

КУЛТУРА ПОЛИСА
УДК 322:316.64
ОHP

DAVID DOMKE AND KEVIN COE

THE GOD STRATEGY: THE RISE OF RELIGIOUS POLITICS IN AMERICA*

For good or for bad, God has always been a part of American politics.¹ Religion formally entered the American presidency at its inception, when George Washington in his 1789 Inaugural Address declared that „it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe.”² Since that time presidents have regularly spoken of a higher power, prayed and been prayed for, sought divine favor for the nation, and expressed gratitude for providential outcomes. This confluence of religion and politics has commonly been called „civil religion,” a phrase coined in the 1960’s by sociologist Robert Bellah. Building upon ideas of earlier philosophers and thinkers, Bellah defined civil religion as „a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals” through which a society „interprets its historical experience in light of transcendent reality.”³ In general, civil religion in America has been perceived—by many scholars, at least—to be a benignly symbolic practice, without distinctly partisan motivations or implications;⁴ however, something profound has changed in recent decades.

In 1960 John F. Kennedy became the only Catholic to be elected president of the United States, but he first had to overcome concerns that his administration would be a Vatican tool. In a pivotal address in September, 1960, Kennedy assured a collection of conservative Protestant clergy that „I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the President—should he be Catholic—how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote.”⁵ It was a welcomed message then; it would be a voice in the wilderness today. Consider that during the 2004 presidential campaign Jerry Falwell declared, „For conservative people of faith, voting for principle this year means voting for the re-election of George W. Bush. The alternative, in my mind, is simply unthinkable.”⁶ James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, whose theologically conservative radio programs (the most extensive in the world, religious or secular), magazines, videos, and books reach more than 200,000,000 people worldwide, broke with his traditionally nonpartisan ways to endorse Bush.⁷ Further, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (U.S.C.C.B.) decreed that priests could withhold communion from Catholics in public office who dissent from Church teachings, claiming that politicians „have an obligation in conscience to work toward correcting morally defective laws”—those which allow abortion, in particular—„lest they be guilty of cooperating in evil and in sinning against the common good.”⁸

It is not only conservatives and conservative causes. In October, 2004, more than 200 U.S. seminary and religious leaders signed a statement condemning what they called a „theology of war” in the Bush administration’s rhetoric in the campaign against terrorism.⁹ That same month the National Association of Evangelicals, which represents roughly 30,000,000 Americans in a range of Protestant churches and denominations, issued an „Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility” that, for the first time, decreed that Christians had a responsibility to care for the planet and to work toward a sustainable environment.¹⁰ In the summer of 2005, Rabbi Michael Lerner launched the Network of Spiritual Progressives with a founding conference in Berkeley, California, that drew more than 1,300 religious leaders, politicians, and activists.¹¹ One headliner was Jim Wallis, the founder and editor of the progressive religious magazine *Sojourners*, who was fresh off a forty-nine-city book tour for his best-selling *God’s Politics*—a tour during

* This article draws on material to be published in the forthcoming „The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America” (Oxford University Press, 2008) and is used with the permission of Oxford University Press.

which he appeared on the Comedy Central network's „The Daily Show” and consistently drew standing-room-only crowds.¹² Also, in the spring of 2006, the U.S.C.C.B. again waded into the political arena—this time with a „Justice for Immigrants” campaign that directly challenged some in Congress who planned to make it a crime to provide food and shelter to undocumented immigrants.¹³

No longer is it enough to recognize, as the truism goes, that all politics are local; all politics now are also religious. On issue after issue, public debate in the U.S. today includes—and often is dominated by—religiously based perspectives provided by strategic, media-savvy individuals and organizations. Religion has always been a political subtext in the U.S., but in the past few decades the *salience* and *strategic use* of religion have become ascendant in a manner not seen before in modern American political history. One's beliefs about God have become a new political faultline, with citizens' religious affinities, regularity of worship, and perceptions of „moral values” now among the strongest predictors of presidential voting patterns.¹⁴ Political leaders have taken advantage of and contributed to these developments by employing a strategy of religious signaling in their public communications. We call this model the „God strategy,” which is the focus of this essay. We will show how successful politicians since 1980 have applied it in pursuit of partisan gain. Our perspective throughout will be that the substantial presence of God in U.S. politics over the past few decades did not occur by chance. It was not by chance that presidents as different as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton used the religious imagery they did, nor was it by chance that G. W. Bush staked much of his electoral hopes in 2000 and 2004 on religion. An underlying political strategy links these presidents: the God strategy.

Religion, Politics, and the Modern Presidency

For a politician seeking to appeal to religiously inclined voters, there are few things more important than an ability to speak the language of the faithful. G. W. Bush's talent for connecting with conservative Christians helped him win the presidency in 2000—he received nearly eighty percent of white evangelicals' vote in that election—and,

once he took office, that language became a hallmark of his public communications. Nevertheless, Bush is only the latest president in what has become a pattern of American religious politics. In this research we focus on presidents' use of religious language since 1933. We examine *how often* presidents have employed religious language and *how much* of it they have used. The evidence will show that, beginning with the presidency of Reagan in 1981, religious communications increased to levels never before seen in the modern presidency. It has yet to recede. We demonstrate this striking development by tracking religious language in every major national address given by presidents from 1933 though 2006—more than 350 speeches in all.¹⁵ These addresses were broadcast to the nation and covered in the press, emphasized serious and wide-ranging matters, and likely went far in shaping U.S. public opinion.¹⁶ These addresses, one might reasonably conclude, represent the most significant public contributions to American political communications over the past eight decades.

Our focus is on two related, yet distinct types of religious communication that we will call „God-talk” and „faith-talk.”¹⁷ To engage in God-talk is to make direct reference, often by name, to a supreme being. Examples include any mention of God, Christ, Creator, the Almighty, Providence, or the like. Such language is the most explicit type of religious communication that any person, including a U.S. president, can use. Faith-talk is more subtle, but not necessarily less important. To engage in faith-talk is to use terms that over time have become laden with spiritual meaning, such as pray, scripture, heaven, faith, mission, and so on. Such language does not inevitably carry religious meaning for all listeners, but there is a vocabulary of faith embedded in American culture that conveys religious sentiment to anyone listening for religious cues—and millions are doing so.¹⁸ Political leaders might engage in God-talk and faith-talk for a range of reasons, first and foremost because the politicians are themselves religious and believe in the language they are using. In this research we are agnostic about the authenticity of politicians' religious beliefs: We do not and cannot know what they truly believe, but we do know, with absolute certainty, what they say—and what politicians say necessarily has far-reaching implications.¹⁹ It is our assumption in this work that both God-talk and faith-talk function as important signals for political leaders

who are trying to communicate their beliefs and convince religiously inclined Americans that a key piece of their worldview is shared.

An ability to speak the language of religious believers can be especially powerful for a president, who is frequently in the spotlight and is the political leader most commonly called upon to be America's „high priest” in times of crisis, national celebration, or tragedy. Religious conservatives in particular pay attention to whether a president communicates in ways that connect with them. Consider the perspective of Doug Wead, a political strategist who headed George H. W. Bush's campaign outreach to evangelicals in 1988. Wead advises political leaders to „signal early, signal often” religious viewpoints. Doing so, Wead told the *Frontline* news program in 2004, is one means of making a „nod” to a key segment of the public—a way „to signal respect to the evangelical community, to say, ‘We don't exclude you. If I'm president, I will love and respect you as much as any other American. I'm not going to judge, or deny you, just because of your religion.’ Evangelicals feel that.”²⁰ This view is echoed by Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization representing more than fifty denominations and 30,000,000 citizens nationwide. Commenting on the religious allusions common in G. W. Bush's public communications, Cizik said: „The president ... used terminology designed, I think, to indicate [to] the evangelicals that ‘Hey, I'm one of you,’ so to speak... It accomplished his purposes. He sent a message, I think, to evangelicals, ‘Hey, I understand.’”²¹ To put it simply and pragmatically, a president who can speak the language of religious believers can go a long way toward suggesting that he understands their concerns and deserves their political support.

In part, the desire to hear presidents speak their language stems from concerns among many religious believers, particularly fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals, about the secularization of modern society—a view that has encouraged their increased participation in politics and fueled recent controversies surrounding the use of religious symbolism in government institutions.²² Since presidents are afforded a unique societal platform, they are well positioned to increase the prominence of religious themes in U.S. culture. Given this, public promotion of God-talk and faith-talk is one way that religious groups might seek to encourage the vitality of their particular vision of

faith. Religious language plays a considerable role in producing, sustaining, and reinforcing the spiritual worldviews of the American public. Numerous scholars in the fields of anthropology and sociology have observed that religion is, at its core, a „system of symbols.”²³ This means that people must learn their faith and then continually recreate their conceptions of it; through this process religious teachings are renewed and passed down through generations.²⁴ Because political leaders' communications circulate widely in U.S. society, their use of religious themes can be an especially important factor in this ongoing religious socialization. Further, scholarship in political science and communication indicates that citizens pay careful attention to the words that circulate in political and media conversations.²⁵ For example, when religious themes are consistently made salient by politicians and news media, citizens become more likely to view religious issues as important and to rely on criteria central to these issues when evaluating politicians.²⁶ Ultimately, what words become consistent and persistent matters deeply for society.

With this in mind, our inquiry begins with what scholars have generally identified as the origin of the modern presidency: the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933.²⁷ Roosevelt is an appropriate place to start for several reasons. First, during his administration the U.S. and particularly the presidency changed significantly, with presidential, federal governmental, and national power all growing substantially.²⁸ Beginning with Roosevelt allows us to hold constant, as best possible, the cultural place of presidents. Second, radio and television gained prominence starting roughly at this time, giving presidents a greater capacity to speak to the public *en masse*, particularly in the high state occasions of Inaugural and State of the Union addresses.²⁹ The larger the audiences are for presidential communications, the greater their chance to influence public perceptions. Also, the presence of immediate, visual media increased the need for political leaders to engage in careful, strategic messages and to participate in events staged primarily for mass-media consumption. Third, U.S. demographics and citizenship participation expanded in this modern period, with greater racial, ethnic, and religious diversity.³⁰ Presidents today must appeal to, respond to, and represent a much more diverse nation than did those in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries; in such

an environment, a confluence of religion and politics takes on greater import for national inclusion or exclusion.

God-Talk

From the first speech in our analysis, Roosevelt's Inaugural on March 4, 1933,³¹ to the last, G. W. Bush's address to the nation about terrorism and Iraq on September 11, 2006, presidents have commonly spoken in religious terms. As will become apparent in the findings that follow, this has occurred both explicitly through references to a supreme being (what we call „God-talk”) and more subtly via usage of terms laden with spiritual meaning (what we call „faith-talk”). Our first point, then, is that religion has always been a part of American politics and that the modern presidency is no exception. This is far from the whole story, however, for there is a vital second point: Something distinct and significant has occurred over the past three decades in American politics. Since 1981, U.S. presidents have substantially increased their religious language—to levels previously unreached with any consistency in the modern presidency. In this section we document this marked rise in the volume of presidential religious discourse. Specifically, we present two forms of evidence: systematic quantitative study of all presidential addresses to the nation from 1933 to 2006, and close reading of exemplary national addresses delivered by U.S. presidents during the same period of time.

The place to begin is with a foundational assessment of presidential God-talk. Have presidents regularly invoked a divine entity in their public communications? Such invocations might include references to a God, Creator, Providence, the Almighty, and so on.³² Figure 1 shows the percentage of White House addresses to the nation, separated by president, over the past seven-plus decades, that included an explicit reference to a divine being.

Our reading of every word of these speeches revealed that presidents from Roosevelt in 1933 to Jimmy Carter (1977–81) included God-talk in roughly half of their addresses to the nation. There were some differences among these presidents: Most notably, Kennedy, Ri-

chard M. Nixon, and Carter were half again lower in their inclusion of God-talk. Nonetheless, the fundamental trend is apparent: Explicit invocations of a higher power have been a regular part of the American presidency. Beginning in 1981, however, invocations of God no longer were just common among presidents—they became omnipresent. In their presidential addresses to the nation, Reagan invoked God ninety-six percent of the time; G. H. W. Bush did so at a ninety-one percent clip; and Clinton and G. W. Bush (through 2006) both explicitly referenced a higher power about ninety-three percent of the time. Over the past three decades, invocations of God have become a normative fixture in American presidential addresses, every bit as *de rigueur* as the band striking up „Hail to the Chief” to announce the arrival of a president.

As a next step, we examined how much God-talk was present in these same national addresses. It might be the case, for example, that the past four presidents referenced God in a large number of speeches but nonetheless were relatively lower—or at least more congruent with previous presidents—in their total use of God-talk. In other words we wanted to know not only whether a president invoked a higher power when speaking to the nation (which Figure 1 shows), but also how many times in each address they did so. Figure 2 shows the average number of references to God per address for each of the presidents since 1933. In presenting this analysis, we include two trend lines. One shows the per-address average of God-talk for all speeches to the nation; the other shows the average for the subset of addresses that occurred in high state occasions—that is, in Inaugural and State of the Union addresses. The high national context is important to distinguish because these speeches tend to draw larger public audiences and more news coverage than do those in the broader sample of national addresses. Comparison of the high state occasions with the entire sample of addresses therefore allows us to gauge the perceived strategic value of God-talk. If there has been consistently more God-talk in Inaugural and State of the Union addresses than in the entire sample of addresses, we might reasonably surmise that American presidents see religious language as politically valuable. Indeed, this is the pattern we expected. Further, the ceremonial nature of Inaugural and State of the Union addresses means that any invocation of God in these contexts necessarily fuses a religious outlook with the nation's sense of itself;

as a result, a higher amount of God-talk in these occasions would have potentially significant effects upon the American public's sense of nationhood.³³

Both of the trend lines indicate a marked increase in the overall volume of explicit language about God in the presidency since 1981. Whether one's focus is on all speeches to the nation or only on those delivered on high state occasions, Figure 2 shows that the four most recent presidents have the highest amount of God-talk in the modern presidency. Looking at the entire sample, the highest mean among the first eight presidents since 1933—by a sizeable margin—was Harry S. Truman with 1.87 references to God per address. Beginning in 1981, the means were 2.8 for Reagan, 2.2 for G. H. W. Bush, 1.89 for Clinton, and 3.29 for G. W. Bush. Among Inaugural and State of the Union addresses, a similar pattern is present, but at a consistently much higher level of God-talk—an outcome suggestive of the political capital thought to accrue with such language. Again in the first group of presidents Truman was the high-water mark for God-talk, averaging 2.86 references to God per address. Beginning in 1981, the means elevated to 5.8 for Reagan, 4.5 for G. H. W. Bush, 2.89 for Clinton, and 5.4 for G. W. Bush. For both trend lines the amount of presidential God-talk in a typical address for the years 1981 to 2006 was *more than double* the average for addresses delivered from 1933 to 1980. Data in Figures 1 and 2, then, indicate that the election of Reagan was a watershed moment for religion in the presidency. It is not that explicit language about God entered the presidency in 1981, but with Reagan explicit language about God became publicly embedded in the presidency—and, by extension, in American politics more broadly.

With this in mind, we focus here on a small number of addresses that are instructive of the trends in presidential God-talk. We begin with a comparison of Roosevelt's address to the nation two days after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and G. W. Bush's response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. We then look closely at prayers delivered by two presidents more than three decades apart, Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 and G. H. W. Bush in 1989. In both instances, there are marked differences in God-talk between the earlier and the more recent addresses.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. Roosevelt requested a declaration of war against Japan from Congress on December 8,³⁴ and the following evening he spoke to the nation in one of his

fabled „fireside chats.” Roosevelt began by detailing the state of relations between Japan and the U.S. and the historical record of Italian, German, and Japanese aggression over the previous decade. As a result of these developments, he said, „We are now in this war. We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman, and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history.” He then turned to the plans of the federal government and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, spending most of the address on these matters. It was not until the very end of the speech—indeed, the very last word—that Roosevelt explicitly invoked a divine entity. He closed with these words:

We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows. And in the difficult hours of this day—through dark days that be yet to come—we will know that the vast majority of the members of the human race are on our side. Many of them are fighting with us. All of them are praying for us. For in representing our cause, we represent theirs as well—our hope and their hope for liberty under God.

All told, Roosevelt's address ran 3,015 words, which was slightly longer than the average length of all presidential addresses to the nation, from 1933 to 2006.³⁵ The attack on Pearl Harbor was the worst by a foreign entity in America's history, and in comforting and rallying the nation Roosevelt overtly invoked God one time. He did not formally address the nation again until his annual State of the Union Address in early January, 1942.

Sixty years later, when terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, the electronic media age was in full bloom. Americans saw dramatic, televised images of the World Trade Center towers' crumbling, the Pentagon's burning, the thousands of persons injured and displaced, and their loved ones grieving. In the space of nine days, G. W. Bush formally addressed the nation via live television three times: from the Oval Office on the evening of September 11; at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, as part of a memorial service on September 14; and before a joint session of Congress on September 20. All three speeches were rich with God-talk. On September 11, he spoke for only five minutes, concluding with these words:

Tonight I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of

safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: „Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.”

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

Thank you. Good night, and God bless America.

Three days later at the National Cathedral, on a day that he had proclaimed to be a national day of prayer and mourning for the victims of the attacks, Bush overtly invoked God and quoted biblical texts several times in an address that ran 932 words. He concluded this way:

On this national day of prayer and remembrance, we ask almighty God to watch over our nation and grant us patience and resolve in all that is to come. We pray that He will comfort and console those who now walk in sorrow. We thank Him for each life we now must mourn and the promise of a life to come.

As we have been assured, neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, can separate us from God’s love. May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own, and may He always guide our country.

God bless America.

Finally, on September 20, Bush spoke before Congress and the nation in an address watched by 82,000,000 Americans, the largest audience for a political event in the nation’s history.³⁶ The speech ran 3,013 words, almost exactly the same length as Roosevelt’s fireside chat sixty years earlier. Bush began by thanking U.S. allies, American families, and Congress for their support and perseverance in recent days—including, he noted, Congress’s singing of „God Bless America” on the steps of the Capitol building. The president then offered an explanation of who the terrorists were, why they had attacked the U.S., and what steps the government and citizens would or should take. Along the way, he twice referenced „Allah,” almost certainly the first time in history that the Muslim God had been mentioned in an American presidential address. At the end, Bush declared: „The course of

this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.” He then added, „Fellow citizens, we’ll meet violence with patient justice, assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.” Recall that after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt spoke to the nation once and invoked God one time. In the space of nine days following the 2001 terrorist attacks, Bush formally spoke to the nation three times and invoked God more than twenty times in these addresses. This much is clear: It would have been very hard for any American to have missed Bush’s religious politics.

A second useful comparison can be made between two presidential prayers that commenced Inaugural addresses: Eisenhower’s in 1953 and G. H. W. Bush’s in 1989. Inaugurals, which are one part of the upper trend line in Figure 2, were places of substantial God-talk. Presidents invoked God an average of 3.9 times in these addresses through 1980, and 6.7 times on average in Inaugurals thereafter. Despite this context of substantial religiosity, the prayers by Eisenhower and Bush were the only ones delivered in Inaugural addresses (though Reagan held a moment of silent prayer in his second Inaugural). With this in mind, we read each prayer closely, beginning with Eisenhower’s. His prayer, in its entirety, went as follows:

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

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

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

Amen.

The military-hero-turned-politician focused his words primarily on the motivations and actions that he, Congress, and the American

public might exhibit. Indeed, Eisenhower spoke of citizens and diversity, of laws and the Constitution.

In contrast to Eisenhower, Bush focused a significant portion of his prayer on God's character and wishes, and he spoke in a distinctly personal manner. Bush's prayer, in its entirety, consisted of these words:

Heavenly Father, we bow our heads and thank You for Your love. Accept our thanks for the peace that yields this day and the shared faith that makes its continuance likely. Make us strong to do Your work, willing to heed and hear Your will, and write on our hearts these words: „Use power to help people.” For we are given power not to advance our own purposes, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us remember, Lord.
Amen.

For both presidents, the prayers expressed a desire to serve God and people. What differed was how this desire was communicated. Eisenhower invoked God three times and prioritized the American public and nation, while Bush invoked God six times and prioritized God and divine will. Bush's was a significant, rhetorical elevation of God and a palpable shift in God's role *vis-à-vis* the nation's leaders and citizens. This change was almost certain to be noticed by devout religious believers—and particularly by religious conservatives interested in a president who acts the role of high priest.

Faith-Talk

As a next step, we examined the usage of more subtle forms of religious imagery in presidential communications. Specifically, we were interested in assessing how common in presidential speeches were terms that might not qualify as explicit God invocations but, nonetheless, are laden with spiritual significance. We call these kinds of words „faith-talk.” Such terms include angel, confession, evil, faith, miracle, mission, pray, proverb, sacred, sin, and worship, among others.³⁷ We recognize that some of the selected words can be used to ad-

dress topics that are not distinctly religious. Our view, though, is that even in such instances the religious heritage of the term still accompanies its usage, so that the words inevitably carry a religious meaning to some significant degree. This is likely to be particularly the case for devout religious believers, who commonly filter many, if not all, of the messages they encounter through a spiritual prism. Such individuals include not only large numbers of religious conservatives in America but also millions of others who see their spiritual life as important. Faith-talk is part of the everyday vocabulary for many Americans. Whether that has been the case for presidents was the guiding question of interest for this analysis.

Our view is that God-talk and faith-talk exist in a symbiotic relationship in American presidential communications. That is, each type of talk reinforces and draws upon the other, working in tandem to express a religious outlook. At the same time, presidents may be more comfortable expressing one type of communication than the other, depending on the realities of the historical moment, their own political and religious outlooks, and the strategic motivations of their administrations. It may be the case, therefore, that even though overt God-talk increased in the presidency after 1980, more subtle faith-talk stayed constant or perhaps even declined. If, however, presidential faith-talk has also risen in recent decades, this would further substantiate that there has been a shift in the public role of religion in American politics. With this in mind, Figure 3 shows the average amount of faith-talk per address for each of the presidents since 1933. As with the earlier analysis, we include two trend lines: the per-address average of faith-talk for all speeches to the nation, and the average for the subset of addresses that occurred in the high state occasions of Inaugural and State of the Union addresses. Recall that the high national context consistently contained more God-talk, and, due to the strategic nature of this setting, we expected the same for faith-talk. Our analysis supports our expectations in two ways.

First, both of the trend lines show a notable increase in the volume of subtle religious language in the presidency since 1980. Whether one's focus is on all speeches to the nation or on those delivered in high state occasions, Figure 3 shows that the three highest volumes of faith-talk in the modern presidency, and four of the top five, occurred with the four most recent presidents. Looking at the entire

sample, the highest mean among the first eight presidents—by a sizeable margin—was Roosevelt with 9.9 faith-talk terms per address. Beginning in 1981, the means were 10.4 for Reagan, 8.6 for G. H. W. Bush, 11.8 for Clinton, and 12.7 for G. W. Bush. Second, among Inaugural and State of the Union addresses, a similar pattern is present—but at a consistently much higher level of faith-talk, an outcome indicative of the strategic nature of these addresses. Again in the first group of presidents, Roosevelt was tops with 13.7 faith terms per address. Beginning in 1981, the means elevated to 21.6 for Reagan, 13.3 for G. H. W. Bush, 20.2 for Clinton, and 16.7 for G. W. Bush. For both trend lines, the amount of faith-talk in a typical presidential address for the years 1981 to 2006 was *more than fifty percent higher* than the average for addresses delivered from 1933 to 1980.

Among the four most recent presidents, the volume of faith-talk is highest for Reagan, Clinton, and G. W. Bush. These findings merit elaboration. For one thing, these data bear out that Reagan was unmatched in the modern presidency in his expression of a religious worldview, at least in his national addresses. He delivered the most addresses containing any God invocations, was highest along with G. W. Bush on the per-address averages for God-talk, and he exhibited along with Clinton and G. W. Bush the greatest amount of faith-talk per address. Put simply, Reagan's presidency was unprecedented in its public religiosity, and G. W. Bush's was a close second. Indeed, the latter was just behind or right with Reagan on all of these measures. As for Clinton, his high level of faith-talk was indicative of his apparent ease among religious communities, including both African-American worshipers and Southern white evangelicals, and it begins to reveal how a Democratic Party politician might succeed with a strategy of religious politics. In his use of God-talk, Clinton was higher than pre-1981 presidents, yet distinctly lower than Reagan and the Bushes. However, Clinton more than held his own on faith-talk—a component of a God strategy likely to connect with religiously inclined citizens, yet perhaps not overly ruffle the large number of secular voters in the Democratic Party's base.³⁸

One additional notable point emerged in our study of presidential faith-talk. Over time in the presidency, there has been a shift in faith-based terminology suggestive of how people might interpret the pressing issues faced by the nation. This shift became apparent in our

reading of the addresses, so we looked more closely at two terms that can be used to describe tasks that must be undertaken: mission and crusade. Each of these words was available for presidents to utilize when describing a range of activities and responsibilities. Both terms have been used historically to refer to military combat, and both also have been employed historically in a decidedly religious manner. Our view is that at all times these words carry dimensions of each of these lineages, making them uniquely important in today's religious politics. Given the trends observed thus far, it seemed plausible that „mission” and „crusade” have appeared more often in presidential communications in recent decades as part of the overall ascendancy of religious politics. With this in mind, we identified when these terms were used in addresses to the nation during the modern presidency.³⁹

„Mission” was the more commonly used of the two terms—appearing 197 times across the full sample of national addresses, while „crusade” appeared only twenty times. Figure 4 shows the proportional usage of these terms in two time periods: 1933–80 and 1981–2006. These data indicate each of the two terms appeared predominantly after 1980. A full seventy-six percent of all usage of „mission” and eighty percent of all instances of „crusade” in major presidential addresses have occurred since Reagan took office. Stated another way, beginning in 1981, the usage of „mission” in presidential addresses to the nation more than tripled, and the usage of „crusade” quadrupled. These patterns become even more remarkable when we consider that our sample included 102 more addresses by presidents prior to Reagan than since Reagan's Inauguration. The implications of the increased usage of „mission” and „crusade,” particularly in a post-September 11 world where military engagements have been common, are profound. These words are used to identify American governmental actions at home and abroad and, therefore, function as a meaningful political and religious signal not only for Americans but also for citizens worldwide.

As a final component of this analysis, we looked closely at two addresses that are instructive of the trends in presidential faith-talk generally and that also highlight how such talk might be used in moments when strategic action is needed by political leaders. Specifically, we considered how presidents responded to major political misfortune in congressional midterm elections. In the seven-plus decades encompassed by our analysis, there were three midterm elections in which

the political party of a sitting president lost control of both chambers of Congress: 1946, 1994, and 2006. Truman was in office for the first, Clinton for the second, and G. W. Bush for the third. For this analysis we selected the two presidents of the same party—Democrats Truman and Clinton—and examined whether these presidents utilized religious rhetoric in their efforts to reconnect with the American public and to regain the political high ground. To find out, we closely read the State of the Union address that followed each of these shifts in congressional power and focused on these two presidents' use of faith-talk.

Truman became president in April, 1945, upon the death of Roosevelt, and within a few months he presided over the close of World War II. An electoral shift away from Democratic Party dominance was perhaps inevitable, but Truman nonetheless had to answer for the Republican Party's pickup of sixty-six seats and both houses of Congress in the 1946 midterm elections. On January 6, 1947, Truman opened his State of the Union Address with these words: „It looks like a good many of you have moved over to the left since I was here last.” He followed this line, a reference to the increase in Republicans sitting on their side of the partisan aisle during this high state address, by noting that he was the twentieth U.S. president to encounter a Congress controlled by an opposing party. Truman then delivered an address that was typical in its faith-talk: Across his high state addresses Truman averaged 11.7 faith-talk terms, and in this one he had fifteen. Further, he was in no hurry to get to the faith-talk: Only three terms appeared in the initial two-thirds of the address, while seven of them—spiritual, spirit (twice), solemn, devotion, and faith (twice)—came in one passage as he approached the closing. For Truman the midterm electoral loss prompted a State of the Union speech that, at minimum, lacked a sense of political urgency in its usage of faith-talk.

Clinton took a diametrically different approach after the Republican Party picked up sixty-three seats and control of both branches of Congress in the 1994 midterm elections. In his State of the Union Address on January 24, 1995, the religious language—both faith-talk and God-talk—was present early and often, a point which became apparent in the opening minutes. Clinton began with this sentence, „Again we are here in the sanctuary of democracy, and once again our democracy has spoken,” and then went on with these words:

So let me begin by congratulating all of you here in the 104th Congress and congratulating you, Mr. Speaker. If we agree on nothing else tonight, we must agree that the American people certainly voted for change in 1992 and in 1994. And as I look out at you, I know how some of you must have felt in 1992.

I must say that in both years we didn't hear America singing, we heard America shouting. And now all of us, Republicans and Democrats alike, must say, „We hear you. We will work together to earn the jobs you have given us. For we are the keepers of a sacred trust, and we must be faithful to it in this new and very demanding era.”

Over 200 years ago, our Founders changed the entire course of human history by joining together to create a new country based on a single powerful idea: „We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, . . . endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Three sentences later, Clinton said: „I came to this hallowed chamber two years ago on a mission, to restore the American dream for all our people and to make sure that we move into the twenty-first century still the strongest force for freedom and democracy in the entire world.” Soon thereafter he turned to the primary theme of his address:

So tonight we must forge a new social compact to meet the challenges of this time. As we enter a new era, we need a new set of understandings, not just with government but, even more important, with one another as Americans. That's what I want to talk with you about tonight. I call it the New Covenant. But it's grounded in a very, very old idea, that all Americans have not just a right but a solemn responsibility to rise as far as their God-given talents and determination can take them and to give something back to their communities and their country in return.

In these opening paragraphs of his address, Clinton twice invoked God, eight times used faith terms, and announced a new social compact known as „the New Covenant”—a phrase certain to capture the ear of devout Christians, who would recognize its biblical grounding, most notably in the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. It turned out he was just getting started.

In the course of his State of the Union speech, Clinton used faith-talk in forty-nine separate instances. This number was the highest of any presidential address in our sample by fully thirteen terms, and overall it was two-and-a-half times more than Clinton averaged across high state speeches (his mean was 20.2 in these occasions) during his presidency. The centerpiece was the „New Covenant,” an idea that he invoked thirteen times that evening. But, there were other key faith words as well. The word „church,” for instance, had never before passed Clinton’s lips in a national address; in this speech it was present six times. It was joined three times each by „sacred,” „religious,” and „reverend,” while „congregations,” „sanctuary,” and „worship” were each used twice. Clinton’s address could have as easily been delivered from a church pulpit on Sunday morning as from the bully pulpit he had on Capitol Hill that evening. Time and again he hit religious themes and brought it to a crescendo with this closing:

We all gain when we give, and we reap what we sow. That’s at the heart of this New Covenant. Responsibility, opportunity, and citizenship, more than stale chapters in some remote civic [*sic*] book, they’re still the virtue by which we can fulfill ourselves and reach our God-given potential and be like them and also to fulfill the eternal promise of this country, the enduring dream from that first and most sacred covenant. I believe every person in this country still believes that we are created equal and given by our Creator the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is a very, very great country. And our best days are still to come.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

In a comparable moment of political hardship a half-century earlier, Truman had stuck to his script with a business-as-usual amount of faith-talk. It was not so for Clinton. The 1994 midterm elections marked the low-water mark for his presidency; in the aftermath and with the nation watching, Clinton brought the God strategy with full force.

Turning Points

Our analysis to this point has shown two patterns. First, since Roosevelt’s first election in the early 1930’s, presidents have with so-

me regularity explicitly invoked a higher power (what we call „God-talk”) and have also spoken in more subtle religious terms (what we call „faith-talk”). God has always been a public part of the American presidency, and this has continued to be the case in the modern era. That said, our second point is the more compelling one: The volume of religious language in the presidency increased sharply when Reagan took office in 1981 and has remained high ever since. Whether the focus is on God-talk or faith-talk or whether the context is a standard national address or one delivered on a high state occasion, a new breed of religious politics has been practiced by the four most recent presidents. Reagan, Clinton, and both Bushes in both common and unique ways have utilized the God strategy. A careful reader might still wonder, however, if increases in presidential religiosity are not only a recent phenomenon but also one driven primarily by other contextual or ideological factors. Let us consider this possibility. In particular three alternative explanations merit examination: The potential impacts of a wartime context, of a president’s party affiliation, and of facing re-election.

The U.S. has been involved in several sustained military conflicts since the early 1930’s: World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and the post-September 11 combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In such environments presidents may have employed greater religious language when speaking to the nation. For example, invocations of God- and faith-talk could have done much to mobilize U.S. public opinion, justify the conflict, and uphold the nation during combat. It is also plausible that political ideology can effectively explain the ascendancy of religious politics. Three of the last four presidents have been Republicans, after all, and it may be that being a member of the Republican Party—for myriad ideological, political, and practical reasons—is the crucial determinant in the volume of religiosity exhibited in the modern presidency. A third possibility is that the pressure of knowing that one faces a potential re-election campaign in the future has compelled presidents to use more religious language. With this political reality always looming, perhaps presidents feel a greater need to communicate in religious terms so as to curry favor among religious Americans. With these possibilities in mind, we compared the increase in presidential God-talk and faith-talk that occurred with the beginning of the Reagan presidency in 1981 to possi-

ble increases suggested by three alternative explanations: (a) being at war, as compared to times of peace; (b) being a Republican, as compared to being a Democrat; and (c) facing a future election, as opposed to not being in this position.⁴⁰

Figure 5 shows the relative percentage increase of each of these „turning points” on presidential religiosity. Looking first at the three potential alternative explanations, we see the data indicate that from 1933 to 2006 America’s being at war and being Republican were indeed significantly related to an increase in God-talk. Presidents were twenty percent more likely to invoke God if the address was delivered during wartime, and Republicans were twenty-nine percent more likely to engage in God-talk than Democrats were. The impact of these two factors upon faith-talk was negligible, however. Also, apparent in Figure 5 is that whether a president’s address came when a future election loomed had little relation to either God-talk or faith-talk (for God-talk there was actually 3.4% *less* when presidents were facing re-election). When we turn to the final bars in the figure, however, we see that these three alternative explanations pale in comparison to the rise in presidential religious language that began with Reagan. Beginning in 1981 and through the end of 2006, the amount of God-talk in presidential national addresses increased by an astounding one-hundred sixteen percent on average from what it had been over the previous five decades. In a similarly dramatic fashion, presidential faith-talk was fifty-five percent higher among the four most recent presidents than it had been for the preceding eight. Simply put, neither war, nor political party, or election context can adequately account for presidential religiosity. The past four presidents’ religious language has far exceeded anything that came before in the modern presidency. Whatever one’s view of the past four presidents may be, they are the Founding Fathers of today’s religious politics.

Further, like the original Founders, these presidents have set a standard that those who follow have sought to emulate. Specifically, the God-talk and faith-talk of America’s four most recent presidents have changed the nation’s presidential politics. One example of the shifting dynamic can be observed in candidate speeches delivered at the Republican and Democratic Party presidential nominating conventions every four years. These conventions became national spectacles beginning with live television coverage in 1952,⁴¹ and from that year

through 1976 Democratic and Republican presidential candidates averaged 2.4 invocations of God and 11.8 instances of faith-talk in their nomination acceptance speeches. In 1980 Reagan’s victory established a new norm for the presidency. Ever since, U.S. presidential candidates who want their faith-claims to be taken seriously now face a come-to-Jesus moment, in which they must display public religiosity in a manner that is inevitably strategic and yet cannot appear overly so. The convention acceptance speech, in which candidates introduce themselves to much of the nation, is that moment for most presidential nominees.

Among Republicans the response to the God strategy implemented by Reagan in 1980 was immediate. From 1984 up through the most recent election in 2004, the Republican presidential nominee in his convention acceptance speech invoked God an average of 5.2 times per address—more than a doubling of the previous level—and included 19.5 faith-talk terms per speech—a sixty-five percent increase. In the Democratic Party the evidence suggests that presidential candidates did not get the memo on religious politics (or chose to ignore it) until Clinton arrived on the scene. In the years since, though, Democratic candidates for the presidency have bought into this strategy as well. From 1992 through 2004, Democratic presidential nominees in their convention addresses averaged 4.3 God invocations and 16.5 faith-talk terms—respective increases of seventy-seven and forty percent over the pre-1980 levels. In the U.S. today major presidential candidates are afraid of being perceived as the apostate in the room. They signal that they are not, by speaking the language of the faithful. In this respect religious conservatives have successfully accomplished one of their primary goals: to reestablish God and religious faith at the center of the American conversation about social and political matters. In 1984 Richard John Neuhaus, editor of the Catholic journal *First Things*, decreed that the nation’s public square was „naked” because in his view God and religious faith had been banished from the conversation.⁴² No one could reach such a conclusion today.

Endnotes:

¹On the centrality of religion in the founding of the nation and throughout U.S. history, see Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999). See also Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alan Wolfe, *Return to Greatness: How America Lost Its Sense of Purpose and What It Needs to Do to Recover It* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²Washington delivered this address on April 30, 1789. A transcript can be accessed at www.americanpresidency.org.

³Quotes drawn from Robert Bellah, „Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96 (Winter, 1967): 1–21; idem, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

⁴In addition to Bellah's writings, see Martin E. Marty, ed., *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Civil Religion, Church and State* (New York: KG Saur, 1992); Gerald Parsons, *Perspectives on Civil Religion* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002); Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988).

⁵Kennedy delivered this address on September 12, 1960, to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association. A transcript can be accessed at www.americanrhetoric.com.

⁶Quoted in David D. Kirkpatrick, „Evangelicals See Bush as One of Them, But Will They Vote?” *New York Times*, November 1, 2004 (Nexis database, accessed February 8, 2005).

⁷Eric Gorski, „Church, Politics a Wary Mix,” *Denver Post*, October 29, 2004 (Nexis database, accessed June 7, 2005); Jeff Sharlet, „Soldiers of Christ,” *Harper's Magazine*, May, 2005, pp. 41–61.

⁸From the U.S.C.C.B. statement on „Catholics in Political Life,” which can be accessed at www.usccb.org/bishops/catholicsinpoliticallife.htm.

⁹A copy of this statement can be found at the website of *Sojourners* magazine, www.soj.net/index.cfm?action=action.election&item=confession_signers.

¹⁰A copy of this document can be found at www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf, the website of the National Association of Evangelicals.

¹¹Sandi Dolbee, „Left to Right: Heeding Last November's Lesson—A New Launch for Liberals,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 28, 2005 (Nexis database, accessed August 31, 2005).

¹²Joe Garofoli, „Activists Start Working on Liberal Spirituality,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 21, 2005 (Nexis database, accessed August 31, 2005).

¹³Information on the U.S.C.C.B.'s actions can be accessed at www.justiceformigrants.org. See also Arin Gencer and Steve Padilla, „Mass Draws on 'Justice for Immigrants' Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 2006 (Nexis database, accessed June 10, 2006); Teresa Watanabe, „Catholic Leaders Hope to Sway Immigration Debate,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2006 (Nexis database, accessed June 10, 2006).

¹⁴See John Green and Mark Silk, „The New Religion Gap,” *Religion in the News* 6 (Fall, 2003, supplement): 1–3, 15; idem, „Gendering the Religion Gap,” *Religion in the News* 7 (Spring, 2004): 11–13; idem, „Why Moral Values Did Count,” *Religion in the News* 8 (Spring, 2005): 5–8.

¹⁵For a full list of the speeches analyzed, see Appendix A in Domke and Coe, „The God Strategy” (see asterisked note above). Speeches ($n = 357$) were selected and retrieved from the „Public Papers of the Presidents,” available at www.americanpresidency.org. We analyzed all addresses that met three criteria: that they were addressed to the nation, that they were broadcast live (via radio for early dates, via television for later dates), and that they dealt substantively with domestic or foreign affairs. This excluded surprisingly few addresses. Those not included in our sample were largely celebratory (e.g., a speech on a holiday that primarily marked the occasion),

were a pre-election or election-night address (these two types trumpeted the value of voting or marked electoral outcomes), or were addressed to the United Nations. Our sample is consistent with a similar, but smaller list in Lyn Ragsdale, *Vital Statistics on the Presidency: Washington to Clinton* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1996).

¹⁶On the media coverage of presidential addresses, see Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002); Mike McDevitt, „Ideological Language and the Press: Coverage of Inaugural, State of the Union Addresses,” *Mass Comm Review*, vol. 13 (1986), pp. 18–24; and Todd M. Schaefer, „Persuading the Persuaders: Presidential Speeches and Editorial Opinion,” *Political Communication* 14 (January–March, 1997): 97–111. For various perspectives on the manner in which presidential communications might shape public opinion, see Murray Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1997); Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing the News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Michael Calvin McGee, „The 'Ideograph': A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (February, 1980): 1–16; John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and David Zarefsky, „Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (September, 2004): 607–619.

¹⁷We borrow the term „God talk” from religion scholar Martin Marty, who uses it to refer to all public religious language. We use „God-talk” to refer specifically to references to a supreme being and use „faith-talk” to refer to other religious terminology. See Martin E. Marty, „The Sin of Pride,” *Newsweek*, March 10, 2003 (Nexis database, accessed November 25, 2004).

¹⁸Consider, e.g., a Pew survey in 2005 which reported that 66% of Americans felt politicians discussed matters of faith and prayer either the „right amount” or „too little.” See the Pew Research Center's report of August 30, 2005, „Public Divided on Origins of Life,” at <http://people-press.org/reports> (accessed July 20, 2006). In the words of Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals: „I sleep better at night knowing he [G. W. Bush] is a man who isn't afraid to say he prays, just like George Washington and many other presidents” (Richard Cizik, interview for the television broadcast *The Jesus Factor* (Public Broadcasting Services, Boston, April 29, 2004).

¹⁹Of course, religious belief is not unique in this regard. With any topic it is impossible to know for certain what political leaders actually believe. We have only their words and their actions to provide clues.

²⁰Doug Wead interview for *The Jesus Factor*, April 29, 2004.

²¹Cizik interview for *The Jesus Factor*.

²²According to its leaders, the religious conservative movement's mobilization in the 1970's was significantly spurred by concerns about „secular humanism” in the U.S. Tim LaHaye, one of the founders of the Moral Majority with Jerry Falwell in the late 1970's, said, „Secular humanism puts man at the center of all things . . . They label it democracy, but they mean humanism, in all its atheistic, amoral depravity” (quoted by Sidney Blumenthal in „The Religious Right and Republicans,” in Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, eds., *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* [Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987], pp. 271–286). See also Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 139–195. The call to arms against humanism was sounded most loudly, and heard most widely, by Tim LaHaye, who wrote the 1980 bestseller *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1980). See also Homer Duncan, *Secular Humanism: The Most Dangerous Religion in America* (Lubbock, TX: Christian Focus on Government, 1979); on p. 15 Duncan calls humanism „Anti-God, Anti-Christ, Anti-Bible, and Anti-American.”

²³Clifford Geertz, „Religion as a Cultural System,” in Michael Lambeck, ed., *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p. 63. See also David Hicks, ed., *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999).

²⁴See Darren E. Sherkat, „Religious Socialization: Sources of Influence and Influences of Agency,” in Michele Dillon, ed., *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 151–163; Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997); Robert Wuthnow, *Producing the Sacred: An Essay on Public Religion* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

²⁵See James H. Kuklinski and Norman L. Hurley, „On Hearing and Interpreting Political Messages: A Cautionary Tale of Citizen Cue-taking,” *Journal of Politics* 56 (August, 1994): 729–751; Jeffery J. Mondak, „Source Cues and Policy Approval: The Cognitive Dynamics of Public Support for the Reagan Agenda,” *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (February, 1993): 186–212; Dhavan V. Shah, et al., „News Coverage, Economic Cues, and the Public’s Presidential Preferences: 1984–1996,” *Journal of Politics* 61 (November, 1999): 914–943; and Mark D. Watts, et al., „Elite Cues and Media Bias: Explaining Public Perceptions of a Liberal Press,” *Communication Research* 26 (April, 1999): 144–175.

²⁶The mechanisms at work in such instances are known as agenda-setting and priming. See Shanto Iyengar, et al., „Experimental Demonstrations of the ‘Not-so-Minimal’ Consequences of Television News Programs,” *American Political Science Review* 76 (December, 1982): 848–858; and Jon A. Krosnick and Donald R. Kinder, „Altering the Foundations of Support for the President through Priming,” *American Political Science Review* 84 (June, 1990): 497–512. On elite influence and opinion change more broadly, see Zaller, *Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.

²⁷See William E. Leuchtenburg, „Franklin D. Roosevelt: The First Modern President,” in Fred I. Greenstein, ed., *Leadership in the Modern Presidency* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 7–40.

²⁸Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (New York: Martin Kessler Books/Free Press, 2000).

²⁹Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Michael Schudson and Susan E. Tifft, „American Journalism in Historical Perspective,” in K. H. Jamieson and G. Overholser, eds., *Institutions of American Democracy: The Press* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 17–47.

³⁰On diversity and multiculturalism throughout U.S. history, see Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 1993). On the changing U.S. demographic and cultural realities leading up to and in the early stages of the modern era, see parts 6 and 7 in Johnson, *A History of the American People*. For an overview of the trends in American citizens’ political participation, see M. Margaret Conway, *Political Participation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000).

³¹The 1933 Inaugural was the last to be scheduled for the date of March 4. In 1937, the date of presidential inauguration was moved to January 20, where it remains to this day. This shift was a product of the nation’s adoption of the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution, enacted in 1933.

³²To be specific, our counts of God-talk included all direct references to a supreme being, including terms such as Him, Thy, and Your when they were used to refer to God. One of the authors read the addresses twice to identify all instances of God-talk in the sample of presidential addresses. As a check of the accuracy of this analysis, the second author read approximately 25% of the speeches. Agreement between the authors was .92, which was .84 after accounting for agreement by chance. See William A. Scott, „Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 19 (Autumn, 1955): 321–325.

³³See Vanessa Beasley, „The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus in the United States: American Principles and American Pose in Presidential Inaugurals,” *Communication Monographs* 68 (June, 2001): 169–183; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words: Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³⁴This December 8, 1941, address before Congress—which included Roosevelt’s famous line that December 7 was „a date which will live in infamy”—was not included in our sample because it was not broadcast to the nation. Had it been, this address would have yielded results very similar to the December 9, 1941, address to the nation that we do analyze. Roosevelt had one God reference in the Congressional address.

³⁵Across all 357 speeches that we analyzed, the average number of words per address was 2,948.

³⁶For audience information, see „For ABC, a winning season, at least on paper,” *Washington Post*, September 27, 2001, p. C-7.

³⁷To be specific, our counts of faith-talk included all instances of the following words or roots (asterisks indicate that the root word was captured, regardless of the word endings): amen, angel, angels, angelic, apostle*, backslid*, baptism*, baptize, believer*, bible*, biblical, bless*, buddhist*, cathedral*, christian*, church, churches, clergy, commandment*, communion, confession*, congregation*, consecrat*, covenant, creed*, crusade*, denomination*, devotion, devout, disciple*, epistle*, evil*, faith*, fellowship*, fruits, genesis, gospel*, grace, hallow*, heaven*, holy, hymn*, immortal*, Islam*, Jew*, lamp, martyr*, miracle*, mission*, Muslim*, orthodox*, parable*, pastor*, peacemaker*, penance, piety, pious, pope*, pray*, priest*, prophe*, proverb*, psalm*, pulpit*, rabbi*, reap, rebirth, reborn, redeem*, redemption, religio*, repent*, restor*, resurrect*, reverend*, sabbath, sacrament, sacred, saint*, salvation, sanctity, sanctify, sanctuary*, scriptur*, sermon*, servant*, shrine*, sin, sins, sinner, sinners, sinning, sinned, solemn*, soul*, sow, sows, sown, sowed, spirit*, temple*, testament, theolog*, trinity, worship*. Our approach is modeled upon one commonly used by political-communication scholar Roderick Hart. See Roderick P. Hart and Jay P. Childers, „The Evolution of Candidate Bush: A Rhetorical Analysis,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 49 (October, 2005): 180–197. To track presidents’ usage of these terms, we used the „Concordance” computer content-analysis program. Details about this program can be found online at www.concordancesoftware.co.uk.

³⁸On the presence of differing electoral blocs in the Republican and Democratic Party coalitions, see Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza, „A Great Divide? Religion and Political Cleavage in U.S. National Elections, 1972–2000,” *Sociological Quarterly* 45 (Summer, 2004): 421–450.

³⁹For this analysis we included variants of these terms as well. Specifically, we counted the presence of „mission” and „missions” and „crusade” and „crusaders.” (The term „crusades” did not appear in these speeches.)

⁴⁰For this analysis we used the following speeches to mark the beginning and end of the five wartime contexts: Roosevelt’s 12/9/41 address through Truman’s 9/1/45 address for World War II; Truman’s 7/19/50 address through Eisenhower’s 7/26/53 address for Korea; Lyndon B. Johnson’s 8/4/64 address through Nixon’s 3/29/73 address for Vietnam; G. H. W. Bush’s 8/8/90 address through his 3/6/91 address for the Persian Gulf; and G. W. Bush’s 9/11/01 address through his final address on 5/15/06 for Afghanistan and Iraq. To examine which presidents were facing an election, we counted all addresses delivered during the first term as being in an „election” context. We also counted all of Roosevelt’s addresses as being in an election context because he was never term-limited. It was not until the nation’s adoption of the twenty-second amendment to the Constitution, enacted in 1951, that presidents were limited to a maximum of two election victories. Johnson was another unique case: He announced on 3/31/68 that he would not seek reelection, even though he was eligible for another term. We counted this address and the four that followed it as not constituting an election context.

⁴¹On the presence of television at the 1952 party nominating conventions, see „TV as a Political Force,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1952 (Proquest database, accessed August 28, 2006). The *Times* article said, „This year’s Presidential campaign will differ from all others that have preceded it in that television will take the voter everywhere, and put him face to face with the candidate. . . . The TV audience is now nation-wide for the first time in a national campaign, and the camera is also newly ubiquitous. . . . Never before has the voter had such widespread opportunity to get the ‘feel’ of the man he may or may not vote for to sit in the White House. Never before has he been able, with his own eyes, to take measure repeatedly of the sincerity, the goodwill and the intelli-

gence of a candidate for high office.” See also the Museum of Broadcast Communications’ discussion of „Presidential Nominating Conventions and Television,” at www.museum.tv/archives/etv/P/htmlP/presidential/presidential.htm. Of the 1952 party nominating conventions and television, the museum said this: „The impact of the medium, only recently networked into a truly national phenomenon, was immediate. After watching the first televised Republican convention in 1952, Democratic party officials made last minute changes to their own convention in attempts to maintain the attention of viewers at home.”

⁴²Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984).