PIETY AND FRATERNALISM: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECRET FRATERNAL SOCIETIES AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION.

by

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B.A. Brock University, 1976

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS in THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES Department of Religious Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October, 1981

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Robert Bellah has suggested that there "exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches and elaborate and well institutionalized civil religion in America". This religion expresses certain common elements of religious orientation shared by most Americans. It gives, says Bellah, a "religious dimension to all aspects of life including the political sphere".

Accepting Bellah's argument, this thesis analyses working mens' secret fraternal societies as one aspect of the institutionalization of the American Civil Religion. It examines how fraternal organizations have fostered public religion as a vital force within American culture. More specifically, it examines the following interrelated questions.

What is the nature of American Civil Religion? How is a particular understanding of this religion reflected in the fraternal emphasis of American lodges? Why has its collective expression required the maintenance of a cloak of secrecy? How do the rituals of secret fraternal societies mediate and confirm for their members the ideals of the public religion? Historically, what segment of the population has been most attracted to this interpretation of American Civil Religion? What is the nature of the dynamic relationship between American society, its civil religion and organized secret fraternalism?
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am greatly indebted to Professor N. K. Clifford. Without his patience, good humour and wisdom this thesis would not have been completed.
In the decades immediately following the American Civil War organized secret fraternalism bourgeoned throughout the United States. More than one hundred men's secret fraternal orders were established within a thirty year span; over ten million Americans joined at least one. Particularly in the newly industrialized towns of the mid and northwestern states, the number of men belonging to a secret fraternity frequently equalled one third of the total adult male population. The value of fraternal membership was widely acknowledged: secret fraternal societies provided an organized setting for male conviviality; the majority operated economic self-help and benefit programs for their members; with few exceptions, the orders encouraged philanthropic activity; most were deliberately non-political and non-sectarian, choosing instead to celebrate their wider loyalty to a transcendent vision of an America in which liberty, equality and nationalism were rendered secure. Finally, participation in secret rituals confirmed for fraternal members the reality of their shared ideal.

While disavowing political activity and, therefore, only minimally affecting American political patterns, secret fraternities contributed significantly to the fabric of American social life. They gave expression to a particular
understanding of American Civil Religion and, for many whose experience of post Civil War America was contrary to the truths of this religion, the rituals of fraternalism allowed them to confirm an ideal to which they had in reality no access.

Nearly all contemporary analyses of American Civil Religion reveal, to some extent, an indebtedness to the writings of sociologist Robert Bellah. This thesis is not an exception. It accepts and builds upon his fundamental premise that American Civil Religion is a constellation of beliefs, symbols and rituals which have grown out of the American historical experience interpreted in the dimension of transcendence. Although primarily expressed through Christian symbolism and metaphor, the civil religion is distinguishable from Christianity. It locates the sovereign agency of God's will in the state. The state is understood as being rooted in two equal truths: the philosophy of the Enlightenment, emphasizing reason as the chief good, as exemplified in the American Federal Bill of Rights: and, the conviction of activistic Protestantism that submission to God's will is man's first duty. These two truths, which simultaneously transcend and are reflected in American life, combine positively to value "individual freedom, personal independence, social and political democracy, restraint in outward conduct and thrift".

American Civil Religion is characterized by ambiguity for the two traditions which have shaped it do not easily
blend. The Enlightenment emphasized human self-sufficiency and saw self-interest as the safeguard of historical progress. Enlightenment thinkers believed competition, technological advancement and material acquisition would induce a state of abundance which, in turn, would satisfy man's desires and eradicate his hostility for his fellow man. When hostility vanished, the genuine brotherhood uniting all men would be revealed. But these doctrines, in many respects, were contravened by American Protestantism. This tradition taught that man is morally corrupt, estranged from God and from creation. Only by God's grace is man wholly redeemed and able to live by the terms which ensure human fulfillment. Human reason, however, is capable of discerning these terms and, aided by a sound will, it can develop the highest approximation of regeneracy possible within the human sphere. Since, as a consequence of the Fall, man's will is not sound, external substitutes compensating for its defects should be developed. These substitutes include a society of like-minded men and a civic polity conducive to man's moral betterment.

Where the Enlightenment saw liberty and equality leading to a pre-existent fraternity, American Protestantism believed that the natural principles of equality and liberty were insufficient for the realization of a fraternal world. Adherents of American Civil Religion attempted to reconcile these different perspectives. Likewise, American secret fraternal
societies created an uneasy harmony between Enlightenment doctrines and the American Protestant tradition. They acknowledged that the protection of the "natural rights of man" heralds the advent of the perfect unity of mankind but they placed equal emphasis on the fact that equality and liberty cannot in themselves constitute fraternity. Unless they are buttressed by a prior fraternal understanding, equality and liberty lead only to social anomie.

American secret fraternal societies stressed that the fraternal impulse springs from the acknowledgement of shared weakness. In so far as men are dedicated to the realization of a fraternal world, they must understand, through fraternal relations, that the like qualities uniting them are more worthy than the unlike qualities separating them. Only then will the necessity of living by the principles of equality and liberty be properly understood.

In American secret fraternal societies, fraternity was expressed through the maintenance of the group's secrets. As guardians of particular secrets, fraternal members understood themselves as set apart from and, therefore, standing in a new relationship to the larger society. This new relationship, in turn, defined relations between fraternal members. Shared perception of difference established a new basis of identity. Where this identity was valued, there was fraternity.⁹
The symbols, regalia and rituals which serve as the medium for the creation of secrecy, frame and consolidate the individual worth experienced in fraternal relationships. Symbolic patterns give shape to reality by fusing principles of behavior and individual preferences so that they become one.\textsuperscript{10} The symbols employed by American secret fraternal societies reflect their ambiguous understanding of American Civil Religion. Christian images and personal piety, animal totems and the righteousness of man's quest to conquer the laws of nature exist together.

Just as symbols present themselves as axiomatic, the messages conveyed by ritual are stated in a form which renders them unverifiable.\textsuperscript{11} Ritual imbues the objective world with subjective order so that both confirm one another. It temporarily negates the boundaries of a specific social setting and unveils a principle of transformation which serves as a common ground for a new classification. If only momentarily, it demonstrates the power of this transforming principle by altering man's relationship to his fellow man.\textsuperscript{12} Through their rituals, members of American secret fraternal societies realize fraternity. This realization affirms the truth of their interpretation of American Civil Religion.

Historically, secret societies drew the bulk of their membership from the lower middle classes. Members lived within and accepted an America which has built its power on
the idea of a perfectible world and the conviction that it is
destined to be the New Jerusalem. Allegiance to these truths
required a fiction. It required that members deny the reality
of their everyday experience. Membership in a secret frater-
nity supplied this fiction and ritual re-affirmed that which
was most in doubt. The rituals of secret fraternalism
established an equality otherwise without substance.

Members of America's secret fraternities generally did
not have access to the channels of power which bring change.
They could not challenge the short-comings of society. They
could only render them invisible by the power of ritual.
Retreat into personal piety was organized fraternalism's
response to a society whose momentum appeared beyond immediate
control.

The function of secret fraternal societies, therefore,
has been to foster public religion as a vital force within
American culture. This thesis examines how fraternal secret
societies have performed this function. More specifically,
it examines the following interrelated questions. What is
the nature of American Civil Religion? How is a particular
understanding of this religion reflected in the fraternal
emphasis of American lodges? Why has its collective expression
required the maintenance of a cloak of secrecy? How do the
rituals of secret fraternal societies mediate and confirm for
their members the ideals of the public faith? Historically,
why has a particular segment of the population been most
attracted this interpretation of American Civil Religion?
What is the nature of the dynamic relationship between Ameri­
can Society, civil religion and organized secret fraternalism?

Chapter one surveys the literature pertinent to the
discussion. Although there are no detailed analyses outlining
the relationship between American Civil Religion and secret
fraternal societies, the writings of several scholars are
particularly useful in the development of such a study. In
the second chapter, the theoretical components drawn from the
literature in Chapter one are placed in historical context.
The character of secret fraternal societies is examined, as
they existed in the decade immediately following the American
Civil War. In the final chapter, the genesis and development
of three American mens' secret fraternities is traced from
their inception in the post Civil War years until 1940. The
three orders examined are: The Benevolent and Protective
Order of Elks, The Loyal Order of Moose and The Fraternal
Order of Eagles. They have been chosen because of the like­
ness of their histories, their similar social locations (areas
of geographical strength, class, status affiliations) and
because they have consistently maintained the centrality of
their secret fraternalism in relation to both economic and
benevolent programs.


Ibid., p. 121.


American secret fraternal societies have been examined from three perspectives. Members have viewed them apologetically; sociologists have studied them as economic self-help organizations; and, theologians have understood them as threatening Christian teaching. Secret fraternities, however, have not been critically examined as an aspect of the institutionalization of American Civil Religion. Yet this fourth perspective is valuable for it employs wider, less evaluative presuppositions than those implicit in the other three approaches. To develop this perspective it is necessary to consider phenomena not generally analysed in the literature associated with organized fraternalism. Texts discussing the American Civil Religion, fraternity, secrecy, myth and ritual must be consulted.

"The Religion of the Republic", "The American Way of Life", "American Shinto", "American Folk Religion", and, most recently, "American Civil Religion" are all terms frequently used to designate those aspects of American history and social life which have contributed to a national self-understanding which possesses religious as well as political dimensions. The variety of terms employed reflects a debate regarding the traditions fostering this religious self-understanding and,
also, whether the phenomena supporting a national spirituality may be rightly interpreted as constituting a public religion.¹

Scholars who have discussed the American Civil Religion include Robert Bellah, Martin Marty, John F. Wilson, Sydney Mead, Will Herberg and W. Lloyd Warner.² Particularly helpful in relating what may be described as a national faith to its institutionalized expressions is Robert Bellah. His thesis is that "there actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well institutionalized civil religion in America".³ The central tenet of this religion is the conviction that, throughout history, America has been called upon by God to establish "a new sort of social order".⁴ Having identified this as the civil religion's major theme, Bellah is then able to identify its parameters. First, since man's rights and duties proceed from a transcendent, sovereign will, they provide a point of leverage from which the political structure may be altered. American Civil Religion is not merely religious nationalism.⁵ Second, since this sovereign will has spoken through the historical process, its characteristics are reflected in the major traditions shaping American history as they have been given political legitimation. Bellah identifies Protestant Christianity and the Enlightenment as the most pervasive influences shaping American Civil Religion.⁶
Bellah employs Rousseau's phrase "civil religion" because he understands American Civil Religion as reflecting Enlightenment thought adapted to American experience. The separation of church and state, the exclusion of religious intolerance, the assumption of a deity whose will is revealed in the laws of nature are all, says Bellah, concepts frequently appearing in the writings of the founding fathers. But they are refracted, he argues, through the older tradition of American Puritanism. This tradition understands America as uniquely covenanted to God. The work of the nation is God's work and he is "actively interested and involved in [American] history". Both traditions stress individualism but American Protestantism lessens the implications of this idea by advocating, via the concept of covenant, a strong communal ethic.

These traditions have coalesced differently at various times in American history and the civil religion has been interpreted in a myriad of ways. Doubtless, Bellah would agree with Marty that there are "as many civil religions as there are citizens". Still, the civil religion is given symbolic definition in several specific ways.

Bellah names five ways in which the American Civil Religion is given expression. First, events crucial to the development of America constitute the religion's "sacred calendar". Second, individuals associated with these events are the prophets, teachers and martyrs of the civil religion.
Third, places related to these events and individuals are the religion's hallowed ground. Fourth, rituals celebrating these historic moments, people and places affirm and propagate the American Civil Religion. Fifth, specific documents express the ideological content of the civil religion as it has been forged throughout American history.\textsuperscript{11}

Bellah sees the civil religion expressed in the following: The American Declaration of Independence, The Federal Bill of Rights, The American Constitution and The Gettysburg Address; The War of Independence, frequently described in Old Testament terms; The American Civil War, which introduced the New Testament themes of sacrifice, death and rebirth; the first and second world war experiences; the veneration of presidents, particularly Abraham Lincoln; the national holidays, including the fourth of July, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving; and, Arlington Cemetery, the American Civil Religion's most esteemed monument.\textsuperscript{12}

John Wilson argues that the ideological specificity of Bellah's model avoids the weaknesses while admitting the strengths of two other models used to analyse American Civil Religion.\textsuperscript{13} Like Professor Warner, Bellah sees the civil religion existing in the country's folkways; unlike him, he does not understand it to be co-terminus with all cultural rites and beliefs. Similar to Professor Mead, Bellah analyses the public faith as a prophetic, transcendent religion;
however, he does not see its theology transcending the field of traditional religious observance. Bellah's argument is sufficiently complex that it facilitates the isolation of particular kinds of behaviour and belief centered on the national polity and it, also, affords a less elusive understanding of the theology of the civil faith.

Philip Hammond has claimed that Bellah's thesis is, essentially, a cultural analysis. In an essay intended to extend rather than refute, he examines with greater precision the institutionalization of American Civil Religion.\textsuperscript{14} The public school and judicial systems are closely analysed. Neither Hammond nor Bellah, however, study secret fraternality as giving symbolic definition to the civil religion. Consequently, while their studies are wide-ranging, they have, nevertheless, neglected an important aspect of the institutionalization of the American Civil Religion.

Fraternity is seldom mentioned in relation to American Civil Religion. There is only a small body of modern literature on fraternity and only one major text, written by Wilson Carey McWilliams, which discusses \textit{The Idea of Fraternity in America}.\textsuperscript{15} E.J. Hobsbawn attributes this gap in the literature to the fact that, since its essence is individualistic, the tradition of middle class liberal thought has not known what to do with the concept.\textsuperscript{16} Fraternity can only be a by-product of individual impulses and, while it is partially defined as liberty and equality which can be legislated, the
attempt to legislate fraternity into practice "has the same air of fantasy as Frederick William I of Prussia beating his subjects on the back with his stick ... saying 'You shall love me' ".

While a part of McWilliam's thesis corroborates Hobsbawn's comments, his analysis of fraternity is more substantive. McWilliams examines fraternity within the context of American social experience, as it has been seen through political and literary history. He argues that there is a "general principle of ambiguity in the culture" and attributes this ambiguity to the American attempt to harmonize, rather than choose between, religious and Enlightenment ethics. Following a path of aggressive pragmatism, Americans have lost sight of the richness of both traditions and their understanding of the symbols associated with each has become attenuated and vague.

McWilliams' study may be broken down into three distinct sections. In the first, he examines fraternity as a political symbol shaped by Enlightenment doctrine. In the second, he explores the American Puritan understanding of fraternity. In the third, he traces the symbiotic relation of both interpretations throughout American history. Throughout his analysis, he argues that the Enlightenment thinkers were mistaken in their understanding of fraternity. Equality and liberty do not lead to fraternity. Rather, fraternity contributes to civic polity which, in turn, makes liberty and equality possible.
McWilliams' criticism of the Enlightenment interpretation of fraternity is attributable to his sympathetic understanding of Freud and Georg Simmel. Both these theorists found the key to the human condition in the "paradoxical frustration of man's possibilities as a prerequisite to his humanity". This tenet is central to McWilliams' analysis. He acknowledges that Enlightenment thinkers recognized how fraternity presupposes an alienation from present surroundings and is dependent on the exaltation of a shared likeness not apparent in immediate circumstances. But he argues that, while the Enlightenment saw man estranged from nature, it did not see man estranged from himself. Self-alienation requires fraternity to be the basis of community, not its final goal. "The individual who knows his unworthiness needs the assurance that he has value; he demands the encouragement of affection".

The founding fathers, however, believed that the affections of friendship conflicted with man's essential interests. Affection is prone to parochiality while progress requires a "willingness to put aside demands for immediate fulfillment and especially for fraternal relations on a scale more limited than that of humanity". Quoting from The Federalist, McWilliams demonstrates that the design of American government was intended to minimize this conflict. With the division of political powers, the proliferation of intermediate groups and the concomitant fragmentation of public
loyalty, the federal government would emerge as both the
guardian of interest and the most worthy object of affection.\textsuperscript{22}

While American Enlightenment thinkers frequently used
the language of American Puritanism, their understanding of
fraternity was the antithesis of that older tradition. In
Puritan analysis, all societies were based on covenants which
committed men to a "common soul" by acknowledging their shared
values and goals. While only one covenant, the Covenant of
Grace, ensured perfect fraternity, it was the responsibility
of lesser covenants to encourage existing fraternity so that,
through mutual support and education, the individual spirit
would more conform to the divine will.\textsuperscript{23}

Until the introduction of the Halfway Covenant, the
civic polity of American Puritanism was based on the recogn-
nition of a prior fraternal understanding. Duties and obli-
gations were defined by this understanding and the strict
employment of reason aided in their execution. It was be-
lieved that reason was largely separate from and did not
suffer the defects of the human will. It propelled the
affections toward the higher will which stood in judgement
over all men and guaranteed that the fraternity of this world
did not become an end in itself.\textsuperscript{24}

When, however, New Englanders codified the Halfway
Covenant the need to acknowledge fraternity was replaced
by the assumption of its pre-existence. The problem
of how to make inherited duties felt as personal obligations
became keenly realized. It was hoped that a renewed emphasis on education would strengthen the weakened bonds of fraternity. But, as McWilliams argues, reason, rather than encouraging fraternity, became an instrument for self-exaggeration.

As New England became more and more a Gemeinschaft, self-exaggeration increasingly became a method of liberation from oppressive social conditions.  

The disintegration of the Puritan community facilitated, says McWilliams, the acceptance of the Enlightenment interpretation of fraternity. The older understanding was not entirely displaced but it was reconciled to the new so that it became simply a diffuse fellow-feeling. Fraternity became an adjunct to politics for it was the "friendship of the individualist who demands the semblance of perfect unity, too proud (or insecure) to bear contradiction, too weak and isolated to do without human support altogether."

McWilliams remarks that apolitical lodges exemplify the American understanding of fraternity. He does not, however, pursue this comment and, consequently, he fails to critically examine the relationship between secrecy and fraternity. For an explanation of this relationship it is necessary to turn from McWilliams to an essay by the German sociologist Georg Simmel.

Simmel's essay "The Secret and the Secret Society" clearly reveals his methodological assumptions. A materialist to the extent that he believed group relations had a
life of their own and were partially determinate of mind and an idealist, in that he assumed mind had its own possibilities, Simmel saw all human relations as a "synthetic product of the interplay between the mind and the reality of activity". He inferred the existence of a similar dialectic between individuals and culture, and, it is his understanding of this second dialectic that forms the basis of his analysis of secrecy.

Simmel understood man to be pitted against the culture he creates. Self-actualization requires the incorporation of external objects of culture but, rather than contributing to the development of individuality, culture makes man its epiphenomenon. There are two reasons for this fact. First, culture is the product of many people, each with different subjectivities. Second, there is more culture than any one person can incorporate. Culture, therefore, may be experienced as oppressive. When it is, secrecy develops.

Simmel claims that, regardless of the contents it guards, secrecy functions as an integral part of the individuation process. Particularly applicable to the analysis of secret fraternities is his argument that, since man's natural impulse is to idealize the unknown, the knowledge that another possesses a secret accords the possessor an importance otherwise denied. The secret places one in a position of exception. When this position is publicized, as it is by formally "public" secret societies, the contents of the secret are of
little significance. The secret exists primarily for those who observe it and their acknowledgement "returns to the subject as the enlargement of his own sphere of significance". In such instances, secrecy, like vanity, requires others in order to despise them.

While "public" secret societies, their own arguments notwithstanding, are not fraternal in their attitude to outsiders, the relations between society members represent a conscious attempt to establish fraternal identity. Members honour one another with a double trust for, in addition to the trust determined by their organization's purpose, there is the additional trust of secrecy. The bestowal of confidence in secrecy cannot be mechanically assessed. Temptations of disclosure are so omnipresent that the discretion involved in bestowing confidence involves an "incomparable preponderance of the subjective factor".

Community provides psychological support against the temptation to betray the society's secrets and, also, compensates for the isolation implied in separating from the larger society. Oaths, systematic instruction in the art of silence, symbolism, ritual and the threat of punishment all contribute to the establishment of a well-rounded structure capable of strongly binding members together. The secret society, therefore, organizes itself as a counter image of the official world to which it places itself in contrast.
As Simmel points out, while the intention of society members may be individual autonomy, there is with the absence of norm-giving regulations only rootlessness. The organization of secret orders must restore the equilibrium of human nature. Paradoxically, to the extent that membership in a secret society implies a sizeable and precarious bid for freedom, to the same extent will the internal structure of the secret society reflect the larger social milieu which, ostensibly, is being left behind.

Simmel's analysis of "The Secret and the Secret Society" has been largely overlooked. This is unfortunate because little has been written on secrecy, and Simmel's conception of secrecy is deeply enriched when it is considered in conjunction with the study of ritual as shown by Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach and Victor Turner.

The writings of Douglas, Geertz, Leach and Turner share two emphases. First, their analyses of ritual are informed by a dialectical approach, congruent with their understanding of culture as a symbol system. Second, their theories utilize van Gennep's thesis that ritual is a process which mediates passage from one social position to another.

All four theorists see culture functioning in two ways.
As a system of shared "conceptions expressed in symbolic forms," culture is the context through which social action is rendered intelligible. Culture also shapes social action by providing symbolic guidelines for behaviour. To use Professor Geertz's terms, culture is both a "model of" and "model for" reality.

Although culture is instrumental in shaping behaviour, it does not entirely determine social reality. Culture is meaningful only when it articulates social relations and, since its fixity is contradicted by the flux of reality, shifts in the social structure continually, if imperceptibly, reshape culture. Between culture and social reality there is an ongoing dialectic.

Ritual attempts to transcend this dialectic by eliminating the conflict between the world as it is lived and culturally defined. Ritual symbols evoke and unify objective and subjective understandings of reality so that individuals experience a congruence between themselves and their culture. By symbolically defining the assumptions underlying social relations, ritual integrates these assumptions into culture and redresses social conflict. Even when it effects no tangible unity between culture and behaviour, ritual modifies perceptions of reality by presenting life in its totality. It provides a metasocial commentary on reality.

In his seminal work, *The Rites of Passage*, van Gennep demonstrated that the order of rituals is constant.
have three phases: separation (from one social position), transition, and incorporation (into a new social role). Professors Douglas, Geertz, Leach and Turner see ritual's dynamic in its middle phase. In the transitional stage of ritual, individuals exist beyond society's classifications. From the viewpoint of structure, they are "polluting" for whatever is not symbolically defined possesses infinite possibilities for ordering. In ritual transition, the actuality of society is superseded by alternate possibilities for social organization.

The degree to which ritual actually reorders social relations is dependent upon the assumptions underlying existing relations as they have been shaped by culture. Victor Turner contrasts ritual assumptions which develop outside society's economic and political processes with others more integrated into the social whole and argues that, in ritual, the latter more clearly reveal the subjectivity of and, hence, the possibilities for social organization. His analysis emphasizes the function of these contrasting assumptions within the ritual process rather than the dynamic by which they first assume shape. Roland Barthes and Herbert Marcuse, however, directly examine this problem in their respective studies of bourgeois myth and contemporary culture.

Myth, argues Barthes, is a system of values interpreted as facts. In myth, already accepted symbols of social reality are reduced to a purely signifying function; they are filled
with historically contingent concepts; and then, like "a constantly moving turnstile", both signifier and concept are presented, apparently in a relation of equivalence. Myth, therefore, functions to transform history into nature. 55

Traditionally, because individuals have been simultaneously producers and consumers of their culture, mythic truths have existed in an ideal-real tension with society. Not divorced from the daily struggle of living, culture's myths have provided freedom for symbolic opposition to existing social arrangements. But as Marcuse and Barthes point out, bourgeois myths have eliminated this freedom; they have integrated culture and social reality. 56

Bourgeois myths assume a mobile and perfectible world, subject to the laws of rational, scientific inquiry, in turn, bourgeois ideology postulates a world whose order lacks creative significance. Stripped of significance, this world view provokes the image of an unchanging humanity, "characterized by an indefinite repetition of its identity". 57 Bourgeois myths, therefore, eternalize man and, in doing so, man's cultural concepts become identified with their prevailing social realization. 58

Since most of bourgeois culture consists only of consumption, how the few producers of culture perceive the relations between men and the world determines how the majority experience life. "Practiced on a national scale, bourgeois norms are experienced as the evident laws of a natural order". 59
Twice divorced from the process of signification, the majority of the bourgeoisie abdicate twice from the responsibility of shaping reality. The degree to which they can effect change - through ritual or other means - is minimal. Because the signification underlying social facts is obscured, public ritual merely evokes affective confirmation of what is already considered self-evident. Its generative powers can only recreate the world in its own image.

Any analysis which understands secret fraternal societies as giving institutionalized expression to the American Civil Religion must utilize the theoretical components outlined in this chapter. Members of American secret fraternities live within a society whose civil religion has increasingly degenerated to the pursuit of power as an end in itself. Lacking power and unable to alter their society in any tangible way, fraternal members choose to confirm it through the rituals of fraternity. Their interpretation of fraternity reflects a desire to cling to the pietistic Puritan understanding of the concept; their secrecy, however, constitutes a bid for the autonomous power of the later republican ideal.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


4. Ibid., p. 8.

5. Ibid., p. 4.


8. Ibid., p. 7.


12 Ibid., pp. 1-21.


17 Ibid., p. 471.


21 Ibid., p. 184.

22 Ibid., p. 190.

23 Ibid., pp. 112-132.

24 Ibid., pp. 112-132.

25 Ibid., p. 152.

26 Ibid., p. 182.


30 Ibid., p. 133.


32 Ibid., p. 334.

33 Ibid., p. 333.
Of Simmel's commentators, only Lawrence E. Hazelrigg, H.B. Hawthorn and, perhaps, Robert Murphy could be said to have examined this article in detail. For their works, see this thesis's "Selected Bibliography".


48 Ibid., p. 28.


53 Ibid., pp. 36-52.


The spectacle of a significant number of American men meeting regularly in guarded rooms and pledging themselves "in ambiguous and hyperbolic oaths", as buffaloes, moose, warriors, nobles and knights is something which has occasioned more mirth than serious discussion.\(^1\) The myths and rituals of American secret fraternal societies generally have been dismissed as light-hearted flummery: as a writer in *Harper's Magazine* once pointed out, they merely exist to afford grown men the opportunity "to play Indian".\(^2\) Denied mythic and ritual significance, secret fraternities usually have been analysed simply as philanthropic and benefit organizations. Consequently, their relation to other types of oath-bound societies has been obscured, and their cultural significance has not been fully explored.

Secret fraternal societies are closely related to veterans' and hereditary organizations, and they can be considered together as one aspect of the institutionalization of the American Civil Religion. Founded in the decades immediately following the Civil War, fraternal, veterans' and hereditary groups all catered to the citizenry's delight "in meeting in guarded rooms, and wearing spangled dresses, and calling themselves sachems and brothers and comrades, soldiers of Gideon and Sons of Reehab".\(^3\) Through symbol, myth and ritual, these
organizations similarly oriented their members to matters of civic behaviour and meaning. Whatever their other functions may have been, they considered themselves sentinels of American patriotism.

In order to place in perspective the similarities, and also the differences, between fraternal, veterans' and hereditary organizations, this chapter considers the genesis of these associations against the larger backdrop of post Civil War America. Viewed, essentially, as a response to the urbanization that accompanied post-war industrialization, these patriotic organizations are usefully considered as similar revitalization movements. At a time when America was experiencing "a profound change of direction", members of patriotic societies attempted to maintain their collective self-understandings in forms suited to their uncertain present.

Responding to and shaped by the same environment, fraternal, veterans' and hereditary groups differed significantly only insofar as their memberships and geographical locations dictated particular interpretations of the same set of issues. As the least exclusive of the three types of association, fraternal societies were the least issue oriented. In order to maintain their popular base, they necessarily presented a more malleable interpretation of the civil religion. Consequently, more than either veterans' or hereditary organizations, they were best suited to survive the passage of time.
Although the changes which American reformers had hoped to bring about through the Civil War were political and moral, not economic, the rapid industrialization the war encouraged transformed the lives of many Americans more dramatically than any moral victory they may have gained. On the one hand, the modern technology of transportation and communications served to bring men together, encouraging the tendency toward common thought and provoking the impulse for associative action. On the other hand, individuals increasingly found themselves bound to a commercial system which, while uniting them in centers of trade, divided them from each other in competition. Subject to changes in "the market", farmers, tradesmen and labourers all became the direct competitors of their neighbour, a fact which threatened an already fragile sense of community.

It is too easy to dub this era "The Great Barbeque" for the security and community that were endangered by industrialization were also believed to be fostered by its forces. In many instances, the spirit which propelled American business leaders was the same as that which inspired the growth of numerous and diverse humanitarian organizations. The period of Reconstruction more properly is characterized as a time of great ambiguity. The return to normalcy was impossible. But, it was believed that the nation's wounds would be bound and the act of Union given "normal justification and meaning" through the logic of industrial expansion.
The contradictory yearnings to restore simultaneously
the old ways and advance with the new could not be reconciled
through an appeal to the inherited creeds of the eighteenth
century. Social Darwinism elevated eighteenth century liber­
alism to the level of science and tied it, with little diffi­
culty, to nineteenth century industrialization. Consequent­
ly, while the older belief in a this-worldly fraternal commu­
nity was not displaced by nineteenth century ideals, it
generally remained a vague yearning. This is true until near
the end of the century, when even industrialists were forced
to acknowledge that classical liberalism could not possibly
lead to a fraternal utopia.

But others had already reached this conclusion, albeit
in a hesitant and frequently faltering way. Generally without
systematic programs for the creation and maintenance of a
fraternal America, the appearance of veterans' and fraternal
orders, as early as the 1860's, testifies to a wish to esta­
blish a more workable balance between the old ways and the new.
Hereditary organizations, which had their large-scale begin­
nings in the 1880's, were also a manifestation of this desire.

Fraternal, veterans' and hereditary organizations all
functioned primarily to compensate for the instability and
anonymity of post-war American life. Each of these types of
association emphasized their recreational and convivial
character; and, to varying degrees, each lobbied for political
reform. Their social atmosphere proved most attractive. For
veterans returning to civilian life, meetings of the Grand Army of the Republic (established in 1866) recalled the warm comradeship found in war. For the townsman, who wished respite from daily competition and drudgery, the lodge was "a world of pure affection, a momentary place of romance".\textsuperscript{14} For beleaguered members of hereditary organizations who confronted increased immigration from southern and eastern Europe, the grandness of their social gatherings gave reassurance of their own social position.\textsuperscript{15}

Fraternal, veterans' and hereditary organizations all sponsored frequent lunches, dinners, conventions, lecture courses and literary entertainments.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, they fulfilled their social function by developing "elaborate" decorations and rituals, establishing auxiliary associations for their members' children and spouses, and undertaking a variety of patriotic projects.

While fraternal and veterans' societies showed a greater interest in ritual and uniform, hereditary groups were equally zealous about their medals and badges. On ceremonial occasions, the Sons of the American Revolution (established in 1883) wore "a silver cross, with a gold medallion in the center, surmounted by a gold or silver eagle, the center decoration being suspended from a gold ring by a blue ribbon".\textsuperscript{17} Other groups had equally symbolic, although sometimes more oblique, insignia. The Daughters of the Revolution (established in 1890), for example, used the colours blue and buff – the buff
supposedly was the same colour as George Washington's knee-
britches.

Occasionally hereditary organizations developed titles for their members that were as "official" as the decorations they wore. On the whole, however, only fraternal orders used elaborate titles. Members of the Grand Army of the Republic were always "comrades", and, for a short while, according to their degree, they were also Recruits, Soldiers and Veterans. But only the Ancient and Honorable Order of the Blue Goose had a Most Loyal Gander, and only the Modern Order of Praetorians moved under the direction of a Sublime Augustus.

Ostentatious designations of degree and office, while nearly always the property of fraternal societies, were in keeping with the rituals of both fraternal and veterans' organizations. For example, neophytes in the Grand Army of the Republic were required to kneel blindfolded before an empty coffin decorated with a flag, skull, crossbones and crossed sword. With their left hand on the Bible, they took their pledges. Vowing to keep the order's secrets, extend charity to veterans and help their comrades secure employment, initiates understood that if they broke their vows they would be executed, a punishment reserved for "traitors and spies".

The use of regalia and ritual extended to the auxiliary associations of fraternal, veterans' and hereditary organizations. Veterans' and fraternal societies had a constellation
of women's and youth affiliates and hereditary groups sponsored several children's organizations. The satellites of one type of association frequently overlapped with those of another. For example, the Loyal Order of Moose's (established in 1888) Junior Order of Moose was related to the Moose Veterans' Association and the relationship between these groups was not unlike that between Civil War Veterans' societies and their young men's affiliates. In turn, these associations' young people's groups somewhat resembled the Children of the American Revolution which was spawned by the Daughters of the American Revolution (established in 1890) in 1895. Although some suggested that these youth satellites merely were designed for the prosaic task of keeping the orders supplied with members, the young people's affiliates also expressed concern with the meaning of citizenship and patriotism. Patriotism was seldom well-defined but it was strenuously advocated for, as a spokeswoman for the Daughters of the American Revolution made clear, if children were properly nurtured there would be "no question about national defense".22

Concern for the nation generally reflected their own self-interest, and, consequently, fraternal, veterans' and hereditary organizations could unite for only a few patriotic ventures. As an "emblem of unity, of loyalty to home and to kindred, and to all that is sacred in life", veneration of the flag required only a vague sentiment of patriotic goodwill; fraternal, veterans' and hereditary groups, therefore; parti-
icipated together in the "cult of the flag". Beginning in the eighteen eighties and continuing through the nineties, hereditary groups, especially, petitioned Congress for the creation of Flag Day; they advocated compulsory saluting of the flag within the schools; and, they also lobbied for legislation prohibiting desecration of the banner. Less embroiled in the legislative repercussions of the cult, fraternal orders developed special rituals for Flag Day. For example, in the Elk's (established in 1866) service, three cylindrical objects were ritually constructed to resemble the Liberty Bell, a flag was placed atop the bell, and an address on the history and meaning of American patriotism was given.

Other patriotic projects and lobbies were more partisan in nature and reflected the interests and memberships of the specific types of association. It was commonly acknowledged that "a list of respectable names" added to the credibility and status of any organization and most patriotic societies, accordingly, dotted their membership rolls with the names of the socially significant. On the whole, however, hereditary, veterans' and fraternal groups had very different criteria for joining.

With their strongholds in the north eastern American states, hereditary groups were more exclusive than either veterans' or fraternal orders. Members were required to possess more than pedigree: there was an "equally prime prerequisite - that of honorable career and high social
standing". Members of hereditary associations were generally well-to-do business people and professionals.

Although veterans and fraternal orders antedated hereditary organizations, few within the pedigreed clans would have joined these earlier types of association. Members of hereditary groups were well-educated and propertied, and their patriotism reflected this fact. Witnessing the social and economic disquiet of the 1880's and 1890's, and believing this unrest either to be caused by or aggravated by the New Immigration, hereditary bodies looked to their past for reassurance of their present. Attachment to the ways of their ancestors was given academic support: Sir Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* and popular understandings of Social Darwinism both gave reassurance of individual and national superiority by virtue of lineage.

Convinced that they constituted the vanguard which would interpret American history so as to maintain national grandeur, hereditary associations busied themselves with two main types of projects. The first was to instruct immigrants in the ways of America. The Daughters of the American Revolution, for example, presented "a handsome silver medal to the little foreigner who (turned) out the best composition on American beatitudes". Of more lasting significance was the second type of project. Preservation of historic buildings, monuments at historic sites, publication of important correspondences, establishment of scholarships, lobbying for university chairs
of history - hereditary groups demonstrated a keen interest in preserving and making American history more accessible. While the Grand Army of the Republic's chief auxilliary, the Woman's Relief Corps (established in 1883), occasionally engaged in historical research, most veterans and their affiliates could not afford the leisure time to be concerned with their ancient past. The rank and file of veterans' groups came from modest economic and social backgrounds. In many instances, returning veterans had little formal education and lacked specific work skills. More than anything, they needed to gain economic security.

In this respect, veterans' groups resembled the strictly rural Order of the Knights of Husbandry (established in 1868). The Grange and the veterans both understood themselves as deserving government favour, and they both lobbied for particular economic advantages. In return for their Civil War service, veterans expected laws of preference, improved pensions, homesteading privileges and homes for orphans and the aged. The fact that they were petitioning for special compensation did not incline the veterans to sympathize with others also looking for reform. They, and their progeny, firmly believed that the vertical channels of society were open to those who possessed the proper qualifications and ability to persevere. This was the conviction that girded the fraternal orders. For veterans' offspring, who were less likely than their fathers to benefit from government aid, their auxilla-
ries and fraternal societies were parallel bodies.

Economic self-help without government protection was an aim of both fraternal and veterans' societies, and to this end, they both emphasized benefit schemes that offered financial compensation in times of sickness and at death. In order to compete more successfully with such fraternal bodies as The Royal Arcanum (established in 1877), the Sons of Veterans (established in 1890) discussed the merits of introducing massive insurance programs. This idea was dismissed in the 1890's but numerous fraternal societies came to focus primarily on their insurance programs. The Ben Hur Life Insurance Company, for example, was originally a fraternal body.

Even though numerous fraternal societies eventually abandoned their ritual and became insurance companies, secret fraternities, more than veterans' and hereditary groups, were built to survive. Existing independently of the men's associations, many members of the women's hereditary organizations moved with the crest of the suffragette movement and, in many instances, abandoned their D.A.R. and Colonial Dames ties. The fraternity of the veterans was dependent on participation in the Civil War, and as succeeding generations grew up without that experience, the veterans' societies slowly dissolved, to be replaced by orders commemorating other wars.

The fraternity of secret fraternal lodges was less exclusive and more amorphous than either veterans' or hereditary organizations; and, in this final section, the character of
this fraternity is examined. Criteria for membership, the nature of fraternal ritual and the position of secret fraternities on political issues are considered.

Believing they provided an outlet for those "ambitions for precedence" which American life fostered and stimulated "without adequate provision for gratification", Walter B. Hill once described secret fraternal societies as "The Great American Safety-Valve". The Golden Age of Fraternity" was a popular and uncertain response to the essential ambiguity of post Civil War American society. On one hand, members of fraternal associations consciously upheld existing social values - they applauded rugged individualism and opposed government regulation of business. On the other hand, members of fraternal groups felt the need for a pietistic brotherhood. Subject to social and economic dislocation, their understanding of fraternity reflected William Summer's conviction that the present life offered "only a 'martyrdom of man' in the interest of future generations".

The nature of lodge fraternity is well exemplified in the teachings of "Elkology", and a brief outline of Elk doctrine illuminates the philosophy underlining fraternal criteria for membership. Elkology was a religion that was "free, not creed-bound; scientific, not dogmatic; spiritual, not traditional; universal, not sectarian". Elkology, in short, reflected a popular understanding of nineteenth century liberal thought. However, it was an understanding that was
robbed of any grim overtones for, more than a theory of God, Elkology was the "new application of his existence". As a fount of love, whose attributes were helpfulness and happiness, the God of the Elks lived within and about all of life. Through degrees of Enlightenment, men came to know this God and to understand that he formed the core of their being. The responsibility of practical brotherhood became realized, and it was extended to all for "sin is only a term applied to ignorant good".

Fraternal organizations, consequently, believed the doors of their orders were wide open. As a spokesman for the Loyal Order of Moose (established in 1888) made clear, "no social station of life is too high, none too low for membership in the Moose ... men ... meet equally ... enlisted in the great human cause of Moose". In reality, there were several stipulations for joining. Fraternity was impossible without the conviction of a deity, and members were required to state their belief in a Supreme Being. Practical concerns for daily living also intruded in the selection process. "Foreigners" — the appellation generally applying to all non Caucasians — were excluded. Caucasians had built and sustained the nation God had blessed; immigrants threatened to destroy the country's institutions. The destitute and the infirm were also excluded. In order to maintain their benefit schemes, fraternal orders required members who could pay their dues; they also needed reassurance that particular individuals would not
drain their coffers to the detriment of other members.

All candidates were examined for eligibility before they were inducted into the mysteries of the various orders. For example, the sachem of the Improved Order of Red Men (established in 1833) dispatched his chief of records to an anteroom to examine the candidate. Only when he had received appropriate answers to his questions, did the official permit the neophyte to proceed with initiation.

In initiation the neophyte "journeyed" from the profane world to the realm of the sacred. He was a "pilgrim in search of light", a "weary traveller in the wilderness", an "alien far from his own shores", a "lost waif toiling the Elysian fields". His travels were not easy. "A series of perambulations around the lodge room" could be a trek over hot sands or a cake of ice; it could be an odyssey through the enemy's camp; it could be a perilous ascent of Mount Olympus. Pitfalls existed at every turn. Sometimes the neophyte was lowered into a Mattressed grave and mourned as lost before miraculously being brought back to life. Lodge members sometimes assumed the role of ruffians and subjected the initiate to great indignities, challenging him to defend his journey. Sometimes they personified the vices and the weary pilgrim was made to avoid great temptation. Only if these pitfalls were avoided could the initiate hope to complete his pilgrimage and gain membership in the order.
Having demonstrated the qualities of a warrior, or a knight, or a wild beast, the initiate was brought finally into the light. "Unleash the sixty watts of every frosted bulb on Mount Olympus". In the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, the neophyte "is then introduced to the Grand Potentate, whom he is commanded to approach with humble and great reverence, stooping low on his knees, his head near the ground, his buttocks elevated, where he receives the "Grand Salaam", that is a blow on his buttocks". After this stroke of introduction, he is introduced to the Grand Potentate, "near whom there is a Galvanic Battery (under the carpet) that when the candidate is introduced to the Grand Potentate he receives a severe electrical shock".  

What was the nature of these esoteric truths, gained at such cost and symbolized in the flicking of a light switch? In initiation the candidate entered the mysteries of chivalry, charity, hope, patriotism and fraternal brotherhood. Depending on his choice of lodge, he learnt the meaning behind such stories as King Arthur and his knightly court, the Good Samaritan, suffering Job, the unknown soldier and Valley Forge, David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias whose love was stronger than death, and a cautionary analysis of Cain and Abel.

The practical application of these mysteries usually was confined to participation in benefit schemes and charitable undertaking within the lodge. It also included such platitu-
dinous promises as "I will never... voluntarily disturb the
domestic relations of a brother Knight" and "I will always ..
endeavour to warn him of any danger which I may know to
threaten him or his family". 47 It did not entail commitment
to specific economic and political ideologies.

Few fraternal societies actively petitioned for govern­
ment reform. Most discouraged political discussion, and the
Improved Order of Red Men went so far as to foreswear politics
entirely. 48 Emphasizing instead personal virtues and congeni­
ality, the lodges, at least unconsciously, recognized that
their fraternity was too weak "to compete with the other
loyalties and the individualized purposes of men". 49

The proliferation of fraternal, veterans' and hereditary
organizations in the years between 1865 and 1890 represented
an ambiguous response to the economic and social disquiet that
resulted from rapid post-war industrialization. Although it
was believed that the mechanisms of the industrial order would
give meaning to the act of Union and eventually lead to the
realization of a national fraternity, this belief, for many,
appeared without substance. Variously confronted with the
anonymity of urban life, the constant threat of unemployment,
the changes wrought by increased immigration and changes in
immigration patterns, members of fraternal, veterans' and
hereditary organizations attempted to maintain a sense of
continuity by accommodating the myths of their past to their
present circumstances.
Unlike members of veterans' or hereditary associations, however, those who joined secret fraternal societies had no concrete basis for fraternity. They had not participated in the war that had made America indivisible. Neither could they claim kinship with those who had founded the great nation. Those who joined fraternal societies had a less specific role in their country's providential history. Divided by the forces of industrialization that, ostensibly, were to unite them, they could allow only the vaguest of fraternal understandings. The grandness of their ritual and decoration compensated for the fraternity they could not afford. "For all their Joves and Neptunes, their rituals and myths of gay dogs who have left their wives at home" what were members of fraternal orders "but homesick tribesmen hunting for their lost clans?"
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


12 Ibid, p. 381.


Wallace Davies describes in detail the various social aspects of veterans' and hereditary societies. All literature on fraternal organizations used in this chapter discusses the conviviality of lodge life.

Ibid, p. 137.

Ibid, p. 123.

For a list of some of the more extravagant titles of office see Howard S. Benedict, "Brethren, the Neophyte Waits Without", *The Nation*, vol. 120, (April, 1925), p. 405.


of Missouri Press, 1940), pp. 110-111.


25 Ibid., p. 110.

26 Ibid., p. 79.

27 Not always employed, members of women's hereditary organizations were usually affluent.


31 Wallace E. Davies discusses extensively veterans' participation in politics.

32 Ibid., pp. 123-125. Also see all literature on fraternal societies used in this chapter.
An interesting discussion of the transition from fraternal to insurance organization is found in Olaf Johnson, *Conversion of the Fraternal Society into an Old-Line Company: Advisability, Tendency, Objections*. (Los Angeles, National Convention of Insurance Commissioners, 1926).


This is a recurring theme in the early literature of fraternal societies.

Occasionally physically disabled individuals were invited to join the lodges. These people were well-known. They were "social" members only.


This information is taken from a variety of sources. However, Gist gives a succinct outline of several initiation patterns. See pp. 80-102.

Howard Benedict, "Brethren, the Neophyte Waits Without", *The Nation*, vol. 120, (April, 1925), p. 403.


CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL CONFIRMATION

In 1923, Frank E. Campbell came to the conclusion that if he was to find an unused totem for his fledgling secret fraternal society, it would be necessary to turn from the animal kingdom to the field of botany. Campbell was the founder of Bunch No. 1 of the Order of Bananas. By the 1920's, there existed fraternal orders of Bears, Beavers, Buffaloes, Blue Geese, Bugs, Camels, Deer, Dogs, Eagles, Elks, Fleas, Goats, Larks, Lions, Moose, Mules, Owls, Reindeer and White Rabbits. The animal kingdom nearly was depleted. Clearly, the associative impulse had fed upon itself. It also had provoked the mirth of onlookers who, in turn, tweaked the serious societies with associations such as the Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo.

The history of most of these organizations is brief and inconsequential. Three of the animal orders, however, have withstood the test of time. In the late nineteen seventies, the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the Loyal Order of Moose had a combined membership of three and a half million. Among their numbers, they counted Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Richard Daley and J. Edgar Hoover.
These three orders survived because they successfully transformed their fraternal self-understanding to accommodate, and reflect, changes in the popular understanding of the American Civil Religion. In order to keep pace with the times, the Elks, Eagles and Moose all altered their secret rituals, their social and benevolent concerns, and their relations to outsiders. The similar development and transformation of these organizations is the subject of this chapter.

Originally known as the "Jolly Corks", the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was founded in New York in 1866 by an actor named Charles Algernon Vivian. Vivian and his theatre cohorts banded together to sidestep a law which closed the saloons on Sunday: they rented a room, bought an ample supply of liquor each Saturday and met at the week's end to revel in their drink and each other's company. Their high-jinks became well-known and others joined their weekly meetings. In 1868, the name Elks was chosen and the group's first constitution was drawn up. Its preamble stated that the organization intended to "promote, protect and enhance the welfare and happiness" of all Elks. 4

The great success of the Elks doubtless was an influence in the decisions to organize the Loyal Order of Moose and the Fraternal Order of Eagles. 5 The first Moose was a physician from Louisville, Kentucky. In 1888, John Henry Wilson decided to create a secret fraternal society that would combine the
"religious fervour" of the Knights of Pythias and the "fun and games" of the Elks. He founded a social organization he called the Loyal Order of Moose. Ten years later, a small group of Seattle, Washington theatre owners decided to form a similar organization. Their object was "fun". Under the leadership of John Cort, the "Seattle Order of Good Times" came into existence. Shortly after, the "Order of Good Times" was renamed the Fraternal Order of Eagles.

Although thirty-two years separate the birth of the first and last of this trio of animal organizations, the early history of all three associations is remarkably similar. Until the beginning years of the twentieth century, the Elks, the Moose and, obviously to a lesser degree, the Eagles all responded to the same issues that confronted their country's intellectual and spiritual leaders. In the post Civil War years a synthetic fraternity had been maintained by the belief that industrial expansion eventually would redeem the nation. In the closing decades of the century, however, this conviction increasingly was threatened by the social and economic tensions wrought by classical laissez-faire and the general failure of liberal principles. The introduction of progressive ideologies proved a panacea for this downward spiral, and it is significant, therefore, that the older orders of the Elk and Moose date their modern history from the beginning years of the twentieth century. Progressivism brought a new
emphasis to the American Civil Religion. The adoption of this emphasis was a turning point within all three fraternal orders.

The relentless intrusion of economic and social crises in the 1880's and 1890's seriously undermined America's complacent trust in the unfettered mechanisms of the industrial order. The formation of labour parties and the bloodiness of strike-busting, the ugliness of the cities and the blight of poverty, the call for more stringent immigration regulations, and the beginnings of the Social Gospel all were symptomatic of a progress which had gone astray. The effects of industrialization appeared the antithesis of fraternity. American reformers, however, were too well trained in the liberal tradition to abandon its precepts. Instead, they attempted to discover a "new formula" which would reconcile the fraternity of equality with the liberty of individualism.

The progressives laid a new emphasis on the Enlightenment teaching that change affirms the fraternal destiny of man by indicating a willingness to abandon the confines of institutions merely developed to solve proximate concerns. The progressives moved beyond their predecessors: they asserted that existing institutions had run their course. Claiming that industrial monopolies had robbed man of individual initiative as well as community, the progressives demanded that universal solidarity become "the means as well as the end of progress". The progressives believed that if the tyranny of monopolies and political parties was eliminated, the distinc-
tions separating men also would vanish. Without the intervention of "artificial" secondary groups, the nation would assume the qualities of a primary group. Guided by the ethic of service, the citizenry would merge into an undifferentiated fraternal whole.\(^9\)

Popular understandings of progressive doctrine penetrated and transformed the societies of the Elks, Eagles and Moose. They became characterized by their belief in service, their pride in nationhood and their understanding of the need for government regulation of some aspects of life. While the superficial optimism that accompanied Union coalesced imperceptibly with increased sentiments of nationalism, the emphasis on service and the awareness of the possibilities of government regulation marked a new self-consciousness on the part of the lodges. This self-consciousness manifested itself in the rituals and benevolent projects of the orders, and both proved an enticement for "joining".

Between 1890 and 1905, the Elks modified their ritual considerably. In 1890, the number of degrees required for full membership was reduced from two to one. Then to quote an Elk historian: "The apron went in 1895. The 'secret password' expired in 1899. The badge and grip died natural deaths in 1902 and 1904 respectively. The test oath and a few other extraneous things disappeared and the Elks began to be themselves and look less like a cross between the Masons and a
Initiation came to be conducted with dignity and decorum. Devoid of any features which would embarrass or annoy the candidate, it no longer subjected him "to ridicule or to any discomfort, physical or mental".

This new propriety stood in marked contrast with earlier Elk ritual. In the order's beginning years, initiation frequently had been a terrifying and humiliating experience. "You were led into the lodge blindfolded. and that blindfold remained on until after you had taken the oath ... Following that you were seated, and suddenly the door opened and six robed figures, sometimes carrying candles, entered the room, bearing a coffin. This was placed in a suitable position ... before the altar. Now entered another robed figure, who began to intone ... 'To him, who in the love of nature holds communion with her visible forms' ... When it was finished the coffin was carried from the room and the initiation was over. Well, not quite over". There remained the final degree and "it was fun for the brothers who looked on". For example, in the branding process, the new member was flung blindfolded to the floor where he could feel the heat of a poker and smell the burning flesh of a piece of steak. His belly was cauterized with ice, and a rubber stamp was applied.

The gradual elimination of such pomposity and indignities was significant. In the period of Reconstruction, secret fraternal rituals had reconciled successfully the promised grandeur of industrialization and the nostalgic yearning for
"the old community". The inherited fraternal synthesis had not eroded sufficiently so that men doubted their ability to be lions and tigers; and community still existed to a degree that challenges to these aspirations remained relatively unknown. However, as the problems of daily living became more and more acute, the old assumptions slowly died. Unable to recapture a lost fraternity, and equally unable to wait for the fulfillment of a "fraternal destiny", men turned to a more immediate brotherhood. They adopted the ethic of protective service. Lacking the distinction "between warmth generally and fraternity specifically", this new brotherhood emphasized harmony and solidarity, not conflict. The modified rituals of the lodges gave expression to this new fraternal understanding.

To facilitate a more practical brotherhood, it was necessary to broaden and more firmly regulate the payment of fraternal benefits. No longer was it feasible to keep direct assessments within the local lodge: in times of extreme hardship, payment of benefits threatened lodge solvency; and increased levies and reduced aid were only self-defeating measures by which to stave off bankruptcy. The Elks, Eagles and Moose never considered insurance to be their principal raison-d'être, and in this respect, they differed fundamentally from the specifically fraternal benefit societies. The benefit societies, however, provided an organizational example which
the three animal orders emulated. By 1906, the Elks, Eagles and Moose all had a three tiered system of representational government (national, state and local) which co-ordinated and more equitably distributed sick and funereal benefits.¹⁴

In 1886, representatives of sixteen fraternal benefit societies met in Washington as founders of the National Fraternal Congress. They joined together "to obtain sympathetic supervision by state insurance departments and constructive legislation from state legislatures and Congress" and to obtain laws defining the scope of their operations in order to protect their reputations "from the odium raised by fraudulents".¹⁵ The Elks were the only organization of the animal trio that existed in 1886, and it did not participate in the activities of the Congress. Still, the two objectives stressed by the N.F.C. came to permeate and influence the social concerns of all three animal orders. First, there was an awareness that local concerns could be realized by appealing to stronger regulatory powers existing beyond the local level. Second, there was the realization that government regulation could alleviate the suffering of well-intended groups whose misfortune was undeserved.

From its early days, the Fraternal Order of Eagles realized its voting strength and the potential political influence which accompanied it. In 1908, the Eagles sponsored America's first mother's pension law, the first of a series of bills whose proposals included workmen's compensation, the
elimination of the poor house and old age pensions.\textsuperscript{16} The spirit underlying these proposals is illustrated in a newspaper article, "Why Eagles Champion the Cause of the Aged."

Written at a later date, it still reflects the earlier sentiment: "These workers grown old are not idlers. They are not spendthrifts or degenerates. They are simply victims of an economic system ... with no surplus for the evil day when the earning capacity has ceased."\textsuperscript{17}

The Elks, Eagles and Moose all considered distressed women and children to be deserving of their benevolence. Significantly, when the languishing Moose were revived under the skilled direction of "Our Jim" Davis in 1906, attention quickly focused on the possibility of creating mooseheart.\textsuperscript{18} First thought of in 1909, and only a circus tent in a field by 1913, Mooseheart is now an incorporated village covering 1200 acres near Aurora, Illinois. Providing a home for widows and orphans of deceased Moose, Mooseheart grew from the early dream to create an "educational institution for the training and instruction of the orphans and children of this order and such others as may enter".\textsuperscript{19} In the scaled down ritual of the Loyal Order of Moose, there is provision for the "Nine O'Clock Ceremony". With bowed heads and folded arms, members turn toward Mooseheart. Silently they pray: "'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not for such is the Kingdom of Heaven'. God bless Mooseheart".\textsuperscript{20}
The security of Mooseheart, the enticement of protective benefit schemes, a growing participation in community affairs, and the introduction of rituals suited to the tone of the age all encouraged the rapid growth of the Moose, Elks and Eagles. In 1893, only 1000 Moose met at fifteen Watering Places; by 1910, the herd numbered 100,000.\textsuperscript{21} In the same year, there were nearly 305,000 Elks.\textsuperscript{22} Quickly expanding, in 1919, there were 329,000 men belonging to Eagle Aeries.\textsuperscript{23}

Although this dramatic increase in membership levelled off during the years of the first world war, the animal trio continued to prosper. Building on the foundations of their old beliefs, the orders found new meaning and purpose. The Elks, Eagles and Moose all agreed with President Wilson who argued that: "From the beginning, the first thought of the people of the United States turned to something more than winning this war. It turned to the establishment of the eternal principles of right and justice. ... There is a great tide running in the hearts of men. ... Men have never been so conscious of their brotherhood".\textsuperscript{24} Elk historian Hollis Fultz expresses the same confession in a less eloquent vein. During the war, the Elks became more than Elks: they became "Citizens of the World".\textsuperscript{25}

Sociologist W. Lloyd Warner had argued convincingly that it is in times of war that the "average" American living in small towns and cities "gets his deepest satisfactions as a
member of his society". War activities strengthen community integration: systematically organized into groups where everyone is involved and in which "there is an intense awareness of oneness", community also is increased by feelings of strength and autonomy brought about by competition in war activities with neighbouring communities". The animal trio's sense of their own importance was strengthened by the belief that their sacrifices were for the common good of the nation.

Fultz proudly recounts that in Olympia, Washington "community singing was a great morale builder in the war bond drive; ... 'There's a Long, Long Trail a 'Winding'. 'Tipperary', and 'Smiles' [were heard] in the Lodge meetings ... and outdoors in the drives; the Elks band was available whenever called upon". As well, with the aid of scores of Elks wives, tons of absorbent vegetation were dried and sacked and forwarded to the medical corps in France, "to soak up the blood of the wounded dough-boys".

In 1925, the Fraternal Order of Eagles could look back with pride on the fact that 50,000 Eagles had joined the ranks of the military. The organization could remind its members that the Grand Aerie had voted unanimously to pay the dues of members in service. It could also point to its "Patriotic Fund" which had dispensed one and a half million dollars - one thousand dollars to each child whose Eagle father had surrendered his life to protect "the American Way".
However, the return of the "dough-boys" brought with it a new set of problems for the lodges. Randolph Bourne described the crisis of the nineteen-twenties as the need to choose between a "trans-national America" united by values which included but transcended cultural diversity, and a sub-national America, a society of isolated and anxious mass men. But for America to be "trans-national" it was necessary that there be lesser nations, smaller communities and fraternities, and these rapidly were eroding. The nation and the state, which had been one during the war, were again separated; and the impersonal power of the Machine threatened to de-stabilize even the community found in family.

It was an era when "human society was transformed between the infancy and old age of an average man. The urban dweller born in an era of coal-oil lamps, horse cars, and four story buildings died amidst the roar and rumble of a city of incandescent lighting, automobiles and skyscrapers". It was a time when mechanization freed women from many of their traditional household responsibilities. It was also an age when mechanization seriously affected more than the externals of life. The principle of standardization, vital for industrial efficiency, became one of the animating principles of society. "Standardized newspapers, magazines, books, movies, plays [caused people] not only to use the same slang, sing the same melodies, and wear the same clothes, but even to feel the same emotions and think the same thoughts".
Standardization impelled men to embrace the myths of their age for, in diminishing individuality, it narrowed the possibilities for alternative world-views. There were few who challenged America's fraternal destiny: most continued to affirm their fundamental brotherhood: and, of necessity, they averted their eyes from the increased social anonymity and growing economic differences that made even local community impossible. As McWilliams comments, if the twenties "roared" it was because silence was unbearable and speech no longer was able to build the bridge of communion between men. The twenties, therefore, was the decade that most lodges lurched silently to their deaths - slowly killed by the more private attractions of the automobile, radio and cinema.

Unlike their more unfortunate counterparts, the Elks, Eagles, and Moose endured, experiencing decline only with the advent of the depression. The animal trio survived because they shifted their fraternal emphasis to reflect the dominant mood of the age: through talent nights and interlodge competition, they offered their members opportunities for self-aggrandizement; and through increased philanthropic activity, they established a strong sense of community that did not threaten members' individualized and private concerns.

Fitness classes, reports on member's holidays, glee clubs, minstrel shows, vaudeville nights, and "live-wire" clubs, which were designed to increase membership in competi-
tion with other lodges, all came to play an important role in the lives of the Eagles, Elks and Moose. Band and drill contests were instituted at the state level, the result being "An increased interest felt by the individual members in their own lodge activities". Of the various interlodge activities, ritual contests were most popular for, in addition to the satisfaction of winning, victory frequently was recognized with pennants, cups, trophies and cash awards.

This thrust for social recognition carried over to the philanthropic activities of the orders. The Elks, for example, were advised to publicize their acts of benevolence, not of course to "partake of a boast, but rather to afford information which the public is always eager to have". The nature and spirit of the orders' philanthropy remained much the same. The Moose instituted Moosehaven near Jacksonville, Florida, a village "Where Life Begins" for elderly Moose and their spouses. The Eagles continued to labour for the old-age pension; and the Elks became engaged in helping disabled children, setting aside the first Monday of August as "Crippled Kiddies Day". The belief persisted that anybody could become somebody merely by exerting enough effort, but, for those whose inability was apparent, help should be offered. More than the other two orders, the Moose succeeded in ferreting out human abilities: in order to avoid the ignominy of charity, those inhabitants of Moosehaven who were unable to work
were given the title "Sunshiners" and an accompanying wage for brightening up the days of others. 41

Although in many ways succumbing to the forces of their age, the animal trio persisted in maintaining the sanctity of the home. Refusing to allow their last bastion of community to be undermined, they established a variety of benevolent programs, social activities, and rituals which were designed to safeguard family unity. Youth clubs and scouting groups inculcated the duties of citizenship; educational trusts provided access to higher learning and incentive to demonstrate individual worth; dinners and picnics brought families together; and the dignity of motherhood was loudly proclaimed. Mother's Day, first suggested in 1904 by Eagle Magazine editor Frank Hering, came to be celebrated by all three orders. As explained in an Eagle publication: "... to all civilized men, since the dawn of human understanding, every day has been and always will be 'Mother's Day'. ... God gave us mothers that we might understand". 42

If men found themselves ineffective in the course of daily living, the lodges restored a sense of equilibrium by reminding them of their power and responsibility to preserve the family unit. In a poem entitled "From the Heart of a Child", published at a time when the Eagle's fledgling insurance program was flagging, the responsibility of fatherhood is clearly outlined:
Mary's Daddy left insurance
And their home will still be theirs.
They're not hungry. Sometimes Mary
gives me cast-off clothes she wears.
They don't have to take in sewing.
Mary's Momma doesn't cry
For her Daddy left insurance
But you didn't Daddy - why?  

In the nineteen thirties, the animal trio continued to
maintain the Holy Grail of family. However, their fraternal
emphasis again switched focus as socialism and communism came
to be identified as the villains which threatened the "American
Way of Life". The "Americanization" work of the Elks came
to stress not only the virtues of citizenship but also the
perils of communism. In 1937 Charles Spencer, the Grand Exalted
Ruler of the Elks, denounced the American Federation of Teachers
as "communists", as he believed they threatened to subvert
the character of the country's youth. The Eagles
agreed with Spencer's pronouncement, and to do their part in
battling the foe they instituted their own "Americanization"
committee.

In pinning down an external enemy, the animal orders
successfully diverted attention from their actual cultural
dilemma. The effects of the depression took a heavy toll, and
the task of rebuilding the economy forced many lodge members
to abandon themselves more completely to the business ethic. Business became the basis for brotherhood, and lodge members were encouraged to advertise in the orders' newspapers in order to tap new markets. Failure to applaud the "modern business creed" was considered un-American; it allowed the communists to make a mockery of American capitalism. The need to adopt the business creed and halt the inroads of communism was given expression in Orpheus C. Soot's poem, "Buy American":

To stop the growth of poverty  
In this land that gave us liberty  
We pledge support in word and deed  
To that great cause of pressing need  
Buy American.

No longer shall our tribute be  
To Alien lands beyond the sea  
But favour first our U.S.A.  
And always we will gladly say  
Buy American

In succumbing whole-heartedly to the business ethic, the lodges lost their already precarious basis for fraternity. Fraternity required a tension between the animal trio's understanding of American destiny and the nation's present form. None existed. The animal orders did not regard the New Deal policies which propped up vast sections of the economy as a sign of the failure of liberal policies. Rather, for them, the New Deal demonstrated that "the goals of material progress and the mastery of nature" could be made to walk parallel
courses with fraternity and community. In 1939, it was reported to the secretary of the Seattle Eagles that several brothers had been overheard discussing Aerie affairs in public places, and in some instances in front of non-members. The secretary pronounced such discussions "both distasteful and degrading". He continued to state that, although the order no longer stressed secrecy to the degree it had previously, discretion was still necessary in order to honour the Eagle vows. The indiscretions of these few Eagle members were symptomatic of a greater change within the animal orders. In retrospect, Charles Fultz points to 1940 as the year the Elks became a club rather than a lodge, the activities of the trustees assuming greater importance than the plans of the Exalted Ruler.

Without a basis for fraternity, the Eagles, Elks and Moose increasingly assumed the character of working mens' "country-clubs". Membership no longer signified a recognized equality made humble by shared vision. It became a symbol of self worth. Lacking a common purpose with which to transform society, the animal orders came only to confirm it.

Philanthropic activity remained a mainstay of the three associations, compassion providing solidarity without the challenges of fraternal brotherhood. Cancer research, cerebral palsy research, the Heart fund, the March of Dimes, the Red Cross, and the Boy Scouts all receive support from at least
one of the animal orders. Given their large memberships and the nature of their philanthropy, it is not surprising that political leaders have sought membership in the Elks, Eagles and Moose. Where the American Dream is not questioned, they, no doubt, receive much support.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 Howard S. Benedict, "Brethren, the Neophyte Waits Without", The Nation, vol. 120 (April, 1925), p. 405.


8 Wilson Carey McWilliams, *The Idea of Fraternity in America*.

9 Ibid., pp. 483-490.

The apron was originally a Masonic symbol. It had been adopted by several orders. Made of lambskin, it is a symbol of innocence.


12 Initiation rituals varied somewhat from lodge to lodge.

13 Wilson Carey McWilliams, *The Idea of Fraternity in America*.


15 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
Although the momentum for these bills gained momentum over time, Eagle application forms give these dates.


John Henry Wilson did not possess the leadership skills of Jim Davis. Davis developed a successful recruiting program, he developed lodges further west (since the west had been less affected by the Civil War, it had fewer orders) and he shortened the ritual. See Warner Olivier, Back of the Dream: The Story of the Loyal Order of Moose. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1952), pp. 48-64.

Ibid., p. 118.


29 Ibid., p. 71.


32 Ibid., p. 508.


34 Ibid., p. 134.


Ibid., p. 16.


Ibid., July 1935, p. 2.


CONCLUSION

Written as a response to questions generated by his original 1967 analysis of the American Civil Religion, Robert Bellah's "Civil Religion in the 1970's" (published in 1974) is an examination of the public faith from both an epistemological and evaluative perspective. The American Civil Religion, Bellah says, is "a social construction of reality"; and, since all groups have a religious dimension, he quickly dismisses those who question the existence of a civic cult. The question, he believes, is not whether a civil religion does or should exist but, given a civil religion, how it should be interpreted so as to safeguard its transcendence and universality. The significance of the essay lies in Bellah's understanding of the implications of this question.

As a symbol of the open transcendence which legitimates their democratic political order, Americans, traditionally, have invoked a jealous Biblical God. The image of a nation standing under the judgement of a transcendent deity has functioned historically to ensure that the civil religion neither degenerates into mere religious nationalism nor becomes identified with a specific religious orthodoxy. Writing from his experience of contemporary American culture, however, Bellah sees the preservation of this openness to be contingent upon the fulfilment of two conditions. These conditions are:
a variety of public theologies and a revitalized sense of community.

Reiterating an idea previously advanced by Martin Marty, Bellah emphasizes that, if spokesmen from different religious traditions address themselves to the nation's needs, their competing understandings of American meaning and destiny will ensure that the civil religion remains creative and transcendent. Although not directly stating it, Bellah strongly implies that the relationships between, and within, these groups need to be informed by a sense of community not unlike that envisioned by the New England Puritans. A conviction of common purpose and an acknowledgement of shared limitation will protect against the imposition of definitive content on what, of necessity, must remain a prophetic, dialectic faith.

Having considered, in the preceding chapters, the history of organized secret fraternalism in relation to the American Civil Religion, it is immediately apparent that the fraternal orders increasingly have come to threaten rather than embody the conditions Bellah sets down. With the disintegration of the fraternal synthesis, America has succumbed to the conviction that individual liberty is the means to universal community. Americans have discouraged lesser communities. Consequently, they have shaped a society in which the myths of the most powerful refuse to be challenged by or to incorporate the myths of the less powerful. In America, the myths of the strong are experienced as orthodoxy.
The central myth of civil religion orthodoxy is that America is a chosen people and Americans a chosen land. This myth allows Americans to view themselves as playing a redemptive role in universal history. Thus, their sense of nation transcends the ideological constraints of place and time. Placed in a universal framework, the myth of American destiny no longer is understood as an historical value. It is a universal absolute. When the proximate myth-making activities of Americans are considered against the backdrop of this universalist myth, they too receive eternal validation. Refusing to compromise values, Americans disagree only on facts.

Although experienced as eternal fact, myth in reality is an historical value. As a system of symbols, it provides a context through which the processes of daily living can be given meaning. Through the symbols of myth, individual ideals are made congruent with cultural principles. Myth can be a transforming power for it expresses the dichotomy between felt ideals and social reality. However, when the ideological basis for myth is not perceived, myth becomes tyrannical.5

Those who join American secret fraternal orders are unable to reject the civil religion's myths of individualism and progress. Divorced from the myth-making process, they are forced to accept as reality myths they cannot live up to except in imagination. In order to confirm an ideal not realized in
their own lives, they turn to the symbolic devices of ritual and secrecy. Through participation in these symbolic forms, they affirm their own worth by their association with "the eternal truths" of the American Civil Religion.

But because there is too great a dichotomy between the ideals of the civil religion and the reality of their own lives their secrecy and ritual fails to transform and simply dissolves into banality. For example, on the Elk's altar there is a flag, a Bible and a set of antlers. The antlers are supposed to mediate between the liberty of the flag and the immediate brotherhood proclaimed in the biblical stories. The symbolism of the elk who is both free and always ready to protect the weak, however, is not strong enough to work any real transformation and therefore it only confirms a rather innocuous piety.

The history of American secret fraternal societies has been characterized by a progressive elimination of the tension between social reality and cultural ideals. As a result of this process, the myths by which most Americans live today do not reflect or communicate the tensions and contradictions of their everyday social life. They do not reflect the violence in the streets, the cleavage between the races and the fact that some are more equal than others. Instead the civil religion perpetuates a myth of liberty and a manifest destiny under God which cannot be reconciled with the realities of American
life. Such a myth is not conducive to the preservation of a creative space between culture and society. For when society is no longer related to culture as a means to an end, there is no reason for secrecy or ritual because the possibilities of transformation for the society do not exist. In recent years, therefore the fraternal societies have dissolved into social clubs with a continuing pious interest in service to the weak and helpless. In taking this step they have not ceased to be institutions of the civil religion; they have simply abandoned the ideal of fraternity and substituted a simpler and less demanding piety.
FOOTNOTES TO THE CONCLUSION


2 Ibid., p. 256.

3 Ibid., pp. 258-259.

4 Ibid., p. 268.

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