

# The Historical and Ideological Roots of “American Exceptionalism”

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**By James Black**

*In a 2013 New York Times op-ed, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned of the dangers of a people seeing themselves as exceptional. “It is extremely dangerous”, he wrote, “to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation”. He hinted at what that motivation could be. “We are all different”, he wrote, “but when we ask for the Lord’s blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal”.<sup>1</sup>*

Putin’s comments were not warmly received in the United States, though his comments are widely shared throughout the world.

Putin’s comments suggest that American exceptionalism is rooted in the belief of divine right, a union between church and state. The idea can be traced back to the Pilgrim Fathers. Governor John Winthrop, for example, famously remarked that “We shall be as a city upon a hill”, a theme later echoed throughout United States history. The theme of American exceptionalism appears to rest in Christian thought and Christian theology; however, upon closer examination, the idea of American exceptionalism is actually quite old, predating Christianity by at least a millennium.

American exceptionalism is actually rooted in the occult beliefs of ancient Mystery Schools. This is not difficult to believe, when one considers that knowledge of the Americas was well-known by initiates of the ancient schools. “For more than three thousand years”, esoteric scholar Manly Palmer Hall has observed, “secret societies have labored to create the background of knowledge necessary to the establishment of an enlightened democracy among the nations of the world”. The establishment of an “enlightened democracy” among the nations of the world found its fullest expression in America. “Men bound by a secret oath to labor in the cause of world democracy”, Hall argued, “decided that in the American colonies they would plant the roots of a new way of life. Brotherhoods were established to meet secretly and they quietly and industriously conditioned America to its destiny for leadership in a free world”.<sup>2</sup>

The Americas—and North America in particular—were regarded by ancient secret societies as the lost city of Atlantis. Sir Francis Bacon, a student of esoteric wisdom who dedicated his life’s work to the advancement of the sciences and philosophy, was instrumental in the founding of the American experiment. In fact, his influence has been so profound that he has been called “The Guiding Spirit in Colonization Scheme”.<sup>3</sup> In 1627 Sir Francis Bacon’s novel, *The New Atlantis*, subtitled *The Land of the Rosicrucia*, was posthumously published,

though the novel was mysteriously never finished by lord Bacon. In his novel, Bensalem (the fictional island in *The New Atlantis*) was described as a society of wise men known as Rosicrucians. That Sir Francis Bacon believed America was Atlantis there can be doubt, for he implied it as much “And the great Atlantis (that you call America)”.<sup>4</sup>

Modern history books selectively tell the story of non-conformist Puritans fleeing England to establish a Christian commonwealth in America. But strangely history books are silent about another group equally dedicated and devoted to establishing an utopian government in the New World. As head of the Rosicrucian lodge of England and the author of *The New Atlantis*, Sir Francis Bacon sent the Rosicrucians, a secret esoteric society, to early America to establish America as the new Atlantis. That Rosicrucians were in early America is an undisputed fact.



Many have dismissed the writings of Manly P. Hall as ahistorical and some even brand them as fringe conspiracy theories, but consider that Hall and his writings have influenced many US presidents, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Ronald Wilson Reagan. “You can call it mysticism if you want to”, Ronald Reagan once remarked to the Conservative Political Action Conference in 1974, “but I have always believed that there was some divine plan that placed this great continent between two oceans to be sought out by those who were possessed of an abiding love of freedom and a special kind of courage”.<sup>5</sup> Ronald Reagan’s views were influenced by the writings of Many P. Hall, but Hall’s influence on Franklin Roosevelt extends considerably further. Franklin Roosevelt was a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason, and it was under his administration that the design of the Great Seal of the United States was placed on the back of the US one dollar bill.







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The Great Seal of the United States has always been controversial, but it is a controversy rooted in myth, which is to say there is no serious controversy. In describing the Great Seal, Hall correctly observed that:

Careful analysis of the seal discloses a mass of occult and Masonic symbols, chief among them the so-called American eagle—a bird which Benjamin Franklin declared unworthy to be chosen as the emblem of a great, powerful, and progressive people. Here again only the student of symbolism can see through the subterfuge and realize that the American eagle upon the Great Seal is but a conventionalized phoenix, a fact plainly discernible from an examination of the original seal.<sup>6</sup>

Hall's contention that the original emblem on the obverse side of the Great Seal was a phoenix, not an eagle, rests in the original drawings of William Barton and is corroborated in *The History of the Seal of the United States* by Gaillard Hunt. In it, Hunt documented that the original design by William Barton in 1782 depicted a phoenix sitting upon a nest of flames. The phoenix bird is a common emblem of occult social movements, and it is a symbol believed to date back to ancient Arabia.

That the Great Seal of the United States is a mass of occult and Masonic symbols cannot reasonably be disputed. This is not inconsistent with the historical record, for many of the Founding Fathers were Freemasons:

Not only were many of the founders of the United States Government Masons, but they received aid from a secret and august body existing in Europe, which helped them to establish this country for a peculiar and particular purpose known only to the initiated few. The Great Seal is the signature of this exalted

body—unseen and for the most part unknown—and the unfinished pyramid upon its reverse side is a trestleboard setting forth symbolically the task to the accomplishment of which the United States Government was dedicated from the day of its inception.<sup>7</sup>

American exceptionalism is rooted in the occult belief that America was chosen as a divine instrument for the perfection of man, the restoration of the mystery religions, and an enlightened world democracy. Symbolically, this is depicted on the Great Seal where an All-Seeing Eye hovers in a truncated pyramid. The All-Seeing Eye is the Eye of Horus, an entity sometimes regarded as the Egyptian sun god. The pyramid, which represents the world plan, is unfinished; the capstone is missing. Incidentally, the Latin phrase “Novus Ordo Seclorum”, or “New Order of the Ages”, is believed to be a nebulous reference to America’s divine destiny.

**James Black** is the author of *The Privacy Book* and *The Privacy Book: Second Edition*. For more information, please visit [www.sovereignpress.org](http://www.sovereignpress.org).

## Notes

1. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2013/09/12/putin-america-is-not-exceptional/>
2. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B17t2HhTjZgFYWRtRHNLSDbOWk0/edit>
3. <http://www.stamps-for-sale.com/newfoundland-1910-sg-100-sir-francis-bacon-type-a-fine-mint-26457-p.asp>
4. *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*. Oxford World’s Classics, 2008, p.467.
5. [http://www.salon.com/2014/01/05/ronald\\_reagan\\_and\\_the\\_occultist\\_the\\_amazing\\_story\\_of\\_the\\_thinker\\_behind\\_his\\_sunny\\_optimism/](http://www.salon.com/2014/01/05/ronald_reagan_and_the_occultist_the_amazing_story_of_the_thinker_behind_his_sunny_optimism/)
6. Hall, Manly P. *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society, 1988, p. 90.
7. Hall, Manly P. *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society, 1988, p. 91.

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