivities. There were processions in the main plaza, pageantry, and a mass. While we have no information about the details, it was probably not unlike a similar celebration of independence held in 1822. Then, the stage was decorated with banners on which painted emblems represented the fruits of independence.

One allegorized the union with a lamb and a lion paying respect to each other, the other the tree of Liberty which one saw watered by four streams to be discovered within a cloud, alluding to the virtue symbolized in the heroic Iturbide, his brows wreathed.¹⁶

The celebration began with a volley of artillery at dawn and a procession of all the civic leaders, parish clergy, and people of the area.

A small boy dressed as an angel carried a sword in his right hand and represented the immortal [Plan de] Iguala. . . . After him came two richly dressed angels carrying between them a pretty girl dressed as a virgin who represented independence and the purity of our cause, and the two angels intertwined their arms with those of La Independencia. The right arm signifying religion, the left union. Their three persons were girded with a tricolor band, embellished sufficiently with diamonds and polished stones. Their appearance was as agreeable as a delicious garden.¹⁷

The procession ended at the Palacio, the Three Guarantees of the Plan de Iguala were read, and the dancing began.

For the September 1832 occasion, Padre Antonio José Martínez, possibly the most influential religious and political leader of the area, was invited to come down from Taos to celebrate the mass and to deliver a sermon, a panegyric, on the life of Padre José Miguel Hidalgo, another of the fathers of Mexican independence.

Likewise, both the city of Boston and the Legislature of Massachusetts prepared elaborate celebrations for the centennial anniversary of the birth of George Washington. The day was ushered in by ringing the bells of the city for half an hour at sunrise. Flags were flying. People were out in the streets in a festive mood. The day was bright with sunshine. Precisely at noon, a procession formed at the State House with the governor and the legislators and other dignitaries of the community, and, to the roar of cannons and another half-hour of bell ringing, they crossed Boston Common to Old South Church.¹⁸

The service began with an organ voluntary, selections from the Psalms, Ecclesiasticus, and the first book of the Maccabees (oddly use the Roman Catholic canon). It also included Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" and a closing hymn celebrating Washington.¹⁹ Gray's oration lasted some two hours. The editor of the Boston *Daily Evening Transcript* made these observations about the religious exercises:

The services at the Old South church would have been more acceptable to the auditors, had not the Orator taxed their patience to the utmost. Not that the oration was not eloquent, nor that the historical facts and illustrations were not judiciously selected, aptly used, and most beautifully molded; but the time occupied in the delivery far outran the period when attention flags—the mind grows weary, and auditors anxiously anticipate the conclusion. Ere so numerous an audience, as was assembled yesterday can be found to listen without complaint more than two

hours to the voice of one speaker, the orator must possess a power to entrance, with which few mortals are ever gifted.²⁰

Following the oration, the dignitaries attended a dinner provided by the city, the procession assembling at the City Hall at three o'clock and moving under the direction of the City Marshal to the dining hall. There a rich feast was held, and toasts were offered, even to the long-winded Francis Gray.

Both ceremonial settings placed the panegyric in the context of a procession and Christian service of worship. The procession in both cases tied the secular civic space to the church. The day was marked by noise, artillery, and the ringing of bells. The community was gathered, led by civic and church officials, and, after the devotional exercises, they ate and danced. The day was marked as a festival of communal meaning. Description of the Santa Fe ceremony (albeit from another occasion) indicates more visual content. The fruits of independence, peace and liberty, were illustrated with biblical forms. The lion and the lamb from Isaiah and the tree watered by four streams from Genesis and Revelation served to announce that independence was an event that changed the world. A new age had dawned. The angels carried the sword of equality and La Independencia gave a further suggestion that the realm of God had broken into human affairs. In Boston, the effect was produced by music. The triumphant "Hallelujah Chorus" suggested that the day of resurrection had dawned. A new day was at hand. The people in both places were primed to hear about the savior who occupied such a transformative time in history.

The Panegyrics

Taking a closer look at the content of the speeches, we can explore this mythology more deeply and discern its connections to the phenomena termed civil religion. Both orations are examples of attempts to connect the political principles underlying the independence movements with more traditional religious language. The rhetoric thereby connected "society's principles of legitimacy with the divine." In telling their hero's story, Martínez and Gray presented a "legitimizing myth" for their societies and for the work of forging national identity and unity in the new republics.²¹

If it is true that these panegyrics served to form symbolic underpinnings for social order in two societies severed from their traditional source of such symbolic material, how then did Martínez and Gray go about satisfying the need for transcendent civic symbols?

Three kinds of symbols appear in the panegyrics themselves and in the civic ceremonies that surround them: liberal Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and happiness; ancient pre-Christian symbols of tree, mountain, and altar; and the biblical Maccabean heroes. The Enlightenment ideals represented new material. These ideals were articulated in the separation of both the British and Spanish colonies from their European parents. The new nations then embedded them in much older symbolic systems from antiquity and pre-Christian myth. Tree and mountain, biblical sources of life and law, have even older roots in both European and Aztec cultures as the location of the holy, particularly the power of fertility. These ideals and symbols then became associated with the new national heroes. The books of the Maccabees, four apocryphal books containing the stories of the struggle of the Jews for independence from the Seleucid kings in the second century before Christ, provided ample material for incorporating the new North American liberators directly into the sacred narratives of European culture. Martínez, whose hero died in the struggle for independence, called upon Judas, the brother who died in battle. The portrait of Maccabees read in Old South Church in Boston concerned Simon, one who did not die but lived to be celebrated as liberator and high priest of the people.

Just how each panegyric accomplished the delivery of a savior differed. Martínez was a Catholic, and Gray was Protestant and a rationalist. Martínez was a priest, Gray a layman. Martínez as a Catholic had more facility with symbols, though he no less than Gray imported the new Enlightenment values into an ancient tradition. Gray's Protestant audience was seated in a plain white meetinghouse with clear glass windows. There were no pictures, and the festival flags were outside. Being from the Protestant tradition, deeply suspicious of anything that could be viewed as idolatry, magic, or superstition, Gray's audience expected words to carry the message. Gray clearly needed more words to convey his point. Martínez's audience was seated in a brown adobe church with whitewashed walls and a richly decorated altar; images of the saints of the faith were readily available to every eye, and the stations of the cross showed the death of Jesus for the liberation of the soul. Martínez compared Hidalgo directly to Jesus Christ.

I compared him to the liberator of the world, to Jesus Christ, sent by the eternal Father to bring about the spiritual salvation of the peoples: this Lord, he [Hidalgo] resembled in his deeds and determination. Jesus came into the world, preached his doctrine, rebuked the wicked, gave us his example, and finally died under the persecution of his enemies and offered himself

to the eternal Father in sacrifice for all people. Hidalgo, following these footsteps, preached the doctrine of his decisions, attacked the tyrants, gave us his example and finally died at the [hands] of the same [tyrants], for the good of his country.²²

Gray the rationalist did not take such liberties. He was careful to note that all was said of Washington that could be said without idolatry: "[He was a] special instrument of divine providence for working out our political salvation, the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, which led us out of bondage."²³ With this imagery from Exodus, Gray did seek to make divine associations for his hero.

Both these panegyrics attempt to create a semidivine hero from the struggle for independence—to create what Catherine Albanese has identified as a "divine man" in the tradition of antiquity.²⁴ Gray appropriated this tradition explicitly, pointing out Washington's refusal to allow the army to make him Caesar.²⁵ The divine hero served as a symbol of independence from Europe and the virtues thought necessary to sustain that independence. This civil hagiography proposed a model for citizenship.

Antonio José Martínez took his text from Isaiah 14:5, "The Lord broke the staff of the impious, and the rod of the tyrants." Martínez outlined the history of Spain's conquest of Mexico and the struggle for independence. He recited the standard liberal version of the Spanish domination of the Americas, mentioning Spain's greed for wealth, the slavery instituted by Hernán Cortés, and the graves of those who fought to maintain their freedom. His history reflected Martínez's criollo frustration. At the climax of the story, his hero, Hidalgo, appeared to rouse the people and save the day. God's powerful hand in the work of independence undertaken in America was manifested in an ordinary human being, proven true and faithful in adversity.

Martínez first compared Hidalgo to Judas Maccabeus, the first of the brothers to die resisting oppression. Judas, like Hidalgo, in Martínez's scheme, had a sense that God had called him to liberate his people. He fought with a small band in a great cause that would triumph because God was with them. But, as we have seen, Martínez went further, not content to base his entire mythology of Hidalgo on the Maccabee brothers. According to Martínez, the Maccabees had no choice but to fight, otherwise they would have been destroyed. Hidalgo, however, could have remained quiet and comfortable, but he chose to fight out of love for his people, initiating his own sacrifice for their freedom.

To make this point, Martínez needed a divine image. God showed special favor to José Miguel Hidalgo by sending him to per-

form a work that Martínez claimed to be analogous to that of Jesus against the King of Darkness. Political liberty bought by the sacrifice of the hero's life for independence was like the salvation of the soul bought by Christ. As Jesus saved the human race, so Hidalgo saved America.²⁶ Martínez closed with an exhortation to his listeners to imitate the virtues of Hidalgo, his valor and constancy in fighting the oppressive Spanish, the enemies of liberty; to perpetuate his memory; and to contemplate his enjoyment of happiness in eternity.

Martínez made use of a process of symbolic appropriation recently identified by J. Míguez Bonino, a twentieth-century liberation theologian, in the "*crístologización*" of Che Guevara. Bonino explains it this way.

Liberation and revolution are the result of a legitimate transcription of the gospel. On account of that, I think, one does not say "Che Guevara is Christ"—the divinization of a historical person—, but "Christ is Che"—a historical incarnation of a divine intention manifested in Christ.²⁷

Martínez's Hidalgo was not Christ, but in the historical moment of liberation, Christ was Hidalgo. Hidalgo thus served as the mirror of an idea, a divine purpose, the incarnation of a divine intention. His personal identity was emptied to make room for the symbolic content Martínez wanted to convey.

Another image in Martínez's panegyric is the tree of liberty. The tree that appeared in the 1822 independence day procession in Santa Fe, watered by four streams coming from a cloud, was a symbol grown from a long history of trees used as meeting places and sacred space. It is an ancient symbol of community life rooted in both pagan and later Christian religious language.²⁸ The tree of life in Hispanic folklore and the biblical tree of life, source of the four streams of living water as depicted in Genesis and the Revelation of St. John of Patmos, were readily available for a new mythological use by European colonists in North America.

The tree of liberty emerged in the British Colonies' war for independence, and the symbol was appropriated by the French and apparently came with them to Mexico. Arthur Schlesinger cites Thomas Paine on the origin of the symbol in the American setting.

This congenital rebel, soon to detonate his great blast for independence in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, conjured up a fit origin for the Tree. Inspired into verse in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* of June 1775, he explained that the Goddess of Liberty had transplanted the "fair budding branch" from the "gardens above" to "this peaceable shore," where the "fame of its fruit" draws men from many nations.²⁹

It is reported that, in 1798, French liberty rings bearing the image of the liberty tree were being worn by both men and women in Valladolid, Spain.³⁰

Martínez put it this way:

The skies of our existence disturbed themselves, and the clouds saturated with fecundity rained down upon us the just Hidalgo, who was nourished by our fruits, as the chosen one to scatter the diadem of immortality upon our soil, planting the unwithering tree of liberty.

Related to May poles and other fertility symbols in European folk traditions, Hidalgo's planted tree is clearly blessed with heavenly origin. Martínez further connected Hidalgo with the tree symbol by likening him to Christ, the "liberator of the world," whose life was given up on a cross (or tree) for the salvation (or freedom) of souls.³¹ Hidalgo was, thus, presented as savior, sent by God to assure the liberty of the Mexican people.

Francis Gray's panegyric was long, using the life and career of George Washington to illustrate the necessity for the Constitution and to lift up Washington as a paradigm of citizenship. Gray's Washington shared Hidalgo's qualities. He emphasized Washington's honor, courage, and devotion to duty. He was "undaunted in danger, undaunted by adversity, undazzled by success."

The eye of posterity therefore, in looking back on the pyramid of the nation's glory, less to scrutinize its structure, than to contemplate its lofty grandeur, will always involuntarily rest upon its summit. And if it behold there, not a gigantic phantom, gifted with power and genius indeed, yet distorted by ambition, or polluted by crimes,—but a majestic form, erect and serene; of exact proportions and severe simplicity; without a fault for censure, an extravagance for ridicule, or a blemish for regret,—on that it will delight to linger, to that it will direct the admiration of mankind.³²

Gray portrayed his hero at the top of a pyramid, overseeing the country he helped to found.

In 1832, plans were well on the way for building a tomb for Washington's remains in the national capital. This tomb was to have been a pyramid. The plan was canceled by southern pressure to keep the remains at Mt. Vernon. Gray saw this pyramid surmounted by the serene figure of Washington, who had pursued and found happiness in the service of his country.

Washington became, in Gray's portrait, the symbol of the ideals of the nation: liberty, free government, and just law. Looking for a

grand religious title for his hero, Gray used "Apostle of Liberty" as well as "Savior of his country." Founder, builder, teacher, martyr, Washington served as all of them. His martyrdom consisted in giving his life to his country while yet living, despite his desire to retire in quiet after the war for independence.

Those who prize intellect or delight in virtue, throughout all time turn to him, whose intellectual and moral greatness first introduced and recommended this system—standing at last, all alone in his pre-eminence, fixed forever in the solitude of his glory, as the Miracle of Men, the great political Benefactor of mankind,—and will exalt that they belong to the same race of beings with Washington.³³

For Gray and his generation, God's direct action in the world was becoming less apparent. Though the address was given in a Congregational church, his theology was not Puritan but rationalist. Washington as a human being of mathematical proportions was the sacred locus of worship. The God who designed the universe, set it in motion, and stands afar off letting it run on its own stood in the background.³⁴ God was present that day in the reading of Scripture and in the "Hallelujah Chorus" but was never mentioned in Gray's panegyric. The pyramid, or cosmic mountain, the seat of the creator deities from Zeus to Yahweh, was now inhabited by a human being, symbol of his nation.

Gray's language shared the same flowery quality as Martinez's. The effusive patriotism and excitement of new nationhood influenced them both. Gray was hoping to shape his nation's view of its hero of independence to provide an anchor in a time of rapid change. Boston would soon be overwhelmed with new immigrants. Gray's people thought it critical to provide these newcomers with a mythology that incorporated them into the Anglo-American cultural milieu lest they corrupt the city's values. The original ideals of independence were also in danger of being lost by the descendants of the patriots themselves. They were growing forgetful. The Jackson election showed that the Constitution could be read in many ways, not all congenial to the conservative Federalist Francis Gray.

We can put Gray's address in the context of a brief moment of broad consensus in New England about Yankee values.³⁵ This consensus was based on a Calvinist worldview, though with room for many variations, including the rationalist stamp of Washington. It was widely agreed that the United States was a chosen nation with a covenant with God. That covenant protected individual freedom and called for community life based broadly on the Ten Commandments

and the Sermon on the Mount. Society was made up of free, morally responsible individuals with inalienable freedoms, though public respect and economic success were reserved for those who worked hard.

It was never clear that all human beings living within the bounds of the country were equally part of this covenant. It was assumed by most that the Native Americans could not fit into this scheme and would have to move on. Immigrants from Europe could assimilate by learning English and converting to Protestantism. The question of the place of African Americans was tabled for a future generation to resolve. The consensus was sustained as long as the question of slavery was not introduced and the slowly growing urban tensions were swept under the rug. To focus on George Washington, happy at the top of his heavenly pyramid, rewarded for his sacrifice for the independence of his country, distracted for a moment from the fear that the consensus would not hold.

Gray's oration can be seen as one of many attempts to present George Washington as a unifying symbol for national life in the midst of profound change. The unifying symbol of George Washington, the "Father of Independence," like the symbol of Padre Hidalgo for the New Mexicans, helped people in this transitional society to recall that they had within them the will and spirit necessary to face change together. Gray and Martínez participated in the creation of a national mythology through the use of their symbolic language. They transformed the religious and political language available to them in order to generate a new truth about communal life.³⁶ They emphasized the nation's independence from Europe and liberty to govern its own affairs. The hero-liberator, bravery, devotion to duty, and self-sacrifice mirrored the values necessary to maintain that liberty.

In the North American context of nations newly independent of European powers, the old myths of the king and his people would not work. Where the church was still acknowledged as connected to the state, as in the Republic of Mexico, mythical forms borrowed from Christianity could and still do work powerfully. But where the state severed itself from the church (though not society from religion), as in the United States, the search for mythical forms became problematic. This can be illustrated in a final sermon from Padre Martínez, preached on the Fourth of July in 1860, after New Mexico had become a Territory of the United States.³⁷ Martínez and his people were transferred overnight from one culture to another. Excommunicated in 1858 by his new French-American bishop for continuing to exercise priestly prerogatives after he had resigned as parish priest of Taos, and implicated by certain enemies in the 1847 revolt against the new American

military government, Martínez was not comfortably at home in the new order.³⁸ This speech, delivered near the end of his life, situated him and his people in the context of the United States. As with Francis Gray, Martínez lifted up the Constitution as the political structure that would guarantee the freedom, stability, and prosperity of his people. He readily appropriated a new national mythology to his own situation, though not its deist theology.

Gone from this sermon is the *crístologización* of the hero of independence. Here, Martínez appropriated George Washington as a "man worthy of eternal remembrance," "whose wisdom serves as a standard." Martínez saw him as a superior organizational genius, which the Republic of Mexico lacked (presumably since Hidalgo died before independence was achieved). His sermon praises the Constitution of the United States, particularly its provision for freedom of religion. The sermon ended with these words:

For all this, long live our hero, the immortal Washintong [sic]! Long live the great government of the United States, sustaining the happiness of its peoples! And long live God, who receives the homage of adoration of these citizens in every appropriate and honorable manner in which they offer it.³⁹

To see a richer, less nationalistic form of civil religion, a North American civil religion, these two hero tales need to be put side by side. Boston and Santa Fe seem to have little in common. They had different languages, different religious traditions, and different geographies. At the same time, they shared the experience of being nations, using liberal political theory of the Enlightenment and symbols derived from shared traditions, Christian and pre-Christian. Neither orator single-handedly created these symbolic heroes, but it was in public arenas such as independence day celebrations that the mythology took shape. In telling the story over and over again, the symbol took root as the model for citizenship. The values of freedom and rights and the Constitution were shared in both places.

Martínez's second sermon suggests ways in which Washington could serve as a bridge between these two American cultures. In one sense, it simply makes plain the gulf of race, religion, and culture, since the story of Washington has to be imported into a strange language. Washington's war for independence became the dominant story and Hidalgo was forgotten. However, Washington and Hidalgo shared many qualities. At least their mythologies were similar, as we have seen. Therefore, Washington is a useable mythology for someone like Martínez. He certainly used Washington to form a bridge between his people and their new nation.

One reason civil religion continues to interest historians and students of American culture is that it offers hope of unity to a fragmented society. Yet, that unity will not be found in a single mythology, no matter how powerful the dominant stream of society may be. Washington alone cannot be made to transcend all the differences of American experience. This study of two patriotic panegyrics suggests that a deeper study of civil religions in seemingly different segments of American culture could provide a stronger foundation for claiming the existence of an American civil religion. This would be not simply ideological agreement, nor the imposition of a dominant mythology upon everyone else, but a rich tapestry of symbols and mythologies that would help to illuminate the complexities of American experience and shape a future citizenship in which everyone might really have an equal voice.

Notes

I would like to thank several colleagues for important conversations that shaped this essay in ways they may or may not recognize: Archie Smith, Jr., Mary Donovan Turner, Eldon Ernst, and Thomas Buckley.

1. Anáhuac is the Aztec term for North America. I am aware that a Euro-American appropriation of a Native American term can be problematic. I am using the term to emphasize the vantage point outside of Boston.
2. Antonio José Martínez, "Panegyric in Praise of Padre Miguel Hidalgo, 1832," in *New Mexican Spanish Religious Oratory, 1800-1900*, ed. Thomas J. Steele, S.J. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 73.
3. Francis C. Gray, *Oration delivered before the Legislature of Massachusetts at their request, on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Washington* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1832), 7.

4. There is not room in this essay for an exacting discussion of the term "civil religion" and how it is employed by historians. I use the term to refer to religious motifs, symbols, and forms that work to explain or justify political and civic practices and ideologies related to national identity and purpose. The term has been around since Rousseau. Robert Bellah's use of it in his 1967 essay "Civil Religion in America" (contained in Richey and Jones cited below) touched off an exploration of its usefulness as a category for understanding certain aspects of public religious life in the United States. For a full understanding of the wealth of meaning of the term, the reader is referred to Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), and Phillip E. Hammond, Amanda Porterfield, James G. Moseley, and Jonathan D. Sarna, "Forum: American Civil Religion

Revisited," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 1-23.

5. Martínez's panegyric is printed in Spanish and translated into English by Thomas Steele in the above cited work *New Mexican Spanish Religious Oratory, 1800-1900*. At least four manuscript versions of it exist, all in the William Gillett Ritch Collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. The text I used most is Santiago Valdez, 1877, "Biografía del Padre Antonio José Martínez," Huntington Manuscript RI 2210, 167-83. Two other Spanish versions, with somewhat more ornate language, are found in RI 2209 A and B, shorter versions of the same biography. An imperfect English translation of the biography contains the panegyric as well, RI 2211, vol. 1, 94-116. The first fifty pages of the English biography are in the handwriting of Samuel Ellison, territorial librarian in the 1880's, and contain good translations. The rest are in another handwriting that I have not been able to identify and contain many mistakes and what appear to be paraphrases. I used Gray's panegyric in published form from a microfiche copy of the original in the Library of Congress.

6. Antonio Barriero, "Ojeada Sobre Nuevo México," in *Three New Mexico Chronicles*, tr. H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard (Albuquerque: Quivira Society, 1942), 263-318.

7. Barreiro estimates the population of New Mexico to be forty-three thousand people in 1827. There were seventeen priests, four serving the Hispanic towns, all the rest in the Pueblo missions. Santa Fe, with five thousand people, had no resident priest. Barreiro, "Ojeada," 88.

8. See Ray John de Aragon, "Padre Antonio José Martínez: The Man and the Myth," in E. A. Mares and others, *Padre Martínez: New Perspectives from Taos* (Taos, N. Mex.: Millicent Rogers Museum, 1988), 137.

9. See Thomas E. Chávez, *Manuel Alvarez, 1794-1856: A Southwestern Biography* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 3.

10. See Steele, ed., *New Mexican Spanish Religious Oratory*, 54.

11. An engaging account of this struggle in the context of the mythologization of George Washington can be found in Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 349-50.

12. There are numerous studies of Padre Antonio José Martínez. The earliest is Santiago Valdez, "Biografía del Padre Antonio José Martínez," in the William Gillett Ritch Collection at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, manuscripts RI 2210, RI 2209, and RI 2211. Published biographies include Fray Angelico Chavez, *But Time and Chance: The Story of Padre Martínez of Taos, 1793-1867* (Santa Fe, N. Mex.: Sunstone Press, 1981); Ray John de

Aragon, *Padre Martínez and Bishop Lamy* (Las Vegas, N. Mex.: Pan-American Publishing Company, 1978); and Pedro Sanchez, *Memorias sobre la vida del presbítero Don Antonio José Martínez* (Santa Fe, N. Mex.: Lightning Tree, 1978), with a translation by Ray John de Aragon. Janet Leconte, *Rebellion in Río Arriba, 1837* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), includes considerable analysis of Padre Martínez's role in the community at that time. Earnest Anthony Mares, *I Returned and Saw under the Sun: Padre Martínez of Taos, a Play* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), dramatizes Martínez's life.

13. See José Gutiérrez Castillas, S. J., *Historia de la Iglesia en México* (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1974), 220-21.

14. Aragon, "The Man and the Myth," 136.

15. Gray, *Oration*, 7.

16. Melgaros, "A Solicitud de la Ciudad de Santa Fe, Capital del Nuevo Mexico . . ." *Gaceta Imperial de Mexico* 2 (21 Marzo 1822): 90, my translation. This celebration is discussed in Lansing Bartlett Bloom, "New Mexico under Mexican Administration, 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe* 1 (October 1913): 142. Augustín de Iturbide was one of the heroes in the Mexican independence struggle. I am grateful for the assistance of Professor José Irrizarry of Pacific School of Religion in the translation of some archaic words.

17. Melgaros, "A Solicitud," 91, my translation.

18. *Daily Evening Transcript* (Boston, Massachusetts), February 21, 1832, and February 23, 1832.

19. Gray, *Oration*, 78-80. The text of the hymn can be found below.

20. *Daily Evening Transcript*, February 23, 1832.

21. Hammond, Porterfield, Moseley, and Sarna, "Forum: American Civil Religion Revisited," 18, 2. This forum presents a variety of ways of addressing what is often called civil religion. The authors have varying degrees of discomfort with the term. Together, they provide some useful lenses through which to view the rhetoric of Gray and Martínez. Hammond, in particular, discusses the conceptual problems entailed in the use of the term "civil religion" and concludes that he prefers the idea of legitimating myth.

22. Valdez, "Biografía," 169-70, my translation.

23. Gray, *Oration*, 7.

24. Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 144-45.

25. Gray, *Oration*, 40.

26. Martínez's analogy of the national hero and Jesus Christ can also be found in the New England milieu of Francis Gray. Will Herberg cites a Memorial Day orator as saying, "No character except the Carpenter of Nazareth has ever been honored the way Washington and Lincoln have been in New England. . . . It will not escape notice, I hope, that Washington and Lincoln are here raised to superhuman level, as true Saints of America's civil religion. They are equipped with the qualities and virtues that, in traditional Christianity, are attributed to Jesus alone—freedom from sin, for example." Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Richey and Jones, 82. In the eyes of some scholars in this volume, this virtual equation of the hero with Christ borders on idolatry.

27. J. Míguez Bonino, *La fe en busca de eficacia: una interpretación de la reflexión teológica latinoamericana de liberación* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1977), 25, translation mine.

28. Many works in religious studies touch on this symbol. James Frazier discusses it throughout in *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

29. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The Liberty Tree: A Genealogy," *New England Quarterly* 25 (December 1952): 435-58. Thomas Paine's writings served as a vehicle for many political ideas and symbols to move from the American to the French struggles for independence.

30. Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., *The Hidalgo Revolt: Prelude to Mexican Independence* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966), 9. Hamill cites a complaint by Ramón Pérez to the Office of the Inquisition. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo de Inquisición, tome 1352, no. 2, leaf 7. During the early years of the Mexican independence struggle, Spain was ruled by a relative of Napoleon's, effectively part of the French empire.

31. Valdez, "Biografía," 174, 169, my translation.

32. Gray, *Oration*, 6, 72.

33. *Ibid.*, 77.

34. Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers*, discusses this issue at length. Martin Marty characterizes this kind of civil religion as one of national self-transcendence. "It does not see people, left to themselves, automatically given to self-worship. But either references to deity disappear entirely or 'God' is drained of earlier cognitive imports and may appear terminologically only out of habitual reference." Martin Marty, "Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Richey and Jones, 144.

35. A helpful discussion of this Yankee culture, especially as it trav-

eled west with American society, is found in Louis B. Wright's *Culture on the Moving Frontier* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955). William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), discusses some of the connected patterns of American life as the New England religious culture made itself felt in shaping secular society.

36. The symbolic transformation Gray and Martínez used is like that process described by Pieder Botha and Johannes Vorster in their introduction to Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 17. "Where truth is seen as socially constructed and 'what is real or factual' dependent on the socio-symbolic interaction of human beings, the status of rhetoric would be enhanced to that of a generating force." This oration and its rhetoric is shaping the audience's sense of reality.

37. Antonio José Martínez, "Fourth of July 1860 Sermon," in *New Mexican Spanish Religious Oratory, 1800-1900*, ed. Steele, 80-87.

38. It is not clear whether Martínez intended to resign, but Bishop Lamy understood that he had. Martínez resisted the transference of duties to the new priest, continuing to perform functions he was no longer authorized to perform.

Thomas J. Steele, S. J., attributes the enmity of French and American business people in Taos to Martínez's "attempt to keep them from stealing the Taos Pueblo Indians' and Hispano vecinos' land." Thomas J. Steele, S. J., "The View from the Rectory," in *Padre Martínez: New Perspectives from Taos*, by Mares and others, 97, n. 22.

39. Martínez, "Fourth of July Sermon," 87.