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‘The Spirit—The Faith of America’: The Role of Religious Rhetoric in Presidential Inaugural Addresses from George Washington to Donald Trump

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‘The Spirit—The Faith of America’: The Role of Religious
Rhetoric in Presidential Inaugural Addresses from George
Washington to Donald Trump

submitted to
Professor John J. Pitney

by
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Abstract

While the United States was founded upon the premise of religious freedom, religious rhetoric has pervaded presidential addresses since the Founding. While such addresses were rare at the Founding because constitutional interpretation restricted presidents' ability to campaign and communicate directly with the American people, the inaugural address is one speech that has existed since George Washington's inauguration in 1789. During presidential inaugurations, presidents introduce themselves as presidents and establish their policy directions for their presidencies. In this context, according to the role of the rhetorical presidency, early presidents used religious rhetoric in order to unite the nation under a unitary God, connecting the nation under common values and orienting the democracy as pre-destined by God for success. As distance increased from the American Revolution, presidents began to use religion in more personal ways, using religious rhetoric and even Scripture to support their policies, while continuing to use religion in unifying ways. By the beginning of the twentieth century, presidents began to appeal to the people more publicly, actively campaigning for their policies. In this context, religion began to be used as a tool of persuasion to advance presidents' policies. This trend continued into the Cold War, when presidents invoked religion in order to establish America's identity in a religious framework against an anti-religious, anti-democratic enemy, while simultaneously using specific religious allusions on the domestic front to further their policies in sometimes divisive ways. As the Cold War concluded, presidents continued to use religion to advance their own policies, appealing to certain audiences through religious rhetoric and making pleas for their policies through religious allegory.

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Introduction

In forming a new government, the United States differentiated itself from the body it was divorcing: Britain. Whereas the British government was a monarchy, the American Founders worked from the premise that no one person nor governing body ought to have excessive or demagogic power.¹ Indeed, David Zarefsky explains that “selecting the president was not a matter of selecting this or that policy or ideology, but of selecting the best person to carry out congressional decisions.”² In the early days of the republic, some worried that presidential speeches would be akin to throne speeches. Accordingly, early American presidents relied little on rhetorical prowess, but rather used their written messages and addresses to communicate about single issues to Congress.³ In the backdrop of the American Revolution, the people were skeptical of popular leadership, thus presidents avoided resemblance to the British crown.

Though contemporary Americans expect to hear from their president, the Constitution says very little on whether the chief executive ought to address the people. The only allusion to speechmaking occurs in Article II, Section 3: “He shall from time to time give to Congress Information of the State of the Union and to recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.”⁴ But this provision does not say that such messages must be in oral form and does not demand that the president give frequent addresses or any speeches at all.

The first American presidents gave few speeches. As Richard J. Ellis and Mark Dedrick explain, “Presidents generally did not give partisan or policy-oriented speeches,” and such speeches were seen as “undignified behavior.”⁵ Jeffrey K. Tulis explains that constitutional design attempted to curtail the role of presidential speech-giving.⁶ He

argues that the Founders intended presidents to have a more managerial role and that playing a greater role in persuading citizens towards certain policies would conflict with the system of checks and balances.⁷ This trend remained consistent through the nineteenth century, reflecting constitutional values of the time.⁸ Indeed, even presidents like Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln—who generally enjoyed public-speaking—gave very few speeches once they assumed the presidency.⁹ Now, the speeches given by these presidents also reflected the constitutional values of the time. According to Tulis, speeches were most frequently “hortatory and declaratory,” saying little about policy and reflecting few partisan values, allowing these presidents to use speeches to encourage national unity, rather than to persuade people into certain directions.¹⁰

There were exceptions. President Martin Van Buren went on speaking tours while in office, President Millard Fillmore discussed policy, and President Franklin Pierce even discussed prospective policy. William McKinley made speaking tours about policy issues.¹¹ Andrew Johnson was the most obvious exception to this rule, giving speeches aimed at persuading the American people. Yet, it was in this very exception that we can see how firm this rhetorical restraint was, as Johnson’s articles of impeachment mentioned his rhetoric.¹² Specifically, Article 10 of the Articles of Impeachment against Johnson faulted him for publicly speaking about the United States Congress. The Article read:

Andrew Johnson as the Chief Magistrate of the United States, did, on the eighteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six, and on divers other days and times, as well before as afterwards, make and declare, with a loud voice, certain intemperate, inflammatory and scandalous harangues, and therein utter loud threats and bitter menaces, as well against Congress as the laws of the United States duly enacted thereby, amid the cries, jeers and laughter of the multitudes then assembled in hearing.¹³

Thus, Johnson was an exception to rhetorical restraint, yet Articles of Impeachment were filed against Johnson for acting outside of this constitutional framework.

Some scholars dispute that there was a presidential trend against communicating with the public, arguing that there were many presidents who communicated directly with the public. Indeed, Mel Larcey and Stephen E. Lucas argue that eleven presidents publicly communicated with Americans in the nineteenth century, meaning that half of the nineteenth century presidents communicated with the American polity.¹⁴ Larcey and Lucas define public communication much more broadly, including newspapers as methods of spreading presidential ideas.¹⁵ On this point, Martin J. Medhurst argues that Tulis's interpretation of rhetoric is too narrow, and he points out flaws with Tulis's interpretation that "rhetoric is construed as spoken discourse, directed to popular audiences, on matters of policy, for the purpose of forcing Congress to act without due deliberation."¹⁶ Medhurst, in concurrence with Lucas, argues that rhetoric should include indirect ways of communicating with the American people and should not be restricted to solely speaking events about policy matters.¹⁷ Yet, Tulis points out that these alternative forms of communication do not prove contrary to his point, as he explains, "they avoided direct popular appeals because it might cost them politically and turned to the partisan press because it could help them politically."¹⁸ Moreover, while Lucas and Larcey argue that there were were "radically different conceptions of appropriate presidential rhetoric and behavior," Tulis defends that by taking to forms other than popular appeals, nineteenth century presidents, with the exceptions of McKinley and Johnson, all acted under similar constitutional principles.¹⁹

This rhetorical constraint shifted with the first three presidencies of the twentieth century, as President Theodore Roosevelt, President William Howard Taft, and President Woodrow Wilson began to implement elements of popular rhetoric. Indeed, Tulis explains that these presidents' rhetorical style represented a "Middle Way" of presidential speechwriting.²⁰ Roosevelt commenced this shift by reframing the presidential role.²¹ Roosevelt was an impressive orator and a charismatic leader, allowing him to appeal to the people in ways that his predecessors had not. He used these skills in order to appeal to the people through campaigning for the Hepburn Act, a railroad regulation bill.²² Roosevelt campaigned for this act without Congress's authority, but he also did so in a way that did not affect Congress's deliberation on this Act.²³ Taft continued this shift by moving his rhetoric to focus on policy.²⁴ Wilson rounded out this new form of presidential rhetoric by combining Roosevelt's inspirational language with Taft's policy nuance in a way that broke with presidential tradition by lobbying Congress to support his policies.²⁵

Wilson's new form of the rhetorical presidency not only changed the way that presidents addressed the American people, but it also put pressure on the constitutional system. Wilson believed that the separation of powers system was, in certain ways, a hindrance to America, and he believed that the United States should allow a more energetic and independent executive.²⁶ Indeed, when addressing both houses of Congress about his tariff bill, Wilson said, "I am very glad indeed to have this opportunity to address the two Houses directly and verify for myself the impression that the President of the United States is a person, not a mere department of Government hailing Congress from some isolated island of jealous power, sending messages, not speaking naturally

with his own voice.”²⁷ Wilson sought to increase the power of the president, and he mirrored this shift with more frequent policy addresses to the people, as opposed to addresses to Congress.²⁸ Wilson’s presidency also set a precedent of more symbolic and visionary, moralistic, and symbolic rhetoric, which has come to mean that modern day presidents gladly speak in moral terms.²⁹ Moreover, Wilson not only shifted our ideas of how the president should communicate with the people, but he also shifted our notions of how candidates for office can campaign for their seats.³⁰ Some scholars, like Richard J. Ellis and Mark Dedrick, argue that Tulis’s account of the modern rhetorical presidency shifting with Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson oversimplifies the transition.³¹ Yet, even if there was more of a transitional period leading up to Wilson’s presidency, these scholars do recognize that twentieth century presidential rhetoric was markedly different from that of our first presidents.

This more energetic, presidential role with accompanying popular rhetoric continued through the twentieth century, and today our presidents speak directly to the people more frequently than ever. Indeed, scholar Michael Nelson explains that “all presidents...face the challenge of being both a partisan, substantive chief of government and a unifying symbolic chief of state. Speeches have become one of their primary devices for negotiating these sometimes reinforcing, often conflicting roles.”³² With greater partisanship and an extended campaign season, candidates now launch full-scale tours across the country to persuade voters to support them and their parties.³³ Moreover, with a new system of mass media, speeches are designed for video, shifting the content of speeches to appeal to large audiences, and are designed with major punchlines to fit into newspaper headlines.³⁴

Moreover, while ghostwriters sometimes helped work on presidential speeches in earlier centuries, the modern day speechwriting apparatus has reshaped the role of presidential rhetoric. Michael Nelson explains that “it was not unheard of for a president occasionally to call on literate, trusted, and politically experienced aides and allies to help in drafting speeches,” citing James Madison and Alexander Hamilton’s help with George Washington’s speeches, Amos Kendall’s help with Andrew Jackson’s speeches, and George Bancroft’s help with Andrew Johnson.³⁵ This apparatus allowed the president to give many more addresses on a wide array of issues.³⁶ Yet, Nelson argues that “not until the twentieth century did speechmaking, and, consequently, speechwriters become a familiar part of the presidency.”³⁷ Moreover, Nelson explains that this increase in speechwriting influence evolved into its current day form of having speechwriter specialists who vastly increase the volume of speeches while simultaneously decreasing the accountability and influence of speeches.³⁸ In this way, while the presidency depends more on speaking ability than previously, presidents primarily differentiate themselves by their delivery of these speeches.

In this context, few public speaking events have remained constant since the Founding. The inaugural address is one of the few speeches that every elected president has given. The only presidents who have not given inaugural addresses were those who succeeded on the death or resignation of a president. Yet, even most of these presidents made inaugural-style pledges when taking office.³⁹ Indeed, Michael Nelson explains, “All but one of the nine vice presidents who succeeded to the presidency when the president died or resigned made an inaugural-style speech pledging continuity with the nation’s best traditions and fealty to the departed president’s legacy.”⁴⁰ Moreover, the

inaugural address is the oldest, rarest, and most precisely scheduled presidential address.⁴¹ While campaigning now involves significant public speaking, the inaugural address serves as the first time a president introduces himself as the nation's executive.

This address is also sacramental, representing a change in power from one president to the next: a changeover of power that represents America's democratic tradition.⁴² On this point, scholars Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson explain that inaugural addresses are "an essential element in a ritual of transition in which the covenant between the citizenry and their leaders is renewed."⁴³ Nixon's speechwriter, Ray Price, said that the address should "heal the divisions of the past campaign, and set the directions for the new administration."⁴⁴ Thus, these addresses tend to be more unifying than other speeches. Indeed, Don Baer explains that inaugural addresses are intended to "remind the nation more of what we have in common than of what divides us."⁴⁵ In these addresses, presidents shift from making a case for their election to setting a tone for their leadership.

Moreover, while the Constitution only requires presidents to give a State of the Union Address and to take the oath of office, the inaugural address has become a tradition. Indeed, inaugurations are instructed by precedent, deriving from George Washington's original ceremony. Washington took his oath outdoors with his left hand on the Bible, and his right hand raised towards the sky.⁴⁶ Moreover, Washington took his oath in front of a large audience and concluded with the words "so help me God," setting a precedent of adding these words and also marking the inaugural as more religious.⁴⁷ Moreover, Washington then returned to the Senate chamber to give his inaugural

address.⁴⁸ Thus, while there is little law establishing the procedures for the presidential inauguration, tradition dictated much of how presidential inaugurations continued.

With the exception of George Washington's second inaugural address, these speeches have all included some invocation of religious rhetoric. This pattern may seem surprising given the separation between church and state in the United States, yet this separation does not discount all elements of religion in the public sphere. Rather, it protects our freedom of religious belief and association, as well as separates our private views from the public sphere.⁴⁹ Robert Bellah in his work, "Civil Religion in America," argues that "although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share," and "these have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere."⁵⁰ In this context, the inaugural address plays an important role in what Bellah calls America's "civil religion," a construct that includes American beliefs, symbols, and rituals, as well as recognizes that religious legitimation is the highest political authority.⁵¹ As religion was a "motivating spirit" of America's Founders, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the obligation to act upon God's will has been a consistent trend in the American tradition.⁵² Yet, moving from this founding, this form of religion that is continually included in American politics, including presidential inaugural addresses is not explicitly Christian or sectarian, but it is also not anti-religious.⁵³

Inaugural addresses are opportune times for presidents to speak of national unity, and invoking religion in this context helps this effort. Early presidents used this form of

religious rhetoric in their inaugural addresses to unify the nation under a deistic creator, as well as to frame America as a protected nation that was divinely-willed to find success, yet they refrained from using religion in a personal way or for persuasive purposes, reflecting the role of the rhetorical presidency at the time. As presidents began to appeal to the people more frequently and in order to persuade Americans to back their policies, the presidents began to use religion as a tool for persuasion, more frequently using Scripture and Judeo-Christian language in order to give religious sanction to their presidencies and defend their policies. Some presidents have gone even further by invoking Christianity and speaking more about their own religious beliefs in their inaugural addresses. In some contexts, modern presidents have used religion to appeal to certain groups of Americans, moving from its use as a unifier to a tool of persuasion. While, there has been a progression from a “unitarian” form of religious rhetoric towards personalizing religion for persuasive purposes in inaugural addresses, there have been exceptions in different presidencies and in different contexts. Some presidents broke with this pattern, by either being more or less religious, and certain contexts, such as the Civil War, the World Wars, and the Cold War, led to the president using religions in ways that also broke with this pattern. In these instances, religion was used to foster unity among citizens but only recently has religion been used in an attempt to rally the nation behind specific policies.

Chapter 1: The Founding Presidents

Early Presidents (Washington-Buchanan)

By definition, George Washington's first inaugural address was the first speech given by a United States president. His speech set a precedent about not only the content of inaugural addresses, but also about the role of presidential speeches, more generally. Washington, as a former general who fought for separation from Britain and its monarchical system, was hesitant to appear as a king-like figure.⁵⁴ His inaugural address reflected this concern. Washington addressed his speech to the "Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives," with the idea that communication should be between the different branches of government, not between the government and ordinary citizens.⁵⁵ Indeed, scholar Jeffrey K. Tulis explains, "Washington sees the powers and responsibilities of his office as stemming from the Constitution and hence, only indirectly from the people," which, to him, meant that the Constitution restrained him from appealing to citizens in his addresses.⁵⁶ In this way, Washington was largely ambivalent about accepting the presidency and expressed those concerns in his inaugural.⁵⁷ Charles O. Jones explains, "The six-paragraph address was less inspirational than explanatory of Washington's personal circumstances and descriptive of the executive's role in the new government."⁵⁸ Moreover, the content of this address focused on his duty to the nation, reverence for the Constitution, and dedication to republican ideals, as opposed to discussing his policies or beliefs.⁵⁹

While this speech discussed Washington's constitutional obligations and his own sense of duty, Washington did give his highest praise to God, albeit in indirect ways. Indeed, Washington appealed to "that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who

presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States” in order to cement his duty and portray an optimistic view for the American future.⁶⁰ Washington also highlighted the “propitious smiles of heaven,” which he said “can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained,” further solidifying this optimistic view of the American future.⁶¹ Scholar Kathleen M. Hall Jamieson describes how this address has “the imprint of sermonic form,” even going so far as to say, “major portions of the address could have been comfortably delivered by a New England preacher to his parishioners.”⁶²

Washington used religious rhetoric to invest Americans in the nation’s new form of government. Indeed, as the first president, Washington had the important duty of not only beginning a government but also ensuring its survival. Washington invoked religion to this end. Nelson explains, “invoking God as the nation’s guide and protector became a largely uncontroversial element of most subsequent inaugural addresses. But invoking Christ or dwelling on religion, which would risk division did not.”⁶³ In this way, Washington explained that “the benign parent of the human race” has “been pleased to favour the American people..with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of Government, for the security of their Union, and the advancement of their happiness; so his divine blessing may be equally *conspicuous* in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on which the success of this Government must depend.”⁶⁴ Washington

could use religion in order to evoke national unity, but he refrained from any invocation of religion that could divide the nation.

Now, Washington's religious views have been scrutinized greatly, and because of the significant depth of research on this topic, Paul Boller Jr. explains his views have been "thoroughly clouded by myth, legend, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation."⁶⁵ Some argue that Washington was deeply religious while others argue he was deistic and religion did not matter much to him.⁶⁶ Indeed, it is not surprising that this issue is contentious, and it is also an issue that is not easily resolvable, as Washington rarely spoke of his beliefs or recorded his religious thoughts.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that Washington supported religious chaplains and officials, attended church, and observed religious practices.⁶⁸ Before the American Revolution, records show that he attended church monthly and even conducted his own services for his troops when chaplains were unavailable.⁶⁹ At the same time, Washington was not vocally religious.⁷⁰ Smith explains, "Washington did not quote or allude to Scripture in his addresses or urge Americans to read the Bible as much as many later presidents did."⁷¹

Indeed, Washington used religion in a very broad way throughout his inaugural addresses. Religion was used as a rhetorical unifier—a way of trying to bring the nation together around certain sacred, universal values. Yet, at the same time, these uses were also nebulous, relating little to specific policies and indirectly evoking religion. Scholar Ann Duncan argues that Washington, like other early presidents, was heavily influenced by deism, and thus, God was "a rather distant ... but still very providential and powerful force...Not the kind of personal god that an evangelical Christian today might talk about."⁷² Similarly, Robert Bellah argues that "the God of the civil religion is not only

rather ‘unitarian,’ he is also on the austere side, much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love.”⁷³ Washington did not once use the word “God” in his inaugural address, and, indeed, the word “God” did not appear in an inaugural address until James Monroe’s second inaugural address.⁷⁴ Yet, this lack of mention of a personal God was also a way to avoid deepening religious divisions among the nation. Martin J. Medhurst, a professor of rhetoric and communication at Baylor University, posits that this indirect language was an element of the “common language adopted by the revolutionary generation in part to avoid the kind of divisiveness that more specific formulations might engender.”⁷⁵

Moreover, R. Scott Hanson says that Washington, as well as other early presidents, were strongly “influenced by Enlightenment philosophy and religious intolerance in Europe,” making them hesitant when invoking religion and, specifically, the word “God.”⁷⁶ With this fear, as well as the fear that his discussion of personal virtues paralleled the monarchy, Washington gave a much shorter address at his second inaugural. This two-paragraph long, 133-word speech demonstrated Washington’s concerns with a popular rhetorical presidency, as it did little to persuade the people of his worth or the worth of his policies, but rather was based around the necessity of taking the oath of office. Washington did not make any references to religion, directly or indirectly.

John Adams, similarly, used religion to bolster national unity. Most of Adams’ inaugural address discussed America’s formation and his veneration of the Constitution, calling upon the idea of America as a promised land and weaving in themes of America’s civil religion.⁷⁷ Yet, he concluded on a more specifically religious note:

I feel it to be my duty to add, if a veneration for the religion of a people who profess and call themselves Christians, and a fixed resolution to consider a decent respect for Christianity among the best recommendations for the public service, can enable me in any degree to comply with your wishes, it shall be my strenuous endeavor that this sagacious injunction of the two Houses shall not be without effect.⁷⁸

Adams did not refer directly to a deity in this passage, yet he very explicitly underscored his admiration for Christians. While it may seem as though Adams blurred the lines between church and state in this context, he is not attaching any of his policies to Christianity or using Christianity as a motivating force for his presidency. Moreover, Adams spoke of Christianity generally, but he did not include himself in the discussion of Christianity. He never spoke of his own Christian beliefs and even distanced himself from Christianity by making reference to Christians as “a people who profess and call themselves Christians.”⁷⁹ Such an indirect, impersonal discussion of Christianity is in line with Bellah’s discussion of America’s civil religion, arguing that America’s civil religion does not infringe upon the separation of church and state so long as religion is discussed without reference to personal beliefs.⁸⁰

Adams also referred to a deity at the conclusion: “And may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty, continue His blessing upon this nation and its Government and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His providence.”⁸¹ Like Washington, this use of religion called upon God to protect the nation and also marked the United States as a promised land. This use of religion did not further any of Adams’ policies, but it did mark his presidency as an attempt to unify the nation under God’s divine will.

Thomas Jefferson was very hesitant about invoking religion in his inaugural address. Jefferson's religious views are largely contested. Jefferson was raised an Anglican but was influenced by English deists.⁸² During his lifetime, many accused Jefferson of atheism, but there also is evidence that Jefferson believed in a religious deity, albeit a religious deity that was novel and unique.⁸³ Moreover, Jefferson attended church, with some records even expressing that he "attended church with as much regularity as most of the members of the congregation—sometimes going alone on horseback, when his family remained at home."⁸⁴ Regardless of his religious inclinations, Jefferson strongly advocated a clear divide between church and state, a view that informed many of his decisions during his presidency. Indeed, in a letter to the Danbury Baptists, Jefferson makes this viewpoint explicitly apparent:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.⁸⁵

While being hesitant to incorporate religion in his presidency, Jefferson's first inaugural address still drew upon sacramental themes and made reference to a deity.⁸⁶ Indeed, Charles O. Jones, in his analysis, classifies Jefferson's first inaugural address as one of the most sacramental addresses, using lofty, visionary, and healing themes.⁸⁷ These themes were particularly useful as Jefferson had lost the previous election to John Adams and served as vice president to him after that loss, and then his election was

eventually decided by the House of Representatives after he tied his race with Aaron Burr.⁸⁸ Jefferson used his inaugural to rise rhetorically above partisan forces and used religion to demonstrate concerns that transcended partisan divisions.⁸⁹ At the conclusion of his address, Jefferson said, “And may that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to what is best, and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity.”⁹⁰ This very indirect reference to God most clearly demonstrates the hesitancy of early presidents to use the word “God.” Michael Nelson explains, “invoking God as the nation’s guide and protector became a largely uncontroversial element of most...inaugural addresses. But invoking Christ or dwelling on religion, which would risk division, did not.”⁹¹ This hesitation to make specific religious references reflects similar hesitations he had using the word “God” in the Declaration of Independence. On this note, Andrew Burnstein explains, “If one looks at Jefferson’s most notable public addresses, it is clear that he was careful to invoke the name of God, at least generally, in support of patriotic purposes; he was at all times sensitive to the needs of his audience,” thus, Burnstein explains that he “safely” and “cleverly” included a deistic version of God in his first inaugural, while refraining from using a term that would imply a more personal form of religion.⁹²

This parallel between Thomas Jefferson’s restrained invocation in the Declaration of Independence and in his first inaugural address demonstrates the greater American theme of limiting the church’s influence in the state. Jefferson said in his second inaugural address: “In matters of religion, I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the Constitution independent of the powers of the general government. I have therefore undertaken, on no occasion, to prescribe the religious exercises suited to it; but

have left them, as the constitution found them, under the direction and discipline of state or church authorities acknowledged by the several religious societies.”⁹³ Yet, even after articulating this separation between church and state, Jefferson continued to make references to a “Creator” with a prayer:

I shall need, too, the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our forefathers, as Israel of old, from their native land, and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with his providence, and our riper years with his wisdom and power; and to whose goodness I ask you to join with me in supplications, that he will so enlighten the minds of your servants, guide their councils, and prosper their measures, that whatsoever they do, shall result in your good, and shall secure to you the peace, friendship, and approbation of all nations.⁹⁴

This prayer not only mentioned a deity but alluded to the story of Exodus, tying the country’s narrative with the Bible.⁹⁵ In this way, he used religious rhetoric to describe the nation as flourishing under a protective deity.

During James Madison and James Monroe’s presidencies, the Second Great Awakening was taking hold. In the 1790s, Protestant revival spanned the United States with evangelical inclinations and came into full effect during the 1820s.⁹⁶ During this time, Protestant church attendance, especially in Methodist and Baptist churches, increased, in part due to preachers’ efforts to bring “the message of the church to the people,” marking the initiation of evangelicalism in the United States.⁹⁷ These messages were mostly about free-will and God as a benevolent creature, moving away from Calvinist ideas of a severe God and of arbitrary judgment into heaven.⁹⁸ According to Ian Finseth, Americans were coming to believe that “the individual soul could be redeemed through the exercise of free will” and “a national redemption could also follow from collective efforts toward social improvement.”⁹⁹

In this context, Madison's 1809 inaugural addresses refrained from directly invoking "God," making reference, instead, to "that Almighty Being...whose blessings have been so conspicuously dispensed to this rising Republic."¹⁰⁰ Yet, Monroe's second inaugural address, in 1821, offered the first mention of the word "God." Monroe concluded, "with a firm reliance on the protection of Almighty God, I shall forthwith commence the duties of the high trust to which you have called me."¹⁰¹ Now, this usage of religion is similar to previous uses in the way it which it calls upon a higher power to establish the United States' predestination, and, indeed, Monroe made many references towards a religiously graced future. For instance, Monroe said in his first inaugural, "If we persevere in the career in which we have advanced so far and in the path already traced, we can not fail, under the favor of a gracious Providence, to attain the high destiny which seems to await us."¹⁰² Yet, while this invocation is similar in some ways to early uses, by using the word "God" in his second inaugural address, Monroe linked his speech to the nation's religious tradition in a way that reflected a change in his audience's perception of the separation between church and state. On this point, Scott Neuman explains "Monroe was apparently as astute a politician as any, and his God reference neatly coincided with the Second Great Awakening, an explosion of Baptist and Methodist congregations in the U.S. that was partly a reaction to the distant deism of the Founding Fathers."¹⁰³ Monroe's presidency marked greater distance from the American Revolution, and the Founders' fears of church interfering with the state. Moreover, his presidency marked a time of Protestant revival and lack of non-Protestant diversity. Indeed, while Jewish population was not concretely recorded at the time, reports indicate that there were around 3,000-6,000 Jews throughout the entire nation in the 1820s, while

records estimate that the Catholic population in America was around 243,000.¹⁰⁴ In this way, the nation was predominately Protestant, and Monroe could engage God without risking dividing most of the nation.¹⁰⁵

Following Monroe's invocation of "God," his successor, John Quincy Adams cited Scripture for the first time. Adams ended his second inaugural address: "I shall look for whatever success may attend my public service; and knowing that 'except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain,' with fervent supplications for His favor, to His overruling providence I commit with humble but fearless confidence my own fate and the future destinies of my country."¹⁰⁶ In this passage, Adams invoked Psalm 127:1, one of the "Songs of Ascent" for Solomon.¹⁰⁷ This specific passage is a form of instruction for civic or political leaders, and, according to Patrick D. Miller Jr., it is aimed at demonstrating "the vanity or fruitlessness of human efforts apart from Yahweh's involvement and activity."¹⁰⁸ Adams followed the pattern of invoking religion to highlight God's protection over the American people. Though this theme was familiar, Adams moved from the more generalized deistic version of invoking religious rhetoric to now invoking a specific passage of the Bible, which, in effect, involved a more personal God and more specific form of Christianity.¹⁰⁹ Yet, during this time of peaceful nation formation and protestant religious fervor, Adams, like Monroe, could make such religious references without fear of dividing the nation.

Subsequent presidents seemed to revert to invoking a more general deity in working to unite the nation. Neuman explains, "Even so, from the 1820s until the late 1850s, as the country moved unstoppably toward civil war, presidents reverted back to the safer territory of Almighty Being and Divine Providence."¹¹⁰ There is an exception to

this pattern: in 1841, William Henry Harrison took office and made reference to “the false Christs whose coming was foretold by the Savior.”¹¹¹ Harrison used this passage to drive home the importance of being “watchful of those to whom they have intrusted power.”¹¹² Harrison allowed Daniel Webster to edit his inaugural address, and Webster used this power to emphasize Harrison’s obedience to the people’s wishes as shown through Congress.¹¹³ This was an exceptional phrase and speech, as Harrison used religion to stress the need for a check on presidential power.¹¹⁴

Other presidents during this period, however, returned to invoking a more unitary form of God in order to evoke national unity. Elvin T. Lim says that “references to religious words...followed a downward trend for most of the nineteenth century,” and indeed, the word “God” appears only in one inaugural address—Franklin Pierce’s inaugural address—between the presidencies of Andrew Jackson and James Buchanan.¹¹⁵ Rather, these presidents returned to the familiar pattern of invoking an “Almighty Being,” “beneficent Providence” or other more general deistic terms.¹¹⁶ Moreover, these presidents returned to use these more Unitarian deity references in the context of protecting Americans and establishing the nation’s divine favor.

America’s early presidents established the tradition of including religious rhetoric in inaugural addresses. Yet, these early uses were not necessarily invocations of *Christian* religion.¹¹⁷ All of these early presidents did include references to some sort of creator, yet only William Henry Harrison mentioned Christ.¹¹⁸ Moreover, their inclusion of religion was very general; they did not tend to use Scripture, embrace a specific denomination, or even use the word “God.” These presidents also used their invocation of a deity in order to affirm America’s destiny and God’s protection. On this point, Bellah explains that

these presidents' God was "actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America," an idea that is tied up with the Founder's connection of America to Israel, as promised lands.¹¹⁹ This version of religious invocation—not necessarily Christian but still religious—informs how we read their inaugural addresses. Their rhetoric was rooted in an Americanized version of civil religion that did not conflict with the separation of church and state.¹²⁰

Civil War and Reconstruction Presidents (Lincoln-McKinley)

As with Washington and Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln's religious views have been a major issue of contention. Samuel W. Calhoun and Lucas E. Morel say that it is "commonplace" to discuss the mystery of Lincoln's religious view and Adam Gopnik says that his faith is "the most vexed question in all the Lincoln literature."¹²¹ Lincoln never joined a church, although he did frequently attend churches.¹²² Similarly, his written documents and speeches tell nuanced and sometimes even conflicting stories about his religious thought. Lincoln's early speeches included calls for "elevat[ing] the Constitution to a 'political religion,'" marking reason as the ultimate authority, outside of religious sanction.¹²³ Later, in his "Handbill Against Infidelity" speech, Lincoln said that although he was "not a member of any Christian Church," he had "never denied the truth of the Scriptures."¹²⁴ Yet, as Giorgi Areshidze explains, these statements fell "short of an explicit and public acknowledgement of the veracity of biblical teachings," and "presumably, a prudent atheist would be mindful of the social stigma associated with unbelief and would therefore exercise restraint about his personal beliefs in public."¹²⁵ Lincoln refrained from discussing his own religious beliefs and practices, leading to greater mystery over his beliefs.¹²⁶ Moreover, he concluded his "Handbill Against

Infidelity” speech: “I do not think I could myself, be brought to support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open enemy of, and a scoffer at, religion.”¹²⁷ On this conclusion, Areshidze explains, “Lincoln’s conclusion seems to combine the reticence of a prudent and respectful atheist with the moderation of a democrat who believes that religion can plan an instrumental role in supporting the morality of a political community.”¹²⁸

Over time, however, he became more entrenched in theological discussions and expanded from a rational, utilitarian view of religion into deep public discussion of a divine providence.¹²⁹ In September 1862, Lincoln wrote a document he named “Meditation on the Divine Will,” which later evolved into Lincoln’s second inaugural address.¹³⁰ This unpublished document helped demonstrate that Lincoln believed that he could not be religiously indifferent over slavery, thus his religious views developed in a way that more directly confronted the issue.¹³¹ Areshidze explains, “Lincoln begins to offer a rationalistic appropriation of the Bible in which he purports to discover a scriptural basis for a labor theory of property rights that is antithetical to slavery.”¹³² Lincoln was steeped in biblical knowledge and used this knowledge to call upon Genesis 1:27, Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 7:12, and Genesis 3:19 in order to make a religiously sanctioned case against slavery.¹³³

Abraham Lincoln’s election in 1860 represented a crossroads. As the United States was facing major divisions, Lincoln pleaded for unity in his 1861 inaugural address, and he used religion to achieve this end. This usage of religion may have had a similar goal to early inaugural addresses in seeking unification, but Lincoln differed from his predecessors in using religion for a specific policy goal. In his first inaugural address, Lincoln said: “If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with His eternal truth and justice, be on

your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people.”¹³⁴ This use of religious rhetoric was about secession. Moreover, Lincoln explained that “a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty,” demonstrating that Lincoln believed that religion solidifies the case for this specific policy: namely, remaining in the Union.¹³⁵ Yet, in his first inaugural address, Lincoln still discussed religion in general terms, refraining from the word “God” and discussing the slavery question in broad terms.¹³⁶ He closed with language that was spiritual but not sectarian: “The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”¹³⁷ As Nixon’s speechwriter, Ray Price, explains, this passage summoned “us to those exertions required to make the future we seek achievable.”¹³⁸ Indeed, this passage harnessed themes of sacrifice and morality in order to unify the nation against the fear of secession.

Lincoln’s second inaugural address, one of the most venerated and religious speeches in American history, came at a significant moment. Charles O. Jones explains, “the ending of the Civil War called for a unifying theme. Lincoln met the challenge of reaching beyond the fissures to the union in a call for compassionate restoration of a common purpose.”¹³⁹ Further, Zarefesky explains that Lincoln “placed the Civil War in a biblical perspective in order to pave the way for healing after a time of deep division.”¹⁴⁰ Lincoln wrote this speech like a sermon and made reference to “God” five times, “living God” once, the “Almighty,” once, the “Lord” once and pronouns associated with God six

times in a speeches that was only 469 words.¹⁴¹ Moreover, Calhoun and Morel argue that Lincoln's second inaugural recognized a personal God: one who has an "active will," who "intervenes in human affairs to accomplish His objectives," who is "just" and renders "true and righteous" judgments, and who "is in two-way communication with humans" through prayer and Scripture.¹⁴² Lincoln's first biblical invocation reads:

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.¹⁴³

Wilson Huhn explains that this passage called upon Genesis 3:17-23, as well as Matthew 7:1, two of Lincoln's most commonly used passages.¹⁴⁴ First, this passage used Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."¹⁴⁵ By making this reference, Lincoln was implying that slaveholders are figuratively eating bread off the sweat of their slaves' faces, placing guilt on the act of slavery.¹⁴⁶ Second, this passage called upon Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that ye be not judged."¹⁴⁷ This New Testament invocation aimed at uniting the nation, demonstrating that even though the act of slavery was unjust, the South should not be solely blamed for the act.¹⁴⁸

Next, Lincoln cited Matthew 18:7: "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."¹⁴⁹ In context, this passage discussed the sin of abusing children, marking this act as one of tremendous evil.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, by using this passage, Lincoln was not only explaining that the Civil War was God's form of punishment for slavery, but he was also marking slavery as an evil on par with child abuse.¹⁵¹ Lincoln then continued:

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."¹⁵²

This passage incorporated phrases from Psalm 19:9: "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."¹⁵³ This usage again blamed neither side of the Civil War. While the Civil War was God's punishment for slavery, Lincoln established that slavery was an evil that cannot be blamed fully on the South. Thus, he used religious rhetoric in the service of national reunification.

Many scholars wonder whether Lincoln was pandering to believers, despite his lack of religiosity.¹⁵⁴ Yet, Calhoun and Morel argue that Lincoln was not attempting to appease the crowd, and rather they explain that his use of religion was not overwhelming in support of his policies.¹⁵⁵ By explaining that "the Almighty has His own purposes," Lincoln was not using religion to explain that God was on his side but was making a case for reconciliation.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Areshidze explains that Lincoln achieved "the effect of redemption and forgiveness that can heal the nation's divisions and moderate the retributive passions on both sides of the war," but he did this by "shift[ing] the emphasis away from moral responsibility."¹⁵⁷ Such religious invocation is important because it was unifying: there was plenty of blame to go around, and it was God who determined the outcome of the Civil War.

Following the Civil War, presidents used their inaugural addresses as ways to restore harmony. Indeed, according to Brooks D. Simpson, Ulysses S. Grant believed that

following the Civil War, it was essential to “preserve the Union, destroy slavery, and establish a durable peace” in the nation.¹⁵⁸ In this way, Grant deployed religious rhetoric to affirm national unity. Grant asked how the government could restore the nation “with the ten States in poverty from the effects of war.”¹⁵⁹ He explained that “Providence has bestowed upon us a strong box in the precious metals locked up in the sterile mountains of the far West, and which we are now forging the key to unlock, to meet the very contingency that is now upon us,” harnessing religion to unify the nation in a similar way to previous inaugural addresses.¹⁶⁰ Yet, unlike many earlier addresses, Grant used religion in this instance for a more specific purpose: using Western wealth to return to the gold standard and relieve the nation of its debt.¹⁶¹ Grant was fiscally conservative at the time, and he wanted gold-backed currency rather than the fiat currency, called greenbacks.¹⁶² This policy was controversial, especially in states like Ohio that bore the burden of this policy, but by placing this policy in a religious framework, he was able to unite the nation around a controversial issue.¹⁶³ Moreover, Grant also called upon “Providence,” and “our Great Maker” to help the United States “become one nation, speaking one language.”¹⁶⁴ In this way, in a divided nation, Grant used religion to unify different regions of the nation under united policies and a united identity.

Rutherford B. Hayes, his successor, also called for “the guidance of that Divine Hand.”¹⁶⁵ Hayes even recited a prayer from the Episcopal Church’s 1789 *U.S. Book of Common Prayer*: “And that all things may be so ordered and settled upon the best and surest foundations that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.”¹⁶⁶ Hayes recited this prayer in order to call upon elected officials and other powerful Americans to help “secure...our country the

blessings, not only of material prosperity, but of justice, peace, and union,” establishing God’s desire for a harmonious nation.¹⁶⁷

James A. Garfield was the first ordained minister to occupy the office, and he brought his religious inclination to the White House.¹⁶⁸ As Jerry Bryant Rushford says, “Garfield...was a product of the profound social, intellectual, and religious ferment of the early decades of the nineteenth century which produced the American religious movement known as the Disciples of Christ.”¹⁶⁹ Garfield had evangelical inclinations and members of the church campaigned for Garfield during his presidential election, even making the trip to Washington, D.C. for Garfield’s inauguration.¹⁷⁰ In the context of his strong Protestant and evangelical faith, Garfield cited Scripture in his inaugural address: “Let our people find a new meaning in the divine oracle which declares that ‘a little child shall lead them,’ for our own little children will soon control the destinies of the Republic,” which alluded to Isaiah 11:6: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”¹⁷¹ This passage came from Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet who prophesied about Israel and its divine destiny.¹⁷² While earlier passages in Isaiah discussed the role of the Messiah as a legitimate king and representative of world order, this specific passage emphasized peace and unity as equals--between animal and animal, as well as between animal and human.¹⁷³ In this way, Garfield was not only invoking a passage that marked the United States as predestined for greatness, but he was also using a passage that called upon unification themes that would bring Americans together as equals without pointing towards any specific presidential policies.

While Garfield, like his predecessors, had used religion as a unifying force, he also diverged from earlier presidents by openly attacking a specific religion. Garfield explains:

The Mormon Church not only offends the moral sense of manhood by sanctioning polygamy, but prevents the administration of justice through ordinary instrumentalities of law. In my judgment it is the duty of Congress, while respecting to the uttermost the conscientious convictions and religious scruples of every citizen, to prohibit within its jurisdiction all criminal practices, especially of that class which destroy the family relations and endanger social order.¹⁷⁴

Now, Garfield did not use religion in this instance as a tool of policy persuasion, but rather he assailed a specific religious denomination. Indeed, this was the first and only time in an inaugural address where a president explicitly rebuked a religion, diverging from a typical use of religion as a unifying force and from the idea of inaugural addresses as dignified and unifying occasions.¹⁷⁵ Yet, while attacking Mormons moved away from using religion in a harmonious way to unite the people, at Garfield's time, attacking Mormons in this way was not decidedly controversial.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, in the nineteenth century, Mormons were ostracized in America and were seen as anti-Christian "others."¹⁷⁷ Thus, openly attacking Mormons divided the nation against Mormons but united non-Mormons under a limited American identity.

Following Garfield, Grover Cleveland, and Benjamin Harrison each continued to follow earlier patterns of using religious rhetoric to unite the nation; however, these presidents differed from earlier presidents in their increased use of the term, "God." Indeed, in each inaugural speech given by these presidents, the word "God" appeared, even multiple times in one inaugural.¹⁷⁸ This turn to the term "God" demonstrates the

presidents' shift to speaking of a more personal God. Indeed, Benjamin Harrison in his address embraced religion in a much more personal, specific way:

The influences of religion have been multiplied and strengthened. The sweet offices of charity have greatly increased. The virtue of temperance is held in higher estimation. We have not attained an ideal condition. Not all of our people are happy and prosperous; not all of them are virtuous and law-abiding. But on the whole the opportunities offered to the individual to secure the comforts of life are better than are found elsewhere and largely better than they were here one hundred years ago.¹⁷⁹

Harrison's view on the temperance movement reflects the movement towards Protestantism following the Second Great Awakening. Moreover, by invoking a more specific God, Harrison is demonstrating a societal shift towards a more Protestant God.

By the mid-nineteenth century, presidents began to employ religion differently from the Founders. While the Founders used religion sparingly and predominately as a unifier to establish common values and a divine belief in democracy, these later presidents began to make more explicit references to religiosity. This difference was in part made possible by the distance between these presidents and the American Revolution, as these later presidents were less concerned with distinguishing themselves from Britain's monarchical system and lack of religious freedom. Yet, at the same time, these presidents still led the nation during a time when presidential public speaking was infrequent, and discussing policy was not seen as within the constitutional bounds of the presidency. In this way, while presidents did begin to harness religious rhetoric in more specific ways by the mid-nineteenth century, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, presidents used religion as a unifier, refraining from using it as a tool of persuasion or as a divisive way to appeal to certain populations.

Chapter Two: The Transitional Rhetorical Presidency

Shifting Rhetorical Presidencies (Roosevelt-Wilson)

By the end of the nineteenth century, presidential rhetoric began to shift. Lim discusses how invoking God became increasingly popular.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, following the trend at the end of the nineteenth century, twentieth century presidents did not shrink from the word “God,” honing in on a more specific religious figure. Moreover, presidents began to make cases for their policies, even invoking religious rhetoric to argue for a specific policy. This century also marked a rise in technology, as well as the speechwriting apparatus, each altering speechwriting and the role of speeches.

Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft began the twentieth century with inaugural addresses that were not particularly religious. Roosevelt made one indirect religious reference: “My fellow-citizens, no people on earth have more cause to be thankful than ours, and this is said reverently, in no spirit of boastfulness in our own strength, but with gratitude to the Giver of Good who has blessed us with the conditions which have enabled us to achieve so large a measure of well-being and of happiness.”¹⁸¹ Roosevelt, in general, tended to be less religious in the public sphere than many other presidents of his era. Baylor professor Martin J. Medhurst explains how Roosevelt “eschewed any interpretation of church and state,” and he further explains that Roosevelt “had a real hesitancy to insert [religious] language and really tried to restrain himself from doing that.”¹⁸² In this way, Roosevelt’s lack of religious emphasis in his inaugural is not surprising.¹⁸³ Yet, it does, according to Ann Duncan, mark him as “an interesting blip in the trajectory of our American civil religion.”¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Taft also did not discuss religion much in his inaugural address. Like Roosevelt, Taft brought in religion only once

at the conclusion of his address: “Having thus reviewed the questions likely to recur during my administration, and having expressed in a summary way the position which I expect to take in recommendations to Congress and in my conduct as an Executive, I invoke the considerate sympathy and support of my fellow-citizens and the aid of the Almighty God in the discharge of my responsible duties.”¹⁸⁵ Now, while these two presidents used religion less frequently than some of their predecessors, their usages of religion were to unite the nation under a universal reverence towards a Judeo-Christian God.

This hesitation ebbed with Woodrow Wilson’s presidency. Wilson transformed the modern rhetorical presidency by not only speaking to the people but also by harnessing moralistic and visionary language.¹⁸⁶ Wilson’s father was a Presbyterian minister and theologian, and religion pervaded Wilson’s childhood.¹⁸⁷ Wilson’s father had instilled in his son certain religious beliefs: the importance of prayer, the belief of predestination, and the belief in a caring and guiding God.¹⁸⁸ With this upbringing, Wilson was well-equipped to harness religious rhetoric in his inaugural address, and, indeed, Colleen J. Shogan explains that “Wilson’s two inaugural addresses alone contained more visionary appeals than the preceding ninety years of presidential history.”¹⁸⁹ Wilson gave his first inaugural address in 1913, four years before the United States entered into World War I but while the Civil War was still in living memory. Wilson was born in Georgia, with the Civil War pervading his earliest memories, and in this context, his father emphasized the South’s justification in seceding from the Union.¹⁹⁰ Yet, by residence, Wilson had lived in the North since his first teaching career at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, thus he was well positioned to speak to North and

South.¹⁹¹ In this way, Wilson used religious rhetoric in order to motivate the country towards specific policies:

The feelings with which we face this new age of right and opportunity sweep across our heartstrings like some air out of God's own presence, where justice and mercy are reconciled and the judge and the brother are one. We know our task to be no mere task of politics but a task which shall search us through and through, whether we be able to understand our time and the need of our people, whether we be indeed their spokesmen and interpreters, whether we have the pure heart to comprehend and the rectified will to choose our high course of action.¹⁹²

This invocation of God differed from previous invocations because it harnessed religion to motivate Americans towards a certain conception of the good. By using this sort of moralistic rhetoric, Wilson made a persuasive case for certain policies, while simultaneously continuing the trend of using religion to unite the nation.

Wilson's second inaugural address came at a critical moment. For over two years, Wilson resisted entering World War I, but on April 2, 1917—just weeks after Wilson's second inaugural address—he requested a declaration of war against Germany, officially entering the United States into the war. According to Ann Duncan, Wilson effectively “used religious imagery to swing public opinion from an otherwise deeply entrenched reluctance to enter into war into an almost crusade mentality among many people.”¹⁹³ Duncan, like Charles O. Jones, compares this use of religion with Lincoln's use of religion in his second inaugural address, as both harnessed religious rhetoric in the face of two major wars: the Civil War and World War I.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, several communications scholars argue that “during times of foreign crisis, presidents engage in ‘prophetic dualism’ rhetoric,” including “appeals to religious faith, moral insight, and God's law” in order to legitimize foreign action.¹⁹⁵ Wilson said, “we shall, in God's Providence, let us hope, be purged of faction and division, purified of the errant humors of party and of

private interest, and shall stand forth in the days to come with a new dignity of national pride and spirit,” and then, further, “I pray God I may be given the wisdom and the prudence to do my duty in the true spirit of this great people...The thing I shall count upon, the thing without which neither counsel nor action will avail, is the unity of America—an America united in feeling, in purpose and in its vision of duty, of opportunity and of service.”¹⁹⁶ Wilson used religion to unite the nation but also to orient it towards worldly duty and service.

With the beginning of more public and active presidencies, religion became a way to not only unify the nation but also unify the nation towards certain policy decisions. While Jefferson and Taft’s addresses did not use religion as a device of persuasion in the same way that Wilson did, their presidencies more generally reflected a hesitancy towards using religion. Wilson used religion as Lincoln had: to unite the entire nation towards common goals and establish the necessity of service and sacrifice in a religious framework.

Post World War I Presidents and World War II Presidents (Harding-Roosevelt)

Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge came to office following World War I and were charged with healing a nation that had been hit hard by the war and also one that was grappling with new technologies, including the media. Harding and Coolidge’s inaugural addresses occurred during a shifting technological landscape. In their addresses, both Harding and Coolidge focused on industrial advances, yet used religious backing to support different conclusions. Harding, on the one hand, used religious rhetoric to back America’s industrialization: “My most reverent prayer for America is for industrial peace, with its rewards, widely and generally distributed, amid the inspirations

of equal opportunity,” while Coolidge said that “the very stability of our society rests upon production and conservation.¹⁹⁷ For individuals or for governments to waste and squander their resources is to deny these rights,” which he explains “have a divine sanction.”¹⁹⁸ Yet, beyond simply their policies outlined by their speeches, these presidents’ speeches, themselves, were affected by advances in the speechwriting world. Harding came to office right after Woodrow Wilson, who was a very skilled speechwriter and impressive orator.¹⁹⁹ Harding lacked the same eloquence.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Wilson had shifted expectations about how often presidents ought to address this people; thus, Harding was expected to speak often and skillfully.²⁰¹ Harding thus employed a professional speechwriter: his literary clerk, Judson Welliver.²⁰² While other presidents had help from others with their speeches, Welliver was the first recognized ghostwriter, and his role as a ghostwriter set a precedent that ghostwriters would have at least a semi-official capacity.²⁰³ Coolidge’s presidency marked the beginning of radio’s influence, and this media influence also changed expectations of how many speeches ought to be addressed to the public.²⁰⁴ The combination of these advances put new pressures on presidential addresses: presidents were now expected to give more addresses and could more easily appeal to the people.²⁰⁵ Moreover, these advances also changed how many people presidents’ inaugural addresses reached and shifted the content of the inaugural addresses by employing skilled writers.²⁰⁶

Harding came to office as the World War I era was fading, and he used his address to unify the nation, specifically using “God” and religious rhetoric to unite the nation towards a “God-given destiny of our republic.”²⁰⁷ Harding used the word “God” seven times, more than any of his predecessors, and he even closed his inaugural with a

passage from Micah 6:8: “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”²⁰⁸ Harding embraced religion, and,

specifically, by citing this passage, Harding embraced a Judeo-Christian religion.

Coolidge similarly did not hesitate from using religion in his inaugural address. He closed:

Here stands its Government, aware of its might but obedient to its conscience. Here it will continue to stand, seeking peace and prosperity, solicitous for the welfare of the wage earner, promoting enterprise, developing waterways and natural resources, attentive to the intuitive counsel of womanhood, encouraging education, desiring the advancement of religion, supporting the cause of justice and honor among the nations. America seeks no earthly empire built on blood and force. No ambition, no temptation, lures her to thought of foreign dominions. The legions which she sends forth are armed, not with the sword, but with the cross. The higher state to which she seeks the allegiance of all mankind is not of human, but of divine origin. She cherishes no purpose save to merit the favor of Almighty God.²⁰⁹

In this passage, Coolidge not only was “desiring the advancement of religion,” but also he called for the nation to arm its forces “not with the sword, but with the cross.”²¹⁰ This was the first time that a president explicitly made a Christian call to arms, by making reference to “the cross.” Early in his presidency, Coolidge signed the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted the number of immigrants from Eastern European nations, among others.²¹¹ This restriction severely limited the number of Jews who could enter America, as the majority of Jews attempting to enter the United States came from these parts of Europe.²¹² After signing the Act, Coolidge said, “America must remain American,” and, indeed, by signing this Act, Coolidge helped maintain the religious demographics in America, allowing him to continue using religion to unify a predominately homogenous nation.²¹³ In this way, Coolidge explained that the nation “cherishes no purpose save to merit the favor of Almighty God.”²¹⁴ These ideas demonstrated a development from

earlier presidents' hesitation to invoke a Christian form of religion towards upholding religiosity as part of the national mission. Presidents began to embrace a new form of presidential rhetoric, a type of rhetoric that did not shy away from persuasion nor from using religion to accomplish that end.

Herbert Hoover entered into office after serving in Harding and Coolidge's cabinets.²¹⁵ According to Donald W. Whisenhunt, "Hoover was running from a position of strength, especially with the peace and prosperity of the 1920s that he and other Republicans promoted."²¹⁶ Indeed, Hoover's inaugural address was hopeful and forward-looking, and many believed that his presidency marked America's path towards future success, even though the nation would take a downward turn months later beginning the Great Depression.²¹⁷ Hoover was born a Quaker, and Whisenhunt explains that "he rejected unrestrained individualism and always believed that an individual had a responsibility to society at large."²¹⁸ With this understanding, Hoover's inaugural address returned to earlier trends of religious rhetoric by sparingly invoking religion, and when he did harness religious rhetoric, he did so generally and to unify the nation towards future success. Hoover referred to a deistic version of God, which Cynthia Toolin emphasizes was a divergence from many other twentieth century presidents.²¹⁹ Yet, this version of the creator achieved the same end that the Founders aimed for: to unify the nation under a less specific version of God. Moreover, when Hoover did invoke a more specific "God," he did so for the sake of unifying the nation: "I shall invite and welcome the help of every man and woman in the preservation of the United States for the happiness of its people. This is my pledge to the Nation and my pledge to the Almighty God."²²⁰ In this way,

Hoover followed the trend of presidents speaking more generally about religious during times of internal strife in order to unite the nation.

While Franklin Delano Roosevelt also entered office during the Great Depression, he harnessed religious rhetoric in his first inaugural address differently from Hoover.²²¹ Roosevelt invoked religious phrases in order to persuade the American people of the nation's ability to overcome the Depression. Indeed, Roosevelt said, "we are stricken by no plague of locusts," a phrase deriving from Exodus 10 and Moses' story of leading his people to Egypt.²²² As scholar Ronald Isetti explains, this reference aimed to dispel national worries that the Depression was "divine punishment for the nation's sins," as locusts in this Exodus story destroyed all living vegetation and occupied all habitation.²²³ Indeed, Roosevelt continued to speak in terms relating to Exodus 10, but he did so in order to draw a contrast between Egypt and the current state of the nation. Roosevelt implied that the plague of locusts in Exodus was divinely willed, but he explicitly said that the nation's current state of desperation came from man's own creation: "Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men."²²⁴ In this context, Roosevelt referred to "money changers" as high-powered bankers who were usurping all the resources from the population, but by using this phrase he is also making an important religious allusion.²²⁵

The term "money changers" came from John 2:13-16:

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:
 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.²²⁶

Thus, not only was Roosevelt setting the Depression apart from the plague of locusts that infested Egypt, but he was also making a religious case against the “personal evil of the financial elites.”²²⁷ While presidents had previously used religion to further their policy goals, this use of religion differs from those uses by harnessing religion to advance policies that divided the nation. Other than Garfield’s attack on Mormons (which he did not use religious allegory to defend), this use of religion was the first time a president targeted a certain sect of Americans, namely corporate America, in an inaugural address.

Moreover, Halford Ross Ryan says that Roosevelt used this allusion to the “money changers” in order to secure his position as a savior for the nation’s current troubles.²²⁸ In this way, Roosevelt set himself as a moral figure who could move America from its capitalistic nature towards a more virtuous aim.²²⁹ Indeed, Roosevelt emphasized, “Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort...These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men,” which Isetti points out is “a traditional Christian moral sentiment drawn in part from the story of the Good Samaritan in the Bible.”²³⁰ Moreover, Roosevelt continued to reject the actions of money lenders by explaining, “They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish.”²³¹ The latter part of this passage came directly from Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is

he.”²³² In context, this Proverb emphasizes that people ought not correct God’s word, but rather act according to God’s laws.²³³ In this way, not only was Roosevelt condemning corporate America by comparing them to the money-changers of the temple, but he was also further arguing that because they were not acting according to God’s law, they were therefore destined to perish. Thus, Roosevelt made a case for how the nation should escape the Great Depression clothed in religious rhetoric that aimed to convince Americans to support one policy, even while risking alienating a portion of the population.

While Roosevelt did employ religion in this unprecedented way in his address: specifically making biblical references that support his policies, he also employed religion as a unifier at other points. Roosevelt concluded his first inaugural address by “ask[ing] the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.”²³⁴ Isetti claims, that like many of his predecessors, “Roosevelt was not specifically invoking the Trinitarian God in whom he personally believed as a practicing Episcopalian. Acting as the chief priest of civil religion, Roosevelt was addressing the purely monotheistic God of civil religion.”²³⁵ Thus, while Roosevelt did make a persuasive case against the excesses of capitalism, he still invoked a more unitary deity figure in a way that mirrored predecessors’ inclination towards a more inclusive God. This usage demonstrates the dual use of religion: as a unifier, but now also as a tool for persuasion. Reflecting the increasing role of the rhetorical presidency, Roosevelt not only used his speeches as a mechanism to influence policy, but he also used religion to strengthen his case for these policies.

Roosevelt's second inaugural address harnessed some of the same religious sentiment as his first. Indeed, Roosevelt began, "We of the Republic pledged ourselves to drive from the temple of our ancient faith those who had profaned it; to end by action, tireless and unafraid, the stagnation and despair of that day."²³⁶ Now, while this invocation of "the temple of our ancient faith" drew back to the biblical story of the moneychangers, it also had grounding in the Jewish tradition.²³⁷ Indeed, the story of Hanukkah is based around the Maccabees' reclaiming and purifying their temple from the Greeks' occupation and defilement.²³⁸ He then continued by calling upon "our covenant with ourselves" that "recognized a deeper need...to find through government the instrument of our united purpose to solve for the individual the ever-rising problem of a complex civilization."²³⁹ Isetti explains that this invocation of a "covenant" tied his speech to "the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who believed that God had chosen them to be His special people in the New World."²⁴⁰ Indeed, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks explains that covenants go further than contracts by marrying people together "in a bond of loyalty and trust to do together what neither can do alone."²⁴¹ Moreover, connecting Roosevelt's invocation back to the idea of "American Israel," Sacks explains that "biblical Israel had a society long before it had a state" because "although they'd lost their contract, they still had their covenant. And there is only one nation known to me that had the same dual founding as biblical Israel and that is the United States of America."²⁴²

On the same note, Roosevelt went on, "Shall we pause now and turn our back upon the road that lies ahead? Shall we call this the promised land? Or, shall we continue on our way? For 'each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth.'"²⁴³

This passage derived from a nineteenth century British poem by Arthur O'Shaughnessy, but Toolin emphasizes that this reflection tied Roosevelt to the idea of Exodus, as he linked America to the “promise land.”²⁴⁴ Moreover, this specific reference to “the road that lies ahead” tied this religious allegory to the idea that Roosevelt can lead the nation towards this end.

Roosevelt finished by calling upon “Divine guidance to help us each and every one to give light to them that sit in darkness and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”²⁴⁵ Isetti explains that the conclusion of this prayer came directly from the Gospel of Luke:

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,
Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.²⁴⁶

This invocation set Roosevelt and his presidency on a path to righteousness. Moreover, this use helped Roosevelt make the religious case that he will bring the nation out of this period of “darkness” into “the path of peace.”²⁴⁷ Roosevelt’s second inaugural address continued the religious case of his first address, uniting America as a “promised land” and setting his policies forth as ways in which to reach America’s full potential.²⁴⁸ While this address still argued against abuses of power, FDR used religion in this address to unite the people under common Judeo-Christian values and unify the people towards his policies.

Roosevelt's subsequent two inaugural addresses had very different settings. In 1939, World War II began in Europe, without the United States' initial participation.²⁴⁹ This conflict shifted the focus from the internal strife caused by the Great Depression to an outward looking contemplation of the American role in this conflict. Roosevelt gave his third inaugural address on January 20, 1941, less than a year before the United States entered the war.²⁵⁰ Roosevelt used this speech to prepare the nation for war, emphasizing America's strength in the face of great peril. Indeed, Roosevelt said, "we know it because democracy alone has constructed an unlimited civilization capable of infinite progress in the improvement of human life," and further, he cited "the spirit—the faith of America" as springing from American democracy and its history.²⁵¹ Roosevelt used religion to connect the strength of the nation to its willingness to live in biblical terms. Roosevelt explained, "Lives of Nations are determined not by the count of years, but by the lifetime of the human spirit. The life of man is threescore years and ten: a little more, a little less. The life of a Nation is the fullness of the measure of its will to live."²⁵² This passage reflected Psalm 90:10, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."²⁵³ By using this passage, Roosevelt was suggesting that the strength of our nation was much greater and more important than any individual life. This idea also corresponds to 1 Corinthians 12:12-25, which connects the life of a group of people to that of a person: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."²⁵⁴

With these biblical references, Roosevelt emphasized the connectedness of the Nation, bringing together all people in the face of potential war. Roosevelt concluded: "In

the face of great perils never before encountered, our strong purpose is to protect and to perpetuate the integrity of democracy. For this we muster the spirit of America, and the faith of America. We do not retreat. We are not content to stand still. As Americans, we go forward, in the service of our country, by the will of God.”²⁵⁵ By explicitly making reference to protecting democracy through American faith and spirit, Roosevelt connects his earlier religious references in a more clear way to protecting the nation in the face of World War II.

Roosevelt gave his fourth inaugural address less than a year before the conflict ended. He was nearing the end of his life, and he gave a noticeably short address with the hope of not over stressing his health.²⁵⁶ This address was fewer than 600 words and was part of a simple ceremony.²⁵⁷ Yet, this address promoted similar themes to his third inaugural address by using religion to defend America’s international role in the face of World War II. Roosevelt explained, “As I stand here today, having taken the solemn oath of office in the presence of my fellow countrymen--in the presence of our God-- I know that it is America's purpose that we shall not fail.”²⁵⁸ This religious invocation harnessed “God” to defend the American mission in World War II. He further said, “The Almighty God has blessed our land in many ways. He has given our people stout hearts and strong arms with which to strike mighty blows for freedom and truth. He has given to our country a faith which has become the hope of all peoples in an anguished world.”²⁵⁹ By setting the United States as God’s chosen land, as well as a model for the rest of the world, Roosevelt sought to persuade citizens to claim their role in their world and keep supporting the war. Roosevelt concluded his inaugural with a common religious goal among all people: “So we pray to Him now for the vision to see our way clearly--to see

the way that leads to a better life for ourselves and for all our fellow men--to the achievement of His will to peace on earth."²⁶⁰ In this way, Roosevelt used religion to unite the nation and position it towards his international goals.

This usage also mirrored how Lincoln and Wilson used religious rhetoric in the face of major conflicts at their time. Like these previous presidents, Roosevelt used religion to emphasize the importance of service and sacrifice, as well as to give fighting a divinely-inspired purpose. Moreover, Roosevelt used religion to unite the nation "as one body" in order to set a united America against an international threat. Thus, while Roosevelt used religion during his first term to further his liberal domestic goals, he used religion in his third term to further his international goals, necessitating a united front.

As the role of presidential public addresses began to shift, giving presidents more freedom to campaign for their specific policies, presidents also began to shift the way in which they used religious allegory. While the Founding presidents were wary of invoking personal religion and believed that campaigning for their causes was an overreach of presidential power, by the twentieth century, presidents were not only actively addressing the American people about their political ideas, but they were also using religion as a tool of persuasion to bolster their case. In many cases, these presidents used a form of American civil religion to unite the nation around certain moralistic values and to uphold America's status as a chosen land. Yet, more than the Founding presidents, these ones honed in on more specific references, rather than the unitary deistic God of the original presidents. Moreover, later presidents, especially Roosevelt, used religion to back their policy goals. Especially when the nation was facing World War II, most of these religious references were used to unite the nation against international threat. Still, Roosevelt used

religion to advance his policy goals in the domestic sphere in a way that divided certain Americans against others.

Chapter Three: Cold War Presidents

Harry S. Truman took office in 1945 as fears of communism began to take hold. Indeed, the next several decades and presidencies were consumed by discussion of America's ability to resist communism, and these presidents' inaugural addresses reflected those fears. Presidents used their inaugural addresses to set religion as a force against communism, as well as to persuade Americans to back their anti-communist policies. As Lincoln, Wilson, and Roosevelt did in the face of international conflict, Cold War presidents used religion to unite the nation against an international enemy. In particular, communism recognizes neither God nor natural rights, and the Soviet Union during this period actively persecuted religious people and destroyed religious monuments.²⁶¹ To combat this anti-religious force, presidents during this era made persuasive cases for anti-communist policies by placing their addresses in a Judeo-Christian framework and by invoking themes of America's civil religion, which sets democratic policymaking in a religious context.

Throughout his presidency and even his vice-presidency, Truman set America's identity in a Judeo-Christian framework. As vice-president, Truman said, "It was the Hebrews who first fought the worship of pagan idols in the western world and who preached eternal faith in *one God*—the God in whom we all put our trust."²⁶² As president, he continued to emphasize the importance of Judaism in the American identity, most evidently displayed by his recognition of Israel on May 14, 1948, the very same date that the Provisional Government of Israel declared Israel a new state.²⁶³ Only months after this recognition, in his inaugural address, Truman began: "I need the help and the prayers of every one of you. I ask for your encouragement and for your support. The

tasks we face are difficult. We can accomplish them only if we work together.”²⁶⁴ He connected the American founding to Judeo-Christian belief:

“The American people stand firm in the faith which has inspired this Nation from the beginning. We believe that all men have a right to equal justice under law and equal opportunity to share in the common good. We believe that all men have a right to freedom of thought and expression. We believe that all men are created equal because they are created in the image of God.”²⁶⁵

The last sentence of this passage alluded to Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”²⁶⁶ In this way, Truman began his inaugural address by connecting American governance to Judeo-Christian belief.

Truman juxtaposed America’s firm faith in religiously-backed democracy with the “false philosophy [of] communism.”²⁶⁷ This rhetoric is in line with Truman’s actions as president to fight communism by uniting nations throughout the world in religious commonality.²⁶⁸ Elizabeth Spalding explains, “Truman maintained that a world crusade of religions against communism would be unbeatable over time,” and, in 1951, he led a global religious campaign that “looked for the defeat of communism through a concerted religious effort.”²⁶⁹ Indeed, Truman explained that the “differences between communism and democracy do not concern the United States alone. People everywhere are coming to realize that what is involved is material well-being, human dignity, and the right to believe in and worship God.”²⁷⁰ Truman demonstrated the incompatibility of communism and democracy, and he also cast communism as a global threat to religious values. Truman then harnessed religious rhetoric to persuade the American people towards action against communism: “Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man's freedom is secure,” and he went on, “we will devote our strength, our

resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God's help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace.”²⁷¹ Truman used American civil religion to tie American citizens together under common values and make the case for pursuing anti-communist policies.

Dwight D. Eisenhower entered office in 1953, as the nation was entrenched in the Cold War.²⁷² Eisenhower, a World War II military leader, called upon religious rhetoric in order to establish America’s God-given strength in the face of a global anti-religious threat. Before his election, he was not a member of any church, yet, on this point, he established, “I am the most intensely religious man I know...Nobody goes through six years of war without faith. That doesn’t mean I adhere to any sect. A democracy cannot exist without a religious base. I believe in democracy.”²⁷³ Further establishing this connection between religion and democracy, Eisenhower began his inaugural address with a prayer, becoming the first and only president to include a self-authored prayer in an inaugural:

My friends, before I begin the expression of those thoughts that I deem appropriate to this moment, would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own. And I ask that you bow your heads:

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the Executive branch of Government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race or calling.

May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen.²⁷⁴

This introduction connected America directly to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and, as Eisenhower recounted, this was a way “to point out that we were getting to secular.”²⁷⁵ Eisenhower thought that it was especially essential to connect the United States to God in the face of the anti-religious threat of communism.²⁷⁶ In order to take steps towards this goal, Eisenhower joined the Presbyterian Church while president, and he was even baptized while holding office, becoming the first president to do so.²⁷⁷

Eisenhower’s address revolved around the idea of American “faith,” using the word “faith” 14 times.²⁷⁸ Eisenhower explained our American faith is in democracy, but he also placed this idea in a religious context, connecting this idea directly to American civil religion. Indeed, in his memoirs, Eisenhower explained that since his childhood he had “a deep faith in the beneficence of the Almighty,” and he wanted to “make this faith clear.”²⁷⁹ This clear connection allowed Eisenhower to set Judeo-Christian values against the “evil” of communism.²⁸⁰ Eisenhower continued this contrast of communism to American democracy: “The enemies of this faith know no god but force, no devotion but its use. They tutor men in treason. They feed upon the hunger of others. Whatever defies them, they torture, especially the truth.”²⁸¹ Eisenhower harnessed religious rhetoric to back his policies, particularly his military interventionism in Cold War proxy conflicts.²⁸²

As the Cold War progressed under Eisenhower’s administration, he continued to emphasize America’s religiosity juxtaposed with the godless communist threat. Indeed, Eisenhower’s “New Look” policy emphasized “maintaining the vitality of the U.S. economy while still building sufficient strength to prosecute the Cold War,” “relying on nuclear weapons to deter Communist aggression or, if necessary, to fight a war,” “using

the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to carry out secret or covert actions against governments or leaders ‘directly or indirectly responsive to Soviet control,’” and “strengthening allies and winning the friendship of nonaligned governments.”²⁸³ While the Korean War did conclude under Eisenhower’s administration, Eisenhower continued to escalate the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union.²⁸⁴ While Eisenhower met with Soviet leaders in 1955 at the “Spirit of Geneva” conference and established a “peaceful coexistence” policy, in 1956, the Soviet Union brutally put down a Hungarian national uprising, resulting in the death of thousands of Hungarians and causing almost a quarter-million Hungarians to flee the country.²⁸⁵ Eisenhower did not take action overtly over this issue, but he continued to be deeply skeptical of the Soviet Union and its leader, Nikita Khrushchev.²⁸⁶

In this context, Eisenhower continued to emphasize America’s religiosity with the “divisive force” of “international communism” in his second inaugural address.²⁸⁷

Eisenhower used the same framework as his first inaugural address by beginning with a prayer:

Before all else, we seek, upon our common labor as a nation, the blessings of Almighty God. And the hopes in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people.

May we pursue the right--without self-righteousness.

May we know unity--without conformity.

May we grow in strength--without pride in self.

May we, in our dealings with all peoples of the earth, ever speak truth and serve justice.

And so shall America--in the sight of all men of good will--prove true to the honorable purposes that bind and rule us as a people in all this time of trial through which we pass.

We live in a land of plenty, but rarely has this earth known such peril as today.²⁸⁸

Eisenhower then argued that the communist mission was “dark in purpose” and strove “to capture...all forces of change in the world, especially the needs of the hungry and the hopes of the oppressed.”²⁸⁹ “Darkness” is associated with evil and “the hungry,” while the Bible upholds “the oppressed” in society. By using this good versus evil imagery, Eisenhower placed the Cold War in a religious framework that pitted America’s goodness against the Soviet Union’s evil. By making this stark contrast, Eisenhower was able to make a religiously-inspired case for his anti-communist policies. In this way, Eisenhower used American civil religion and religious allegory in order to set a united, religious nation against one that was militantly anti-religious.

John F. Kennedy in his famous inaugural address similarly used religion as a way to connect Americans towards international goals and universal values.²⁹⁰ Kennedy was the first Catholic president, but he used the Protestant King James Bible, as opposed to the Catholic Douay Rheims Bible.²⁹¹ Indeed, Robert Bellah uses Kennedy’s inaugural address as a prototypical example of American civil religion. Bellah explains, “the whole address can be understood as only the most recent statement of a theme that lies very deep in the American tradition, namely the obligation, both collective and individual to carry out God’s will on earth.”²⁹² Kennedy said, “the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.”²⁹³ In this way, Kennedy tied American values to the rest of the world, and he directly connected these values to the Declaration of Independence, as well as the will of God, demonstrating his deep-seated belief in America’s religious predestination for success.²⁹⁴ On this point, Bellah points out that by emphasizing the intrinsic nature of these values, “the president’s

obligation extends not only to the people but to God. In American political theory, sovereignty rests, of course with the people, but implicitly, and often explicitly, the ultimate sovereignty has been attributed to God.²⁹⁵ In this way, Kennedy set his presidency on the path of “carry[ing] out God’s will on earth.”²⁹⁶ Kennedy tied America’s destiny with God’s divine will, yet, in accordance with Bellah’s American civil religion, he did not refer to any specific religion, nor to Jesus, Christianity, or Catholicism, the denomination to which he belonged.²⁹⁷ By doing so, Kennedy tied the nation to a religious concept that appealed to a much broader American audience. Kennedy’s inaugural address mirrored broader themes of twentieth century speeches by using rhetoric to rally support for his policies. Moreover, Kennedy’s speech also reflected the increasing use of Judeo-Christian religious rhetoric to justify policies.

Kennedy used religious rhetoric to call upon the American people to domestic and international action: “Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need--not as a call to battle, though embattled we are--but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, ‘rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation’--a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.”²⁹⁸ This passage borrowed from two biblical passages. First, Kennedy used 1 Corinthians 14:8: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”²⁹⁹ This passage, from one of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, referred to the ancient Israelite tradition of trumpeting to lead armies into battle.³⁰⁰ The second reference was to Romans 12:12: “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer,” and Kennedy used this passage to justify American international action for the sake of eliminating “tyranny, poverty, disease and war

itself.”³⁰¹ Both of these passages came from the New Testament, although neither passage included any solely Christian beliefs. Kennedy continued on this thread by concluding, “let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.”³⁰² This religious invocation touched on Kennedy’s earlier and more famous lines: “ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.”³⁰³ Moreover, this reference to sacrifice also connected Kennedy further to Bellah’s idea that America’s civil religion, especially after Lincoln, is rooted in sacrifice.³⁰⁴ Kennedy implied that the United States had a divinely sanctioned duty to go forth and fight in America’s name. In this way, Kennedy used religion to connect Americans together under common values and set those values apart from their communist enemies.

By the 1960s, television took hold in America and changed the way in which presidents addressed the people.³⁰⁵ While the inaugural address had once been accessible only by Washington politicians and other officials, the entire nation could now hear the president’s address by radio and even see it on television. For President Lyndon B. Johnson, this new technology meant that speeches had to be written in ways that could be easily picked by news media.³⁰⁶ Moreover, with this rise in influence of presidential addresses, Johnson and Richard Nixon further institutionalized the practice of having official speechwriters in their unit.³⁰⁷ Nixon even created a writing and research department, which he employed to create strong presidential speeches and to improve his public relations.³⁰⁸ Yet, while the speechwriting role became more formal, speechwriters also became less involved with policy decisions.³⁰⁹

Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter each used religion in their inaugural addresses to unite the nation on domestic policies, as well as continue their predecessors' strategy of setting a united religious America against a Cold War threat. Johnson explained in his address, "we are a nation of believers," Nixon said "let us go forward...sustained by our faith in God who created us, and striving always to serve His purpose," and Carter underscored, "[America] was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and human liberty."³¹⁰ These invocations each set American history in a religious context. Moreover, they cited specific biblical text in order to establish their religiosity and unite the nation more generally. Johnson, in his inaugural, quoted 2 Chronicles 1:10: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?"³¹¹ By quoting this specific biblical text, Johnson connected his governance to the Judeo-Christian tradition.³¹²

Jimmy Carter also tied his inaugural address to the Old Testament by quoting Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."³¹³ Carter derived from a Baptist background, and he made his way up the political ladder from the ground up.³¹⁴ As Carter came from outside of the Washington establishment, he was very hesitant about employing speechwriters.³¹⁵ Indeed, Carter had hoped to quote 2 Chronicles 7:14 in his inaugural address, but this speechwriters talked him out of using this invocation, fearing it could divide the nation.³¹⁶ This passage reads, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will

heal their land.”³¹⁷ Carter’s aides thought that this passage would contradict with Carter’s position that “the government was bad and that the people were good” and would thereby divide the nation.³¹⁸ Carter did not like this advice, but he nonetheless left it out of his inaugural address, instead quoting Scripture that unified the nation and tied his speech to a Judeo-Christian tradition.³¹⁹ Nixon also cited religious Scripture when he referenced the peace that comes “with healing in its wings,” from Malachi 4:2.³²⁰ These uses of religion aimed to unite the nation: Carter and Johnson’s only to set their presidencies in religious frameworks, and Nixon to unify the nation under peaceful themes in the context of a divisive war in Vietnam.

These presidents made religiously backed claims to their policies. Johnson explained, “In a land of healing miracles, neighbors must not suffer and die untended. In a great land of learning and scholars, young people must be taught to read and write,” clearly linking religion with his Great Society.³²¹ References to Jesus’ ability to miraculously heal those in need pervade the New Testament. For instance, in Matthew 11:4-5, Jesus says to his disciples, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”³²² In this way, this Christian religious allegory helped Johnson make a case for his domestic policy in a way that marked him as acting according to Jesus’ teachings.

As Ronald C. Wimberley explains, Nixon’s inaugural address was clothed in religious rhetoric.³²³ Nixon was raised a Quaker, and while he spoke in general religious terms in his address, he did allude specifically to Quakerism. Nixon explained in his address that the nation is in a crisis, and he said, “To a crisis of the spirit, we need an

answer of the spirit. And to find that answer, we need only look within ourselves.”³²⁴

While this reference is not biblical, this idea of looking within ourselves corresponds directly to the central components of Quakerism.³²⁵ Indeed, Quakerism revolves around the idea of an “inner light,” deriving from John 1:9: “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”³²⁶ Quakers believe that closeness to and knowledge of God is experienced from within individuals, and experiencing inner light teaches individuals the difference between good and evil, as well as unites individuals as open to deciding between good and evil.³²⁷ In more generally religious terms, Nixon clearly linked religion to his domestic policies by saying, “We have the chance today to do more than ever before in our history to make life better in America—to ensure better education, better health, better housing, better transportation, a cleaner environment—to restore respect for law, to make our communities more livable—and to ensure the God-given right of every American to full and equal opportunity.”³²⁸ In this way, these presidents worked in a framework of American civil religion, yet they more explicitly used religion to make cases for their policies.

Ronald Reagan used his first and second inaugural addresses to solidify his emphasis on religion. In the 1970s and 1980s, the New Christian Right emerged, calling upon evangelical fundamentalist leaders to use their religious sway to affect elections.³²⁹ In this context, in the 1980 election, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and John B. Anderson were all considered pious candidates, yet the “Moral Majority” led by Howard Phillips and Jerry Falwell, supported Reagan for his “pro-God, pro-family, and pro-American causes.”³³⁰ According to Richard V. Pierard, the Moral Majority “threw

themselves body and soul into the campaign on behalf of Reagan, a man they believed was a godly, evangelical Christian who would bring America back to God.”³³¹

In his first inaugural address, Reagan suggested that Inauguration Day should be an official Day of Prayer, and as Hanson cites, Reagan made it “almost obligatory...to end every address with some combination of ‘God bless you’ and ‘God bless America’ — a move from asking for, appealing to, or seeking divine guidance to asking God to bless the people and country.”³³² In this way, Reagan’s inaugural address set his presidency in a religious framework. Moreover, by establishing, “We are a nation under God, and I believe God intended for us to be free,” Reagan sets freedom as a religiously backed virtue, setting the course for governmental policies towards this end.³³³

Reagan’s second inaugural address came after the president won a resounding victory, defeating Walter F. Mondale in every state except Minnesota.³³⁴ Reagan used this landslide victory as a mandate to continue expanding his economic and militaristic policies, to pacify the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, and to realign the nation towards religiously conservative policies.³³⁵ Pierard explains how leading up to the 1984 election, “he pushed forward in the effort to rally religious conservatives of all stripes to his cause,” appealing to evangelicals and incorporating the religious right into his administration.³³⁶ On their end, the Moral Majority rallied support for the president and helped frame Reagan’s presidency in a religious light.³³⁷

Reagan’s second inaugural address revolved around religious themes. Indeed, Reagan mentioned God eight times in this speech, the most of any president ever, and he oriented his speech in the context of American civil religion.³³⁸ Reagan began by praying for two lawmakers: Senator John Stennis, who had been suffering from cancer, as well

as, Congressman Gillis Long, who had passed away immediately prior to Reagan's address.³³⁹ Reagan then nodded to George Washington and explained, "In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow" and by saying, "One people under God determined that our future shall be worthy of our past."³⁴⁰ Reagan continued, "When I took this oath four years ago, I did so in a time of economic stress. Voices were raised saying we had to look to our past for the greatness and glory. But we, the present-day Americans, are not given to looking backward. In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow," demonstrating a shift in the state of the nation, consequently affecting the way Reagan harnessed religion.³⁴¹ Moreover, Reagan directly connected his current term to his previous one:

One people under God determined that our future shall be worthy of our past. As we do, we must not repeat the well-intentioned errors of our past. We must never again abuse the trust of working men and women, by sending their earnings on a futile chase after the spiraling demands of a bloated Federal Establishment. You elected us in 1980 to end this prescription for disaster, and I don't believe you re-elected us in 1984 to reverse course.³⁴²

Reagan used this framework to make a case for "renew[ing] our faith" through cultivating values in line with the Moral Majority.³⁴³ Reagan very directly uses religion to support his policies. He said "We must simplify our tax system...so the least among us shall have an equal chance to achieve the greatest things—to be heroes who heal our sick, feed the hungry, protect peace among nations, and leave this world a better place," which borrowed two scriptural references from the Book of Matthew.³⁴⁴ The first came from Matthew 25:40: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," and the second came from Matthew 10:8: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,

raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”³⁴⁵ By making these scriptural references, Reagan was using religion to make a case for his domestic goals. On this note, he further explained, “Our fundamental goals must be to reduce dependency and upgrade the dignity of those who are infirm or disadvantaged” in order to “offer our best chance for a society where compassion is a way of life, where the old and infirm are cared for, the young and, yes, the unborn protected, and the unfortunate looked after and made self,” which used the same threads to defend his policies.³⁴⁶ He also emphasized “There is no story more heartening in our history than the progress that we have made toward the "brotherhood of man" that God intended for us,” when discussing racial issues.³⁴⁷ Reagan clothed each of these issues in religious rhetoric, making a case to persuade the people, especially his evangelical base, to support his policies.

Reagan then turned to discussing the Soviet Union, and in so doing he continued to pit a religious America against a godless enemy. Reagan explained:

Today, we utter no prayer more fervently than the ancient prayer for peace on Earth. Yet history has shown that peace will not come, nor will our freedom be preserved, by good will alone. There are those in the world who scorn our vision of human dignity and freedom. One nation, the Soviet Union, has conducted the greatest military buildup in the history of man, building arsenals of awesome offensive weapons.³⁴⁸

Using this type of language, Reagan sets America as good, peaceful, and religious while the Soviet Union is militaristic and evil. Yet, rather than using this language to continue a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, Reagan used the language to call for peace.

Reagan then concluded his address by tying it back to God: “we raise our voices to the God who is the Author of this most tender music. And may He continue to hold us close as we fill the world with our sound--sound in unity, affection, and love--one people

under God, dedicated to the dream of freedom that He has placed in the human heart, called upon now to pass that dream on to a waiting and hopeful world.”³⁴⁹ In this way, Reagan used religion to appeal to his religious base and make a case for his domestic and international policies. Thus, while he used notions of American civil religion to unify the people under a religious identity, he also frequently used religion to appeal to a certain sect of people, namely religious evangelicals. Reagan pursued oftentimes controversial policies, but he tied his policies back to religious allegory. In this way, Reagan demonstrated the increasing shift towards a public president who defends his policies, and he also marked a shift towards a presidency incorporating concerns of the religious sphere.

George H.W. Bush mimicked many of Reagan’s religious strategies in his inaugural address. Reagan said:

When the first President, George Washington, placed his hand upon the Bible, he stood less than a single day's journey by horseback from raw, untamed wilderness. There were 4 million Americans in a union of 13 States. Today we are 60 times as many in a union of 50 States. We have lighted the world with our inventions, gone to the aid of mankind wherever in the world there was a cry for help, journeyed to the Moon and safely returned. So much has changed. And yet we stand together as we did two centuries ago.³⁵⁰

Then, George H.W. Bush followed suit:

I've just repeated word for word the oath taken by George Washington 200 years ago, and the Bible on which I placed my hand is the Bible on which he placed his. It is right that the memory of Washington be with us today not only because this is our bicentennial inauguration but because Washington remains the Father of our Country. And he would, I think, be gladdened by this day; for today is the concrete expression of a stunning fact: our continuity, these 200 years, since our government began.³⁵¹

By employing these very similar passages, these two presidents were both connecting their presidencies with the Founding and the Bible. This is a very common strategy of American civil religion and allowed these presidents to unite the nation under American civil religious themes. Moreover, like his predecessors, Bush continued to frame the Cold War as a battle against an anti-religious force. Indeed, during his presidency, Bush emphasized that “the communist leadership was morally bankrupt,” and, thus, “religion, morality, right and wrong—any challenge to the rule of the state became an enemy of the state.”³⁵² In this way, even though he was hesitant to bring personal faith into his speeches, he declared his “first act as President” to be a prayer, and he led the nation in a prayer to commence his inaugural address, just as Reagan did.³⁵³ He then concluded his inaugural address with a religious invocation: “God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.”³⁵⁴ Thus, Bush continued Reagan’s pattern of contextualizing American politics in a religious framework. This continuation of Reagan’s policies fit with Bush’s role as a transitional president, as he also continued many of Reagan’s policies.³⁵⁵

As the nation was faced with an international threat in the form of the anti-religious, anti-democratic communism, presidents at the time responded by using religious rhetoric in their inaugural addresses to unite the nation under a Christian identity juxtaposed with a non-religious enemy. In this way, like other wartime presidents, these presidents used religion to unite the nation under certain moralistic claims and with the idea of America’s divine providence. Yet, more than ever before, these presidents also used religion as a way to make a case for their policies. In the international sphere, that meant contextualizing the Cold War as a battle of good versus

evil. Yet, that role also filtered into the domestic sphere. Presidents during this period increasingly used religion to persuade the people to support their domestic policies, even at the expense of uniting the nation. In so doing, these presidents were much more inclined to not only invoke “God” but also hone in on New Testament Scripture and Christianity. Moreover, they were also more inclined to make cases for policies that were not always supported by the entire nation. In this way, by the late twentieth century, the role of the rhetorical presidency continued to shift, and the role of religion within the rhetorical presidency shifted, as well.

Chapter Four: Post-Cold War Presidencies

After twelve years of Republican control of the White House, Bill Clinton was elected in 1992. Clinton was born into a troubled but religiously observant family.³⁵⁶ He was raised attending a Baptist church and was versed in Scripture.³⁵⁷ Yet, Clinton diverged from his Baptist upbringing after idolizing John F. Kennedy and attending Georgetown University, a Catholic university as opposed to the local Baptist one.³⁵⁸ According to Robert D. Linder, Clinton “cast aside his Baptist inhibitions and became a member of the hip 1960s generation” while in college, but he eventually returned back to his Baptist origins when his daughter Chelsea was born.³⁵⁹ While Clinton was attacked by many religious authorities for his liberal policies on pro-choice abortion issues and on equality for homosexual couples, he maintained his public advocacy of his strong faith.³⁶⁰

While a Democrat after a series of Republican leaders, Clinton’s first inaugural address used many of the same approaches as his Republican predecessors. Like his predecessors, Clinton also highlighted the founding of our nation in the framework of American civil religion: “When our Founders boldly declared America's independence to the world and our purposes to the Almighty, they knew that America, to endure, would have to change; not change for change's sake but change to preserve America's ideals: life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Though we marched to the music of our time, our mission is timeless.”³⁶¹ This passage demonstrates Clinton’s attachment to the founding of our nation in a way that makes reference to “the Almighty” and also mirrors the theme of America’s predestined greatness. Throughout his address, Clinton continued to allude to America’s founding in a way that less directly used religion, but, nonetheless, still harkened to the theme of “American Israel.”³⁶² While Clinton did invoke religion and

harness American civil religion, he diverged from his predecessors in his use of Christianity, specifically. As John J. Pitney Jr. explains, Clinton was aware that “many Americans would take offense at excessive Bible-thumping or at phrases that endorse one denomination over another. So while he often talks about God, he seldom uses the name of Jesus. While he sometimes quotes directly from Scripture, he more often employs words and phrases that come from the Bible but have secular meanings as well.”³⁶³ To this end, Clinton concluded his inaugural address with a passage from Galatians 6:9: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”³⁶⁴ Indeed, this Scripture is explicitly religious, yet it also relates to many other biblical ideas, as well. As Pitney explains, “This passage had a special resonance, for it contained the ‘reap and sow’ metaphor that recurs throughout the New Testament,” and relates to the idea of seasons.³⁶⁵ Clinton then further reinforced this idea of seasons by explaining, “Yes, you, my fellow Americans, have forced the spring. Now we must do the work the season demands,” making a religiously backed case for political change in his administration.³⁶⁶ In this way, Clinton continued the twentieth century trend of using religion to rally support for his policies, yet Clinton tapped the Judeo-Christian tradition that appealed to broader audience. Rather than speaking of Jesus or quoting the New Testament, Clinton used religion more broadly to set his speech in the framework of American civil religion without making his speech explicitly Christian.

Clinton’s second inaugural address invoked religious rhetoric to foster unity within the nation in the framework of American civil religion. Indeed, Clinton again reinforced the American narrative in religious terms: “Guided by the ancient vision of a promised land, let us set our sights upon a land of new promise.”³⁶⁷ This idea of a “land

of new promise,” relates back to the Puritanical idea of America’s greatness, and it sets that greatness in an “American Israel” religious context.³⁶⁸ Yet, rather than using this vision of a great America, Clinton grappled with religious equality by stating “Prejudice and contempt cloaked in the pretense of religious or political conviction are no different. These forces have nearly destroyed our Nation in the past,” and then he also makes the case for equality more generally: “Let us remember the timeless wisdom of Cardinal Bernardin, when facing the end of his own life. He said, ‘It is wrong to waste the precious gift of time on acrimony and division.’”³⁶⁹ While Clinton was a Baptist, he was also was a big admirer of John F. Kennedy and did not hesitate from invoking Catholic religion.³⁷⁰ Capturing a larger swath of believers, Clinton quoted a Catholic authority, just as Kennedy had cited the King James Bible. Thus, Clinton used religion and religious ideology to make the case for equality on all matters, including religion.

George W. Bush was a highly religious evangelical, and he brought this strong Christian faith to his presidential rhetorical style. Indeed, scholars D. Jason Berggren and Nicol C. Rae explain that “Bush certainly is among the most religious presidents in the sense of blurring the lines between religion and politics.”³⁷¹ With this strong religious component to his presidential identity, Bush’s strongest support group in the 2000 and the 2004 elections were from evangelicals and churchgoers.³⁷² While in office, Bush was more inclined to invoke religion in the public sphere than his father, and he had greater evangelical tendencies than his father.³⁷³ Indeed, while his father was more private about his religious views, Berggren and Rae explain that “Bush sees politics as a religious vocation, a calling, and a sacred duty to be performed for God and humankind.”³⁷⁴

With this strong faith and these evangelical notions, Bush not only used religion to make a persuasive case for his policies, but he also invoked a more specific God and form of belief. Frank explains that “Rev. Franklin Graham's prayer delivered during the first inauguration of George W. Bush heralded the theology that would soon prompt the rise of the new atheism. Graham ended his prayer ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—and of the Holy Spirit.’”³⁷⁵ While invoking a deity figure can unify the nation, this evangelical turn to discuss Jesus marked a shift towards a more specific form of religion, targeting a subset of Americans rather than the entire nation.

Now, Bush’s first inaugural address in January 2001, months before the September 11th attacks, was among the most religious in history, both in its specific invocations of God and in its moralistic language.³⁷⁶ Indeed, Bush couched his discussion of American duty and governmental responsibility with religion:

Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet, compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government. And some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor's touch or a pastor's prayer. Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws.³⁷⁷

Yet, this inclusion of religion in his inaugural address was not narrowly defined. For the first time in an inaugural address, Islamic religion is mentioned, and it is framed within the context of American religiosity. While Bush included a broader definition of religion, Hanson points out that “no other president has spoken so explicitly about the possible role of religion in the political sphere, and it alarmed those who monitor church-state issues.”³⁷⁸ Indeed, Bush’s first executive order was creating the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which allowed religious groups to receive

governmental funding.³⁷⁹ Thus, while Bush's view of religion reached beyond Christianity, critics often argued that Bush was breaching a distinction between church and state.³⁸⁰

At one point in his first inaugural address, Bush said, "I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves, who creates us equal, in His image, and we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward," and he also later explains, "we are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with his purpose. Yet, his purpose is achieved in our duty. And our duty is fulfilled in service to one another."³⁸¹

He also invoked specific Scripture in his address. Bush said, "Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty. But we can listen to those who do. And I can pledge our Nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side."³⁸² This passage alluded to the Parable of the Good Samaritan:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.
 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.
 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,
 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁸³

Jesus used this parable to teach how to live a righteous life, and, likewise, Bush uses this Scripture to persuade Americans to follow in Jesus' footsteps and have mercy on those in need. By doing so, Bush is not only using religion to persuade Americans to support

certain policies, but he is bringing in a much more specific form of religion by referring to the New Testament. Indeed, Hanson even points out the Bush is one of the first presidents to use the New Testament in an inaugural address.³⁸⁴ Bush went on, “Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers; they are citizens—not problems but priorities. And all of us are diminished when any are hopeless,” and then returning again to discuss “the vulnerable.”³⁸⁵ Not only are these common Christian terms, but they are very related to this story of the Good Samaritan, linking these terms back to his case to support those in poverty.

Even when Bush did not directly discuss religion, he used highly moralistic language. Hanson explains that Bush “supported the idea of a civil religion” by saying that “our democratic faith is more than the creed of our nation. It is the inborn hope of our humanity,” reinforcing the idea of a faith in our democracy that mimics faith in God and even descends from that belief.³⁸⁶ Moreover, Bush’s address was drenched in allusions to moral values; Hanson cites that “compassion,” “character,” and “citizen” are referenced more in Bush’s speech than any twentieth-century address.³⁸⁷ Bush also focused on a “call to conscience,” which Frank explains was “celebrating God’s ‘call’ to fulfill the promise of freedom.”³⁸⁸ John M. Murphy explains that this line is “the most important of the address and frames all that has come and all this is to follow,” as calling upon Americans “is to sanctify the nation, to make it eternal, and to realize its covenant with God.”³⁸⁹ Murphy explains that using this framework, Bush made America “‘holy,’ placing the country in the ‘sacred history’ of the Pauline manifestation of the Christian myth. Bush effectively lifts America out of secular time into an ‘eternal present’ in which

he becomes ‘the authoritative leader and teacher who decodes and continues the American story.’”³⁹⁰

Bush’s second inaugural address reaffirmed religious themes highlighted in his first address. Yet, Bush gave his second inaugural address in a very different context. During the election of 2004, America was involved in the Iraq War, which hinged on religious dynamics. Indeed, James L. Guth, Lyman A. Kellstedt, Corwin E. Smidt, and John C. Green’s research demonstrates that religious groups believed that the Iraq War was justified to a disproportionate degree to the rest of society, and that those “attitudes towards the Iraq War were the most powerful predictor of the presidential vote.”³⁹¹ Bush catered to his strong religious base by emphasizing religion and placing America into the context of a divinely guided path to success. Bush begins by placing this religious context into a historical framework: “From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this Earth has rights and dignity and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of heaven and Earth.”³⁹² Then, he moved to a religiously inspired destiny: “History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty.”³⁹³

Yet, even while placing the United States in a religious framework, he continued to incorporate a broader view of religion. Indeed, like his first inaugural address, Bush deployed Christian, Jewish, and Muslim themes in his inaugural address:

Self-government relies, in the end, on the governing of the self. That edifice of character is built in families, supported by communities with standards, and sustained in our national life by the truths of Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the Koran, and the varied faiths of our people. Americans move forward in every generation by reaffirming all that is good and true that came before - ideals of justice and conduct that are the same yesterday, today, and forever.³⁹⁴

Rather than an explicitly Christian religion, Bush harnessed American civil religion by tying American democracy to God and Scripture, without connecting his speech only to Christianity. Thus, even in the context of the Iraq War, Bush used religious rhetoric to connect Americans, emphasizing the similarities between religions, rather than the differences. By rhetorically uniting the nation under an Abrahamic religious identity, Bush followed similar patterns to many of his previous wartime predecessors. He united the nation under American civil religion values and under its emphasis on America's divine predestination, against an international threat.

Barack Obama's election in 2008 marked a shift in the presidency: the first Black president was elected. Moreover, Obama's presidency also diverged significantly from the way in which his predecessors used religion. Obama's devout Christian beliefs did not arise until later in his life. Obama explained at the 2009 National Prayer Breakfast, "I was not raised in a particularly religious household. I had a father who was born a Muslim but became an atheist, grandparents who were non-practicing Methodists and Baptists, and a mother who was skeptical of organized religion."³⁹⁵ Indeed, in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama explains his broad religious upbringing: "In our household the Bible, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita sat on the shelf alongside books of Greek and Norse and African mythology."³⁹⁶ From this religiously diverse childhood, Obama eventually "walk[ed] down the aisle of Trinity United Church of Christ one day and [was] baptized," after finding religious connection in the African American religious tradition as an adult.³⁹⁷ As president, Obama did not join a church in Washington, D.C., but he did attend church services at least as often as some of his predecessors in different Protestant churches across the region.³⁹⁸

Indeed, like many of his predecessors, Obama used religion to unify the nation behind his policies, albeit in a very different way. Whereas Republican presidents used religion in order to unify the nation around conservative policies, Obama used religion to unite the nation for liberal ones. Thus, in Obama's first inaugural address, he used religion to unite the nation for social welfare programs, while using secular language when approaching other issues. On this note, Frank explains, in his first inaugural address, Obama "limited the domain of religion in the public sphere to that which can be verified, an approach that requires public reason, discourse, and science."³⁹⁹ Indeed, Obama balanced using secular rhetoric when discussing the space for American progress, as he explained his policies in terms of what "we can do. All this we will do," while simultaneously using religion to unify the nation in more broad strokes: "The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."⁴⁰⁰

Obama referred to America as "a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers."⁴⁰¹ This reference to "non-believers" was the first instance of a president ever including secular individuals in an inaugural address. On this point, Frank points out, "This is a striking passage as it rejects the religion/atheism divide, acknowledges the three Abrahamic religions, and for the first time in the history of American presidential inaugural rhetoric, explicitly recognizes the Hindu religion, a fact recognized on the front page of major Indian dailies."⁴⁰² Furthermore, like Bush, Obama recognized Muslims as part of the national narrative in this passage, continuing a trend of

embracing a broader view of religion in America.⁴⁰³ Obama continued, “to the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.”⁴⁰⁴

Frank explains that this use of multiple religious affiliations demonstrates “the sustaining, if not revival, of the role faith plays in global community.”⁴⁰⁵

While Obama made secular and non-Christian religious nods in his inaugural addresses, he did allude to Judeo-Christian religion frequently. Indeed, like Bush, Obama invoked Christian Scripture in ways that connected America and his presidency to religion. Frank notes that while Obama’s Inaugural “does not mimic or mirror the more Manichean signature embraced by his predecessor,” he, instead, used “a distinctly cosmopolitan theology out of the tradition of American civic religion, and civil rights leader Joseph Lowery’s benediction.”⁴⁰⁶ In this way, Medhurst demonstrates that Obama uses the words “faith,” “hope,” and “courage” most frequently, underscoring his emphasis on this cosmopolitan form of American civil religion.⁴⁰⁷ Frank further explains that this cosmopolitan ideology demonstrates “his commitment to a prophetic expression of Christianity, a belief that God is still working in the world, that other religions and nonreligious have a sacred responsibility to other.”⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, the specific language choices that Obama use demonstrate a religious orientation to his policy persuasion. On this note, Stanley Fish notes that Obama followed a similar literary technique to the Bible by writing in short, simple sentences.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, Frank expands on Fish’s point by explaining how Obama’s inaugural was written in parable-like moments.⁴¹⁰ Thus, rather than making a deductive argument driven by a thesis, Obama’s inaugural was written in a series of “discrete moments.”⁴¹¹

Furthermore, Obama did invoke Scripture in his address:

But in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.⁴¹²

While this passage may seem like a more secular message than previous presidents' scriptural references, this invocation came from 1 Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."⁴¹³ Frank emphasizes that this is "a key passage as it establishes Obama's vision of civil religion in a universal claim, one that is not a heritage of natural law or the Enlightenment, but derives from the Hebraic tradition."⁴¹⁴ Obama was still following his predecessors' strategy of using religion to place America on a certain destiny. Yet, rather than emphasizing the singularity of the Founders' religion, Frank emphasizes, that "the American journey, Obama narrates, did not begin with a uniform or unitary set of religious principles; rather, it evolved out of a patchwork of different beliefs. This reworking of the prevailing American founding myth, reflective of the language of Being and an assumption that the American national identity was grounded in white Christianity, is cosmopolitan in its pretensions, but draws directly from American myth."⁴¹⁵

Obama's second inaugural more explicitly tied America's founding not only to religion but to a more all-encompassing form of civil religion. Indeed, rather than Frank's position that Obama's version of civil religion does not come from a set of uniform beliefs—both from Christianity and from the Founders—Obama returned to the traditional form of civil religion by emphasizing "what makes us exceptional -- what makes us American -- is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more

than two centuries ago: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’”⁴¹⁶ Yet, Obama said that while “history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they’ve never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth.”⁴¹⁷ In this way, Obama did not simply leave the American narrative up to God, but he puts the American destiny in a more secular sphere. He furthered this notion when he explained that “a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American; she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own.”⁴¹⁸ In this way, Obama was reaffirming “Obama's vision of civil religion in a universal claim,” a claim that incorporates the diversity of American citizens and the multitude of beliefs.⁴¹⁹

Moreover, Obama concluded:

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths — that all of us are created equal — is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth.⁴²⁰

This passage established the American narrative all in a religious context, especially events that may contradict with certain religious practices. Seneca Falls was the first American women’s rights convention based around rallying for equal rights for women, a position that conflicted with many positions in established churches at the time.⁴²¹

Similarly, the Stonewall Uprisings were protests against police action at a gay bar in New York, and these protests catalyzed significant modern demonstrations for LGBT rights in

the United States.⁴²² By embracing Stonewall and Seneca Falls in the American narrative, Obama suggested that these people and movements include people who are equally “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁴²³

In this way, Obama used American civil religion to unite the nation under a religious identity. Like Bush, this identity, for Obama, encompassed more than just Judeo-Christian religions. Indeed, while invoking religious themes, Obama even included non-believers in his interpretation of the American identity. Yet, even while incorporating a broader view of religion in his inaugural addresses, Obama did still rely on Christianity when making the case for his policies. Thus, as Obama was aware of his religiously diverse audience, his reliance on Christian references demonstrates that his use of religion was not always a unifier. Rather, it served as a tool of persuasion for certain policies that would appeal to different groups of citizens.

Donald J. Trump was born into a Presbyterian family, and, as a teenager, he began following the famous minister Norman Vincent Peale, who was the pastor at Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan.⁴²⁴ Peale preached a message that appealed to businessmen and the upper class, advocating Christianity’s compatibility with free markets and financial success, yet this message also caused a stir among religious scholars who argued Peale chose only parts of the Bible that would meet his needs without giving credit to the Bible’s most important parables.⁴²⁵ Trump was particularly taken by Peale, and his form of religiosity mimicked Peale’s by using religion when convenient for his interests.⁴²⁶ Indeed, while Trump claims to be religious, he has been married three times, built strip clubs, uses obscenities publicly, has stated publicly that he

does not forgive or ask for forgiveness, spoken explicitly about women, and has reported on his sexual liberality.⁴²⁷ In a conversation with Frank Luntz, Trump explained that there is “nobody that [he] would compare to” in the Bible, and he could not name a favorite Bible verse of even whether he preferred the Old Testament or the New.⁴²⁸ He has seldom attended church since the 1980s, except on Christmas and Easter because he claims he is too busy.⁴²⁹

During the primaries, $\frac{3}{5}$ of voters, on both the Democratic and Republican side, perceived Trump as not very religious, yet as Trump gained success in the electorate, his support from religious Americans began to increase.⁴³⁰ In particular, evangelicals rallied around Trump in the election: by the Republican convention, evangelicals supported Trump in similar numbers to how they supported Romney in the 2012 election.⁴³¹ While evangelicals were hesitant of Trump’s rhetoric, they were largely excited about Trump’s outsider status.⁴³² Indeed, Corwin E. Smidt even writes that “as Election Day approached, a new survey revealed that evangelical Protestants were far more willing than others to agree that someone who had committed an immoral act in their personal life could, nevertheless, still behave ethically and fulfill the duties of their office in public life.”⁴³³ Moreover, after the elections, polls demonstrated that, despite Trump’s lack of religiosity, religious Americans tended to vote in line with their party preferences.⁴³⁴

Trump’s use of religion in his inaugural address diverged significantly from his predecessor. Trump used the same strategy as Obama and many other presidents by placing his inaugural address in a religious framework. Yet, his emphasis was different. While Obama used a religious framework to establish a diverse vision of the people, Trump used it to set Americans against others. Trump began, “We do not seek to impose

our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow,” a theme that is an archetypal example of American civil religion.⁴³⁵ Trump continued, “We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones -- and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.”⁴³⁶ This sentiment diverges significantly from Bush and Obama’s rhetoric.

Immediately following this pledge to eradicate “radical Islamic terrorism,” Trump cited Psalm 133:1: “When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice. The Bible tells us, ‘How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.’”⁴³⁷ While this passage seems to mirror a strategy of uniting the American people under a religious deity, this invocation was more explicitly geared towards Trump’s policy goals. Indeed, modern nation-states date back to 1648, thousands of years after this Psalm was written.⁴³⁸ Trump’s unification of the American people was aimed at setting a monolithic vision of the people against foreign enemies. Indeed, Trump emphasized that this unification should mean “a total allegiance to the United States of America” with the aim that “When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.”⁴³⁹ Moreover, he said, “We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement and, most importantly, we are protected by God.”⁴⁴⁰ In this way, Trump uses religion to unify the nation, and he orients this unification towards his specific policy positions.

In post-Cold War America, presidents not only continued to use religion in their inaugural addresses, but they invoked very personal forms of religion and used those personal forms of religion to back their domestic and international policies. Moreover, while the nation has become increasingly religiously diverse, presidents’ use of religion

no longer always serves as a unifier to bring Americans together under common religious values, but it can be used as a divisive form of rhetoric, appealing to only certain Americans. Recent presidents have adapted to these concerns by more explicitly making reference to many types of Believers (and non-Believers), yet even making these references oftentimes are policy plugs to rally certain groups around the president's messages. In this way, contemporary presidents oftentimes use religion as a calculated tool to mobilize certain groups for certain policies.

Conclusion

Today, we expect our presidents to address the people publicly, and we find it an almost necessary requirement for presidents to be religious. For these reasons, it is not surprising to see contemporary presidents invoking religion in their inaugural addresses: the first time they are introduced to the nation in their role as presidents. Moreover, we are not surprised when modern presidents use religion in their inaugural address to support their specific policies, whether domestic or international. Yet, this role of religion in presidential inaugural addresses *is* surprising. Indeed, it is unique to our time in history and our democratic nation to incorporate religion as a tool of persuasion in our inaugural addresses.

As a democracy that was founded upon a separation between church and state, it is surprising that our executives lead the nation with calls to religion. Indeed, among other Western, democratic nations, we are unique in this way. Professor Phil Zuckerman in his book, *Society without God*, explains that in other Western countries, like Sweden and Denmark, “politicians are expected to keep whatever religious beliefs they have to themselves, and if they have no religious beliefs, well, that’s even better.”⁴⁴¹ He continues, “if a politician were to discuss his or her faith publicly, or were to base any decision-making on prayer, were even to refer to God now and then in public addresses, that individual would quickly be out of a job.”⁴⁴² This stands in stark contrast from the United States. Indeed, an international survey demonstrated 64% of Americans agreed that “Politicians who don’t believe in God are unfit for public office” and 75% of Americans agreed that “it would be better for our country if more people with strong

religious beliefs held public office.”⁴⁴³ As a secular democracy, this emphasis on religious seems paradoxical.

Yet, if we look to the American Founding, the use of religion has always played a significant role in the public sphere. America was founded based upon premise of religious freedom, but its democratic notions were also framed within the context of American civil religion. Specifically, the Founders based their defense of democracy in religious terms while not specifically invoking a personal God. Indeed, rather than democracy and religion being at odds with one another, the Founders argued that they actually march together in America. At America’s Founding, democracy and religion were especially compatible due to the religiosity of society at the time. In this way, religion offered common values for Americans. On this note, Alexis de Tocqueville explained that religion was America’s first political institution and “powerfully contributes to the maintenance of a Democratic Republic among Americans.”⁴⁴⁴

Yet, the importance of religion in American society does not necessarily undercut the separation between church and state. Indeed, according to Bellah, American religiosity was based upon indirect, general references to a deistic God, not aimed at any personal form of religion.⁴⁴⁵ In this way, American governance upheld religious freedom and even allowed religious diversity to flourish because of America’s lack of an established church. Thus, at the Founding, presidents harnessed a form of American civil religion that emphasized religious values and America’s predestination towards greatness without discussing religion personally or even Christianity, specifically.

This use of religion in the framework of American civil religion manifested directly in the religious allusions used in presidential inaugural addresses. While our Founding

presidents were staunch advocates of a separation between church and state, they did not believe that discussing religion in this general way was an infringement upon this principle. As the Founders were addressing a very religious, albeit religiously diverse, group of citizens, this invocation of religion was used as a national unifier, as opposed to a way to limit freedom. This use of religion as a unifier was especially important as the nation faced major times of trial, such as the Civil War, when religion could be used to unite Americans.

While the importance of American civil religion has persisted, the use of religion in presidential inaugural addresses has shifted. While original presidents invoked general deistic themes in their inaugural addresses in order to unite the nation under lofty principles and goals, later presidents began to use religion in a much more personal way towards more pointed political goals. As distance from the Founding increased, presidents began to use religion to more specifically advocate for their specific policy proposals. In this way, presidents began to hone in on using specific religious references and Scripture, and they used this more personal form of religion as a tool of persuasion.

Now, the use of religion shifted under different presidents and in different contexts. During wartime, presidents used religious rhetoric in order to unite the nation under principles of sacrifice and religious predestination. In pursuing domestic policies, presidents defended their positions with religious views. Yet, regardless of political party or ideology, all presidents invoked some form of religious reference in their inaugural addresses. This religiosity differentiates the United States apart from its other Western, democratic counterparts.

Moreover, while original presidents invoked religion to generally unite the nation, they did not see their role as president including publicly communicating with the people or persuading the people through oral discourse. In this way, not only is America's religiosity a surprise when juxtaposed with other Western nations, its use of religion as a tool of persuasion is also surprising when we compare it to its own founding. Not only did the Founding presidents refrain from using a personal form of religion, but they also refrained from addressing the people directly and from making a case for any of their policies.

In these ways, the role of religion in the rhetorical presidency is not only surprising internationally but also historically. Our government is exceptionally religious when compared with other Western democracies. Moreover, the rhetorical role of the presidency has shifted significantly from the Founding: presidents are not only more public, but they also have taken to the public stage in order to persuade the American polity to support their positions. In this context, our modern presidency uses religion in ways that were seen as out of line with the Constitution and in ways that other democracies see as puzzling.

Against this backdrop, Trump emerged as a candidate who saw his role as predominately public and who perceived that he was not beholden to checks of power. Yet, he was also arguably the least religious serious candidate in United States history. However, this lack of religiosity did not stop Trump from harnessing religious rhetoric in order to make a case for his policies and his presidency. In this way, Trump's use of religious rhetoric in his campaign demonstrates religion's role as a tool of persuasion in order to give credit to his campaign and mobilize a religious audience.

The Founders were skeptical of an overly powerful executive, fearing that an energetic president would turn to tyranny and begin to resemble a monarchy. Moreover, the Founders were also skeptical of a breach of church and state with the fear of diminishing religious freedom. Today, these fears are apparent. With Trump's election to the presidency, he has used his power to circumvent checks and balances and has used his public connection to the American people as a way to justify his actions. Furthermore, he has used a specific, Christian religious defense for his policies in order to appeal to certain portions of the nation and to further his divisive policies. In this way, Trump's presidency not only threatens religious freedom, but also Constitutional restraints on the presidency. As we move forward in our nation, we must assess the role of religion in the public sphere, as well as the role of the presidency in our Constitutional framework more generally.

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