

THESIS

CONSTITUTING THE UN-AMERICAN ATHEIST: EISENHOWER'S
THEISTNORMATIVITY AND THE NEGATION OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

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ABSTRACT

CONSTITUTING THE UN-AMERICAN ATHEIST: EISENHOWER'S THEISTNORMATIVITY AND THE NEGATION OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

During the Cold War, President Eisenhower used civil religion and what Philip Wander calls prophetic dualism to construct an image of the American people. In doing so he excluded atheists from his description of the American citizenry. In order to understand how atheists fit into the national imagination inspired by President Eisenhower, this thesis explores how Eisenhower talked explicitly and implicitly, through rhetorical omission, about atheists. I argue that President Eisenhower framed atheists as un-American during his presidency, which contributed to a negative perception of atheists that is still prevalent in modern American society. This thesis also calls on scholars to be more mindful of how the theist-normativity promoted in American society marginalizes American atheists, both historically and today.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When Barack Obama delivered his inaugural address in 2009, it was the first time in which an African American delivered that historic speech. The novelty of the occasion was echoed by a novelty in the speech which included various “firsts” for a presidential inaugural, including how the president described the religious identity of the American people. When describing the religious make-up of America, Obama stated, “For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus and nonbelievers.”¹ This was the first time a president had acknowledged atheists during an inaugural address in an inclusive way.² His addition was generally praised by atheists, with many admitting that they were surprised when they first heard that he had included them. Many other Americans, however, did not know how to respond. One Fox News host asked, “Was it all-inclusive to acknowledge non-believers or just offensive?”³ Although he did not expand on why it was offensive, it is clear that some individuals were offended by the inclusion. Bishop E.W. Jackson of the Exodus Faith Ministries, for example, appeared offended that Obama was trying to paint America as a country of non-believers, arguing that Obama “seems to be trying to redefine American culture, which is distinctively Christian. The overwhelming majority of Americans identify as Christians, and what disturbs me is that [Obama] seems to be trying to redefine who we are.”⁴ Why did simply acknowledging the existence of nonreligious individuals, one of the fastest growing minority groups in America, lead Jackson and others to argue that Obama was trying to “redefine American culture”?⁵ It was perhaps, in part, a result of Obama’s attempt to paint American civil religion in “a cosmopolitan hue” by acknowledging the growing religious pluralism that included non-religious Americans.⁶ Historically, presidents have

typically either ignored non-religious Americans or have undermined atheists' ability to be recognized as full citizens in American society through their use of civil religious rhetoric.

Civil religion is a popular field of study, especially in relation to presidential rhetoric. Civil religion is the merging of religious tradition with national life until it becomes nearly impossible to separate the two. American civil religion represents an alliance between "politics and religion at a national level."⁷ It allows the government to acknowledge a God without endorsing a specific religion, thus violating the first amendment. It also gives elected officials the ability to build support for their actions from the American people by claiming their actions are the will of God and a result of his desire to have America be his "primary agent" in modern history.⁸ Ultimately, civil religion creates a general religion with whom *almost* all citizens can identify.⁹ It is those who do not fit into that *almost* all category that I focus on in this thesis.

There is limited rhetorical scholarship that examines explicitly how atheists have historically fit into the culture of civil religion and how that affects perceptions of atheists in modern America.¹⁰ Atheists are often either ignored completely in conversations about civil religion or briefly glossed over. When atheists are talked about in relation to civil religion it is typically in one of two ways. One way scholars acknowledge atheists' connection to civil religion is by recognizing that atheists would struggle using civil religious rhetoric, making it unlikely that an open atheist would be elected president.¹¹ The second way atheists are talked about in relation to civil religion is the argument that nonreligious individuals can believe or appreciate civil religion because a large part of it is not directly tied to a specific god or is purely ornamental.¹² As the population of atheists in America continues to grow, it is becoming even more important to understand how the use of civil religion impacts society's perceptions of atheists and how atheists view the use of civil religion. Examination of presidential rhetoric,

especially that which invokes civil religion, can provide useful insights into the ways in which American atheists are constructed and perceived.

David Zarefsky argues that, due to presidents' political position, they have the ability to shape how the public views different events or phenomena. In other words, the president has the power to "define political reality."¹³ Additionally, the president is perhaps the most influential individual in shaping American civil religion.¹⁴ As the reaction to Obama's inaugural address illustrates, people care about how the president paints the religious landscape of America. While civil religion has always been a part of presidential rhetoric, it took its modern form after World War II with the emergence of the Cold War. President Dwight Eisenhower was particularly influential in developing the culture of civil religion in America that has been prevalent for the past 70 years.¹⁵ Eisenhower was also the president who most commonly acknowledged the existence of atheists, in part due to the association of atheism and communism.

Because of his formative influence on modern conceptions of civil religion, Eisenhower's rhetoric, and specifically the strategies he used to frame atheists in American culture, is the subject of this thesis. As Kevin Coe, Robert J. Bruce, and Chelsea Ratcliff argue, presidents "define who and what matters in America—definitions that ultimately hold considerable weight in the national imagination."¹⁶ I am interested in how atheists fit into the national imagination inspired by President Eisenhower. To address this interest, I started this project by posing the following two research questions: First, how did Eisenhower frame atheists as American citizens when he explicitly talked about atheists and the atheist ideology? Second, how did Eisenhower frame atheists as American citizens when he used civil religion to address all Americans as religious? To answer these questions, I analyze instances where Eisenhower talked explicitly and implicitly, through rhetorical omission, about atheists. I argue that President Eisenhower framed

atheists as un-American both when he mentioned them explicitly and when he alluded to them implicitly, through a rhetoric of omission. This thesis is, in part, a response to Coe, et al's call for more scholarship on presidential communication about marginalized groups and Vanessa B. Beasley's appeal for more than just a focus on what national ideas are but for an understanding of how they come to be. Ultimately, this project helps inform a larger inquiry about why atheists sometimes struggle to find acceptance within the United States.

In this introduction, I provide a brief overview of atheism in America, civil religion, and presidential rhetoric, focusing specifically on President Eisenhower's rhetoric, particularly within the context of the Cold War. I then outline the critical perspectives that informed this project: ideological criticism and fragmentation. Finally, I provide an overview of the chapters that contain my analyses.

Atheism in the United States

Atheists have been fighting for recognition as citizens of the United States since its beginning, though in early U.S. history they were typically referred to as infidels.¹⁷ In fact, whether they should be included as a part of the democracy was a contested issue during the formation of the United States. Many of the founders' ideas were derived from the writings of John Locke who was one of the leading voices for religious liberty. Locke, however, did not think that those liberties should be extended to atheists.¹⁸ One of Locke's primary reasons for the exclusion of atheists was his belief that, without a belief in a higher power, atheists would have no reason to uphold the oaths necessary for good citizens to take while participating in society. While many colonists supported Locke's ideals, others, such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, believed in the inclusion of atheists in American society. Paine's and Jefferson's side won the debate as evident in the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedoms, in which

Jefferson argued that a citizen's religious opinions and beliefs should not affect their civil capacities as citizens. In his autobiography, Jefferson stated explicitly that the bill was written to include the irreligious.¹⁹

Despite their intended inclusion in American society, atheists continued to face discrimination through cultural stigmatization and exclusionary laws, some of which remain on the books today. Both Paine and Jefferson were accused of being infidels to hurt their reputations, a consequence of openly supporting atheists' inclusion in civil society. Many state constitutions required citizens to declare a belief in a higher power before holding public office. Nonbelievers were not considered reliable witnesses in a court of law. It was also not uncommon for atheists to face jail time or fines for blasphemy if they were open about their beliefs. Fines could be particularly high in the cases of blasphemy. In 1765, when Elijah Leach was fined for indecently exposing himself and declaring he "did not care a turd for God in Heaven," he was fined ten shillings for indecent exposure and forty shillings for his "irreverent speeches."²⁰ Clearly, for American atheists, being open about one's beliefs could have serious consequences. As Thomas Paine argued, "Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving [rather it consists] in professing to believe what [one] does not believe."²¹ In other words, in the United States, citizens have the right to believe (or not believe) what they want, but if one is vocal about their lack of belief in God there will be consequences.

Despite the consequences, during the nineteenth century, America's irreligious started gaining a stronger voice with prominent speakers and writers such as Ernestine Rose, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Francis Abbot, Samuel Porter Putnam, and Robert Ingersoll. These influential "infidels" attracted religiously diverse audiences and encouraged Americans to accept atheist citizens. It is important to note that one issue America's irreligious faced was the disagreement

as to whether atheist was the correct term to use to identify themselves. At an Infidel Convention in Philadelphia in 1857, attendees argued whether “infidel” and “atheist” were slurs that should be cast aside or embraced by the movement.²² Other names such as “unbelievers,” “liberals,” “secularists,” and even “true Americans” were suggested during this time frame. Names such as “freethinkers,” “rationalists,” “agnostic,” “materialists,” and “humanists” were also added to the mix of potential labels.²³ The inability to find a common identifier continues to be a tension in the irreligious community today, with many individuals who are not religious rejecting the term “atheists” to describe them.²⁴

Despite the issues with identification, the nonreligious community in America was influential in the fight against slavery, woman suffrage, and the fight against the Christian Amendment in 1863.²⁵ However, after the death of Robert Ingersoll, one of the most popular atheist speakers, in 1899, the voices of American atheists began to be quieted.²⁶ With the rise of communism in the 20th century, atheism once again became stigmatized and those who may internally have identified as being atheists were reluctant to be vocal about their beliefs out of fear of retaliation.

In the 70 years that followed the rise of communism after World War II, American atheists gained ground in several legal cases, but continued to face stigmatization that prevented them from enjoying the full privileges of American citizenship. In 1961, The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Roy Torcaso, an atheist who refused to sign a statement saying that he believed in a God and was thusly denied the right to hold public office as a public notary due to a clause in Maryland’s state constitution. This case was the first time that atheists’ religious beliefs were officially recognized by the Supreme Court as being protected under the first amendment.²⁷ Despite the ruling, most states never took the similar clauses out of their constitutions.

Consequently, atheists continue to have to fight for the right to hold public office. In 1992, Herb Silverman was denied a position as notary public until he won his case in the South Carolina Supreme Court five years later. More recently, in a 2009 case in North Carolina, Cecil Bothwell's opponent tried to invoke the clause after losing a seat on Asheville's City Council to Bothwell. Even if such clauses are not enforceable, many atheists argue that they are discriminatory, offensive, and unconstitutional. Todd Stiefel of the Openly Secular coalition argued that "If it was on the books that Jews couldn't hold public office, or that African-Americans [sic] or women couldn't vote, that would be a no-brainer. You'd have politicians falling all over themselves to try to get it repealed. Even if it was still unenforceable, it would still be disgraceful and be removed. So why are [atheists] different?"²⁸ As Stiefel argues, not only are atheists a group that faces discrimination, but they are a group that politicians often are not willing to fight for.

The inability of atheists to get representation in Congress is one major issue that is reflective of the cultural stigmatization of atheists. There is currently only one individual (out of 535) in Congress who identifies as "religiously unaffiliated," despite the fact that in a recent Pew survey nearly 26% of Americans fall into the category of respondents who identify as atheists, agnostics, and "nothing in particular."²⁹ There is still a notion in the United States that atheists should not be trusted to hold public office. As of 2012, only 54% of Americans said they would vote for an atheist as president, which made atheism one of the traits most likely to prevent someone from getting elected.³⁰ This may in part be related to the results found in a study done by Penny Edgell, Douglas Hartmann, and Joseph Gerteis in 2006 that found that about 40 percent of respondents believed that atheists "did not at all agree" with their vision of America.³¹ This prejudice against atheists also became evident in the 2008 North Carolina Senate race when

Elizabeth Dole accused challenger Kay Hagan of supporting the atheist agenda in an attack ad, and in the 2016 presidential election when it was leaked that members of the DNC contemplated trying to determine if Bernie Sanders may in fact be an atheist in order to hurt his reputation. In both cases the accused vehemently denied the accusations.³² Not only do these cases reflect a prejudice that prevents atheists from being elected, but they also demonstrate the struggles atheists have with being able to change laws if they are unable to get representation in politics. Without political clout, atheists lack the leverage to enact political change.

Prejudice towards atheists goes beyond those who may wish to seek political office. Atheists are viewed as less trustworthy than others and as more likely to break laws. Penny Edgell, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, and Joseph Gerteis reported that parents view atheists as undesirable prospective spouses for their children.³³ Studies done on atheists in America often find atheists commenting on their concerns about “coming out,” as atheists and about their fear of public stigmatization.³⁴ Atheists in the United States are often portrayed as anti-American.³⁵

While there have always been individuals in America who did not want to acknowledge atheists as American, the anti-atheist mindset became increasingly widespread during the twentieth century with the rise of the Cold War, and its effects are still seen today. One major factor that made being atheistic synonymous with being un-American was the way in which civil religion was deployed during the Cold War.

Civil Religion

The phrase “civil religion” was first coined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his work *The Social Contract*, where he argued that leaders can promote a general faith that can be accepted by most citizens in order to encourage good citizenship.³⁶ Like the Founding Fathers, Rousseau appears to have developed many of his ideas from John Locke. However, notions similar to civil

religion can be traced back to the classical era, when Plato argued that a state needs to have its citizens express belief in a “beneficent deity” in order to be viable.³⁷ Civil religion does not take the place of organized religion; in fact, it is crucial for civil religion to be independent from the institutional church or it will appear to be the endorsement of the church from the state. It is not a particular religion but it requires “a core civil theology—a religious way of thinking about politics.”³⁸ Civil religion is a tool that binds citizens together in order to help a nation survive by creating a shared sense of identity. It creates shared interests and encourages individuals to sacrifice for the good of the nation.³⁹ It is a way to build patriotism by promoting the notion that, even if there are things citizens disagree on, they have a common belief system that binds them together.

American civil religion became a popular area of study after Robert Bellah published his 1967 article “Civil Religion in America.” In this article, Bellah argues for the existence of American civil religion and explains how it functions in a country that encourages separation of church and state.⁴⁰ He claims that separation of church and state does not mean denying that politics have a religious dynamic because, although personal religion is private, religion has had a great influence on American institutions and many Americans share beliefs in religious elements. Bellah argues that this religious dimension of politics, which is expressed through beliefs, symbols, and rituals, is American civil religion. The many references to God in speeches, on currency, and monuments is a statement of Americans’ belief that America is God’s sovereign nation. In order to explain American civil religion, Bellah focuses on how the Founding Fathers and presidents talk about God. According to Bellah, the God the Founding Fathers and presidents typically refer to is a Unitarian God that is focused more on law and order than love and salvation. In a nation that was overwhelmingly Christian, the Founding Fathers

avoided using Christian terms when discussing civil religion, creating a clear separation between a civil religion that the nation could believe in and the Christian God individuals worshipped in their homes. Civil religion in America can be thought of as the religion of the American way of life.⁴¹ This American way of life has its foundation in the belief in a higher power and civil religion has become ingrained in society's ideological expectations for American behavior.

Robert V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder argue that there are five main components to American civil religion. First is the belief that America is God's new "chosen nation" which, in part, developed from the Puritan belief that America would be the new promised land. Second is the notion of "Civil Millennialism" which is the secularizing of themes. For example, instead of using the notion of the United States being the "chosen nation" to promote Christianity, America was and is framed as a new "seat of liberty," opened to freedom of religion.⁴² This allows for the notion of separation of church and state and the avoidance of civil religion appearing to endorse one religion over another. The next component is the "Evangelical Consensus." Although the government did not endorse one religion, there needed to be a national consensus on what the ethical norms would be that people could support. With Evangelicalism being one of the dominant religions, many of the ethical norms came from their specific beliefs. The fourth component is the "Deist Contribution," which is the idea that, while there is a God, he allows free will, thus still giving power and agency to citizens in a democracy. The final component of American Civil religion is the "Self-Authenticating History," which is where historical events such as the Revolutionary War, and World Wars I and II appeared to prove that the United States of America was God's chosen nation through their victories.⁴³ The combination of these components is what makes American civil religion unique.

Pierard and Linder point out that many scholars argue that civil religion is not stagnant, but is in constant flux as new generations imagine a new national God that supports whatever policies Americans “believe the times demand.”⁴⁴ While early civil religion tended to have a stronger Christian tone, with the increase of immigrants in the late nineteenth-century, a more deistic civil religion began to emerge in the latter half of U.S. history.⁴⁵ Non-Christians, such as Jewish Americans, embraced civil religion because it helped promote freedom of religion and delegitimized anti-Semitism by encouraging religious cooperation. Civil religion, however, developed even more after World War II with the start of the Cold War. Civil religion began to be used to paint a picture of a unified American “us” versus a communist un-American “them.”⁴⁶ One powerful way of creating the “us” versus “them” rhetoric was by describing Americans as a strong religiously united nation and the communists as a part of an immoral atheistic nation. By drawing upon the God of civil religion, leaders, such as President Eisenhower, joined many Americans in religious unity against the communists. The strategy of uniting religious Americans, however, left non-religious Americans in limbo between the American “us” and un-American “them” that was the enemy to the American way of life.

Civil Religion and Presidential Rhetoric

Although anyone has access to the rhetoric of civil religion, the president is a central figure in determining how it is used to influence national beliefs and unity. Throughout American history, the presidency has been linked to civil religion, which, Pierard and Linder argue, has created a vital bond between the presidency and religious Americans.⁴⁷ This bond’s influence is even more evident when considering how religion is an unspoken requirement for an individual to be elected president. As Bellah acknowledged, a non-religious person would not be able to use civil religious rhetoric and appear sincere, which is part of the reason Americans

profess unwillingness to vote for an atheist presidential candidate.⁴⁸ Religious Americans are willing to help an individual get elected if he or she validates their religious beliefs. Using civil religion, a president of any denomination can successfully validate the religious beliefs of all theists. Once in office, the president becomes the “high priest” or “chief pastor” of American civil religion. This is evident when looking at presidents throughout history, though presidents have used civil religion in different ways. Some presidents have used it as a key tool to govern the nation and gain support for policies while less active presidents use it just to maintain tradition.⁴⁹ Presidential ties to civil religion date back George Washington, when he became the first “high priest” during his inaugural address.⁵⁰

In studies on civil religion, Washington is often mentioned because he did initiate the use of civil religion by a president. Washington, while often depicted as a strongly convicted Christian, was more likely a man of Unitarian beliefs. He used these beliefs in his rhetoric to promote tolerance and national unity by referring to a general God that any person who held a belief in God could relate to. In addition, he often connected patriotism and religion in his speeches.⁵¹ When he was first confirmed as President of the United States, he added “So help me God” to the end of his oath, thus starting a long-standing tradition that every president has honored. Scholars discussing civil religion also often mention President Abraham Lincoln, who continued to promote the importance of religious bonds to hold the nation together during the Civil War. He often referred to the United States as God’s chosen nation. Like Washington, he tended to refer to a more Unitarian God that all could relate to.⁵²

While less often mentioned by scholars, other presidents encouraged a more Christianized civil religion. In their book, *Civil Religion & the Presidency*, Pierard and Linder discuss how William McKinley used civil religion to develop the notion of Manifest Destiny as

he justified America's action in the Philippines as a call from God to "Christianize" Filipinos.⁵³

In attempting to gain support for entering World War I, President Woodrow Wilson often compared patriotism specifically with Christianity instead of a general religious belief as many previous presidents had done. These rhetorical choices are, in part, why some Christians conflate civil religion with their personal Christian beliefs and define America as a Christian nation despite having no specific Christian references in the founding documents.⁵⁴

Pierard and Linder go on to discuss how, in the context of modern civil religion, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was particularly influential in changing the scope of civil religion due to the effects he had on changing the expectations of the presidency. His civil religion was more akin to Washington's and Lincoln's rhetoric in his reference to a more Unitarian God. He promoted unity among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews claiming that he did not care what their religion was but was more interested in "whether they were good citizens and believers in God. [He] hoped they were both."⁵⁵ Roosevelt's statement reflects his emphasis that religious beliefs were important to American citizenship, a belief that would become more emphasized with the rise of the communist threat. It was not his preferred style of civil religion, however, that influenced modern civil religion, but the expansions on the power of the presidency that he made during his office that would cause an effect.

While the presidency was always an important and influential role, it became far more powerful after World War II and Roosevelt's administration. With changes in technology and more recognition on the global scale, the president had far more ability to reach out to and affect the everyday American citizen.⁵⁶ Nonreligious citizens are among those who could be affected by presidential rhetoric. Although this thesis focuses specifically on President Eisenhower's rhetoric, understanding how Truman set a precedence for talking about atheists with the

beginning of the Cold War is important. Truman pushed forward the “us” versus “them” rhetoric that was inherent to the Cold War. According to Phillip E. Muehlenbeck, Truman often spoke of the Cold War “as a struggle between the morality of beliefs and the immorality of unbelief.”⁵⁷ Truman tried to unite all religions, including Muslim and Buddhist leaders, against the “godless” communists. He emphasized the notion that the United States had been called upon by God to unite all “God-fearing humans” against communism.⁵⁸ He tended to refer to communists as godless instead of atheistic while emphasizing their immorality compared to the religious morality of the free world.

It was following Truman that Eisenhower stepped into the presidency and moved civil religion even further along its new path of “us” versus “them” rhetoric. Eisenhower offered his own prayer during his inaugural address, the first president to do so, thus demonstrating his intention to emphasize religion while in office. Eisenhower firmly believed that religion was necessary for the America’s democratic way of life; he encouraged America to accept those beliefs.⁵⁹ Eisenhower was not seen as an extraordinarily religious man throughout his military career; however, he always carried his beliefs with him.⁶⁰ Kevin Kruse argues that religious leaders at the time, such as Reverend Billy Graham, threw their support behind Eisenhower as a candidate, seeing him as a future president who would support religious values, particularly Christianity.⁶¹ In this expectation, they were not disappointed. During his presidency, Eisenhower invoked religion in many of his speeches, promoted the National Day of Prayer, started the National Prayer Breakfast, and signed into law the addition of “under God” to the pledge of allegiance and “In God We Trust” as the national motto.

According to Pierard and Linder, Eisenhower’s particular brand of civil religion had three major components. The first was an emphasis of the spiritual being of the individual. Second was

the idea that American democracy depended on a spiritual foundation. Finally, his civil religion often had a “crusading character” in that he believed that America was the chosen nation that was continuing its purpose.⁶² Eisenhower often referred to the religious foundation of the United States and its religious culture. Scholars including Ira Churnus, Martin J. Medhurst, Ned O’Gorman, and Philip Wander have commented on how Eisenhower emphasized the importance of religious spirituality for national identity, character, and strength.⁶³ He spoke to the American people as a religious people, not clarifying the position of atheists among those people.

American atheists faced discrimination throughout U.S. history, but the rise of the Cold War escalated tensions between the theists and atheists in the United States. Leaders in the United States often use the rhetoric of civil religion while addressing the American people, a move that has isolated American atheists, particularly when used by presidents. The Cold War reflects a turning point in how America’s religious landscape was constituted and President Eisenhower was a key figure in its construction. To explore the relationship between atheists and civil religion, I use ideological criticism, specifically focusing on Phillip Wander’s theories of prophetic dualism and the third persona while exploring fragmentations of Eisenhower’s rhetoric during the Cold War.

Critical Method

Ideological Criticism

While not all of the examples used in this thesis are direct examples of Cold War rhetoric all were at least influenced by the context of the Cold War. Consequently, my methodological approach is informed by the work of Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott. In their book *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, the authors suggest three distinct methodologies that can be utilized while analyzing Cold War rhetoric: a strategic assessment of a speech’s goals and outcomes, metaphoric criticism, and ideological

criticism.⁶⁴ While any of the approaches could be applied to Eisenhower's rhetoric, I selected ideological criticism for my analysis because I am interested in how Eisenhower's rhetoric reflects and influences Americans' beliefs and attitudes towards atheist Americans. As Wander argues, ideological criticism asks questions related to the "here-and-now of historical struggle where the future is being constructed in the same way that the present, as an alternative future, was constructed in the past."⁶⁵ While I am studying texts that are 60 years old, it is in order to understand the present. Eisenhower's rhetoric is reflective of cultural ideologies that have persisted for more than half a century in the United States.

Edwin Black describes ideologies as a type of "network" that function "epistemically and that shape [an individual's] identity by determining how he [sic] views the world."⁶⁶ Ideologies are self-serving explanations of the world that tell a group what they should or should not do.⁶⁷ They are self-serving in the sense that they create an "us" versus "them" mentality that automatically assumes that the "us" is in the right. Religious ideologies, for example, frame the believers (us) as good while framing non-believers (them) as bad. As previously mentioned, this is the type of rhetoric that was used in the civil religion of the Cold War to fight communism. Anti-communism is an ideology, but the way anti-communism was promoted during the Cold War not only framed communists as "them," but also as atheists. Leadership in the U.S. promoted the religious "us" versus nonreligious "them" as common sense, giving it a hegemonic function. Adding "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and requiring it to be recited in schools is one example of how American leadership attempted to ingrain this ideology in the minds of Americans as natural or common sense. During the Cold War, Eisenhower needed ideological consensus from the American people. As Beasley explains, rhetoric promoting ideological consensus has a strong moral component that reminds American citizens of "their

righteous duties, including faith, dedication, [and] self-restraint.”⁶⁸ This was particularly true during the Cold War.

Eisenhower’s rhetoric was constitutive in the way it called upon his audiences to have a collective religious identity. The theory of constitutive rhetorics was proposed by Maurice Charland in 1987 as a way to understand how a speaker can persuade their audience to see themselves are part of a particular identity.⁶⁹ As Theon E. Hill explains, “constitutive rhetoric examines the intersections of ideology, collective identity, and unity.”⁷⁰ Eisenhower needed national unity during the Cold War so he called upon his audience to view themselves as religious, emphasizing the connection between religious ideology and American identity.

Eisenhower’s rhetoric gives us an opportunity to explore the dominant ideology of religion as a necessity to the American way of life and how that framed how atheists were seen in American culture. I explore how he used civil religion to repress the non-dominant ideology of nonreligious Americans. Wander argues that Eisenhower employed “prophetic dualism” to promote his ideology and defend America’s foreign policy. Prophetic dualism, according to Wander, divides the world into two opposing parties. One party is “good, decent, and at one with God’s will” while the other is the opposite.⁷¹ It is necessary that one side must win over the other and no compromise is allowed. Civil religion was pivotal to the success of Eisenhower’s rhetoric of prophetic dualism, as were the tensions of the Cold War. These tensions allowed patriotism to “virtually become law” and public protest or communist sympathies to be “un-American.”⁷² It was through his use of prophetic dualism that Eisenhower most often presented his audience with the idea of what an atheist was. Eisenhower’s use of prophetic dualism often included him describing the communist enemy as atheistic. In doing so he framed atheism as un-American.

The rhetoric and tensions of the Cold War created a clear division between American ideals and foreign communism, but it also created a division between “loyal Americans” and “fellow travelers” (those sympathetic to the communist ideology). One demonstrated they were a “true American” by being loyal to the state. Being un-American became synonymous with communism and socialism; being un-American during the Cold War was seen as a criminal offense.⁷³ Being accused of being un-American had the potential to ruin lives, a notion commonly associated with McCarthyism. While Eisenhower’s rhetoric was not nearly as directly accusatory as McCarthy’s in stating who was truly American and who was un-American, his prophetic dualism was still influential in promoting a dominant ideology that required citizens to be religious in order to be deemed “truly American.”

In addition to explicitly connecting religiosity with patriotism, Eisenhower also influenced perceptions of atheist citizens through a rhetoric of omission. Consequently, my analysis also considers what Wander has called the “third persona.” Wander’s third persona built on Edwin Black’s discussion of the first persona (the implied author of an address) and the second persona (the implied auditor suggested by the text). Black argued that critics need not confine their analysis to an assessment of how discourse impacts its immediate audience. The critic can gain further insight by determining the ideal audience suggested by the text, which, in turn, will reveal the ideological underpinnings of a speech.⁷⁴

Wander extends Black’s theory by arguing that the third persona refers to:

a tertiary audience, an audience which may or may not have been part of the speaker’s awareness, existing in the silences of the text, the reality of oppression, and the unutterable experience of human suffering, an audience for whom what was said was relevant in ways that traditional approaches of interpretation may overlook.⁷⁵

When leaders, such as Eisenhower, use civil religion to talk about the United States as a religious nation, they frame atheists as not being members of the nation, even if that is not intended by the

rhetor. Traditional approaches to studying civil religion have not looked at atheists as part of the third persona despite the potential for uses of civil religion to silence non-religious Americans.

Wander argues that, in the moment, the third persona is the audience that is “rejected or negated through the speech and/or the speaking situation.”⁷⁶ Wander clarifies that the notion of being neglected not only leads to the alienation of the third persona but frames the third persona as an “it” that the first and second persona should “avoid becoming.”⁷⁷ In doing so, a speaker maybe be aiding the construction of an ideal space, with an imaginary ideological center that represents who the ideal national is.⁷⁸ Within the United States, this ideal national has been described as white, male, and heterosexual.⁷⁹ I contend that the ideological center of U.S. national identity is also religious. Ultimately, the further away one is from the ideal national, the more foreign and untrustworthy that person becomes.⁸⁰ Members of the third persona can be framed as being far away from the ideological center constructed by a text; such is the case with atheists in Eisenhower’s rhetoric.

Fragmentation

In addition to using ideological criticism, I use Michael McGee’s method of fragmentation to create a text encompassing Eisenhower’s framing of non-theists during his presidency. McGee argues that with the fragmentation in American culture, rhetorical messages do not exist as discrete, finished texts. Instead, texts are fragmented, shaped by cultural impact that the speaker cannot fully control.⁸¹ Rhetorical scholars need to find the fragmented pieces of discourse that comprise a concept and construct a single, observable text.⁸² A single presidential speech cannot be looked at in order to understand how perceptions of atheists came to be. The reaction to Obama’s comment about nonbelievers only makes sense when put in the context of how previous presidents have talked about atheists and how American culture receives atheists.

It is necessary to use the fragments of speeches where presidents have discussed atheists to create a “text suitable for criticism.”⁸³

President Eisenhower’s rhetoric was particularly influential in creating modern civil religion and contemporary perceptions of atheists. By assessing the fragments of Eisenhower’s speeches which address or elide religious and nonreligious citizens, I explore how his rhetoric framed atheist Americans. First, I look at how Eisenhower framed atheists as American citizens when he explicitly talked about atheism and atheists. Second, I explore how Eisenhower framed atheists as American citizens when he used civil religion to address all Americans as religious throughout his presidency. To explore how President Eisenhower talked explicitly about atheists I used the American Presidency Project’s website to search Eisenhower’s speeches for references to “atheist,” “atheism,” and “godless.” I also looked at comments made by Eisenhower in the year leading up to the election which were found in news archives and previous scholars’ work.

To understand how Eisenhower framed atheists when he used civil religion to describe Americans as religious, I looked at President Eisenhower’s first inaugural address, his yearly statements for the American Legion “Back to God” program, and his statements after “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance.⁸⁴ These texts demonstrate how Eisenhower portrayed the United States as a space for religious individuals, a space that was unwelcoming to anyone who did not have a belief in the Almighty. These texts were widely broadcast and well publicized which allowed them to have influence in shaping the public’s notion of whose bodies and what ideologies were welcomed in the space constructed by the president.

As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson rightfully point out, it is nearly impossible to know exactly what a speaker was thinking in order to determine their intention. They also argue, however, that if scholars explore the situation the speaker is confronted with

and understand how the speaker has responded in similar situations, it can be determined what a speaker “realistically hoped to accomplish.”⁸⁵ Even if the results are unintentional, repeatedly responding to a situation in a similar way can create an impression on an audience. By looking at various texts from President Eisenhower and understanding the historical context of the Cold War, I can contend that he dismissed atheists through his rhetoric. I argue that President Eisenhower framed atheists as un-American both when he mentioned them explicitly and when he addressed them implicitly, through omission.

Preview of Chapters

This thesis is organized into two analysis chapters and a conclusion. My second chapter analyses how Eisenhower presented an image of atheists as a threat to the United States when he explicitly talked about atheist ideologies and atheists. Most of these references came from his describing communism as “atheistic.” While there is a difference between an atheistic government and an atheist as a person, as I argue in chapter two, Eisenhower often conflated atheism and communism through his uses of prophetic dualism. In doing so, he framed atheists as part of the enemy threat during the Cold War. Additionally, when Eisenhower spoke about atheists as people, he demonized, dismissed, and scapegoated them.

Chapter three analyses how President Eisenhower’s use of civil religion aided in the construction of an ideal space that negated atheists. I look at how Eisenhower used civil religion in three highly publicized rhetorical situations to paint America as a space for religious individuals. I explore how atheists existed as members of the third persona in such addresses, and how the consequences of their exclusion intensified in the context of the Cold War.

My conclusion focuses on the implications of Eisenhower’s rhetoric. I argue that scholarship on Eisenhower’s civil religious rhetoric needs to be reassessed to consider those who

are marginalized by his rhetorical choices. I also discuss the modern implications of how culture and space in the modern United States is still reflective of that which Eisenhower created and how modern atheists are reacting to the space. Finally, I expand on opportunities for further scholarship on atheism and civil religion in the field of rhetorical studies.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EXPLICIT CONSTRUCTION OF THE UN-AMERICAN ATHEIST

“[Communists] influence so many people. They have no religion. They don’t believe in God. They believe in destroying the faith of those that have religion.” –Housewife, Wisconsin

“[Communists] teach people against Christianity, ungodly things, and this is against our country. We believe in Christianity.” —Clergyman, Texas.⁸⁶

In 1954, the Board of Directors of the Fund for the Republic conducted a nationwide survey with over 6,000 participants to determine perceptions of the communist threat during the Cold War. While the study was focusing on communists, it also revealed how the public in the 1950s viewed atheists in the United States. When participants were asked why communists presented some danger, many respondents expressed concern that they were spreading their ideas.⁸⁷ Based on qualitative data collected during the survey, many of those concerns involved spreading atheistic ideologies. When asked “What things do Communists believe in,” the most common answer was that they were “against religion.”⁸⁸ Many Americans associated communism with atheism, with 16% of Americans even going as far as saying “yes” to the question “If an American opposed churches and religion, would this *alone* make you think he [sic] was a Communist?”⁸⁹ Beyond and perhaps in relation to atheists being associated with communists, atheists were also viewed as being immoral people. One woman from Texas explained that communists “preach against Christ. People who don’t believe in Christ are so warped they can do almost anything.”⁹⁰ This participant’s response is reflective of how President Eisenhower talked about communists and atheists during this time. As the author of the study suggested, public figures such as President Eisenhower were particularly effective in influencing people’s perception, and thus such figures needed to be responsible with their rhetoric.⁹¹

In this chapter, I explore the ways Eisenhower explicitly talked about atheists. As Kevin Coe, Robert J. Bruce, and Chelsea L. Ratcliff argue, “if a president mentions a marginalized group, even in passing, that mention temporarily places the group in the audience’s mind—a potentially consequential cognition.”⁹² Whenever Eisenhower talked about atheists, even in passing, he placed the group’s existence into the mind of the American people. I argue that when Eisenhower talked about atheist ideologies and atheists, he presented an image of atheists as a threat to the United States. My analysis explores two aspects of how Eisenhower framed atheists. First, I examine how Eisenhower’s use of prophetic dualism framed atheists as the enemy of the United States. By conflating atheism and communism, Eisenhower framed atheism as inherently problematic and constructed the Cold War as a battle between atheists and theists. Second, I analyze the instances where Eisenhower talked about atheists as people. While these occasions were rare, they were powerful in the way they dismissed atheists’ agency as American citizens.

Constructing the Atheistic Enemy

Although the Soviet Union had been an ally to the United States during World War II, the relationship quickly changed at the end of the war when tensions over ideologies and actions taken by both sides eroded the strategic alliance between the two nations.⁹³ Fear of the spread of communism quickly became part of U.S. national rhetoric as the United States tried to determine how to handle the new threat. Shawn Parry-Giles argues that both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations engaged in a psychological “war of words” during the Cold War in order to gain support from the American people and avoid conventional warfare.⁹⁴ Harry Truman took the standpoint that it was necessary to identify all communists and their allies in order to protect U.S. national interests.⁹⁵ As noted in the introduction, Muehlenbeck argues that Truman often framed the Cold War as a “struggle between the morality of beliefs and the immorality of unbelief.”⁹⁶

He recognized the power of religion and created the Psychological Strategy Board which determined that it would be best to frame the Cold War as a moral and spiritual struggle instead of an economic or political one. While Truman may have established the importance of religion in fighting the Cold War, President Eisenhower perpetuated the strategy when he took office in 1953. In doing so, he amplified the criticism of atheistic ideology and its perceived connection to communist ideas.

According to Martin J. Medhurst, Eisenhower was a “true civil religionist” who firmly believed in the necessity of a religious foundation for the success of a democracy.⁹⁷ Eisenhower’s use of civil religion was fundamental in developing a national identity that unified religious Americans within a collective “us.”⁹⁸ To successfully establish a collective “us,” Eisenhower had to construct an image of the foreign “them” that the nation could rally against. The combination of the tensions during the Cold War, Truman’s groundwork for framing the battle as a moral conflict, Eisenhower’s role as the first true television president, and his established ethos with the American public as a sincere American hero increased Eisenhower’s ability to influence national identity and the culture of the United States during the Cold War.⁹⁹ It was a time of national panic and Eisenhower had the need to unify the American people. Perhaps the best way to unify any group of people during time of crisis is to establish a national enemy, which is exactly what Eisenhower did.

According to Philip Wander, Eisenhower’s use of civil religion often materialized in the form of prophetic dualism. As mentioned in the introduction, prophetic dualism divides the world into two conflicting groups. On one side are those (led by the United States) who are moral and “at one with God’s will”; on the other side are those (led by the Soviet Union) who are evil and opposed to God.¹⁰⁰ The conflict between the two cannot be ended unless one side

completely defeats the other, which is why the battle is so important to win. In other words, prophetic dualism, as Mary Stuckey describes it, portrays the world as black and white, with no gray areas to account for the complexities of human nature.¹⁰¹ During the Cold War, failure on the part of the United States would mean the annihilation of the American way of life (freedom and democracy). That way of life, as portrayed through civil religious rhetoric, is inherently tied to a fundamental belief in God. This is why prophetic dualism, particularly during the Cold War, tended to be strongly anchored in religious superiority. America was fated to win the war because God was on their side, but they needed to work for the win.

Eisenhower's use of civil religion often equated religion and national identity. Religion was fundamental to the American way of life. According to Eisenhower, democracy in the American form could only exist if a higher power also existed. Eisenhower promoted the notion that religion was a prerequisite to democracy, in that it gave citizens and leaders moral guidance to help the nation succeed, while countries without a religious foundation were doomed to be aggressive threats to the free world.¹⁰² The American people needed to use their belief in God to fight against the force that threatened religion. Eisenhower called on the American people to unify behind their religious beliefs. In doing so, Eisenhower had to emphasize the anti-religious threat posed by communism. Eisenhower focused on the atheistic component of communism, thus conflating atheism and communism in his rhetoric. He described a lack of belief in God as inherently problematic. Through Eisenhower's rhetoric, atheism naturally led to or was associated with evil and destruction. To battle against this perceived evil atheism, Eisenhower used prophetic dualism to encourage his audience to use religion to fight against the enemy, thus further promoting the idea that atheists were the true threat. While Eisenhower may have been

successful in developing national unity, atheists were scapegoated as the enemy as a result of Eisenhower's rhetorical construction of the threat during the Cold War.

Conflating Atheism and Communism

When President Eisenhower talked about communism, he often focused on the lack of religion in the system. Communism as a system is atheistic in that communists, such as Karl Marx, believed that society needed to eliminate religion as “the illusory happiness of the people” in order for people to find their “real happiness.”¹⁰³ This belief led many communist countries to eliminate religious freedom, forcing atheism on citizens. However, when Eisenhower talked about the threat of communism he did not stress the lack of religious freedom in the countries. Instead, he strategically framed the general lack of belief in God as one of the primary problems with the communist ideology. In doing so, he conflated atheist and communist ideologies.

One strategy Eisenhower used to conflate the two ideologies was to describe the government in the Soviet Union and other communist countries as atheistic. In using prophetic dualism to construct the threat of communist government, he argued that:

To sustain [The United States's] position in this world, sharply divided as it is between the values of freedom on one side, and the aggressive purposes of a communistic and atheistic dictatorship on the other, is a many-sided task.”¹⁰⁴

In different addresses, official statements, and news conferences, Eisenhower would alternate between calling the foreign dictatorship communistic or atheistic, thus giving his audience the impression that the two were one in the same.

Not only did this strategy conflate communism and atheism; at times it emphasized atheism as being the primary threat during the Cold War. According to Eisenhower, the one issue underlying all of the dangers that Americans faced was “the great threat imposed [by] aggressive communism, the atheistic doctrine that believes in statism as against our conception of the

dignity of man, his equality before the law.”¹⁰⁵ He portrayed the atheistic doctrine to be the component of communism that led to statism, when statism is in fact the underlying component of a communist doctrine. The atheistic rule of communist countries, in Eisenhower’s eyes, threatened the freedoms enjoyed by the people of the United States of America.

For Eisenhower, the atheistic rule of communism not only threatened the United States, but the entire world. In his 1957 address at the Republican National Conference, he argued that “godless dictatorship” was seeking to destroy countries that lived in freedom.¹⁰⁶ He described the world as being “troubled by an atheistic imperialism.”¹⁰⁷ The free world, according to Eisenhower, needed to rally together to fight against the atheist threat and he warned that if the United States did not protect other free nations, the world would be “swallowed up by an atheistic imperialism.”¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, it was atheistic dictatorship that threatened the “concepts of freedom and human dignity” around the world.¹⁰⁹ By describing communistic government as atheistic, Eisenhower encouraged his audience to focus on the atheistic component of communism and view it as the primary threat of the free world.

Not only did Eisenhower conflate atheistic and communist government, he also conflated the Cold War threat from communist nations with the threat of atheistic ideologies, which Eisenhower perceived as being dominated by materialism. In an address to the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1954, Eisenhower stated:

The system that challenges us today is the atheistic. It is self-admitted as an atheistic document. They believe in a materialistic dialectic. In other words, there are no values except material values. It challenges us today in every corner of the globe.¹¹⁰

Throughout his address, Eisenhower never mentioned the word communist, but framed the threat as the atheistic ideology that corresponded with the communist ideology. Eisenhower

emphasized the notion of materialism, which he viewed as a concept that led to the dismissal of human dignity as an inherent aspect of atheistic philosophy.

Staying true to use of strategic prophetic dualism, he expounded his views that atheistic materialism was a threat to human dignity in an address that same year at the Columbia University National Bicentennial Dinner when he explained that the world was:

split by hostile concepts of man's [sic] character and nature... Two world camps, whose geographic boundaries in important areas are mutually shared, lie farther apart in motivation and conduct than the poles in space. One is dedicated to the freedom of the individual and to the right of all to live in peace—the other to the atheistic philosophy of materialism, and the effort to establish its sway over all the earth. Watching the two opposing camps are hundreds of millions still undecided in active loyalty.¹¹¹

This blatant example of prophetic dualism described the world as divided between those who love freedom and those who value the “atheistic philosophy of materialism.” For Eisenhower, freedom and the right to live in peace were fundamental human rights. If the atheistic philosophy was the opposite of freedom and the right to peace, then it was unable to accommodate fundamental human rights and dignity. As Eisenhower would later proclaim, “those who respect the dignity of man [will] prove once again that greatness of spirit and love of liberty will overcome the forces of atheistic materialism and coercion.”¹¹² Those who believed in freedom and the dignity of man needed to fight against the biggest threat to those values: atheistic ideology.

Eisenhower presented atheism and communism as being one and the same. By conflating atheism and communist ideologies in his rhetoric, he contributed to a national mindset that perceived atheists as communist threats. When explaining why they thought someone they knew had been a communist, one respondent of the Fund of the Republic's survey explained that the person “Didn't believe in the Bible.”¹¹³ Another, a farmer from Rhode Island, stated he was suspicious because of “the literature they read and the way they talk—atheists.”¹¹⁴ While

Eisenhower may not have been solely responsible for the perception of some Americans that atheists were communists, his rhetoric supported such a conclusion. His contribution, however, did not stop at simply conflating the two ideologies. Eisenhower framed atheism and its ideologies as being the leading force of evil in communist countries, furthered the stereotype of the immoral atheist.

Constructing a Negative Association

While focusing on the atheistic aspect of communism, Eisenhower often associated atheism with immoral actions. During a toast in 1959, he proclaimed that neither Spain nor the United States were “impelled by an atheistic philosophy to degrade human beings into economic tools of the state.”¹¹⁵ By implying that it was the atheistic philosophy rather than the communistic philosophy that degraded people “into economic tools of the state,” Eisenhower presented atheism as being the reason humans face destitution in communist countries. He argued that it was “with atheistic ruthlessness” that communists tried to destroy countries that were founded in “the faith of human dignity.”¹¹⁶ He focused on the godlessness of communism as the driving factor for its ruthlessness. According to Robert L. Ivie, war rhetoric often frames the enemy as savage and Eisenhower’s rhetoric was no exception.¹¹⁷ He framed atheistic ideologies as being the inhumane force of the Cold War; the true threat during the Cold War was the atheistic savagery.

In using prophetic dualism, Eisenhower framed the United States and other nations as fighting on the side of good against such savagery. Before leaving on a Good Will trip to Europe, Asia, and Africa, Eisenhower addressed the American people, arguing that that the United States was providing:

a peaceful barrier, erected by freedom to the continuous probing of predatory force. [The United States' and other free nation's] mutual undertakings support those who strive to forestall aggression, subversion, and penetration. It helps steady the struggling economics of free nations new and old. It helps build strength and hope, preventing collapse and despair. In a world sorely troubled by an atheistic imperialism, it is a strong instrument of hope and of encouragement to others who are eager, with us, to do their part in sustaining the human spirit and human progress.

Eisenhower presented free nations such as the United States as being on the side of good, fighting for strength and hope. Alternatively, the other camp, the atheistic one, was aggressive and led to societal collapse and despair. The atheistic doctrine ultimately halted human progress. This argument was particularly damning towards atheistic ideologies, since atheists often situate themselves on the side of science and progress. Eisenhower similarly highlighted atheism's role in the degrading of society in remarks recorded in 1954 in which he stated, "Atheism substitutes men for the supreme creator and this leads inevitably to domination and dictatorship."¹¹⁸ In both of these examples, Eisenhower explicitly promoted the idea that atheism inherently led to domination and dictatorship, thus suggesting that atheism at its core was a dangerous ideology.

Another way that Eisenhower insinuated to his audience that atheist ideologies were dangerous was by using prophetic dualism to associate atheism with other undesirable outcomes. In a commencement speech to students at the University of Notre Dame, he encouraged graduates to take part in government by arguing that there were vital issues where citizens needed to make choices between "freedom or regimentation, public or private control of productive resources, a religious inspired or an atheistic society, a healthy economy or depression, peace or war."¹¹⁹ Freedom, public control of resources, a religiously inspired society, a healthy economy and peace are all classed together.¹²⁰ If one did not choose to support a country that was religious inspired, they alternatively chose regimentation, private control of

resources, depression, and war: an atheistic society. Members an atheistic society, according to Eisenhower, were doomed to endure hardships and cruelty.

Eisenhower also used prophetic dualism to associate atheism with negative characteristics and unwelcomed outcomes. At the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1954, Eisenhower implored members to use their power as spiritual leaders to fight against the enemy, contrasting the battle as a choice between “ignorance and selfishness and greed and atheism, and war and destruction. Or courage and stamina, and understanding, and faith and peace.”¹²¹ Atheism was associated with flawed attributes such as ignorance, selfishness, and greed. The ideology was portrayed as resulting in the unwelcomed societal outcomes of war and destruction. Alternatively, a society without atheism had the positive attributes and outcomes of courage, stamina, understanding, and peace.

Additionally, while Eisenhower was talking about a foreign threat, his rhetoric was enthymematic in the way it encouraged his audience to be wary of atheists as an internal threat as well. The use of enthymemes is a rhetorical strategy in which the speaker allows the audience to fill in the missing syllogism. In Eisenhower’s case, by suggesting that atheism led to domination and dictatorship, his audience could assume that if atheists within the United States gained any political power, they would lead the United States to a similar fate. Atheism and democracy, according to Eisenhower, were incompatible. Atheists and their ideologies were un-American and unwelcomed within the United States.

In Eisenhower’s rhetoric, atheism was portrayed as one of the most dangerous component of communism. In his use of prophetic dualism, it was the atheistic enemy that needed to be defeated due the threat it posed to the free world. The Cold War was a theological battle between

theism and atheism which meant that the best way to defeat the godless enemy was to rally the god-fearing citizens of the United States and the world.

Depicting a Theological Battle

As seen in the previous section, in describing the negative associations and outcomes of atheism and communism, Eisenhower often used prophetic dualism to highlight the positive associations and outcomes of a religiously inspired country such as the United States.

Eisenhower himself openly declared that the Cold War was “a struggle of ideologies, of a religious way of life against atheism, of freedom against dictatorship.”¹²² For Eisenhower, the Cold War was ultimately a religious battle in which belief in a higher power was associated with freedom while a lack of belief in God led to dictatorship. According to Vanessa B. Beasley:

civil religious rhetoric enables presidents to offer norms for proper citizenship even as they articulate the United States’ global mission; in other words, they can unite the American people by providing a global, un-American ‘them’ against which the citizenry can feel like a distinctive, unified ‘us.’¹²³

Eisenhower’s framing of the Cold War, through his civil religious rhetoric and prophetic dualism, depicted the un-American “them” as atheistic and the American “us” as religiously inspired. In doing so he dismissed atheists as part of the American citizenry, a rhetorical consequence I will discuss further in the next chapter.

For Eisenhower, religious belief not only unified Americans, but was a critical defense that needed to be utilized during the Cold War. He viewed churches as essential to that defense. Early in his presidency, in a message to the Commission on Religious Organization, he described churches as “citadels of our faith in individual freedom and human dignity.”¹²⁴ He went on to proclaim that “this faith is the living source of all of our spiritual strength. And this strength is our matchless armor in our world-wide struggle against the forces of godless tyranny and oppression.”¹²⁵ In Eisenhower’s rhetoric, religious belief and spirituality were the unrivalled way

to defeat communists and their godlessness. Eisenhower's emphasis on the necessity of religion to fight against communism accentuated the notion that the enemy was truly atheists. In an address to the National Council of Churches, Eisenhower encouraged churches to join the fight to save the free world, stating that:

we should never forget we are supporting principles that are after all religious in their derivation. And I mean politically speaking, as against godless atheism—and because this is an atheistic ideology, denying all human rights, any kind of human dignity—we have an enemy operating under a dictatorship that has us always at a disadvantage.¹²⁶

Eisenhower asserted that the enemy America was fighting was “godless atheism” and it was the atheistic ideology that denied human rights and human dignity while leading to dictatorship.¹²⁷ It was the religious institutions and people of the United States that needed to fight against the dictatorship.

Eisenhower emphasized the reality of the fight against atheism as being a global problem that relied on other countries to reflect on their religious foundation as well. In a 1957 address to the American people about the situation in the Middle East, Eisenhower praised countries such as Israel as contributors to the world because they were a nation “imbued with a religious faith and a sense of moral values.”¹²⁸ He asserted that the United States was “entitled to expect, and do expect, from such peoples of the free world a contribution to world order which unhappily [the U.S.] cannot expect from a nation controlled by atheistic despots.”¹²⁹ Eisenhower constructed a world where a nation's ability to contribute to world progress and peace hinged on the religious ideologies of that country.

Eisenhower expanded the notion of the global struggle as a battle between religiously inspired and atheistic nations in a commencement speech at Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland in 1958 when he argued:

[the global struggle] of course has at its core the struggle between atheistic communism and every kind of free government which has its true roots in a deeply-felt religious faith. If we believe in human dignity, the value of the individual's soul, if we believe in every right which our founders said was given to us by our Creator, then we must hold fast to the conviction that this struggle of ours is truly a combat with this atheistic doctrine.¹³⁰

All countries that had their system of government rooted in religious belief were framed as being on the side of the United States. Eisenhower framed the battle as not one between communism/totalitarianism and democratic governments, but as between governments inspired by either atheism and religious faith. It was the *atheistic* doctrine that needed to be defeated, not the *communist* doctrine. Furthermore, Eisenhower, did not frame the problem as a lack of religious freedom versus religious tolerance, but instead as a lack of belief versus “deeply felt religious faith.”¹³¹

In his 1958 State of the Union address, Eisenhower emphasized this point by arguing that the future did not belong to the “concept of the regimented atheistic state, but to the people—the God-fearing, peace-loving people of all the world.”¹³² While Eisenhower initially framed the problem as being the regimented atheistic state, or forced atheism, he juxtaposed religious, “God-fearing” people against the atheistic state. By using this juxtaposition, Eisenhower did not present winners of the battle as those who have religious freedom, which would be the more accurate contrast of the regimented atheistic state. Instead, the battle was once again framed as a battle between god-fearing people and godless individuals

Prepared addresses and official statements were not the only way Eisenhower used prophetic dualism to portray the Cold War as a battle between atheists and theists; he made similar statements in news conferences. In a 1954 conference, when asked about objections the World Council of Churches had in the international order, Eisenhower responded, in part, by arguing “of course, we understand that in one of its deepest aspects this is a struggle between a

civilization that is firmly based in a religious faith, and atheism or materialism; that is inescapable.”¹³³ Two years later, when asked if he was considering “mobilizing all religions against the nonreligious Communists,” Eisenhower replied:

Well, I have certainly often in public talks, although I have never thought of putting this into any kind of a plan, I have in public talks pointed out that this is, underneath it all, a battle between those people who believe that man is something more than just an educated animal and those who believe he is nothing else. That is exactly what it is. It is atheism against some kind of religion. And I believe that we should do our very best to get people to feel the way we do, because along with this underlying basic fact is this: religion ordinarily tries to find a peaceful solution to problems.¹³⁴

Even in more casual rhetorical situations, Eisenhower argued that the underlying battle of the Cold War was not between totalitarianism and democracy, or forced atheism and religious freedom, but between atheists and theists. He admitted that in other rhetorical contexts he had promoted his belief that the Cold War was ultimately a battle between those who believed in God and those who believed man was nothing more than an “educated animal,” a jab at Darwin’s theory of evolution which is often associated with atheists and their beliefs.

Additionally, Eisenhower proposed that religiously inspired nations tended to find peaceful solutions. In using this argument, he ignored a long history of religiously inspired violence which, to name a few, included the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and the numerous monstrosities that resulted from the concept of manifest destiny. Eisenhower’s rhetoric overlooked the violent ways religion had been used in order to suggest that it was atheism that tended to lead violence and that religion typically led to peace.

Eisenhower’s prophetic dualism emphasized this argument by creating an illusion that the Cold War was a theological battle between atheists and theists. Through Eisenhower’s rhetoric, the term “atheistic” became synonymous not only with communism, but with evil and destruction. While Eisenhower may have been talking about an ideology when he criticized

atheistic philosophy, the construction of an atheistic ideology becomes associated with atheists themselves. By presenting his audience with what he viewed an atheistic ideology to be, Eisenhower presented an idea of what he perceived atheists to believe in and how they behaved. The presence and the distinct uses of the term “atheistic” in the context of the Cold War, created an image in Eisenhower’s audience mind about atheists. This image extended to the way that Eisenhower talked about atheists when he talked about them as human beings and not just about their ideology.

Constructing the Atheist Problem

Although Eisenhower rarely brought up atheists outside of the scope of communism, when he did, he demonized, dismissed, and scapegoated them. Even before being elected president, Eisenhower made public statements criticizing the existence of atheists. According to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, during the 1952 Republican convention in Chicago, while commenting on the importance of religion and spiritual beliefs in a democratic nation, he argued that France had “gone astray” because the population is “50 percent agnostic or atheist.”¹³⁵ He criticized France for putting more emphasis on reason than religion, proclaiming “it takes no brains to be an atheist.”¹³⁶ According to *The New York Times*, while making the disparaging comments he also claimed that a *true* democracy was a religious concept and failure to a model society after that fact would inevitably lead to the decline of a nation.¹³⁷ For Eisenhower, atheists were not only a problem in communist countries, but in democratic ones as well. He framed them as a threat to democracy, their very existence weakening society. Not only did he frame atheists as a threat, but he dismissed their agency by dismissing their intelligence. Atheists often align themselves with being the voice of reason. By arguing that being an atheist

“takes no brains,” Eisenhower refuted one of the key arguments atheists try to use to defend their voice in the public sphere, thus dismissing their agency.

Eisenhower also rejected the idea that atheists could be in the military. In his 1954 remarks for the American Legion’s “Back to God” program, Eisenhower argued that “In battle, [soldiers/veterans] learned a great truth—that there are no atheists in the foxholes. They know that in time of test and trial, we instinctively turn to God for new courage and peace of mind.”¹³⁸ Eisenhower’s statement discredited atheists in several ways. First, Eisenhower dismissed the notion that atheists can be genuine in their beliefs by arguing that as soon as they are faced with true danger, they will give up their atheism and turn to God. By framing atheists’ beliefs as fickle, Eisenhower dismissed their legitimacy and agency. Second, Eisenhower promoted the notion that to be a good soldier one needed to be religious. In a 1958 address at the U.S. Naval Academy Commencement Ceremony, Eisenhower urged members of the military to develop their spiritual and moral selves arguing:

While this does not necessarily require religious training yet active participation in the faith of your choice can provide you with unparalleled opportunities for growth in understanding the values upon which our civilization rests. Certainly it will help you to live up to the finest traditions of the service and of the nation to which you have dedicated your lives. And because of the threat imposed by a militant and aggressive atheism, I believe that the strengthening of all phases of our moral and spiritual foundation has a profound significance for the actual security of our nation.¹³⁹

Eisenhower went on to explain how belief in God is fundamental to the democratic principles of the United States and that understanding the spiritual values and their foundation is the most effective way of assuring that the United States remained free. Eisenhower’s statements emphasized the importance of religious belief in soldiers, bringing to question whether one who does not have religious belief can be an effective soldier. As Coe, et al. argue, the American military is one of the most important patriotic symbols in American culture. Connecting a group

to the military is a way to promote the notion that that members of the group are patriotic and American.¹⁴⁰ While Eisenhower did not call for any form of military sponsored religious training, he made it clear that he expected members of the armed forces to independently focus on their religious growth in order to become better soldiers. By connecting religious practice and good service, he simultaneously portrayed atheists as deficient members of the military

While Eisenhower was not the first to bring up the notion that there are no atheists in foxholes, his ethos as a decorated war hero and platform as the President of the United States undoubtedly helped spread the concept. He framed American soldiers as those who particularly needed religious faith in order to keep the nation secure. However, if an atheist were to become a soldier, it shouldn't be much of a concern because being a soldier is effective in converting an atheist to a believer of God. Either way, atheists, in their true forms, are not framed as part of the American military.

Additionally, using prophetic dualism, Eisenhower framed the enemy that the military faced as being aggressive atheism. The military needed to be religiously inspired in order to be on the side of good that fought against the atheistic side of evil. In the black and white world that Eisenhower's prophetic dualism constructed, there was no room for atheists in the military. By encouraging the military to be religiously inspired and dismissing atheists' ability to be seen as soldiers, Eisenhower portrayed atheists as unable to be on the side of good, the American side. In Eisenhower's prophetic dualism, atheists were inherently un-American.

Eisenhower also discussed his views on atheists in American society during a 1956 Breakfast of the International Council for Christian Leadership. In explaining why he chose to say a prayer at his inaugural address and why he did public prayer breakfasts, he explained:

And here is the lesson as I see it. I know very few men, I know very few people that tell me they are atheists or they are even agnostic, but we find among the laity a curious

diffidence in merely stating the fact that they believe there is a God and He is more powerful than I and I am dependent upon Him. That is what the prayer did and it was because a layman as I see it, did do so--and of course, in such a position--that [positive responses to the inaugural prayer] came in.¹⁴¹

First, Eisenhower pointed out that there are few atheists or agnostics in United States, basing the assumption on how many individuals have explicitly told him they are atheist or agnostic. In doing so, Eisenhower disregarded the hostile environment that had been created towards atheists during the Cold War. As the Board of Directors of the Fund for the Republic survey had revealed, speaking publicly about being an atheist could lead to accusations of being a communist. Eisenhower, however, dismissed the obstacles an open atheist had in the 1950s and assumed that only those who openly spoke about being an atheist were atheists. In doing so, Eisenhower was able to ignore the potential for there to be numerous atheists within the United States who had been silenced by the historical and rhetorical context.

Eisenhower went on to imply that because the numbers of non-theists are small, they should not have much influence on American society. He suggested that religious Americans were hesitant to announce their belief in God because of the influence of non-theists. Eisenhower framed theists as silenced victims and atheists as the reason for theists' silence. Instead of entertaining the possibility that people, particularly in government, avoided talking about religion because of the notion of separation of church and state and the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, Eisenhower laid the blame on the "influence" of atheists. Eisenhower's rhetorical move scapegoated atheists, a group that Eisenhower had consistently framed as "un-American" and immoral, for potential qualms over the notion separation of church and state thus shifting the blame away from the government. Eisenhower framed atheists as having far more power in the United States than they actually did. By suggesting atheists had power, he was able

to dismiss any potential qualms atheists might have about being marginalized as a result of his rhetoric.

Conclusion

Eisenhower's use of prophetic dualism portrayed atheists as the enemy during the Cold War. Additionally, Eisenhower was promoting the benefits of religion by wrapping its portrayal in his rhetoric in a cloak of peacefulness while ignoring the historical connections between religion and war. Eisenhower encouraged a fearful audience to embrace religion by proposing that it was the only solution for peace. Alternatively, he encouraged his audience to be fearful of atheists, not only abroad but at home, because their ideology inherently led to societal tribulations and destruction. Even when Eisenhower talked about atheists outside of the context of communism, he encouraged his audience to be wary of them. He suggested that they were unable to participate in the military as their true selves, suggesting that they were un-American. He scapegoated atheists for potential problems theists might have with government, thus proposing that atheists had more power than they actually did. Eisenhower encouraged his audience to be wary of that power and fight against it. Ivie argues that Eisenhower contributed substantially to a culture of fear during the Cold War. While it is true that, as Ivie points out, Eisenhower was, in part, "reiterating the reality of the communist threat in terms the public could understand and appreciate," by doing so he framed the battle as one between atheism and theism instead of forced atheism and religious freedom.¹⁴²

Ivie argues that Eisenhower's use of fear was problematic, in part, because it left a "rhetorical legacy of fear."¹⁴³ Americans lacked a sense of a security in "an international environment of ideological diversity," which included atheistic ideologies.¹⁴⁴ Out of fear, however, often comes hate. Whether intentional or not, by using terms such as "atheist,"

“atheistic,” “atheism,” and “godless” to describe the enemy, Eisenhower was putting in image in his audience’s mind about who atheists were, what they believed, and how they behaved. Eisenhower’s promotion of atheists as the enemy promoted a mindset of hatred towards atheists. Even in his farewell address, he warned his audience of the “hostile ideology--global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method.”¹⁴⁵ He warned that the threat would remain prominent for the indefinite future. Eisenhower set up the American public memory to keep the idea of an un-American, atheistic enemy tucked away, to remain a lingering threat in the years to come. Atheist Americans were silenced by the negative portrayal of atheists that Eisenhower constructed. In the Board of Director’s survey, when asked how Americans had personally known or suspected someone was a communist, many responded that the person did not attend church or had admitted to being an atheist.¹⁴⁶ If an atheist wanted to dispute Eisenhower’s framing of atheists, they risked being labeled a communist. The social consequences of such a classification had the potential to silence those who did not value their nonreligious identity over their well-being. For a nonreligious American who believed that the current life was the only one they got, it would make logical sense to pass as religious and stay silent about negative social stigmas in order to avoid having those stigmas placed on them.

Eisenhower’s use of prophetic dualism framed atheists as being a part of the foreign “them” and constructed a religious “us.” His use of prophetic dualism was geared towards a theistic audience. Despite presumption that he was addressing all Americans, it was a religious audience that made up his rhetoric’s second persona, or his intended audience. Atheist Americans were members of the third persona, a group that was affected by and negated through Eisenhower’s rhetoric. In the next chapter, I explore how Eisenhower’s use of civil religion created an ideal space that negated atheist Americans.

CHAPTER THREE: THE IMPLICIT CONSTRUCTION OF THE UN-AMERICAN ATHEIST

In 1953, Wladyslaw Plywacki was on track to gain U.S. citizenship. A Polish native, he had survived and escaped from Auschwitz before fighting with the U.S. Air Force in Japan. He had passed his citizenship test and just needed to swear his oath to citizenship before a federal judge, Frank McLaughlin. He told the judge that, as an atheist, he could not, in good conscience say the words “so help me God.” Plywacki expected to be given the option for an affirmation of allegiance, an option given to Quakers or other groups who did not wish to use the phrase “so help me God.” Instead, Judge McLaughlin denied Plywacki his citizenship. In explaining his reasoning, Judge McLaughlin stated “Our government is founded on a belief in God . . . I appreciate the right of a person to be an atheist, but if you join an organization that has principles based on the existence of a Supreme Being—from the Declaration of Independence on down to the latest pronouncements by President Eisenhower on the importance of religion—you must abide by the rules of that organization.”¹⁴⁷ McLaughlin’s reasoning for denying Plywacki’s citizenship demonstrates how influential President Eisenhower’s rhetoric was in defining Americans’ perception of citizenship and who belonged in the United States.

While Plywacki’s case may be unique in relation to legal definitions of citizenship, the influence of Eisenhower’s rhetoric went beyond legal consequences. According to Barbara Hobson, Marcus Carson, and Rebecca Lawrence, citizenship is considered in two different ways: “citizenship as membership and inclusion, and citizenship as practice.”¹⁴⁸ Despite having met all the legal qualifications for citizenship, Plywacki was denied citizenship because Judge McLaughlin did not believe Plywacki would behave the way a citizen is expected to behave when it came to religious beliefs. As stated by Judge McLaughlin, President Eisenhower

influenced McLaughlin's idea of what behaviors and beliefs an American citizen should have when it comes to religion. Vanessa B. Beasley argues that "the conflation of American identity with civil religious themes has sometimes made it far too easy for some presidents to suggest that not all people of worthy of inclusion in the *demos*."¹⁴⁹ While Beasley was focusing her attention on ethnicity and gender, the way that President Eisenhower used civil religion suggested that nonreligious individuals were not worthy of full inclusion or participation in American spaces. In this chapter, I argue that President Eisenhower's use of civil religion aided in the construction of an ideal space that negated atheists. A space can be thought of as a sphere where multiple relations intertwine to create meaning.¹⁵⁰ Public memory, political rhetoric, and laws are just a few of the relations that intertwine to create meaning for a space. While I address these different relations' impact on developing space, I focus on how Eisenhower's rhetoric worked to construct an ideal space for religious Americans and how that framed atheists. In particular, I examine three rhetorical situations in which Eisenhower's use of civil religion negated atheists: His inaugural address, his remarks for the American Legion's "Back to God" program, and his official statement after "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance. These three rhetorical situations were pre-planned and well-publicized. They were all presented early in his presidency, which set the tone for his full eight-year incumbency. Moreover, Eisenhower was greatly involved in the creation of the texts for the three situations. In all the occasions, Eisenhower used various rhetorical strategies that contributed to the construction of the ideal space that negated atheists.

The Construction of a Negating Ideal Space

The ideal space that Eisenhower constructed allowed for the negation of atheists by relegating them to the third persona. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, a member of

the third persona is limited in their ability to respond to being negated by the rhetor. As Wander explains:

The objectification of certain individuals and groups discloses itself through what is and is not said about them and through actual conditions affecting their ability to speak for themselves. Operating through existing social, political, and economic arrangements, negation extends beyond the “text” to include the ability to produce texts, to engage in discourses, to be heard in the public space.”¹⁵¹

In the case of atheist Americans during Eisenhower’s presidency, the social and legal consequences of being labeled a communist is a clear example of an “actual condition” that would prevent members of the third persona from being able to participate in public discourses about who were acceptable members of American society. President Eisenhower’s use of civil religion not only negated atheists, but helped maintain a space that prevented atheists from addressing the negation.

Eisenhower’s use of civil religion materialized in three prominent rhetorical strategies that aided in the construction of the ideal space: equating religion and national identity, directing American bodies to perform religion, and dismissing dissenters. These strategies worked to demonstrate how ideal citizens should behave within the United States. Enthymematically, they also told audiences what to look for when attempting to identify un-American threats. After briefly discussing each rhetorical strategy, I examine how Eisenhower incorporated them into his inaugural address, his “Back to God” broadcasts, and his official statements on the inclusion of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance.

Equating religion and national identity is a prominent characteristic of civil religion. It is a rhetorical strategy that Cold War and civil religion scholars acknowledge that Eisenhower used regularly. Before he became president, as the president-elect attending a luncheon at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Eisenhower claimed: “Our form of government has no sense unless it is

founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is."¹⁵² He contended that if the United States was to win the fight against the Soviets, they would have to go back "to the very fundamentals in all things, and one of them is we are a religious people."¹⁵³ Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder argue that the quote demonstrates how much civil religion was being used to engender consensus during the Cold War.¹⁵⁴ For Eisenhower, belief in God is what set the United States apart from communist countries, thus belief in God was integral for true patriotism. Religion thus became unquestionably linked with national identity. Religion was portrayed as fundamental to Americanism, thus American unity. This argument is well established within scholarship on civil religion and President Eisenhower. However, while scholars frequently comment on how Eisenhower's conflation of religion and national identity fostered national unity, there is limited scholarship on how it simultaneously marginalized atheists. By promoting the idea that national identity relied on religious identity, Eisenhower excluded atheists from the American citizenry. It is this aspect of the civil religious theme of equating religion and national identity that I explore in this chapter.

Eisenhower's second strategy was directing American bodies to perform religious activities. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson argue that "skillful presidents not only adapt to their audience, but also engage in transforming those who hear them into the audience they desire."¹⁵⁵ By describing American bodies as religious and encouraging them to behave as such, Eisenhower sought to transform his audience into a theistic body. By producing a conception of how bodies should behave within an ideal space, Eisenhower presented the American people apparent material evidence of which Americans were closer to the ideological center of the ideal space. Maurice Charland, drawing on the works of Louis Althusser and Michael McGee, argues that "ideology is material because subjects enact their ideology and

reconstitute their material world in its image.”¹⁵⁶ American bodies who perform religion thus become evidence for the argument that religion is fundamental to Americanism.

Atheists who did not behave the way true citizens should risked being labeled an un-American threat. As discussed in the previous chapter, the study on perceptions of communism conducted in 1954 by Board of Directors of the Fund for the Republic found that Americans were suspicious of bodies that did not act religiously. When respondents were asked why they thought someone they knew was a communist, responses included “He didn’t believe in Christ, heaven, or hell,” “Would not attend church and talked against God,” and “Didn’t believe in the Bible and talked about war.”¹⁵⁷ Not acting religious could mean being drawing suspicion and potential accusations of being un-American. The result of encouraging bodies to act religiously connected to Eisenhower’s third strategy: silencing dissenters.

Eisenhower silenced dissenters through various tactics. His use of enthymemes was one commonly used method. If Eisenhower stated that Americans were religious, one could assume that if they met someone who was not religious, that person was un-American. As discussed in the last two chapters, to be labeled un-American during the Cold War was socially detrimental. Eisenhower’s enthymemes forced atheists to choose between revealing themselves as atheists, thus risking social stigmatization, or passing as religious which allowed the stigmatization to remain unchallenged. Beasley argues that while civil religion “may seem to be inclusive by offering an ideational model of national identity, it may actually inhibit the possibility of good-faith discussions of diversity among the American people.”¹⁵⁸ Rhetoric that frames certain traits as un-American, according to Beasley, may prevent people from talking about their differences out of fear of appearing unpatriotic or even dangerous.¹⁵⁹ Atheists were discouraged from joining

in on the conversation as their true selves a result of the context of the Cold War, making it difficult for them to challenge Eisenhower's enthymematic reasoning.

Eisenhower also contributed to the stifling of good-faith discussions by presenting religious ideology as factual and beyond debate, limiting the legitimacy of any challenges. Presidents have institutional authority, through the prestige of the position. Eisenhower, in particular, was highly respected by the American people. While his words may not have been law, they held weight in his audiences' perceptions of reality. Additionally, with the rise of the Cold War, a great emphasis was put on governmental loyalty as a sign of being a good American. If an individual challenged Eisenhower's claim that religious ideology was factual or beyond debate, it could indicate that the individual was not loyal to the government. Dissenting from Eisenhower's positions could put an individual at risk.

These three strategies are distinct, yet intertwined, elements of Eisenhower's civil religious rhetoric. I argue that President Eisenhower used these three strategies to aid in the construction of an ideal space that negated atheists. His Inaugural Address, his broadcasts for the American Legion "Back to God" program, and his statements following the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance are three examples of rhetorical situations where Eisenhower constructed an ideal space using these strategies of civil religion. I provide a close textual analysis to demonstrate how the three strategies were utilized by Eisenhower.

Inaugural Address

As perhaps the most ceremonial event of a presidency, inaugural addresses are epideictic in form.¹⁶⁰ According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, presidential inaugurals serve four primary functions: constructing audience members as "the people," reviewing past communal values, demonstrating the political principals that will dictate the new

administration's policies, and establishing an understanding of the limitations of the role as president.¹⁶¹ As Eisenhower fulfilled the generic expectations of inaugural addresses, he illustrated the central role that civil religion would play in his rhetoric. In his framing of "the people" and his reiteration of values, he emphasized that faith in God was central to the American way of life; he made it clear that religious beliefs would undoubtedly have a major impact on Eisenhower's administration's actions; and he demonstrated that he recognized his own limitations by acknowledging himself as a subordinate to God.¹⁶²

President Eisenhower had a priestly style of civil religion.¹⁶³ This became particularly clear in his inaugural address when he opened his address with an unprecedented request: "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."¹⁶⁴ According to Eisenhower, he did not want to make the inaugural address a sermon but he wanted to address the fact that he thought America was getting "too secular."¹⁶⁵ He aimed to provide a reminder of the importance of God to America and its people.

According to Pierard and Linder, the prayer "was an action unique in the annals of presidential inaugurations, and the prayer is a landmark document in American civil religion."¹⁶⁶ While presidents had previously discussed God and the importance of God to America during the inaugural address, no other president had initiated a prayer. Giving a prayer, as Eisenhower recognized, is a private action—a personal act reserved for private places such as homes or places of worship.¹⁶⁷ Eisenhower recognized that his request was unusual, as he stated that he wanted to say the prayer before he talked about subjects that were "appropriate to this moment."¹⁶⁸ Historically, saying a personal, private prayer during an inaugural address was not appropriate to the occasion. Yet, in 1953, Eisenhower determined that it was necessary.

Religious acts that may have once been deemed for private use needed to be seen in public to demonstrate the religious identity of the American people and to encourage the embracement of that identity.

Those in attendance were asked to embrace this public display of prayer when President Eisenhower asked the audience to bow their heads. That request made clear that he wanted them to participate in the act of recognizing God. Considering that inaugural addresses are an opportunity for president to identify who they view “the people” to be, by requesting his audience to perform a religious act, Eisenhower portrayed “the people” as being inherently religious. Within the confinements of the ideal space Eisenhower was constructing, he assumed bodies should not have been hesitant to bow their heads in prayer.

While the audience members had the agency to ignore his request, and it is possible some did, that choice was risky. First, it would be ignoring a seemingly simple request from the president, which could be seen as disrespectful at best or un-American at worst. Furthermore, as discussed in previous chapters, Eisenhower started his presidency during the height of the Cold War when anti-communist attitudes were prevalent and the notion of atheists being communists was already planted in the minds of many Americans. Someone not bowing their head in prayer could indicate that they did not worship God, bringing about suspicion as to where their loyalties lie. For someone in the crowd who did not believe in God, it would be safer to bow their heads in order to allow their bodies to conceal their beliefs.

Eisenhower’s request worked as a double bind for atheists. According to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the double bind is a strategy where those with power put those without power in a no-win situation.¹⁶⁹ While historically women have most often been the target of the double bind, other minority groups such as atheists can also be the quarry. The text in Eisenhower’s speech

assumed that everyone would bow their head, postulating that everyone in attendance was religious or would at least pretend to be. Eisenhower did not say “if you wish to join, please bow your head.” Instead, he said, “I ask that you bow your heads” which did not suggest that he thought there might be people in the audience who would not want to participate. Atheists were negated by the text by being forced into a double bind where they either had pass as religious by bowing their heads or blatantly ignore the request, bringing negative attention on themselves. Doing the former meant playing into the notion that there were no atheists to oppose Eisenhower’s actions, but not participating meant risking being labeled un-American.

In requesting audience members to bow their heads, Eisenhower made no explicit threats or fear appeals to force audience members to participate. The context of the Cold War, however, did the work of a fear appeal. Eisenhower simply forced audience members to make a decision about how they should use their bodies to perform their identity. This demonstrates how Eisenhower’s rhetorical strategies were effective because of the established context of the Red Scare. While atheists’ agency still existed, the request from the text combined with the conditions of the Cold War limited their ability to respond defensively to the negation. The fear of being perceived as un-American worked as a silencer to atheist Americans.

Eisenhower went on in his address to invoke religion as a natural component of American democracy. He emphasized the importance of religious belief for the unified collective. When discussing foreign nuclear threats, he exclaimed:

At such a time in history, we who are free must proclaim anew our faith. This faith is the abiding creed of our fathers. It is our faith in the deathless dignity of man, governed by eternal moral and natural laws. This faith defines our full view of life. It establishes, beyond debate, those gifts of the Creator that are man’s inalienable rights, and that makes all men equal in His sight.¹⁷⁰

Eisenhower’s pronominal choices created a sense of who belongs in a collective “us.”¹⁷¹

Eisenhower started by saying “we who are free,” which referred to all of those who were part of

the free democracy, which assumedly included atheists.¹⁷² However, immediately following this statement, Eisenhower indicated that the unity might actually only be between religious people when he equated those who are free with those who “must proclaim anew our faith.” While this statement alone did not necessarily indicate religious faith, he went on to describe the creed of “our fathers,” invoking a public memory of the Founding Fathers who declared their independence by invoking rights endowed by the Creator. Beasley points out that in inaugural addresses, presidents do not necessarily call for audience members to embrace certain principles as much they remind audience members of “allegedly ancestral values.”¹⁷³ By invoking the memory of the Founding Fathers, Eisenhower reminded his audience that religion played a role in the foundation of the country and has been a part of American democracy from its beginning. “The faith” of the audience’s forefathers needed to be remembered by contemporary audiences.

Eisenhower more explicitly connected the “faith” with religion when he claimed that the faith includes “our faith in the deathless dignity of man.” This statement brought about imagery of afterlife and heaven. The collective “we” that Eisenhower’s rhetoric constructed appeared to only include those who believed in eternal life. Atheists could not share in “our faith” if they did not have faith in the “deathless dignity of man.”¹⁷⁴

Eisenhower argued that this faith referred to American ideals such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This notion of faith was not synonymous with a religious belief in God, however, Eisenhower framed the belief in a higher power as essential to accepting those principles as truth thus necessitating a belief in God in order to have this faith in the American way of life. The use of the notion of “our faith” was a classic employment of civil religion. Eisenhower seamlessly equated religious belief with national identity to develop a sense of national unity.

While he may have started this statement with pronominal choices that seemed to include all American citizens, the text quickly made it clear that his statement excluded anyone who did not share in “our faith.”¹⁷⁵ Anyone who had “our faith,” which was described broadly to include most religious beliefs, was welcomed into the ideal space that Eisenhower constructed for the collective “us.” Failure to believe in God indicated an inability to have “this faith,” thus atheists were not likely to be included in the audience Eisenhower addressed, nor the ideal space he was constructing.

Eisenhower argued that “our faith” and the notions it established were “beyond debate.” As Phillip Wander notes, Eisenhower’s use of civil religion “does not so much urge a point of view as call on absolute support for an absolute.”¹⁷⁶ Eisenhower’s assertion denied people the agency to debate concepts established by civil religion within the ideal space. By establishing what topic could not be debated within a space, Eisenhower restricted atheist bodies from discussing how their lack of belief in God could still work in a democratic nation. If one wanted to be a part of the ideal space and the collective “us” they had to support the absolute truth Eisenhower proposed. An individual failing to support the truth would give a reason for the collective “us” to suspect their trustworthiness as an American and label that individual as a part of the foreign “them.” Fear of the label would motivate atheists to pass as individuals who believed in a higher power. In doing so, they needed to avoid debating the validity of Eisenhower’s connection with the necessity of belief in God in having faith in the American way of life.

Eisenhower went on to describe the enemy of the United States as the enemy of the absolute truth: “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.”¹⁷⁷ Eisenhower had already established that faith was an absolute and dictated the American way of life. Here Eisenhower clarified that the enemy of the American way of life is those who do not believe in God. Through his inaugural address, Eisenhower frequently talked about the “enemy” and “evils” facing Americans, but he never mentioned communists or communism—the assumed enemy of America during the Cold War. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Eisenhower often conflated atheism and communism. An article in *The Washington Post* acknowledged that Eisenhower never mentioned Russia yet he made it clear through quotes such as “the enemy knows no God but force” that he was talking about the Soviet Communists.¹⁷⁸ The American people knew that when Eisenhower talked about those who were godless, he was talking about the enemy.

Eisenhower reinforced the notion of the “faithless” as the enemy when he stated “We are free men. We shall remain free, never to be proven guilty of the only capital offense against freedom, a lack of stanch [sic] faith.”¹⁷⁹ As discussed earlier, this faith was the faith in the American way of life, which required a belief in God. If one did not believe in God, it is questionable whether they could share in this faith at all, let alone have *staunch* faith.¹⁸⁰ Failure to have this staunch faith was, according to Eisenhower, a capital offense. Atheists were consequentially framed as criminals through Eisenhower’s rhetoric.

Eisenhower ended his inaugural address by urging each citizen to embrace their role in the Cold War battle in their daily lives by calling upon their spiritual strength and moral stamina. He claimed “This is the hope that beckons us onward in this century of trial. This is the work that awaits us all, to be done with bravery, with charity, and with prayer to Almighty God.”¹⁸¹ Beasley argues that, in inaugural addresses, presidents speak of the American identity “in terms of both an attitudinal *pose* and civil religious *principle*. Instead of speaking only of ideological

consensus, then presidents also seem eager to promote some sort of phenomenological consensus among the American people.”¹⁸² From the beginning to the end of his inaugural address, Eisenhower based his arguments on the civil religious principles, or supposed fundamental truths, but he also encouraged particular ways of behaving in order to embody those principles. He began by asking his audience to bow their heads to participate in a prayer. He went on to explain civil religious principles tied to “the faith” of the nation and who the enemy of that faith was. He ended by reminding audience members of what behaviors, such as praying in their daily lives, they could do to embody Americanism. If all Americans behaved in a religious way, they could unite against the atheist enemy.

Eisenhower’s inaugural address was met with praise from the media and members of Congress. *The New York Times* published excerpts from editorials from around the country that praised Eisenhower for his “moral fiber” for starting his inaugural address with a prayer in which not only all of America but “the entire free world must have joined [in on].”¹⁸³ Speaker of the House Joseph W. Martin Jr. was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying “It was an inspiring message for peace and understanding among nations, as well as an appeal to a higher morality and a great devotion to this country and its ideals. The people will receive it as a much-needed tonic.”¹⁸⁴ Martin was impressed by Eisenhower’s emphasis of the religious connection to national identity and thought the people would view it as cure. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Republican Senator Alexander Wiley also thought the people would appreciate the message saying, “There is not a line in it that all Americans cannot heartily indorse [sic].”¹⁸⁵ An atheist, however, would not necessarily view Eisenhower’s rhetoric as a cure or as rhetoric they could heartily endorse. These statements reflect how Eisenhower was not alone in assuming Americans in attendance and around the country would have no problem participating in a

religious ritual and embracing a belief in God as fundamental to Americanism. Like Eisenhower, these statements talk of the America as if atheists could not be a part of the religious make-up of “the people.” These responses demonstrated how the ideal space could be maintained through the media and other political figures reiterating Eisenhower’s messages.

As stated in *The Washington Post* the day after the address, “Inauguration Day was, first of all, an occasion for the renewal of faith—faith in God, in freedom and in the essential rightness of our way of life. In this, of course, Eisenhower set the pace.”¹⁸⁶ Eisenhower’s inaugural address laid the foundation for how he would rhetorically construct an ideal space for Americans. His rhetoric and political policies would continue to influence the space throughout his presidency. This was evident a few weeks after Eisenhower’s inaugural address when he provided a recording to be broadcasted for the American Legion’s “Back to God” program.

Back to God Broadcasts

The American Legion started its “Back to God” program in 1953 with the hope that the American people would embrace participation in three religious actions: going to church every Sunday, praying every day, and educating children about religion. As Donald R. Wilson, a commander of the American Legion argued, “It is said that the family that prays together stays together. We say that, as the family, so the nation that prays together stays together.”¹⁸⁷ The program was broadcasted over the radio and included several statements from political leaders including the president.

President Eisenhower recorded remarks for the “Back to God” program in 1953, 1954, and 1955. All the recordings had themes of the importance of God and citizenship. In his first recording, he opened by saying that his prayer for the American people was “that all of us by our combined dedication and devotion may merit the great blessings that the Almighty has brought

to this land of ours.”¹⁸⁸ With this opening, Eisenhower suggested that it is the responsibility of the people to enact dedication and devotion to God in order for God to grant the continued success of the United States. People needed to “earn” blessings and human rights, including “the right to worship as we please, to speak and to think, and to earn, and to save.”¹⁸⁹ Those who did not show dedication or devotion to God risked preventing the United States from receiving God’s blessings. Thus, atheist bodies became a threat to America’s prosperity.

Eisenhower ended his speech by reminding his audience of the connection between religion and national identity by encouraging the American people to cheerfully strive for “better citizenship” in order to show that they were “worthy members of this great American family of free, God-fearing people.”¹⁹⁰ Eisenhower suggested that a sign of good citizenship was devotion to God. Only in being a good citizen (devoting oneself to God) could an individual be a part of the American family, which inherently was God-fearing. Atheists, who are not inherently God-fearing, nor likely to devote themselves to God, were denied the possibility of inclusion into the American family of which Eisenhower was encouraging his audience to be a part.

One segment of Eisenhower’s second recording focused on the importance of a shared religious past for the American family. He argued that throughout history Americans have turned to God. He reminded the audiences of their school days when they learned about the pilgrims trying to find a land where they could worship freely.¹⁹¹ In doing so, Eisenhower invoked the public memory of the United States’s religious past. National identity relies on shared knowledge and memory.¹⁹² Leaders, in an attempt to foster unity by promoting a specific shared viewpoint, often promote an interpretation of the past that promotes that viewpoint.¹⁹³ Those using civil religion are often relying on the origin story of the Puritanical mission in the United States.¹⁹⁴

By reminding the people that historically the United States has turned to God, Eisenhower emphasized the importance of the “Back to God” program, to turn to God in the present moment. He invoked the memory of pilgrims, who white citizens learned about in school as their ancestors who came to America to freely worship God. Invoking the pilgrims served as a reminder of the importance of God in the very creation of the United States of America. If the pilgrims had gone to another land, the United States might not exist. Eisenhower’s use of this public memory was a way to justify his use of civil religion and the construction of an ideal space for religious citizens.

Moving forward in history, Eisenhower brought up the image of President George Washington as he struggled for freedom during the Revolutionary War. Eisenhower stated “We remember the picture of the Father of our Country, on his knees at Valley Forge seeking divine guidance in the cold gloom of a bitter winter. Thus, Washington gained strength to lead to independence a nation.”¹⁹⁵ According to Pierard and Linder, this story is the most common legend spread about Washington’s religion, popularized by the “greatest Washington mythmaker of all times,” Mason Weems. According to Paul F. Boller, Jr., one of the leading experts on Washington’s faith, there is no evidence to support that this, nor many other stories about Washington’s religion, actually happened.¹⁹⁶ While the story may not have been true, the power of public memory is that, even if the memory is false, it can be used to confirm ideals. By suggesting that Washington was strongly religious and that his strength came from his belief in God, Eisenhower highlighted the importance of religious belief in gaining strength as a nation at the present moment. This validated the actions the “Back to God” program aimed to convince listeners to participate in. Americans and their nation would gain the strength to win the Cold War if they participated in religious acts such as praying and going to church.

By invoking public memory, whether factual or false, Eisenhower presented a history that supported what he had said in his inaugural address was beyond debate: that God is fundamental to Americanism. Eisenhower's strategic way of providing apparent evidence for the connection between religion and national identity discouraged dissent from any member of society who might not share in the public memory. Furthermore, it promoted a sense of shared community for those who did not question the legitimacy of public memory.

Eisenhower claimed that "America's freedom, her courage, her strength, and her progress have had their foundation in faith" and declared that there was a new "need for positive acts of renewed recognition [of the] faith" that the "Back to God" program addressed.¹⁹⁷ Eisenhower emphasized the importance of religion to America's success and encouraged the American people to participate in the American Legion's "Back to God" program to recognize that faith. In doing so, Eisenhower simultaneously equated religion and national identity while encouraging bodies to act in a way that recognized the connection.

Eisenhower highlighted the importance of a community that had a shared public memory and could together participate in the renewed recognition of faith in the end of his 1954 broadcast when he stated:

Whatever our individual church, whatever personal creed, our common faith in God is a common bond among us. In our fundamental faith, we are all one. Together we thank the Power that has made and preserved us as a nation. By the millions, we speak prayers, we sing hymns--and no matter what their words may be, their spirit is the same—"In God is our trust."¹⁹⁸

In his first inaugural address, Eisenhower had talked about the importance of the faith that bonded the American people. During the address, he had been referring to a faith in the ideals of America which were accessible only through a belief in God. In his "Back to God" broadcast, however, Eisenhower claimed that an explicit religious faith in God was the bond.

Atheists could not be a part of that bond because they lacked that fundamental religious faith. Eisenhower's use of civil religion welcomed anyone who had faith in God into the space, no matter the church, creed, or words said to express that faith. While non-Christians may not have been at the ideal center, Eisenhower welcomed any theists into the ideal space. Atheists, however, did not share the bond that held all theists in the space so they were unwelcomed to participate as their true selves.

In Eisenhower's final "Back to God" recording, he once again invoked public memory when he opened his speech by reminding the audience that the Founding Fathers recognized God "as the author of individual [r]ights" and that the purpose of government was to secure those rights. Eisenhower argued that the only thing that kept a government from trying to take away human rights was the recognition that the rights were God-given. Eisenhower then presented perhaps his clearest example of merging national identity and religion when he declared "Without God, there could be no American form of Government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first--most basic--expression of Americanism."¹⁹⁹ Eisenhower again emphasized the necessity of belief in God in the American way of life, particularly in how the government saw its power. However, he took it a step further by making it clear that the fundamental condition of being American was belief in God. Believing in God was the *most basic expression of Americanism*. Atheists, being unable to even meet the basic criteria of Americanism, were not regarded as capable of being "truly American."

By claiming that belief in God is the "most basic--expression of Americanism," Eisenhower dismissed atheists as Americans, thus invalidating their rights as Americans. If an atheist is not "truly American" would it matter if they opposed how Eisenhower framed who Americans were? If an atheist were to oppose Eisenhower's proclaimed criteria, they could be

dismissed as un-American. By setting up a perceived criterion to Americanism, Eisenhower limited atheists' right to be recognized as part of the democratic voice that shaped the nation.

At the beginning of the "Back to God" program, two years earlier, Eisenhower had asked bodies to join the American Legion in turning back to God through showing devotion to God in order to earn his blessings. At the conclusion of his contribution to the program, he repeated the request:

Each day we must ask that Almighty God will set and keep His protecting hand over us so that we may pass on to those who come after us the heritage of a free people, secure in their God-given rights and in full control of a Government dedicated to the preservation of those rights. I can ask nothing more of each of you, of all Americans--than that you join with the American Legion in its present campaign.²⁰⁰

The American legion had requested that Americans to go to church, pray daily, and educate children about religion in order to turn back to God. Eisenhower emphasized the importance of American bodies accepting the request. By asking Americans to perform religious tasks to demonstrate their Americanism, Eisenhower mapped out an understanding of how good Americans should behave.

In his conclusion, Eisenhower claimed he was talking to all Americans, but it is unclear if atheists were meant to be included. One might assume that if anyone needed to "turn back to God," it would be atheists. However, the only reference Eisenhower made explicitly about atheists was a comment on how "there are no atheists in foxholes."²⁰¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, in that case he dismissed the legitimacy of the existence of atheists.

Throughout the rest of the program, Eisenhower presented a belief in God as something that all American already have, though may not value enough. He never called on those who did not believe in God to change their beliefs, but called on all Americans to turn more attention to what

they already know. Through the broadcasts, Eisenhower either framed true atheists as nonexistent or unable to be American.

Atheists were not included in the audience Eisenhower encouraged to turn back to God, yet his rhetorical choices created an ideal space that negated them. Throughout his three contributions to the “Back to God” program, Eisenhower called on Americans to perform religious acts to show their Americanism, he used public memory to equate religion and national identity, and he dismissed atheists as part of the American citizenry, limiting their ability to participate in the conversation. His rhetoric not only had legitimate influence on how Americans viewed atheists, but would be used to influence legislation that further negated atheist Americans. During the “Back to God” program, the majority of American backed Congress in creating legislation that promoted the notion that America truly was a nation “under God,” a nation where atheists did not belong.

Under God Addition

As mentioned previously, Eisenhower’s rhetoric alone did not create an ideal space. Other aspects, such as community traditions, legislation, and the discourse of other rhetoricians, were also influential in its development. One important example of this was the addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. The pledge, which a Baptist pastor named Francis Bellamy wrote in 1892, did not originally include the words “under God.” While several attempts had been made to add “under God” to the pledge, the notion did not get any major backing until February 7, 1954, when a preacher named George Docherty gave a sermon at the New York Avenue Presbyterian church, with President Eisenhower in the audience, encouraging the addition.²⁰²

Docherty reasoned that without the words “under God,” the pledge was a generic pledge that members of any nation could use, even “little Muscovites” in Russia.²⁰³ Docherty argued that “To omit the words “under God” in the pledge of allegiance is to omit the definitive character of the American way of life.” Docherty characterized the belief in God as fundamental to Americanism, as Eisenhower had often done in his speeches. Docherty did address the fact that, while “under God” was general enough for all religious people to accept, atheists would not be included. He rationalized this negation by arguing that, while atheists can be good people, neighbors, and even citizens, “an atheistic American is a contradiction of terms.”²⁰⁴ He went on to explain that, atheists are “parasites” in that they are enjoying the benefits of “accumulated spiritual capital of Judeo-Christian civilization” while at the same time denying the existence of the God that made those benefits possible.²⁰⁵

According to Docherty, after his sermon, Eisenhower told him that he endorsed his idea whole-heartedly.²⁰⁶ Docherty’s characterization of atheists as “parasites” and his recognition that “under God” would not be applicable to atheists, did not deter Eisenhower from supporting the change to the pledge. Docherty’s sermon was printed and broadcasted around the United States and Congress was overwhelmed with letters supporting the addition.²⁰⁷ In fact, a Gallup poll done in 1954 showed that the only demographic group that did not support the addition were the religiously unaffiliated and atheists.²⁰⁸

The lack of support from atheists did not prevent Congress members from fighting for a bill that added “under God” to the pledge. Louis Rabault, who was one of the strongest congressional supporters of the bill, dismissed atheists by arguing that the issue that the addition addressed was the fact that “the unbridgeable gap between America and Communist Russia [was] a belief in the Almighty God [and] from the root of atheism stems the evil weed of

communism.”²⁰⁹ Rabault, like Docherty, argued for the importance of having an official acknowledgement of what made Americans different from their “atheist adversaries.”²¹⁰ Along with the rest of Congress, Rabault was able to dismiss atheist dissent by framing atheists the enemy, using rhetoric reflective of President Eisenhower’s. As discussed in the previous chapter, atheism became synonymous with communism, which allowed atheist Americans’ concerns to be dismissed.

Less than five months after the Docherty’s sermon, Congress passed legislation to add “under God” to the pledge of allegiance with no real push-back from any member of Congress. As Lee Canipe points out, no one wanted to “go on record as being anti-God.”²¹¹ In the United States, it would have been politically detrimental. Atheist Americans were not a group for whom it was worth risking one’s political career.

Upon signing the new legislation into law, Eisenhower released a brief statement to demonstrate the importance of the change. He started by declaring:

From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty.²¹²

Eisenhower’s statement emphasized the importance that this legislation would have in affecting school children in all kinds of spaces in the United States; Whether they were from big cities, small towns, or one room school houses, students would be using their bodies to stand and say a pledge that was not only to show their dedication to the United States but to God. Considering how important schools are in shaping the minds of citizens, the addition was also a way to teach American school children about the importance of God to America.

The spiritual teaching of children had been one of the goals of the American Legion’s “Back to God” program and the addition of “under God” was one way to help promote that

aspect of their mission. Furthermore, one concern the Eisenhower administration had, as expressed by J. Edgar Hoover, was that children of communists were “captives of an alien ideology” and one example of this was that parents were teaching children that God did not exist.²¹³ By having school children in all parts of the country cite the Pledge of Allegiance with “under God” in it, schools could try to counter what might be taught at home.

Eisenhower went on to proclaim: “To anyone who truly loves America, nothing could be more inspiring than to contemplate the rededication of our youth, on each morning, to our country’s true meaning.”²¹⁴ Eisenhower’s rhetoric constricted atheists’ ability to voice concerns about adding “under God” by making it clear that anyone who *truly loved America* would support this addition and be happy to see it. If an atheist were to express that they did not support the addition it would, according to Eisenhower, indicate that they did not actually love America, and thus make them suspicious. This tactic worked as another double bind in that atheists were forced to either stay silent, thus making it appear that there was complete consensus supporting the addition, or voice their dissent and risk being labeled un-American. Either way, any concern atheists might have had about the constitutionality of the new pledge could be dismissed.

Eisenhower once again reminding citizens that the true meaning of the United States of America is explicitly tied to a belief in God. As with his inaugural address and “Back to God” broadcasts, Eisenhower identified belief in God as a central component of American identity and nationalism. If one did not believe in God then they did not believe in the purpose of the United States. They were, as Docherty put it, “parasites” living off the ideals of America while not contributing to the devotion of God needed for the national to continue receiving blessings from the higher power.

Eisenhower ended his official statement by declaring “this law and its effects today have profound meaning. In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strength those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s most powerful resources, in peace or in war.”²¹⁵ Eisenhower emphasized the importance of material reminders of the connection between religion and national identity. The new law would allow bodies to perform that connection by enacting patriotism and religious beliefs at the same time. It was a spiritual weapon, which could not only be used against external threats, but internal ones who threatened the very foundation of America, its religious beliefs. Atheists were silenced by this weapon. Future attempts to fight against the new weapon would be met with accusations of un-Americanism. Eisenhower’s rhetoric and the legislation passed protected religious Americans while villainizing atheist Americans.

Though only two paragraphs long, Eisenhower’s official statement upon the signing of the bill to include “under God” to the pledge equated religious beliefs and national identity, encouraged American bodies to act religious, and silenced dissenters. The bill might be considered one of the most influential pieces of legislation from Eisenhower’s administration. Millions of school children did, and still do, proclaim daily that they were part of a nation that was “under God.” In doing so, Eisenhower allowed for the ideal space that he worked to construct continue thriving in classrooms around the country for decades to come.

Conclusion

President Eisenhower’s rhetoric constructed a notion of an ideal space that citizens, like Judge Frank McLaughlin, could use to justify the rejection of atheists from the United States. Wladyslaw Plywacki’s case is an example of the real-life effects a president’s rhetoric can have

on shaping impressions on who is welcomed within a space. Eisenhower connected faith in God and faith in the American way of life so seamlessly that at times it is hard to clarify which one he put more emphasis: In doing so, he constructed a *religious* American “we,” which left atheists Americans far from the ideological center of the ideal space.

Eisenhower also used his rhetoric to direct bodies on how to behave. In some cases, he instructed his audience to take part in certain actions, whether it be bowing their heads, praying, devoting themselves to God, or standing up to say they lived in a nation “under God.” By doing so Eisenhower evoked an image of how a true American was supposed to behave. When directing American bodies to perform religious acts, Eisenhower employed an enthymematic rhetorical strategy that suggested that if bodies did not behave the way Eisenhower instructed, then those bodies were not truly American. Failure to perform religious act could draw negative attention that most Americans in the 1950s wished to avoid.

The double bind atheists faced when deciding how to use their bodies functioned as a way to silence dissenters. Additionally, Eisenhower discouraged any dissent by claiming God’s connection to America was an absolute and asserting that any true American would agree. By constructing his arguments in such a way, atheists are caught in a bind between being sincere to their own beliefs and staying safe from the damaging effects of mischaracterizations. Atheists were not able to share their beliefs or voice concerns about policies that privileged religious individuals without fear of retribution. Not only did the text of Eisenhower’s rhetoric negate atheists, but they were unable to defend themselves because of the influence that Cold War fears had on the contexts surrounding Eisenhower’s rhetoric.

Whether by was talking explicitly about atheists or framing them through his silences, Eisenhower’s rhetoric located atheists outside of the ideal space. In Eisenhower’s construction of

American identity, atheists did not belong. Eisenhower may have been attempting to foster national unity during the Cold War, but in doing so, he scapegoated atheist Americans. The last two chapters have demonstrated how Eisenhower negated atheists through his attempts to unify. This analysis provides a new way to look at Eisenhower's use of civil religion in order to understand his rhetoric, the challenges atheist Americans faced during the Cold War, and how, 70 years later, Eisenhower's construction of the ideal space remains a part of public memory.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the American people held President Dwight D. Eisenhower in high regard during his presidency. At the end of his first term, he had an impressive 68% approval rating.²¹⁶ Even at the end of his presidency, in 1960, he had a 59% approval rating, one of the highest ratings of the 20th century.²¹⁷ Most presidential scholars agree that presidents are influential in shaping political and social reality, national identity, and rhetorical norms. Having a higher national approval rating indicates that a president may have had a greater ability to influence the people in various ways due to his positive ethos. For better or worse, Eisenhower's ability to command the respect and the attention of the American people unified many under a religious ideological consensus. While the consensus may have been viewed as a necessity during the Cold War, it came at the expense of atheist Americans. President Eisenhower framed atheists as un-American both when he mentioned them explicitly and when he alluded to them implicitly, through a rhetoric of omission. The perception of atheists as un-American was evident during the Cold War and still lingers in modern U.S. culture.

This final chapter examines the implications of Eisenhower's rhetorical choices. I discuss how Eisenhower's treatment of atheists echoed in the rhetoric of subsequent presidents and how his legacy continues to influence perceptions of atheist citizenship. Ultimately, I contend that rhetorical studies scholarship needs to expand to include the marginalized perspective of atheists.

Eisenhower's Influence on Presidential Marginalization of Atheist Citizens

Scholars agree that Eisenhower's administration represents a shift in uses of American civil religion.²¹⁸ His offering up a prayer in his inaugural address, inauguration of the annual prayer breakfasts, making "In God We Trust" the national motto, adding "under God" to the

Pledge of Allegiance, and his common use of prophetic dualism all contribute to this credit. As president, his rhetoric contributed to the hostile national environment towards socialist and communist outsiders during the Cold War. His use of civil religion framed atheists as a group of outsiders of which the American people should be particularly wary. In doing so, he limited atheists' ability to participate in public life without hiding their religious identity. He encouraged a form of theist-normativity that still permeates societal expectations today.

Eisenhower's use of civil religion was key to the development of American theist-normativity, in part because of the way his successors sustained its use. A search on the Presidency Project Database shows that every president after Eisenhower, aside from Richard Nixon, used or talked about the motto "In God We Trust" at least once during their presidency.²¹⁹ More impressively, since Eisenhower left office, the phrase "under God" appears in over 300 different recorded documents in the Presidency Project Database and has been used by every president.²²⁰ During an address at the NATO headquarters in 1963, John F. Kennedy proclaimed that in time "the unity of the West can lead to the unity of East and West, until the human family is truly a 'single sheepfold' under God."²²¹ In his proclamation for National Hispanic Heritage Week in 1982, Ronald Reagan stated that he wanted "all Americans to join together in peace, brotherhood, and pride in being one Nation under God."²²² Bill Clinton argued during his 1997 radio address that "we must renew our pledge to make America one Nation under God."²²³ At a commencement address at Liberty University in May of 2017, Donald Trump proclaimed:

America has always been the land of dreams because America is a nation of true believers. When the pilgrims landed at Plymouth they prayed. When the founders wrote the Declaration of Independence, they invoked our creator four times, because in America we don't worship government we worship God. That is why our elected officials put their hands on the Bible and say, 'So help me God,' as they take the oath of office. It

is why our currency proudly declares, 'In God we trust,' and it's why we proudly proclaim that we are one nation under God every time we say the pledge of allegiance.²²⁴

This small rhetorical sampling indicates that presidents continue to follow civil religious norms that assume that the God is fundamental to the American way of life. Presidents who use this rhetoric appear to assume that they are talking to all Americans. In reality, they are only including religious Americans while atheists continue to be silenced members of the third persona.

In addition to their use of civil religion to negate atheists to maintain a theist-normative mindset, many of Eisenhower's successors have addressed atheists in ways that have dismissed their agency and citizenship. While no president referenced atheism and atheists as often as Eisenhower did, contemporary presidents' references often reflected Eisenhower's rhetoric. Lyndon B. Johnson warned the American people about the "godless 'ism'" that threatened the United States, in doing so emphasizing that the lack of belief in God as the key threat of the Cold War. Jimmy Carter reiterated Eisenhower's use of prophetic dualism through arguments such as:

The Soviets represent a totalitarian nation; we are committed to peace and freedom and democracy. The Soviets subjugate the rights of an individual human being to the rights of the state; we do just the opposite. The Soviets are an atheistic nation; we have deep and fundamental religious beliefs.²²⁵

Carter's contrasting of positive attributes of a religious nation with the undesirable characteristics of an atheistic nation continued to promote the idea that atheistic ideologies inherently led to the downfall of a country. Ronald Reagan, who is credited with ending the Cold War, remained dedicated to Eisenhower's rhetorical construction of the Cold War, claiming: "Atheism is not an incidental element of communism, not just part of the package; it is the package."²²⁶ Atheism, according to Reagan, is what communism is, thus atheism was what needed to be combated, a notion Eisenhower likely would have wholeheartedly supported.

Even after the Cold War ended, President George W. Bush still spoke of the battle in a way that reflected President Eisenhower's way of thinking. In remarks prior to meeting with Pope John Paul II in July of 2001, Bush described how:

America continues to measure herself by the nobility of her founding vision in building this society of liberty, equality, and justice under the law. In the century which has just ended, these same ideals inspired the American people to resist two totalitarian systems, based on an atheistic vision of man and society.²²⁷

In remembering the Cold War, Bush suggested that it was still the "atheistic" component that was problematic. While Bush could have left the comment at "two totalitarian systems" his apparent need to emphasize the atheistic component demonstrates a continued disconnect with American values and atheist ideologies.

As with Eisenhower, contemporary presidential rhetoric about atheism goes beyond discussions of communism. At a Commencement Address at Warner Pacific College in Portland, Gerald Ford dismissed atheists by referencing the same cliché that Eisenhower invoked twenty years before that there are "no atheists in foxholes."²²⁸ Reagan, like Eisenhower, dismissed atheists as foolish. On multiple occasions, domestically and abroad, he made the joke that he had

long been unable to understand the atheist in this world of so much beauty. And I had an unholy desire to invite some atheists to dinner and then serve the most fabulous gourmet dinner that has ever been concocted and, after dinner, ask them if they believe there was a cook.²²⁹

To be willing to make a joke out of the beliefs of atheists shows how little respect was given to them. Like Eisenhower's dismissal of atheists as foolish, Reagan's joke discredited atheists. If a president shapes the American imaginary about who mattered, the act of dismissing atheist beliefs as irrational or foolish tells the American people that atheists are irrational, foolish, and do not matter.

In both their use of civil religion and their references in atheists and atheism, presidents have echoed Eisenhower's rhetoric. With few exceptions, atheists have continually been framed as un-American by American presidents. This type of dismissive rhetoric continues to shape the American imagination in ways that have consequences for the everyday American atheist.

Atheism and Public Memory

Eisenhower's portrayal of atheists as un-American continues to permeate American public memory. Despite the population of non-theists growing over the last decade, a 2015 survey done by the Public Religion Research Institute found that 69% of Americans believed it was "very important" (52%) or "somewhat important" (17%) to believe in God in order to be considered "truly American."²³⁰ The respondents' assumption that religious belief is fundamental to the American way of life and to being a "true American" is the same assumption Eisenhower made throughout his presidency and that many of his successors reiterated. This assumption suggests that if one must believe in God to be "truly American" than those who do not believe in God can never achieve full citizenship in the eyes of their fellow Americans. This belief is further confirmed by Penny Edgell, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, and Joseph Gerteis who found that more than 40% of Americans felt that atheists did not "at all agree with [the respondent's] vision of American society."²³¹ This was considered the biggest societal concern associated with atheism. Ultimately, atheist ideologies are still viewed as un-American, reflective of attitudes surveyed during Eisenhower's administration.

Over the past 70 years, perceptions of atheists have evolved and, while they have gotten better, they still indicate a reluctance to accept atheists. Gallup has surveyed Americans' willingness to vote for an atheist president since 1958. The first year of the survey only 18% of Americans said they would vote for an atheist president while in 2012, 54% said they would.

While the percentage has gone up, atheism was still the most unfavorable trait on the survey and had one of the lowest growths rate at only 36 percentage points (the only change that had a lower growth rate was willingness to vote for a Catholic which went from 60% to 94%, a change of 34 percentage points).²³² Considering the quick growth of nonreligious identities, this slow process of acceptance could lead to further tensions. According to the Gallup Poll, in 1958 only 2% of Americans admitted to being nonreligious (nones/atheists/agnostics), while in 2012 14% of American claimed the identity. That number increased to 18% by 2016.²³³ This is by far the largest increase in the population size of a religious minority group within the United States in the past 70 years.

The increase in the number of atheists does not necessarily mean that they have a strong or unified voice as a marginalized group. Raymond W. Converse argues that there are three general categories into which atheists fall.²³⁴ First are those who do not believe in God, but do not give much thought to it and may have difficulty articulating those beliefs. They are simply living their lives assuming God is not there. This is likely the largest group of atheists. 65% of atheists say they “seldom or never discuss their views on religion with religious people.”²³⁵ This groups’ atheist identity is typically not as important to them so there is no need to advertise it publicly. By not talking about their lack of belief with religious individuals, these atheists are contributing to continued assumption that the atheist group is smaller than it actually is. A 2015 Pew Research survey found that only 59% of participants claimed they knew an atheist. It is more likely that, similar to Eisenhower, many of these participants simply have not had people actually reveal to them that they were atheists. Unfortunately, as Eisenhower suggested, a group’s size can matter in perceptions of whether the group should be listened to. If many

atheists are not open about their lack of belief, that affects the ability of atheists to be seen as a formidable social group worthy of respect.

The second type of atheist Converse describes are those who do not believe God exists and can articulate that position fairly well when asked. The group can hold their own in a conversation about their beliefs but may or may not go out of their way to actually have the conversation and reveal their non-religious identity. For many, the fear of public stigmatization determines whether an atheist reveals their beliefs and whom they are willing to tell. Qualitative research on atheists has found that many atheists are hesitant to tell others, especially family members, about their belief out of fear of negative reactions.²³⁶ This often involves the fear of not being taken seriously and being dismissed or the fear of rejection and alienation. The types of social stigmatizations that make atheists afraid to come out are the same social stigmatizations that Eisenhower promoted during his presidency. While numerous factors have contributed to these negative perceptions, the influence on the president's public imagination helped to foster attitudes that inhibit atheists' willingness and ability to be open about their beliefs.

The final type of atheist, according to Converse, are those who can articulate their beliefs clearly and who demonstrate eagerness to be public about their beliefs.²³⁷ Their atheist identity is a very important part of their self-concept. Those in the latter category are the ones trying to make the most political change. They are actively involved in atheist organizations such as American Atheists, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, Secular Student Alliance, or the Secular Coalition for America. They might participate in Camp Quest, a summer camp where campers are encouraged to discuss freethought and humanist values, often attracting atheist or agnostic participants.²³⁸ These are the atheists who put on and attend the Reason Rally, a gathering in Washington D.C. every four years

(during the presidential election year) to show the presence and power of the secular vote. These are the atheists actively demanding more respect and less stigmatization for the non-religious community.

While this type of atheist may be more willing to reveal their identity as nonreligious while in the public sphere, they do not necessarily use the term atheist to describe themselves. Many, in fact, fully reject the term as identifier. This demonstrates one of the most influential aspects of Eisenhower's rhetorical construction of atheists: his problematization of the word "atheist" itself. In the same survey in which 40% of respondents said atheists did not "at all agree with [the respondent's] vision of American society," only 12% of Americans thought the same about those who were spiritual but not religious.²³⁹ While it is debatable as to what exactly "spiritual but not religious" means, the margin between perceptions of the two groups demonstrates the animosity Americans have towards those who have a specifically atheist identity. Similarly, the Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013 Religious Monitor survey found that 50% of Americans viewed atheists as a threat, yet 70% stated that they had trust in people with no religious affiliation.²⁴⁰ Like "spiritual but not religious," the label "no religious affiliation" could be interpreted various ways, however, the extreme contrast between these results demonstrates a disconnect between the label "atheist" and the actual lack of religious belief. The term "atheist," even more so than the concept of not being religious, is what troubles many Americans. In discussing their findings, Edgell, Hartmann, Stewart, and Gerteis themselves argue that term atheist "denotes a cultural category that signifies a general and diffuse sense of moral threat."²⁴¹ Atheism reminds Americans of a moral threat, similarly to how Americans during the Cold War viewed atheism a threat to the American way of life.

While this disconnect can make it difficult to determine exactly how individuals feel about the nonreligious, it also makes it particularly difficult to measure how many atheists or non-religious individuals there actually are within the United States. Some surveys ask if people are atheist, agnostic, unaffiliated, do not believe in God, do not believe in religion, have no religious identity, do not know, etc. Without common terminology across surveys, it is challenging to determine if a category such as “unaffiliated” means does not believe in God or does not participate in organized religion. Consistently in surveys, however, the percentage of self-identified atheists is far smaller than the general group of religious “nones.”

As David Silverman argued at the 2016 Reason Rally, the lack of a common identifier makes the nonreligious seem smaller than it is. He criticized nonreligious members for choosing terms such as “humanist,” “freethinker,” “agnostic,” or “unaffiliated” instead of atheist, claiming that the term “atheist” was better understood than other terms and held the best denotative definition to describe people who do not believe in God.²⁴² From my own observations while attending the event, it was clear that there were mixed feelings about Silverman’s speech. Although some agreed with his logic, many in attendance criticized him for telling his audience to identify as atheists. Even the names of nonreligious groups in the United States demonstrate this tension: American Atheists, American Humanist Association, American Secular Union, Internet Infidels and Washington Area Secular Humanists are just a few organizations. The term “atheist” is only embraced by some in the nonreligious community. It could be, as Silverman argued, that nonreligious people do not use the term because they are afraid of being stigmatized by others.²⁴³

This thesis provides strong evidence that a part of that stigmatization comes from the historical connection between atheism and the foreign threat of communism invoked by Cold

War presidents particularly Dwight. D. Eisenhower. While atheism may not necessarily be directly associated with communism in modern society, atheists continue to be regarded as an immoral threat in society. Eisenhower conflated communism with atheism and identified atheism as a threat in and of itself. These negative associations lingered in American public memory. The disconnect between the distrust of those who are spiritual but not religious or have no religious affiliation, however, demonstrates that there may be a disconnect between atheism and its actual ideologies. Not being religious is not necessarily the problem; being an atheist is. Even those who do not believe in God, thus aligning with the dictionary definition of atheism, do not want to be associated with the word. Eisenhower's augmented use of the term atheistic to describe perceived un-American behaviors and threats could help explain part of this disconnect.

Interestingly, Barack Obama had the opportunity to fight against the stigmatization of the term during his presidency. Instead, his attempt to include atheists may have unintentionally escalated the controversy over finding a collective identifying name for the nonreligious. He primarily used the term "nonbeliever" instead of the word "atheist" during most of his addresses. Some atheists/nonreligious Americans dislike the term "nonbeliever" because it can lead to the assumptions that they believe in absolutely nothing. Their concerns were confirmed by Mike Huckabee who, after Obama's inaugural address, stated that "there are certainly many people in this country that are not necessarily believers in anything other than themselves."²⁴⁴ Huckabee suggested that the only thing a person could believe in is God, a notion many atheists reject. Notably, between Obama taking office in 2008 and him leaving office in 2017, those who identified as religious "nones" increased from 12% to 20%, the largest increase of the nonreligious in any period fewer than ten years. While numerous factors contributed to this increase, having a president who was openly inclusive of non-religious Americans certainly

helped. However, during that time, there has not been much agreement on an inclusive name for the nonreligious. If Obama had used the term “atheist” it may have helped destigmatize the name, making it easier for the nonreligious to reclaim it. However, it is also possible that the previous stigmatization of the term “atheist” would have continued to restrain the nonreligious’ ability to use the term to unify themselves. While one can only speculate, Obama’s use of “nonbeliever” likely contributed to the willingness of individuals to be open about their lack of belief, but did not help to end the stigmatization of the term “atheist” that Eisenhower perpetuated.

It remains to be seen how the U.S. public and future presidents will deal with the growing number of nonreligious Americans (whether they identify as atheists or any other term). Part of the reason President Eisenhower was able to successfully use civil religion in a way that negated atheists was because of the context of the Cold War. Few people openly identified as atheists or religiously unaffiliated in the 1950s, though whether that was because it was true or because they feared being labeled a communist is difficult to determine. The small population of atheists made civil religion an ostensibly justifiable means of gaining unity. The fear of social consequences made it easy to maintain. Seventy years later, presidents still use civil religion. However, with the religiously nonaffiliated and atheist populations being measured at close to 20% of the population, its uses are now being met with more resistance. For example, on July 26, 2017 when Trump tweeted “IN AMERICA WE DON’T WORSHIP GOVERNMENT-WE WORSHIP GOD” he was met with backlash by nonreligious and religious people alike.²⁴⁵ With the growing number of American citizens who identify as atheists, scholars will need to re-examine how they talk about civil religion to contend with the increasing rejection of its use.

The Atheist in Rhetorical Studies

In the first volume of *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell proclaimed that:

The aim of the rhetorical critic is enlightenment—an understanding of the ways symbols can be used by analyzing the ways they were used in a particular time and place and the ways such usage appealed or might have appealed to other human beings—then or now. Rhetorical critics attempt to function as surrogates for audiences, both of the past and of the present. Based on their general knowledge of rhetorical literature and criticism, and based on familiarity with the rhetoric of movement and its historical milieu, critics attempt to show how a rhetorical act has the potential to teach, to delight, to move, to flatter, to alienate, or to hearten.²⁴⁶

In rhetorical scholarship, scholars have extensively demonstrated how civil religion has been used to teach the American people how to view themselves and how it has been used to delight, move, flatter, and hearten religious Americans. However, rhetorical scholars have failed to explore how civil religion, as a rhetorical tool, has alienated atheist Americans both in the past and the present. As surrogate audiences, they have adhered to the theist-normative mindset promoted by Eisenhower and, in doing so, have either completely forgotten about or have dismissed atheists.

By abiding by the theist-normative mindset, scholars have failed to recognize that atheists in the public sphere must deal with obstacles that are unknown to theists.²⁴⁷ In the United States, where the public sphere is steeped with civil religion, atheists must find ways to survive, whether by assimilating or resisting. However, in the field of rhetorical studies, and more specifically in public address, atheism continues to be one of the last “silent taboos” that scholars have yet to address.²⁴⁸

Scholars, particularly those who study civil religion, have had ample opportunity to tackle this issue. In analyses of President Eisenhower’s use of civil religion alone, there are numerous examples of scholars skirting the topic of atheism. Scholars have recognized that

Eisenhower's rhetoric was geared towards a religious audience, that prophetic dualism pits "religious Americans" against "godless communists," and that in so doing atheism was portrayed as immoral and alien.²⁴⁹ While many scholars have, in one way or another, touched on the notion that atheists were negated through Eisenhower's use of civil religion, they have not taken the next step to examine the consequences. By ignoring atheists, much like Eisenhower, scholars imply through their silence that atheists do not matter.

Criticizing scholars of American civil religion for treating atheists as "a marginal and anomalous group in American society," Dylan Weller raised one of the same questions that has driven this thesis: "given the burgeoning numbers of non-theists in this country...how much longer can they be ignored?"²⁵⁰ I argue it cannot be much longer. American civil religion builds patriotism by telling Americans that they have a shared religious bond. If more individuals are acknowledging that they, in fact, do not share in that bond, how will civil religion survive? As demonstrated in the response to Donald Trump's rhetoric, it appears that civil religion is already beginning to lose its power as a unification tool. This indicates that we are in the midst of a shift in civil religion, similar to (or perhaps more accurately exactly opposite of) the shift that occurred during Eisenhower's presidency. Historical and contemporary studies on civil religion need to start acknowledging the atheists' role in civil religion in order to understand why and how this shift is taking place.

Civil religion scholars, however, are not the only ones who have opportunity to fight against the atheist taboo in rhetorical scholarship. This thesis took a historical approach to studying atheism, focusing on the rhetoric of President Eisenhower. However, atheists have existed for as long as history has, meaning that there are ample historical instances and contexts in which rhetorical scholars can give voice to atheists. The first step is to recognize that atheists

are part of the audience and their experience is different from that of their fellow theistic audience members. Scholars can look at how other presidents have framed atheist audience members, for while presidents may be inspired by the predecessors, each took their own approaches and had different historical contexts with which to contend. There are of course, many other influential rhetorical situations outside the presidency that have had an effect on atheists. Be it from other political figures, the ministry, or members of social movements, there are numerous texts available to help scholars fight against the atheist taboo.

Viewing atheists as members of the national audience is important, but the atheist voice itself should not be discounted. Throughout history and in contemporary times, across the United States and the world, atheists have been fighting to have their voices be heard. While they have faced barriers, they have prevailed. It is time that rhetorical studies make room for their voices. Doing so will provide the field with a more well-rounded understanding of historical uses of public address and resistance. Perhaps even more importantly, if rhetorical studies makes room for atheist voices within its scholarship, the field will be fighting against centuries of stigmatization that have plagued the atheist community.

Lastly, while this thesis has admittedly been limited to the plight of the atheist American, scholars can take their scholarship beyond the borders of the United States to contribute to the global construction of atheism as well. There are atheists in every country around the globe who are being silenced in various ways depending on context and culture. There are also atheists around the globe who are resisting stigmas and persecution. While it can be easy to focus on just the atheist Americans, there is an entire world of godless individuals who have been largely unexamined rhetorical scholars.

While there are a handful of “scholars of atheism” in the field of rhetorical studies, the opportunities for scholarship on atheism is endless.²⁵¹ Even if scholarship does not focus on atheism, acknowledging their existence and their struggles would go a long way to fight stigmatization. In conversations about American ideology, scholars should note that it is not just white, heterosexual, cisnormative men who have an advantage but *theistic* (or one could also go as far as saying *Christian*), white, heterosexual, cisnormative men who are privileged. Rhetorical scholars rarely acknowledge the theist-normativity that permeates American society, despite extensive conversation about how civil religion is used to appeal to religious Americans.

Before Eisenhower’s administration, the national motto was “E Pluribus Unum”—from many, one. The motto represents how 13 colonies became one nation. Alternatively, however, it can be thought of as representing how many different beliefs and ideologies can still come together as one nation. While historically civil religion has been used to unify a heterogenous society, it did so by ignoring atheist Americans. Despite what some individuals may want to believe, atheism is part of the many beliefs and ideologies of the American people. American atheists are part of the one nation, and contrary to what Eisenhower claimed, that nation is not entirely under God.

NOTES

¹ Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address,” January 20, 2009, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=44>.

² This observation is based on a search of inaugural addresses on the American Presidency Project’s database: Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/sou.php>.

³ *Citing Atheists Offensive in Obama Inaugural Address?*, YouTube video, 1:52, January 25, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twoXZE9U0Io>.

⁴ Ian O’Shaughnessy, “Obama’s Nonbeliever Nod Unsettles Some,” *irReligion.org*, January 24, 2009, <https://www.irreligion.org/2009/01/24/obamas-nonbeliever-nod-unsettles-some/>.

⁵ “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

⁶ David A. Frank, “Obama’s Rhetorical Signature: Cosmopolitan Civil Religion in the Presidential Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 605–30.

⁷ Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion & the Presidency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 25.

⁸ Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, 25.

⁹ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1–21; Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*.

¹⁰ While I will refer to this group as “atheists,” many nonreligious individuals do not choose to identify as atheists, perhaps in part because of the cultural stigmatization behind the word. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of atheism is “a) a lack of belief or a strong disbelief in the existence of a god or any gods or b) a philosophical or religious position characterized by disbelief in the existence of a god or any gods.” “Definition of ATHEISM,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed August 27, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atheism>. I’m inclined to agree with individuals such as David Silverman who argue that individuals who do not believe in a God fall into the category of atheist, even if they do not choose to use that label: David Silverman at Reason Rally 2016, YouTube video, 13:48, August 26, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj02qrYuObs>. While I acknowledge that there is disagreement whether all “non-believers” fit into this category (such as agnostic) I’ve elected to use the terms atheists and non-theists throughout this thesis in the hope that it will help address the stigmatization of the word. I’m not using Obama’s term “non-believer” because it indicates that those who do not believe in God do not believe in anything which, in my opinion, is more damaging to the understanding of non-theists than the term atheist.

¹¹ Bellah, “Civil Religion”; Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 24.

¹² Robert V. Friedenberg, "Rhetoric, Religion and Government at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 25, no. 1 (March 2002): 39.

¹³ David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 612, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2004.00214.x>.

¹⁴ Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2004), 3-24; Bellah, "Civil Religion," 1-24; Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 15.

¹⁵ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 184.

¹⁶ Kevin Coe, Robert J. Bruce, and Chelsea L. Ratcliff, "Presidential Communication About Marginalized Groups: Applying a New Analytic Framework in the Context of the LGBT Community," *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 6 (December 1, 2017): 854, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12335>.

¹⁷ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Village Atheists: How America's Nonbelievers Made Their Way in a Godly Nation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 2.

¹⁹ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 6.

²⁰ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 3.

²¹ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 4

²² Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 12

²³ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*, 2

²⁴ See note 10.

²⁵ The Christian Amendment was an attempt to add Jesus Christ to the constitution. It was in part suggested by those who believed that the civil war was punishment by God for not making America an explicitly Christian nation. *Proceedings of the National Convention to Secure the Religious Amendment of the Constitution of the United States: Held in New York, Feb. 26 and 27, 1873: With an Account of the Origin and Progress of the Movement*, (Philadelphia: James B. Rodgers, 1872), vii-x, <https://books.google.com/books?id=YL6byrRQ3UIC&printsec=titlepage#v=onepage&q&f=false>; Schmidt, *Village Atheists*.

²⁶ Schmidt, *Village Atheists*

²⁷ Terry Eastland, *Religious Liberty in the Supreme Court: The Cases That Define the Debate over Church and State* (Washington D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993). "Constitutional Law. Personal Rights: Religious. Provision Requiring Declaration of Belief in God by State Official Does Not Violate Fourteenth Amendment. *Torcaso v. Watkins* (Md. 1960) on JSTOR," *Harvard Law Review*, 74, no. 3 (January 1961): 611-614 http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/stable/1338686?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

²⁸ Laurie Goodstein, “In Seven States, Atheists Push to End Largely Forgotten Ban,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/07/us/in-seven-states-atheists-push-to-end-largely-forgotten-ban-.html>.

²⁹ Danielle Kurtzleben, “Nonreligious Americans Remain Far Underrepresented In Congress,” NPR.org, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/01/03/508037656/non-religious-americans-remain-far-underrepresented-in-congress>.

³⁰ This was up from 18% in 1958 who said that they would elect an atheist president. 2012 was the first time over 50% of Americans said they would vote for an atheist president. Despite the increase, they are still the least likely group to be elected, which is particularly influential considering nearly a quart of U.S. citizens consider themselves religiously unaffiliated, “Atheists, Muslims See Most Bias as Presidential Candidates,” *Gallup.com*, June 21, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155285/Atheists-Muslims-Bias-Presidential-Candidates.aspx>.

³¹ Penny Edgell, Douglas Hartmann, and Joseph Gerteis, “Atheists As ‘Other’: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society,” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 218, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/000312240607100203>.

³² Kay Hagan denied these accusation in a response ad: *Hagan’s “Belief” ad*, YouTube video, 0:31, October 30, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Yug8HcPSwQ. Sander’s denied being an atheist in an interview with CNN: Sanders: “I’m Not an Atheist...it Is an Outrage...,” YouTube video, 2:33, posted by “CNN” July 24, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhsjmKDwPAw>.

³³ Edgell, Hartmann, Gerteis, “Atheists as ‘Other’; Penny Edgell, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, and Joseph Gerteis, “Atheists and Other Cultural Outsiders: Moral Boundaries and the Non-Religious in the United States,” *Social Forces* 95, no. 2 (December 2016): 607–38. doi:10.1093/sf/sow063

³⁴For some examples of articles on atheists “coming out,” please see: Whitney Anspach, Kevin Coe, and Crispin Thurlow, “The Other Closet?: Atheists, Homosexuals and the Lateral Appropriation of Discursive Capital,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 4, no. 1 (April 2007): 95–119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900601149509>; Lawrence I. Bonchek, “A Coming Out Day for Nonbelievers,” *Free Inquiry* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2000/2001): 70; Stephen Bullivant, “Defining ‘Atheism,’” in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, ed. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Lori G. Beaman and Steven Tomlins, eds., *Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Regulating Religion in Diverse Societies* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-319-09602-5.pdf>; Doug Cloud, “Rewriting a Discursive Practice: Atheist Adaptation of Coming Out Discourse,” *Written Communication* 34, no. 2 (April 2017): 165–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088317695079>; Michael A. Harrington et al., “The Coming Out Process Among Non-Religious Undergraduate Students: Implications for Residence Life Professionals,” *Journal of College & University Student Housing* 41, no. 1 (July 2014): 164–77.

³⁵ Lori G. Beaman, and Steven Tomlins, eds., *Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Regulating Religion in Diverse Societies* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015) 12. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-319-09602-5.pdf>.

³⁶ Carl L. Bankston III and Stephen J. Caldas, *Public Education-America's Civil Religion* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (New York: Random House, 1993).

³⁷ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 36.

³⁸ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 23.

³⁹ Walter A. McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed the National Interest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 357.

⁴⁰ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America."

⁴¹ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America."

⁴² Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 54.

⁴³ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 60.

⁴⁴ McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy*, " 31.

⁴⁵ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*.

⁴⁶ Beasley, *You, the People*, " 50.

⁴⁷ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 19.

⁴⁸ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 15.

⁴⁹ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 27.

⁵⁰ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 65-86.

⁵¹ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 77.

⁵² Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 87-113.

⁵³ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 134.

⁵⁴ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 284-298.

⁵⁵ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 173.

⁵⁶ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 182.

⁵⁷ Philip E Muehlenbeck, *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012) xiii.

⁵⁸ McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 261.

⁵⁹ Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

⁶⁰ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 192-194.

⁶¹ Kruse, *One Nation Under God*.

⁶² Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 198.

⁶³ Ira Chernus, *General Eisenhower: Ideology and Discourse* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002); Martin J. Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993); Ned O'Gorman, "Eisenhower

and the American Sublime” 94, no. 1 (2008): 44–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630701790792>; Philip Wander, “The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy,” in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), 153–83.

⁶⁴ Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott, *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990).

⁶⁵ Philip Wander, “Critical and Classical Theory: An Introduction to Ideology Criticism,” in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), 144.

⁶⁶ Edwin Black, “The Second Persona,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (April 1970): 109–19.

⁶⁷ Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1998).

⁶⁸ Vanessa B. Beasley, “The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus in the United States: American Principles and American Pose in Presidential Inaugurals,” *Communication Monographs* 68, no. 2 (June 2001): 181.

⁶⁹ Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Quebecois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133–50.

⁷⁰ Theon E. Hill, “(Re)Articulating Difference: Constitutive Rhetoric, Christian Identity, and Discourses of Race as Biology,” *Journal of Communication & Religion* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 31.

⁷¹ Wander, “American Foreign Policy,” 157.

⁷² Wander, “American Foreign Policy,” 157.

⁷³ Wander, “American Foreign Policy,” 158.

⁷⁴ Black, “The Second Persona”; Philip Wander, “The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory,” *Central States Speech Journal* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 1984): 197–216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510978409368190>.

⁷⁵ Wander, “The Third Persona,” 215.

⁷⁶ Wander, “The Third Persona,” 209.

⁷⁷ Wander, “The Third Persona,” 210.

⁷⁸ Thomas R. Dunn, *Queerly Remembered: Rhetorics for Representing the GLBTQ Past* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2016).

⁷⁹ For additional scholarship on the ideal space see: Dunn, *Queerly Remembered*; Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, “Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (August 1995); and Laura C. Privera and John W. Howard III, “Masculinity, Whiteness, and the Warrior Hero: Perpetuating the Strategic Rhetoric of U.S. Nationalism and the Marginalization of Women,” *Women & Language* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2006).

⁸⁰ Prividera and Howard III, "Masculinity, Whiteness," 30. Cited in Raka Shome, "White Femininity and the Discourse of the Nation: Re/Membering Princess Diana," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no. 3 (2001): 323–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770120088927>.

⁸¹ Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 54, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 274–89; Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "Object and Method in Rhetorical Criticism: From Wichelns to Leff and McGee," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 54, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 290–316.

⁸² McGee, "Fragmentation."

⁸³ McGee, "Fragmentation," 288.

⁸⁴ All texts were found on The American Presidency Project's website, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>: Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Recorded for American Legion 'Back to God' Program," February 1, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Proclamation 3016—Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 1953," May 21, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Message to the National Co-Chairmen, Commission on Religious Organizations, National Conference of Christians and Jews," July 9, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Broadcast as Part of American Legion 'Back to God' Program" February 7, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the State of the Nation," April 5, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks to the 63d Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution," April 22, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address at the Columbia University National Bicentennial Dinner," May 31, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "President Upon Signing Bill To Include the Words Under God in the Pledge to the Flag," June 14, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, Illinois.," August 19, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address at the American Jewish Tercentenary Dinner, New York City.," October 20, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Recorded for Program Marking the 75th Anniversary of the Incandescent Lamp," October 24, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference," November 23, 1954. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Recorded for 'Back-to-God' Program of American Legion" February 20, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks at Annual Breakfast of the International Council for Christian Leadership.," February 2, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference," March 21, 1956. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Radio and Television Address to the

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⁸⁶ Samuel A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties: A Cross-Section of The Nation Speaks Its Mind* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), 162.

⁸⁷ Stouffer, *Communism*.

⁸⁸ Stouffer, *Communism*, 166.

⁸⁹ Stouffer, *Communism*, 167.

⁹⁰ Stouffer, *Communism*, 164.

⁹¹ Stouffer, *Communism*, 229-232.

- ⁹² Coe, Bruce, and Ratcliff, "Presidential Communication About Marginalized Groups."
- ⁹³ Robert L. Scott, "Cold War and Rhetoric: Conceptually and Critically," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990).
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- ⁹⁶ Muehlenbeck, *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War*, xiii.
- ⁹⁷ Medhurst, *Strategic Communicator*.
- ⁹⁸ This collective "us" is in reference to Vanessa Beasley's discussion of the construction of the collective "we" and foreign "them." Beasley, *You, the People*.
- ⁹⁹ Robert L. Ivie, "Eisenhower as Cold Warrior," in *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1994) 7-8.
- ¹⁰⁰ Wander, "American Foreign Policy," 157.
- ¹⁰¹ Mary E. Stuckey, "Competing Foreign Policy Visions: Rhetorical Hybrids After the Cold War," *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 216.
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- ¹⁰⁴ Eisenhower, "Chamber of Commerce."
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- ¹⁰⁹ Eisenhower, "Address at the Gettysburg College Convocation."
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- ¹¹¹ Eisenhower, "Address at the Columbia University."
- ¹¹² Eisenhower, "Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council."
- ¹¹³ Stouffer, *Communism*, 176.
- ¹¹⁴ Stouffer, *Communism*, 177.
- ¹¹⁵ Eisenhower, "Toast by the President at the Dinner Given in His Honor."
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¹¹⁸ Eisenhower, “75th Anniversary of the Incandescent Lamp.”

¹¹⁹ Eisenhower, “Address ‘Beyond the Campus.’”

¹²⁰ Note that Eisenhower chose to valorize a “religiously inspired society,” rather than a religiously tolerant society which demonstrates how Eisenhower framed the Cold War as a battle between atheism and theism more than forced atheism and religious freedom.

¹²¹ Eisenhower, “Address at the Second Assembly.”

¹²² Eisenhower, “A Toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.”

¹²³ Beasley, *You, the People*, 50.

¹²⁴ Eisenhower, “Message to the National Co-Chairmen.”

¹²⁵ Eisenhower, “Message to the National Co-Chairmen.”

¹²⁶ Eisenhower, “Remarks to a Delegation From the National Council of Churches.”

¹²⁷ Notably, while Eisenhower warned against godless atheism he never clarified the difference between “godless” and “godful” atheism.

¹²⁸ Eisenhower, “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in the Middle East.”

¹²⁹ Eisenhower, “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in the Middle East.”

¹³⁰ Eisenhower, “Address at the Sesquicentennial Commencement.”

¹³¹ Eisenhower, “Address at the Sesquicentennial Commencement.”

¹³² Eisenhower, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.”

¹³³ Eisenhower, “The President’s News Conference,” 1954.

¹³⁴ Eisenhower, “The President’s News Conference,” 1956.

¹³⁵ Several news articles reported or commented on Eisenhower’s statement including: “Remark Called Casual,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1952: 10; “Ehrenburg Shoots Own Dove of Peace: Says Vienna Congress Aims at Amity With U. S., Then Opens a Bitter Attack,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1952: 14; “Ewing Accuses Ike of ‘Tactless’ Statements,” *The Washington Post*, July 15, 1952: 4; Drew Pearson, “Rayburn’s Qualifications Listed,” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1952: 23.

¹³⁶ “Remark Called Casual,” *New York Times*, 10.; “Ehrenburg Shoots,” *New York Times*,
14

¹³⁷ “Remark Called Casual,” *New York Times*, 10.

¹³⁸ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1954.

¹³⁹ Eisenhower, “Address at U. S. Naval Academy Commencement.”

¹⁴⁰ Coe, et al., “Presidential Communication About Marginalized Groups.”

¹⁴¹ Eisenhower, “Annual Breakfast of the International Council for Christian Leadership.”

¹⁴² Ivie, “Cold Warrior,” 21.

- ¹⁴³ Ivie, "Cold Warrior," 21.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ivie, "Cold Warrior," 21.
- ¹⁴⁵ Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address."
- ¹⁴⁶ Stouffer, *Communism*, 176-177.
- ¹⁴⁷ Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 128.
- ¹⁴⁸ Barbara Hobson, Marcus Carson, and Rebecca Lawrence, "Recognition Struggles in Trans-national Arenas: Negotiating Identities and Framing Citizenship," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 10, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): p. 444, doi:10.1080/13698230701660170.
- ¹⁴⁹ Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People*, 15.
- ¹⁵⁰ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 148.
- ¹⁵¹ Wander, "The Third Persona," 210.
- ¹⁵² "President-Elect Says Soviet Demoted Zhukov Because of Their Friendship," *New York Times*, December 23, 1952: 16.
- ¹⁵³ "President-Elect," *New York Times*, 16.
- ¹⁵⁴ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 184.
- ¹⁵⁵ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 7.
- ¹⁵⁶ Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 143.
- ¹⁵⁷ Stouffer, *Communism*, 176-177.
- ¹⁵⁸ Vanessa B. Beasley, "The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus," 181.
- ¹⁵⁹ While Beasley was referring to people who "care too much about their distinct cultural heritages [such as] women in veils, Sikhs in turban, African-Americans in tribal robes" ("Ideological Consensus," 181), her argument can apply beyond physical distinctions of cultural ideologies. Atheists would did not attend church or who declared they did not believe in God put themselves at risk by bringing attention to their differences.
- ¹⁶⁰ According to Campbell and Jamieson, referring to Aristotle's definition, epideictic speeches are "a form of rhetoric that praises or blames on ceremonial occasions, invites the audience to evaluate the speaker's performance, recalls the past and speculates about the future while focusing on the present, employs a noble, dignified literary style, and amplifies or rehearses admitted facts." Campbell and Jamieson, *Creating the Presidency*, 29.
- ¹⁶¹ Campbell and Jamieson, *Creating the Presidency*, 45-46.
- ¹⁶² Campbell and Jamieson, *Creating the Presidency*, 45-46.
- ¹⁶³ Civil religion is typically considered either prophetic or priestly. Prophetic is when users "tell the word of God" and focus on judgement and repentance. Priestly focuses on speaking "for the people to God," praising, celebrating, and focusing on the notion of being a "chosen nation." Eisenhower tended to focus on the latter. Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 24-25, 184-205

¹⁶⁴ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁶⁵ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change* (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Company Inc., 1963), 100.

¹⁶⁶ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*, 202.

¹⁶⁷ Ned O’Gorman argues that by calling the prayer his “own,” Eisenhower changed the meaning of the word “private” from being contrary to “public” to being synonymous with “personal.” According to O’Gorman, Eisenhower’s “turn inward was a conversion upward.” O’Gorman, “Eisenhower and The American Sublime,” 57-58.

¹⁶⁸ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁷⁰ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address"

¹⁷¹ As discussed in the introduction the "us" refers to a unified "us" compared to the foreign "them." Beasley, *You, the People*.

¹⁷² Of course, there were many groups who were not truly free with full rights of citizenship at this time, but the text indicates that it is meant to include everyone.

¹⁷³ Beasley, "The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus," 180

¹⁷⁴ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁷⁵ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁷⁶ Wander, "American Foreign Policy," 160.

¹⁷⁷ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁷⁸ Robert C. Albright, "Kiss for His Wife, Prayer of Own Composition Precede Address: New President Asks Unity In Time of Peril," *The Washington Post*, January 21, 1953: 1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/hnpwashingtonpost/docview/152522725/abstract/D803CC6E08A8413APQ/3>.

¹⁷⁹ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁸⁰ In relation to the ideal space, this also indicates that even those who identify as religious, if they do not have *staunch* faith, they are pushed further away from the idea center.

¹⁸¹ Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address."

¹⁸² Beasley, "The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus," 176.

¹⁸³ "Excerpts From Editorial Comment on President Eisenhower’s Inaugural Address," *New York Times*, January 21, 1953: 20.

¹⁸⁴ William S. White, "Internationalist’ Inaugural Acclaimed in Both Parties: Inaugural Called Internationalist," *New York Times*, January 21, 1953: 1.

¹⁸⁵ O’Gorman, "Eisenhower and the American Sublime," cited from "Eisenhower Talk Praised by Many in Both Parties," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, January 20, 1953, 66.

- ¹⁸⁶ “Eisenhower’s Inaugural,” *The Washington Post*, January 21, 1953: 12.
- ¹⁸⁷ “Spiritual Rebirth is urged by Legion: Commander Opens Campaign at Ceremony in Philadelphia Citing 4 Chaplain Heroes,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1952: 7.
- ¹⁸⁸ Eisenhower, “Back to God’ Program,” 1953.
- ¹⁸⁹ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1953.
- ¹⁹⁰ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1953.
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- ¹⁹² Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 119-120.
- ¹⁹³ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- ¹⁹⁴ Beasley, “The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus,” 171.
- ¹⁹⁵ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1954.
- ¹⁹⁶ Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion*; Paul F. Boller, Jr., *George Washington & Religion* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).
- ¹⁹⁷ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1954.
- ¹⁹⁸ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1954.
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- ²⁰⁰ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1955.
- ²⁰¹ Eisenhower, “Back to God,” 1954.
- ²⁰² Ellis, *To the Flag*.
- ²⁰³ “‘UNDER GOD’ Sermon Preached by Dr. George M. Docherty,” Christian Heritage Ministries, 2016, <http://www.christianheritagemins.org/articles/UNDER%20GOD.pdf>.
- ²⁰⁴ “‘UNDER GOD’ Sermon Preached by Dr. George M. Docherty.”
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- ²⁰⁶ George M. Docherty, *I’ve Seen the Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 159.
- ²⁰⁷ Ellis, *To the Flag*.
- ²⁰⁸ Ellis. *To the Flag*, 131.
- ²⁰⁹ Lee Canipe, “Under God and Anti-Communist: How the Pledge of Allegiance Got Religion in Cold War America,” *Journal of Church & State* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 317.
- ²¹⁰ Canipe, “Under God,” 315.
- ²¹¹ Canipe, “Under God,” 318.
- ²¹² Eisenhower, “‘Under God’ in the Pledge to the Flag.”

²¹³ J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958), 115.

²¹⁴ Eisenhower, "Under God."

²¹⁵ Eisenhower, "Under God."

²¹⁶ "Gallup Vault: Americans Saw What They Liked in Ike," Gallup Inc., June 7, 2016, <http://news.gallup.com/vault/192377/gallup-vault-americans-saw-liked-ike.aspx>.

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²⁴⁷ This experience is similar to how Campbell argued woman have to face barriers unknown to men in *Man Cannot Speak For Her*.

²⁴⁸ Charles E. Morris III argued that sexuality stood among the "last of the silent taboos, public address's shameful third persona" in *Queering Public Address* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 4.

²⁴⁹ For just a few examples see: Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*; Thomas Rosteck, "The Case of Eisenhower vs. McCarthyism," in *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1994); Wander, "American Foreign Policy," 153–83.

²⁵⁰ Dylan Weller, "Godless Patriots: Towards a New American Civil Religion," *Polity* 45, no. 3 (July 2013): 390, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2013.15>.

²⁵¹ Even if atheism is not a scholar's focus, the literature on atheism in rhetorical studies is so limited that writing just one article on atheism is enough to make one a "scholar of atheism" in the field. See: Douglas Cloud, "Atheist Adaptation of Coming Out Discourse"; Hannah Dick, "Atheism in Religious Clothing? Accounting for Atheist Interventions in the Public Sphere: Culture and Religion," *Culture and Religion* 16, no. 4 (2015): 372-391; Roderick P. Hart, "An Unquiet Desperation: Rhetorical Aspects of 'Popular' Atheism in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64, no. 1 (February 1978): 33-46; Joseph Rhodes, "The Atheistic Voice," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 323–47.