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Grains of God: planting faith and growing cold war fears in Iowa during the 1950s

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Grains of God: planting faith and growing cold war fears in Iowa during the 1950s

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History
Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University
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This thesis is a culmination of nearly two years of researching and writing on top of a lifetime of searching for answers to make sense of humanity's complexities. I have always been fascinated with religion's influence on society and the extent of religion's power to shape cultures and nations. The last two years of my life have been one small step in an endless journey to discover explanations for the relationship between religion and American politics.

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ABSTRACT

The decade of the 1950s was a challenging time for the United States as the nation coped with racial inequalities at home and dealt with a Cold War abroad. America believed that freedom – rooted in democratic principles – provided the ideal political and social structure for the rest of the world to emulate.

Using Iowa during the 1950s as a case study, this thesis argues that the United States government perceived communism as a greater threat to American security than it actually posed. Legislators in Washington feared that communism threatened to destroy the American way of life inciting them to push through legislation that formally recognized God on federal currency and government endorsed pronouncements. During Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidency, the United States created a "civil religion" when acknowledgment of God by the government was not religious, but patriotic.

Congress tested the boundaries of separation of church and state established by the First Amendment when the American civil religion formed. United States' policymakers believed they were defending the nation against communism by placing "under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance and changing the national motto to "In God We Trust." These actions proved to be unnecessary through an analysis of Iowa during the 1950s, revealing the nation already possessed a strong devotion to God.

When the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, it further exposed the superfluous actions taken by the United States government since America found science education

more effective in competing with the Soviet Union and keeping the nation's interest in its efforts to defeat communism and win the Cold War.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Some profess Christian dogmas because they believe them, others because they are afraid of not looking like they believe them. Christianity therefore reigns without obstacles, on the admission of all.”¹

–Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

In November of 2010, American President Barack Obama delivered a speech in Jakarta, Indonesia telling the crowd, “In the United States, our motto is ‘E pluribus unum’ – out of many, one.” The president had the translation correct, but he was incorrect by claiming the Latin phrase is America’s national motto. In 1956, the United States changed the motto to “In God We Trust,” and Obama’s gaffe astonished members of the House of Representatives prompting them to deliberate for thirty-five minutes to reaffirm the country’s national motto as “In God We Trust.” Following the discussion, the House voted 396 to 9 to uphold America’s trust in God.²

Actions that the House of Representatives took after President Obama’s speech seemed exorbitant. The president was not calling for the country to change its national motto. Why did Representatives feel compelled to spend time discussing America’s “real” national motto and then hold a vote confirming that the current national motto was still the national motto? “In God We Trust” was in its fifty-fifth year as the national

¹ Andrew Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 9.

² David A. Fahrenthold, “‘In God We Trust’: House reaffirms national motto – yet again,” *Washington Post*, (Washington D.C.), 2 November 2011, available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/in-god-we-trust-house-re-affirms-national-motto--yet-again/2011/11/02/gIQAiZRWfM_story.html, accessed 21 January 2014.

motto in 2011 when Obama gave his speech. Why did the United States change the motto in 1956, one hundred and sixty five years after the ratification of the United States Constitution? The Constitution – including the amendments – does not mention God and includes religion only twice, both times prohibiting the government from discriminating against or establishing the exercise of religious beliefs. What happened between 1791 and today that created government sponsored recognition of the Judeo-Christian God?

Fear grasped Washington and caused policymakers to overreact to a perceived ideological threat. Communism became the antithesis of American freedom and democracy during the Cold War. Legislators in Washington believed communism was anti-capitalism, anti-democratic and anti-God, which made it anti-American. During the 1950s, fears of communism spread through government ranks generating sentiments that belief in God was a necessity of a “true” American. Religiosity – tied to faith in God – became a key characteristic to hold government positions during the Cold War. A double standard emerged in the United States when religious affiliation became a requirement for political office in a government system that advocated the separation of church and state. Cold War anxieties instigated legislators in Washington to pass bills placing “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We Trust” onto paper currency and as the national motto. Policymakers hoped if Americans kept God on their minds that they would keep communism out.

Recasting formal recognition of God as patriotic rather than religious created an American civil religion: when religious language and symbols became secular in use.³ God became the most important American citizen in the 1950s as a result of “civil religion” legislation.⁴ Whether these laws aligned with the country’s “founding principles” or violated those principles, a look at the culture in the state of Iowa during the strenuous decade of the fifties reveals that God did not need to be “forced” into the public discourse to keep the populace from replacing their Bibles with copies of *The Communist Manifesto*.

This thesis focuses on the American government’s increased dependency on religion during the 1950s to build its image as the nation fighting for “good” during the Cold War and as a way for American leaders to feel serenity while competing with the Soviet Union. While this thesis addresses the relationship of religion and the United States government, it is interesting to note that many standard accounts of the 1950s focus on the related phenomena of suburbia, the automobile-based economy, and the baby boom.

From 1946 to 1964, American mothers gave birth to some 76 million babies and, to some extent, American politics, economics, culture and society has had to deal with this. More marriages and more children drove the need for additional housing; federal policies - both FHA mortgages and GI Bill-financed ones - pushed mortgagees to buy

³ Diane Kirby, “Religion and the Cold War – An Introduction” in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (New York: MacMillan, 2003), 4

⁴ For more information and perspectives on the origins and meaning of “American Civil Religion,” see William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009); Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

new homes. William Levitt transferred industrial, mass production practices from factories to home building on a production line and constructed Levittown on former potato fields on Long Island, soon replicated across the country. In addition, to connect these new living areas with older core cities, shopping, schools, family, and churches, Americans needed cars and the 1950s was a decade marked by America's love affair with the automobile.⁵ Behind all the changes in America during the 1950s, there were fears over foreign relations, a troubling world, and the superpower confrontation with the Soviet Union that drove some American leaders to distort the capabilities of communist ideologies.

The second chapter of this thesis establishes that Iowa was not vulnerable to communism since Iowans already had a strong connection to their faith. Newspapers in the state printed events and information about churches in the community and leading elites in the state believed freedom gestated in divine origin. Iowans concluded that the Bible contained morals that the state's youth should learn in order to instill a foundation of democratic principles based on Judeo-Christian morality. A majority of Iowans derived purpose and meaning in life from their religious faith and they were not going to abandon their devotion to God for communism.

Chapter 3 explains the emergence of the American civil religion starting in 1954 when Congress unanimously passed House Joint Resolution 243, which placed the phrase "under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance. God became part of the country's

⁵ See Douglas T. Miller and Marion Novak. *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were*, (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1977); William L. O'Neill. *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1960*, (New York: Free Press, 1986).

national motto and stamped on American paper currency because of legislation passed in 1955 and 1956. Iowa's lackluster response to the actions of Congress between 1954 and 1956 suggests that the civil religion legislation did not affect Iowans as much as drafters of the bills intended. This uncovered a sense of isolation from the Cold War narrative for many Iowans since they were not actively pushing for this legislation and did not feel their lives change as a result.

Chapter 4 identifies a shift in Washington's approach to combating communism and shows that Iowans placed themselves within the Cold War narrative after the Soviets launched *Sputnik* in 1957. Iowans observed and listened to the Russian satellite and felt a connection to America's competition with the Soviet Union. Iowa – and the rest of the country – noted failures of Washington that kept the United States from beating the Soviets into space. The ramifications of *Sputnik* affected more than just America's position in the space race and Iowans realized their security was at stake. When the government passed the National Defense Education Act in 1958, Iowa made needed improvements in education and the government's move to organize missile defense plans in all states allowed Iowans to see and feel effects of Cold War legislation.

Planting “grains of God” into the minds of Americans convinced leaders of the nation they took active measures to engage and defend against ideologies of communism. Americans seemed to want a civil religion, but this movement had little impact in Iowa because of it was a deeply socially conservative and religious state. Much as the case with Prohibition - Iowa passed a state law before the federal Constitutional amendments, Iowans had moved to merge society and religion. In reality,

the creation of a civil religion did little to help Iowans and the rest of the United States combat local and more important challenges needed to stay ahead of the Soviets in the global struggle for supremacy.

CHAPTER 2

FIELDS OF FAITH

December 25 is a date that many Americans recognize and anticipate each year. Christmas – a Christian holiday – is widely celebrated across the United States in various ways. The holiday is part of American culture and so important to Americans that the United States government has long recognized December 25 as a federal holiday. Many American schools – elementary to collegiate – plan their academic calendars around Christmas. In 1991, as Americans exchanged gifts in celebration of Christmas, across the globe the atheistic and communist Soviet Union officially dissolved, ending the Cold War. For nearly fifty years, the United States and the Soviet Union dueled for global power and influence and on December 25, 1991, America stood as the lone superpower.

As time marches farther from the last days of the Cold War, historians can better assess the era and the legacy it left behind. Perhaps it reflected the tradition in Western thought to posit two forces in nature, each threatening to consume the other, in contrast to philosophic systems in Eastern Asia that emphasize the complementary nature of differences. Hence, the Greeks noted fire and water; the early Catholic Church had God and the devil; the American revolutionaries worried over power and liberty; and during the Cold War, scholars thought about religion and the atheism of Communism.

Over the years, historians voiced their ideas on political, economic, and social forces that drove the Cold War; however, there is a scarcity of literature devoted to the

influence of religion on directing actions of the Cold War. A vast majority of early Cold War scholars focused on how diplomacy affected religion, placing religious beliefs as a “victim” of Cold War diplomacy. Within the last fifteen years, a historiography developed placing religion as a force that helped shape Cold War policies. Historians today continue to advance the theory that religion actually influenced decisions and actions of leaders during the era, elevating theology to an agent of the Cold War.

A groundbreaking publication addressing religion as a force influencing Cold War diplomacy was a volume that Dianne Kirby edited in 2003, *Religion and the Cold War*. In her book, Kirby defines the Cold War strictly in religious terms, “The Cold War was one of history’s great religious wars, a global conflict between god-fearing and the godless.” She noted religion’s place within the historiography of the Cold War “has been neglected.”⁶ Kirby’s book helped historians realize that religious factors belonged in the discussion with political and economic factors as characteristics of the Cold War.

Nearly ten years after the release of *Religion and the Cold War*, Philip E. Muehlenbeck published an edited volume, *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, as a continuation of the work that Kirby started. Muehlenbeck notes, “Religion acted as a cause and an instrument in the Cold War: As a cause it helped determine why the U.S. opposed the Soviet Union...and a factor in how the U.S. fought the Soviet Union.”⁷ Muehlenbeck’s focus on “why” and “how” helps define religion as an agent influencing actions during the Cold War. With the help of Kirby and

⁶ Dianne Kirby, “Religion and the Cold War – An Introduction,” in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (New York: MacMillan, 2003), 1.

⁷ Philip E. Muehlenbeck, “Preface,” in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press), vii.

Muehlenbeck, religion has become a more reputable area of study that helped define the years between 1945 and 1991.

In 2011, Jonathan P. Herzog published a book focusing on the influence of religion on domestic policies of the United States during the Eisenhower administration. Herzog covers the “religious revival” years of the 1950s when “under God” became a part of America’s Pledge of Allegiance, and when the government added “In God We Trust” to paper currency and as the national motto. In *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*, Herzog contended that American policy-makers, especially under the direction of Eisenhower, used religion as a way to guard the United States against communism.⁸ Herzog argues that “The religious revival of the 1950s was top-down instead of an inspired bottom-up movement.”⁹ *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* does a wonderful job explaining actions of the Eisenhower administration in creating a domestic defense through government endorsed acknowledgments of God.

Policies that produced a formal recognition of God by the American government resulted from organizations pushing their own interests and politicians taking a reactive approach towards fears that Soviet communism threatened America. United States policymakers believed they needed to “protect” Americans from communist ideologies. Using Iowa as a case study reveals that actions taken during the 1950s went largely unnoticed by the population suggesting that formation of these policies was top-down

⁸ Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 87.

⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

and “forced” into the public sphere rather than generated as a grassroots campaign. For the most part, Iowans – and the rest of America – were not calling for the government to endorse the Judeo-Christian God. Communism did not seem to be as much of a threat to Iowa as politicians in Washington made it out to be. Iowans did not have a sense of “belonging” within the narrative of the Cold War. How did Iowans see themselves fitting within the global struggle for supremacy? Did Iowans feel they were taking an active role in helping America “defeat” communism? Discovering answers to these questions begin with analyzing an advertisement from a 1950s campaign.

During the 1954 gubernatorial race in Iowa, Republican candidate Leo A. Hoegh took out a full-page advertisement in the *Des Moines Register* promoting his campaign. The ad featured a large picture of Hoegh, smiling proudly next to a categorized list of his attributes that reaffirmed his qualifications to be governor of the state. The list contained Hoegh’s political history – information that would seem paramount to anyone wishing to hold political office – yet this category was not within the top five of the eight qualifications listed. One of the categories listed in the top five qualifications promoting Hoegh as the “right choice” for the highest seat of public office in Iowa was religion. His reverend, Frank Carlson, provided a quote speaking on behalf of Hoegh’s character, “Mr. Hoegh has kept faith with his family, his Church, his profession and with the people.”¹⁰ Hoegh won the election by a slim margin over the Democratic candidate, Clyde E. Herring with fifty one percent of the vote.¹¹ Hoegh’s gubernatorial campaign advertisement revealed more than just characteristics of Iowa’s thirty-third governor; it

¹⁰ “Leo A. Hoegh for Governor,” *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), 6 June 1954.

¹¹ *State of Iowa Official Register, 1955-1956*, 280.

revealed qualities engrained in the culture of Iowa. The state valued religion and believed its spiritual identity was equal to its national and local identity. Iowans saw religion as the means to teach morality and schools in the state needed to ensure students acquired knowledge and morals to develop well-rounded citizens.

The start of the school year in fall of 1957 was relatively normal for most Iowans since they lived in a northern state that was not part of school integration. This did not mean Iowans were oblivious to the actions occurring in places like Arkansas. That fall, African American students in Little Rock reported to Central High School – previously an all-white school – as part of school integration in the south. Governor Orval Faubus sent National Guard troops to stop the African American students from entering the school, which forced President Eisenhower to send troops from the 101st Airborne Division to protect the African American students to attend Central High.¹² On October 6, 1957, a letter to the editor from David M. Fowler of Mason, Iowa appeared in the *Des Moines Register* calling for Iowans to go through their local church in order to “sponsor” an African American family in the South. Fowler explained, “In each town with more than one church there is a ministerial association. Each pastor could then discuss the proposal with his own congregation. What congregation could not find ways to welcome one Negro family?”¹³

¹² James Oakes, Michael McGerr, Jan Ellen Lewis, Nick Cullather, Jeanne Boydston, Mark Summers, and Camilla Townsend, *Of the People: A History of the United States*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 837.

¹³ David M. Fowler, “Iowa Churches Urged to Resettle Southern Negroes in Their Towns,” *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), 6 October 1957.

Although Mr. Fowler did not speak for all of Iowa, his editorial exposed key characteristics of the state that harbored a strong religious culture. Fowler acknowledged that several towns had more than one church and would be able to initiate the drive to sponsor a southern African American family. His plea for Iowa families to host African Americans from the south suggested he felt their treatment was wrong and Iowans working through their churches could make things right. Multiple churches within a community meant that the town contained members of different denominations and Iowa was religiously diverse just as the rest of the United States. Fowler saw local churches as a way to solve problems of society and as vital institutions in communities that nurtured and reinforced moral principles that taught “right” from “wrong”.

Many of the early settlers to North America came from Europe to worship God without fear of persecution. Some of the early settlements became distinct and identifiable based on their religious beliefs. Communities formed around a common faith and after the United States drafted a constitution, belief in God blended with democratic principles creating a unique perspective among early Americans that religion was a part of their national identity. According to Nathan Hatch, in his book *The Democratization of American Christianity*, “Religious populism...and the charisma of democratic movement-builders remains among the oldest and deepest impulses in American life.”¹⁴ The Second Great Awakening engulfed the United States between 1795 and 1842 and under the freedom allowed by the First Amendment, several new Protestant denominations formed without government interference. Christianity grew immensely

¹⁴ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989,) 5.

diverse after the Second Great Awakening resulting in a competition for converts among religious groups.¹⁵

Class divisions in the United States developed along religious lines evoking conflict among different Christian denominations. A majority of native-born whites in America were Protestant while most immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were Catholic and Jewish. Irish immigrants became more devout Catholics in the United States in order to resist Protestant culture.¹⁶ Catholic and Protestant churches existed in Iowa as early as 1834. Some Christian denominations in the state divided into national synods based on the native language revealing that religion was a deciding factor of identity.¹⁷

The Second Great Awakening faded around the time that Iowa achieved statehood in 1846, yet a diverse religious population emerged in the upper Midwestern state because of the spiritual movement. Education was central for many of the Christian denominations that settled in the state. Iowa's third governor, James W. Grimes, moved to strengthen the schools Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, and others established. Grimes brought an educator from New England in order to implement a strong

¹⁵ For more information regarding the importance of the Second Great Awakening to developments of religious pluralism in the United States, see Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004); Joseph Conforti, "The Invention of the Great Awakening: 1795-1842," in *Early American Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1991): 99-118; Neil Meyer, "Falling for the Lord: Shame, Revivalism, and the Origins of the Second Great Awakening," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2011): 142-166; William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture: 1765-1840*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

¹⁶ Oakes, McGerr, Lewis, Cullather, Boydston, Summers, and Townsend, *Of the People*, 550-551.

¹⁷ "Iowa Pathways," *Iowa Public Television*, available from http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000256, accessed 12 December 2013.

educational system in the Iowa.¹⁸ When Puritans settled in the New England area, they emphasized literacy so people could read the Bible, which was critical to obtain salvation. Strong schools formed in Puritan communities out of a desire for people to read scripture.¹⁹ Puritan settlers from New England who came to Iowa brought these ideals with them and Governor Grimes took advantage of this situation.²⁰ By 1870, Iowa had the nation's highest literacy rate and by 1930 contained over eighty different Christian denominations, reflecting Iowa's growing commitment as a state of strong religious conviction and devotion to education.²¹

Religious pluralism remained a characteristic of Iowa and American society into the 1950s, but religious bickering across denominational lines diminished. Communism posed a greater threat to Americans and people's religious denominations did not matter as much as believing in God. This perspective developed from hypersensitive feelings towards communism during an era dominated by Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950, Senator McCarthy claimed he had a list, known to the Secretary of State, of department employees who were communists. Over coming weeks, he reiterated the charge, while changing the alleged number of communists working within the government.²² This launched McCarthy onto the national scene as a "crusader" against communism and started a nearly four-year campaign to purge the American government of Soviet sympathizers. In 1953, Senator

¹⁸ *The Encyclopedia of Iowa*, A Volume Encyclopedia of the United States. (New York: Somerset Publishers, 1995), 72.

¹⁹ Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996), 118

²⁰ *Ibid*, 114-119.

²¹ *Ibid*, 111-120.

²² Alan Axelrod, *The Real History of the Cold War: A New Look at the Past*, (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2009), 278-279.

McCarthy interrogated a member of the Voice of America (VOA) radio network who he believed was communist. McCarthy asked the VOA member, “Do you regularly attend any church? I am not asking what church.”²³ Staunch anti-communists like McCarthy – who was Catholic – believed church membership helped determine if a person was communist and particular church affiliation was irrelevant. Even though McCarthy’s influence diminished, his feelings toward religious faith as a determinant of communist ties remained. The McCarthy era polarized American politics leaving Republicans and Democrats squabbling over which party had more hatred for communism, but the era also contributed to unifying the two parties behind a common idea that faith in God constituted a true American.

The United States’ reliance on God as a purveyor of freedom was not an anomaly of the Cold War. In 1853, Franklin Peirce did something that no other American president had done before him: he referenced God in his inaugural address. He made history when he stated, “It must be felt that there is no national security but in the nation’s humble acknowledged dependence upon God and His overruling providence.”²⁴ Pierce was the first president to coalesce divine guidance with American prosperity in an inaugural address, but he was not the last. William McKinley believed that God actively worked through the leadership of the United States to protect the country. According to McKinley, Americans needed to realize God’s divine guidance was important for the

²³ T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 59-60.

²⁴ Franklin Peirce, “Inaugural Address” *Yale Law School: Avalon Project*, available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/pierce.asp, accessed April 25, 2013.

well-being of the nation.²⁵ He also believed the United States should retain possession of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War because God told him that the United States needed to “civilize” the Filipinos while praying one night.²⁶ Historians, like Robert Shulzinger in *U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900*, argue that modern American foreign policy emerged after the Spanish-American War and acknowledge that some decisions, like that of McKinley’s, derived from religious beliefs.

In his inaugural address, Calvin Coolidge endorsed that, “the harmony of mankind,” rested in divine origin.²⁷ All but three presidents – up to and including Barack Obama – acknowledged God in some form in their inaugural addresses since Pierce.²⁸ By the time of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s election as president in 1952, referencing God’s role in the affairs of American politics was a familiar practice. During the 1950s, the United States became so preoccupied with religion that the government conducted a survey to determine how many Americans identified with a religion.

In 1957, the Bureau of the Census conducted a survey, called the asking citizens older than fourteen to provide a response to the question, “What is your religion?” The survey provided options for “Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Other Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Other, and No Religion.” Options provided in the survey show the government recognized Judaism and denominations of Christianity more than other religions revealing America’s beliefs in Judeo-Christian principles.

²⁵ William McKinley, “Inaugural Address” *Yale Law School: Avalon Project*, available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/mckinely.asp, accessed April 25, 2013.

²⁶ Robert D. Shulzinger, *U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁷ Calvin Coolidge, “Inaugural Address” *Yale Law School: Avalon Project*, available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/coolidge.asp, accessed April 25, 2013.

²⁸ See Inaugural Addresses at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century

Results of the survey exposed that America was still religiously diverse, but the government focused on the fact that over ninety-six percent of those surveyed identified with a religion. American leaders did not care which religious denomination a person marked just as long as they marked one. In an era of a godless communist threat, having faith in God mattered most to the government.²⁹ The 1952 presidential election revealed that the American populace had no regard for the religious affiliation of their elected leaders as long as they believed in the Judeo-Christian God.

Dwight D. Eisenhower ran for president and won as an “unaffiliated Christian.” Born a Jehovah Witness, Eisenhower never fully adopted the faith and did not declare affiliation to any denomination until after he was in office when he became a Presbyterian.³⁰ He is the only American president baptized while in office.³¹ Eisenhower coasted to victory in 1952 over Adlai Stevenson, winning over eighty-three percent of the electoral vote. Iowans helped send Eisenhower to the White House, reaffirming a Cold War sentiment that denominational lines did not matter, even for the most powerful position in the United States.³² Americans saw Eisenhower as a “man of God” and this appealed to the strong religious culture of Iowa and the nation.

²⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religion Report by the Civilian Population of the United States, 1957*. Prepared by Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC, 1958.

³⁰ Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96-99.

³¹ William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 265.

³² “Election of 1952,” *The American Presidency Project*, available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1952>, accessed 10 March 2014.

Editors for major metropolitan newspapers in Iowa³³ devoted sections to cover religious news in the community and to provide information about church services to ensure their readers knew when and where to worship. The *Waterloo Daily Courier* devoted half a page from an issue on July 15, 1955 to announce that Waterloo was a “City of Churches,” since “approximately eighty churches representing an estimated thirty denominations and faiths,” resided within city limits.³⁴ Ads like this reinforced the belief that active participation in church was more valuable than specific church denomination.

The *Burlington Hawkeye Gazette* ran a full-page ad on June 18 1954, sponsored by the Burlington Ministerial Association, that featured a picture of a man and child standing next to a body of water watching a boat sail. The caption for the ad helped reinforce the importance of church attendance for citizens of Burlington,

“I, too, can marvel at the speed of a plane, the grace of a pony, the beauty of a sailboat. But in all of them, I sense a force much greater than that of the man who pilots the plane, saddles the pony, or rigs the sail. You are learning about the force when you go to Church each Sunday.”³⁵

These advertisements revealed the vital role the local church played in the lives of Iowans. Churches had the financial support of the community to afford ad space and the

³³ “Major Metropolitan” in this paper refers to cities in Iowa with a population of at least 30,000 people according to the 1950 census as shown in the *Iowa Official Register – 1955-1956*, pages 261-262. Newspapers from the following cities represent “major metropolitan” areas of Iowa in different regions of the state in the 1950s: Cedar Rapids (population of 72,296), Council Bluffs (45,429), Davenport (74,549), Des Moines (177,549), Dubuque (49,671), Ottumwa (33,361), Sioux City (83,941), and Waterloo (65,198).

³⁴ “Waterloo: City of Churches,” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa) 15 July 1955.

³⁵ “Burlington Ministerial Association Advertisement,” *Burlington Hawkeye Gazette*, (Burlington, Iowa) 18 June 1954.

newspapers were willing to provide ample space for advertisements that editors of newspapers disseminated without objection.

In addition to occasional church advertisements or religious-related stories, some major metropolitan papers had weekly, or even daily, information about church services in the community. Church listings helped reinforce the role of faith in Iowans' daily lives. Waterloo, the "City of Churches," had a page in the Saturday edition of the *Waterloo Daily Courier* that listed the times of weekly church services and topics of sermons for the week.³⁶ The *Ottumwa Daily Courier* and *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* devoted a page of its Saturday edition to provide similar information, and as part of the same page, the *Ottumwa Daily Courier* had a "Power of Faith" section that contained inspirational religious quotations or direct quotes from the Bible.³⁷ The *Des Moines Register* ran a weekly column called, "Current News in Religion," the *Marshalltown Times-Republican* provided a weekly affirmation titled, "The Prayer for Today from the Upper Room," and in the weekly print of *The Keota Eagle* there was a portion titled, "Church Notes," which highlighted important news from the religious services in the community.³⁸ Newspaper staffs included sections related to religious services side-by-side with other news from the community creating a perception that people cared just as much about church as they did other events occurring in the area. Newspaper staffs in

³⁶ See Saturday edition of *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa) 1950 – 1959.

³⁷ See Saturday editions of the *Ottumwa Daily Courier*, (Ottumwa, Iowa) and *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, (Council Bluffs, Iowa), 1950 – 1959.

³⁸ See issues of *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, (Marshalltown, Iowa), *Keota Eagle* (Keota, Iowa), 1950 – 1959.

Iowa knew their readers believed in God and provided the population with information needed for Iowans to remain active Christians.

Papers in Iowa occasionally devoted their “non-religious” sections to address religious matters. The *Cedar Rapids Gazette* ran a weekly column called “Matter of Opinion” that posed a random question to five random people and the paper published responses. On July 15, 1955, the *Gazette* asked five reverends, “What kinds of sermons or talks have you found to be the most effective?” Each reverend responded to the question differently, but together they stressed the importance of keeping God as the center of people’s lives.³⁹ The section helped Iowans recognize that no matter what denomination they claimed, a core component that connected them – made them American – was devotion to God.

Children learned to become American in school and Iowans believed quality education contained religious fundamentals. On graduation day, June 7, 1954, Reverend Wilbur Wilcox asked attendees at the ceremony, “What is the meaning of life?” He provided listeners with the answer to his question, “The really solid reason that we are here is to glorify God by honoring and serving Him.”⁴⁰ Reverend Wilcox delivered the commencement speech at Technical High School in Des Moines, Iowa, but he was not the only church leader appearing before graduates. The commencement speaker at North High that year was Reverend Walter Lee Myers. Reverend Charles Miller addressed graduates at Lincoln High School and Reverend H. LaVern Kinzel spoke at the graduation ceremony at East High.

³⁹ “Matter of Opinion,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), 15 July 1955.

⁴⁰ “Students Receive Commencement Advice,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa) 7 June 1954.

Every public high school in Des Moines had a local church leader as a commencement speaker, providing graduates with advice. “To live a life, we must learn how to worship,” and, “I personally believe that when youth realizes that what does possess them is of greater importance, they are willing to give themselves to heroic aims.”⁴¹ Church leaders provided graduates with messages that harmonized education and religion. As students sat in their caps and gowns celebrating years of hard work culminating in the most important day of their lives, they heard a message from a representative of God as a reminder of what else was important to them. In 1955, representatives from each county in Iowa met to discuss education reform and intended to keep religious instruction as part of the curriculum to ensure God remained prominent from students’ first day of school to their last.

In 1955, under the direction of Virgil Lagomarcino, head of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), each county in Iowa filed a report that evaluated the goals of their school systems. Religion remained an important point of discussion among the county boards. According to an editorial from the *Waterloo Daily Courier* in July of 1955, a student who was “ignorant of [the Ten Commandments], cannot be considered educated.” The editorial, written by the paper staff, was a response to a survey that revealed less than two thirds of high school students in New York knew the Ten Commandments.⁴² If the Ten Commandments represented the bedrock of Judeo-Christian morality, and if this represented the basis for American morality, then the

⁴¹ “Students Receive Commencement Advice,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa) 7 June 1954.

⁴² “Ignorance of the Commandments,” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa), 17 July 1955.

educational system was not doing everything possible to produce well-rounded American citizens.

When county representatives in Iowa met to discuss topics provided to them by the DPI, they addressed concerns about a generation growing up ignorant of Christian morals. There were eight discussion areas given to the counties covering topics such as quality of facilities, retaining well-trained teachers, implementing new technology in the classroom, and the quality of higher education in the state. “Discussion Area 1” asked the county boards to address how schools met the needs of “the individual and society.” Many county representatives interpreted one of the “needs of the individual” as instilling moral characteristics in students.⁴³ Members from Des Moines County specifically discussed religious education in their meeting as the source for morality. The committee acknowledged regardless of laws related to religious freedom, “Our High School youth need more religious education especially in Love of God, the Ten Commandments and the realization that man is a spiritual as well as physical being.” Despite strong support for “spiritual instruction,” the representatives from Des Moines County could not reach a consensus on implementation.⁴⁴

There was a consensus across the state on the importance of providing “spiritual instruction,” but there was no uniform approach to enforcing this type of education. Religion was the means to teach morality and public schools needed to know which

⁴³ *Governor’s County Conferences on Education*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 31, folder 14, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁴⁴ *Des Moines County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 33, folder 5, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

institution was responsible for this type of instruction.⁴⁵ Polk County representatives believed there was a need for, “developing moral and spiritual values,” and offered different methods for the school to support this type of education. One approach was “released time,” which meant schools would end the day early at least once a week to allow students to attend a class at their local church for spiritual and moral guidance.⁴⁶ The board in Polk County was ready to cut into school time to allow for religious instruction. The board did not reach an agreement on the “released time” method, but its examination of this option exposed the extent to which the county would accommodate a moral lesson imbedded with Christian principles.

Other counties worked to identify responsibilities of the church and school in each community to nurture a well-rounded student. Johnson County representatives commented that, “There should be an increased emphasis on moral and spiritual values with churches taking the lead in this movement.”⁴⁷ Keokuk County believed a more equitable exchange worked best, “We recommend that the school share with the home and church the place of purpose of the family units.”⁴⁸ The committee in Boone County took a different approach noting, “Our schools should recognize in a sympathetic manner those organizations interested in the development of the family and spiritual

⁴⁵ *Governor’s County Conferences on Education*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 31, folder 14, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁴⁶ *Polk County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 34, folder 19, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁴⁷ *Johnson County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 33, folder 18, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁴⁸ *Keokuk County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 33, folder 20, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

living.”⁴⁹ Boone County believed the school system needed to remain flexible to help foster the needs of institutions that supported student development in areas not provided by the school. Floyd County representatives expressed a similar message as Boone and emphasized the importance of the family unit in developing a student’s education, “For the good of the child, the home must be reinforced by church, school, and other agencies.”⁵⁰

The DPI reports unveiled Iowans felt there were two different types of instruction: standard subject matter that provided proficiency in English, math, sciences, and instruction that focused on “spiritual” and “ethical” development. This type of instruction created a well-rounded and “true” American that Clay County representatives highlighted in their report,

“We recommend that the school and the church work cooperatively at the common task of instilling within the parents as well as the youth the highest moral and ethical concepts that will contribute to a wholesome society and a strong nation.”⁵¹

The Clay County board eloquently stated a common theme addressed in a majority of counties in Iowa: the United States remained strong through a sound moral education rooted in Judeo-Christian principles.

The mission of Iowa State College (Iowa State University), the state’s land-grant university, reflected values expressed in many of the DPI reports showing that colleges supported similar ideals as the local elementary and high schools. William Robert Parks,

⁴⁹ *Boone County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 31, folder 14, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁵⁰ *Floyd County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 33, folder 1, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁵¹ *Clay County Report*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, box 32, folder 12, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

a government professor at Iowa State in 1955 (and who later served for twenty-one years as president), presented a paper at an agricultural conference and noted, “The land-grant college, as an agent of democracy, has been built upon the ideal of social service on a basis of equality.” According to Parks, “democratic theory” was possible because all men are “sons of God.”⁵² If children in Iowa learned to become proud American citizens, values taught in elementary and high school remained prevalent in their college instruction.

In the fall of 1957, the *Iowa State Daily* published an article by a professor from Coe College, Dr. Harry Gage, providing students with tips on how to survive college and with the “proper” way to understand how college fit within their lives. Keeping in unison with Iowa’s approach to education, Gage reminded students there was a Christian and patriotic component to leading a healthy lifestyle. Mentioning a religious characteristic next to feelings of patriotism allowed Gage to emphasize a belief that both were essential to being a good American. He closed out the article by saying, “Good homes make good government. Going to college does not mean going away from home. If so, college would be the most destructive force in American life.”⁵³ Gage stressed a need for bright, educated college graduates who would not forget characteristics that made them American: a commitment to the home – not just the familial home – but the “American home.”

⁵² William Robert Parks, “*History, Philosophy, and Traditions of the Land-Grant College*,” October 4, 1955, box 47, folder 4, William Robert Parks Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁵³ Harry Gage, “A Guide to College From Dr. Harry Gage,” *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 11 October 1957.

Religious beliefs saturated all levels of education and various areas of life in Iowa. Major newspapers in the state assigned portions of certain issues to provide news related to the religious institutions in the community. Avid readers of the Iowa press could not get through a week without a reminder about religious services. When local leaders all across the state developed educational goals dependent on Judeo-Christian values, it established a standard that without religious morals a student could not be “fully” educated. Many Iowans before 1954 already believed they lived “under God” and placed their trust in God, but United States legislators overlooked this strong religious culture and convinced themselves that Americans needed the government to provide the country with more recognition of God. Legislators believed communism threatened American spirituality and they sought ways to protect the populace in the years leading up to 1954 when a movement to amend the pledge of allegiance gained popularity.

CHAPTER 3

BREAKING DOWN A WALL

“Our democracy is truly at stake today,” declared the weekly bulletin of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Ames, Iowa on March 8, 1953. According to the bulletin, democracy and Americans’ “spiritual well-being” were vulnerable to “false standards.” Members of St. John’s Episcopal Church called upon God to be their defense against these “subversive enemies.”⁵⁴ People generally classify standards as “true” or “false,” and the members of St. Johns were no different. Cold War mentality translated “false standards” as an ideology that was wrong for Americans. Communism was perhaps the most important “false standard” and America’s “spiritual well-being” was vulnerable.

Once the Second World War ended and the alliance between the United States and Soviet Union broke apart, communism replaced fascism as the major threat to peace and security in the world. For Americans, communism threatened more than just democracy. The same year the war ended church leaders in America noticed a considerable decline in church attendance and they attributed this to Americans abandoning their religious faith for communism.⁵⁵ Gallop Polls conducted in the early fifties revealed that less than fifty percent of Americans attended church services every

⁵⁴ *St. John’s Episcopal Church Weekly Bulletin*, March 8, 1953, Le Roy S. Burroughs Papers, box 29, folder 3, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁵⁵ Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex*, 67.

week.⁵⁶ Did this mean that nearly half of the population was spending Sundays reading Marx?

Communism's threat to religiosity became more palpable when additional publications on its "spiritual" characteristic reached the public. In 1945, a priest in Baltimore produced a survey that described communism as a "threat to the Church and to the welfare of the United States."⁵⁷ If church leaders believed empty pews resulted from Americans converting to communism, then this survey strengthened the idea that communism retained spiritual qualities. A book authored in 1952 by a former Soviet spy, Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, recounted his journey from a member of the communist party in the 1930s to a devout Christian. Chambers testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee famously accusing Alger Hiss of being a fellow communist and this accusation both ruined Hiss's career and helped propel Richard Nixon from the House to the Senate and in 1952 the vice presidency. According to Chambers, he was a communist, *then* he was a Christian. Viewing communism as something that required conversion suggested that it retained qualities of religious ideologies since people who move from one religious faith to another label their movement as a "conversion."

United States legislators believed Judeo-Christian morals were the core of American democracy and if Christianity and communism could not coexist, then democracy and communism could not coexist either. The government needed to protect

⁵⁶ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 2, 1949-1958, (New York: Random House Inc., 1972), 1222, 1252.

⁵⁷ Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex*, 61.

democracy and this meant protecting faith in God. Chambers expressed a belief that a person could not be Christian and communist at the same time and he was not the only one who held this belief. A Gallup Poll conducted in August of 1949 revealed that nine out of ten Americans believed that a person could not be a good Christian and a communist.⁵⁸ Ideas such as these contributed to the increasing rhetoric that communism was a belief system that threatened religious faith and American identity.⁵⁹ Chambers held that there was a spiritual component needed to defeat communism and faith in God was critical to the preservation of freedom and democracy.⁶⁰ Belief that communism threatened religion attributed a spiritual component to the ideology, which, if true, threatened the totality of American identity.

According to the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), Charles B. Shuman, communism was a “substitute for religion” and threatened to penetrate America’s farmlands.⁶¹ The AFBF developed from components of the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land grant colleges, and the Hatch Act of 1887, which provided for agricultural experiment stations. These acts called for implementing programs to educate farmers outside of campus settings. Local organizations grew into

⁵⁸ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 2, 1949-1958, (New York: Random House Inc., 1972), 844.

⁵⁹ Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex*, 39-41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 42.

⁶¹ Charles B. Shuman, “An Agricultural View of the Soviet Threat: Summary Statement of the American Farm Bureau Federation to the Subcommittee on Economic Statistics, Joint Economic Committee,” November 20, 1959, box 29, folder 1, American Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa State University Special Collections.

state organizations throughout the country, with Iowa's Farm Bureau Federation forming in 1918, and the Farm Bureaus achieving national recognition in March 1920.⁶²

Shuman believed communism posed a threat to American farmers and he wrote a forty-four page report in 1959 outlining his assumptions, titled, "An Agricultural View of the Soviet Threat." Shuman acknowledged his report was "in the light of the Farm Bureau philosophy... [which] emphasizes the God-given liberties of every individual." Shuman viewed the Soviet Union as desiring world domination and wishing to destroy religion and ethics through promotion of atheism. He upheld the idea that "Communists cannot permit the existence of the idea that the individual is made in the image of God."⁶³ The philosophy employed by the Farm Bureau through Shuman's vision reinforced beliefs that communism posed a threat to the American way of life. When Shuman stated, "The Farm Bureau regards the U.S.S.R. as a threat because the nature of Communism," he enhanced perceptions that the Soviet Union was dangerous because it was communist.⁶⁴ Shuman continued describing the precarious nature of communism,

"The conflict with Communism is a conflict of opposing ideologies; consequently, it is a struggle for men's minds. In such a struggle the continued existence of either ideology is an actual or potential threat to the continued existence of the other. Western civilization is based on Judo-Christian ethics such as those expressed in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount."⁶⁵

⁶² "Farm Bureau: Historical Highlights, 1919- 1994," *The Voice of Agriculture*, American Farm Bureau Federation, available from www.fb.org/index.php?action=about.history, accessed January 16, 2014.

⁶³ Charles B. Shuman, "An Agricultural View of the Soviet Threat: Summary Statement of the American Farm Bureau Federation to the Subcommittee on Economic Statistics, Joint Economic Committee," November 20, 1959, box 29, folder 1, American Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa State University Special Collections, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

Asserting that the Cold War was a “struggle for men’s minds”, Shuman presented an apocalyptic scenario that did not require nuclear bombs to create. He explained the Cold War as a competition between conflicting ideologies that could not coexist and a winner could only emerge through elimination of the opposing ideology. If the United States wanted to win the Cold War, it needed to protect the minds of Americans.

During the 1950s, American lawmakers moved to provide an ideological shield to protect the United States from communist ideologies and keep Americans committed to democracy through belief in God. Americans traditionally viewed themselves as a chosen people of God. In *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reforms*, William G. McLoughlin contended that manifest destiny developed in the nineteenth century when the nation embraced the belief that “Americans were a peculiar race, chosen by God to perfect the world.”⁶⁶ Beliefs that spawned manifest destiny reappeared during the 1950s as a way for politicians to reinforce the country’s reliance on God as the reason for the prosperity of American democracy.

Cold War mentality reflected the idea of Americans as a “chosen people” of God and with a mission to construct the world in the image of the United States. The *Des Moines Register* ran an article in October of 1957 with excerpts from an interview with John Foster Dulles by *Foreign Affairs* journal where he explained how the United States formed its foreign policy. Appointed by Eisenhower as Secretary of State in 1953, Dulles noted in the interview, “Because of our religious beliefs we attach exceptional importance to freedom. We believe in the sanctity of human personality, in the

⁶⁶ William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 105.

inalienable rights which men are endowed by their Creator and in their right to have governments of their own choosing.” Dulles emphasized that American foreign policy reflected this belief, which was a “deeply ingrained national characteristic.”⁶⁷ Dulles’ comments built on an assumption that American nationalism was a product of freedom bestowed upon the country from God. Historian Andrew Preston argues that American democracy “has been closely linked...to higher virtues of Christianity.”⁶⁸ One of the earliest documents laying the foundation for Cold War foreign policy, National Security Council Document NSC-68, approved in December 1950 after Chinese communist intervention in the Korean conflict, encompassed Dulles’s outlook since the opening described the United States fighting for “good” against Soviet “evil.”⁶⁹ According to leaders in America, democracy derived from God who supported their goals and endeavors during the Cold War, which meant Soviet policies poisoned the pure and ideal American policies.

Notable scholars in Iowa held positions similar to Dulles, seeing a divine origin to American democracy. In September of 1953, Green Lake, Wisconsin hosted professors from Midwestern colleges to discuss aspects of public policy in America. One of the professors in attendance was an instructor of government from Iowa State University, Dr. William Robert Parks who delivered a speech titled “Goals of Democracy.” Parks noted that democracy’s ultimate goal was the “well-being of each

⁶⁷ John Foster Dulles, “The Moral Foundations of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 6 October 1957.

⁶⁸ Andrew Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 14.

⁶⁹ Dianne Kirby, “Religion and the Cold War – An Introduction,” in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (New York: MacMillan, 2003), 1-2.

individual as a distinct and significant item of humanity.” He reminded the audience where humanity derived this essential goal, “It rests upon the ancient Christian-Jewish belief that each individual human being, however mean his worldly status, as a son of God has a dignity and worth which is equal to that of every other man.”⁷⁰ Parks remained true to the idea that God was the main force behind democracy. He helped to reinforce the belief that without God the American democratic system had no strength or validity, keeping Americanism tied with faith in God. Behind the support of President Eisenhower, legislators took steps in the 1950s to reaffirm beliefs that people like Dulles and Parks held to form an “official” union between God and government.

When Eisenhower delivered his first inaugural address, he was honest with Americans on the reality of the world in which they lived, “Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet.” Nevertheless, Eisenhower ensured Americans that “prayer to Almighty God” was essential to ensure peace for the future of humanity.⁷¹ His inaugural address established the tone for his presidency by recognizing God’s role in guiding the affairs of the nation. Once Eisenhower left the podium on the day of his inauguration and started his term as president, his actions revealed a man committed to keeping God as a key member of his cabinet.

⁷⁰ William Robert Parks, “Goals of Democracy,” William Robert Parks Papers, Iowa State University Special Collections, box 47, folder 1.

⁷¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “First Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1953. *The Avalon Project*. available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisen1.asp, accessed November 1, 2013.

Less than two weeks after taking office, Eisenhower attached himself to the American Legion's "Back to God" program, constructed as a "crusade to bring Americans back to God," through three components:

1. Regular church or synagogue attendance,
2. Daily family prayer,
3. Religious training for children.⁷²

Eisenhower took to the airwaves on February 1, 1953, to show his support for the "Back to God" program by taking part in radio interview on the importance of faith in the lives of Americans. He opened the broadcast with grateful thanks to all Americans for, "your prayers for divine guidance on my behalf are the greatest gift you could possibly bring to me."⁷³

Eisenhower believed that Americans needed to call upon God to help him lead the country, and by doing so, Americans realized the importance of faith in guiding the fate of their nation. He acknowledged that, "Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first – the most basic – expression of Americanism," providing the rationale for his strong support of the "Back to God" program that called for individuals to become more devout Americans by becoming more devout with faith in God.⁷⁴ Eisenhower, wanted Americans confident that the United States had the "protection of Divine Providence"⁷⁵

⁷² New York City Municipal Archives, *Eisenhower: Back to God*, February 1, 1953 available from <http://www.wnyc.org/story/200764-eisenhower-back-to-god/>, accessed 19 June 2013.

⁷³ "Back to God" Program, *Remarks Recorded for the American Legion*, President Eisenhower, February 1, 1953, available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=9818#axzz1nyiBKFui>, accessed June 20, 2013.

⁷⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Recorded for the "Back-to-God" Program of the American Legion.," February 20, 1955, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10414>, accessed June 20, 2013.

⁷⁵ One of the first U.S. documents outlining America's strategy for the Cold War was National Security Council Report 68 in 1950, which stated that the Soviet Union was a threat to the American way of life.

in order to combat communism, which he said was “dark in purpose.”⁷⁶ Again, Eisenhower used language that portrayed an idea that the Cold War was truly a battle of “good” versus “evil,” strengthening the apocalyptic consequences of the Soviet ideology and increasing fears that communism could destroy the United States and God. American policy makers feared that American children were the most susceptible to the “darkness” of communism and the country needed to protect its youth.

Politicians knew that millions of children recited the Pledge of Allegiance each morning before school started and they could protect the nation’s youth by amending the pledge. The Pledge of Allegiance developed from the mind of a socialist and former minister, Francis Bellamy, who wrote the original pledge in 1892 as part of a celebration of Columbus’s discovery of America and as a way to promote American patriotism.⁷⁷ The wave of immigrants coming to America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generated a feeling that the pledge could “Americanize” the children of immigrants whose ethnic background increasingly varied from earlier migrants from Great Britain and Germany. The schoolhouse was the optimal place to have children in America honor the flag daily through an official pledge.⁷⁸ Bellamy’s original pledge did

NSC 68 stated that America relied on divine protection as a part of the nation’s national security. This acknowledgment reinforced the notion that the U.S. was a nation fighting on God’s side. U.S. Department of National Security, *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security*, April 14, 1950, available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm>, accessed October 10, 2013.

⁷⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Second Inaugural Address,” January 21, 1957. *The Avalon Project*. available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisen2.asp, accessed November 1, 2013.

⁷⁷ Richard Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press: 2005), 10-14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

not contain a reference to God and remained secular for over fifty years until a resurgence of communist anxieties after the Second World War.

The Knights of Columbus initiated the campaign to add the words “under God” to the pledge when their national board adopted a resolution in April 1951, inserting the phrase in their version delivered at the opening of meetings. The Knights of Columbus formed in 1880 as a Catholic organization that pooled resources to pay for funerals and care for the sick and disabled.⁷⁹ By the 1950s, the organization’s prominence grew to influence the leading policymakers in the country. Legislators heard about the Knights’ campaign and felt the pledge needed an “upgrade” in order to protect the youth of American from communism through a realization that belief in God was paramount to their unique identity. According to Reverend Heman Humphrey, the president of Amherst College in 1831, a true American nation was a “sort of union which makes every patriot a Christian and every Christian a patriot.”⁸⁰

Adding a reference to God in the pledge created a formal pronouncement that blended American patriotism and American religiosity. In the summer of 1954, Congressman Louis C. Rabaut of Michigan, introduced House Joint Resolution 243 to the floor of the House of Representatives, which officially called for adding “under God” to the pledge.⁸¹ Although there was not a voice of contention to the bill, plenty of Representatives voiced their spirited approval on the prospect of including God.

⁷⁹ Ellis, *To the Flag*, 130.

⁸⁰ McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, Reform*, 106.

⁸¹ T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*, (Westport: Praeger, 2009), 65.

On June 7, 1954, a former captain of the Iowa National Guard representing the Fifth Congressional District of Iowa,⁸² Representative Paul H. Cunningham, rose from his seat to provide his rationale for why he endorsed House Joint Resolution 243,

“The significant importance of our action today, however, is that we are officially recognizing once again this Nation’s adherence to our belief in a divine spirit, and that henceforth millions of our citizens will be acknowledging this belief every time they pledge allegiance to our flag.”⁸³

Cunningham’s words expressed a belief that the Founding Fathers understood the importance of God’s role in the formation of the country and that the current administration needed to reinforce this idea. Without this acknowledgement, the nation risked losing divine protection against the forces of communism.

Politicians viewed House Joint Resolution 243 as a way to achieve two goals: it separated the United States from communist ideologies and reinforced God’s role in helping direct the fate of America. Illinois Representative Barrat O’Hara provided a chilling image as a reminder to his colleagues if Congress did not add “under God” to the pledge. “In fact,” O’Hara expressed, “I could hear little Moscovites repeat a similar pledge to their hammer-and-sickle flag in Moscow with equal solemnity.”⁸⁴ O’Hara’s words resonated deeply for a nation that feared a communist threat overtaking democracy through a slow process of a generation growing up unaware that belief in God was what made Americans American. Representative O’Hara went on to add, “One of the greatest differences between the free world and the Communists, [is] a belief in

⁸² Iowa Official Register – 1955-1956, 32.

⁸³ Rep. Cunningham (IA.), "House Joint Resolution 243," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 6 (7 June 1954) p. 7757.

⁸⁴ Rep. O’Hara (IL.), "House Joint Resolution 243," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 6 (7 June 1954) p. 7763.

God. The spiritual bankruptcy of the Communists is one of our strongest weapons in the struggle for men's minds and this resolution gives us a new means of using that weapon."⁸⁵ President Eisenhower explained more thoroughly the "weapon" that O'Hara referenced when he signed the bill placing "under God" into the pledge on June 14, 1954, "In this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource, in peace or war."⁸⁶ The new pledge was not just a trivial action that was a product of a mundane Congressional bill; it represented a "weapon" to combat the ideologies of communism.

Homer Ferguson, the Senator from Michigan who sponsored House Joint Resolution 243 in the Senate, fully understood the importance of establishing an "ideological weapon," to defend the nation against Marxist-Leninist tenants, "We know that Americans cannot be defended by guns, planes, and ships alone."⁸⁷ Ferguson's comment underscored the notion that the Cold War required more than just military weapons to ensure American citizens remained safe. If communism was a belief system, then Congress acted to "arm" the nation against this through the amended version of the Pledge of Allegiance. As symbolic as this pronouncement was for the leaders of the United States, it failed to have the rallying significance for the entire nation, including Iowans.

The *Des Moines Register* exposed Iowans to the congressional discussion on the pledge on June 8, 1954. Clark Kinnaird, a national columnist who wrote, *Your America*,

⁸⁵ Ibid. 7763.

⁸⁶ United Press, "New Pledge of Allegiance Becomes Law," *Ames Tribune*, 15 June 1954.

⁸⁷ Sen. Ferguson (MI.), "House Joint Resolution 243," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 5 (25 May 1954) p. 6348.

Day by Day, noted, “This form [of the pledge] embraces the inclusion of the words ‘under God’ in affirmation of the Christian foundations of our nation.”⁸⁸ Kinnaird’s column resembled arguments that legislators used that the words “under God” helped Americans “rediscover” the principles used by the Founding Fathers to form the nation. Five days later, the *Register* published a letter from an Eldora man, George A. Mahoney, who agreed with Kinnaird’s point of view on the significance of new pledge. Identifying himself as a member of St. Mary’s Parish, Mahoney acknowledged, “It is only in God, from God and under God that man has dignity and rights and freedom.”⁸⁹ Although Mahoney did not specifically address communism, his assertion that freedom only exists through the belief in God acknowledged that Soviet citizens were not truly free since communism denied God. Despite their strong feelings toward the addition of “under God,” neither Kinnaird nor Mahoney mentioned how these words acted as a “weapon” of defense against communism. Politicians promoting the new pledge argued that the words “under God” provided Americans with a reconnection to their past and a “spiritual weapon.” Based on stories appearing in newspapers, Iowans only received part of the message.

Stories in major metropolitan newspapers in Iowa related to amending the pledge were sporadic at best. On June 9, The *Des Moines Register* provided an update on the story with an article from the Associated Press that noted President Eisenhower had to

⁸⁸ Clark Kinnaird, “Your America, Day by Day,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 8 June 1954.

⁸⁹ George A. Mahoney, “On Adding Phrase to Pledge to Flag,” *The Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 13 June 1954.

make a final decision on the pledge after the bill passed both houses of Congress.⁹⁰ The story was brief and did not highlight any of the rhetoric legislators and the president espoused. Coverage of the event in Iowan newspapers continued without much fanfare. Four days later the *Davenport Morning Democrat* published an anonymous editorial titled “An Old Flag But a New Challenge,” that stressed the importance of Americans “rededicating” themselves to the founding principles of the nation. The article also noted that the power of God kept, “‘Old Glory’ flying over our heads.”⁹¹ The editorial stressed the same point as Kinnaird and Mahoney about the symbolic meaning of the phrase “under God” in the pledge: it gave Americans a “window to the past” in order to clearly see the importance of divine intervention in establishing and sustaining American democracy.

President Eisenhower signed into law House Joint Resolution 243 on June 14, 1954 officially adding “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. If legislators and the president regarded the new version of the pledge as profoundly significant for the security of America during the Cold War, local headlines in Iowa on June 15 failed to convey that message. The *Ames Daily Tribune* ran a United Press story about the amendment of the pledge containing some quotes from Eisenhower. None of the quotes published mentioned the creation of a “spiritual weapon.”⁹² The *Des Moines Register* chose not to run a story about the pledge on June 15, but the paper already ran stories

⁹⁰ Associated Press, “Flag Pledge Change Is Now Up to Ike,” *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), 9 June 1954.

⁹¹ “An Old Flag But a New Challenge,” *Davenport Morning Democrat*, (Davenport, Iowa), 13 June 1954.

⁹² United Press, “New Pledge of Allegiance Becomes Law,” *Ames Daily Tribune*, (Ames, Iowa), 15 June 1954.

about the proposed changes leading up to the signing of the bill.⁹³ No other major metropolitan newspapers in the state of Iowa published articles related to the pledge the day after Eisenhower signed the bill into law. In the week leading up to June 14 – the day the new pledge became official – and in the week after, only three major metropolitan papers in Iowa printed stories about changes to the pledge.⁹⁴

Papers in Iowa that actually ran stories about the new pledge focused on *why* House Joint Resolution 243 passed and not *what* the resolution created. Editorials emphasized that Americans of the present needed to understand how they received their freedoms and from where they received their freedoms. Why did editors for the papers in Iowa fail to provide articles disclosing that the government created a new “weapon” to help the United States in the Cold War? Why did statements from President Eisenhower and Representative Cunningham about the words “under God” acting to create a “spiritual weapon” not make the headlines? The absence of stories about the new pledge in general revealed that American policy makers highly exaggerated the significance of their actions.

Not only were Iowans unaware the government created an ideological shield with the new pledge, but many were unaware about the changes made. On June 15, the *Davenport Morning Democrat* published an article specifically addressing how Iowans felt about the addition of “under God” to the pledge. With an article titled “Pledge to Flag Revised; Few Aware of Changes,” the conclusion was not many knew what had

⁹³ See the *Des Moines Register*, 15 July 1954.

⁹⁴ See the *Burlington Hawkeye Gazette*, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, *Ottumwa Daily Courier*, *Sioux City Journal*, and *Waterloo Daily Courier*, from 7 June 1954 to 21 June 1954.

happened on June 14, 1954.⁹⁵ The *Morning Democrat* editorial staff questioned residents of Davenport on the amended pledge and discovered that less than one in four citizens heard about the revision.⁹⁶ The city of Davenport did not represent the entirety of the state of Iowa, but based on the lack of coverage by disseminators of the news in other cities throughout the state, the creation of a “spiritual weapon” passed largely unnoticed. In 1955, as counties in Iowa met to assess the quality of education in the state as the DPI mandated, there was no mention of the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance in creating ideal American citizens.⁹⁷ The first act of Congress in creating an American civil religion went largely unrecognized, but how would Iowans react to the next two pieces of legislation?

On July 11, 1955, the United States government took another step in establishing a civil religion by passing House Resolution 619 that required printing the words “In God We Trust” on all paper currency by 1957.⁹⁸ The United States government placed the motto “In God We Trust” on the two-cent piece in 1864 amidst the Civil War. An act of Congress in 1874 removed the motto and it remained off American currency until 1908 when legislation called for stamping of the motto on all coinage.⁹⁹ Legislators in the 1950s decided all American currency deserved the phrase. This action coincided with

⁹⁵ “Pledge To Flag Revised; Few Aware of Changes,” *Davenport Morning Democrat* (Davenport, Iowa), 15 June 1954.

⁹⁶ The article does not provide the number of people that the editors questioned. “Pledge To Flag Revised; Few Aware of Changes,” *Davenport Morning Democrat* (Davenport, Iowa), 15 June 1954.

⁹⁷ For more information and minutes from county meetings regarding public education in Iowa, see *Governor’s County Conferences on Education*, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction Report, 1955, boxes 31 - 35, Virgil Lagomarcino Papers, Iowa State Special Collections.

⁹⁸ Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 99.

⁹⁹ *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint to the Secretary of Treasury*, United States Mint, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 1.

Eisenhower's sentiment when he proclaimed, "Without God, there could be no American...way of life."¹⁰⁰ Cold War dichotomy established a "capitalist" West and a "communist" East in which the United States believed it was the ideal model for the opulence of capitalism. In a way, spending money represented the "American way of life" that Eisenhower espoused. Adding "In God We Trust" to dollars ensured that all of the currency carried by Americans contained a reminder of their trust in God. Capitalism was a key characteristic that separated the United States from the Soviet Union and placing God's name on the dollar was a way for Americans to exchange their trust in God with one another on a daily basis outside of their churches and synagogues.

The final act of Congress in establishing a civil religion occurred when the country's national motto became "In God We Trust," on July 30, 1956. This helped promote the United States as the country fighting for "good" as outlined in NSC-68.¹⁰¹ Politicians reassured the country that the new national motto did not violate the First Amendment. According to the argument that Senator Ferguson used in support of "under God" in the pledge, "This is not an attempt to establish a religion; it has nothing to do with anything of that kind. It relates to belief in God, in whom we sincerely repose our trust."¹⁰² Behind the words of Congress and the pen of Eisenhower, the United States placed its trust in God. These leaders announced that believing in God was not a religious expression, but a patriotic expression. Newspapers in Iowa did not print any stories related to the legislation that placed "In God We Trust" onto the paper currency

¹⁰⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks Recorded for the "Back-to-God" Program of the American Legion,"

¹⁰¹ Silk, *Spiritual Politics*, 99.

¹⁰² Sen. Ferguson (MI.), "House Joint Resolution 243," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 5 (25 May 1954) p. 6348.

or as the national motto. Either Iowans already believed the nation placed its trust in God long ago and did not see the recent legislation as “news,” or they did not know – as the story from the *Davenport Morning Democrat* revealed about the new pledge.

Despite what Iowans thought about the creation of a civil religion, they helped the Eisenhower administration earn a second term in 1956 as Americans reelected Ike with nearly sixty percent of the popular vote.¹⁰³ In his second inaugural address, Eisenhower opened with a prayer as an ultimate expression of an American “trusting in God.”¹⁰⁴ A few months into Eisenhower’s second term, the government received reassurance that the goals of its “spiritual weapon” succeeded. Based on the results of the *Religion Report by the Civilian Population* over ninety-six percent of Americans believed in God.¹⁰⁵ A letter to the editor appeared in the *Waterloo Daily Courier* expressing America’s strong devotion to God as a superior quality that Soviets lacked.

Eddie Torriell wrote a letter to the paper in Waterloo stating he wanted the Russians to see, “The free-and-easy neighborliness shown in the yard of a country church at the end of services on Sunday morning – when men and women feel at peace with their God and with themselves.”¹⁰⁶ Torriell proudly, and unknowingly, reaffirmed the civil religion by supporting God as an aspect of American patriotism that provided Americans with better freedoms and a better life that Russian citizens could obtain if

¹⁰³ “Election of 1956,” *The American Presidency Project* available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/1956>, accessed November 20, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Second Inaugural Address,” January 21, 1957. *The Avalon Project*. available from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisen2.asp, accessed November 1, 2013.

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religion Report by the Civilian Population of the United States, 1957*. Prepared by Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC, 1958.

¹⁰⁶ Eddie Torriell, “Around the Corner: Torriell Suggests What Russians Should See,” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa), 17 July 1955.

they acknowledged God as well. He associated belief in God with peace as if to imply that America was the nation truly looking for a peaceful resolution of tensions between the superpowers and if only the Russians saw how “well-off” Americans were with a devotion to a higher power then the Soviet Union could help to bring about an end to the Cold War.

In the first year of Eisenhower’s second term, he could smile confidently believing that his “spiritual weapon” succeeded. The creation of the weapon began when the American civil religion formed starting with implantation of “under God” in the pledge. In the eyes of Eisenhower, the “spiritual weapon” grew stronger as the nation further cemented the civil religion with “In God We Trust” on all United States currency and as the national motto. At the start of his second term, Ike could claim an amorphous domestic “victory” within the ideological war against communism.

Although President Eisenhower or other legislators did not admit the fact, the legislation that created the civil religion was the result of American fears of communism. A frightened nation reacted by placing an unnecessary psychological “shield” over the populace. Fear was at the heart of the legislation, but no one noticed at the time. By the fall of 1957, the United States faced a more tangible communist threat and this generated more realistic fears that produced more effective legislation to combat communism.

CHAPTER 4
IN SCIENCE WE TRUST

October 4, 1957 was a Friday and Iowans – like most of America – focused on weekend sports stories that occupied the headlines each fall. The Milwaukee Braves won game two of the World Series behind a strong outing by pitcher Lew Burdette to even the series with the New York Yankees at one game apiece. In college football, Iowa State was in Norman, Oklahoma preparing for a matchup with the Sooners and in Iowa City, the University of Iowa was hosting Washington State.¹⁰⁷ Iowa farmers were in the fields working on another year’s harvest. That day had the appearance as just another fall day in Iowa and America. As the sun settled over the horizon on October 4 and farmers hauled wagonloads of grain from their fields, on the other side of the iron curtain the Soviet Union made history. The Russians successfully launched the first manmade satellite – *Sputnik* – into orbit. As the world turned its attention to the Soviet achievement, the United States felt a shift in its cherished belief that America was the superior and more technologically advanced nation in the Cold War and indeed, the world.

In the United States, *Sputnik*’s popularity seemed to be circling the globe at a faster pace than the satellite’s orbit, consuming headlines and becoming the main subject of conversation across the country and world. Dominating front pages of newspapers across Iowa was news of Russia’s successful launch of a beach ball-sized satellite. The

¹⁰⁷ See sports section of *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), for 4 October 1957.

headline in the *Des Moines Register* read, “Reds Launch First ‘Moon,’” while the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* declared, “Soviet – First Step to Moon.”¹⁰⁸ Initial stories provided as much information as possible about the launch and the satellite. News about *Sputnik* included artist renditions of the artificial moon since no pictures were available immediately after the launch. Although initial information may not have been completely accurate, one thing was clear: there was a Russian satellite orbiting the earth.

On October 8, the front-page headline in the *Des Moines Register* was, “Red ‘Moon’ Over Iowa Today,” reflecting an increasing popularity of the satellite that resulted in articles weaving Iowans into the monumental event of the Cold War saga.¹⁰⁹ The *Des Moines Register* noted that Dale Cruiskshank, head of the Des Moines division of the Great Plains Astronomical Society, planned to watch for *Sputnik* along with a team of “moonwatchers.”¹¹⁰ In Ames, the university’s daily student newspaper ran a story about students who recorded signals from the satellite,¹¹¹ and the *Ames Daily Tribune* published a story about students at Iowa State College (Iowa State University) taking part in a “world-wide chain of groups which will track satellites of any country which might launch one.”¹¹² The Russians purposely polished the metal surface of *Sputnik* allowing for better visibility of the satellite by amateurs wishing to catch a glimpse.¹¹³ The Soviet Union wished for the world to take notice of its accomplishment

¹⁰⁸ See headlines for *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa) and *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) for 5 October 1957.

¹⁰⁹ “Red ‘Moon’ Over Iowa Today,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹¹⁰ “Reds Launch First ‘Moon,’” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 5 October 1957.

¹¹¹ “Students Tape Satellite Signal,” *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 9 October 1957.

¹¹² “ISC Student Sets Up Watch,” *Ames Daily Tribune*, (Ames, Iowa), 5 October 1957.

¹¹³ Yanek Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower’s Sputnik Moment: The Race for Space and World Prestige*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 12.

and coverage of the event by the Iowa press showed Iowans took notice. Waiting to catch a glimpse of *Sputnik* as the satellite passed over was not the only way Iowans found ways to “interact” with the historic event.

On October 6, 1957, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* printed a story, “C.R. Radio Ham Hears Signals,” about a resident of the city who used his ham radio to listen for signals from the Russian satellite.¹¹⁴ On the same day, the *Waterloo Daily Courier* printed an article about students at Iowa State Teachers College (University of Northern Iowa) tape-recording signals from *Sputnik*.¹¹⁵ A day later, a story appeared in the *Des Moines Register* about radio amateurs in Newton, Iowa successfully tape-recording “ten complete passes of the Russian Earth satellite over Iowa.”¹¹⁶ Iowans felt the pulse of the Cold War through every signal emitted from *Sputnik* and news stories provided accounts from radio amateurs that captivated the state. Iowa papers continued carrying stories highlighting the magnitude of the launch, enhancing the significance of those who interacted with the signals emitted from the satellite. Everyday Iowans could read about someone in their town or the neighboring community who saw or heard *Sputnik*.

As the media covered these stories, it placed the average Iowan as an actor within the Cold War. Iowans felt so connected to the developing *Sputnik* story, that on October 8, residents in Cedar Rapids phoned the police and fire department believing that the satellite was descending on the city after a work whistle at the Penick and Ford

¹¹⁴ “C.R. Radio Ham Hears Signals,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), 6 October 1957.

¹¹⁵ “Record Moon Beeps at TC,” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa), 6 October 1957.

¹¹⁶ “Newton ‘Hams’ Record Beeps,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 7 October 1957.

Company “wailed out of control for about ten minutes.”¹¹⁷ Most of the headlines related to the Cold War before *Sputnik* took place far away from the cornfields of Iowa. Stories originated out of Korea, Berlin, and in Washington D.C. With a Russian satellite orbiting over Iowa, residents of the state felt more involved in, and perhaps, more threatened by the Cold War than ever before.

Teachers in Iowa strayed from their usual curriculum to allow students time to discuss *Sputnik* and participate in activities related to the satellite. The *Des Moines Register* visited local classrooms to show that students of all ages found ways to bring the Russian satellite into the lessons. The article contained a picture of two fifth graders from Windsor School holding a small model of *Sputnik* that the class made and were “monitoring”.¹¹⁸ On October 12, the *Register* toured high schools in Des Moines and found that student interest in *Sputnik* was “so demanding” teachers “found themselves discussing the topic every day.”¹¹⁹ Iowans – and the rest of America – had trouble avoiding exposure to information related to the artificial moon. Even the prominent cartoonist Charles Schulz devoted his weekly “Peanuts” comic strip to the *Sputnik* hysteria drawing Charlie Brown and Linus standing under the stars absorbed in conversation on the vastness of the universe.¹²⁰ Most of America seemed to be looking up and finding ways to place themselves within the *Sputnik* narrative, but the nation’s leaders struggled to keep a positive spin on the story.

¹¹⁷ “Not Sputnik,” *Davenport Morning Democrat*, (Davenport, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹¹⁸ “Sputnik Comes to the Classroom,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 9 October 1957.

¹¹⁹ “School Topic: Reds’ Sputnik,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 12 October 1957.

¹²⁰ Charles Schulz, “Peanuts,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 10 October 1957.

President Dwight Eisenhower downplayed the Soviet space triumph and came off somewhat aloof to the event. He dismissed notions that the United States was engaged in a “race” with the Soviet Union with regards to rocket and missile technology and he indicated America was “on schedule” with its satellite program.¹²¹ Eisenhower’s apathy toward *Sputnik* in the immediate days after its launch seemed to resonate with Iowans. The *Des Moines Register*’s weekly column, “What Do You Think,” asked four random people a question and published their responses on October 13. The question asked was “Does the Russian earth satellite worry you much?” All four respondents said, “No” to the question.¹²² Some students in public schools in Des Moines felt that the United States did not need to be the “first” in everything and that the Russian satellite did not provide Americans with any new insights the country was already developing.¹²³

If *Sputnik* only represented an achievement in space exploration, Americans had little to worry about concerning their safety, yet some representatives of the media and of Congress viewed the Russian satellite as a step in developing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) capable of launching a nuclear warhead at the United States with little warning. Even though President Eisenhower insisted that *Sputnik* represented a scientific achievement, he could not stop the flood of questions and allegations that America fell behind in the arms race.¹²⁴ Members of the media read between the lines of Eisenhower’s statements regarding *Sputnik* despite his claim there was no military

¹²¹ Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brianpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 10.

¹²² “What Do You Think,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 13 October 1957.

¹²³ “School Topic: Reds’ Sputnik,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 12 October 1957.

¹²⁴ Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower’s Sputnik Moment*, 1.

threat. The *Des Moines Register* published an editorial two days after a White House press conference analyzing the president's remarks, suggesting Americans had legitimate concerns. Eisenhower recognized the Soviets had superior rocket fuel technology, which was also crucial for developing rockets capable of reaching targets in other parts of the world from Russia.¹²⁵

Iowa papers sought expert advice regarding military implications associated with the launch of the Russian satellite and if the United States had more than just a space race on its hands. The day after *Sputnik* took orbit, the *Des Moines Register* published an article with comments from two in-state physicists on the magnitude of the Russian achievement. Dr. Kinsey Anderson, from State University of Iowa (University of Iowa), said he was, "impressed by the number of months the Russians beat us [in launching the satellite] and by the weight of the pay load." Anderson continued, "The size of the satellite places it in the category of 'military strategy.'"¹²⁶ Anderson, like other American scientists, realized that *Sputnik* was an achievement for the Soviet Union in building an ICBM capable of launching a nuclear warhead. An editorial in the *Des Moines Register* expanded on the military implications, "The six month Soviet beat on the earth-satellite is another sign that Russia is ahead of the U.S. in the most dangerous phase of the arms race. The three-stage rocket necessary for launching an earth-satellite is needed for the so-called 'ultimate weapon.'"¹²⁷

¹²⁵ "Ike's View of Sputnik," *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 11 October 1957.

¹²⁶ "Iowans Call Red Success Remarkable," *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 5 October 1957.

¹²⁷ "Historic Achievement," *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 7 October 1957.

Four days after the launch, the *Iowa State Daily* ran a story that continued the focus on the military significance of *Sputnik's* success. The article addressed a special report that aired on WOI-TV in Des Moines consisting of a panel of local politicians and scientists discussing the Russian satellite. Iowa Congressman Merwin Coad expressed his concern, "The development of an intercontinental ballistic missile is considered the ultimate in weapons and we can't afford any further delay."¹²⁸ Coad's dramatic comments placed the United States in a precarious situation. American politicians believed that the country was losing the nuclear arms race, and this posed a far greater threat to American security than an innocent satellite.

Sputnik evolved into a military threat and became a way for the American media to portray Soviet science as superior to American science. An editorial appeared in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* on October 7, acknowledging a failure of the scientific community in the United States in developing rocket technology. The commentary was humbling for those who prided themselves as capitalist entrepreneurs thriving on the profits of consumerism, "While we can out-market the Russians with a crush-proof cigarette box, we obviously haven't any exclusive ability when it comes to scientific developments."¹²⁹ Views of American elitism tarnished as consumer-driven technology became less valued than technology that advanced rocket and missile designs. Margaret Molden, writing for the *Iowa State Daily*, made her message clear that the United States

¹²⁸ "USSR Satellite Launching Discussed Over WOI-TV," *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹²⁹ "Laugh, Reds, Laugh," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), 7 October 1957.

was not superior since, “All the brains aren’t on this side of the ocean.”¹³⁰ The *Davenport Morning Democrat* commented that, “It is painfully evident that the Russians do have the mechanism for launching such missiles and that we presumably do not.”¹³¹

A little over a month after *Sputnik’s* launch, President Eisenhower addressed the nation on the current state of America’s scientific progress in regards to rocket and missile technology. The media frenzy over the Russian satellite and its military meaning became the focus of Ike’s comments,

“Earth satellites, in themselves, have no direct present effect upon the nation’s security. However, there is real military significance to these launchings, which I have previously mentioned publicly. Their current military significance lies in the advanced techniques and the competence in military technology they imply, evidenced, for example, by the powerful propulsion equipment necessarily used.”¹³²

President Eisenhower could no longer play off the military implications of *Sputnik* and the relationship of the Russian satellite to nuclear missile technology. However, Eisenhower also could not reveal confidential and secret information assessing the relative military and industrial strength of the United States and the Soviet Union. If he could, Americans would have rested easier.

The reality of American fears over the military implications of *Sputnik* materialized when the Office of Civil Defense Mobilization (OCDM) came about from a merger of the Federal Civil Defense Administration and the Office of Defense Mobilization on July 1, 1958. This “gave the Nation a solid organizational base for

¹³⁰ Margaret Molden, “‘Russians Score Triumph,’ Says Atomic Research Head,” *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹³¹ “Disturbing Side of Satellite,” *Davenport Morning Democrat*, (Davenport, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹³² Dwight D. Eisenhower: “Radio and Television Address to the American People on Science in National Security.,” November 7, 1957. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10946>, accessed 18 October 2013.

building a unified national nonmilitary defense program.” The report noted that advancements in “military science” caused an overlap in the duties of the preexisting agencies and the government needed to form a new organization to handle responsibilities of “nonmilitary defense planning.”¹³³ The ultimate goal of the OCDM was to “deter aggression, and in the event of aggression, to enable the Nation to survive, recover, and win.”¹³⁴ In order for the United States to “recover” from a nuclear attack and still “win” the Cold War, joint coordination between the federal government and each individual state on the goals and aims of the OCDM program was vital.

The OCDM program required each state in America to devise a survival plan that would “protect life and property and the mobilization and management of resources and production”¹³⁵ through two basic objectives: maximum saving of lives and continuation of state and local governments.¹³⁶ Every plan required information on relocation sites for target cities of nuclear strikes, proper steps for evacuation of the target areas, and responsibilities of specific organizations and agencies in the process. Iowa developed its plan in August of 1958 based on the assumption that the targets of a nuclear attack were Des Moines, Davenport, Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Sioux City, and Waterloo.¹³⁷ *Sputnik* required the United States to deal with the possibility of a nuclear attack directly, and by naming potential targets of an atomic war, Iowa policymakers realized the solemnity of the situation. Iowans grappled with the realities of *Sputnik* in an

¹³³ Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization, *Annual Report, Fiscal Year, 1959*, (Washington D.C., United States Government Printing Office: 1960), 1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

¹³⁶ Office of the Governor of Iowa, *Civil Defense Preliminary Operational Survival Plan for the State of Iowa*, Iowa Survival Plan Project, August, 1958. BP-1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, BP-2.

age when intercontinental ballistic missiles threatened to bring nuclear war to their doorsteps. The Cold War no longer remained a distant conflict that Iowans only made contact with through news headlines and grainy television images of politicians accused of being communist spies. The state was an acting participant in the Cold War regardless of its intentions.

Despite acknowledging a military component to *Sputnik*, Eisenhower still maintained that the United States was not behind the Soviet Union in rocket technology. Ike's interpretation of "behind" in regards to rocket propulsion appeared in a White House Memorandum from December of 1957. The report stated the United States trailed the Soviet Union in rocket technology, but this was a result of America starting later and not because of inferior technology.¹³⁸ The White House Memorandum attempted to rationalize why the United States was not leading the world in strategic technology. If the United States was not inferior to Soviet technology and science instruction, why did the country choose to start later than the Soviets? Regardless of the excuse, America was not the first nation to launch an earth satellite into orbit. Something seemed to be affecting American progress in science more than poor timing. Perhaps the United States naively miscalculated scientific progress of its Cold War adversary. Staff editors for the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* in a column on October 8 titled, "Face on New Moon," suggested, "Military experts in the Pentagon...underestimate[d] the ability and progress of Russian

¹³⁸ J.R. Killian Jr., "Progress Report Regarding Missile and Satellite Programs Memorandum for the President," *Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, and Boyhood Home Website*, available from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/nasa/Binder3.pdf, accessed 17 January 2014.

scientists.”¹³⁹ Eisenhower could not change the increasing perception that Russia was scientifically better than the United States. The *Waterloo Daily Courier* was not as harsh with its editorial on October 8, but the message was still clear: the United States was second fiddle to the Soviet Union because of *Sputnik*.¹⁴⁰

Americans were not alone in rethinking their rank atop the scientific world according to a Gallup Poll conducted in 1960 among foreign nations. It revealed a loss of faith among the world’s citizenry in the United States’ scientific superiority. Ten industrialized nations around the world – including the United States but not the Soviet Union – responded to the question: “Looking ahead ten years, which country do you think will have the leading position in the field of science: United States or Russia?” Eight of the ten countries listed Russia as being the world leader in science by 1970. Nearly six out of ten polled in France believed Russia succeeded the United States as the leader in science.¹⁴¹ Whether the Soviet Union actually surpassed America in areas of science and missile technology did not matter to the rest of the world as much as the perception that the Soviets were ahead. An article in London’s *Daily Telegraph* suggested, “Americans are not suffering from a crisis in technology but a crisis in confidence.”¹⁴² President Eisenhower knew the country needed to regain its confidence and enhancing America’s commitment to science instruction was a step in restoring the nation’s pride.

¹³⁹ “Face on New Moon,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), 8 October, 1957.

¹⁴⁰ “Russian Satellite Demonstrates Propaganda Value of Science,” *Waterloo Daily Courier* (Waterloo, Iowa), 8 October 1957.

¹⁴¹ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971, (New York: Random House Inc., 1972), 1653.

¹⁴² Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower’s Sputnik Moment*, 26.

Sputnik forced the United States to concentrate more time and resources on physical science, causing the Eisenhower administration to push religion aside as a crucial component for America's security during the Cold War. During Ike's first term the government erected a "spiritual weapon" through legislation that created a civil religion in the United States. The Soviet Union penetrated the "spiritual weapon" and America lost global prestige because of *Sputnik*. The Eisenhower administration looked to bolster science through more funding and better education in order to recover a status of superiority over the Soviet Union.

America's decision to invest its future in science created a spurious conflict between science and religion that echoed through editorials from subscribers of the *Des Moines Register* on October 13, 1957. Gilbert Barker's letter to the editor lamented over the decline in recognition of God in the lives of Iowans. He noted the decline in church attendance and concluded that people's priorities were not in order when, "out of seven days a week, they cannot give one hour devotion to their Lord."¹⁴³ Barker did not blame *Sputnik* for the declining church attendance, but he expressed a feeling that somehow the population lost sight of the force behind the "spiritual weapon" that Eisenhower acknowledged the government erected to shield the United States from communism. The media did not mention God while covering *Sputnik* and Barker's comments reflected a concerned Iowan who did not want his fellow citizens to minimize God within any context.

¹⁴³ Gilbert Barker, "Reader Deplores So Little Time Devoted to Lord," *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 13 October 1957.

A second letter to the editor exposed a different concern that the author, Raymond Wilson, felt was more important to Americans than Sunday church attendance. He believed that the Russian satellite was a greater accomplishment than the first flight the Wright Brothers took and America could only surpass the Soviet Union if the country devoted more time to science. Wilson stated, “I wish more adults in this country would take the study of science more seriously, or as a hobby, even though their employment may have little to do with it. This would induce the youngsters and the next generation to lean toward science.”¹⁴⁴ Wilson was not the only voice pushing for more emphasis on science instruction. A story from the *New York Times* appeared in the *Des Moines Register* on October 12 asserting that *Sputnik* shattered America’s “smug complacency about its schools and colleges.” The article continued with a warning that the United States would continue to fall farther behind the Soviet Union in scientific progress if America’s schools did not receive better funding.¹⁴⁵

The president acknowledged that the country neglected to finance and promote science instruction resulting in the United States losing prestige in the competitive arena the Cold War formed. Eisenhower knew he was one of the individuals responsible for America’s science-related shortcomings. As early as 1955, cabinet members of Eisenhower’s administration – along with the president – discussed a worsening decline in scientists and engineers that the American education system produced. Even though the president knew the United States faced a shortage of quality scientists two years

¹⁴⁴ Raymond Wilson, “Red Moon Outshines First Plane,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 13 October 1957.

¹⁴⁵ “Soviet Moon is Challenge for Schools,” *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), 12 October 1957.

before *Sputnik*, the government did little to rectify the problem. Six days after *Sputnik* launched, the American Council on Education met in Washington D.C. and berated the government for being victims of its own doing because of the failure to fund education.¹⁴⁶ A majority of federal funding for education after World War II came through such indirect channels as the G.I. Bill, but the Russian satellite pressured the government into taking a stronger approach to support American schools.¹⁴⁷

Nearly a year after the world appointed the Soviet Union as the international leader in science because of *Sputnik*; a comprehensive overhaul of the American educational system took place. President Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) into law on September 2, 1958, with the intent to provide better quality scientific instruction in American classrooms through investing more than one billion dollars over a four-year period.¹⁴⁸ *Sputnik* led to a belief among American leaders that “the defense and the security of the Nation are inseparably bound with education.”¹⁴⁹ In his speech following the signing of the NDEA bill, Eisenhower sternly recognized the failure of American education to remain competitive with the Soviet Union, conceding that the United States was not doing enough to ensure a victory in the Cold War.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brianpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 11-12.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid* 4.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur S. Flemming, “Report on the National Defense Education Act: Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1959,” *U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), v.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid* 1.

¹⁵⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Statement by the President Upon Signing the National Defense Education Act,” 2 September 1958, *The American Presidency Project*, available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11211>, accessed 7 May 2013.

NDEA was the first step in mending wounds that *Sputnik* left in making Americans believe that Soviet children received a better education producing a more scientifically literate population. On October 9, 1957, an article appeared in *The Des Moines Register*, titled, “Red School Called ‘Idol’ Of Its Youth,” which argued that Russian schools were superior to those in the United States because Russians “worshipped” education. Written by Dr. Marcus Bach, a professor from the school of religion at the University of Iowa, the article noted how Russian students slept fewer hours at night than American students did because their schoolwork was more rigorous.¹⁵¹ Bach’s article helped explain reasons for the Soviet Union’s success and why the United States was not the first country to launch a satellite into space. On the same day, the *Waterloo Daily Courier* published a column from Dorothy Thompson, which supported the belief that Soviet schools exceeded the expectations of American schools.¹⁵² NDEA supporters hoped the United States could overcome conceptions of poor schools and start producing scientists capable of helping the country compete with the Soviet Union.

Initial reports indicated the government planned to invest nearly eight hundred million dollars to help schools in America provide better science instruction. The day Eisenhower authorized the “aid-to-education bill,” the *Des Moines Register* printed an article summarizing his comments,

“The president said it doesn’t do all that needs to be done in growingly scientific world. The bill provides student loans, fellowships for those

¹⁵¹ Marcus Bach, “Red School Called ‘Idol’ Of Its Youth,” *Des Moines Register*, 9 October 1957.

¹⁵² Dorothy Thompson, “Thompson: ‘Conservative Soviet Schools Superior to American,’” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, (Waterloo, Iowa), 9 October 1957.

who want to be college teachers, grants to states to help locate and guide able young students, and grants to the states for equipment needed for teaching science, mathematics and modern foreign languages.”¹⁵³

Eisenhower explained that science curriculum was not the only field that would benefit under provisions of the NDEA. The bill appropriated funds to support other areas deemed essential for America’s “national security,” including critical foreign languages. NDEA intended to develop a generation of Americans that could enter fields serving to protect the country from Soviet influence, but the fundamental purpose of the bill was more students entering science-related careers.

The extent of America’s neglect to quality science instruction became more evident when reports surfaced analyzing NDEA’s effectiveness. Before NDEA, some states in America spent about \$1.25 per pupil on science instruction. After the implementation of NDEA, some states spent approximately \$16.25 per pupil on science instruction.¹⁵⁴ One year into NDEA, Iowa had thirty-five institutions participating in the student loan program designed to increase enrollment in institutions of higher education. Each Iowa school participating in NDEA received an allocation of \$16,800 to help students pursue a college education. The state received nearly \$900,000 for schools to purchase new equipment and remodel facilities geared towards supporting science instruction.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “105 Bills are Signed by Ike,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa), 3 September 1958.

¹⁵⁴ Flemming, “Report on the National Defense Education Act,” 8.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 5, 12.

Academic institutions welcomed federal funding and based on a study that Iowa State University published, colleges in the United States needed the aid earlier to support students pursuing degrees in science. The study conducted by Iowa State analyzed success of students enrolled at the university who came from public high schools and found that students who took at least twelve semesters of math and science performed better academically at the university than those who did not.¹⁵⁶ Less than a year after NDEA passed, Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts became Iowa State University of Science and Technology.¹⁵⁷ Enrollment at Iowa State increased from 9,252 students in 1959 to 12,541 five years later. The university saw enrollment increase every year throughout the 1960s. By the time Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the moon, Iowa State's enrollment increased nearly 10,000 students.¹⁵⁸ NDEA allowed more students to earn degrees and helped nurture a future of scientifically literate Americans.

Americans rediscovered confidence in their superiority in technological innovations as the decade of the 1950s ended. In a speech to the American Farm Bureau Association in November of 1959, President Charles B. Shuman boasted about American agriculture. He described Soviet farming as inefficient by noting that forty three percent of the population “engaged in agriculture” compared to

¹⁵⁶ “Students Need Math, Science for College,” *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 6 September 1958.

¹⁵⁷ “History of Iowa State,” *Iowa State Website*, available from <http://www.add.lib.iastate.edu/spcl/exhibits/150/template/timeline-1950.html>, accessed 19 February 2014.

¹⁵⁸ “Iowa State Enrollment Figures,” *Iowa State Fact Book*, *Iowa State Office of Registrar*, available from <http://www.ir.iastate.edu/FB14/PDF%20files%20as%20of%20Nov%2020/035%20Enrollment.pdf>, accessed 24 February 2014.

only twelve percent of the United States population.¹⁵⁹ He believed American farmers were the most efficient producers in the world and he argued that the Soviet Union could be more dynamic in other areas if it was more efficient in agriculture. Shuman argued American agricultural productivity released a larger portion of the population to help the United States excel in other industries. Shuman's message placed Iowa farmers as a crucial piece to America's success in the Cold War.

Iowans found more relevancies in the Cold War saga post-*Sputnik*. After NDEA, new classroom materials, curriculum, and new rhetoric convinced Iowans they were a part of the fight. America turned to science through NDEA to build a more effective defense against communism to train competent engineers who could push the United States past the Soviet Union in rocket and missile technology. Well-trained scientists could also develop more efficient farming methods to further enhance America's productivity. Science became the effective "weapon" of the Cold War and all Americans – from Eisenhower to the Iowa farmer – needed to find a way to rationalize their dependency on science over religion to find success in the Cold War.

A return to Gilbert Barker's and Raymond Wilson's letters to the *Des Moines Register* help to understand how *Sputnik* created a divide in the United States between science and religion. Barker called for a stronger devotion to God while Wilson wanted

¹⁵⁹ Charles B. Shuman, "An Agricultural View of the Soviet Threat: Summary Statement of the American Farm Bureau Federation to the Subcommittee on Economic Statistics, Joint Economic Committee," November 20, 1959, box 29, folder 1, American Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa State University Special Collections, 22.

the population to realize the importance of investing more time and energy in fields of science. The United States government spent the years of Eisenhower's first term using Barker's belief by passing legislation that kept God on the minds of Americans to defend from the "ideological evils" of communism. During Eisenhower's second term, the importance of a "spiritual weapon" and formation of a civil religion was no longer a priority and the government aligned with the wishes of Wilson by investing more money into science education in the United States.

Sputnik diminished American prestige around the globe, but the satellite forced politicians and President Eisenhower to pass NDEA establishing stronger science curriculum in the classroom. *Sputnik* delirium engulfed the entire nation, but unknown to the populace at the time, the Russian satellite caused the United States to acknowledge that quality science instruction was more helpful than the erection of a "spiritual weapon." President Eisenhower admitted that he realized *Sputnik* had, "real military significance," and knew that the nation might need more than just faith in God to win the Cold War.¹⁶⁰ The president and the rest of America did not abandon their faith, and some found a psychological balance between science and religion.

The Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization federal directive allowed states flexibility in the interpretation of "comprehensive operational survival plans," understanding that states were diverse and the best methods for survival varied.¹⁶¹ Iowa's plan included a section titled "Religious Affairs," which state policy makers

¹⁶⁰ Piers Brendon, *Ike: The Life and Times of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), 349.

¹⁶¹ Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization, *Annual Report, Fiscal Year, 1959*, (Washington D.C., United States Government Printing Office: 1960), 5.

portrayed as essential for “comprehensive survival” in Iowa. According to Annex P of the *Civil Defense Preliminary Operational Survival Plan for the State of Iowa*, the religious affairs service needed “to supply a broad moral base of government in its responsibility to operate effectively during [an] emergency.”

Members of the Office of the Governor who developed Iowa’s report felt the state needed to ensure the “spiritual welfare” of the population after a nuclear attack and this was essential for survival. The section on religious affairs clearly stated the need for keeping the responsibilities of the church operating for survivors. To ensure the full support of the spiritual needs of the remaining population, the plan called for “lay leaders on whom the clergy may call for assistance in planning and supervising the church activities in the material realm.”¹⁶² Despite being significantly shorter than the other sections, the fact Iowa included a section on “Religious Affairs” in its plan revealed that the realities of destructive forces brought on by military science did not shatter the state’s religious convictions. Iowans remained true to their devout faith that was evident before Congress passed legislation creating a “spiritual weapon” and remained after science dominated school instruction.

Sputnik exposed a domestic façade behind the “spiritual weapon” that American policymakers generated to help convince leaders of the nation that the United States had an upper hand on the Soviet Union when the country was really a step behind.

Acknowledging that God was a force behind the prosperity of American democracy contributed to the belief Americans were superior to their Soviet counterparts, but

¹⁶² Office of the Governor of Iowa, *Civil Defense Preliminary Operational Survival Plan for the State of Iowa*, Iowa Survival Plan Project, August, 1958, P-1.

Sputnik caused leaders of the United States to reassess their strategy. Eisenhower's presidency concluded before the Cold War ended and he could declare victory in defining the identity of an American through a government-supported recognition of God, but he could not claim victory over technological achievements and the development of a scientifically literate population.

In 1954, Senator Homer Ferguson stated, "We know that America cannot be defended by guns, planes, and ships alone," as he reaffirmed his belief that the United States needed God for protection. He shared a common faith with Eisenhower that American military technology needed divine intervention to help the United States win the Cold War. *Sputnik* caused the president and politicians to realize that the construction of a civil religion might have helped provide a "spiritual boost" for the American people, but quality science instruction would help fight communism more effectively.¹⁶³ Using money stamped with "In God We Trust," the United States poured over a billion dollars into the American educational system to bolster science instruction ensuring that future Americans had the knowledge to continue to defeat Soviet communism abroad.

¹⁶³ Sen. Ferguson, (MI.), "Senate Joint Resolution 126," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 5 (11 May 1954) p. 6348.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

On October 14, 1957 – ten days after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik* – the *Des Moines Register* ran an editorial, “An Honest Prayer for the Atomic Age,” from a Chicago-based columnist, Sydney J. Harris. In the article, Harris reflected on the scientific realities of a nuclear war coupled with the hypocrisy of a nation claiming to be “under God.” Harris acknowledged the terrifying power of nuclear weapons and called for God to “Withhold from us [Americans] the horrors of hemorrhages in the central nervous system.” His prayer continued, “Visit these catastrophes upon our enemies, not upon us, and we promise to love Thee and keep the commandments – all except one, O Lord.”¹⁶⁴ The “prayer” Harris proposed exposed the irony of a nuclear armed nation – like the United States – that claimed to be the moral beacon for the rest of the world. His comments suggested he was angry nuclear weapons threatened to destroy humankind and that humanity seemed to abandon its morality to fight the Cold War.

Deconstructing Harris’ “Prayer for the Atomic Age,” helps define the decade of the 1950s when the United States attempted to depict itself as a nation of God that represented all that was good in the Cold War. Legislators in Washington desired to express their trust in God during a time when communism became the greatest threat to America, but the “communist threat” appeared more fabricated than realistic based on the mood and feelings of Iowans during the fifties.

¹⁶⁴ Sydney J. Harris, “An Honest Prayer for the Atomic Age,” *Des Moines Register*, 14 October 1957.

The words of Iowa's Paul H. Cunningham – during the House debate on amending the pledge – provide insight into origins of the fear.

“It comes at a time when throughout our land and throughout the world some people express doubt, yes, doubt and even fear, regarding the future. They see the storm clouds blowing up on the horizon and sometimes not the sun behind. They see arrayed against this Nation, and the way of life which it represents, a dictatorial policy that recognizes no God and no divinity in man.”¹⁶⁵

American leaders feared the idea of communism more than actions of the Soviet Union causing them to manufacture an ideological threat to the nation that resulted in legislation that placed God into the public sphere. President Dwight Eisenhower and other American policy makers were not aware that they created a dualistic Russian when American exceptionalism forged with American fears. The United States believed that Soviet culture was inferior to American culture, yet Soviet ideology – communism – had the power and capability to vanquish American ideals. How could Soviet communism have the potential to infiltrate the minds of Americans and threaten to take down the United States – one mind at a time – yet Soviet culture was backwards, inept, and incapable of competing with the prosperity of American capitalism?

American leaders naively engaged in an ideological war during the 1950s and let their fears get the best of them because they believed that a philosophy – a construct of the mind – posed a greater threat to the United States than armed Soviet troops. Weapons do not have beliefs, but those who fire weapons do. Senator Ferguson noted that the nation could not defend with “guns, planes, and ships alone,” but through

¹⁶⁵ Rep. Cunningham (IA.), "House Joint Resolution 243," *Congressional Record* 100, Pt. 6 (7 June 1954) p. 7757.

legislation that provided God with America's endorsement, ships sailing for the United States sailed for democracy. Planes flying for the United States flew for freedom, and guns fired by American armed forces shot for God. People construct ideologies and retain beliefs and the American government forged a civil religion during the Cold War and had the military fight for freedom they believed gestated through the divine guidance of God. The United States broke down the wall that separated the government from God because leaders of the country believed they had a weakness they needed to overcome and they felt more confident by recognizing God as America's protectorate.

Communism is an ideology while *Sputnik* was the product of Soviet science and American leaders discovered the "real" fight in the Cold War was the space and arms race. *Sputnik* caused the United States to realize Americans' minds needed better education instead of a "spiritual weapon" to help the country defeat the Soviet Union. There is no way to measure the effectiveness of President Eisenhower's "spiritual weapon" in protecting the country from communism, but it surely did not help the United States get a satellite into orbit before the Soviets. The United States ended up creating a different weapon that took the form of textbooks, state-of-the-art laboratories, and better-trained teachers when NDEA laid the framework for better science instruction in America.

Sputnik shook American leaders to their core and was a "blow to American pride," however, the years leading up to *Sputnik's* launch caused American leaders to construct hollow fears out of communism that overshadowed the realities of the satellite

causing an overreaction that produced NDEA.¹⁶⁶ Even as *Sputnik* blasted into the atmosphere on October 4, 1957, American technology was superior to Soviet technology despite perceptions. Technology used in *Sputnik* was crude and well behind American technology and the R-7 – the rocket that launched *Sputnik* – actually posed no major military threat at the time. Launching a missile to a target was far more difficult than launching a satellite into space, but this fact was lost in the headlines and stories about the satellite’s military significance.¹⁶⁷ An editorial from the *Iowa State Daily* on September 10, 1958, noted that, “*Sputnik* frightened Congress and, as a result, promising individuals who can help us at this point are being bribed to pitch in and dig us out from under the avalanche of public opinion.”¹⁶⁸ American leaders let their fears of *Sputnik* dwarf the fact that the United States was still superior to the Soviet Union in military and space technology. Unlike the panic that led to erecting a “spiritual weapon,” the “*Sputnik* crisis” produced the NDEA, which proved to put America on the right path to a more practical way to defend against communism.

America began providing stronger science education in classrooms and this formed minds that were able to produce a “scientific weapon” that turned out to be more effective than a “spiritual weapon.” The domestic plan to win the Cold War involved putting God on the minds of Americans when Americans needed to improve their minds in school to effectively compete with the perceptions of Soviet science. When Iowans

¹⁶⁶ Arthur S. Flemming, “The Philosophy and Objective of the National Defense Education Act,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 327, January 1960 available from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1033973>, accessed 23 October 2013, 134.

¹⁶⁷ Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower’s Sputnik Moment*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ “Scientists Are Not Our Only Need,” *Iowa State Daily*, (Ames, Iowa), 10 September 1958.z

stood before the flag each morning and recited the Pledge of Allegiance with the words, “under God,” they did not suddenly become “more American.” Nothing in those two words allowed them to better help the United States stay competitive with the Soviet Union in missile and rocket technology. Better science instruction equipped young minds with ways to “arm” the country with technology capable of assisting the United States in winning the Cold War.

In the closing days of his presidency, Eisenhower struggled internally with ideas of Soviet superiority because of *Sputnik* and the United States retaining the upper hand in the Cold War. Ike wrote to a friend discussing his thoughts on *Sputnik* and he stated that the Soviets may have the edge in rocket technology, but the United States was still beating the Soviets in the ideological competition of faith in God.¹⁶⁹ Eisenhower did not view the formation of a civil religion as a waste of time since he believed spiritual faith in God was important for American success in the Cold War. However, when Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act into law, he verified that the United States needed more than spirituality to defeat the real and perceived threat of the Soviet Union. As Eisenhower left the White House, he defined American success in spiritual terms and had to rationalize that faith in God did not help the United States compete in more important areas of the Cold War.

The American dollar represented a perfect coalescence of the dichotomy of Eisenhower’s two terms that endorsed God during his first term and then placed trust in science during the second term. The NDEA pumped nearly a billion dollars into the

¹⁶⁹ Piers Brendon, *Ike: The Life and Times of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), 348.

American education system and each one of the dollars spent on NDEA had the words “In God We Trust” stamped on them to remind Americans that trust in God fueled their fight against communism.

On June 13, 1954, Judge Harvey Uhlhopp from Hampton, Iowa stood before a crowd of Iowa Farm Bureau members in Des Moines and warned the audience members about one of the gravest threats facing the United States during the Cold War. He acknowledged that war with the Soviet Union was a possibility, but Americans should not see that as the greatest danger. He mentioned the risk of a communist uprising from within the country, but this did not seem likely either. For Judge Uhlhopp – a man whose profession relied on extensive knowledge of the Bill of Rights – the greatest concern for Americans was the government “adopt[ing] laws to fight Communism which themselves adopt Communist methods.”¹⁷⁰ Uhlhopp did not want to see America restricting basic freedoms in its efforts to combat communism. The next day President Eisenhower signed House Joint Resolution 243 into law placing “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance.

Religious freedom became restricted once Americans had to place their trust in the Judeo-Christian God in order to be a “true” American. Cold War fears caused a feeling throughout the United States that being religious did not make someone an American, but an American was someone who was religious – specifically Jewish or Christian. Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and others who did not believe in the Judeo-Christian God were not seen “as American” as those who did when the United States

¹⁷⁰ “Careless Use of ‘Red’ Tag Called Threat to Liberties,” *Des Moines Register*, (Des Moines, Iowa) 13 June 1954.

created a civil religion. Although Americans did not face any formal repercussions for denying God as part of their American identity, they felt forced to remain silent because they feared the “communist” label.

On March 11, 2010, the 9th United States Circuit Court of Appeals rejected legal challenges by a Sacramento resident, Michael Newdow, who claimed references to God by the government were unconstitutional. In a 3-0 ruling, the appeals court upheld the national motto, “In God We Trust.” The court based their decision on an earlier ruling stating the phrase is “ceremonial and patriotic and ‘has nothing whatsoever to do with establishment of religion.’”¹⁷¹ Historians Diane Kirby, Phil Muehlenbeck, and Jonathan Herzog would disagree with this notion since “In God We Trust” created a “civil religion” in the United States. Actions taken by President Eisenhower and policymakers between 1954 and 1956 knocked down the wall between religious beliefs and patriotic beliefs causing people like Newdow to acknowledge God in order to identify as an American. As long as the country continues to stamp “In God We Trust” on its currency and use it as the national motto, America cannot claim to uphold the separation of church and state.

Jonathan Herzog was correct when he stated, “Religion comes to represent the worst kind of hysterical anti-Communism of early Cold War irrationality.”¹⁷² By keeping “In God We Trust,” on our currency and as our national motto, we reaffirm a point in our history when we let our fears overcome us. We forgot about our

¹⁷¹ “Atheist Loses 2nd ‘Under God’ Court Appeal,” *CBS News*, available from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/atheist-loses-2nd-under-god-court-appeal/>, accessed 21 January 2014.

¹⁷² Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

accomplishments during the Second World War and the emergence of the “greatest generation” that helped the United States reach the level of an economic superpower. Our fears became greater than we were as an American people. Today, when Americans carry money with them shopping and on trips they also carry with them a reminder of a time when our nation was afraid.

Members of the House of Representatives who voted to reaffirm the national motto as “In God We Trust” in 2011 did so out of pride. Representatives felt they renewed the nation’s honor with their vote and that they sent a reminder to the country what it means to be an American. In actuality, by a margin of 396 to 9, Representatives reaffirmed fears of the past. Their vote was a reminder of a time when America was afraid and there is no pride in reaffirming that.

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