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The Chosen People in the United States:
From before Manifest Destiny to
Imperialism

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UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
DEPARTAMENT D'ESTUDIS ANGLESES I ALEMANYS

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Abstract

This project involves finding what was the role of the chosen people in the United States from Manifest Destiny to Imperialism. The goal is to analyze the different events of American history intending to discover how religious ideas shaped America. To do so, I examine different events chronologically. I start by explaining how America before Columbus discovery was and then, I focus on the first European settlers of the New World. Afterwards, I analyze the First and the Second Great Awakening. After that, I mention Utah, as it was believed to be the Promised Land. Later, I explain the Mexican War, the Gold Rush, the Westward Movement of the Frontier and the Civil War because these events are crucial in American history as it is clear how the idea of Manifest Destiny came to fruition. When all these events are examined, it becomes clear that religion has been a fundamental element in American history as it has been shaped according to the Bible. Thus, it can be shown that all the events were justified by religion and also by the chosen people; since they believed that their actions were justified as being God's mission.

Keywords: religion; culture; God's mission; American history; Promised Land.

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Introduction

The aim of my project is to research the role of the chosen people in the United States from the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century. I choose this period because the concept of Manifest Destiny rapidly spread around the country during those centuries. Therefore, I focus on all the events of American history that were affected by the idea of chosen people and Manifest Destiny. Furthermore, many of the events happened in the era of imperialism. Hence, I briefly mention the differences between Imperialism and Manifest Destiny as they are often confused because of their similarities.

My objectives in this project are to highlight the role of the chosen people during all the events of American history. Moreover, I analyze where the idea of the chosen people comes from and compare the Bible with the concept of Manifest Destiny since they are linked. From the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century, the most important events that have been affected by the above-mentioned ideas are explained throughout the dissertation. Nevertheless, before going into the explanations of all the events, I begin by explaining who American citizens were before America was colonized. Afterwards, I explain the concepts of the Chosen People, Manifest Destiny and Imperialism. To sum up, I want to learn how all these events shaped the United States and its identity.

To do so, I read several articles, books and I have watched many videos too. These sources are found in the references.

1. The United States before its discovery

The United States has always been a territory of immigrants. The first immigrants were the nomadic ancestors of the so-called Native Americans. The author Gregorio Doval (2009) talks about America's origin in *Breve Historia de los indios norteamericanos*. In the following point, much information has been provided by him.

Many theories of the origins of Amerindians are still controversial nowadays. Some of them were related to religion and it is believed that Native Americans are the descendants of the biblical Lost Tribes of Israel. However, according to the most accepted theory, Native Americans may be the descendants of Siberian hunters who commonly left their territory during the last Würm glaciation and crossed the Bering Strait. Thus, they expanded agriculture civilizations and adapted their life according to their environment and their resources. Furthermore, Native Americans inhabited more than 500 towns. All of them were related to each other by ancestral ties. A common characteristic among all tribes is that they had close relationship and big ties for nature. Nevertheless, every tribe had a different way of living depending on their religion and culture. Hence, everyone had an identity which was different from the rest of Native Americans. What is more, many languages were spoken in different tribes so, it is almost impossible to generalize the life of Native Americans because they had distinct cultures; some of them hunted and foraged for food while others who were already settled, lived from agriculture, and built hills to venerate their gods.

William O. Kellogg (1991) says in *American History The Easy Way* that nowadays it has been proven that Native Americans had contacts with Africans and Europeans before Christopher Columbus discovered the land of what in the future would be known as America. O. Kellogg (1991) also adds that even though there are no clear messages

among them, a clay of figurines with Negroid features was found in Aztec art before 1500 AD. Plus, in New England, inscriptions in Egyptian hieroglyphs and Celtic writing were also found.

The first immigrants from Europe were Celts and Vikings due to their constant voyages. During the Roman Republic, the Celts arrived at the New World. Leif Erikson is considered one of the first Europeans to have explored America, 500 years before Columbus, and established the first colonies on the coast of North America in the 11th century: Greenland and Newfoundland.

It is important to have a brief knowledge of the origins of America in order to understand the conflict between the Native Americans and the immigrants or colonizers. That is to say, the Indians and the colonizers had a culture war. In other words, they could not live together because of their opposing ideologies and ways of seeing their surroundings. On the one hand, the Indians were guided by nature, as mentioned above. On the other hand, the first immigrants were guided by God and religion. An example that demonstrates how a concept can be interpreted in different ways is the following: Native Americans sold their territories to the colonizers. However, they did not understand why they could not use them anymore. They thought territories were to share and they should not have an owner. The crucial point to bear in mind is the misunderstanding of the Natives which lead the Europeans in some cases, to failure.

It must be said that colonizers' victories were seen as a blessing of God and an answer of His will. This was a consequence of the thought that the earth belonged to God. Moreover, colonizers also justified their acts with the idea that Natives Americans were not taking advantage of their land. As L. Daniel Hawk (2010) says in *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny*:

Early on, “savage” was opposed to “civilized” and “heathern” was opposed to “Christian”. Clasing Native peoples as “savages” shaped them into the “other” against which the colonizers constructed and maintained their own sense of identity. The colonists were chaste; the savages were lascivious. The colonists were merciful; the savages were bloodthirsty. The colonists were rational; the savages were animalistic. The Christians were the chosen people; savages were captive to Satan (Hawk, 39).

Hence, Native Americans have always been considered inferior to Europeans and they were defined as savages which in the Bible meant convicts of Satan; in the Bible, Satan is the opponent of God. As Alfred A. Cave (1992) says, this is the reason why Native Americans or the Indians have always been linked to shamanism since the first settlers in New England. Moreover, the first immigrants wrote reports in which they explained in detail the Indians spiritual culture, especially, sorcery and Devil worship.

1.2 Columbus Discovery

With the great economical support of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, on August 3rd, 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail with his crew from Spain in three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. On October 12th, Columbus assumed he had arrived in the East Indies. In reality, he had landed in the “New World”, what is now known as America, specifically on one of the Bahamian islands. As O. Kellogg (1991) states, he is commonly attributed to the “discovery of the New World” and how he changed history. However, it must be said that Columbus arrived in America at a time when there were many technical developments which made it easier for him to write about his voyages. Furthermore, it was an era of growing economic rivalries between the developing states that looked for new wealth. Consequently, this competition led to the establishment of colonies.

2. Crucial Concepts

2.1 The Chosen People

Chosen people is an idea that expresses that God has selected specific people to fulfill the mission of announcing the truth to the world. The origin of such idea comes from several passages taken from the Bible. For example, the following can be read in the Book of Deuteronomy: “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people of his own possession, out of all the nations that are on the face of the earth” (Deut. 14:2). Chosen people can also be interpreted in the Old Testament that God chose Israel, at the time of Abraham, as his chosen people. To further understand the meaning of this idea, Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson (2021) explains in the Jewish Learning Institute that being chosen by God implies two different issues. On one hand, perfection. Those who are chosen are perfect and flawless because God has selected them. Hence, they feel elevated, and they have infinite power. On the other hand, the chosen people can feel small because they are an extension of God, and they are nothing compared to Him.

To further understand this topic, professor Macià Riutort explained the following to me: The Christian religion was born out of a sectarian Jewish group. Until the 4th century, the Christians were not considered a religious group different from the Jews. Therefore, the true chosen people were the Christians, since they were the ones who really followed the faith of God. As a consequence, it was the Christians, and not the Jews, who had the mission to spread the truth of God throughout the world. Therefore, the Jews had to accept that Christians would take on the role of spreading the truth. In fact, the Puritans were the new chosen people who followed the faith of God to the end.

2.2 Manifest Destiny

The term Manifest Destiny is used to express the American expansion in the 1800s. This concept justifies the divine right to expand across America. Manifest Destiny was published for the first time in the *Democratic Review* in July 1845. A journalist named John L. O' Sullivan coined this term. He wrote editorials about the annexation of Texas and the dispute with Britain over Oregon. Hence, O'Sullivan related Manifest Destiny to the Mexican War. O'Sullivan made up this slogan with the thought that God provided America in order to be expanded by the United States of America. As Kim Kutz Elliott (2018) explains in Khan Academy video, this idea implies three points: in the first place, the privilege of white Europeans; then, a false spread of democracy and civilization and finally, it was an inevitable act. Many Americans believed that God had given them the right to expand their territories and settle lands of the West. Nationalism spirit grew dramatically as well as cultural and racial superiority. In the following article named *The Great Nation of Futurity*, it can clearly be read how O' Sullivan conveys strong ideas about new changes that need to be made to progress. Also, he promotes freedom and rights through God's Will:

Yes, we are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is the cynosure of our union of States, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals; and while truth sheds its effulgence, we cannot retrograde, without dissolving the one and subverting the other. We must onward to the fulfilment of our mission -- to the entire development of the principle of our organization -- freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality.

Furthermore, *The Great Nation of Futurity* insists on the natural destiny of America to fulfill their mission and freedom. O’Sullivan also combines politics and religion at the same time. All in all, he focuses on taking steps forward to create a better future.

This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?

It must be said that the idea of conquering America originated in the 17th century at the time when the first immigrants from Europe, English Protestants or Puritans, arrived at the New World.

2.2.1 Manifest Destiny and the Bible. A comparison.



Picture 1



Picture 2

Picture 1 made by John Gast in 1872 titled *American Progress* clearly represents the idea of Manifest Destiny. More specifically, it represents the Westward Expansion in the 19th century in America. The first element to point out is the feminine figure who is called Columbia, the female personification of the United States. This majestic woman wears on her head what the writer A. Crofutt defined as “the Star of Empire”. In her right hand, she is holding a book which could represent education, and, in her left hand, she is holding the telegraph wires which at the same time, she is stretching. These telegraph wires also represent the intelligence she is bringing. She is a superior being and she guides the colonizers from the east to the west as the picture shows. Another point to highlight is the sky. In the east, the sky is clear. But, in the west, it is dark. This is a metaphor that means that Columbia is bringing joy and light to the New World. Nevertheless, the Indians are avoiding the change and progress she is bringing. Another interpretation of this image is the passage of time from left (past) to right (future).

American Progress which is the title of *Picture 1* was inspired by the Bible. Both Abraham and Moses are generally considered the fathers of the Jewish people and the influence of both would be everlasting.

Aiming to explain some passages from the Bible, the following information about some passages have been extracted from the official Christian website.

The Bible says that God has given Abraham land which will be inherited by his descendants. Promised Land was extended from the Nile to the Euphrates, the two grand rivers of the Bible which are the borders of Egypt. In 12 of the Genesis: 1 Then the LORD said to Abram, “Leave your country, your kindred, and your father’s household, and go to the land I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless

you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you”.

Afterwards, the idea of the Promised Land also appears in the second book of the Bible, Exodus. Also, according to Tanach, Israelites had been the chosen people by God to spread truth and the ten commandments.

Another crucial character of the Bible is Joshua. He is known as the second Moses because he guided the Israelites to the Promised Land. Moreover, he represents destiny and leadership. In the Bible, Joshua is defined as the one who obeys Moses’ commands and the one responsible for the separation of Israel’s nations. After the Israelites were saved from God, they looked for a place to live close to Him. God had rescued them from the bondage of Egypt. Therefore, their faith in God grew and the Israelites crossed the Jordan while they waited for a response from God to lead them to their new home, a new land that God had provided them with to live free. In other words, God had chosen them to build up their new home in the Promised Land and consequently, the Israelites called themselves the people of God. The fact that God had given them the land of Canaan as a gift, represents the power He has. As many religious sources say, nowadays, pastors are influenced by Joshua’s ideas because he stated that success is achieved with obedience; he also warned about sins and finally, he said that God believes in courageous leaders.

Considering God wanted his people to light the rest of the world, when colonizers arrived in America, they interpreted this idea with converting the Native Americans to their religion in order to keep them away from the wilderness and Satan. This idea was taken from Joshua because he had created a model of what to do with the Natives “Canaanites” when the Israelites settled down in Canaan.

2.3 Imperialism

Imperialism can be defined as an expansionist ideology with the belief that the whites had the God-given right to conquer territories for their own economic and geopolitical benefits. Imperialism has also been associated with the "New Manifest Destiny" because this expansionist ideology was born out of Manifest Destiny. However, it consists of the expansion of the US in the late 19th century and the 20th century on strategic locations throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Asia. The United States took possession of people from different ethnicities and this event led to a change in US policy in which it was prohibited for a new US citizen to be automatically conferred residence in the country.

Claude Fohlen (1967) talks about imperialism in *La América anglosajona*. He says that the idea of Manifest Destiny regained a lot of traction during imperialism era because it helped to promote the myth of the superiority of the white man, or to be more precise, the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon man. The United States was very clear about its mission to dominate the 'barbarians'. After all, they were aiming to replace British imperialism, because they were already failing in Southern Africa.

All in all, imperialism was used to justify the will of God. However, in the Bible, God gives the Israelites the land of Canaan as a gift. Imperialism, perhaps, was a violent act which could not be justified as a will of God.

3. Events that shaped America

3.1 First colonizers in America

Spaniards were the first colonizers to establish in America in the 16th century. They were the first Europeans to do so considering that the Reformation entailed a problem to maintain the Christian Church in Western Europe united. However, the Spanish kept Roman Catholicism, and this led them to have a free path in the Americas to bring their religion there and also, to explore and conquer. At the time they arrived, they found a territory with the three most advanced and important cultures of America. According to William O. Kellogg (1991) in *American History The Easy Way*, Spaniards were looking for wealth and they found it in Mexico, a territory which was conquered by Ferdinand Cortez in the 1520s. This led to the creation of the Spanish empire which was controlled by the King of Spain and had under its control the territories of Mexico and Peru, conquered by Francisco Pizarro in the 1530s. Their social life in the New World consisted of making the most of the new lands and consequently, Spanish brought slaves from Africa to take advantage of them. The Spanish colonizers, who were mainly men, married Native Americans and slaves. Considering the Spanish wanted to bring their religion, they built Christian churches and worked to convert the Indies to Roman Catholicism. An important point to highlight and it is well explained by O. Kellogg (1991) is that the Spanish got rid of written records and buildings of the Incas and Aztecs. As a result, nowadays, it is difficult to clearly understand the culture of the Native Americans. The Spanish colonies caused a great loss of the Indies culture and knowledge. What is more, it had many other consequences such as new diseases which killed many Natives Americans because they were not immune to such illnesses.

The only advantage of Spanish settlement in the New World was the exchange of products. Beans and potatoes were a new meal in Europe whereas cattle and horses were new in America.

Despite conflicts with the Reformation, some explorers from France, England and Holland were sent to America. Some of them were Jacques Cartier, Henry Hudson and Sir Francis Drake. As O. Kellogg (1991) says, even though they are commonly known as adventurers, they actually were conquerors. This event represented the beginning of the colonization period. James I was the king who named Jamestown, the first successful English settlement in 1607 which was founded by the London Company. Like Spaniards, the English also wanted to seek wealth in the new continent. Unlike Spaniards, English colonizers did not find any group of Indies. Thus, slavery grew more over the years because the first African Americans arrived in Jamestown as servants to help grow tobacco. Again, as the first colonizers, the English also took advantage of slaves to increase their wealth. Not only did they take advantage of Native Americans and their lands but also of black people, who were not considered human beings to white people. This is another example of racial superiority which can also represent the idea of chosen people. According to Pérez Cantó and García Giráldez (1995) in *De Colonias a República: Los Orígenes de los Estados Unidos de América*, Hispanic and English colonies were very different. On one side, the Spanish Monarchy occupied lands which were declared royal. On the other side, the English Crown empire was weak because their colonies were not synchronized. This was a consequence of the lack of interest that the English Monarchy had on colonizing the lands.

Regarding the rest of Europe, the French established their first colony in Quebec with the same purpose as the other colonizers, to gain wealth. The Dutch founded their colony in New York following Henry Hudson's explorations. By 1604, North America was

populated by Spanish, English, French, Dutch and Swedish people. Now, many other reasons such as religion helped to increase the number of immigrants who left or escaped from their homelands to establish in the New World.

3.2 Massachusetts Bay

At the end of the 16th century, the Puritans and the Peregrines shared the same ideology about the Anglican church. They were against the new changes and the English Crown. As a result, the Puritans escaped from England and established in the Massachusetts Bay in 1629. They were seeking for the Promised Land to practice their religion radically. At the time they arrived, the Puritans believed that they were the chosen people by God. John Winthrop was the first Puritan Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony who wanted to establish the perfect Christian Community with the help of the Puritan Idea of the Covenant. Winthrop is also famous for his sermons, including the phrase “city upon the hill” which is found in his speeches, and he used it to refer to the New World. The following part of Winthrop’s sermon is named *A Modell of Christian Charity* and it was read aloud to inspire the Puritans to start a new Christian life. It was delivered by Winthrop aboard the *Arabella* in the spring of 1630, before reaching America:

If we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world; we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and all believers in God; we shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us, till we are forced out of the new land where we are going.

Winthrop states that the Bay Colony was in covenant with God, a chosen people, a new Israel. At some point, he talked about the mission of converting Massachusetts Bay to the city upon the hill.

The Puritans felt a strong connection between the Israelites because the Puritans left corrupted Europe while the Israelites were rescued from bondage and went to the “New Canaan”. The “New World” and the “New Canaan” were places where God would protect them and consequently, they would become role models to the rest of the world.

During two generations, the harmony of Massachusetts Bay Colony that Winthrop preached was maintained. In order to take part of the Puritan colony, Pérez Cantó and García Giráldez (1995) say in *De Colonias a República: Los Orígenes de los Estados Unidos de América*: “the aspirant had to demonstrate unequivocally that he had been chosen by God; the ministers subjected him to an interrogation, from which he had to emerge with flying colors from the public celebration of admission” (Pérez Cantó and García Giráldez, 90). (Translation made by me from Spanish to English).

The other similar group, the Peregrines, also crossed the Atlantic Ocean looking for the Promised Land, to live directly with God and practice their ideal religion. However, on the journey, more than half died due to smallpox. From now on, the purpose of the colony was to increase their own personal growth and education, which became important goals in the colony. Moreover, reading the Bible was compulsory to keep in contact with God.

All in all, as Kenneth Lockridge (1970) says in *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*: “Puritanism was above all a new religious impulse, part of the Reformation which swept over Europe in the sixteenth centuries and which in its origins and effects was far more than a mere offshoot of the peasant ethos” (Lockridge, 20).

3.3 The Great Awakening

Since the early settlers who arrived in America, religion has been important during history, especially since the Puritans arrived in New England. Nevertheless, the first immigrants were predominantly Protestant. In addition, a small group of Jews settled down in the cities of Boston and New York.

The Great Awakening was a movement that was born in the 1730s in a small community on the Connecticut River, Boston. It consisted in the return of religious fanaticism or as others say, a new Reformation. O. Kellogg (1991) says that The Great Awakening was produced in the form of a large evangelical movement. Even though it was the first movement with the idea of “born again” and giving emphasis on education and reading the Bible, it was not the last one. It dominated a large part of the population, thus causing a great impact on society and agitation to the foundations of all Orthodox churches. The Great Awakening lasted ten years. Considering there were many revivals, each of them focused on personal relationship with God. Intending to understand why this phenomenon arose, as Frank Lambert (1999) explains in *Inventing the “Great Awakening”*, this movement requires a particular context to grow. In the first place, it develops in a culture in which it is needed a showering of God. In the second place, it originates where people in that particular culture need the revival because religion is at a low point. Finally, ministers and laypersons prepare people for divine mercy.

The Great Awakening had a huge impact on the nation. However, some of the results that remain nowadays are the foundation of many colleges such as Columbia University. The reason for these foundations is because education was crucial during the movement in order to read the Bible.

An important figure of the First Great Awakening was Jonathan Edwards. As Edwards, J., & Goen, C. C. (1972) defined him, he was one of the greatest fathers. His ideology was focused on the idea that all human beings were sinners. Considering God was unsatisfied with human actions, individuals had to beg for forgiveness. As a consequence, this idea became one of the main features of the Great Awakening. Edwards was defined as a zealous preacher who delivered many sermons. In fact, one of them is *Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God*. It was delivered in 1741 during a congregation in Connecticut and it had a profound impact. It can be considered one of the most remarkable sermons of the colonial era.

Another important figure of this movement was George Whitefield. He is commonly known to preach to slaves and Native Americans; no one was left behind during his sermons. Hence, he certainly was responsible for the Great Awakening expansion. He was a British minister who traveled more than 5,000 miles to preach all his memorized sermons. One of his most important sermons is *Walking with God* based upon Genesis 5:24, “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him”.

3.4 The Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening was the second wave of Christian revival which began at the end of the 18th century and lasted until the middle of the 19th century. It was a movement that helped the idea of Manifest Destiny increase even more. This religious revival entailed changes and reform movements. For example, it was believed that education was a tool to get rid of poverty and crime. Other important events were the increase of the abolitionist movement and also, the spread of utopian thinking. In other words, they believed that if everybody followed the rules, it was possible to build a perfect

community, as perfectly united and perfectly at peace. Even though the Second Great Awakening spread all over the United States, it became specifically strong in the Northeast and the Midwest. Many religious groups benefited from this movement because the number of converts increased, and church attendance grew too. Moreover, new religious groups arose as a result of their opposition to the already established ones. An example of a group who created their own doctrines were the Mormons, a branch of the Latter-Day Saint movement. John Smith was the founder of this new religious group.

One of the most influential evangelists in this movement was Charles Finney. With the aim of talking about Finney, I have taken much information from Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe (1996) article: *Charles G. Finney and Evangelical Anti-Catholicism*.

Finney was a theologian professor at Oberlin College and he spread messages around New York. He was well-known to preach more than thirty nights on sin. Finney also made some changes in religion and introduced many new topics. In fact, he permitted the role of women as an important figure. To be more specific, he let women deliver speeches at prayer meetings. Even though some ministers tried to ban it, the practice was accepted by the end of the century.

Finney also focused his messages on the true Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The following quote manifests his principal ideas. In this case, he conveys the unusual idea that men and women had the ability to do things without the action of God:

“More than five thousand million have gone down to hell, while the church has been dreaming, and waiting for God to save them without the uses of means”.

Another important figure during the Second Great Awakening was the president of Yale College, Timothy Dwight. He had a profound impact on evangelism and culture during the Second Great Awakening. His vision and strategies succeeded; his students converted and started to believe in God and Christ because of him. A student of him was Nathaniel Taylor and he defined Dwight as a man made by God and the perfect person to guide his students to Christ. As Terry Lee Williams (1996) says in his abstract *The impact of Timothy Dwight on evangelism in the Second Great Awakening*:

“The true impact Timothy Dwight’s life is not contained within the borders of his own time and space but spreads out across America through the lives of the men he impacted, such as Nathaniel Taylor, Lyman Beecher and many others. His life was a success, not because of the books he wrote or the offices he held or the institutions he supported, but because of the men he impacted who went on to impact others” (Williams,10).

There is another point of this movement, which is not commonly known, and it is discussed by Peter Guardino (2014) in *“In the Name of Civilization and with a Bible in Their Hands:” Religion and the 1846–48 Mexican-American War*. Guardino (2014) says that in the 1840s, two events related to Protestantism had been crucial in the expansionist idea of the United States. The first was the Second Great Awakening and the second was the dramatic rise of anti-Catholic sentiment, which had been fueled by the presence of Catholic immigrants in American cities. In this movement, there were several waves of Protestant revivals and camp meetings in different regions. The meetings tended to be emotionally powerful as people sought to rebuild their relationship with God. The Second Great Awakening revived the belief that America had an exclusively Protestant and republican destiny, which directly fueled the expansionism of the 1840s. In addition, this movement helped reinvigorate the ties between American expansionism and

Protestantism. The ideology of the English ancestors who were against Catholicism remained in American culture.

Finally, Guardiano (2014) adds that in a Jacksonian America in which all white men were considered equal, many Americans saw immigrants as inferior even though they were white. Immigrants believed that Catholicism was part of their identity. Still, “nativists argued that Catholics were barbaric, superstitious and subject to the dictates of the Pope. They represented not simply an underclass, but a threat to American democracy” (Guardino, 346).

An important figure who was against Catholicism was Samuel Morse. He wrote about why Catholics were plotting against civil and religious liberty.

3.5 Utah as the Holy Land

In order to complete the following point, I have used the book of *Go East, Young Man* by Richard V. Francaviglia as a reference. To be more specific, I have based all this point from the chapter called *Chosen People, Chosen Land: Utah as the Holy Land*. Although the chapter is quite long, I have focused on the most important explanations that justify the chosen people’s actions. I have attempted to talk about the following points because I consider they are the pertinent ones to understand why Utah was considered the territory of chosen people.

In the 1840s, the Great Basin was a territory of only Native Americans. Nevertheless, it became a place where religious groups would find their refuge and freedom. One of the most remarkable figures of this massive immigration was John Charles Frémont. He reported the features of the Great Basin and his reports immediately caught people’s attention and they had an especially huge impact on the Mormons. The Mormons, who

were the most successful religious and controversial group on the American frontier, established in Missouri and later, in Illinois.

The main figure of Mormonism was Joseph Smith. He was commonly known for being a seer, within fifteen years, he managed to create a church whose roots laid into two different geographic locales. As a religious leader, Smith is also considered the most biblical prophet of all times in America. He based his ideas on literature, its millennialism and especially, on progress. As a matter of fact, the Mormons thought that God spoke to men in America, and also, it was believed that America was the place where many biblical events took place.

The Mormons' appearance in Utah made a change because they converted the Wasatch Range into the Holy Land and New Zion. They appropriated North America West as the chosen land for chosen people in the 19th century. The natural landscape and human conditions in this territory were very different from the others. What is more, for many centuries, a lot of metaphors about North America as the Holy Land spread. As Richard V. Francaviglia (2011) explains in the book, the foundation of America as Israel started when the Puritans settled down in America. Some of them believed that their long voyage was a metaphor of the analogous Israelite's passage through the Red Sea.

In addition, according to Francaviglia (2011), the past of the Holy Land has always been an attractive subject, but even more so the future of this land as it was being reinvented. During the Second Great Awakening the "Burned over District" of upstate New York became the nexus of considerable Protestant zeal and utopian thinking. It must be considered that the district was strategically positioned as a funnel into which New England culture would spread westward to the Great Lakes. Precisely the western frontier of New England was the birthplace of an American religion that would eventually turn much of the Intermountain West into Zion. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was created under the American culture and

based on the history of the Holy Land. Strategically, it was situated in the westward expansion of the nation. The constant migration of Mormons from New England to Ohio, to Missouri and then to Illinois indicates that they were constantly searching for a Promised Land free from persecution.

By July 1847, the Mormons declared the interior American west as their territory and the center of their religion, which they named Deseret. The area grew from “miserable” and “desolate” as Frémont said into the “Mormon Country” or “New Jerusalem”. As a result, the Mormons immediately attributed Utah as the Holy Land. Brigham Young proclaimed this territory by saying, “This is the place” in one of his speeches. These four words became the most significant ones in the history of Utah. The place, also known as instead of called “western Jordan”, imagined the river of Utah as the Jordan river. Furthermore, Young delivered powerful speeches which encouraged the chosen people to occupy Utah.

As it is said in the Bible, the river is a source of water. On the one hand, water is a necessity for life. On the other hand, water has a spiritual purpose. For instance, water has been used for Christian baptisms since the time of Christ in the Holy Land.

Native Americans were considered remnants of the Lost Tribes of Israel who left the Holy Land and traveled miles until they landed in America. The Mormons called the Indians Lamanites. Moreover, in the 19th century, people saw similarities between the Native Americans and people from the Middle East.

Considering that Utah is a territory rich in landscapes, it was believed that for this reason, many passages of the Bible took place there. For example, the Walls of Jericho. Another example is the Joshua tree or “Praying Tree” which is mistaken for a biblical prophet.

3.6 The Mexican War

The Mexican-American War is a crucial event in which the idea of Manifest Destiny is clearly seen. The war was against Mexico and the United States. It lasted two years; it started in 1846 and finished in 1848. Considering the United States was still a young territory, James K. Polk, the President of the United States at that time, desperately wanted to expand the country under the idea of Manifest Destiny.

As Media Rich Learning (2017) explains in the video *Manifest Destiny*, the Texas Republic was a crucial issue in the presidential campaign of 1844. After many debates, Texas became the 28th state of the Union. The annexation of it in 1845 was the incentive of many conflicts and tensions. Mexico did not recognize Texas independence and consequently, many questions arose whether the Texas territory ended at the Nueces River or the Rio Grande River. James K. Polk offered to buy the strip of Texas, New Mexico, and California for the amount of \$40 million. However, his offer was strongly rejected. As a result, 3,000 troops were sent into the land between the Nueces and Rio Grande to claim US ownership of the territory. The war was declared on May 13th. Afterwards, even though the Mexicans were not prepared for this conflict because of the problems they had in internal politics, they sent a troop who attacked Americans and caused many deaths. This event led to the Mexican-American war which was the first US armed conflict fought primarily on foreign land. Even though the US army was small and with no experience, they gained enough power to fight thanks to an excellent leadership. For the first time, citizens could talk about the conflict and have their own point of view thanks to the telegraph and Pony Express, whose reporters could deliver the news right from the battlefield.

Media Rich Learning (2017) explains that the war ended with a cost of 17,000 deaths and \$15 million. Nevertheless, the official end of the war was signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in February 1848. The United States gained after all the territories of Texas, New Mexico and California; a total of 500,000 square miles. It was 1/3 of Mexican territory. Considering the Gadsden Purchase five years later, the United States stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The victory of Manifest Destiny opened the extension of slavery again on the new acquired territories.

As John Green (2013) says, after the war ended, between 75,000 and 100,000 Mexicans and 150,000 Native Americans were under the authority of the United States. As a matter of fact, Mexicans were Catholics, and they were considered inferior to Anglo-Saxons. What is more, in the East of the country, anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant ideology grew quickly. This set of ideologies was given the name of nativism. In addition, the party *The American Party* was created in order to expand such ideologies.

Peter Guardino (2014) talks about the impact of religion in many American events in "*In the Name of Civilization and with a Bible in Their Hands: Religion and the 1846–48 Mexican American War*". Hereunder, there is another perspective of how religion became an important point during the Mexican War because it was an incentive that helped to fight against enemies. In fact, it helped fighters to fight against their opponents. The United States and Mexico had their own religion which was crucial for them in order to have a national identity. Multiple American troops attacked Mexican Catholicism. Before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, Mexican negotiators secured protection for those Catholic Mexicans who remained in the transferred territory. However, just before the treaty was signed, anti-Catholic politicians in the US Senate eliminated this protection.

Guardino (2014) also talks about when Americans wrote about Catholicism in Mexico. According to him, “They were simultaneously making arguments about the Protestant nature of the United States, and when Mexicans wrote about the Protestant United States, they were simultaneously making arguments about the Catholic nature of Mexico” (Guardino, 344). In addition, he says that American Catholic leaders reinforced the war to defend a secular version of American nationalism in order to participate.

In conclusion, it can be said that the United States managed to expand their territory under their divine ideology. However, their beliefs towards the Native Americans were now also applied to the Mexicans. It clearly shows that they thought they were superior to others, the color of the skin or religion did not matter.

3.7 The Gold Rush

The Gold Rush was a period of massive immigration due to the discovery of gold. This phenomenon is different from the others in terms of distance and groups. The Gold Rush is a movement well known for having marked a fundamental period in the history of America. In this case, the number of homogenous people who came to California was astonishing. Another characteristic that stands out in this movement is the long distance that the future settlers traveled.

Nine days before signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, on January 24, 1848, a carpenter named James Marshall found numerous pieces of gold at Coloma; a territory which was Mexican California at that moment. As it is explained in the video *Manifest Destiny* from Media Rich Learning (2017), the gold was found on the property of John Sutter, 40 miles away from Sacramento. Practically the day after, forty miners, who were also called gold prospectors, sold their homes and closed their businesses to go straight

to California to gain wealth. These treasure seekers only carried a pickaxe and a shovel with them. Due to the Gold Rush, California's population grew from 8,000 non-Indian citizens in 1848 to 300,000 in 1855. San Francisco was also a city which experienced a big change due to the Gold Rush. Firstly, "it was a quiet ocean side town of just 800 to a bustling commercial hub and the region's most important seaport". Shortly after, treasure seekers, who came from the States, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, settled down to San Francisco. Everybody was looking for gold in California. After all, "more than \$200 million in gold was pulled from the ground in four years following its discovery".

To understand why the Gold Rush had a huge impact, two main points must be considered. According to Roske, R. J. (1963) in *The World Impact of the California Gold Rush 1849-1857* the "pull" and "push" were the main factors that attracted everybody to travel to California. Roske (1963) also discusses that "In all migrations to the United States the percentage of men was 60 to 65, but in the earliest days of the gold rush the percentage reaching California rose to ninety" (Roske, 188). What is more, 70% of all immigrants approximately remained as permanent residents.

In the end, the real fortune was found by few gold prospectors. The ones that made it, wasted their gold to pay for booze or gambling. Moreover, San Francisco entrepreneurs gained huge fortunes as a consequence of taking advantage of miners because they charged them in first needs such as accommodation, food or clothing.

The Gold Rush had a big impact in the eastern of the United States and in Latin America. In December of 1948, President Polk verified the gold strike in the Congress. Consequently, "'Yellow fever" quickly gripped the East, and all classes of young men stampeded for the Far West" (Roske, 207).

3.8 The Westward Movement of the Frontier

California's growth was due to the Westward Expansion. During the 18th and 19th century, 60 million Europeans migrated to the West. They moved to the New World, attracted by the possibility of becoming rich and starting a new life full of possibilities. Specifically, their aim was to acquire land in California. In addition, the discovery of gold and silver caused even greater growth in migration.

The Westward Movement of the Frontier began at the time when the Louisiana territory was purchased in 1803 by the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began an expedition to the West in order to discover a route to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition lasted two years and Lewis and Clark came back with the knowledge of the territory and its population, the Indians.

Green (2013) states that the Federal Government wrote a law which promoted colonization and the expulsion of Natives Americans from their land. In other words, it was an imperial act. Even though, Native Americans claimed and fought for their lands, Americans justified this expansion with the idea of Manifest Destiny and also, they took advantage of this movement to spread republican democracy. Moreover, the transportation revolution and improvements of technologies played a good role in this massive expansion. In fact, the incorporation of railroads was an important factor that allowed the West to grow. Railroads were heavily promoted for two main reasons. First, it allowed people to bring crops or other goods to the market. Second, they were useful to make life in the West profitable and livable because goods such as tools for planting and sowing were brought to people that needed them. Moreover, the incorporation of this transport allowed the settlers to relate to modernity. Nevertheless, the only way to

maintain the railroads was by destroying Native Americans culture and also, corralling them into smaller reservations.

As it is discussed in the video *Westward Expansion: Crash Course US History* by John Green (2013), the aim of the whites was to conquer the West of the States for two main reasons. The first one is that they believed that they had the divine right to possess those lands. What is more, it was a racial imperative. The second reason is that they wanted the country to grow economically. In addition, the United States did not want or allow other countries to acquire the lands because it could be dangerous to their way of living. To avoid this situation, the 5th President of the United States said in his annual message to Congress in 1823: “We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety”.

According to John E. Gareth (2001) in *Cultural nationalism, westward expansion and the production of imperial landscape: George Catlin's native American West*, the election to the presidency of Andrew Jackson was crucial in Indian policy. In 1829, Thomas McKenney, head of the Office of Indian Affairs said that “If the Indians do not emigrate, and fly by the causes, which are fixed in themselves, and which have proved so destructive in the past, they must perish” (Gareth, 183). A year later, the Congress approved the general removal bill which said that all Indians had to emigrate to the east of the Mississippi. The approval of such bill was justified by saying “America would save the Indians for civilization by rescuing them from civilization”.

As Green (2013) discusses, the Dawes Act was signed in 1887 and it stated that Indian lands would be allotted to families other than Indians. It was believed that in this way, the Native Americans would become civilized people. Because of this law, the Indians, who

owned 138 million acres of land, lost 86 million. A new policy was established which amounted to genocide in order to make the Indians become civilized people. As a consequence of this policy, boarding schools were built where Indian children were forcibly removed from their families. One of the best known to date is the boarding school located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Within the boarding schools, different rules were adopted such as teaching the children English, removing the common clothing of their culture and also, eliminating the names that directly related them to Native Americans.

As a conclusion, the Westward Movement of the Frontier in the United States was an historical phenomenon in America as it helped turn the country into what it is today. The main points of this migration were marked by transportation and racial superiority. After all, it provided natural resources and ports which helped the United States become a powerful country.

3.9 The Civil War

Ten years before the conflict started, the United States' most important issue was if slavery should have extended to the other territories. Citizens from the North thought that it was immoral to do so. However, the South, who were in an open rebellion, considered the extension as an economic growth for the country. The differences between the two ideas caused the country to be divided. Consequently, the Civil War broke out.

The American Civil War is the great dividing point in the history of the United States. It took place on April 12th, 1861, when the Confederate States attacked the federal fort in South Carolina. The war ended four years later, April 9th, 1865; years in which Abraham Lincoln was the President. Lincoln's election as president had consequences for the Civil War as it escalated. The war was fought by the Northerners, also called The Union or the "blue", and the Southerners, called the Confederates or the "gray". The Civil War

required a large number of men and resources. Just before the war, the Regular Army had at its disposal 15,000 officers and men. As a matter of fact, it was believed that the war would not last long and it would not cause a lot of pain.

As Julia Dyer (2001) explains in the video *And the War Came*, the day after Fort Sumter was attacked, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to fight for 90 days. In the free states, the response was very positive because men were running to the nearest enlistment place. In the Confederate South, the people were just as patriotic as the people of the North. What is more, since the war started, both sides, the North and the South, strongly believed they would win. Besides, either the Union or the Confederate thought they were superior to the other. Soldiers were willing to fight for their country as their forefathers did in order to defend their new nation and the legacy of the American revolution. Historian James McPherson intervenes in the video explaining that the soldiers were also defending their nation due to the foreign invasion of a Yankee nation. On top of that, most of the soldiers admitted that they were not fighting against slavery but for their independence. In reality, some of them were in favor of slavery.

Dyer (2001) also explains that in terms of fighting, the North had more resources than the South and consequently, it permitted their victory. First, the Union had 22 million soldiers and the Confederate South had 9 million, some of whom were slaves. Second, they had better materials such as the greater number of railroads and more than 90% of all goods in the country. The Southerners had to make a nation from scratch. Besides, the ruling class was free from fighting in the war. Nevertheless, the South had many advantages such as goods leaders like Robert E. Lee and a huge size of their territory, 750,000 miles. Therefore, conquering this territory required a large number of soldiers and war materials.

During the war there were two generals who stood out. Ulysses S. Grant was the general in the Union. He is considered the most successful leader of The Union. Robert E. Lee, well known and acclaimed at the time, was the general for the Confederacy.

There are various opinions on whether slavery was the only problem that created the war. In fact, the American historian David Goldfield wrote “both northerners and southerners recognized slavery as the immediate cause of the Civil War”. Furthermore, John Green (2013) explains in the video *The Civil War, Part I* that when the war began, Lincoln downplayed the importance of slavery because he wanted to justify the war as a way to preserve the Union. Still, religion played an important role in the war as it has in many events throughout American history. Moreover, David Goldfield said “in protecting the revolutionary ideals, northerners would preserve God’s plan to extend democracy and Christianity across an unbroken continent and around the world. Southerners welcomed a war to create a nation more perfect in its fealty to God than the one they had left”. In addition, some soldiers often had more prosaic reasons for going to fight the war. For The Union, religion and the end of slavery were two issues that helped to go to war.

To conclude, as John Green (2013) says in the video *The Civil War Part II*, the War ended up with a total cost of 6.7 billion dollars for The Union. It was crucial for some nations to develop and as a result, create the nation we know today as the United States. Moreover, it is commonly said that Manifest Destiny made the Civil War inevitable. Finally, Green (2013) says that the nations which succeeded the most were the ones that adopted industrialization and modern ideas. Considering that The Union won the Civil War, it meant that the United States would become an industrial country instead of an agrarian nation. Green (2013) also says that “Over the course of the 19th century, people stopped pluralizing the United States. Instead of saying ‘the United States are a great place to live’. They said, ‘the United States is a great place to live’. The Civil War helped singularize what had been until then a plural nation”.

3.10 Reforms

According to William O. Kellogg (1991) in *American History The Easy Way*, after the Civil War, there were many changes in the United States of America which affected the economy, politics and society. These reforms entailed American values and character which are still present nowadays. The main changes brought on by industrialization, immigration and the closing of the frontier. Hence, from 1877 to 1914 America experienced constant changes and developments. However, the main highlights during those years, before World War I broke out, were the following points which are well explained by Claude Fohlen (1967) in *La América Anglosajona*.

First of all, imperialism. Considering that up to this time, America had not expanded outside the continent. The idea of Manifest Destiny regained a lot of traction, especially after it was adopted by historian John Burgess. America was still convinced that whites were superior to others, and therefore, they had to fulfill the mission of going against the barbarians. In other words, they wanted to impose certain measures against Native Americans. The Indians were still a very different group from the English who, according to them, were not part of the Americanization process.

President Theodore Roosevelt was remarkable during imperialism because he gave several international responsibilities to the country. In fact, Roosevelt is commonly remembered as the president who developed his own “corollary” to James Monroe's famous doctrine in 1823. In 1904, he proclaimed the “Big Stick” and he is considered the father of the contemporary American fleet. During his speech in his annual messages to Congress, he said:

Chronic wrongdoing or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the western hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however recently, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international power.

What Roosevelt was saying was that the United States would control the Americas. In order to justify the imposition of US views and values they used the Monroe Doctrine. In other words, this would be another example of an imperialist act and also, it is another reason why it has been called Roosevelt's Big Stick diplomacy. Moreover, Roosevelt's ideology was not based on the superiority of the white man, but on knowing how to distinguish the superior civilized nations from the bastard nations.

Claude Fohlen (1967) also says that American imperialism was personified in Roosevelt. The United States entered in a new era because from that moment on, the destiny of America and even of the world would be written. The role played by the United States as mediator between Russia and Japan in 1905 was a consequence that positioned the United States as a great power and foreshadowed its intervention in the First World War.

Conclusions

Religion has been a fundamental element in the formation of the United States and for that reason, nowadays there is a strong feeling for it. Considering several human beings believed they were the chosen people by God is not only a thing of the Christians. Other cultures have also come to think that they are the right people to spread their ideologies. Throughout this project, I have realized that religion has provoked many conflicts and has caused certain decisions to be made from a religious point of view. Also, one of the conclusions I have drawn is that the concept of Manifest Destiny has been crucial throughout history but, few people have heard of such idea.

As a consequence of the great migrations that led many Europeans to flee Europe and settle in the New World to freely practice their beliefs, religion has become an essential element in the identity of the United States which was strongly marked by the Great Awakenings. An example of that is Thanksgiving celebration. This tradition has its origins in 1621, when colonizers settled down in the New World.

Over the years, America ends up being a territory to find a better life or to become rich. But racial superiority continues to be an element that sculpts America's ideology, especially during imperialism. Hence, the main goal of the United States is to occupy other territories to "civilize" the rest of the world under their politics.

Although I finish in the beginning of the 20th century, the idea of racial superiority is still present in the First World War, especially during the Nazi era. Plus, Martin Luther developed the concept of chosen people in Germany.

All in all, events such as the Mexican War, the Gold Rush or the Westward Movement of the Frontier are, by far, events in which divine ideology of the chosen people followed from the Bible was clearly seen.

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