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Division and Reunion: Woodrow Wilson, Immigration, and the Myth of American Unity

HANS VOUGHT

HISTORIANS HAVE EXAMINED Thomas Woodrow Wilson perhaps more closely than any other United States president. Sixty-five volumes of his papers have now been edited and published, numerous books analyzing his character, administration, and relationship to his times have been written. One would think that nothing remains to be said about the man. But surprisingly, very little attention has been paid to President Wilson's attitude towards immigration. Historians have given passing notice only to his two vetoes of the Burnett Immigration Restriction Bill, without bothering to question why a mugwump so clearly racist towards blacks and Asians would reject a literacy test to keep ignorant, non-Teutonic foreigners out of the United States. Not only was the bill popular, the very concept of the literacy test was one that he endorsed in his native South to keep blacks disfranchised. Clearly, there is an issue here that needs to be examined.

This essay addresses the issue, and seeks to place Wilson's attitude towards immigration not only in the context of his overall character, but in the larger context of traditional American political attitudes. Specifically, Wilson is pictured in this study as embodying the American political ideal of complete homogeneity. He was upset by the fierce class and ethnic conflict that raged in America in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century, a struggle that he viewed as a second Civil War and Reconstruction. Wilson saw himself as taking over the role of his hero, Grover Cleveland, the Democrat who, in Wilson's opinion, reunited the sections and brought peace and prosperity to the United States.¹

Wilson was representative of a moderate progressivism that existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of this one. He was a mugwump reacting negatively to the new, industrialist class, but maintaining a strong belief in the triumph of American ideals and progress. In general, moderate progressives believed that ethnic and

class conflict resulted from valuing private interests over the public interest. This in turn led to widespread corruption of the spoils system by political machines. Immigrants living in the major cities had too often been the cogs that kept the machines running. The solution, according to the moderate progressives, was to unify all classes and ethnic groups into a homogeneous middle class. They believed that the majority of Americans, including themselves, belonged to this middle class. Not only did the classes need to be unified, they also needed to be socialized through education to accept the American political, social, and economic ideals. Only with a common basis of belief could the body politic agree upon the national interest.²

Wilson, like most progressives, moderate or otherwise, abhorred not only the anarchist and socialist beliefs of some of the foreign born, he failed completely to understand their conception of politics as an exchange of favors. Wilson's heroes were great statesmen, who selflessly served their country's commonweal while rallying the people to patriotic endeavors. Wilson saw himself as another Pitt, another Bismarck who could create an efficient, honest government to which all people would rally.³

In all of this, the underlying political idealism was that strange mixture of the Enlightenment and Protestant Christianity, which the founding fathers had incorporated into American political structure and thought. Wilson championed the belief in society as a collection of rational, autonomous men who, given the right education, would always agree as to what was the commonweal and then act upon it. Furthermore, he believed in the inevitability of progress, because he believed in a God who was active in history. His own deep, personal faith in Jesus Christ led him to temper his belief in autonomous reason with the realization that some truths could only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. But this mattered little, for God's will, in Wilson's mind, was the same as American national interest.⁴

Hyphenated immigrants were unacceptable to Wilson and most progressives because they acted as groups, and put selfish group interests blindly above the national interest, which, in Wilson's thought, was naturally all of humanity's interest. Moderate progressives sought reforms to improve the lives of immigrants, the urban poor, and the working class, but they sought reforms designed scientifically to meet objectively the needs of society as a whole.⁵ Hyphenates, suffragettes, unions, and those demanding welfare legislation were thus all grouped together as

selfish special interests to Wilson. Later on, he would become more sympathetic to some of these groups, but only when he began to see their special interest as the national interest. The hyphenate groups never fell into this category. Their disloyalty was bad enough in times of peace; in times of war, it was intolerable.⁶

Note, however, that Wilson opposed hyphenate groups, not immigrants in general. Although he was racist towards blacks and Asians, he was only mildly paternalistic towards the former residents of southern and eastern Europe. Wilson thought the literacy test indeed served a valid purpose in preventing the unassimilable blacks and Asians from voting, but it was invalid to deny admittance to people on the basis of ignorance. For Wilson, illiteracy did not equate with unassimilability, despite the great stock that he placed in education. After all, one could hardly expect southern and eastern Europeans to have received a decent education in their homelands. The point was that they were capable of being educated and assimilated into American culture because they shared a similar enough moral and cultural background as well as a similar shade of skin. More importantly, the United States had to allow the "poor, huddled masses, yearning to breathe free" to enter in order to fulfill God's purpose in creating the "land of the free and the home of the brave."⁷

One word of explanation needs to be issued here. This essay examines the writings and speeches of Woodrow Wilson in order to ascertain his political thought and emotional responses. The pragmatic motives of everyday politics are not intended to be slighted, as Wilson was capable of compromising and pandering to the crowd. Nevertheless, all of his biographers have observed that Wilson was an intensely stubborn man in defending what he perceived to be principles, and there was little for which he did not develop a principle. Wilson remarked, "It is not men that interest or disturb me primarily, it is ideas. Ideas live; men die."⁸ Wilson is the closest thing to a pure ideologue in recent American political life, and his oratorical abilities uniquely captured the essence of important American myths. For these reasons, it is the nature of his ideology that is of concern.

Everybody has heroes, or role models in their chosen or desired field. Wilson saw his political hero, Grover Cleveland, as standing in the nationalist Whig tradition of his other American heroes, Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln. Cleveland was able to reunify the nation because he was impartial, clear-headed, and had the Christian faith and educated

upbringing to be a great statesman. As Wilson stated: “Mr. Cleveland had a very definite home training; wholesome, kindly, Christian. He was bred in a home where character was disciplined and the thoughts were formed, where books were read and the right rules of life obeyed.”⁹

In addition to publishing two articles on the Cleveland administration in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Wilson sang the president’s praises in two of his historical books, *Division and Reunion*, a history of the causes and effects of the Civil War, and *A History of the American People*, which presents the overall sweep of American history and incorporates in large part the former work.¹⁰ In both books, Wilson deplored the sectionalist loyalties that split the country asunder, and therefore wrote against both the Confederate leaders and the radical Republicans of Reconstruction.¹¹ He felt that the Reconstruction policies only prolonged the division. Reunion came not with the Compromise of 1877, however, but with the administration of Grover Cleveland, who as a good, laissez-faire Democrat was able to reunite South and North, at least to the extent that Republican Congresses went along with his policies.

In Wilson’s famous thesis, *Congressional Government* (1884), he argued that unifying the legislative and executive branches to some extent would help to unify the entire political structure, including the voters. This was especially true if the president and cabinet were of as high a caliber as Grover Cleveland and his cabinet.¹² Wilson attacked the dominant legislature because it was divided into committees, and this weakness allowed sectional and social differences to fester in the polity.¹³

By 1908, however, Wilson had completely revamped his analysis of the federal government. *Constitutional Government* revealed Wilson’s faith in a newfound source of leadership: the strong, active presidency. He was able to put his faith into action just four years later. Inspired by the current example of Theodore Roosevelt, as well as his old heroes, Lincoln and Cleveland, Wilson wrote that “greatly as the practice and the influence of the Presidency has varied, there can be no mistaking the fact that we have grown more and more inclined from generation to generation to look at the Presidency as the unifying force in our complex system.”¹⁴ A parliamentary system was not needed if the president could use his office as a “bully pulpit” to preach to and convert the masses, thus keeping Congress honest. So, “we can never hide our President again as a mere domestic officer. We can never again see him the mere executive he was in the thirties and forties. He must stand always

at the front of our affairs, and the office will be as big and as influential as the man who occupies it.”¹⁵ One can tell that the “we” is really a royal “we,” indicating Wilson’s renewed faith in the ability of a strong statesman—a Cleveland; perhaps a Wilson—to overcome Congressional (divided) government and establish constitutional (united) government.

The switch from parliamentary to presidential leadership also indicated a new, or renewed, belief in the ability of educated popular opinion to recognize and embrace the commonweal. The president should be the educator, and who would make a better president than a professional educator? Wilson saw in the fierce class and ethnic struggles of the 1890s and 1900s a new civil war, with bloodshed actually occurring on the picket lines. He longed to step in and reunify his divided country, and this emotion was soon transformed into action.

A History of the American People showed a strong conservative viewpoint, favoring “laissez-faire” economic policies, and opposing labor unions and farmers’ alliances as special interest groups opposed to the common good. The book also painted immigrants from Asia and southern and eastern Europe in a rather unfavorable light, despite condemning nativist movements such as the Know-Nothing party. Wilson thus shared the somewhat paradoxical viewpoint of many mugwumps at that time. By the 1910 gubernatorial race in New Jersey, however, Wilson had much more sympathy for the working class and immigrants. Nonetheless, his earlier, unkind words came back to haunt him during the campaign due to hypocritical Republican smear tactics.¹⁶ The Republicans knew they had him in a difficult position. Since organized labor, especially the American Federation of Labor (AFL), favored severe immigrant restrictions to protect their jobs and wages, they knew he could not please both blocs of voters. The party broadcast anti-labor, pro-immigrant quotes to the unions and anti-immigrant, pro-labor quotes to the immigrants, a very effective tactic that both Republicans and opposing Democrats used in the 1912 presidential race as well.¹⁷

The passage most often circulated among Polish Americans, Hungarian Americans, Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, and others was this:

Throughout the century men of the sturdy stocks of the north of Europe had made up the main strain of foreign blood which was every year added to the vital working force of the country, or else men of the Latin-Gallic stocks of France and northern Italy; but now there came multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner

sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries of the south of Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population, the men whose standards of life and of work were such as American workmen had never dreamed of hitherto.¹⁸

Wilson continued that although the Chinese coolies had been excluded from the West Coast, and were seen as “hardly fellow men at all, but evil spirits, rather,” they were more desirable than the European immigrants because they were skilled, intelligent and hardworking. The Chinese were driven out because they were good enough to compete with white Americans for jobs; the Europeans were tolerated because they were only fit for the lowest, unwanted jobs.¹⁹

Such statements naturally aroused anti-Wilson sentiment in California when the Hearst newspapers broadcast them. James Duval Phelan, the leader of the Wilson forces in California, begged Wilson to issue a statement upholding the Chinese Exclusion Act to mollify irate white voters. Wilson replied in a published telegram that he stood firmly for the exclusion of Oriental immigrants: “The whole question is one of assimilation of diverse races. We cannot make a homogeneous population out of people who do not blend with the Caucasian race. . . . Oriental coolieism will give us another race problem to solve and surely we have had our lesson.”²⁰ Wilson thus blatantly labelled both blacks and Asians as unassimilable, making his racism all too evident. Nevertheless, he believed that those already living in the United States should be treated as well as possible without giving them any political responsibility.

Wilson was forced to write letters to European immigrant groups practically every day during the 1912 campaign in order to explain his position to irate voters. Nicholas Piotrowski, the city attorney of Chicago and a leading Democrat, wrote to Wilson that many of the three million Polish Americans were upset about the passage quoted from Wilson’s *History*, but that he personally could not believe that Wilson meant it. He offered the New Jersey governor the chance to explain himself. In case the governor had been ill-informed about Polish immigrants, Piotrowski supplied him with a brief history of their successes in the United States. He concluded, “In honesty, integrity, thriftiness and respect for the laws, the Poles in this country rank as high as any other nationality. . . . It is true that among the 3,000,000 Poles in this country,

there will be found undesirables, but the same is true of all nationalities; Americans of English descent not excepted.²¹

Wilson hastily replied to Piotrowski that the passage was misconstrued due to the necessity of condensation in publishing, and that it really referred only to contract labor, which drew "in many cases upon a class of people who would not have come of their own motion and who were not entirely representative of the finer elements of the countries from which they came." This reply became his stock-in-trade answer to irate hyphenate groups. In addition, he agreed with Piotrowski that the Poles had a distinguished history in both Poland and the United States, and he declared that he certainly did not favor Chinese laborers over Polish ones. This answer apparently satisfied Piotrowski and many other Chicago Polish Americans, because Piotrowski was eventually very helpful in getting out the Polish vote for Wilson.²²

Wilson made every effort to win back immigrant support.²³ The leaders of the Italian-American Association (IAA) were invited to Sea Girt, New Jersey for a private reception, in which Wilson offered similar apologies. He particularly praised the I.A.A. for its work in resettling immigrants in the wholesome countryside, thus distributing the population more evenly and easing the overcrowding that produced the squalid slums of the port cities. The leaders of the I.A.A. reported afterwards that "we Italians may be certain that no man is less capable of damaging our interests even by a chance word, no man is better aware of the real position and importance of our countrymen in the United States, and no man is better disposed and more capable of viewing the Italo-American citizen as he really is."²⁴

The majority of immigrant groups remained hostile to Wilson, however. The United Polish Societies of Manhattan denounced him as "narrow and unjust in his attitude toward the Poles," while the Rev. John Strzelecki of Saint Stanislaw's Church declared that "what he says is an insult to the white race!" Likewise, the Italian-American Civic Union of New York opposed his nomination due to his "prejudiced and narrow mind of very limited intelligence."²⁵ The United Polish Societies of South Brooklyn also remained opposed to his candidacy, despite Wilson's promise to their leader, Ignatius Drobinski, to have the offending passage corrected in the next edition (never published).²⁶ Hungarian Americans, too, remained hostile to Wilson, despite his successful interview with Gezea Kende, editor of *Amerikar-Magyar Nepszava* (*American-Hungarian People's Voice*, the largest Hungarian newspaper in the

United States), in which he gave a signed statement that he favored only “responsible” restrictions on immigration that safeguarded health and morals, but did not “exclude from this country honest, industrious men who are seeking what America has always offered—an asylum for those who seek a free field.”²⁷

The Roman Catholic church was also very upset by the publication of several anti-Catholic quotes from Wilson. A poll of 2,313 priests and monks from around the country revealed that while the majority of Irish and German clergy supported Wilson, the majority of Italian and Polish clergy opposed him. The Democratic party had a prominent Catholic layman, James Charles Monaghan, write a pamphlet defending Wilson as a friend to Catholics. In his campaign speeches, Wilson paid his compliment to the Church by praising it for keeping alive the flame of individual liberty and equality during the Dark Ages, by allowing the humblest peasant the opportunity to become Pope through the priesthood. Wilson also accepted an honorary membership in the Knights of Columbus, ironically setting off a storm of anti-Catholic protest in Pittsburgh.²⁸

The Hearst newspaper campaign was a collaboration with rival Democratic presidential candidate Champ Clark’s staff, and it assailed Wilson’s attempt to befriend immigrants as an about-face. The papers tried to arouse nativist as well as immigrant anger. Hearst’s editorials referred to Wilson as “a perfect jackrabbit of politics, perched upon his little hillock of expediency, with ears erect and nostrils distended, keenly alert to every scent or sound and ready to run and double in any direction,” and predicted that the only people who would vote for Wilson would be the railroad owners. “If the railroads could have Woodrow Wilson in the White House and a million Chinese laborers, as a starter, to work for them, it would be a very fine combination. Woodrow Wilson would, as President, protect them against legislation in favor of the people.”²⁹

This kind of smear campaign further perpetrated the very evils that Wilson was trying to end: pitting classes and ethnic groups against each other. The fact that Hearst and Clark were hypocritically sending opposite messages about Wilson to each warring faction, using the same quotations, was even more infuriating. Wilson strove to bring reunion out of this division by stressing the contributions that all ethnic groups had made to the United States: “The reason America grows more and more vigorous and more and more various in its vigor is because it has

more and more elements of power, because of the new infusion that is constantly taking place in its blood and thinking. Each race contributes its own quota."³⁰

This response was more than mere savvy political rhetoric. Wilson, like most of the people of his time, believed that each "race," or ethnic group, had national characteristics that all of its members possessed. Thus he told the New England Society of New York City that he believed "that it is necessary that races of different characters should exchange their ideas as well as their compliments, and that we should understand just what our relative parts are to be in the great game that we are to play upon this continent."³¹ On the other hand, he believed that in merging these characteristics, they should blend away into a solid blankness, the same way that all colors, when mixed together, produce white. Thus he told countless audiences whom he addressed that there was no special American human nature, and the traits that he enumerated as belonging to Americans, "alertness, inquisitiveness, unconventionality, readiness for change, eagerness for the newest things and the most convenient," were universal characteristics, not limited to any particular "blood strain." He did acknowledge that our principles were still held with bigotry, but he confidently stated that we were "learning ever," and that education would foster ideals and "drive our ignorance, provincialism, [and] noxious error."³² Wilson essentially shared, though with important differences, the view of John Dewey and other progressives that liberal education was the best means of political socialization.

In Wilson's standard after-dinner speeches, he often divided historical time into centuries, attributing themes to each one. The seventeenth century was the age of settlement, the eighteenth century was the age of independence (both from French attacks and British sovereignty), and the nineteenth century was the age of division and reunion. Wilson was reluctant to label the twentieth century, but he made it clear that the new empire and international prestige acquired by the United States through the Spanish-American War offered every promise of a century of American glory, if the nation could unite behind moral principles.³³ Again, one can see Wilson acting the part of Daniel Webster or Abraham Lincoln, calling the nation to unite in the name of God and humanity, and yearning to act the part of a triumphal Bismarck, or Cleveland.

The insistence of hyphenates upon retaining their national loyalty stood directly in the way of the triumphal American century that Wilson envisioned. He had no quarrel with those who wished to remember

fondly their heritage. Wilson often referred proudly to his Scotch-Irish background. But he firmly believed that it *was* background, and that all American citizens, whether naturalized or native born, should think and act in the foreground. After all, the United States was the last, best hope of mankind, and hence far more deserving of loyalty than any lesser land. In a 1902 speech, Wilson defined patriotism as not merely a sentiment, but a principle of action: the Biblical command to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” And who was one’s neighbor? He answered, “Patriotism comes when a man is of big enough range of affection to take the country in. It is friendship writ large. It is fellowship with many sides, which expends itself in service to all mankind joined in the same citizenship, and who are bound up in the same principles of civilization.”³⁴

Note once again the theme of unity, a brotherhood of servants of God. In Wilson’s view, to take the oath of citizenship was to join this lay order. Immigrants who then insisted on hyphens in their name, and tried to fight out Old World battles in the New World, had broken their vows, and quite literally broken faith with America. He probably remembered his father pronouncing the judgment of Jesus from the pulpit: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God.” He used similar language when addressing a crowd of several thousand newly naturalized citizens in Philadelphia in 1915:

You have just taken an oath of allegiance to the United States. Of allegiance to whom? Of allegiance to no one, unless it be God—certainly not of allegiance to those who temporarily represent this great Government. You have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race. . . . And while you bring all countries with you, you come with a promise of leaving all other countries behind you—bringing what is best of their spirit, but not looking over your shoulder and seeking to perpetuate what you intended to leave behind in them. I certainly would not be one even to suggest that a man cease to love the home of his birth and the nation of his origin—these things are very sacred and ought not to be put out of our hearts—but it is one thing to love the place where you were born and it is another thing to dedicate yourself to the place to which you go. You cannot dedicate yourself to America unless you become in every respect and with every purpose of your will thorough Americans. *You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups.* A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American.³⁵

The fate of immigrants who continued to look to the past would be that of Lot's wife, according to Wilson. Of course, he desired unity of American spirit at all times. But the efforts of hyphenated Americans, whether Irish, German, Italian, or English, to draw the United States into World War I on behalf of their homelands particularly infuriated Wilson, violating as it did his proclamation of neutrality. It is not by accident that in the same speech quoted above, Wilson made his famous declaration that America was "too proud to fight."

Joe Tumulty, Wilson's Irish Catholic secretary (whom today would be called chief of staff), recorded Wilson's anger at Irish Americans who wanted the United States to support Germany in order to force Great Britain to give Ireland her freedom, an anger which Tumulty claims to have shared. When Irish agitator Jeremiah O'Leary wrote to Wilson in 1916, threatening the loss of the Irish vote, Wilson replied angrily in a published letter, "I would feel deeply mortified to have you or anybody like you vote for me. Since you have access to many disloyal Americans and I have not, I will ask you to convey this message to them."³⁶ Although he thus repudiated the hyphenate vote in 1916, Wilson was not ready to silence all disloyal opposition completely, as Roosevelt was. That would come with the United States' entry into the war, one year later.

Wilson most clearly enunciated his views on this subject when giving an address at the unveiling of a statue of Irish-American Commodore John Barry:

John Barry was an Irishman, but his heart crossed the Atlantic with him. He did not leave it in Ireland. And the test of all of us—for all of us had our origins on the other side of the sea—is whether we will assist in enabling America to live her separate and independent life, retaining our ancient affections, indeed, but determining everything that we do by the interests that exist on this side of the sea. Some Americans need hyphens in their names, because only part of them has come over; but when the whole man has come over, heart and thought and all, the hyphen drops of its own weight out of his name. This man was not an Irish-American; he was an Irishman who became an American. I venture to say that if he voted he voted with regard to the questions as they looked on this side of the water and not as they affected the other side; and that is my infallible test of a genuine American.³⁷

Wilson had indeed long supported the Irish nationalists in their struggle for independence, but it must not come at the expense of United States neutrality or interests.³⁸

His campaign against hyphenism coincided with ever-present nativism and the growing pro-Allied war movement to produce a backlash against immigration. This backlash led to the Burnett Immigration Restriction Bill passing Congress in 1915 and 1917, and becoming law in 1917 over the president's veto.

Wilson was genuinely opposed to nativism, and he viewed the unions' position as merely selfish interest, which he could not tolerate. To assuage the fears of average Americans, he portrayed the hyphenates as a minor faction, comparable in their disloyalty to the most outspoken Allied supporters, such as Theodore Roosevelt. In a stump speech on preparedness in 1916, Wilson said of the immigrants, "Their intimate sympathies are with some of the places now most affected by this titanic struggle. You can not [sic] wonder—I do not wonder—that their affections are stirred, old memories awakened and old passions rekindled. The majority of them are steadfast Americans, nevertheless." He noted that by contrast, many nativist Americans had been disloyal in seeking to draw the United States into the war on the Allied side, and concluded that all disloyal favoritism must be put down.³⁹

Again, in an address to the Daughters of the American Revolution (an organization that was notoriously nativist) in 1915, entitled, "Be Not Afraid of Our Foreign-Born Citizens," Wilson cautioned them, "There is too general an impression, I fear, that very large numbers of our fellow-citizens born in other lands have not entertained with sufficient intensity and affection the American ideal. But the number is, I am sure, not large. Those who would seek to represent them are very vocal, but they are not very influential." He went on to remind these ancestor-worshipping women that "Some of the best stuff of America has come out of foreign lands, and some of the best stuff in America is in the men who are naturalized citizens. . . . the vast majority of them came here because they believed in America; and their belief in America has made them better citizens than some people who were born in America."⁴⁰

The fact that Wilson equated his struggle to bring unity to warring ethnic groups with Abraham Lincoln's struggle to bring unity to the warring states was made explicit in Wilson's Flag Day address of 1916. By an earlier proclamation, he had made Flag Day an official, nationwide celebration, seeking to use this obvious patriotic symbol to end the "influences which have seemed to threaten to divide us in interest and sympathy," by saying to his "fellow countrymen," "Let us on that day rededicate ourselves to the Nation, 'one and inseparable,' from which every thought that is not worthy of our fathers' first vows of indepen-

dence, liberty, and right shall be excluded and in which we shall stand with united hearts, for an America which no man can corrupt, . . . no force divide against itself."⁴¹ Here was an obvious reference to Lincoln's immortal maxim, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." In the June 14 address itself, Wilson explicitly compared the current test of unity to that of the Civil War, and stated, "There is disloyalty active in the United States, and it must be absolutely crushed."⁴² Unfortunately, all dissent was indeed to be crushed under the weight of George Creel's Committee on Public Information and other wartime measures.

All of these themes came together in Wilson's decision to veto the Burnett Immigration Restriction Bill in 1915 and 1917. The bill's main feature was a literacy test, designed to exclude those who threatened the health and morals of the United States, as Wilson had asked for.⁴³ He followed the example of Cleveland and Taft in vetoing the bill. In the process, he was standing up to the growing nativist hysteria brought on by the war. The vote to override failed narrowly in 1915; in 1917 the override passed and the Burnett Bill became law.

The movement to restrict immigration had caught Congress's attention in the 1880s, and produced the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as the later "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan. President Cleveland's position was, not surprisingly, very close to that of his protégé's thirty years later. In 1886, Cleveland stated in his annual message to Congress, "In opening our vast domains to alien elements, the purpose of our lawgivers was to invite assimilation, and not to provide an arena for endless antagonisms. The paramount duty of maintaining public order and defending the interests of our own people, may require . . . restriction, but they should not tolerate the oppression of individuals of a special race."⁴⁴ In his second term, Cleveland did call for legislation to check the "growing evil" of the padrone system, and he voiced concern over the rising illiteracy rates among immigrants. Nevertheless, he vetoed Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge's literacy test bill as too restrictive in 1897. Taft likewise vetoed a similar bill in 1913.⁴⁵

The earliest champion of the literacy test was Lodge, the Massachusetts Brahmin who became Wilson's nemesis. Wilson and Lodge both held an idealistic, optimistic view of America's past and future greatness, and both upheld the Puritan ideal of a public-spirited, homogeneous society as the only salvation for the morass of self-serving urban politics. Where the infamous antagonism existed between the two leaders was over *how* to achieve that homogeneity. Wilson sought American

strength through unity, blending together the best characteristics of every nationality to create the ideal citizenry. Lodge, on the other hand, sought strength through purity, convinced that only the Anglo-American “race” could succeed. Lodge believed in assimilation and Americanization, to be sure, but it could only be successful when immigrants abandoned their ethnic heritage entirely and became Anglo Americans. Where Wilson wanted only for the immigrants to share a common vision, Lodge wanted them to share a common history, common language, and common customs. This subtle contrast between amalgamation and isolation was, of course, also at the heart of the battle over the League of Nations.⁴⁶

Lodge argued for the literacy test bill almost as soon as he was elected to the House of Representatives. As a senator in 1896, he recommended the literacy test to his colleagues precisely because it would discriminate against undesirable Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Greeks, and Asians, while allowing British, German, Scandinavian, and French immigrants to come in. He declared that “illiteracy runs parallel with the slum population, with criminals, paupers, juvenile delinquents of foreign birth or parentage. . . . [and] those who bring the least money to the country and come most quickly upon private or public charity for support.” Furthermore, the new immigrants were dangerous because they were “changing the quality of our race and citizenship through the wholesale infusion of races whose traditions and inheritances, whose thoughts and whose beliefs are wholly alien to ours.”⁴⁷ For Lodge, citizenship was directly tied to ethnicity. He could not see Wilson’s argument that the American spirit could transcend ethnicity.

The G.O.P. platform of 1896 called for a literacy test, and Roosevelt pressed Congress to ban all anarchists after McKinley’s assassination. Roosevelt tried to maintain a balanced position on immigration, however, despite favoring the literacy test. In his 1903 message to Congress, he sounded the theme of Wilson’s National Liberal Immigration League (NLIL) which sought to break up the urban slums and spread the immigrants across the nation. “The need is to devise some system by which undesirable immigrants shall be kept out entirely, while desirable immigrants are properly distributed throughout the country.” Again in 1905 he called for distribution, suggesting the banning of immigration only in the big Northern cities.⁴⁸ It was only during World War I that Roosevelt became the champion of the rabid nationalists.

The Southerners were violently opposed to any immigrants being distributed around Dixie, and it is not surprising to find that most of the

literacy test's supporters were Southern Democrats such as Oscar Underwood and John Burnett. They wanted an end to all immigration of non-"Teutonic" foreigners, and thought that the literacy test could accomplish this as well as it kept blacks from voting in their home states. Immigration restriction was also a golden opportunity for Southern Democrats to win back the farmers and unions that had bolted the party for the Populists in the 1890s.

The theme of racial superiority dominated Congressional debates quite as much as economic concerns about wages and jobs. Congressman Everis A. Hayes of California made a motion in 1914 to amend the Burnett Bill by excluding all "Hindoos [sic] and all persons of the Mongolian or yellow race, the Malay or brown race, the African or black race," but it was defeated handily.⁴⁹ Sen. James A. Reed of Missouri did get an amendment excluding all blacks (carefully worded so as to bar even black United States citizens who travelled abroad from returning!) to pass the Senate, but it was dropped in conference committee in 1915.⁵⁰ The 1917 bill that finally passed over Wilson's veto did include an "Asiatic Barred Zone" that restricted immigration by longitude and latitude.⁵¹

While Wilson saw the Southerners and the unions as guilty of promoting selfish special interests, Congressman John L. Burnett of Alabama attacked the foes of his bill as special interests: the "Ship Trust," the "Brewer's Trust." He argued that his bill did exactly what Wilson had called for in his address to the foreign-language editors during the campaign: restricting immigration to maintain American ideals. (However, he contradicted himself immediately by quoting a *Boston Transcript* editorial claiming that the literacy test was *not* a test of character.) Burnett made sure to fill his speeches with the social science statistics that made progressives' ears perk up, and quoted experts such as New York Police Commissioner Bingham: "You will notice that these particular crimes [against women and children] are done by fellows who can't talk the English language. . . . [who] don't know what liberty means, and don't care; don't know our customs, . . . and are in general the scum of Europe."⁵² While Burnett was definitely a white supremacist, he urged the House to vote down the amendment restricting all blacks—but only because the amendment would insure the bill's defeat.

The most outspoken opponent of the Burnett Bill was Congressmen James A. Gallivan of Massachusetts. He joined Washington Gladden in denouncing the new "holy wars" between Catholics and Protestants that

the debate on immigration was engendering. He also pointed out the hypocrisy of the bill's supporters, noting that the majority of white Southerners, let alone blacks, were as poor as the immigrants, and had much higher rates of illiteracy. He observed, too, that wealth and education had grown in the North along with immigration. Gallivan reminded his colleagues that the twelve Apostles were mostly illiterate when Jesus called them, and that their own colonial ancestors, of whom they were so proud, were largely illiterate, too. As he said: "Then, as now, the men who faced the hazards of the tempestuous ocean and the perils of the savage continent were usually the bravest and most enterprising of their class; they had courage, strength, common sense, native ability, and a willingness to work out their own salvation in a new country. . . ." but not a good education. Gallivan pleaded always for a true test of character, noting that anarchists and socialists were almost always well-educated, and so a literacy test would not keep them out. He concluded that "we have grown fat and foolish in our progress; we forget our origins; we imagine that the eternal verities will change and that the letters and scripts that man has made have, by some curious alchemy, become greater and more worthy than the gifts God has given us."⁵³

In Wilson's first veto message, he called the bill, "a radical departure from the traditional and long-established policy of this country . . . in which our people have conceived the very character of their government to be expressed, the very mission and spirit of the Nation . . ." because it greatly curtailed the right to political asylum in the United States. In addition, the bill was unsound because it would, "turn away from tests of character and of quality and impose tests which exclude and restrict; for the new tests are . . . tests of opportunity. Those who come seeking opportunity are not to be admitted unless they have already had one of the chief opportunities they seek, the opportunity of education."⁵⁴ Wilson's second veto message basically reiterated the first. Ironically, however, he criticized an amendment put in to answer his objections about the elimination of asylum, saying that it would lead to diplomatic difficulties. The ever-approaching war no doubt contributed to this seeming about-face.⁵⁵

Wilson did not desire the severe repression of the wartime years, although he did condone it. The Burnett Immigration Restriction Bill, on the other hand, was a measure that he opposed from the start. Not only did Wilson deem it unnecessary (as he remained confident that the majority of immigrants were loyal Americans) but more importantly, it

violated the foundational principles of America. Wilson consistently saw America as more of a spiritual concept than a physical reality, a mental device used by most Americans to reconcile the image of America that they have been socialized to accept with the far-from-perfect reality which they can plainly see. Wilson recognized that it was vital to keep the spiritual concept of America, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, not too far out of line with the reality of Ellis Island.

This spiritual concept called America was in reality the old Puritan dream of the New World as the new Jerusalem, the "city set on a hill" of which Jesus spoke, and of the American people as the new Israel, a people set apart by God to be an example and inspiration to all the world. The biblical texts and the writings of Calvinist preachers were all familiar to the son of a Presbyterian minister and a devout Christian in his own right, and his allusions clearly drew on them. In a Thanksgiving Day address to the Har Sinai Temple of Trenton, New Jersey in 1910, he quoted the old New England divine William Stoughton on the subject of God sifting the nations of the world to plant the choicest seed in America, and he went on to say, "And so, apparently God is sifting the nations yet to plant seed in America." He described the American people as a "conglomerate," with each ethnic group contributing necessary characteristics, "I will not say, out of alien stocks, for these stocks are bound by adoption, by mixture and by union."⁵⁶ One can hear St. Paul saying, "Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises." Wilson then said, "I don't regard these national elements, that is, race elements, that make up American life as something outside America for they have come in and been identified with her. They are all instantly recognizable as Americans and America is enriched with the variety of their gifts and the variety of their national characterization."⁵⁷

His campaign speeches in 1912 emphasize this spiritual concept as the force which motivated most immigrants to come to the United States. In part, this was because Wilson was trying to mollify hyphenate groups who were outraged over the infamous passage in Wilson's *History* by arguing that the quote was taken out of context, and that he referred only to those immigrants who were "forced" to come over as contract labor. By contrast, the majority of immigrants came over voluntarily, literally "moved by the spirit."

But this defense merged in Wilson's mind with what he considered to be the more important reason to emphasize the spiritual concept of

America: the unity of believers that it implied. Wilson believed that he could reunite the divided American people by teaching them that the past no longer mattered, save to teach them the necessity and inevitability of their being all as one now in the American spirit. It is as if Wilson was paraphrasing St. Paul again: "Here there is no Greek or Jew, immigrant or native, Pole, Italian, slave or free, but America is all, and is in all."⁵⁸ It also calls to mind the motto of King Louis XVIII of France after the French Revolution: "L'union et l'oublie" ("Union and Forgetfulness").

We can hear this cry in Wilson's address to a Polish-American crowd in Chicago's South Side:

When we speak of America, we speak not of a race; but of a people. After we have enumerated the Irish-Americans, the Jewish-Americans, the German-Americans, and the Polish-Americans who will be left? Settlers and descendants of settlers constitute the minority in America, and the people of all the races of Europe a majority. The term America is bigger than the continent. America lives in the hearts of every man everywhere who wishes to find a region somewhere where he will be free to work out his destiny as he chooses.⁵⁹

Wilson, indeed, began to protest wherever he spoke against the very hyphenated terms with which the immigrants were labelled. He realized that the use of such terms fostered the lack of unity felt by Americans of different ethnic backgrounds, and prevented the full flowering of united American power that he predicted for this century. He declared, "I am looking forward to an era of unprecedented national action. We are now coming to an era where there will be but one single expression and but one common thought." In order for this era to be brought about, the usages of thought and expression had to be changed, however. Thus he went on, "I protest against speaking of German-Americans, or Irish-Americans or Jewish-Americans, for these nationalities are becoming indistinguishable in the general body of Americans. Drop out the first words, cut out the hyphens and call them all Americans."⁶⁰

The importance of language in communicating this spiritual concept of America was stressed to a group of approximately one hundred editors of foreign-language newspapers in 1912. Wilson explained to them his view of America, and stated that immigration should only be restricted to exclude those who did not have the spirit of American idealism which caused people to voluntarily emigrate. He then protested against their

designation as foreign-language editors, arguing that whatever language was used to convey American ideals was the language of America: "All my interest is that you shouldn't regard the language in which you print your periodicals as a foreign language when printed in America for the conveyance of American thinking."⁶¹ This was indeed a radical statement of the American spirit of unity erasing even the most obvious ethnic divisions.

True American faith was limited to the elect, however. There were certain languages that simply could not convey the American spirit. Wilson thought that the key to a successful immigration policy was assimilation. Indeed, it was on this basis that Wilson supported the Chinese Exclusion Act. Oriental people, like the blacks in the South, were simply incapable of conforming to the ideal, Wilson believed. Therefore, they were obviously heathen intruders in the Kingdom of God, who should be tolerated, but kept in their place.

Despite the fact that Europeans emigrated to the United States because they were already Americans at heart, assimilation was not an automatic experience. Immigrants needed to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, and it was up to the "native" citizens to aid them in the assimilation process. The key was education. Wilson heartily approved the naturalization classes and night school movements started by progressive social workers during this time period. But, he believed that "the chief school that these people must attend after they get here is the school which all of us attend, which is furnished by the life of the communities in which we live and the Nation to which we belong. . . . It is easy . . . to communicate physical lessons, but it is very difficult to communicate spiritual lessons." The ideal American community (i.e., small and rural) was the best school for instilling American ideals, not crowded cities where those ideals had been corrupted.⁶²

The chief spiritual lessons which immigrants needed to learn were American political ideals. Wilson was very upset that the immigrants kept the urban political machines running by exchanging votes for jobs and other favors. This process corrupted Wilson's, and America's, ideals of both the statesman and the electorate. His views on the ideal statesman have been discussed above. It needs to be pointed out here that although Wilson saw the party as a powerful tool, he demanded that elected officials act as individually responsible trustees, and not as mere delegates, blindly following party dictates. As early as 1876 he wrote:

Although there are principles of duty to his party and to the cause he has espoused, still no statesman should allow party feeling to bias his opinions on any point which involves truth or falsehood, justice or injustice. He should search for truth with the full determination to find it, and in that search he should most earnestly seek aid from God, who will surely hold him responsible for the course he pursues.⁶³

In a 1912 campaign speech, Wilson cautioned his audience to, “always distinguish a boss from a political leader. Party organization is absolutely legitimate and absolutely necessary,” but only when the political leader uses the party to serve the commonweal. “A boss is a man who uses this splendid open force for the secret processes of selfish control.”⁶⁴

Voters must vote for the good of the nation as a whole, and politicians must serve that greater good. In Wilson’s speech accepting the Democratic nomination in 1912, the man who had defeated the bosses in New Jersey called on his party to do the same nationwide: “We are servants of the people, the whole people. *The nation has been unnecessarily, unreasonably at war within itself.* Interest has clashed with interest when there were common principles of right and of fair dealing which . . . should have bound them all together. . . . As servants of all, we are bound to undertake the great duty of accommodation and adjustment.”⁶⁵ Thus the call once more to end the civil war and unite in patriotic homogeneity of belief and practice.

Wilson explicitly linked this homogeneity of American idealism to the assimilation of immigrants during the campaign. He argued that America had always opened its doors and extended hospitality to all the “modern civilized peoples,” that they might share in our ideals and enrich our melting pot. America must be careful to live up to the ideals which persuaded the immigrants to come here, the vision of “a place of close knit communities, where men think in terms of the common interest, where men do not organize selfish groups to dominate the fortunes of their fellow men, but where, on the contrary, they, by common conference, conceive the policies which are for the common benefit.”⁶⁶ Once more, the image of special interest groups as an evil, divisive force emerges, as well as the image of small-town community life as the ideal force to Americanize and unify the diverse elements of the population.

Although he believed that Americans came with, and because of, this ideal vision, they did not always realize it. Often they continued to act politically in the manner that they learned in the Old World, giving

loyalty on the basis of debts owed and blood ties. Wilson saw a need to educate immigrants to accept that in the United States, the people, and not the State, were sovereign. He told the Conference on Americanization, "When you ask a man to be loyal to a government, if he comes from some foreign countries, his idea is that he is expected to be loyal to a certain set of persons like a ruler or a body set in authority over him. . . . Our idea is that he is to be loyal to certain objects in life." Not only must they be taught that idealism is allowed in the United States, they must be taught that idealism is mandatory in the United States.

Loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart the absolute principle of self-sacrifice. Loyalty means that you ought to be ready to sacrifice every interest that you have, and your life itself, if your country calls upon you to do so, and that is the sort of loyalty which ought to be inculcated into these newcomers, . . . that, having once entered this sacred relationship, they are bound to be loyal whether they are pleased or not; and that loyalty which is merely self-pleasing is only self-indulgence and selfishness.⁶⁷

Education was necessary for assimilation. But, as noted above, Wilson believed that the best education came from everyday community life. The healthiest communities were naturally the rural ones. Wilson therefore supported efforts to get the immigrants out of the crowded, squalid cities in which most of the immigrants stayed, and spread them out into the great expanse of American country. To this end he became a director of the National Liberal Immigration League.⁶⁸ In fact, he asked for legislation to facilitate such assimilation by dilution instead of the Burnett Bill in 1915.⁶⁹

Seen now in the context of Wilson's overall attitude towards immigration, these two vetoes make much more sense. Wilson saw himself as another Lincoln or Cleveland, trying to heal the divisions of civil war and reunify the country to carry on its God-ordained mission. The literacy test may have been useful in keeping blacks and Asians out of American political life, because they were patently unassimilable to Wilson. However, it constituted an arbitrary restriction on thousands of European immigrants, who had the spirit of America in their hearts, and could only help build the glorious empire of the United States in the twentieth century, and spread the gospel of political freedom to all the world.

More importantly, the rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson reveals several

foundational myths in American life. The myth of America as the chosen people of God, building His Kingdom on Earth, rings forth in Wilson's religious imagery. This myth requires logically the myth of homogeneity, that all cultural differences must blend away in the melting pot, and that education will lead all rational men to recognize and strive only for the commonweal. "E pluribus, unum," thundered Wilson from the classroom and the bully pulpit of the Presidency. And the people responded by silencing all opposition to the war, by staging race riots, by abandoning the very ideals which Wilson had said unity would serve.

In this decade of the 1990s, when "multiculturalism" is the watchword of the universities, and cultural pluralism continues to increase rather than decrease, America needs to examine closely her foundational myths. Can, or should, the divided Puritan ideal be reunified? Does the concept of a nation still require a set of shared values and cultural experiences? The message of Woodrow Wilson is therefore a challenge to our society to redefine our national character, and examine anew our complex reactions to immigration. We can harshly suppress all differences, and thus destroy the very ideals we seek to preserve. We can abandon all hope of cultural cohesiveness, and either Balkanize our society or water down our ideals to meaninglessness. Or we can try to follow the middle road that Wilson attempted to lay down: teaching immigrants what it means to be Americans, but at the same time learning and adopting from them what their cultures have to offer.

NOTES

1. Woodrow Wilson, "Mr. Cleveland as President," *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. by Arthur S. Link (65 vols. to date) (Princeton, 1966–), 10: 102–19; Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, 5 vols. (New York, 1902), pp. 171–172, 176–180, 194–195, 220.

2. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), chap. 5, described the progressives as mugwumps reacting to this "status revolution" by trying to reestablish themselves as a responsible, elite class guiding democracy. In chap. 6, he insightfully pointed out the crucial difference between the immigrants and the progressive reformers in their perceptions of the nature of politics. George Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York, 1958), chap. 5, described the progressive vision of the unitary middle class. Cf. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York, 1967); Robert M. Cruden, *Ministers of Reform* (New York, 1982); John H. Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985); and David Danbom, *The World of Hope* (Philadelphia, 1987).

3. Wilson's ideal of the selfless, erudite leader was a lifelong one. See, e.g., "A Christian Statesman," *Wilmington North Carolina Presbyterian*, 6 September 1876, in Wilson, *Papers* 1:188; "The Ideal Statesman," *ibid.*, 1:241–43.

4. For an excellent discussion of the vast influence of Wilson's Presbyterian

faith on his political thought, see Arthur S. Link, "Woodrow Wilson and his Presbyterian Inheritance," *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville, 1971).

5. See Crunden, *Ministers*, chaps. 1–3; and Danbom, *World*, chaps. 3–4. For a completely different (and largely cynical) interpretation, cf. Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism* (Chicago, 1967); and James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State* (Boston, 1968).

6. Link argues in *Wilson: The Road to the White House* (vol. 1 of 5 volume biography) (Princeton, 1947), pp. 29–35, that Wilson began life as a conservative mugwump, solely concerned with academic problems. During his presidency at Princeton, however, he became knowledgeable on current economic and social problems, and between 1908 and 1912 he was transformed into a progressive. However, Link has more recently emphasized the continuity of Wilson's thought as a "higher realism," which transformed his Christian ideals into political reality, as far as he deemed practicable, through moderate reform. See Link, "The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson," *Higher Realism*.

7. See both of Wilson's veto messages on the Burnett Bill, as well as his speeches, "Loyalty Means Self Sacrifice," and "Be Not Afraid of our Foreign Born," discussed below.

8. Gamaliel Bradford, "Brains Win and Lose," *Atlantic Monthly* 147 (February 1931): 154.

9. Wilson, "Mr. Cleveland as President," in *Wilson, Papers*, 10:119, 103. See a brilliant discussion of Wilson's Whig roots in David Steigerwald, "The Synthetic Politics of Woodrow Wilson," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (July–September 1989): 465–84. See also Nils A. Thorsen, *The Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson, 1875–1910* (Princeton, 1988).

10. Woodrow Wilson "Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet," in *Wilson, Papers* 8:160–78; "Mr. Cleveland as President," in *ibid.*, 10:102–119; Woodrow Wilson, *Division and Reunion, 1829–1889* (New York, 1893); Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People* (New York, 1902).

11. Wilson was indeed a rare Southerner in not mourning for the Lost Cause, but it was not because the defeat ended slavery, but rather because it freed the Southern economy to industrialize. In fact, one of his initial reasons for supporting immigration was that the "New South" needed skilled immigrant laborers to run the industries, as blacks were supposedly incapable of doing due to inherent laziness. See Wilson article, "New Southern Industries," *New York Evening Post*, 26 April 1882, in *Wilson, Papers* 2:123–25.

12. Wilson, "Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet," in *Wilson, Papers*, 8:160–78; David H. Burton, *The Learned Presidency* (Cranbury, N.J., 1988), p. 166.

13. Wilson, *Congressional Government*, in *Wilson, Papers* 4:171–72. See Steigerwald for an excellent discussion of this work in the context of Wilson's Whig ideals.

14. Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government*, in *Wilson, Papers*, 18:109; Burton, *Learned*, p. 174; Thorsen, *Political Thought*, p. 64.

15. Wilson, *Constitutional Government*, in *Wilson, Papers* 18:121.

16. The G.O.P. in New Jersey circulated pamphlets proclaiming Wilson to be the enemy of unions, Jews, Catholics, and southern and eastern European immigrants, and quoting passages from his earlier writings to prove their point. Wilson fought back by telling these groups that the Republicans were "false friends," and that his earlier criticisms of them resulted from his fear that group interests would ruin popular government for the common interest. See Henry W. Bragdon, *Woodrow*

Wilson: The Academic Years (Cambridge, 1967) p. 399; Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 186–87.

17. For a full description of the smear campaign, see Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 380–88. Thus the smear campaign not only aroused immigrant anger in the East, it aroused nativist anger in the West, no mean feat on the part of William Randolph Hearst, whose newspapers ran the smear campaign in collaboration with Democratic candidate and Speaker of the House Champ Clark.

18. *Wilson, History*, vol. 5, pp. 212–13.

19. *Wilson, History*, vol. 5, pp. 185–86; 213–14.

20. James Duval Phelan to Wilson, 20 April 1912, in *Wilson, Papers* 24:351–53; Wilson to Phelan, 3 May 1912, in *ibid.* 24:382–83. The telegram was a draft statement sent by Phelan. The statement was, indeed, issued partly to win union votes. But there was a deeper equation of Asians and blacks as unassimilable in Wilson's mind. In logic typical of most racists, Phelan mentioned to Wilson the horrifying fact that Orientals might soon outvote whites in Hawaii!

21. Nicholas Piotrowski to Wilson, 11 March 1912, in *Wilson, Papers* 24:241–42. This is a very pointed letter, warning Wilson that his failure to explain himself would mean political suicide.

22. Wilson to Piotrowski, 13 March 1912, in *ibid.* 24:242–43; Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, p. 386; Wilson to Piotrowski, 11 December 1912, in *Wilson, Papers*, 25:586. Wilson also addressed two large Polish-American audiences in the South Side. See *ibid.*, 24:299–303.

23. Special bureaus were set up in the Chicago and New York headquarters to direct appeals to the immigrants. The New York headquarters spent \$133,000 out of a total sum of \$828,122.79 on the foreign born and blacks, while the Chicago headquarters spent \$13,000 out of a total sum of \$206,273. See Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 486–87, 499.

24. "Italians Get Wilson's Reply," *Newark Evening News*, 17 May 1912, in *Wilson, Papers*, 24:404–07. The work of the I.A.A. in distributing immigrants around the country was very similar to the efforts of the National Liberal Immigration League, of which Wilson was a director (discussed below). Wilson was a firm believer in the "agrarian myth," the progressive belief that virtue resided on the farm, and vice reigned in the city. A more even distribution of immigrants also made assimilation easier, not only by breaking up the "Little Italys" of the cities, but also by exposing the immigrants to the American political and social ideal: small-town democracy.

25. *New York Sun*, 10 February 1912, *New York American*, 29 January 1912, and 10 February 1912, in Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 384–85.

26. Francis Ignatius Drobinski to Wilson, 2 February 1912, in *Wilson, Papers* 24:131–32; Wilson to Drobinski, 7 February 1912, in *ibid.*, 24:134–35; Drobinski to Wilson, 29 February 1912, in *ibid.*, 24:219; Wilson to Drobinski, 4 March 1912, in *ibid.*, 24:223. In Wilson's first reply, he stated, "I have received the greatest stimulation from my reading of Polish history," but it does not appear that Wilson had ever read Polish history, except for Piotrowski's letter. In Wilson's second reply, he ignored Drobinski's other demands: an erratum slip for the present edition, and a public apology. He did contact Harper & Brothers the same day about correcting the next edition, however. See also Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 386–87.

27. "Wilson in Hiding to Write Speech," *New York Times*, 23 July 1912, in *Wilson, Papers* 24:563–64; Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 384–85. This statement on what constituted acceptable and unacceptable immigration restrictions

is almost identical to Wilson's later veto messages on the Burnett Bill (discussed below).

28. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 499–500; James Charles Monaghan, *Is Woodrow Wilson A Bigot?* (New York: Democratic National Committee, 1912); Wilson, *Papers* 19:60; 20:329; 21:180. The exact figures of the poll were: 60 percent of the Irish and 80 percent of the German clergy for Wilson, 90 percent of the Italians and 70 percent of the Polish clergy for Roosevelt. Wilson's compliment to the "democratic" Roman Catholic church of the Middle Ages is surprisingly ignorant. However, perhaps it reveals something about Wilson's view of democracy: the theory was more important than the practice. As long as any peasant could technically become pope (or president), it did not matter how many actually did so. Besides, noble sons (or mugwumps) made better popes, anyway.

29. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 382–84. Editorials taken from the 14 March 1912 *Washington Post* and the 27 May 1912 *New York Evening Journal*. Hearst was especially enraged at Wilson because the New Jersey governor had rebuffed Hearst's earlier offer to support him, literally telling him to go to hell. Wilson's personal integrity would not allow him to accept the support of someone whom he considered irresponsible and corrupt.

30. Address to Temple B'nai Jeshurun, Newark, 8 January 1911, in Wilson, *Papers* 22:320.

31. After-dinner speech to the New England Society of New York, 22 December 1900, in Wilson, *Papers*, 12:53.

32. Notes for "Americanism," a standard speech of Wilson's, delivered this time to the New Century Club of Wilmington, Delaware, 7 December 1900, in Wilson, *Papers*, 12:41–42.

33. Notes for speech to American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 14 April 1905, in Wilson, *Papers*, 16:53. This bears a striking resemblance to Henry Luce's later proclamation of the "American Century."

34. Speech to Worcester Women's Club, 29 January 1902, in Wilson, *Papers*, 12:259.

35. Address to several thousand naturalized citizens after ceremonies, Philadelphia, 10 May 1915. Woodrow Wilson, *The New Democracy*, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, 2 vols. (New York, 1926) vol. 1, pp. 318–19 (emphasis mine). This speech is better known for Wilson's declaration that the United States was "too proud to fight" in World War I.

36. Joseph Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson as I Knew Him* (Garden City, N.Y., 1921) p. 214. See also pp. 4, 188–91, 208–09; Henry C.F. Bell, *Woodrow Wilson and the People* (Garden City, N.Y., 1945), pp. 156–57, 166–67, 202, 206.

37. Address at unveiling of Commodore John Barry statue, Washington, D.C., 16 May 1914, in Wilson, *The New Democracy*, vol. 1, p. 109.

38. On the subject of Wilson's long-standing support for the Irish nationalists, see, e.g., Wilson to Ellen, 27 February 1889, in Wilson, *Papers* 6:116, in which he expresses support for Charles Stuart Parnell.

39. Stump speech on preparedness in Topeka, Kansas, 2 February 1916, in *The New Democracy*, vol. 2, pp. 83–84.

40. "Be Not Afraid of Our Foreign Born Citizens," in *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 379.

41. Flag Day proclamation, 30 May 1916, in *ibid.*, pp. 189–90.

42. Flag Day Address, 14 June 1916, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 207–11, quote on p. 209. Note the shift already to a more hostile, uncompromising stance on dissent. As Wilson became more and more convinced of the rightness of the Allied cause, he allowed himself to be pulled further and further towards the extremist position of Roosevelt and other "preparedness" advocates.

43. See, e.g., Wilson's signed statement to Gezea Kende, discussed above; Campaign speech in Carnegie Hall, 19 October 1912, in Wilson, *Papers*, 25:441–42. In 1912 Wilson put this immigration plank into his draft of the party platform: "Reasonable restrictions safeguarding the health, the morals, and the political integrity of the country, no one can object to, but regulation should not go to such an extent as to shut the doors of America against men and women looking for new opportunity and genuine political freedom." Wilson, *Papers*, 24:481.

44. Edward P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798–1965* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 91.

45. Hutchinson, *Legislative History*, pp. 114–15, 118–121, 149–54.

46. The conflict between Wilson and Lodge has been examined by far too many books to enumerate here. I would note only the useful insights of William Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 16, 22–24, 27–28, 57–61.

47. Hutchinson, *Legislative History*, pp. 116–17; *Congressional Record* (1895–1896), 28:2817, 2820.

48. Hutchinson, *Legislative History*, pp. 118–19, 131–36. On the NLIL see below.

49. Hutchinson, *Legislative History*, p. 161; *Congressional Record* (1913–1914), 51:2781. The vote was 54–203.

50. Hutchinson, *Legislative History*, p. 163.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 162–63. Senator Reed opposed this, not because it excluded Asians, but because by drawing arbitrary lines, it overlooked some Asians who would still be able to enter the country. *Congressional Record* (1914–1915), 52:2617–19.

52. *Congressional Record* (1914–1915), 52 (Appendix): 171–74. Burnett also quotes New York Immigration Inspector Marcus Braun on the superiority of Northern European immigrants (e.g., one supposes, Germans).

53. *Congressional Record* (1914–1915), 52:1139–40; 3016–17.

54. Message to the House of Representatives, 28 January 1915, in Wilson, *The New Democracy*, vol. 1, pp. 252–54.

55. Message to the House of Representatives, 29 January 1917, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 420–21.

56. Thanksgiving Address at Har Sinai Temple, Trenton, 24 November 1910, in Wilson, *Papers* 22:89–91. One cannot help but note the appropriateness of such an allusion on Thanksgiving—an appropriateness which was doubtlessly fully intentional.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

58. Col. 3:11. The original passage reads, "Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."

59. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 April 1912, in Wilson, *Papers* 24:299–303. Note that despite his recognition of the fact that everyone in the United States (with the exception of the Indians) had immigrant roots, he still distinguishes between "the settlers" and "the people of all the races of Europe." Such a distinction is simply unconsciously accepted by fully socialized Americans.

60. *Ann Arbor Daily Times-News*, 19 January 1912, in Wilson, *Papers*, 24:57–58.

61. Talk to approximately 100 editors of foreign-language newspapers in New York City, 4 September 1912, in *ibid.*, 25:94–97. Very few of these editors endorsed Wilson, however, so it seems that they did not accept this as an explanation enough of his statements in the *History*. Cf. Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years*, pp. 260–61, where he argues that Wilson's lecture notes show a belief that language differences had to be eliminated in order for a common, conducting media to be

established. It is likely that Wilson's views on language changed along with his views on immigration.

62. "Loyalty Means Self-Sacrifice," Address on citizenship to Conference on Americanization, Washington, D.C., 13 July 1916, in Wilson's *The New Democracy*, vol. 2, p. 248. Again, we see Wilson's belief in the "agrarian myth," as well as the "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner.

63. Wilson, "A Christian Statesman," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, 6 September 1876, in Wilson, *Papers* 1:188.

64. Campaign speech at Carnegie Hall, New York City, 19 October 1912, in *ibid.*, 25:446. Note the similarity between the call for parties to be an "open force" and Wilson's later demand in the Fourteen Points for "open" treaties. The American ideal was truly a world standard, in Wilson's mind, with the people of the world unifying to end the domination of the selfish special interests of groups called the European national governments.

65. Acceptance speech, Sea Girt, 7 August 1912, in *ibid.* 25:6 (Emphasis mine).

66. Campaign speech at Carnegie Hall, New York City, 19 October 1912, in *ibid.*, 25:441–42. Note that the hospitality is limited to "modern civilized peoples," thus excluding non-Europeans.

67. "Loyalty Means Self-Sacrifice," address to Conference on Americanization, Washington, D.C., 13 July 1916, in Wilson, *The New Democracy*, vol. 2, pp. 249, 251.

68. See Wilson, *Papers*, 24:89–90, 25:95; 27:75–78; Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, p. 387. Edward Lauterbach, President of the League, defended Wilson to hyphenate groups in the 1912 campaign.

69. Wilson to Sen. E.D. Smith, 5 March 1914, in Wilson, *Papers* 29:310–11.