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Lauren Alissa Clark
Denison University

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A President's Jeremiad of Terror (Excerpts from Honors Thesis, The Rhetoric of the War on Terror: George W. Bush's Transformation of the Jeremiad)

Lauren Alissa Clark

As you abandon me to serve alien gods in your own country ... the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests exploit the people. And my people love it!

(Jer 5:19, 31)²⁵

As both governor and president, George W. Bush has always demonstrated religious devotion in his public rhetoric. His language appears most overtly religious in the defining event of his presidency: the war on terror. Faith and public policy intertwine in Bush's presidency, providing him with "guidance and wisdom and strength" during a trying time (as qtd. in Viorst 102). God and nation unite in a mission, a mission described and mediated by the president. It is this unique aspect of Bush's presidency, which bears examining. How does his rhetoric blur the boundaries between public and private faith, religious beliefs and public policy? How does his rhetoric unite these components in his speeches regarding the war on terror?

A useful way to answer these questions is to examine his rhetoric through the form of the jeremiad. Attributed to the Biblical prophet Jeremiah, the jeremiad has since become a secular rhetorical form, which enacts desired change in the audience's beliefs or behaviors. This rhetorical form follows the following four steps:²⁶

²⁵Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical citations and quotations are from The New Jerusalem Bible: Readers Edition. Henry Wansbrough, gen. ed. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

²⁶This formula is the author's description, drawing on the work of Mitchell and Phipps, Johannesen, Ritter, Bercovitch, and Miller; it is a combination and simplification of their descriptions of the components of the jeremiad form.

1. This is the way things should be
2. This is how things are
3. This is what will happen if there is not a turn to the way things should be
4. This is what will happen when we are victorious in fighting for how things should be

Utilized by both secular and religious orators, this secular form has achieved a prominent place in American public rhetoric used by many presidents. President Bush appears to also utilize the jeremiad form in his rhetoric surrounding the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent war on terror. The religious content of his orations, however, removes the jeremiad from the secular sphere and into the sacred, holding him accountable to the content of Jeremiah's original jeremiad.

Jeremiad Part I: The American Dream

Part one of the jeremiad form is an explanation of the "communal norm" (Murphy, J. M. 403), a description of the ideal grounded in the historical present. For Jeremiah, this was Israel when it first received the covenant, when God spoke to the Israelites and said: "Listen to my voice, I told them, carry out all my orders, then you will be my people and I shall be your God, so that I may fulfill the oath I swore to your ancestors, that I may give them a country flowing with milk and honey" (Jer 11:4-5). It is to the social conditions of this time that the present community should return so that God may "perform the oath" sworn to the ancestors of the current generation. In return, the community is expected to uphold their end of the oath, and live in compassion and justice.

For Bush, the ideal life he draws upon is the "American Dream." Constituted as the collective "values, ideals, principles and achievements" passed from generation to generation, this takes form in the minds of the American people as the dream to which they are supposed to aspire (Johannesen 160). Bush's jeremiad recalls this dream as the glory of America's past. As Bercovitch describes, post-revolutionary look to the Founding Fathers, Declaration of Independence, and Constitution as the manifestations of the ideals bequeathed by the Puritan forbearers. These ideals form American sacred scriptures, creating an American covenant, a civil religion of "fundamental American principles," standards against which current policies, actions, and conditions must be measured (Johannesen 160).

For most Americans, these standards manifest themselves through buzzwords such as freedom and democracy, justice and pluralism, equality and

kindness. While the specifics of what these words entail is debatable, these values nevertheless are nearly universally applauded in America. It is the duty of American citizens to uphold their inheritance and share these desirable values with the world. These values provide the background civil religion which Bush draws upon to guide his jeremiad.

Through the fourteen speeches examined in this analysis, there is a dominant ideal which emerges to guide Bush's jeremiad. This ideal looks to the freedom and compassionate courage which define the American covenant, the American dream, illustrated best by speeches given on September 11, 2002 ("PRN 2002"), September 11, 2001 ("SPN 2001"), and July 4, 2004 ("PCI 2004").²⁷

Like Jeremiah, who looked to the past to find the ideal that should guide the community, Bush looks to America's past and the ideals upon which it was founded. On Independence Day, 2004, Bush recalled what is honored that day, when Americans "remember names like Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin. We honor their courage and we honor their vision" ("PCI 2004"). This vision is further explained, again looking to history, when Bush remembers "our nation's founding creed ... Americans believe in 'the right to liberty under God'" ("PCI 2004").

Freedom—or liberty—forms one of the central aspects of the American covenant, a value set out explicitly in the Bill of Rights. Bush reiterates the importance of liberty, calling his audience to remember the men who exemplified this value. He recalls World War II ("PRN 2002"), using it to show historical precedent and to affirm continuity between the past and present wars, which both sought to protect, confirm, and spread freedom. In recalling the historical precedent, the ideal, Bush reminds people of what they should be striving for:

Our love of freedom, the freedom for people to speak their minds, the freedom for people to worship as they so choose. Free thought, free expression, that's what we believe...by serving that ideal, by never forgetting the values and the principles that have made this country so strong after 228 years after our founding. ("PCI 2004")

If Americans remember the values and principles, which guide the community, the nation will remain "the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world, and the nation will remain strong" ("SPN 2001").

²⁷This abbreviation will be used in order to facilitate reader ease. As there are so many speeches with a single orator (Bush), and the titles of the speeches are similar and lengthy, it will be easier for the reader if an abbreviated citation system is used to replace the traditional citation method. For example, instead of a citation reading (Bush, "2002 State of the Union"), the citation would read (Bush, "SUA 2002").

Bush believes that America has a duty, a calling, a “sacred promise to ourselves and the world” (“PRN 2002”). As long as Americans live up to the twin ideals of courage and freedom at home, they also have a duty to work for those same ideals in other nations. Courage and freedom have served the United States so well and for so long; Bush holds the conviction that America has a responsibility to use this courage for the improvement of others:

The qualities of courage and compassion that we strive for in America also determine our conduct abroad. The American flag stands for more than our power and our interests. Our founders dedicated this country to the cause of human dignity, the rights of every person, and the possibilities of every life. This conviction leads us into the world to help the afflicted, and defend the peace, and confound the designs of evil men (“PCI 2004”)

Since these values have served the United States so well for so long, they are the ones to guide all nations of the world. The American ideal is “the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it” (“PRN 2002”). America’s foundation is untouchable (“SPN 2001”).²⁸ It is untouchable because Bush believes the American ideals are the best, best for both America and the entire world.

Bush’s rhetoric posits America as a reluctant agent in the world, going to a war it did not desire. But the United States will undertake this mission, not only because it was forced upon America, but because it is the sacred duty of that nation to spread the good American ideals of freedom and compassionate courage in the face of relentless evil. This evil—the various terrorists and insurgents—is so corrupt and removed from the American ideals that there seems to be no hope for them. A description of these transgressions is the second theme of the jeremiad.

Jeremiad Part II: Fallen from the Ideal

The second component of the jeremiad form is a description of society’s current state. In the Book of Jeremiah, lists of the idolatries plaguing the community are seemingly endless: the land has been laid to waste (2:15), the community

²⁸This language is reminiscent of John 1:1-5: “In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him. What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men; and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.” Here, by using the same light imagery, Bush’s word choice demonstrates the light is God’s word, all-powerful and untouchable from Q`m the beginning of time.

plays whore to other nations and gods (2:20-25), their hearts are wicked (4:14), the poor are shunned (5:4-5), prophets speak false prophecy (5:13), people fall victim to their pride (7:26), oppression builds upon oppression and deceit upon deceit (9:6), and worst of all, they abandoned the words of the covenant (11:8). Jeremiah's nation was meant to be one, which upheld the covenant and lived up to the ideals set forth in the founding of that community. Instead it had fallen into the opposite.

In Bush's jeremiad, he provides a similar list of transgressions. His list, however, deals with the transgressions of the terrorists against America and its ideals "that make us a nation" ("PRN 2002"). Bush's community is no longer limited to the United States. Jeremiah focused on ills internal to his community. Bush focuses outward, past traditional national boundaries to deliver "secular sermon[s] delivered in a Biblical cadence" (Ivie, "Savagery in Democracy's Empire" 61).

Throughout the speeches he professes his belief in America's mission to the world to guide it in accordance with American ideals and values. National borders no longer limit his community of influence. It has become the world. Now, all who fail to live up to the ideals of the American covenant are subject to the judgment of the United States as mediated by the Chief Executive. In order to pass such judgment, Bush must first catalogue the various idolatries committed by the people. Throughout the speeches, the idolatries which consistently recur are all sins in which the evildoers have somehow attacked the nation; they have done so physically or by violating tenets of the American covenant: freedom, justice, love of life. Speeches which best illustrate the enumeration of these violations are the ones given on June 28, 2005 ("PAN 2005"), November 8, 2001 ("PDW 2001"), and January 31, 2006 ("SUA 2006").

As perhaps the most central aspect of the American covenant, an attack on freedom is viewed as a direct attack on the United States. Conversely, an attack on the United States is taken as an attack on the freedom America supposedly embodies. Utilizing metonymy to conflate the two, Bush describes the mentality of the enemy:

This new enemy seeks to destroy our freedom and impose its views. We value life; the terrorists ruthlessly destroy it. We value education; the terrorists do not believe women should be educated or should have health care, or should leave their homes. We value the right to speak our minds; for the terrorists, free expression can be grounds for execution. We respect people of all faiths and welcome the free practice or religion; our enemy wants to dictate how to think and how to worship even to their fellow Muslims. ("PDW 2001")

The terrorists value everything in opposition to what the United States stands for: America's values are good, terrorist values are evil.

Terrorists have also abandoned the covenant and practiced idolatry by bringing war to America, a country Bush maintains values peace. These terrorists will use heinous actions in causing strife in the world, spreading their idolatrous behaviors and disrupting the peace. Bush claims they will stop at nothing in their pursuit of this goal, seeking to "impose a heartless system of totalitarian control," where they will first "seize power in Iraq, and use it as a safe haven to launch attacks against America and the world" ("SUA 2006"). Already they "murder children at a school in Beslan ... [and] blow up commuters in London" in the hope that it will allow "the violent to inherit the Earth" ("SUA 2006").

These actions violate the peaceful world which Bush claims America envisions. If the American covenant demands peace, then the worst sin, the worst idolatry to commit is to wage violence, aggression, and war. By making "common cause with criminal elements," these "ruthless killers" "fight the advance of peace and freedom" in the world ("PAN 2005"). Terrorists are counted among the killers, criminals, and other denizens of the corrupt underworld of society. They have lost their way, lost sight of the just ideals, trading them for "blind hatred" and "lethal weapons" in order to be "capable of any atrocity" ("PAN 2005"). The world is losing its way, and unless something is done to stop this loss of morality, this taking of "innocent lives to create chaos," then the world will fall into shadow ("PAN 2005").

Time and time again in his speeches, Bush reiterates how much Americans value life, contrasted with the destructive nature of the terrorists. For while they should value life, they instead are "enemies who boast they want to kill—kill all Americans, kill all Jews, and kill all Christians" ("PDW 2001"). Reveling in their murderous activities, the terrorists are portrayed as feeling no qualms in utilizing violent action to achieve their totalitarian goals ("PAN 2005"), as they "have no conscience" and "celebrate the murder of innocent, men, women, and children" ("PDW 2001").

Bush expresses no hope that these people will repent their evil ways and return to the side of justice, truth, peace, and compassion. Too far consumed by their evil, he declares they have lost sight of what is right and just in this world. Just as Jeremiah spoke to his community, cataloguing their sins and transgressions, Bush speaks to the world, his perceived community of influence, describing the ills, which have occurred. With no hope of repentance left, the only choice left to make is no choice at all: punishment will be brought to the offenders.

Jeremiad Part III: Divine Punishment through Worldly Agents

In the jeremiad form, the third component is a description of what happens if and when the offenders do not repent their wicked ways. In his jeremiad, Jeremiah provides both. He first enunciates the demands for repentance, extending ultimatums, which must be met for the return of God's "disloyal sons" (3:22). Through Jeremiah God extends his people an ultimatum: "take your Horrors out of my sight" and live "As Yahweh lives! truthfully, justly, uprightly" (4:1-2). In order to do this they must "apply circumcision to" their hearts (4:4), and return to a life governed by the tenets of the covenant. Jerusalem must take warning, or God "shall turn ... [His] attention away from you and reduce you to a desert, a land without people" (6:8). There is no middle ground: people must return to the covenant or pay the price.

As the people do not return to the covenant, Jeremiah describes the judgment, which will come. God speaks through him to the earth, that God will "bring disaster on this people: it is the fruit of the way they think, since they have not listened to my words nor to my law, but have rejected it" (6:19). Having brought this punishment upon themselves (4:18), Jeremiah describes the coming punishment: "Yahweh says this, "Look, a people is coming from the land of the north, from the far ends of the earth a great nation is rising; they are armed with bow and spear, they are cruel and pitiless; their noise is like the roaring of the sea; they are riding horses, they are ready to fight against you as one man, daughter of Zion" (6:22-23).²⁹ This nation from the north—Babylon—comes under the auspices of God, is working as God's agent in the world. Babylon will do God's work in the world, militarily punishing the Israelites under the hand of God. War is brought to the Israelites as divine reprimand.

Bush's rhetoric also follows the same general pattern: an ultimatum which is not met, the judgment which comes, and divine sanction of that judgment. These three components are best illustrated in speeches given on September 20, 2001 ("AJC 2001"), October 7, 2001 ("PAN 2001"), and January 20, 2005 ("PSI 2005"). After blame for terrorist attacks had been attributed to al Qaeda and the Taliban, Bush lays out an ultimatum to Afghanistan:

And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately

²⁹See also Jeremiah 5:15: "Now I shall bring on you a nation from afar, House of Israel, Yahweh declares, an enduring nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know."

and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate. ("AJC 2001")

It is a harsh ultimatum. In giving this ultimatum, Bush demands that the Taliban regime turn over al Qaeda and all other terrorists, as they are the ones who have violated the tenets of the American covenant—love of life, freedom, peace, justice.

Just as Jeremiah's people did not heed his demands, the Taliban leaders did not meet the demands put forth by Bush. Because of this, Bush promises that "now the Taliban will pay a price" ("PAN 2001"). Echoing the words of Abraham Lincoln, he voices a prophetic utterance: "Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves; and, under the rule of a just God, cannot long retain it" ("PSI 2005"). This Biblical choice of words is consistent with his other word choice; it is no accident that his rhetoric uses such polarizing language. Bush's main speechwriter, Michael Gerson used the term "axis of evil" instead of the originally proposed "axis of hatred" for "its more theological resonance" (Goldberg 60). Bush's rhetoric creates the terrorists in the image of the savage, the enemy, the evil other who stands in opposition to everything which the United States values. Thus, in a very Biblical manner, he reiterates the words of Lincoln, a man who epitomized the values of the American covenant, lending historical credibility to his claims. He also explicitly promises that the Taliban and the terrorists cannot hope to retain their autonomy for much longer.

As "the United States will not ignore" oppression or excuse oppressors, they will defeat terrorism no matter the cost ("PSI 2005"). Bush argues that the "only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows" ("AJC 2001"). Just as Babylon came down upon Israel to bring God's judgment, the United States will go to Afghanistan. America truly is a contemporary Babylon. In Jeremiah, the nation which will destroy Israel, is a "destroyer" (6:26). In the Middle East during the sixth century BCE, Babylon was the superpower of its day, replacing its predecessor in that role, Assyria. Commanding the strength of an empire, it laid siege to Jerusalem, becoming its overlord.

According to Jeremiah, it became overlord of the Israelites because they had turned their backs on the covenant. In bringing Babylon to rule Israel, destruction was brought in order to eliminate apostasy where it grew. Jeremiah believed that the external violations of the covenant stemmed from internal decay, decay in the

hearts of the people. This covenant had to be rewritten on the hearts of the people (32:39-40), and once that had been accomplished they would again be faithful to God and covenant. Covenantal renewal would only be possible after the old unfaithful regime had been swept away, leaving behind a faithful remnant.

In this contemporary jeremiad, Bush delivers a similar oracle concerning a similar situation: the world's superpower moves to militarily clear the way for the advent of the covenant. Success, however far in the future and difficult to obtain, is assured because it is upheld by divine mandate. Throughout his speeches, Bush utilizes religious terminology, which ascribes divine sanction to actions taken in the war on terror. Ideals of the American covenant, especially freedom, are promised to all people by God. He asserts that "freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them" ("AJC 2001"). While the side God chooses is not explicitly delineated, the American listener is expected to fill in the gap, knowing that God chooses the side of freedom and justice, the side for which the United States fights.

If the United States is working to make the world according to how God desires it to be made (free and just, according to Bush), it is acting as God's agent in the world. Whether it is doing so unofficially or officially, it is still working as God's agent. Thus to follow the lead of the United States is to follow the lead of God, for America is walking the path set out by the world's creator. If nations follow America's lead, and "start on this journey of progress and justice," then Bush promises that "America will walk at your side" ("PSI 2005"). This language is very Biblical; replace "America" with "God" and one has "God will walk at your side." God walked at the side of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), was alongside the Israelites day and night in their march (Exod 13:21), and a prayer from Psalms seeks to "walk in the presence of God" (56:13). Not only does this language recall the Bible, but it also recalls the ending to Bush's speech on the day of the terrorist attacks on September 11, taken from Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me" ("SPN 2001"). By using these words, Bush not only demonstrates his religious faith (which the author has no reason to doubt or debate) but also his assumption that God walks alongside America on its mission.

This belief is made explicit in his speech on January 20, 2005, as he is sworn-in for his second term. After a long speech about the war on terror, he concludes with the following paragraph:

We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom ...Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and

chooses as He wills. We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul. When our Founders declared a new order of the ages; when soldiers died in wave upon wave for a union based on liberty; when citizens marched in peaceful outrage under the banner “Freedom Now”—they were acting on an ancient hope that is meant to be fulfilled. History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty.³⁰ (“PSI 2005”) While he does acknowledge that God moves and chooses according to God’s will, and that the United States does not have a monopoly on God’s favor, his rhetoric does reveal a belief in the divine sanction of the mission America has undertaken.

America’s fight for freedom against the terrorists, to return justice and other covenantal ideals to the world, is a fight authorized by God. Just as Jeremiah’s mission and Babylon’s military action were authorized by a higher power, so too is the one undertaken by Bush and America.

Jeremiad Part IV: A Hopeful Light in the Darkness

While jeremiads are characterized by their negative views of the current state of the community, they are also characterized by their assertion that there is still hope for the future. Interspersed throughout his various lamentations and descriptions of the evils plaguing his people, Jeremiah also demonstrates a certainty of hope for the future (30:18-19, 31:1-14). Going with his people into exile, Jeremiah follows them into their darkest hour. Even in those times of trial, there is comfort and consolation when God promises that the days are coming “when I shall bring back the captives of my people Israel (and Judah), Yahweh says. I shall make them come back and take possession of the country I gave to their ancestors” (30:3). Cities shall be rebuilt (30:18), thanksgiving and merrymaking will return to the land (30:19, 31:4), vineyards will be planted (31:5), and most importantly: “you will be my people and I shall be your God” (30:22).

God will take back his people and they will return to uphold the values of the covenant. When they do this, God promises that “just as I have brought this complete and total disaster on this people, so I shall bring them all the good things I have promised them” (32:42). The people will return to their homeland, to the faithful comfort of the covenant, and there they shall be satisfied and replenished (31:25). Back in the bonds of the covenant, Jeremiah’s people will return to the right and just way of life, the only way for them to live.

³⁰For God to be the “Author of Liberty” makes the overt connection between liberty (a value of America’s covenant) and God.

Bush, in his speeches, also demonstrates an assured certainty of eventual success. Speeches given on January 29, 2002 ("SUA 2002"), June 6, 2002 ("PAN 2002"), and January 20, 2004 ("SUA 2004") serve to best demonstrate this certainty. Bush believes America is in a unique position of power; it has been called into action to answer the great challenge put before it. America will "lead the world to safety, security, peace, and freedom" ("PAN 2002").

In this conflict there has been pain and destruction for all involved: Afghans, Iraqis, Americans, and American allies alike. In the midst of all of this, in spite of it, the "United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom" ("SUA 2004"). Iraq, America, and the rest of the world will eventually live in freedom. With America fighting for this just cause in the world, a country which both knows and has "shown freedom's power," Bush promises that "we will see freedom's victory" ("SUA 2002").

Freedom's victory is assured not only through the work of America, but because God has ordained it so. On January 20, 2004, he described faith in assured success based in both civil religion and the divine:

We now move forward, with confidence and faith. Our nation is strong and steadfast. The cause we serve is right, because it is the cause of all mankind. The momentum of freedom in our world is unmistakable—and it is not carried forward by our power alone. We can trust in that greater power who guides the unfolding of the years. And in all that is to come, we can know that His purposes are just and true. ("SUA 2004") America's fight is right because it is mankind's cause. Freedom's momentum in the world is not carried along solely by America's work; it is also carried along by God.

Bush believes that if Americans are to believe in their cause—freedom—then Americans are also to believe that it is not "carried forward by our power alone" ("SUA 2004"). God has power over history and the "unfolding of the years" ("SUA 2004"). History is under the sway of God's hand. No one is allowed to doubt that God will cause freedom to persevere. No one is allowed to doubt that the United States will be successful, for even when freedom and the desire for it has been "crushed by tyranny for decades, it will rise again" ("SUA 2004"). No one is allowed to doubt the word of God, and when the war is successful (and it is promised to be), "no one can ... doubt the word of America" ("SUA 2004"). This religious rationale is represented as "more than human and so 'insulated against criticism by mere mortals'" (Roberts 375); success is assured by a higher power, the day when freedom's light shines again will come and the covenant be restored, completing the jeremiad.

A True Jeremiad: Internal Compassion and Justice

Jeremiah served as the mediator between God and the world. He warned his people of how they had fallen from the ideal and gave them opportunities to repent. When they did not, he prophesied their destruction and then promised an eventual return to the tenets of the covenant. This rhetorical form, the jeremiad which has spawned two millennia of subsequent jeremiads, is still in place today. President Bush employs it in his discourse about the current war on terror. Bush's rhetoric may fit the form and use the same religious language as is found in Jeremiah, but is his application appropriate?

When Bush utilizes the jeremiad form, his content is no longer secular. He restores it to its religious dimension, appearing to genuinely invoke God in his justifications for a secular agenda. As a devout Christian, Bush appeals to the Biblical God. His language appeals to the same God to whom Jeremiah appealed, connecting him back to the Old Testament. Because of this, Bush is accountable to the same God, to Jeremiah's God. By employing language from a Christian heritage colored with an American secular agenda, does Bush twist the true purpose of the jeremiad?

Written in response to Bush's imminent commencement address at Calvin College, an open letter to the president describes some of the perceived differences in their "understanding of what Christians are called to do and many of the policies of" the Bush administration ("Open Letter"). Its list of grievances recall Jeremiah's many citations of the Judeans' disregard for living a right life.

Obviously, Jeremiah was not a Christian, his ministry completed centuries before the birth of Christ. But his God is the same God as the Christian God. Christians are expected to answer the same standards of justice and compassion as were the Israelites and Judeans. Bush (as a professed Christian who publicly admits his faith and its impact on his actions), then, should be calling for the same standards of justice and compassion in the United States as Jeremiah called for in ancient Judah and Israel.

While it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the international and national policies of the Bush administration or to catalogue its failings, it does seek to examine the religious rhetoric employed by the President and the implications of that rhetoric. Religious rhetoric apart from actions are just words. But one's words are connected to one's honor, honor that is demonstrated through one's actions. A speaker who invokes religious language must be held accountable to the core principles, which come with those words. Perhaps, instead of focusing on spreading democracy among the nations of the world, Bush would do better

to follow the lead of the original Jeremiah and turn his jeremiad inward to an examination of the social, environmental, and political ills plaguing the nation. If his religion language performs a jeremiad, then it should be performed correctly, focusing inward on rewriting compassion and justice into the community.

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