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Ronald Reagan's 1983 "Evil Empire" speech: A rhetorical analysis

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RONALD REAGAN'S 1983 "EVIL EMPIRE" SPEECH:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

by

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Associate of Arts and Sciences
Ricks College
1991

Bachelor of Science
Utah State University
1993

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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Hank Greenspun Department of Communication
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The Thesis prepared by
Kirsten Ann Westenskow Clark

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Ronald Reagan's 1983 "Evil Empire" Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis

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Master of Arts in Communication Studies
ABSTRACT

Ronald Reagan’s 1983 “Evil Empire” Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis

by

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Dr. David Henry, Examination Committee Chair
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In 1983, President Ronald Reagan addressed the National Association of Evangelicals, delivering what is now referred to as his “Evil Empire” speech. Hoping to reestablish his commitment to conservative values and encourage the audience to oppose a nuclear freeze, Reagan condemned the Soviet Union as the “focus of evil” in the modern world and urged the audience to resist the aggressive impulses of an evil empire. Although it initially received widespread criticism, Reagan’s speech has since been credited as a salient factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union and has been heralded as one of the most important addresses of his presidency.

To illuminate the persuasive elements in the speech, this study examines its historical context, rhetorical problems and evolution of the text. The resulting critique discusses how Reagan’s masterful epideictic and deliberative speech reestablished his commitment to conservative values and justified his position in the nuclear freeze debate.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On March 8, 1983, President Ronald W. Reagan addressed the conservative National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, warning them that since the Soviet Union was "the focus of evil in the modern world" (8), they should "resist the aggressive impulses of an evil empire" (8) and oppose a nuclear freeze. This pivotal foreign policy address, later referred to as the "Evil Empire" speech because of its strong condemnation of the Soviet Union, received immediate, widespread criticism but has since been credited as being a salient factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, Dinesh D’Souza, senior domestic policy analyst for Reagan’s second administration, heralded it as “the single most important speech of the Reagan presidency, a classic illustration of what Václav Havel terms ‘the power of words to change history’” (135; see also Havel 58).

Although Reagan’s comments were initially labeled the “worst rhetoric of the cold war” (Schmemann A12) and “the worst presidential speech in American History” (Krauthammer par. 12), the scope of scholarship dedicated to illuminating its unique features is relatively small. Rhetorical scholars Robert L. Ivie and Kurt Ritter examined the influence the speech had on 1988 presidential election addresses.
and determined that its portrayal of the Soviet Union reflected a reverse image of Reagan’s view of America. A large portion of the scholarship simply reveals that the speech reflects opinions and ideologies that remained consistent over Reagan’s political career (Noonan 212; see also Cannon, *Role*, 317; Muir, *The Bully Pulpit*, 76; Dallek 131). Political Science scholar Andrew Busch argued that the speech is one part of the President’s “ideological counteroffensive” against the Soviet Union (*Politics* 197). Perhaps the most insightful analysis of the speech, however, was provided by scholar G. Thomas Goodnight who contended that it was part of the President’s effort to reformulate the ‘rhetoric of war’ and address the exigence created by the increasing national interest in a nuclear freeze. Goodnight contended that the address reaffirmed and extended the administration’s insistence on a nuclear weapons build-up by portraying “nuclear war as part of an age-old struggle between good and evil, a conflict beyond strict rational assessment” (391).

What Reagan’s oratory and these critiques demonstrate is the force of rhetoric and the value of its analysis in contemporary political culture. Rhetorical scholar Roderick Hart insists that “[b]ecause rhetoric is such a vast repository of truths and visions, it takes many hands to understand it” (“Wandering with Rhetorical Criticism” 77). Although prior scholarship provides preliminary insight into Reagan’s rhetorical goals and strategies, no critique has fully exhausted the “Evil Empire” speech through textual analysis. Consequently, an excellent opportunity exists for a review that can deepen our understanding of the creation, purposes and functions of contemporary presidential speech. Further, since discourse can shape public opinion and affect social change, it is important to study the impact and
consequences when the President of the United States uses oratory to gain or
discourage public support for controversial foreign policies or legislative decisions.
Finally, whenever a rhetorical act evokes an immediate, almost unanimously
negative response, it is worthy of critical review to illuminate the elements
underlying the outrage, and to provide insight into the persuasive strategies at work
in the text. In Speaking Into the Air, John Durham Peters references Socrates to
argue that “rhetoric is guided by knowledge of both the truth and the audience. As a
physician ought not to dispense remedies without knowing the patient’s constitution,
so an orator ought not to deliver words ill suited to the audience” (45). As such, it is
important to analyze the text to discover why it evoked the strong response it did.

Initially, I had hoped to reveal a strategic relationship between Reagan’s “Evil
Empire” address and his Address to the Nation on National Security speech (more
commonly referred to as the “Star Wars/Strategic Defense Initiative” address)
delivered two weeks later. My initial suppositions about the commonalities present
between the two addresses, however, were unsupported by the archival records of the
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. The objective of this study therefore shifted to a
focus on the evolution of the “Evil Empire” address. Such a focus provides insight
into how presidential speeches are crafted and also demonstrates how perceptions of
presidential leadership are constantly refigured through public address.
Critical Purpose

Ronald Wilson Reagan’s political career arguably began in 1964 when he addressed a television audience encouraging their support for Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Drawing on the public speaking skills acquired during the eight years he served as spokesperson for General Electric, his “A Time for Choosing” speech drew the attention and admiration of several prominent Republicans, including fundraiser Holmes P. Tuttle who encouraged and facilitated his entry into politics (Cannon, Reagan, 102; see also Pemberton 53; Reagan, An American Life, 144). After being elected Governor of California two years later, Reagan sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1968 and 1976 and continued sharpening his political communication skills through a variety of highly-publicized public addresses. He received the nomination in 1980, when he campaigned calling for “a new consensus with all those across the land who share a community of values embodied in these words: family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom” (University of Texas Reagan web site; see also Cannon, Reagan, 267). Reagan defeated incumbent President Jimmy Carter with an electoral college victory of 489 votes to 44 (Cannon, Reagan, 303) and took office amid speculation that because Republicans had gained numerous seats in the election, a new conservative political era had begun.

Often referred to as the “great communicator,” Reagan was a master orator who possessed the ability to encapsulate his conservative values in rhetoric that broadly appealed to the masses. “Through three primary and two presidential campaigns and continuing with his television and radio addresses as president, Reagan . . . used his
speaking ability not only to attain office, but to disseminate his ideas and achieve an impressive number of his goals” (Gold 162). His self-cast role of 'citizen-politician' enabled him to use ceremonial discourse to establish a rhetorical connection with his varied audiences by demonstrating that he, as one of “them,” was governing the country with their best interests in mind. In their book *Reagan and Public Discourse in America*, communication scholars Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce emphasize that Reagan’s ability “to express the essence of ordinary life in endearing and reassuring images, and at the same time to associate himself with them via his personal life history, contributed significantly to his avuncular ethos” (20) as well as to his overall rhetorical success.

Rhetorical scholars Kurt Ritter and David Henry also recognized Reagan’s exceptional ability to connect with his diverse audiences. They contend that Reagan’s rhetorical success resulted not only because of his skilled delivery and figurative appeal, but also because of his ability to “transcend the distance between himself and his television audiences” (109). In their book *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator*, Ritter and Henry suggest that there are four distinct features in Reagan’s public addresses: “a conversational manner; diligence in staying focused on a few broad, value-centered themes; a reliance on stories as a dominant mode of proof, and a keen knack for constructing or embellishing dramas that shaped the public’s perceptions of political reality” (62). Of these features, Reagan’s reliance on figurative stories has been the focus of a diverse body of scholarship. As a result, rhetorician Walter R. Fisher’s narrative paradigm provides substantial insight into the President’s rhetoric.
Proposed as an alternative to the ‘rational world paradigm,’ the narrative paradigm presumes that we are storytellers acting on what we consider ‘good reasons’ derived from our experience. Further, narration plays an important role in our development of knowledge and greatly influences our perceptions and judgment (Lewis 288). Applying the narrative paradigm to Reagan’s discourse, Fisher proposed that:

First, Reagan’s story is grounded in American history and it is informed by central values of the American Dream. Second, his perceived character is constituted by this background and renders him virtually immune to “rational” criticism. Third, the implied audience of heroes in his rhetoric is as efficacious as just about any that one might conceive, given our troubled times (Human Communication 146).

Fisher also contended that Reagan’s rhetoric included a romantic strain that increased his ability to be viewed as a presidential hero (“Romantic Democracy” 299). Building on Fisher’s narrative paradigm, William F. Lewis analyzed Reagan’s use of anecdotes and myths to argue that as a master orator, “Reagan use[d] storytelling to direct his policies, ground his explanations, and inspire his audiences” (281) with persuasive narratives that articulated and reflected their shared knowledge. Lewis contended that by using narratives with strong moral orientations, Reagan often precluded arguments about his policy proposals “by transforming opposition to policy into opposition to principle” (291). He cautioned, though, that this use of narrative form often distorts “truth” and discourages critical assessment or evaluation.
In contrast to Lewis who viewed Reagan’s rhetorical strategies somewhat skeptically, J. Jeffery Auer considered Reagan’s skill as a storyteller a significant persuasive strength. He argued that to be a successful contemporary orator, presidents must augment their rhetorical acts with numerous performance skills including a positive persona, audience sensitivity and personal style (99). Auer contended that Reagan exceptionally demonstrated these skills and adapted them to his television audiences. However, he cautioned that Reagan’s strengths as a storyteller often concealed “basic inadequacies in the substantive arts of rhetorical invention and disposition” (120) and created a dangerous assumption that his rhetoric is both accurate and responsible. Kathleen Hall Jamieson posited that “[b]etter than any modern president, Reagan understands the power of dramatic narrative to create an identity for an audience, to involve the audience, and to bond that audience to him” (137). This skill, she suggested, added greatly to the success of his rhetorical ventures. Ellen Reid Gold also analyzed Reagan’s narrative form, not within Fisher’s analytical mode, but as part of America’s oral culture. Reagan’s ability to infuse his speeches with simplistic anecdotes accepted widely by prior audiences, she writes, “puts him in the tradition of the oral narrators who reshape and reuse the myths and beliefs of their culture” (163). Further, she suggests that his ability to “tell stories” that create emotional connections between him and his audiences and provide them with a sense of completeness and belonging is the reason he is a “great communicator” (171).

Although Ronald Reagan’s rhetorical style and methods have been the focus of a broad range of scholarship, none of the literature reveals the persuasive strategies of
his "Evil Empire" address. Because of the text's centrality in cold war history, there remains a need to study the speech to deepen our understanding of contemporary presidential discourse. The variety of critical approaches already utilized to analyze Reagan's rhetoric thus provide a solid groundwork that encourages further analysis of his persuasive methods, particularly those present in the controversial 1983 speech studied here.

The "Evil Empire" Speech

Reagan's March 8, 1983, address to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has been referred to by some pundits and reporters as the "worst rhetoric of the cold war" (Schmemann A12), and has even been labeled "the worst presidential speech in American history" (Krauthammer par. 12). Addressing an audience of more than 2,000 politically conservative Baptists and Methodists who, during the convention, would determine the organization's official position on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons (Hannaford, Reagan's SDI, par. 2), Reagan "gave a speech that rattled the Soviets (and many Americans), and disturbed them for the rest of his presidency. He said it was an 'elementary fact' that Moscow did not accept any morality unless it furthered class warfare. The Soviet Union was the 'focus of evil in the modern world' and an 'evil empire'" (Pemberton 162).

Despite its controversial, inflammatory content, the scholarship dedicated to uncovering the speech's rhetorical strategies and methods is relatively small, and the majority of literature focuses instead on the immediate public outrage that followed.
Before delving into the small body of scholarship discussing the address, therefore it is instructive to review the ephemeral criticism it received via mass media channels. Shortly after the speech’s delivery, the media called it a strategic ploy designed to rebuild the support of the president’s conservative base (Clymer A18; see also Yoder A5; Cannon, “Master,” A3; Smith A11) and suggested that it was a preliminary attempt to establish a political platform for the upcoming 1984 elections (Reston A21). Journalist Charles Austin reported that the President was criticized “for using religious language to characterize the political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union” (A17) and was condemned for distorting Christianity in order to achieve political goals (A7). Washington Post staff writer David Hoffman suggested that Reagan’s controversial rhetoric was designed to emphasize the Soviet threat in order to generate support for his defense buildup that was facing congressional defeat (A1; see also Lewis A27), and William Safire accused Reagan of overstepping his presidential authority by attempting to preach morality (A15).

Although the numerous mass media articles focusing on Reagan’s controversial address provide insight into the speech, the small body of literature discussing its rhetorical characteristics provides a greater preliminary understanding of the text’s persuasive strategies. D’Souza credits the discourse as being “the single most important speech of the Reagan presidency” (135), in which the President defined the U.S./Soviet conflict in moral terms and “unapologetically asserted the moral superiority of the West” (136). Ivie and Ritter briefly examined the speech’s influence on foreign policy rhetoric used by George Bush and Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential election and concluded that Reagan’s “description of Soviet
motoes and intentions was a reverse image of his heroic vision of America" (437).
Busch identifies the “Evil Empire” address as part of an ongoing ideological
counteroffensive intended to “illuminate the nature of the Soviet regime in stark
terms of good and evil . . . [and] to strengthen and encourage the latent resistance of
those behind the Iron Curtain” (Politics 197; see also Defeat 454); but his analysis
stopped short of exploring the persuasive strategies used in the address.

Gold suggests that Reagan’s attack on the Soviet Union reflects an oral tradition
and speculates that using attack strategies enables a rhetor not only to generate
substantial emotional intensity but also to unite the audience against outsiders (168).
Reagan biographer and journalist Lou Cannon argues that the address epitomized the
President’s views about the Soviet Union and “faithfully reflected in tone and
content the president’s long-held view of the immorality of communism” (Role 317),
while serving a more practical political function of encouraging the members of the
NAE to oppose a nuclear freeze. William K. Muir argues that to understand the
rhetorical power of the “Evil Empire” address, “one must understand that President
Reagan had expressed many of the same ideas on earlier occasions” (76, 79; see also
Dallek 131; Cannon, Role, 316), and explains that by placing the nuclear freeze
argument in a broader context of good and evil, Reagan emphasized the moral
differences between free and totalitarian societies. Rebecca S. Bjork suggests that by
calling the Soviet Union an “evil empire” and referring to the nuclear freeze as a
“dangerous fraud,” Reagan’s comments reveal an argumentative strategy “designed
to locate conspirators in the movements against the arms race, thereby discrediting
them. In Burke’s terminology, Reagan attempted to respond to the growing
antinuclear movement through secular prayer to the accepted order” (186) and relied on the Cold War rhetorical strategy of labeling its supporters as supporters of communism and the Soviet Union.

Goodnight contends that in the “Evil Empire” speech, the President called upon his audience and the world to “play out an eternal drama where implacable evil always demands heroic sacrifice” (408). He claims that Reagan used rhetorical strategies to transfer debate about the nuclear freeze from political, policy-oriented discussions into spiritual, morality oriented debates and consequently expanded the Administration’s symbolic position (403). However, he proposes that Reagan’s “Star Wars” proposal was necessary to complete the rhetorical argument the President was advocating through his reformulation of the rhetoric of war. He argues that through the rhetorical progression present in the addresses, the President summoned “sentiments and principles of conduct from an earlier, simpler era, a period when the United States endured its essential experience of trial and triumph” (409).

Several themes emerge from this review of relevant literature. First, both media and academic criticism of the address accuse Reagan of using rhetoric to combat the growing strength of the nuclear freeze movement. Roland Evans and Robert Novak suggest that the President’s comments were intended to “seize the moral high ground from the nuclear freeze and peace movements” (A23), and Goodnight also recognized the speech’s attack on the nuclear freeze movement, concluding that because Reagan did not specifically take a definitive position on the ongoing nuclear weapons debate, he successfully insulated his proposal from argument (402). Second, the President’s attempt to restrict the appropriate responses to controversial foreign policy decisions by placing them within a
moral context of good and evil has been widely criticized and consequently deserves further exploration to determine the persuasive strategies dedicated to achieving this goal.

Third, although most of the attention given to the address focuses on its passages related to the Soviet Union, existing scholarship has failed to account for the rhetorical significance of the remainder of the address. As a result, there is still much to be discovered about the “Evil Empire” speech.

The Evolving Role of Presidential Rhetoric in Contemporary Society

Before initiating a historical, textual and critical analysis of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” address, it is important to understand the persuasive functions of presidential rhetoric and how it has been transformed over the past century. In 1984, Theodore Otto Windt, Jr. published a significant article in which he reviewed related scholarship and outlined future areas of study. Quoting Richard Neustadt’s influential book, Presidential Power, Windt contends that the key to a president’s power lies in his ability to persuade, and suggests that “[i]f presidential power is essentially persuasive, then rhetoric must be analyzed and evaluated as an instrument of political power” (24). He identifies four categories of critical research within presidential rhetoric: single speech criticism; analyses of presidential rhetorical movements; genre criticism; and miscellaneous areas of inquiry. Windt contends that “the critic’s major function in doing criticism of presidential speeches is to contribute to a better understanding of how public arguments affect the president, his policies, and the continuous political debates over our national agenda and public
policy” (27). A textual analysis of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech is thus in order to further our understanding of presidential persuasion.

To better comprehend the persuasive functions of modern presidential rhetoric, it is also important to understand what has become known as the “rhetorical presidency.” Windt writes that the concept “adds a new dimension to rhetorical studies beyond analysis and criticism of presidential speeches or campaigns to the influence—both theoretical and practical—of rhetoric on the nature and conduct of the office” (25). This is so, he suggests, because of the increased tendency of our nation’s leaders to use publicly-addressed rhetoric to solicit support for their policies. As a result, during the past two decades considerable discussion has focused on the president’s changing rhetorical role in modern leadership. During Reagan’s presidency, James W. Ceaser, Glen E. Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis and Joseph M. Bessette published a significant article on the rhetorical functions of the modern presidency, arguing that contemporary expectations of presidential speech are inconsistent with those established by the nation’s founding fathers. The intended role of the presidency, Ceaser et. al. maintain, was “that of a constitutional officer who would rely for his authority on the formal powers granted by the Constitution and on the informal authority that would flow from the office’s strategic position” (162), and not on public appeals made to the populace to gain support of presidential initiatives or policies. The Founders felt that by insulating the presidency from the constantly changing tides of public opinion, the dignity and importance of the office would remain intact and the president would be able to resist the temptation to “denigrate
into demagoguery, which might raise anew the great divisions of class, section, or constitutive principle” (Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 111).

According to Ceaser et. al., because of their distrust and suspicion of popular leaders, the Founders made deliberate choices to prevent the presidency from becoming a platform from which a leader could govern the nation through rhetorical appeals and attempts to sway public opinion. Since the president’s ethos was of utmost importance, the Founders felt that direct appeals would diminish the president’s stature. The effect mirrors sentiments found in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, where “Aristotle considers the moral character of the speaker, as conveyed through his speech, the most effective means of persuasion” (qtd. in Thurow 15). As a result, they established the presidency so that the nation’s leaders were discouraged from attempting to instigate or influence legislative action through direct emotional appeals that played on the public’s passions of envy and fear. Consequently, “[t]he development of presidential rhetoric in the nineteenth century reflected the force of the general constitutional theory” (Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 46), and resulted in two general guidelines that governed presidential speech. First, to discourage the president from overstepping his constitutional limitations, all policy rhetoric was written and addressed to Congress. Second, presidential rhetoric not discussing policy was restricted primarily to ceremonial occasions such as proclamations, and inaugural addresses were developed with great caution to ensure they did not overstep the president’s constitutional authority (Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, 46-47.) As a result, nineteenth century presidents largely limited their public speeches and appearances to ceremonial or formal occasions, thereby
preserving the dignity of the presidency and ensuring that the president’s public addresses in no way attempted to influence public opinion or legislative action.

During the twentieth century, however, a dramatic shift in presidential rhetoric occurred. Starting with Theodore Roosevelt, twentieth century presidents began using what has become known as the “bully pulpit” to generate public support of policy objectives and to influence congressional action through broad, passionate public appeals. According to David Mervin:

The bully pulpit is a unique and imposing podium available only to the President as the one public official (apart from the Vice President), elected by the nation as a whole and invested with all the trappings and symbols of his great office. From his elevated position in the bully pulpit the President can speak to the American people justifying, explaining and advancing his policies. Provided he has the skill, the aptitude and the desire he can motivate public opinion behind his agenda thereby wielding a formidable weapon against those who would oppose him whether they are in Congress, the courts, the bureaucracy or the special interests (19).

As a result, twentieth century presidential discourse and our perceptions of presidential power have repeatedly been reconfigured through use of the bully pulpit. Contemporary society not only expects the president regularly to address the nation and world on a variety of issues, but also often determines a president’s success or failure on the ability to communicate effectively with the populace. Consequently,
presidential rhetoric and the bully pulpit have become important aspects of governance and leadership.

Muir sees unrestricted access to the bully pulpit and its role in the rhetorical presidency as a crucial component of the president’s ability to govern the nation. “[T]he Constitution,” he writes, “does not oblige [the president] to share his pulpit with any other branch of government. His messages to the people do not have to be authorized by Congress, or upheld by the Supreme Court, or executed by the bureaucracy. He is free to use the rhetorical prominence of the presidency to clarify the ideas that animate his people and give purpose to their actions” (14). Despite the many political advantages it provides, however, overuse or misuse of the bully pulpit leads to an inherent problem of rhetorical leadership. Tulis posits that frequent presidential rhetoric is both good and bad for political discourse and leadership, and states that “[d]irect popular appeals are shown to be indispensable for periodic political needs but problematic when routinized. Thus, popular rhetoric [is] necessary to contend with the crises of depression, war, and civil strife but problematic in normal times where it trade[s] on images of war and strife inapposite to the politics it [seeks] to effect” (“Revising,” 4). Tulis acknowledges that the modern rhetorical presidency must continually change to adapt to the needs of the current polity, but stresses that to be an effective leadership tool, the bully pulpit must not contribute to a deterioration of the political process with excessive, emotional public appeals.

Since Theodore Roosevelt’s first use of the bully pulpit, our nation’s leaders have consistently relied on its political prominence to appeal to the public for support of
their initiatives. However, because its use became much more prominent during Reagan's presidency (Hart 9), analysis of Reagan's use and/or abuse of persuasive rhetoric is vital to understanding the influence publicly addressed speech has on the political process. Hart contends that if, as Windt suggests, rhetoric is part of a president's ability to govern, "a great deal of rhetoric must translate into a great deal of governance. If this is so . . . their speech texts must bear the scrutiny of the most perspicacious critic" (18), and part of the thorough scrutiny must illuminate the rhetorical situation and any exigencies faced by the rhetor.

In "Rhetoric and Its Situations," Scott Consigny argues that the "rhetorical act is one in which a rhetor becomes engaged in a novel and indeterminate situation and is able to disclose and manage exigencies therein" (179). Consigny contends that the role of rhetoric is thus both heuristic and managerial: heuristic in that the rhetor is able to discover the salient issues of a situation, and managerial in that the rhetor then is able to respond to the issues and bring them to an appropriate resolution (180). Martin J. Medhurst stresses the importance of understanding the rhetorical situation surrounding presidential rhetorical acts. He proposes that:

A rhetorical context is the unique array of forces—rhetorical, historical, sociological, psychological, strategic, economic, and personal—that exists at any given moment in time and that impacts the speaker's selection and presentation of topics, the ways in which the message is composed and treated, and the manner in which the audience is invited to experience and understand the discourse ("Presidential Speechwriting" XIX).
As a result, a textual and critical analysis of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech that not only closely analyzes the evolution of the text through its various drafts and edits, but also examines the rhetorical situation it addressed and the goals it hoped to achieve will deepen our understanding of presidential rhetoric and its role in modern leadership.

Because one of the most damaging drawbacks of the rhetorical presidency lies within the tendency of presidents to use excessive emotional appeals, it is important to contextualize the forthcoming analysis of the “Evil Empire” speech within the framework for presidential discourse suggested by Tulis. And, since the speech evoked an overwhelmingly negative emotional response, a critical analysis that explores this relationship is of utmost importance to determine the impact such practices have on our perceptions of presidential power. Finally, examining the text to discern its persuasive characteristics will help to determine whether Reagan’s controversial rhetorical act constitutes a “descent into demagoguery,” despised by our nation’s Founders and represents an abuse of the bully pulpit.

The Expanded Role of Speechwriters

Equally important to understanding the evolution of presidential rhetoric over the past century is gaining insight into how contemporary presidential speeches are prepared. Because much can be learned about a rhetorical act by studying its development and evolution, before explicating the critical approach used to access
the "Evil Empire" speech's persuasive dimensions, it is essential to explore the
process by which presidential speech is produced.

Contrary to a popular myth, the presence of speechwriters and their involvement
in presidential address dates back to the beginning of our country. Medhurst explains
that although the majority of presidents from George Washington through Woodrow
Wilson wrote their own speeches, "[e]ven Lincoln, the most rhetorically astute and
accomplished presidential orator of the nineteenth century, occasionally turned to
aides such as William Seward for help" ("Presidential Speechwriting" 4).

In her review of literature about speechwriting, Lois J. Einhorn contends that
using speechwriters is a necessity of contemporary leadership. She insists that
"[m]ost major leaders employ speechwriters to save time. Because their demanding
jobs entail so many responsibilities, and because they deliver so many speeches, they
simply do not have enough time or energy to write all of their messages" ("The
Ghosts Unmasked" 41). Further, she claims that mass media coverage of
contemporary political address necessitates speechwriters because of the potential for
any rhetorical act to become an official "public statement." A former speech writer
for President Gerald Ford, Craig R. Smith, suggests that contemporary presidential
speechwriting duties are divided among three groups: stylists, the individuals
responsible for composing the speech text; researchers, the staff members who
provide the factual and historical elements contained within a speech; and public
relations experts, persons who ensure the speech properly portrays the speaker's
ideas and opinions (53-54).
With a growing public awareness and acceptance of the role of speechwriters in presidential address, one of the strongest criticisms about the use of speechwriters has consistently been that because they are responsible for crafting the words someone else will ultimately deliver, the president is little more than a marionette delivering words prepared for him. This criticism has given impetus to numerous scholarly debates surrounding the ethics of ghostwriting and whether public address, as important as presidential rhetoric is, should be prepared by someone other than the orator. Medhurst disagrees, however, arguing that:

At the presidential level, there is simply no truth to the charge that words are being put into the president’s mouth. The presidents are too involved and the staffing process is too rigorous for anything like that to happen. The typical presidential speech—if there is such a thing as a typical speech—is vetted by anywhere from five to twenty people before it is finalized. Given such a process, it is hard for any one individual to dictate what the president will say (9).

This insight is particularly applicable to the role Ronald Reagan played in the construction of his public addresses. According to former White House Counsel Peter J. Wallison, unlike many other presidents, “Reagan understood the importance of his speeches in setting a direction for his administration and the country” (34), and made a significant effort not only to be involved in the development of his addresses but also to ensure that they reflected his longstanding beliefs and ideologies and not simply those of his speechwriters. Reagan speechwriter Anthony Dolan concurred. He explained that not only did the president recognize the importance of his
comments, he also used his speeches “to mobilize public opinion to make the government work in the direction [he] want[ed]” (Muir, “Ronald Reagan’s Bully Pulpit,” 205; see also Wallison 32).

Muir’s book The Bully Pulpit: The Presidential Leadership of Ronald Reagan, provides a wealth of information about how presidential speeches were crafted during the Reagan Administration. According to Muir:

The routine by which speeches were written and edited in the Reagan White House was straightforward, the process simple to describe. The chief speechwriter assigned an event to himself or to one of his colleagues, who prepared a first draft and handed it over to the chief for editing. Thereafter, the speech was circulated for comments—both from within the White House and from all relevant executive agencies. Responding to their suggestions, the speechwriter wrote a second draft, which was then forwarded to the president for his changes and approval (33).

The forthcoming critical analysis of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech explores in detail the numerous drafts of the final text to reveal the role its speechwriters played in its development. This not only enhances our understanding of how presidential speeches are created, but also provides a better understanding into the varied ways a final text is transformed by numerous participants.
Method of Analysis

Conducting a thorough textual analysis of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech requires using a unique approach, one that enables identification of the rhetorical problems, objectives and strategies of the address. Consequently, an approach drawing from numerous critical theories is utilized in this study. The approach draws from Aristotle’s epideictic and deliberative speech categories, Bonnie J. Dow’s views on presidential crisis rhetoric and Celeste M. Condit’s views on the expanded functions of epideictic rhetoric.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle divided rhetoric into three categories. *Deliberative* oratory argues for or against a future action, *forensic* oratory attacks or defends a person’s past actions, and *epideictic* or ceremonial oratory praises or blames a person or event in the present (1335). Analyzing crisis rhetoric’s epideictic and deliberative functions, Dow maintains that presidential speech that “responds to critical events is characterized by epideictic strategies that function to allow the audience to reach a communal understanding of the events which have occurred. In contrast, presidential rhetoric that is crisis-creating . . . is characterized by deliberative strategies that function to establish the expediency of action taken in an effort to gain public support” (296). Dow proposes that although different exigent situations require different rhetoric, applying an epideictic or deliberative lens to one’s analysis can produce fruitful results and a deeper understanding of the rhetor’s persuasive intent and objectives. Although Reagan was not facing a national security or other tangible crisis situation, it can be argued that within the context of the modern rhetorical presidency, declining public support could certainly constitute a leadership “crisis”
and require an expedient response. Even though numerous critiques have selected one Aristotelian category with which to analyze a rhetorical act, Kenneth S. Zagacki and Andrew King support Dow's suggestions and propose that reviews of "[p]residential rhetoric should serve as a guide to the historical, the ethical and the intellectual dimensions of executive acts [and] should merge the deliberative with the epideictic, the technical with the practical" (9). As a result, by reviewing the speech in terms of its deliberative and epideictic qualities, a greater understanding of Reagan's motives and goals can be achieved. But before proceeding, an expansion of the scope of epideictic rhetoric is in order.

Aristotle's original definition restricted epideictic discourses to ceremonial oratory of display that praises or censures someone in the present, "since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time, though they often find it useful also to recall the past and to make guesses at the future" (1335). According to Walter H. Beale, the development and exploration of epideictic rhetoric primarily focuses on either its function as ceremonial discourse or on its stylistic properties, with most identifications classifying it as speech of "praise or blame" (221; see also Chase 296). Additionally, Beale identifies another important distinction between epideictic address and other types of discourse. He reminds us that in epideictic speech, the audience is called upon to act as an observer or critic rather than as a judge. As a result, this salient difference "has helped to establish and perpetuate a view of epideictic which is predominantly literary, and which neglects the vital social role that epideictic plays in reinforcing traditional values by strengthening the 'intensity of adherence to the values it lauds'" (222).
To account for epideictic rhetoric’s ability to reinforce traditional values, Condit suggests expanding Aristotle’s limited epideictic classification from rhetoric that "generally features colorful style, praise and blame, noncontroversiality, universal values, and prominent leaders and speakers" (291). She claims that a more complete understanding of its rhetorical functions is necessary for contemporary criticism and proposes expanding its scope to encompass any public communications that "provide important understandings, allow the sharing of community, and permit future leaders to display their eloquence for the judgment of community" (296). She contends that three pairs of functions—definition/understanding, shaping/sharing of community, and display/entertainment—are present in epideictic speeches, and that they help define the rhetorical act for both the speaker and the audience. Moreover, the most complete epideictic address will combine all three functional pairs and result in a "communal definition:"

In speeches which define the community and the situations it faces, the speaker displays leadership and is judged for the humane vision with which the audience is ‘entertained.’ Simultaneously, the audience gains understanding of its shared self as community is created, experienced and performed” (291; see also Jamieson 147).

By synthesizing Condit’s three functional pairs into a broader view of epideictic discourse, three useful benefits arise. First, it allows an expansion of Aristotle’s epideictic classification beyond the discovery of the praise or blame bestowed by the rhetorical act and permits a critique to identify Reagan’s personal motives and goals. Second, it encourages a broader inquiry into the text’s persuasive strategies and
supports an in-depth evaluation of the speech’s success or failure to respond to its rhetorical problems. Finally, it provides one element of a framework from which a critical evaluation can be made that assesses the potential impact of the discourse on how future presidential rhetoric is understood and evaluated.

Aristotle also proposed that “rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion. Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated” (1327). Aristotle argued that there are three modes of persuasion present in public discourse: ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos is dependent upon the speaker's personal character as demonstrated in the speech; pathos places the audience into an impressionable state of mind; and logos is the proofs provided by the words of the speech (1329). Based on Aristotle's theory, Fisher contends that “[t]he key to the ethos (character) of Presidents is their conception of the relationship to the people, for in this conception lies their image of themselves and the role of the Presidency” (Human Communication 154). Hart extends these modes of persuasion to contemporary political rhetoric, saying that “[p]residents have developed a rhetorical reflex, a tendency to resort to public suasion as an initial response to a political situation” (33). And, he identifies the modes’ role in contemporary political rhetoric. Hart states that after inspiring the audience (pathos) and simultaneously building their own credibility (ethos), political rhetors should shape their discourse to fulfill the audience’s wants, desires and expectations (logos) and should leave the audience with information that will guide their future behavior (43). Applying Hart’s contemporary views of Aristotle’s modes of persuasion is particularly useful when
analyzing Reagan’s texts, because it enables a rhetorical critic to identify and explain how the modes of persuasion interact with the other persuasive elements of the discourse and either enable or prohibit rhetors from accomplishing their objectives.

Fisher’s views on narrative and public moral argument also help illuminate Reagan’s strategies. In *Human Communication asNarration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, Fisher contends that “to view communication through the perspective of narrativity is to focus on message, on the individuated forms that constitute it, and on the reliability, trustworthiness, and desirability of what is said” (143). He distinguishes between the public, moral and argument characteristics of such discourse. Public moral argument, he asserts, is designed to persuade the masses, “is aimed at what Aristotle called ‘untrained thinkers…’ [and] is a form of controversy that inherently crosses fields” (“Public Moral Argument” 12). Public moral argument focuses the discourse on human rights and reflects the common values of the community and the government. Public moral argument within the context of a narrative paradigm consists of “good reasons” as well as public debates about moral issues (12). Fisher also contends that “[p]residential heroes are made known to us ultimately through their capacity to articulate the inarticulate dreams of the people, giving them both a better vision of themselves and a way of realizing it” (310). Lewis suggests that public moral argument encourages narrative form, since “[t]he nature of the narrative form is said to be moral because stories make events intelligible by imposing a temporal order that leads to some end that defines the moral frame of the story and because the nature of the characters and events in the story will be defined with reference to that purpose” (290).
Hart observes that because contemporary society expects its leaders to be capable of speaking in an entertaining, informative fashion, eloquence is often considered a prerequisite to successful governance, and successful rhetoric often replaces action and identifies the deliberative functions of the address. He says this belief is perpetuated by political leaders who “come to feel that to have spoken about a matter is to have done something about that matter” (197), and by viewing Reagan’s comments in terms of their similar functions, the rhetorical analysis achieves a more thorough explanation of his objectives.

By synthesizing Dow’s views on presidential crisis rhetoric and Condit’s broader view of epideictic discourse into a critical framework that encompasses Hart’s view of rhetoric being a substitute for action, a useful theoretical perspective emerges. The perspective issues three significant benefits not available in other critical approaches. First, it allows an expansion of Aristotle’s epideictic classification beyond the discovery of the praise or blame bestowed by the rhetorical act and instead allows the critic to identify Reagan’s personal motives and goals. Second, it encourages a broader inquiry into the text’s persuasive strategies and supports an in-depth evaluation of the speech’s success or failure to respond to Reagan’s rhetorical problems by arguing for deliberative action. Finally, it provides a framework from which a critical evaluation can be made that assesses the potential impact of the discourse on how future presidential rhetoric is understood and evaluated.
Following Chapters

One of the purposes of studying presidential rhetoric is to examine the persuasive powers of presidential speech and demonstrate how it is used in modern governance. Therefore, an historical, textual and critical analysis of Reagan’s "Evil Empire" address will expand our understanding of the contemporary presidency’s rhetorical functions. As a result, the subsequent chapters will proceed as follows.

First, chapter two analyzes in detail the rhetorical situation surrounding the speech and examines the exigencies faced by the President that required a rhetorical response. It explores the media accounts claiming that Reagan was in danger of losing conservative supporters and backing for his weapons buildup, and demonstrates how prior rhetorical attempts to address this concern were unsuccessful. Next, it examines the nuclear freeze movement to inform the textual analysis that follows by clarifying the political obstacles Reagan faced before his address.

Building on this background, Chapter Three closely scrutinizes the evolution of the "Evil Empire" address. It illuminates the significant differences that exist between the consecutive drafts and explores in detail the importance of the subsequent edits and additions. Further, it highlights the significant role Reagan played in the preparation of the speech and sets the stage for an in-depth review of the final address.

Chapter Four reveals the persuasive strategies and methods present in the final version of the "Evil Empire" address. The analysis expands upon prior critical suggestions that the speech was both an attempt by the administration to reduce the
rhetorical strength of the nuclear freeze movement, and an attempt to “shore up” the
President’s conservative political base. Further, it demonstrates how Reagan’s
controversial address served both epideictic and deliberative functions, and applies
the previously explained critical framework to the final text.

Chapter Five culminates in a critical analysis of the persuasive strategies and
methods used in the address. It expands on Reagan’s use of the “bully pulpit” to
discourage public support of a nuclear freeze as discussed in the preceding chapters,
and assesses the implications and impact such rhetoric has on the rhetorical
presidency. Finally, the chapter concludes with an assessment of the persuasive
modes used by Reagan and aims to provide greater insight into how contemporary
presidential speeches are planned and executed and the impact this has on future
rhetorical studies.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Whenever a critic undertakes the task of analyzing a public speech, gaining an appreciation of the historical context that created the need for a rhetorical response is of utmost importance. Scott Consigny instructs us that as an art of topics, the “real question . . . is not whether the situation or the rhetor is ‘dominant,’” but the extent, in each case, to which the rhetor can discover and control indeterminate matter, using his art of topics to make sense of what would otherwise remain simply absurd” (185). Consequently, it is important to begin any critical analysis by providing a solid situational foundation, one that will further our critical understanding of why the text emphasized the elements it did. As a result, this chapter examines the two situational factors preceding the “Evil Empire” address that demanded a presidential response: a media-reported decline in President Reagan’s conservative support, and the growing strength of the nuclear freeze movement.

President Reagan’s Dwindling Public and Conservative Support

To many Americans, Ronald Reagan’s landslide victory over incumbent Jimmy Carter in 1980 was “a giant step in the long swing toward conservatism that started
in 1964" (Pemberton 91). With exit polls revealing that 25% of registered Democrats and 52% of Independents had voted for the conservative candidate, many were quick to assume that the President had been granted a conservative mandate and that conservative issues would be at the forefront of his presidency, particularly since strong conservative support had been crucial in his election (Ashford 31). Although Reagan enjoyed widespread popularity during the first few months of his presidency, by June 1981, the media began reporting a decline in his public support (“Gallup reports Reagan slipping” 14). Amid an economic recession and growing national concerns about the ongoing arms race, the once highly popular President’s public approval ratings continued to decline and the media expressed concern that he lacked the leadership qualities needed for a successful presidency. During the summer of 1982, Gallup polls continued to reveal that the President’s popularity was decreasing, and in August announced that the public’s approval of Reagan was at its lowest point since his landslide election victory (“Gallup survey finds approval” 14).

Despite the Administration’s efforts to reverse the President’s rapid decline, his public opinion ratings continued their descent. In the midst of accusations that he was little more than an “out-of-touch president being maneuvered into reasonable positions by a staff that sometimes does not seem overly respectful of [his] abilities” (Cannon and Hoffman A10), by January 1983, polls conducted by Harris Survey and Republican pollster Richard B. Wirthlin found that during the previous five weeks, Reagan’s overall approval rating had decreased seven points from 45 percent to 38 (Cannon and Hoffman A1). A Washington Post-ABC News public opinion poll reported the public to be very skeptical about his performance (Sussman A1) and
journalists from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* opined that Reagan’s administration was “‘troubled,’ ‘in disarray’ or ‘unraveling,’” while the President himself was described as helplessly ‘detached’” (Ceaser 5). A Gallup Poll survey indicated that the President’s “job-performance is poorer than 4 predecessors” (“Rating on Reagan” A14), *Los Angeles Times* columnist William Schneider declared Reagan to be at a “make-or-break” point in his presidency (1) and *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis noted that the President’s supporters were losing confidence in his leadership and values (A27).

A growing perception that his conservative support was decreasing compounded Reagan’s public opinion problems. Lewis insisted that the administration’s “ineptitude” was costing the President the support of previously loyal supporters (A27), and on January 19, the *New York Times* interviewed three disenchanted Reagan supporters who accused the President of abandoning his conservative values and becoming more “left wing” in his political beliefs (“Reagan goes left” 9).

*Washington Post* staff writer Lou Cannon reported that “[c]onservative publications and spokesmen [sic] have become increasingly critical of the administration in recent weeks, questioning whether the White House has abandoned conservative principles” (A2). Hedrick Smith wrote that right-wing loyalists were growing increasingly unhappy because of the President’s bipartisan compromises (A9). Following Reagan’s State of the Union address, *Washington Post* staff writer Paul Taylor reported that members of a conservative think tank “judged him to have strayed ominously from his fold” (A8), and the weekly conservative publication *Human Events* accused Reagan of losing sight of his prior vision and confidence (Smith A9).
The President was accused of “defaulting” on his campaign promises to revolutionize the political landscape (Broder A25). Media reports included ample remarks from disillusioned Reagan supporters including “conservatives Richard A. Viguerie and Paul M. Weyrich . . . [who] accused the President of failing to honor campaign promises to do something about abortion, busing and other social problems” (Averill 16), and even members of his administration voiced their concern that some of the President’s recent policy decisions had not only affected his conservative support but also could “destroy him politically” (Weisman B10). Representative Mickey Edwards (R-Okla), chairman of the American Conservative Union, echoed this concern, acknowledging that the coalition of conservative voters instrumental in the 1980 election needed to be rebuilt and reassured about Reagan’s conservative commitments (Averill 16). Overall, “critics on the political Right accused the president of deserting the dreams they had shared at the beginning of his administration” (Graebner 105).

Reagan responded to the media’s accusations by increasing his rhetoric about conservative issues. When asked if he had become more moderate in his political philosophies, the President remarked that “you must be doing something right when you’re getting rocks thrown at you from both sides” (“Second Anniversary”6), and he insisted that he was still pursuing the conservative agenda for which he was elected. On January 31, he addressed the National Religious Broadcasters at their annual convention, vowing to restore prayer to public schools (Clines A1). He urged broadcasters to join him to “march, lobby, and mobilize every force we have, so that we can end the tragic taking of unborn children’s lives” (“Annual Convention” 1).
Two weeks later, he addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference and "delivered a sweeping speech that touched on every issue dear to the hearts of conservatives" (Clines A9). Unfortunately, the media were quick to point out that his recent comments espousing conservative values were politically motivated (Cannon A2) and consequently had little impact on the growing disenchantment voiced by his right-wing followers. Compounding Reagan's political problems was the growing conservative interest in a nuclear weapons freeze, a movement that if successful, would destroy his plans to enhance the nation's defenses through an unprecedented military build-up. Since widespread conservative support played an instrumental role in Reagan's 1980 election (Clymer A18), the conservative president was greatly troubled by persistent accounts that more and more conservatives supported the nuclear freeze movement and opposed his desired weapons buildup.

The Nuclear Freeze Movement

In addition to appreciating Reagan's growing concern over his alleged diminishing public and conservative support, it is important to understand the nuclear freeze movement and why its growing conservative backing plagued the President. The first U.S. nuclear freeze proposal occurred in 1964, when the nation's substantial advantages in nuclear weapons technology and strategic weapons led President Lyndon Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to propose a nuclear freeze to Soviet Union General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev (Meyer 159). In 1969, the Nixon administration initiated SALT, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks,
in a first attempt to establish arms control agreements that would reduce the risks of nuclear war (Waller 27-28). A year later, the Senate proposed a freeze on nuclear missile flight-testing that passed in April of 1970 with the overwhelming support of 73 senators, and according to Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Director Gerard Smith, enabled the United States to “take the ‘high ground’ psychologically” (Meyer 159) in the increasing public debate surrounding nuclear weapons. Although the Soviets did not respond to the Senate’s 1970 resolution, they proposed a bilateral freeze on nuclear weapons and testing in 1976, 1977, and again in 1978 at the United Nations’ first Special Session on Disarmament. Although their proposals were never adopted, the UN General Assembly publicly stated that arresting the arms race was an important goal, and the Session attracted thousands of demonstrators opposed to nuclear weapons (Meyer 148).

Although the Soviet freeze proposals were largely ignored by American leadership, they reflected the growing international interest in a world free from the threat of nuclear confrontation and helped fuel the beginning stages of the nuclear freeze movement. In 1979, while Reagan was seeking the Republican presidential nomination and preparing for the 1980 election, nuclear freeze activists were beginning to mobilize support for a massive nuclear weapons freeze campaign. During the spring, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR) proposed that a nuclear freeze be added as an amendment to SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks), and author and Institute for Policy Studies Senior Fellow Richard Barnet published an article in Foreign Affairs that advocated a “three-year moratorium on the procurement, testing and deployment of all bombers, missiles and warheads” (786).
Founder of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies (IDDS), activist Randall C. Forsberg wrote *Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race*, a treatise proposing a bilateral nuclear freeze (305). In December, she addressed the Mobilization for Survival (MfS) annual convention and asked for their support in drafting a nuclear freeze proposal that called for an immediate stop to the production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons (Meyer 157). According to Tufts University Professor David S. Meyer, a former nuclear freeze activist and researcher for the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, Forsberg’s proposed freeze appealed to a wide range of organizations, to a large degree, because it was easily accessible and salable to the general public. Expressing a first step toward resolving a host of difficult problems in moderate and clear language, the nuclear freeze encouraged grassroots political mobilization, simultaneously tapping into a vein of populist antielitism that runs deep in U.S. political culture (157).

As a result, Forsberg’s freeze efforts not only had the potential to influence ongoing U.S./Soviet arms control negotiations but also would serve as the centerpiece of the nuclear freeze movement that was emerging.

In 1980, the movement began to attract the attention and support of a broad range of religious and peace activist groups. Organizations including the National Council of Churches, the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, Sojourners, and the World Peacemakers rallied support for a nuclear freeze and attempted to get the issue included as a debate topic during the presidential election. Despite the efforts of the movement to achieve national prominence and legitimacy during the
presidential election, a nuclear freeze and arms control issues in general were largely excluded, and Reagan’s overwhelming victory cast a dark shadow on the efforts of the nuclear freeze movement. Nevertheless, the movement soon recognized “Reagan as an asset for their efforts. By moving government policy and political rhetoric so far to the right, he created room for the movement to emerge” (Meyer 173), and his rhetoric repeatedly fueled their ongoing discussions and demonstrations. In fact, freeze activist John Issacs commented that the nuclear freeze movement “would never have materialized if Reagan had simply ‘kept his mouth shut for the first six months in office’” (Meyer 74; see also Leavitt 28).

In March of 1981, Georgetown University’s Center for Peace Studies hosted a nuclear freeze strategy conference to discuss mobilizing support for a national movement through a multi-step campaign that would expand public and political support and would result in the adoption of a nuclear freeze proposal (Meyer 176-77). The resulting campaign enabled the movement quickly to gain public support and by April of 1982, a survey revealed that 81% of those polled favored a nuclear freeze (Infomanage par. 2). Further, by April 19, “317 town meetings, 67 city councils, 19 county councils, 3 state senatorial districts . . . and the legislatures of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, Wisconsin and Iowa” (Kazin 523; see also Waller 40) endorsed a freeze through a variety of resolutions and proposals. One month later, Senator Edward M. Kennedy joined Senator Hatfield in introducing a second nuclear freeze resolution that was supported by 150 representatives and 21 senators (Kazin 523; see also Kimball par.9).
Although the resolution ultimately failed, by June it had amassed the support of 169 representatives and 25 senators.

On June 12, over one million people gathered in New York City’s Central Park during the United Nations’ second Special Session on Disarmament, calling for an immediate end to the nuclear arms race. Featuring numerous prominent speakers including several U.S. Representatives and prominent Americans including Edward Markey, Tom Downey, Corretta Scott King, Bruce Springsteen and Orson Welles, the speakers emphasized the importance of structured freeze participation in the upcoming midterm elections. Forsberg’s stirring address linked the nuclear freeze movement to federal budget issues by challenging the administration’s increased military spending and by questioning the reasoning of spending “$20 billion a year on these stupid weapons when infant nutrition and school lunches are cut back; student loans are cut back; the elderly are forced to go without hearing aids and eat dogfood [sic]; and 20 percent of the black population is unemployed” (qtd. in Meyer 187-88).

As a result of the national attention and interest generated by the June 12 demonstrations in New York, that fall, nuclear freeze referenda received the support of over 11 million voters (Cortright par. 6; see also Meyer 190). In December, the National Conference of State Legislatures “called on Mr. Reagan to move immediately to negotiate a mutual nuclear freeze agreement with the Soviet Union” (Miller A9) and numerous organizations including the Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Lawyers’ Alliance for Nuclear Arms Control proclaimed that a nuclear freeze should be a social action priority (Infomanage par. 4). Building on
their midterm election victories, movement leaders increased their efforts to influence 1984’s rapidly approaching national elections (Pincus A2). Former Vice President Walter Mondale announced his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, declaring that the nation deserved a leader in support of a nuclear weapons freeze. The House Foreign Affairs Committee began drafting another freeze proposal and was expected to approve a non-binding resolution urging the United States and the Soviet Union “to pursue a complete halt to the nuclear arms race, decide when and how to achieve a mutual, verifiable freeze on testing, production, and further deployment of nuclear warheads, missiles and other delivery systems, and incorporate negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear missiles into the strategic arms talks” (Hornblower A1). Because a growing number of politicians were expected to support the 1983 resolution (Pincus A2) and since the prior resolution had failed to pass the House of Representatives by only two votes (Herron and Wright 2E), Reagan and his advisors were greatly troubled by the freeze movement’s growing public support.

Compounding the President’s concern over the strength of a nuclear freeze was the increased conservative and religious support of the movement. In Britain, journalist R.W. Apple reported that “the Most Rev. Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said a full-scale nuclear war was unwinnable, said it was madness even to contemplate such a war and applauded those who demonstrate against nuclear weapons” (A12). The Protestant National Council of Churches pledged their support as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops rapidly approached the completion of a pastoral letter that declared nuclear war immoral, called for a nuclear weapons
freeze as well as substantial arms reductions, and characterized “planning for limited nuclear war as morally repugnant” (Raskin 105; see also Briggs A13). The Synagogue Council of America, an organization representing six leading Conservative, Orthodox and Reform groups, urged Reagan and Soviet leader Yuri Andropov to “seek a ‘total cessation of production and deployment of nuclear weapons’” (Clines A1), and an increasing number of other religious organizations including members of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) began joining the debate about nuclear freeze. As a result, the President and his advisors found themselves in a precarious political position, one that required an immediate, substantial response.

Combating Public Opinion with “Peace Through Strength”

As the momentum surrounding the nuclear freeze movement increased, President Reagan and his advisors were greatly troubled, particularly since they had consistently argued that a nuclear freeze would place the U.S. military in an inferior position to the Soviet Union and would jeopardize national security, an argument necessary to justify his recently proposed military budget increases. When the nuclear freeze movement began receiving regular media attention, Reagan attempted to stifle the growing interest by suggesting the possibility that nuclear freeze supporters were “carrying water” for the Soviet Union (Miller A9; see also Scoville 3; Maitland A1). Further, he even hypothesized that if Congress failed to fund production of MX missiles by rejecting or restricting his proposed defense budget, he
might discontinue U.S. participation in the arms negotiations taking place with the
Soviet Union in Geneva (Halloran A17). However, his efforts were largely
unsuccessful, and the media forcefully combated his statements with persuasive
evidence that refuted his position and encouraged the public to voice their discontent.
On March 7, the *New York Times* featured an editorial by John E. Rielly, the
president of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, who argued that “[b]oth the
public and [opinion] leaders are less concerned about the military balance between
the United States and the Soviet Union than four years ago” (A15). Rielly’s
sentiments were echoed by a public opinion poll suggesting that “a growing number
of Americans no longer fear that the United States is lagging behind the Soviet
Union in military prowess and feel the Reagan administration is spending too much
money on sophisticated new weapons systems” (Schmidt A1). Clearly, the
President’s military objectives were in jeopardy.

The growing interest surrounding the nuclear freeze movement was also
propelled by concern that the United States would fail to negotiate substantial arms
reductions with the Soviet Union in ongoing discussions taking place in Geneva.
Referring to allegations that Reagan was not genuinely interested in arms control,
Pope John Paul II urged the United States and the Soviet Union to reach a consensus
on disarmament, stating that to achieve world peace and security from a nuclear
holocaust, “all the parties [must] work in common, to progress in common on the
path of peace” (Kamm A11). Just weeks later, a widely-publicized Soviet editorial
blamed the United States for deadlocking negotiations “to insure by hook or by crook
a unilateral weakening of the U.S.S.R.’s defense potential” (Burns A1) and accused
Reagan of discussing arms control only as a “stall tactic” that enabled him to pursue his proposed military buildup. These sentiments were echoed in a *Washington Post* editorial by Joseph Kraft who commented that “there lurks the fatal suspicion that the Reagan administration, far from reaching an accord, is only seeming to negotiate in order to buy time for a military buildup” (A17). Soviet Union leader Yuri V. Andropov added to the mounting pressure troubling Reagan by stating that “the Soviet Union was prepared to do ‘everything within its power’ to reduce tensions, impose controls on nuclear weapons and end the arms race” (Cannon A1). Andropov repeatedly suggested a summit to discuss arms negotiations. Reagan’s refusals to meet with him perpetuated the public’s concern that the administration was more interested in a military build-up than in substantial weapon reductions.

Reagan insisted that although he was genuinely interested in achieving a disarmament agreement with the Russians, “[t]he only basis on which a fair agreement can be reached is that of equality of rights and limits between the U.S. and the Soviet Union” (Weisman A1). He and his supporters attempted to counter the nuclear freeze movement’s growing popularity by advocating the need to augment America’s military forces to achieve “Peace Through Strength.” Joseph Lehman, the chief spokesman for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, traveled extensively throughout the country “to deal with the ‘growing stridency and hysteria’ of the movement against nuclear weapons” (Miller A9) and tried to convince the country’s Roman Catholic bishops that a strong military force is an instrument of peace rather than an immoral effort. The National Coalition for Peace Through Strength organized anti-freeze rallies in an attempt to “counter the freezenik
demonstrators” (Hornblower A2), and the Coalition for Peace Through Strength announced their intent to fight the nuclear freeze movement at the local and state level (“New War of Words” 7). Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger contended that cutting the defense budget and restricting the modernization of U.S. military forces would pose a serious threat to national security, and “[o]ther officials said the Administration’s objective within the current five-year plan was to build a nuclear deterrent that could survive in a protracted nuclear conflict and, in the long run, be capable of forcing the Soviet Union to end such a war on terms favorable to the United States” (Halloran A1).

Although it never received the same religious support as the nuclear freeze movement, the “Peace Through Strength” campaign was supported by numerous prominent religious figures including Reverend Jerry Falwell who placed full-page advertisements in the Washington Post, the New York Times and other national newspapers urging the public to support President Reagan’s proposed military buildup. Falwell argued that:

It is time for patriotic, God-fearing Americans to speak up and let the nation’s leaders know where you stand on the critical issues of national defense. No matter how you look at it, the peace of the future is going to be decided by strength. Is it going to be American strength or Soviet strength? Vote now for Peace Through Strength (B18).

The administration augmented Falwell’s advertisement by declassifying secret intelligence information on the Soviet’s military capabilities to provide convincing evidence in support of the President’s position, but the media quickly labeled it a
strategic ploy. The *Washington Post* reported that “talk of declassifying some U.S.
intelligence data comes on the eve of a key committee vote in the House on a nuclear
freeze resolution and of planned demonstrations against the freeze” (Hoffman A2).

Despite its broad efforts, “Peace Through Strength” failed to change the opinions
of a public concerned that a military buildup would do nothing more than increase
deficits (Cohen A13). Arthur Macy Cox, a specialist on Soviet affairs and arms
control, insisted that Reagan was steering the nation on a course toward nuclear war
and encouraged the country to reconvene “genuine arms control negotiations with the
Soviet Union, giving priority to a ban on first-strike weapons, a comprehensive test
ban, and a ban on antisatellite weapons and other military uses of space” (A23).
Cox’s statements were echoed by a growing number of Americans and stimulated
broad conservative and religious support for a nuclear freeze, including many of the
President’s previously loyal supporters. As a result, the President greatly needed a
rhetorical opportunity that enabled him to justify his proposed weapons buildup in
terms that his wavering conservative followers could support.

Reagan’s Rhetorical Opportunity Emerges

With a growing number of religious organizations taking public stands on the
nuclear freeze issue, previously silent groups began joining the debate. One of these
undecided groups, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), invited President
Reagan to address them at their annual convention scheduled for March 8 in Orlando,
Florida, to help them reach a consensus on national security issues. With an
increasing number of NAE members voicing their opposition to NATO's scheduled deployment of missiles, "[t]he association's leaders decided a presidential speech might clarify the stakes" (Warner par. 48), and placed discussion of the nuclear freeze on the convention's agenda.

The NAE was formed in 1942 when a small group of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians met to "organize an Association which shall give articulation and united voice to our faith and purpose in Christ Jesus" (par. 10). The conservative organization quickly opened an office in Washington, D.C. to represent and support its interests with the State Department and the Federal Communication Commission (par. 12) and began establishing regional offices to support its growing membership. The NAE rapidly expanded during the 1950s, but national and cultural unrest in the 1960s and early '70s greatly impacted its previous growth. Toward the end of the 1970s, however, the organization again experienced rapid growth and "the new phase of NAE history swung into full gear with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan had come to power with the wide support of evangelicals" (pars. 27 and 29) and accepted an invitation to speak at the NAE's 1983 convention with the hope of influencing his audience to spread his nuclear freeze and arms control views to the Association's 3.5 million members (Groer A1).

The NAE's invitation was largely in response to the growing religious support of a nuclear freeze. As the Association prepared to meet, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops was finalizing their official statement about the nuclear arms race, the Protestant National Council of Churches had already pledged their support, and the NAE felt it important to likewise take a public stand on the issue. According to
Richard Cizik, a NAE legislative researcher, the President was expected to speak about religious freedom, the Cold War (Warner par. 42) and national defense (Dugan, "Letter to Ronald Reagan," 1), and his comments, they hoped, would help their membership reach a consensus on the nuclear freeze issue and enable them to declare their support for or against the freeze movement (Dugan, "Letter to James Baker," 1). In fact, Robert P. Dugan, Jr., the NAE’s Office of Public Affairs Director, specifically encouraged the President to discuss his objections to the nuclear freeze movement because:

> We believe that an address to NAE could be strategic politically, were the President to articulate his position on national defense. The [Protestant] National Council of Churches has already positioned itself on the left. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which at present is drifting in the same direction, will finalize its stance next May. On the other hand, the third major segment of the religious community is comprised of evangelicals, who are not yet firmly positioned on the nuclear freeze issue. They are thus, potentially, a major bloc of support for the Administration. However, evangelicals are being wooed by influential voices [even though o]ur NAE Washington office is working behind the scenes to counteract some of the drift toward the nuclear freeze position ("Letter to James Baker" 1). Consequently, the President was eager to address the conservative Evangelicals and use his comments to address his two significant rhetorical problems. First, with the media reporting that his conservative support was decreasing, Reagan’s address came
at an important point in the third year of his presidency. Amid speculation that his would be a “failed presidency” (Ceasar 5), it provided him with an exceptional opportunity to reassure his wavering followers that his dedication to conservative issues and values had not waned. Second, with the House of Representatives expected to pass the nuclear freeze resolution proposed by the Armed Services Committee, his comments occurred at a critical juncture in public debate and could potentially encourage undecided groups and individuals to oppose a freeze and instead support his weapons buildup. As a result, the NAE address provided an excellent opportunity for Reagan to address his rhetorical problems, and his speechwriting department began researching and crafting his forthcoming comments.
CHAPTER 3

EVOLUTION OF THE TEXT

For Ronald Reagan to overcome the rhetorical problems created by his dwindling conservative support and the increasing public interest in a nuclear freeze, his address to the National Association of Evangelicals needed to serve two purposes. First, it needed to refute the persistent media accounts that his conservative support had diminished, by convincing his audience that conservative values were still the primary force driving his political decisions. Second, he needed to generate support for his proposed military weapons buildup by convincing his audience that a nuclear freeze was not in the best interests of the country and by encouraging them to “spread his anti-freeze gospel from church pulpits and pews” (Groer A1).

Before examining the final speech in search of the ways it responded to its rhetorical situation, it is instructive first to chart the evolution of the text and acknowledge the role and influence of the speechwriter and others involved in the process. Medhurst contends that by studying the sequential development of the text, “we see how the study of the composition process itself teaches us about the forces at work in the particular rhetorical situation” (“Ghostwritten Speeches” 246). As a result, by carefully examining the progressive versions of the speech as well as the
changes made to the text by Administration staff, a better understanding and analysis of the final speech, its rhetorical problems and solutions, can be achieved.

Draft One: Dolan Attacks the "Elites"

Speechwriter Anthony Dolan penned draft one, produced on March 3 at 1:00 P.M. The draft provides a wealth of information about the administration's growing concern about media claims that the President's conservative supporters were doubting his commitment to their values and his faithfulness in pursuing a conservative political agenda. Dolan, a speechwriter "[w]idely respected for his political astuteness, literary power, and sense for an opponent's jugular" (Muir, "Ronald Reagan's Bully Pulpit," 196), was recognized within the Reagan Administration as a right-wing conservative. Consequently, the first draft attempts to make a clear distinction between Reagan and his conservative audience and "many of those in government, educational foundations and institutions and significant sectors of the media . . . [who] view everyday Americans as wanton and unwise" (3). The speech begins with a compliment honoring the NAE members for their spiritual and humanitarian works as well as a gracious acknowledgment of their continued prayers on his behalf. After sharing a brief humorous story about the different heavenly accommodations reserved for an Evangelical and a politician, the text begins demonstrating Reagan's faithfulness to conservative political issues. Not only does the text respond to recent accusations that the President has lost sight of his conservative values, it also overtly attacks the "elites in the media and entertainment
industry” for their approval of liberal political candidates, adultery, homosexuality and abortion, and claims that “less than 10 percent [of elites] give religion any important place in their lives” (3-4). It is interesting to note here that Dolan’s sharply worded attacks on the “elites” either fail to consider or ignore that the President was once a prominent, influential member of this elevated portion of society which, according to draft one, is the cause of so many of America’s ills. The text continues its attack on those outside the President’s current conservative followers by declaring that those agreeing with the “liberal-secularist philosophy” are attempting to replace traditional values and parental rights with their views, blaming them for “giving us inflation, recession, unemployment, unmanageable bureaucracy, trillion dollar deficits and a host of foreign policy debacles” (5). Again, the text single-handedly pursues a line of reasoning that removes any responsibility Reagan might share in America’s current situation and instead clearly identifies the portion of America, the “elites,” as responsible for the country’s plight.

In addition to illuminating the differences between Reagan and the “elites,” the first draft of speech goes to great lengths to reestablish the President’s commitment to conservative beliefs by attacking the “arbitrary imposition of liberal views” (8). First, it criticizes a judicial ruling that permits distribution of birth control to teenagers without parental consent, and complains that federally-imposed regulations requiring parental consent prior to the distribution of birth control “was met with attacks from the left portraying those of us in the Administration as a bunch of pinch-cheeked old prudes out to keep the kids from having a little fun” (4). Second, it insists that the recent controversy surrounding the inappropriateness of prayer in
public schools is evidence of a "liberal social philosophy" that aims to turn American schools into "social science laboratories where school children could be removed from traditional influences and taught instead the wonders of value-free science and moral relativism" (6). The resulting decline in the quality of American education, it claims, exists because the "elites on the left" are trying to force their values and beliefs on conservative Americans. Finally, it condemns abortion as "a great moral evil" that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of fetuses each year and claims that despite the warnings of conservatives that abortion on demand would lead to a decline in the nation's respect for human life, "many of those in the intelligensia and the glitter set scoffed" (8) at these warnings.

After recounting the many ways conservative values are under attack by the "liberals" and "elites" on the left, the first draft assures the audience that "the old liberalism--decadent and dying--is being replaced by a new political consensus, a consensus that wants government to perform its legitimate duties such as maintaining domestic peace and our national security but otherwise to leave the people alone" (9). It cautions that although the nation is experiencing a spiritual reawakening and a return to traditional values, "we must never forget an important distinction between our moral philosophy and that of the liberal-secularists . . . that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or as the theologians would put it: the doctrine of sin" (10). From this point, the first draft segues from reaffirming the President's conservative values to a broader discussion of good and evil and the moral dangers of supporting the nuclear freeze movement. Before defining the nuclear freeze movement and the arms race in good and evil
terms, however, the text acknowledges that American history is not without sin: it briefly refers to slavery, racism and other forms of ethnic and racial hatred as evidence of past American moral evils, and assures the audience that the Administration is currently battling the modern evil located in organized crime syndicates.

Dolan begins the text’s attack on the nuclear freeze movement by addressing what he terms “another illustration of the gulf between the views of our professional elites and those of everyday Americans” (12). After defining the Soviet view of morality as anything “that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting social order and for uniting the proleteriat” (13), the text insists that the refusal of many Americans to accept this “elementary insight” is evident in the growing strength of the nuclear freeze movement. Further, it suggests that future historians “will be shocked by the naivete and moral blindness of the unilateral disarmers” (13) and with their hindsight achieved by years of removal from the arms race will recognize the Soviet Union as “the focus of evil in the modern world” (13), a conclusion the text hopes to encourage the President’s supporters leaning toward a nuclear freeze to support. Next, the text strongly urges the audience during their discussions of the nuclear freeze movement to:

Beware the temptation of pride--the temptation to blithely declare yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to facilely call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourselves from the struggle between right and wrong, good and evil.
ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you bargain
away, for the sake of a few glowing minutes on the nightly news and a
little cooing from the glitter set, your vital support for this
Administration's efforts to keep America strong and free (14-15).

The first draft concludes by arguing that although the arms race is of significant
importance, the nation is faced by a much larger spiritual crisis and a test of morality
and religion. However, it assures the audience that the American people will
ultimately overcome the crisis "because the strength is our cause, the quest for
human freedom . . . and because this strength is spiritual and know [sic] no limitation
it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow
man" (15).

Before proceeding to a discussion of the second draft, three observations about
Dolan's first draft should be noted. First, by identifying the root of America's social
problems as the "elites" and "liberal secularists," the text rhetorically responds to
conservative accusations that the President was becoming more moderate in his
political beliefs. Second, it is reasonable to assume that these attacks were initially
intensified by Dolan because of the overwhelmingly conservative audience to which
they would be delivered. Third, as a result of the sharply worded attacks on the those
who do not share the President's conservative views, the first draft loses its initial
positive influence which could detract from its achieving its rhetorical goals.
Draft Two: Minor Changes Made by Administration Departments

Because of the influence a wide range of people within a presidential administration can have on the arguments made in the final version of a speech, it is important to acknowledge the existence of these viewpoints and include them in discussions of the text’s evolution. Muir contends that internal disagreements often occur during the speechwriting and editing process and the inclusion or exclusion of suggested changes reflect the personal interests of those involved. This insight is certainly applicable to the second draft of the “Evil Empire” speech because although it does not contain overly drastic revisions or edits, the changes suggested for this draft provide a wealth of information into how the presidential speechwriting process involves a diverse section of an administration’s many offices. Before discussing these changes, however, it is also important to note that White House speechwriting director Aram Bakshian later stated that he deliberately downplayed the significance of the NAE address when it was distributed, to prevent it from undergoing drastic changes by other administrative departments (Warner par. 78). His efforts are clearly reflected in the minor revisions suggested for draft two.

First, several edits were recommended to “tone down” Dolan’s sharply right-wing comments. A member of Chief of Staff James A. Baker’s office, Kenneth M. Duberstein, suggested that the speech’s reference to those who support the nuclear freeze movement merely to attain “a few glowing minutes on the nightly news and a little cooing from the glitter set” (15) be removed because of the likelihood that the Evangelicals would find the implication offensive. Staff members from the Department of Health and Human Services removed the textual reference to the
Administration as a group of "pinch-cheeked old prudes" because of their requiring parental notification before providing birth control to teenagers. An interesting series of terminology changes to Dolan's right wing comments also occurred in the many archived copies of the second draft. Staff members from the numerous departments all suggested changing Dolan's "elites" references to "elitists," which is interesting in that it reflects the differing perspectives about the meanings of the words, and hints at a possible perception that Reagan himself could be considered one of the "elites" referenced in the draft.

Abundant changes were also suggested to clarify the conservative policy issue discussions included in the text. Robert B. Carleson and Michael M. Uhlmann from the Department of Health and Human Services suggested the addition of three paragraphs further addressing steps needed to stop infanticide, and although their suggestions were not incorporated into subsequent drafts, they demonstrate Muir's observation that within the speechwriting process, various suggested changes and edits reflect the personal interests of the different departments (35). Minor changes were also suggested by Lawrence A. Kudlow from the Office of Management and Budget, Craig L. Fuller of the Department of Health and Human Services and Edwin L. Harper from the Office of Policy Development.

The most significant change made during circulation of the second draft was suggested by Sven Kraemer from the National Security Council who strengthened the argument against the nuclear freeze movement by adding numerical evidence of the West's prior efforts to secure world peace. Further, Kraemer augmented the text's solicitation for support for Reagan's proposed arms buildup arguing that
enhanced military strength was necessary “to negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world’s nuclear arsenals” (15) as an alternative to a bilateral nuclear freeze. It is also interesting to note that despite comments made by Dolan claiming that the speech’s controversial “evil empire” reference was consistently removed by those involved in the editing process, the phrase went untouched in the subsequent drafts. According to Dolan, numerous “West Wing ‘pragmatists’” objected strongly to the phrase and showed their displeasure by deleting the section (Warner par. 87). Because the archival records fail to support Dolan’s statements, this underscores the vital need to consult original source documents about the veracity of the speechwriting process.

Draft Three: The President Joins the Speechwriting Process

Many of us are familiar with the recurring criticism that since professional speechwriters are routinely used to craft presidential addresses, the resulting texts do not accurately reflect the beliefs and ideologies of the President. According to several former speechwriters interviewed by Einhorn, this criticism is largely unfounded because the speechwriter is expected to “reflect as accurately as you possibly can the policies of the President” (“The Ghosts Talk” 104). They also stressed that a crucial element of the success of any presidential speech is the involvement of the speaker in the text’s final stages of development. In keeping with this insight, a close review of the changes Reagan made to the third draft of the “Evil Empire” speech reveals not only that the President played a significant role in
shaping the final version of the address but also that he augmented Dolan's original draft with numerous salient statements, paragraphs and examples.

Muir's research on Reagan's involvement in the speechwriting process reveals that the President paid close attention to the content development of his discourse. As such, it is not surprising that he made some of the most instructive and significant changes in the "Evil Empire" speech. In fact, the President radically altered numerous sections of the third draft, and his changes provide insight into his awareness of his rhetorical problems. Reagan begins his changes by adding three significant sentences at the beginning of the address. Following a brief statement thanking the NAE for inviting him to join them and acknowledging the many prayers offered on his behalf, he adds that "I believe in intercessionary prayer. But I couldn't help but say to that questioner that if sometime when he was praying he got a busy signal, it was me in there ahead of him. I feel as Abe Lincoln felt when he said 'I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go'" (1). This is an important addition: by aligning himself with Lincoln, the President greatly augmented his developing ethos. After making numerous edits to enhance the storytelling quality of the prose and adjusting the humorous story to reflect his own speaking style, the President reminded them that his joke was not intended to "contribute to a stereotype" because, like himself, "there are a great many God fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life" (2). Further, he encourages them to continue their efforts of reminding those in public life of the ideas and principles that made them choose political service in the first place.
Reagan’s changes also demonstrate a concerted effort to tone down Dolan’s sharply right-wing rhetoric. The first obvious change in tone occurs when the President drastically alters a paragraph attacking many people in government, education, and the media for being “deeply secularist and decidedly liberal” and removes a statement that insists that these liberals view everyday Americans as “wanton and unwise” (3). Instead, Reagan changes the wording to acknowledge that conservative beliefs are often in conflict with those “who have turned to a modern day secularism, discarding the tried and time tested values upon which our very civilization is based. No matter how well intentioned, their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. And while they proclaim they are freeing us from superstitions of the past, they have taken upon themselves the job of superintending us by government rule and regulation” (3). The President continues, adding two pages of handwritten additions that discuss in detail the inappropriateness of providing birth control to teenagers without parental consent. He writes:

Let me state the case as briefly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent established clinics nationwide to offer help to these girls and hopefully to alleviate this situation. Again, let me say I do not fault their intent . . . Never the less the drugs and devices are prescribed without getting parental consent or giving notification. Girls termed ‘sexually active’--that has replaced the word
‘promiscuous’—are given this help in order to prevent illegitimate birth or abortion (4).

The President’s handwritten additions continue to comment that his Administration has been strongly criticized for “violating the privacy of young people” and that although clinics providing such help using Federal funds have been instructed to notify the teenagers’ parents, a court injunction frees them from doing so. He questions the morality of such a decision by asking:

Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And isn’t it the parents right to give counsel and advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their entire lives? We are going to fight the court decision but many of us in government would like to know what parents think about this intrusion in their family by government. While we’re at it we might also ask why it is that an underage girl can take advantage of our welfare regulations to obtain an abortion without her parents knowledge or consent. Yet she couldn’t have her tonsils removed without parental consent. Yet parental permission is required for any other operation. Yes we all know there are parents who for whatever reason have not communicated with their children as they should but there are millions and millions who have (5).
From Reagan’s condemnation of clinics providing birth control devices to teenagers without parental consent or notification, Dolan’s original draft moves into a lengthy discussion about prayer in public schools. It is interesting to note here, however, that Reagan again drastically altered the original text’s transitional paragraphs by removing several, strongly-worded indictments about the damage the “liberal social philosophy” has inflicted on America’s school system. He removed a statement accusing the “social scientist mentality” for causing a decline in the quality of U.S. education because of their “lax educational standards,” and deleted a sharp rebuke of the “small group of elitists on the left who still want to impose their value system on the vast majority of Americans” (7). Finally, he removed statements accusing “those who call themselves ‘liberals’ [of] using their position of power” to stifle religious expression permitted by the first amendment and removes several sentences arguing for the rights of religious schools to set their own curricula without state interference (8).

At this point, well on his way to reasserting his commitment to conservative values, the President makes a transition into another discussion of a highly-charged political issue: abortion. Reagan makes several significant changes to the text at this stage and interestingly enough, his changes reflect recent criticisms that he was becoming more mainstream in his political views. Dolan’s original draft labels “‘abortion on demand’ [as] a great moral evil that takes the lives of 1½ million unborn children a year” (9). However, not only does Reagan remove this inflammatory definition, he also removes a reference to “those in the intelligensia and the glitter set” who disagree that abortion has led to a decline in the country’s
respect for human life. These changes are somewhat tempered by his addition of a statement urging the audience to support legislation protecting human life, arguing that “[u]nless and until it can be proven that the unborn child is not a live entity than it’s [sic] right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness must be protected” (9).

After concluding lengthy remarks about the need for human rights legislation, Dolan’s first draft summarizes what he terms the “wreckage” caused by “several decades of liberal, secularist philosophy.” The original paragraph insists that these liberal political philosophies are being replaced by “a new political consensus, a consensus that wants Government to perform its legitimate duties, such as maintaining domestic peace and our national security, but otherwise to leave the people alone” (10), and although these statements echo the President’s longstanding beliefs, Reagan removes the entire paragraph. Instead, he replaces it simply with an acknowledgment that despite the many reasons for conservatives to be discouraged, “there is a great spiritual awakening in America” and the country is beginning to return to traditional, conservative values (10).

Although the next several paragraphs of Draft 3 feature minor edits made by the President, his next significant changes occur during the general discussion of good and evil. In addition to removing two paragraphs discussing the evil present in organized crime as well as removing “another illustration of the gulf between the views of the professional elitists and those of everyday Americans” (13), Reagan significantly alters the paragraphs discussing Marxist-Leninist philosophy. He replaces a quote referencing their self-proclaimed willingness to “commit any crime, to lie, to cheat” to further their cause with a less harsh statement claiming that the
only morality the Soviet's recognize is one which will further "world revolution" (13). He references how his statements have been treated as unjustified accusations against Soviet philosophy rather than what he insists are "a quote of their own words" (13) and replaces a paragraph responding to these accusations with "[t]his misrepresentation is frequently repeated accompanied by a charge that my harsh and intemperate accusations are making it impossible for us to have any kind of understanding with the Soviets" (14). Clearly, as evidenced through his handwritten additions, the President was well aware of the recent media criticisms condemning his "zero option" stance against the Soviet Union in arms control negotiations.

Reagan also makes several significant changes with regard to Dolan's strongly worded attack on the nuclear freeze movement. After leaving Dolan's transition from a brief discussion of Soviet doctrine to the nuclear freeze movement untouched, he acknowledges that despite their philosophical differences, "[t]his does not mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them." He softens the rhetorical attack on the nuclear freeze movement by removing a statement referring to the "naivete and moral blindness of the unilateral disarmers." Although he insists that "I intend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful intent," he strongly cautions the Soviets by adding a strong warning. "At the same time, however," he states, "they must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God" (14).
At this point, the President again demonstrates his important role in the speechwriting process. He strengthens his position against the nuclear freeze movement by sharing a story about entertainer Pat Boone. Reagan writes:

A number of years ago I heard a young father addressing a tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the Cold War when communism and our own way of life were very much on people's minds and he was speaking to that subject. Suddenly I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than anything in the world but I would rather see them" and I thought oh no, don't say that. But I had underestimated him. He went on "I would rather see them die now still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God." There were thousands of young people in that audience. They came to their feet with shouts of joy. They recognized the profound truth in what he had said (14A).

From this dramatic example, the President astutely brings the discussion back to the current U.S./Soviet conflict by urging the NAE members to "pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God" (14A), but reminds them to never forget that until they do, they are the "focus of evil" in contemporary society.

Several additional comments about Reagan's edits need to be made to understand further the role he played in the final development of the text. First, as explained, Dolan's original draft contained numerous harsh references to liberal secularist philosophies, the left, and the elites. Reagan himself toned down the attacks by either
removing the phrases entirely or by rewording the statements to be less hostile. This is noteworthy because of the recent conservative accusations reported by the media that Reagan was losing his conservative focus and was becoming more mainstream in his political convictions. Second, the President's personal interest and involvement in the preparation of his political speeches rebuts criticisms that he was uninterested in the speech preparation process by demonstrating that he was "far more involved in his presidential speeches than most of his twentieth-century predecessors . . . and spent considerable time and energy on all of his major addresses (Medhurst, "Presidential Speechwriting," 8). Third, his changes reflect his exceptional communicative skills and provide tremendous insight into not only his perceptions of the importance of well-crafted discourse but also his intuitive ability to perform as a successful storyteller.

Draft Four: The Final Draft is Released

Draft four, circulated on March 7, incorporated nearly all of the President's proposed changes. Although this version of the speech was not circulated widely for additional input from the various Administration divisions, an important expansion of the nuclear freeze argument occurs at this stage. Several significant paragraphs discussing the nuclear freeze movement were suggested by Kraemer, and although five of his ten suggested paragraphs were deleted, they provide a wealth of information about the Administration's concern about the growing popularity of the movement and their strategies for overcoming its rhetorical strength.
Kraemer’s recommended insert begins by saying that because of the contrasting values and histories of the United States and the Soviet Union, “we are pledged to assure strong deterrent forces which can preserve the peace and protect the flowering of freedom” (1). The first paragraph continues to argue for Reagan’s “peace through strength” initiatives, arguing that “we must - - in the face of the continued Soviet military build-up—modernize our too long neglected armed forces and must restore the margin of safety. It is in this light that we must work for real reductions--at equal and verifiable levels--in the world’s nuclear arsenals” (1). Building on this momentum, the second inserted paragraph begins with a direct attack on the nuclear freeze movement by asserting that the United States “can assure neither deterrence, nor freedom, nor meaningful and stabilizing reductions through the so-called nuclear freeze resolutions being proposed by some. The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud” (1). He strengthens the argument against a nuclear freeze by insisting that it would end the possibility for major arms reductions, would reward the Soviet Union for their recent military buildup, would forbid the United States from modernizing its aging, vulnerable forces, and would be virtually impossible to verify.

In addition to the passages suggested by Kraemer that were included in Reagan’s final address, the segments that were removed provide important insight into how the growing threat of the nuclear freeze movement was perceived by Reagan’s advisors. Further, these deleted passages reflect the speech’s attempt to link arms control negotiations and nuclear freeze discussions to moral values. After illustrating the limitations and potential dangers of a nuclear freeze, Kraemer adds:
I believe it must be plain to every single American, indeed to all the
world who want, as I do, effectively to reduce the arsenals and risks of
war, that a freeze at current levels of arms involves dangerous illusions
which grievously damage the cause of peace, of freedom, and of
genuine arms control. This Administration’s far-reaching arms
reductions proposals left the freeze proposals in the dust a long time
ago. Even the Soviet Union has, in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
(START), proposed reductions in current arsenals. Would it really be
wise, or moral, to abandon the serious Geneva reductions negotiations
in favor of a freeze at current high levels? Should we really be
removing the incentive for the Soviet Union to negotiate reductions to
far lower and equal levels of arms (2).

By directly linking the freeze proposals to the ongoing arms reduction
discussions in Geneva and by attempting to reinforce the immorality of a nuclear
freeze, Kraemer’s suggestions strengthen the President’s “peace through strength”
position. In light of the potential impact these statements might have had, it is
curious that the passages were removed. Had the President voiced these statements in
the final “Evil Empire” text, it is possible that not only would they respond
rhetorically to accusations that he was not interested in “genuine” arms control
negotiations, but they also would have formed an additional argument against the
President’s supporters.
CHAPTER 4

THE FINAL TEXT

Building on the foundation provided by reviewing the evolution of the “Evil Empire” speech, close scrutiny of the final text is in order. This chapter examines and analyzes the address in order to achieve the following goals. First, it explicates how Reagan used persuasive strategies to create and enhance his ethos. Second, it reveals how the text responded to his two rhetorical problems. Third, it demonstrates how the speech operates as both an epideictic and deliberative address, by identifying the textual elements that perform each function. Finally, it provides a basis for a critical evaluation that addresses the potential impact the speech has on future presidential rhetoric.

Reagan Reaffirms His Dedication to Conservative Values

In order to overcome the exigencies that created his rhetorical problems, Reagan first needed to reassure his conservative followers that he has not lost sight of the principles and values for which they elected him. The first portion of Reagan’s address thus aims both to reestablish the president as the nation’s moral and spiritual
leader and to create a shared experience that reinforces his primary audience's key values and identities. Because a vital ingredient in the success of any rhetorical act is the rhetor's capacity to persuade the audience to support his views, the ability to establish credibility and ethos is of utmost importance. Both Aristotle and Hart say that political credibility is often achieved through the words a political rhetor speaks and this insight provides an excellent lens through which to view Reagan's ethos-building efforts.

One of the first ways Reagan attempts to build his credibility is through subtle shifts in tone. Predictably, his opening comments are gracious. He warmly thanks the National Association of Evangelicals, saying "I can't tell you how you have warmed my heart with your welcome. I'm delighted to be here today" (1). Next, he humbly acknowledges their continuous prayers on his behalf, commenting that "Nancy and I have felt their presence many times in many ways. And believe me, for us they've made all the difference" (1). After these comments, however, two subtle shifts in tone occur. Reagan first becomes reflective, recounting a recent occasion where he was asked whether he was aware of "all the people out there who were praying for the President" (1). He acknowledges that yes, he is aware, and the speech's first hint of humor appears when he responds that "if sometimes when [the reporter] was praying he got a busy signal, it was just me in there ahead of him" (1).

Immediately after these comments, an additional key strategy employed in the speech's opening paragraphs surfaces, that of quoting famous American figures. Building on his prior statements about the presence of prayer in his daily life, Reagan quotes Abraham Lincoln to comment that he, too, has "been driven many times to
[his] knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go" (1). This quotation plays an important role in developing his ethos because by acknowledging the importance he places on prayer, both personal and intercessionary, the President provides rhetorical evidence, or logos, that he is a worthy leader. Quickly thereafter, Reagan uses a strategically placed enthymeme that relies on the audience’s awareness of the stereotypes surrounding political events when he jokes that “[f]rom the joy and the good feeling of this conference, I go to a political reception” (1). This persuasive statement enables him again to interject humor into the beginning of a powerful foreign and domestic policy speech and enhances his ethos by creating an inviting, positive relationship between him and his primary audience.

Reagan next entertains the NAE members with a joke about an evangelical minister and a politician who arrive in Heaven at the same time. He explains that the minister receives a small, simple room whereas the politician receives a beautiful mansion. Confused by the drastic difference in the two men’s accommodations, the politician asks St. Peter “. . . ‘how do I get this mansion while that good and holy man only gets a single room?’ And St. Peter said, “You have to understand how things are up here. We’ve got thousands and thousands of clergy. You’re the first politician who ever made it” (1). This well-delivered joke received an enthusiastic response from the audience, and builds on the previous enthymeme employed by Reagan and enhances the casual, friendly relationship he is developing with his audience. Further, it also makes a silent suggestion to the audience: as part of his ethos-building efforts, Reagan subliminally suggests that he is one of the few
politicians who will someday “make it” to Heaven, and as such, the story enhances his credibility greatly.

Reagan’s embedded humor plays an important part in his developing ethos and is strategically used to inoculate his audience against being overwhelmed by the strong lines the speech later draws between good and evil. The use of humor in a serious, morality based speech poses an interesting challenge: if his comments are received as too jocular, the seriousness of his arguments might be overlooked or trivialized. On the other hand, without some light moments, the speech runs the risk of being overpowering and disconcerting, both of which can detract from his display of eloquence. To prevent this from happening, however, the speech carefully transitions from humor by stating that:

I don’t want to contribute to a stereotype. So I tell you there are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company And, yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideas and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted (1-2).

Reagan next reaffirms his eloquence and further supports his belief that God must be a part of political governance by quoting numerous famous American figures. After insisting that the American experiment in democracy rests on an important insight, that “freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and
humbly accepted” (2), he quotes William Penn to remind the audience and nation that “[i]f we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants” (1). Reagan immediately follows Penn’s quote with two equally powerful statements made by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington: Jefferson reminds us that “[t]he God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time” and Washington states that “of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports” (2). Reagan summarizes his previous quotations in a dramatic statement made by Alexis de Tocqueville who vividly recognized the importance of religion and God in the political process when he said that “[n]ot until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and genius of America. America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great” (2). By incorporating statements made by revered political figures, Reagan’s references not only provide support for his later arguments but also substantially add to his ethos by creating a rhetorical link between himself and other “great” spiritual and political leaders in America’s history.

After developing a positive rapport with his audience and simultaneously establishing his ethos, Reagan begins to address his first rhetorical problem: the accusations that he has lost sight of his conservative principles and values for which they elected him. The next portion of the address thus aims both to reestablish the President as a worthy conservative and to create a shared experience that reinforces his primary audience’s key values and identities, and Reagan accomplishes this through the strategic use of proofs. Celeste Condit explains that “[t]o insure the
power of this shared experience, the speaker must create a vivid picture of the shared
definition, not merely a clear and rational case” (292), and Reagan’s eloquence
continues to play an important role in accomplishing the task of placing the audience
in an impressionable state of mind, what Aristotle refers to as pathos. He begins by
telling the audience that he is pleased to be in the company of those “who are
keeping America great by keeping her good” and commends them for helping him
“keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last, best hope of man” (2).

Building on the positive response these statements generated, Reagan addresses
the audience as a moral and spiritual leader who has transcended his presidential
office in order to confront the many moral and ethical problems facing the nation.
This subtle persona shift allows him strategically to place himself on even footing
with the country’s other religious leaders, and enables him to discuss political issues
in moral terms. The first sign of this persona shift appears when he states that “this
administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of
America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods,
communities--the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others
and respect for the rule of law under God” (2). By discussing the importance and
necessity of following the rule of law under God, his comments accomplish two
salient objectives in his quest to reestablish his conservative beliefs. First, they
enable him to construct a religious, moral framework in which his forthcoming
arguments will be placed. Second, his words help maintain his spiritual and
conservative identity. Reagan next distinguishes his conservative supporters as
separate from those who advocate “a modern-day secularism, discarding the tried and
time-tested values upon which our [very] civilization is based” (2). He claims that not only do these secularists ignore the values and principles on which the nation was founded, they also attempt to impose their “radically different” ideals on the rest of the country. This attempt, he states, reflects their intentions to superintend America with governmentally-imposed rules and regulations. His implication, of course, is that the correct values of conservatives are under attack. As a result, by eloquently praising his audience and blaming those who do not share their conservative values, Reagan’s comments transcend ceremonial oratory and translate into enhanced ethos for himself in the eyes of his audience.

Building on the dramatic tension created by his cautionary comments, the President segues into a discussion of conservative political positions to reassure his concerned followers that his values still mirror theirs. Hart argues that because our contemporary society expects its leaders to be able to speak in an entertaining, informative fashion, eloquence is often considered a prerequisite to successful governance, and successful rhetoric often replaces action. Hart maintains that this belief is perpetuated by political leaders who “come to feel that to have spoken about a matter is to have done something about that matter” (Sound of Leadership 197). Reagan’s strongly worded indictments of abortion, providing birth control to teenagers and forbidding prayer in public schools enable him to rhetorically “do something” about these conservative issues. Further, his topical development of these highly-charged political issues enables his comments to develop increased momentum and influence.
The President begins by arguing that federally-funded clinics that provide birth control drugs and contraceptive advice to teenagers without parental consent or notification are adding to the immorality of America’s youth. Although he admits that this practice originated because of a group “sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent,” he is quick to question the appropriateness of a practice that fails to emphasize or acknowledge “morality as playing a part in the subject of sex” (3). Reagan determinedly states that his Administration is going to fight a judicial injunction preventing them from requiring federally-supported clinics to notify a teen’s parent prior to providing contraceptives because “[t]he rights of parents and the rights of family take precedence over those of Washington-based bureaucrats and social engineers” (4).

Reagan’s efforts designed to demonstrate his deep commitment to conservative values continue when he states that “the fight against parental notification is really only one example of many attempts to water down traditional values and even abrogate the original terms of American democracy. Freedom prospers,” he continues, “when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged” (4). From this statement, the text evolves into a discussion about reinstating prayer in public schools by briefly discussing the ways in which these “bureaucrats and social engineers” have attacked the religious principles contained in the first amendment. The Founding Fathers, Reagan insists, passed the first amendment to protect religious organizations from governmental interference. They did not, he emphatically states, intend “to construct a wall of hostility between government and
the concept of religious belief itself” (4). Consequently, he infers that the recent rules prohibiting prayer in public schools are yet another attempt by the liberals to impose their radically-different values on the rest of the country.

To justify this argument further, Reagan cites numerous contemporary political occasions that reject the hostile attitude toward religion and government issues. He posits that:

The evidence of this permeates our history and our government. The Declaration of Independence mentions the Supreme being no less than four times. ‘In God We Trust” is engraved on our coinage. The Supreme Court opens its proceedings with a religious invocation. And the Members of Congress open their sessions with a prayer. I just happen to believe the schoolchildren of the United States are entitled to the same privileges as Supreme Court Judges and Congressmen (4).

He calls on his audience to assist him in restoring prayer to public schools through a constitutional amendment and declares that it already has amassed tremendous bipartisan support. He next addresses a new target audience, the U.S. Congress, and urges them to grant school children the same religious rights they enjoy by calling on them to “act speedily to pass [the amendment] and to let our children pray” (4). At this juncture, it merits note that the President’s comments combine the functions and purposes of epideictic speech and those of deliberative policy argument. By addressing both the NAE and the Congress and advocating specific policy action, Reagan is not only able to exhibit his commitment to conservative issues but also demonstrates a contemporary function of the rhetorical
presidency because he takes rhetorical action in lieu of political, policy action. Reagan concludes his remarks about the importance of prayer in public schools and religious freedom with a narrative example that cites a recent judicial ruling making it "unconstitutional for a school district to give equal treatment to religious and nonreligious students [sic] groups, even when the group meetings were being held during the students' own time" (4). Fortunately, he informs the audience, legislation correcting this judicial error by prohibiting discrimination against religious speech has been introduced by Congress, and he again solicits their support in getting it passed.

Before proceeding to the next way the speech reaffirms Reagan's conservative beliefs, it is instructive to note that his comments are beginning to develop an implicit argument that will become much more prominent later in the address. By addressing conservative issues before a conservative audience, the President's objectives depend on the audience's full acceptance of his beliefs and are likewise empowered by the positive response they receive. Consequently, by identifying "good" political positions and contrasting them with "bad" policy made by the "bureaucrats and social engineers," he will be able to later rhetorically transfer the NAE's unspoken approval of his political positions to the good and evil arguments present in the nuclear freeze movement.

A third way Reagan reaffirms his conservative values and narrows his argument about good and evil is in his discussion of abortion and infanticide. He reveals that "abortion on demand" takes the lives of 1½ million unborn children annually, and expresses his hope that "human life legislation ending this tragedy will some day
pass the Congress and you and I must never rest until it does" (4). He emphatically continues his attack on the common practice of abortion, arguing that “[u]nless and until it can be proven that the unborn child is not a living entity, then its right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness must be protected” (4-5). After briefly discussing the residual effect legalized abortion has had on the nation’s respect for human life, he announces that recent legislation introduced in the House of Representatives will, if passed, increase restrictions on abortion and will prevent other forms of infanticide. Again, by urging the NAE as dedicated, moral Christians and the Congress, as “good and noble” men and women, to fight against abortion-on-demand, the President substitutes “deeds done in words” for policy action. This enables him to create an illusion that he is indeed doing something about the political issues important to his conservative supporters and has not abandoned his conservative beliefs.

By commenting on numerous conservative issues important to his audience, Reagan’s discourse fulfills what Condit refers to as the shaping and sharing of community function of epideictic discourse. She explained that epideictic speeches usually reference a community’s shared heritage and values and “[renew] its conception of itself and of what is good by explaining what it has previously held to be good and by working through the relationships of those past values and beliefs to new situations” (289; see also Fisher 145). Consequently, by discussing numerous “good” conservative political positions, Reagan begins laying the groundwork for his forthcoming indictments of “bad” political positions within a broader context of good and evil.
Before shifting to a larger discussion of good and evil, the text devotes several paragraphs to enhancing the President’s ethos and consequently, his comments serve two additional purposes. First, they enable him to reaffirm his conservative values by renewing his beliefs, reminding his audience that he is a worthy leader. Second, they summarize his discussions of “good” political decisions and firmly establish the theoretical, moral groundwork that will be vital in his future discussions of good and evil. He assures the audience that despite their understandable discouragement, their efforts have had a positive effect on American life. “There is a great spiritual awakening in America,” he states, “a renewal of the traditional values that have been the bedrock of America’s goodness and greatness” (5), and intimates that this would not be possible without organizations like the NAE. He informs the audience that a recent survey revealed that the nation as a whole is more religious than other countries, and quotes another study that found that “an overwhelming majority of Americans disapprove of adultery, teenage sex, pornography, abortion and hard drugs. And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief” (5). Here, another persuasive strategy emerges: statistics are provided as influential logos and are used to add weight and credibility to his argument. Further, these comments serve as an important bridge between his previous comments and his upcoming deliberative requests regarding the nuclear freeze movement because they enable him to build on the audience’s unspoken agreement and transfer their acceptance of his leadership into a new context.

Here, another persuasive strategy used to demonstrate Reagan’s eloquence and leadership emerges. Made possible by the religious audience to whom the comments
were addressed, he voices his support of America’s spiritual reawakening by proudly declaring that “Yes, let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream” (6). This embedded Biblical reference paraphrases Amos 5:24 where Amos says “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (841) and enables the President to demonstrate that he is an appropriate spiritual leader.

Condit argues that epideictic discourse “works not only to maintain community values (a conservative function perhaps), but also to accomplish the progressive function of adapting our community to new times, technologies, geographies, and events” (297). She says that ceremonial occasions allow the rhetor to reaffirm commonly held beliefs and the community’s shared heritage and to explain and define new situations and events, and Reagan’s concluding remarks exemplify this progressive function. Consequently, by “giving a speaker the right to shape the definition of the community, the audience gives the speaker the right to select certain values, stories, and persons from the shared heritage and to promote them over others” (289). This specific function of epideictic discourse is essential to Reagan’s success in his forthcoming deliberative arguments about the ongoing nuclear freeze debate.

By dedicating over half of the speech to reaffirming his conservative values and displaying his eloquence, Reagan’s comments accomplished two very important objectives. First, he was able to enhance his ethos dramatically, an effort vital to the success of his forthcoming deliberative intentions. Second, and perhaps more significantly, Reagan was able to redefine the views of his audience and adapt them to his broader discussion of good and evil.
Reagan Lobbies For Support of His Military Objectives

An important transition occurs when Reagan reminds the audience that despite America’s many accomplishments and moral record, “no government schemes are going to perfect man” (6). He declares this to be so because “[t]here is sin and evil in the world. And we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might” (6). At this stage in the speech, Reagan’s comments change from serving primarily epideictic functions to arguing for specific policy-related results, and his secondary purpose, convincing the NAE to oppose a nuclear freeze, emerges. However, before he is able to present his nuclear freeze views and argue for their moral superiority, a broader definition of the good and evil context in which his statements will be placed must be provided.

Bonnie Dow says that “[f]undamentally, deliberative rhetoric is concerned with ‘establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action’” (302). Conversely, for the “Evil Empire” speech to be successful in its deliberative efforts, the President must establish the necessity of supporting his peace through strength position by emphasizing how the proposed by the nuclear freeze movement will weaken the military strength and moral virtue of the country. Reagan begins this task by acknowledging that although the United States has its own legacy of evil, “[t]he glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past” (6). After briefly touching on the American sin evident in the historic practice of slavery and the recent reappearance of ethnic and racial hatred, he insists that the nation must work to cleanse itself of the various forms of evil and identifies the first expedient step the audience must take in the battle between good and evil. “I know
that you have been horrified,” he begins, “by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice. Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate these hate groups in our midst” (6). Next, the President uses another key scriptural reference to condemn the racial hatred of these groups, quoting St. Matthew to proclaim that “[t]he commandment given us is clear and simple: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’” (6). These statements exhibit the first stage in the President’s rhetorical attack on evil and represent his last appeal intended to enhance his ethos and speaking credibility. He transitions from discussing America’s legacy of evil by declaring that despite this tragic element of the country’s past, its history still primarily represents “the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom, but not just for ourselves, but for millions of others around the world” (6).

After identifying morality as a key part of the battle against sin and evil, Reagan carefully shifts his focus to demonstrate how it is under attack by briefly illustrating the underlying principles supporting Communist thought. He begins by describing how the Soviet Union’s view of morality vastly differs from that of the United States, stating that “the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution . . . Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat” (6). These comments represent the President’s first attempt to place his foreign policy decisions within a broader context of good and evil. By drawing a clear distinction between what the United
States and Soviet Union view as moral behavior, Reagan builds on the audience's previously established communal definition of morality, sin and evil to identify the Soviets as "enemies" of the traditional values and beliefs held by Americans. At this juncture, his persona subtly shifts from being a worthy, moral, conservative leader to that of the nation's commander in chief. This persona shift is worthy of mention because in his new rhetorical role, the President's comments request the audience to make specific, deliberative decisions about arms control issues and the nuclear freeze movement and not merely accept or reject him as an appropriate leader.

It is important here to note that when Reagan states that there is sin (offenses against religious or moral law) and evil (morally reprehensible behavior) in the world and argues that "we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might" (6), he makes no distinction between church and state. His comments are a direct appeal to both secular and religious audiences. The statement's literal meaning allows Reagan to use it as a broad umbrella under which his future argument against a nuclear freeze fits neatly. Further, Reagan's use of both "sin" and "evil" also creates an interesting relationship between the two different words. He says that "[w]e know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin" (6). Reagan's distinction between evil and sin, using evil as the term for the secular world and sin for the religious world, is an important one in that it enables him to link the two ideologies together and use them jointly to emphasize his point. He acknowledges the presence of both sin and evil in the world, and in the fight against them, the religious and political worlds must work together. His use of
“evil” and “sin” also categorizes prior topics of his speech: the right to life argument deals with “sin,” the arms race and proposed nuclear freeze deal with “evil.”

Reagan quickly relates sin and evil to his opposition of a nuclear freeze by explaining that since the Soviet Union views morality as subordinate to class war, his differences with the nuclear freeze movement are an example of a contemporary battle between good and evil. He proposes that one way the country can battle the Soviet Union’s immorality is by updating its military arsenals rather than freezing weapons production, and argues for support of his efforts to reinforce the nation’s military resources while working toward a reduction in strategic ballistic missiles. He assures the audience that despite the vast differences between American and Soviet ideologies, he will continue to work with them to reduce and eliminate strategic ballistic and intermediate-range nuclear missiles but begins his rhetorical attack on the nuclear freeze movement by emphatically stating that:

[The Soviet Union] must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God. And we will never stop searching for a genuine peace, but we can assure none of these things America stands for through the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some. The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength (7).

Adding to the momentum generated by these statements, he declares that the only “freeze” he will ever support is not one targeting nuclear weapons but rather one that
will “freeze the Soviets’ global desires” (7). To convince further the NAE’s members to oppose a “freeze” on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and to support instead his military renovation, he enumerates several reasons why he is focused on revitalizing the nation’s military resources rather than supporting a freeze. First, he insists that a freeze will hinder the arms control negotiations taking place in Geneva because it will eliminate any incentive for serious arms control and reductions. Second, he argues that a freeze would “reward the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup [and] would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces increasingly vulnerable” (7). Third, he posits that an “honest” freeze would not only require substantial negotiations, it would also be virtually impossible to authenticate. Finally, he reiterates that a nuclear freeze will divert the U.S. from their current efforts to pursue weapons reductions.

With these statements, Reagan’s secondary rhetorical purpose becomes much more prominent, and two additional targeted audiences emerge. The first implied audience to which he speaks is the Soviet Union and his message to them is clear: because of America’s steadfast belief in God, it is not susceptible to Communist thought or influence and will never support them on their totalitarian quest for world revolution and territorial gain. Additionally, he reminds them that although he will continue searching for a political understanding with them, he will not do so at the expense of national security and traditional American values. His comments also address the nuclear freeze movement and its supporters, and he implicitly tells them that if they insist on pursuing a bilateral freeze, they are solely responsible for
placing the country in an inferior military position. Further, and more serious
because of the high value Reagan has rhetorically placed on morality, they are
placing the United States at risk of moral inferiority and the loss of freedoms and
privileges granted by God.

Fisher's narrative paradigm presumes that we are storytellers acting on what we
consider 'good reasons' derived from our experience, and next Reagan provides the
audience with a personal example that illustrates further his position on the nuclear
freeze issue. He describes a political gathering he attended several years earlier
where entertainer Pat Boone was discussing the Cold War and communism. He
vividly recalls hearing Boone exclaim that although he loved them more than
anything, he "would rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than
have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God"
(7). Reagan continues, telling the NAE that the young audience "came to their feet
with shouts of joy. They had instantly recognized the profound truth in what he had
said, with regard to the physical and the soul and what was truly important" (7).
Using this example, Reagan draws on the audience's belief in the importance and
supremacy of a higher power and assumes that the members of his audience feel the
same way the young father does.

The text skillfully links Reagan's position on the nuclear freeze and the Soviet
Union to the overarching battle between good and evil by encouraging the NAE to:

[Pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian
darkness - - pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until
they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the
state, declare domination of all peoples on the Earth - - they are the focus of evil in the modern world (8).

Relying on the distinction previously drawn between what the United States and the Soviet Union view as moral behavior, Reagan establishes them as enemies of the traditional values and beliefs held by Americans. By doing this, he restricts the acceptable responses of his conservative audience: if they are moral and good, they will support his weapons buildup and rhetorically resist any action that will support the Soviet Union's quest for world domination, specifically a nuclear freeze. He continues offering justification for his foreign policy, referencing C.S. Lewis whose *Screwtape Letters* concluded that the world's greatest evil "is conceived and ordered . . . by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice" (8). Reagan relates this reference to the Soviet Union who, despite occasionally professing to desire brotherhood and peace with the West, are constantly making more territorial demands and subjecting the rest of the world to their aggressive impulses. Consequently, the subliminal message Reagan sends is clear. As long as the Soviet Union's objectives and morals are at odds with America's, our country must live up to its religious mandate to oppose sin and evil completely. As a result, he will do whatever is necessary, including withholding his support for a nuclear freeze, to protect the nation from communist aggression and influence because anything less would mean "the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom" (8).

At this point in the text, Reagan bluntly states the action that he and the NAE members must take. Aristotle says that political speaking "urges us either to do or
not to do something" (1335) in the future, and the deliberative nature of Reagan’s comments are explicit when he urges the National Association of Evangelicals members to support his peace through strength initiatives:

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. You know, I’ve always believed that old Screwtape reserved his best efforts for those of you in the church. So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride — the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil (8).

Here, another strong implication surfaces. By warning the NAE members to beware of pride, he silently suggests that in order to be free from this “sin,” they must take a political stand that supports his peace through strength initiatives instead of a nuclear freeze. “I ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you withhold your support for our efforts,” he continues, “to keep America strong and free, while we negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world’s nuclear arsenals and one day, with God’s help, their total elimination” (8). Reagan’s spiritual yet patriotic tone demonstrated in these statements is an incredibly important persuasive strategy because it allows him to place his political objectives on a “higher” plain. The arms race is no longer simply a material race for a larger amount of better
weapons; rather, it is a moral imperative that is necessary to ensure that (good) America’s freedom under God is protected in the fight against the Soviet Union (evil). Consequently, his implication makes a convincing argument that supporting a “freeze” would in effect be supporting “evil” rather than “good.” This allows Reagan to remove the nuclear freeze debate from the political realm and to redefine it in moral terms easily identifiable by his conservative audience and followers.

Before proceeding, it is important to note the religious significance of the “evil empire” phrase and why its delivery was appropriate for the NAE audience. Frances Fitzgerald contends that the “evil empire” phrase has a specific theological significance and suggests that:

To conservative evangelicals . . . the phrase would trip-wire the whole eschatology of Armageddon. According to fundamentalist doctrine, derived from the Book of Ezekiel, the Book of Revelations and other sources, the evil empire will appear in the end-times under the leadership of the Anti-Christ; after a seven-year period of tribulations, Christ and his saints will fight the evil empire and confederated nations in a great battle on the field of Armageddon in Israel, and their victory will usher in the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The evangelical clergymen would not have been surprised that Reagan identified the Soviet Union as that empire, for ever since the Bolshevik revolution, fundamentalists had identified Russia as the Biblical ‘Ros,’ where the Beast would appear (25-26; see also Moore 3).
As a result, it is logical to conclude that had the President been addressing a different, non-religious audience, the phrase would have been omitted as inappropriate.

By removing the nuclear freeze debate from the political sphere and instead placing it in a religious, moral context of good versus evil, Reagan's deliberative comments also demonstrate another expanded epideictic function, that of definition/understanding. Condit explains that "[t]he 'definition/understanding' functional pair refers to the power of epideictic to explain a social world. Audiences actively seek and invite speech that performs this epideictic function when some event, person, group, or object is confusing or troubling. The speaker will explain the troubling issue in terms of the audience's key values and beliefs" (288) and by inviting the President to address the organization on the nuclear freeze debate, the NAE encouraged him to define the debate in terms they could identify with. Therefore, by identifying the nuclear freeze issue as being a moral debate rather than a secular one, he augments the weight of his rhetorical argument greatly and severely limits the appropriate responses of his audience.

Condit's definition/understanding function also helps explain Reagan's shift from discussing conservative values and issues within a right and wrong framework to discussing the nuclear freeze movement within a broader context of good and evil. This enables him to address the various facets of the exigence created by the increasing support for a nuclear freeze. His remarks rebut accusations that he was deliberately hindering the disarmament talks in an attempt to 'buy time' for a U.S.
weapons buildup and illustrates how within epideictic discourse a rhetor’s ability to redefine troubling situations can help him/her overcome situational exigencies.

Before providing the audience with a final example to justify his peace through strength position, he reveals that despite the importance of augmenting the country’s military strength, “the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith” (8). To demonstrate this, Reagan uses Whittaker Chambers as a narrative example to illustrate how success in the fight against good and evil depends on the role of God in the battle. Labeling the Hiss-Chambers case as one of the terrible tragedies of the twentieth century, Reagan quotes Chambers to argue that to resist communism, the West must not attempt to accomplish anything without God and must refuse to collaborate with the Soviet Union in their attempts to make man stand alone without God. “The Western world can answer this challenge,” Reagan quotes, “but only provided that its faith in God and the freedom he enjoins is as great as communism’s faith in man” (9). By quoting a man who was “saved” from communism, his narrative example allows him to subliminally argue that the West’s battle against the evil of communism can be won. Further, by using this example as an illustration, Reagan assumes that his audience likewise agrees that America’s faith in God is a vital element in its struggle against sin and evil.

Reagan concludes the speech in the role of a moral and spiritual leader. He inspires the audience to be steadfast in its struggle against evil and sin and says that
I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material but spiritual. And because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man (9).

He summarizes his comments with an inspirational scriptural reference from Isaiah: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increased strength . . But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary" (9). Finally, Reagan strongly encourages his audience to change their world, a statement reflecting the convention's theme. In this short statement, he reminds the NAE to support his efforts in restoring prayer to public schools, protecting the right to life for all children, opposing all forms of sin and evil in the world and most significantly, to oppose a nuclear freeze.

External Response

As one would expect, Reagan's remarks to the NAE membership were extremely well received by his immediate audience. "The mostly conservative, strongly Southern coalition of evangelical ministers and laymen interrupted Reagan's talk with 32 rounds of applause and numerous ripples of 'amens'" (Gholdston A20), reported Orlando Sentinel religion writer John Gholdston. NAE Executive Director
Billy Melvin expressed great pleasure at the President's remarks, commenting that he felt that Reagan "represents the concerns of a large cross section of American popular opinion" (Gholdston A20). The founder of the international radio ministry *The Methodist Hour*, Reverend Herb Bowdoin agreed "wholeheartedly" with the President's stance on the nuclear freeze and his position on disarmament, and Polish immigrant Leonard Jankowski applauded Reagan's efforts and stated that he "know[s] people trapped behind the Communist walls who are applauding him too" (Gholdston A20). NAE president Reverend Arthur Gay was more cautious in his remarks, commenting that although he was "delighted that the president made his position known so strongly" (Gholdston A20), he felt that many NAE members were unmoved by his comments and were still fundamentally opposed to Reagan's peace through strength position.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive reception Reagan's remarks received in Orlando, the media immediately attacked his comments, and it is interesting to note that although over half of the President's address focused on conservative positions including abortion and prayer in public schools, the majority of the criticism it evoked focused on his strongly worded condemnation of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." His speech was called a strategic ploy designed to rebuild the support of the president's conservative base (Clymer A18; see also Yoder A5; Cannon, "Master," A3; Smith A11; Peterson A15) and it was even suggested that his comments were a preliminary step at establishing a political platform for the upcoming 1984 elections (Reston A21). His speech was labeled the "worst rhetoric of the cold war" (Schmemann A12), *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis called it primitive
(A27), and William Safire criticized Reagan for attempting to assume the role of a preacher by preaching morality (A19). “Historian Henry Steele Commager said, ‘It was the worst presidential speech in American history’” (Krauthammer par. 12; see also Peterson A15) and Hugh Sidey declared that “the worst thing about Reagan’s sermon was that all the trumpets and organ rolls obscured and discredited the truth in his message: the Soviet Union remains the free world’s principal disturber of the peace” (18). The President was criticized “for using religious language to characterize the political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union” (Austin A17) and was condemned for distorting Christianity in order to achieve political ends (Austin A7). Finally, Washington Post staff writer David Hoffman suggested that Reagan’s controversial rhetoric was designed to emphasize the Soviet threat in order to generate support for his proposed defense buildup that was facing congressional defeat (A1; see also Lewis A27).

Not all of the ensuing media commentary was negative. In an article published in The Washington Post, Dartmouth professor Jeffrey Hart applauded the President for telling “the simple unpleasant truth about the Soviet system [and] refusing to entertain any pleasing illusions about just who it is we are negotiating with. The system is as evil as anything dreamed up by Hitler or Pol Pot, and it is a good thing to have a president who knows it and says so” (C1). William Rusher, the publisher of The National Review, remarked that the President’s comments reflected the opinions of a majority of Americans and remarked that by boldly proclaiming his beliefs, “Reagan stands forth more clearly than ever as their leader” (C1). Patrick Buchanan lauded the President’s “fiery sermon from the Bully Pulpit” as an important speech.
necessary to remind the American people that “the struggle between East and West—because it is at bottom a moral and philosophical and religious struggle—is irreconcilable” (3C).

The overwhelming ephemeral criticism that immediately surrounded the address notwithstanding, Reagan’s speech stands out as one of the most significant discourses of his presidency and has been credited as being a salient factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, his use of highly-charged, emotional appeals raises questions about the appropriateness of the persuasive strategies employed. Consequently, an ethical evaluation that determines whether the speech constitutes an abuse of the rhetorical presidency is in order.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

By first addressing numerous conservative issues that reestablished his ethos as a worthy conservative leader, Reagan sought to enmesh his arguments against a nuclear freeze within a broader context of good versus evil. Although his comments encouraged his audience to approve of and support his presidential leadership, however, they failed to convince the NAE members to support his peace through strength initiatives and to oppose a nuclear freeze. According to New York Times journalist Charles Austin, the members “were too divided on the question of a nuclear freeze to pass a resolution on the topic, despite President Reagan’s strongly worded speech to the group” (A17). Further, some of the evangelicals “contended that the President’s speech distorted Christianity to serve political goals” (A17). The head of the Evangelicals for Social Action strongly condemned the President’s attempt to couch a political issue within a good and evil framework, stating that “[i]t is intolerable to suggest that good citizens in favor of a freeze are duped by the K.G.B. or by Satan” (A17). As a result, Reagan’s inflammatory address only resolved one of its two rhetorical problems, despite the standing ovation and thunderous applause it generated from the audience. And, although the preceding

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By first addressing numerous conservative issues that reestablished his ethos as a worthy conservative leader, Reagan sought to enmesh his arguments against a nuclear freeze within a broader context of good versus evil. Although his comments encouraged his audience to approve of and support his presidential leadership, they failed to convince the NAE members to support his peace through strength initiatives and to oppose a nuclear freeze. According to *New York Times* journalist Charles Austin, the members “were too divided on the question of a nuclear freeze to pass a resolution on the topic, despite President Reagan’s strongly worded speech to the group” (A17). Further, some of the evangelicals “contended that the President’s speech distorted Christianity to serve political goals” (A17). The head of the Evangelicals for Social Action strongly condemned the President’s attempt to couch a political issue within a good and evil framework, stating that “[i]t is intolerable to suggest that good citizens in favor of a freeze are duped by the K.G.B. or by Satan” (A17). As a result, Reagan’s address only resolved one of its two rhetorical problems, despite the standing ovation and thunderous applause it generated from the audience. And, although the preceding textual analysis provides a greater insight into the persuasive strategies used by the President to accomplish his rhetorical goals, an analysis of the “Evil Empire” address would be incomplete without an assessment of its ethical dimensions and their potential impact on future presidential rhetoric.
Implications on the Study of Presidential Rhetoric

Because our discourses reveal the ways in which we perceive ourselves (Sillars and Gronbeck 202), any time a political leader enmeshes arguments for policy decisions in religious rhetoric, its lasting effects are potentially very damaging. Reagan's "fire and brimstone" comments to the National Association of Evangelicals members, for example, raise concerns about the appropriateness of his persuasive strategies and make it vital to evaluate whether using morality-based principles to argue for the "correctness" of a particular policy action constitutes an appropriate use of the bully pulpit, or instead reflects a "descent into demagoguery." In his review of the traditional purposes of rhetoric, Kenneth Burke argues that "[y]ou persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (55). And although adjusting the context of a political argument to make it mirror the values of a particular group may be an enticing persuasive strategy, it has the potential to delegitimize the resulting debate by focusing the discussions on emotional responses rather than policy-related fact. Further, by placing his arguments against a nuclear freeze within a framework of "right versus wrong," and "good versus evil," Reagan's excessively passionate appeals crossed the line of appropriate ceremonial and deliberative presidential rhetoric. In The Rhetorical Presidency, Tulis argues that "attempts to mobilize the public through the use of personal or charismatic power delegitimatizes constitutional or normal authority" (190). Reagan's discourse, however appropriate for his immediate audience, demonstrates a rhetorical undermining of future presidential speech.
Weiler and Pearce also question the appropriateness of presidential rhetoric ceremonializing policy discussions. They argue that such discourse "diminishes the discursive terrain for dealing with complex public issues. It contracts and impoverishes the public sphere. It tends to exclude moments of moral doubt and strategic indecision" (13) and it encourages an uninterested, passive electorate that is both alienated from the practice of political power and uninformed about the issues (14). They caution that this can have devastating implications on citizen involvement in the political process, and Reagan's willingness to contextualize policy issues in an address partially intended to rebuild his conservative support encourages future presidents likewise to use divisive policy debates to build personal credibility and ethos. Further, since the Founders were concerned that direct public appeals would diminish the president's stature, this practice can potentially damage the stature and rhetorical significance of presidential speech.

Although the president is empowered to speak on behalf of the country, to represent verbally and symbolically its values and cultural history, and to explain current events to domestic and international audiences, it is vital to remember that the president's comments are shaped according to his individual worldview and do not necessarily provide an accurate portrayal of the citizens he represents. According to former speechwriter Harry McPherson (1972):

Political words offer a rationale for otherwise chaotic events. They help to unite people of very different sensibilities behind common policies, and thus they help government to function. But they rarely give an accurate reflection of reality. Their writers, joining in (and
sometimes leading) the applause that follows their ringing phrases, can easily forget that. And communicating fairly and precisely is not the only question. Out beyond the convention centers and the Hilton hospitality rooms, beyond the cars pulling up with lobbyists and their clients, are citizens whose problems do not yield to any words at all (45).

By consciously choosing to give higher importance to the beliefs of some political factions while simultaneously ignoring those of others, the president publicly makes value judgments about the salience of those opinions appropriate for public consumption. This also can have devastating results on future presidential rhetoric if future leaders mirror Reagan’s strategies and attempt to displace rational policy deliberation with emotional appeals of “good” and “evil.” Further, the fact that Reagan’s persuasive efforts were unsuccessful in convincing his immediate audience to support his military buildup rather than a nuclear freeze, suggests that despite the initial positive response emotional appeals may generate, their usefulness is limited by their ability to effect a lasting, legitimate change in public opinion. As such, it is vital that future scholarship closely scrutinize texts that enflame the passions of the populace to determine whether or not the speech in question results in a deterioration in the value and the political power of presidential speech.

Conclusion

Presidential rhetoric is arguably the most important public discourse we are exposed to, particularly since a president’s power is largely determined through his
ability to persuade the public to support his objectives. Our nation's president not
only represents our country to the world, but as we witnessed after the horrific
attacks of September 11, 2001, is often called upon to describe and interpret current
events within the context of his leadership. Because no scholarly analysis has
exhausted the textual features of Reagan's "Evil Empire" address, this study aimed
to examine the text in search of its persuasive features but also to provide a better
understanding of why it encouraged such phenomenal outrage and was later referred
to as one of the reasons the Soviet Union fell. Consequently, the analysis hopefully
has expanded our understanding of the purposes of presidential rhetoric in a number
of ways. First, its close textual critique has provided added insight into the process
by which contemporary presidential speech is created, by detailing the evolution of a
final public address and examining the influence of the White House staff. Second, it
has demonstrated the utility of carefully examining controversial presidential rhetoric
in order to illuminate the persuasive methods that instigated a strong emotional
response. Third, although it can certainly be argued that all presidential rhetoric is
ceremonial in nature in that a president's ability to govern depends largely on
whether or not he has the public's support, this evaluation has expanded the
application of epideictic and deliberative public address and has demonstrated that
approaching presidential speech in search of the ways in which it fulfills both
functions can result in a fruitful study. Finally, it has provided the groundwork for
future study into presidential rhetoric that attempts not only to understand fully the
intricacies of a text but also the historical events creating a need for a presidential
response.
Despite the ethical concerns raised about the appropriate use of emotional appeals, it is important not to underestimate the impact and influence of the “Evil Empire” speech. According to Muir, “of all the speeches the president was to make in his two terms, none was more important rhetorically” (Bully Pulpit 74), even though it initially ignited a firestorm of outrage. And, although the President never used such severe words again, “he did not need to—the message was clear and the words unforgettable” (Pemberton 162), their impact immeasurable. In 2003, Time magazine recognized it as one of the eighty days that changed the world, declaring that although his sharp words alarmed many Americans, “Reagan managed to touch the hearts and minds of those who mattered: the rebels behind the Iron Curtain who ultimately brought it down” (Ratnesar A62).

Years later, after the “Evil Empire” collapsed, several former Soviet dissidents told Reagan that when they heard his sharply worded speech, “it gave them hope, and they said to each other that America finally has a leader who clearly understood the nature of communism” (Dallek 135). Anatoly Shcharansky, a Russian human rights activist arrested for treason in 1977, later remarked that “the most important step in the cold war and the defeat of the Soviet empire was [Reagan’s] words” (Noonan 213), because not only was the President accurate in his assessment of the Soviet Union, he was also not afraid to risk public outrage to state it. More significantly, during a dinner with U.S. arms negotiators years after the Soviet Union fell, a former Soviet senior general emphatically informed his counterparts that the downfall of the Soviet Union was caused by “[t]hat damn speech about the evil empire! That’s what
did it! . . . It was an evil empire. It was” (Novak par 10.) In conclusion, according to political science professor Dr. Paul Kengor:

The single most important effect of the Evil Empire speech is that it planted a seed. Reagan’s statement about Soviet ‘evil’ succeeded in helping change minds inside and outside the USSR. It made something click in the minds of many who otherwise were not given to think of the USSR as ‘evil,’ or anywhere near quite that bad. Reagan knew it was important to get them to think this way (par. 11).
APPENDICES

One
The Speech First Draft

Two
Ronald Reagan's Revisions

Three
National Security Council Insert

Four
The Final Text
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 1983

Nancy and I are delighted to be here today. Those of you in
the National Association of Evangelicals are known for your
spiritual and humanitarian work — and I would be especially
remiss if I did not discharge right now one personal debt of
gratitude.

Thank you for your prayers. Nancy and I have felt their
presence many times in many ways. Believe me, for us, they have
made all the difference. The other day in the East Room, someone
asked me whether I was aware of all the people out there praying
for the President. I was touched, of course, but I'll tell you
what I told him: Thank you but please keep it up. And when
you're at it, if you get a busy signal sometimes, keep trying.
It just means I'm in there ahead of you.

From the joy and good feeling of this conference we leave
for the hurly burly of a political reception for the Florida GOP.
You can see it's a day of contrasts; it reminds me of a story I
may just tell the folks over at that reception. It seems this
evangelical minister and politician both died and went to heaven.
St. Peter took them in hand to show them their new quarters. He
took the minister to a small room with just a bed and table. So
naturally when the politician saw the modest quarters of this
holy man he was pretty worried about what was in store for him.

Much to his surprise, St. Peter took him to a great mansion,
with beautiful grounds and many servants and told him all this
would be his. So naturally, the politician said: "But how can
you give me this mansion and only a small place to that good minister?"

St. Peter replied, "Oh, don't worry, he's an evangelical, we've got plenty of them up here. But you're the first politician we've ever had."

I like that story. It reminds those of us in the political world that our fast-paced existence can sometimes be an obstacle to quiet reflection and deep commitment, that we can easily forget the ideas and principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty, a commitment that itself is grounded in the much deeper realization: that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly acknowledged.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight, its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers. "Men who will not be ruled by God will be ruled by tyrants," William Penn said. Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson remarked, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And it was George Washington who said that "of all the disposition and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville put it eloquently:

"I sought for the greatness and genius of America in fertile fields and boundless forests, it was not there. I sought for it in her free schools and her institutions of learning; it was not there. I sought for it in her matchless Constitution and democratic congress; it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and found them aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and genius
of America. America is great because America is good. When America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

That is why I am so pleased to be here today with the people who are in the business of keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last best hope of man called America.

I want you to know this Administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities -- the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God.

Now I don't have to tell you that our pursuit of this philosophy puts us in opposition to the prevailing attitude of many of those in government, educational foundations and institutions and significant sectors of the media. The views of this group, however well intentioned, are deeply secularist and decidedly liberal; their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. Because they view everyday Americans as wanton and unwise they have taken upon themselves the job of regulating, overseeing and superintending the people from Washington.

Now recent polls have shown a dichotomy between their values and those of the American people. For example, recent surveys of elites in the media and entertainment industry showed they voted in far greater numbers than their fellow Americans for liberal
candidates, that most see nothing wrong with adultery and homosexuality, that they approve of abortion by overwhelming margins and that less than 10 percent give religion any important place in their lives.

I think one recent controversy in Washington, the one over the so-called "squeal rule", is an illustration of this clash between the values of these elites and the rest of America. And don't get me wrong, I'm not attacking or attempting to silence these elites. I just think the difference between the view of the world and ours ought to be fully aired.

Now as most of you know, the controversy began when a judge struck down rules issued by our Administration requiring parental consent before government provides birth control devices to underage teenagers. Believe me, I wonder too what government is doing in the birth control business, but Congress passed the legislation several years ago and we have no choice but to carry it out. Now this rule, which is nothing more than an affirmation of the traditional rights of parents, was met with attacks from the left portraying those of us in the Administration as a bunch of pinch-cheeked old prudes out to keep the kids from having a little fun.

It reminded me of a similar storm some years ago in California when I insisted that parents had a right to know if their 15 year old daughter was going to have an abortion especially since the State was paying for the abortion with welfare funds. This caused quite a stir but who, I asked, are we in Government to act in locus parentis? For heaven's sake, that girl couldn't have her tonsils out without parental consent, let
alone an abortion. It was during the controversy I began to realize that the real agenda of many who subscribe to this liberal-secularist philosophy is to actually impose their values to use the power of Government, the media and the schools to supercede the family, church and other inculcators of traditional values.

I believe the same mind set is at work in the squeal rule controversy. Hoping to silence the opposition with names like old fashioned and puritanical, our critics seek to use the power of government to insure the preeminence of their own views, views that are clearly out of step with what most Americans believe and want.

So there you have it: the same liberal secularists who did a marvelous job of giving us inflation, recession, unemployment, unmanageable bureaucracy, trillion dollar deficits and a host of foreign policy debacles now want us to let them preempt parental rights and run the sex lives of our underage teenagers.

Well, I say we fight our battle in the courts, I say the rule stays. And I say the rights of parents and the rights of family take precedence over those of Washington-based bureaucrats and social engineers.

But the squeal rule is really only one example of many attempts to water down traditional values and even abrogate the original terms of American democracy. As I mentioned before, nothing could be more deeply engrained into the American political consensus than the realization that freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God acknowledged. When our Founding Fathers passed the First
Amendment they sought to protect churches from Government interference. They never meant to construct a wall of separation between Government and the concept of religious belief itself.

The evidence of this permeates our history and our government: The Declaration of Independence mentions the Supreme Being no less than four times; "In God We Trust" is engraved on our coinage; the Supreme Court opens its proceedings with a "religious" invocation and the Members of Congress open their sessions with a prayer. I just happen to believe the school children of the United States are entitled to the same privileges as Supreme Court Justices and Congressmen -- it's time for Congress to act on the prayer amendment. Let our children pray.

But in the controversy over the prayer amendment we see once again that will to power that has characterized so much of the liberal social philosophy that dominated American intellectual life in the 50's and 60's. Many advocates of liberal and progressive education hoped that the schools would become social science laboratories where school children could be removed from traditional influences and taught instead the wonders of value-free science and moral relativism.

Now we know that what happened to American education as it increasingly fell under the influence of this social science mentality, the influence of parents and teachers declined, so did excellence and discipline -- and America's school children learned less and less.

As you all know, there has been a rebellion among parents and teachers against these lax educational standards and once again basic learning is being stressed in our schools.
Similarly, the attempt to prohibit the acknowledgement of God in the classroom has come under heavy fire. By overwhelming margins, the American people want prayer returned to the classroom and have been voting for candidates who support that amendment.

Unfortunately, however, this hasn't discouraged that small elite on the left who still want to impose their value system on the vast majority of Americans. Perhaps some of you read recently about the Lubbock school case where a judge actually ruled that it was unconstitutional for a group of students meeting on their own time on school property for religious purposes. You can see can't you how the First Amendment has been stood on its head? How a constitutional provision designed to promote religious expression has been used to stifle that expression? And you can see can't you the irony of those who call themselves "liberals" using their position of power to deny to millions the time-honored right of religious expression in public places?

And let me add here that like you, I have been deeply concerned about recent controversies in several states between religious schools and state educational authorities. No one questions the right of the individual States a voice in establishing certain minimum standards for the education of our children. But, on the other hand, religious schools are entitled to make basic decisions about their curriculum and not be forced to march in lockstep to the directives of regular bureaucrats.
I think you should know that both Senators Denton and Hatfield have proposed legislation in Congress on this whole question of prohibiting discrimination against religious forms of student speech. I strongly support that legislation and with your help I think it's possible we could get this amendment through the Congress this year.

Now in discussing these instances of the arbitrary imposition of liberal views, we would be remiss not to mention a Supreme Court decision more than a decade ago that quite literally wiped off the books the statutes of 50 states protecting the rights of unborn children. Abortion on demand is a great moral evil that takes the lives of fetuses a year. Human life legislation ending this tragedy will some day pass the Congress, you and I must never rest until it does.

You may remember that when abortion on demand began many religious leaders warned that the practice would lead to a decline in respect for human life, that the philosophical premises used to justify abortion-on-demand would ultimately be used to justify other attacks on the sacredness of human life, even infanticide or mercy killings. When these warnings were first spoken, many of those in the intelligensia and the glitter set scoffed at them. But, tragically enough, they proved all too true: only last year a court in Indiana issued an order permitting the death by starvation of a handicapped infant.

Recent legislation introduced in the Congress by Representative Henry Hyde not only increases restrictions on publicly financed abortions, it also addresses this whole problem of infanticide. I urge the Congress to begin hearings soon on
this legislation, to address the problems of infanticide, to adopt legislation that will protect the right of all children, including the disabled or handicapped to the right to life.

Now in surveying the effect of several decades of liberal-secularist philosophy -- the wreakage, for example, left by the decisions like those on abortion and school prayer -- it is easy to grow discouraged. But we must never forget that we now stand at a turning point, a time when the old liberalism -- decadent and dying -- is being replaced by a new political consensus, a consensus that wants government to perform its legitimate duties such as maintaining domestic peace and our national security but otherwise to leave the people alone.

Along with this return to limited Government, there is a great spiritual awakening in America and a renewal of the traditional values that have been the bedrocks of America's goodness and greatness.

One recent survey of thousands of Americans by a Washington based research council concluded that Americans were far more religious than the people of other nations; 95 percent of those surveyed expressed a belief in God and a huge majority believed the Ten Commandments had real meaning for their lives.

Another study of 2000 Americans by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance found that -- in contrast to the views of the elites I mentioned earlier -- the following practices were found wrong by large majorities of average Americans: adultery, 85 percent, hard drugs, 84 percent, homosexuality, 71 percent, sex before 16, 71 percent, abortion, 65 percent and pornography, 68 percent.
And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief.

So I think the items we have discussed today are the political agenda of the future. Remember for the first time the Congress is openly debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues -- that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and moral renewal. With your biblical keynote, I say today let "justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream."

Now obviously, much of this new political and social consensus I have talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must never forget an important distinction between our moral philosophy and that of the liberal-secularists. Unlike them, we know that no Government schemes are going to perfect man, we know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or as the theologians would put it: the doctrine of sin.

There is sin, there is evil in this world and we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. And that is why in talking about America we must never forget that like any other human entity our Nation too has a legacy of evil with which it must deal.

Now, the glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights, once a source of
disunity and civil war, is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-semitism or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country. I know you have been horrified as have I by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice. Today I urge you: Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate these hate groups in our midst.

And I want to mention today another dark legacy of our past -- one that we are also now attempting to address in Washington. For many years in America we tolerated the existence of powerful syndicates of organized crime. As the years went by these national syndicates increased in power, influence and sophistication. Recently, in the enormous growth of the illegal drug trade, we have seen the tragic results of this permissiveness and the climate of professional lawlessness it fostered. This trade was only a short time ago spreading murder and mayhem throughout South Florida. Today through the South Florida Task Force headed by Vice President Bush we have a handle on it -- we've cracked down on this drug trade in Florida and now we're bringing on 200 new prosecutors and 1000 new investigators to extend that task force model to twelve other regions throughout the United States.

Yes, we are going after the drug cartels. But we're not going to stop there. Through a new presidential commission and several other initiatives we intend to expose and prosecute the infrastructure of organized crime itself. We mean to cripple
their enterprises, dry up their profits and put their leaders behind bars where they belong.

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom -- not just for ourselves but for millions of others around the world. And this brings me to my final point today, and by the way, it's another illustration of the gulf between the views of our professional elites and those of everyday Americans.

During my first press conference as President, I pointed out that as good Marxists-Leninists the Soviet leaders have "openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat.... and that is moral, not immoral." I asked that we would do well to keep this in mind during our negotiations with the Soviets.

Well, once again this caused a stir. I saw several accounts that truncated my remarks and suggested they were meant nothing more than name calling. Other accounts suggested that it was a breech of diplomacy to be that candid about the Soviets.

Now putting aside for the moment the fact that the pundits and opinion makers are rarely upset when the Soviets say much worse about us everyday in their press, I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, a saint, a guiding spirit to the Soviet leadership, who wrote in 1920: "We repudiate all morality
that proceeds from supernatural ideas or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. Everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting social order and for uniting the proleteriat."

I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary insight into Soviet behavior illustrates the historical reluctance of much of the elite to see totalitarian powers for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930's; we see it today in the nuclear freeze movement.

But surely, just as we look back in wonder at the self-dece... to the 1930's, future historians, looking back at our time, will be shocked by the naivete and moral blindness of the unilateral disarmers. Surely, they will note the real proportions of the threat to peace, that it was the West that refused to use its nuclear monopoly in the 40's and 50's for territorial gain -- and that it was not the West that intervened by proxy in Angola, in Ethiopia, in South Yemen or Central America, that it was not the West that invaded Afghanistan, or supressed Polish Solidarity or used chemical and biological warfare in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia.

Surely, those historians will find in the councils of those who preached the supremacy of the state, who declared its omnipotence over individual man, who predicted its eventual domination of all peoples of the Earth, surely historians will see there . . . the focus of evil in the modern world. It was C.S. Lewis who in his unforgettable Screwtape Letters wrote:

"The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid 'dens of crime' that Dickens loved to paint. It is not
done even in concentration camps and labor camps -- in those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried and minuted) in clear, carpeted, warmed and well-lighted offices by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices."

Because these "quiet men" do not "raise their voices", because they sometimes speak in soothing tones of brotherhood and peace, because like other dictators before them they are always making "their final territorial demand," some would have us accept them at their word and accommodate ourselves to their aggressive impulses. But, if history teaches anything, it teaches: simple-minded appeasement or self-delusion about our adversaries is folly -- it means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom.

So I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military inferiority to the Soviet Union. You know, I have always believed that old Screwtape reserves his best efforts for those of you in the Church. So in your discussions of the nuclear freeze movement I urge you to beware the temptation of pride -- the temptation to blithely declare yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to facilely call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong, good and evil.

I ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you bargain away, for the sake of a few glowing minutes on the nightly news and a little cooing from the glitter set, your vital
support for this Administration's efforts to keep America strong and free.

But while America's military strength is important let me add here that I have always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. For the real crisis we face today is a spiritual one, at root it is a test of moral will and religious faith.

Whitaker Chambers, the man whose own religious conversion made him a "witness" to one of the terrible traumas of our age, the Hiss Chambers case, wrote that the crisis of the Western world exists to the degree in which the West is indifferent to God, the degree to which it collaborates in communism's attempt to make man stand alone without God. For Marxism-Leninism is actually the second oldest faith, he said, first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden with the words of temptation: "Ye shall be as Gods."

The Western world can answer this challenge he wrote, "but only provided that its faith in God and the freedom enjoins as great as Communism's faith in man."

I believe we shall rise to this challenge, I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the strength of our cause, the quest for human freedom, is not of this world; and because this strength is spiritual and know no limitation it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man. For, in the words of Isaiah:
"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no
might, he increased their strength . . . but they that wait upon
the Lord shall renew their strength . . . they shall mount up
with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary . . . ."

Thank you and God bless you.
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 1983

Nancy and I are delighted to be here today. Those of you in the National Association of Evangelicals are known for your spiritual and humanitarian work — and I would be especially remiss if I did not discharge right now one personal debt of gratitude.

Thank you for your prayers. Nancy and I have felt their presence many times in many ways. Believe me, for us they have made all the difference. The other day in the East Room someone asked me whether I was aware of all the people out there praying for the President. I was touched, of course, but I'll tell you yes, I am — because I've felt it in the unspoken prayers of many people out there praying for others around the world, whether they're American or not. And I can tell you, it has been wonderful for us to feel that we are part of a Godly family. When you see the President in prayer, you know that he is not the only one praying. You see, we have a Godly family who pray for him.

As you leave this conference today, I hope you take with you the feeling of joy and good will that I hope has filled you. From the joy and good feeling of this conference we leave with the belief that the political reception is not just another day of campaigning. It is a way of bringing people together, of showing them that we care about each other. It is a way of bringing people together, of showing them that we care about each other.

I want to tell you a story that reminds me of a political reception. It seems that an evangelical minister and politician arrived at the reception, but he was not welcome. The politician was a little worried about what was in store for him. He was not sure how people would react. But when he arrived at the reception, he was surprised to find that everyone was very friendly. He was welcomed with open arms, and he felt that he had made a difference.

St. Peter took them in hand to show them their new quarters. He took the minister to a small room with just a bed, table, and chair. He explained that they would be taking care of the minister here. The minister was a little disappointed, but he agreed. Then St. Peter took the politician to a great mansion, with beautiful grounds and many servants and told him all this.
So I tell you there are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And, yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideas and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants." Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And it was George Washington who said that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret of America's greatness and genius -- and he said:

"Not until I went into the Churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America. America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." (Applause.)

Well, I am pleased to be here today with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last, best hope of man.

I want you to know that this administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities -- the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God.

Now, I don't have to tell you that this puts us in opposition to, or at least out of step with, a prevailing attitude of many who have turned to a modern-day secularism, discarding the tried and time-tested values upon which our value civilization is based. No matter how well intentioned, their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. And while they proclaim that they are freeing us from superstitions of the past, they have taken upon themselves the job of superintending us by government rule and regulation. Sometimes their voices are louder than ours, but they are not yet a majority. (Applause.)
An example of that vocal superiority is evident in a controversy now going on in Washington. And since I'm involved, I've been waiting to hear from the parents of young America. How far are they willing to go in giving to Government their prerogatives as parents?

Let me state the case as briefly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent sometime ago established a nationwide network of clinics to offer help to these girls and hopefully alleviate this situation.

Now, again, let me say, I do not fault their intent. However, in their well-intentioned effort, these clinics have decided to provide advice and birth control drugs and devices to underage girls without the knowledge of their parents.

For some years now, the federal government has helped with funds to subsidize these clinics. In providing for this, the Congress decreed that every effort would be made to maximize parental participation. Nevertheless, the drugs and devices are prescribed without getting parental consent or giving notification after they've done so. Girls termed "sexually active" -- and that has replaced the word "promiscuous" -- are given this help in order to prevent illegitimate birth or abortion.

We have ordered clinics receiving federal funds to notify the parents such help has been given. (Applause.) One of the nation's leading newspapers has created the term "squeal rule" in editorializing against us for doing this and we're being criticized for violating the privacy of young people. A judge has recently granted an injunction against an enforcement of our rule.

I've watched TV panel shows discuss this issue, seen columnists pontificating on our error, but no one seems to mention morality as playing a part in the subject of sex. (Applause.)

Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And isn't it the parents' right to give counsel and advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their entire lives? (Applause.)
Sometimes their voices are louder than ours.

But they are not yet a majority.

An example of that vocal superiority is evident in a controversy now going on in Wash. Since I'm involved, I've been invited to hear from the parents of young women. It can be for are they willing to go in giving up their prerogatives as parents.

Let me state the case as clearly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent established clinics to offer help to these girls and hopefully to alleviate this situation.

Again, let me say I do not fault their intent. However, in their well intentioned effort, these clinics provide service to unmarried teen age girls without the knowledge of their parents. For some years now, the Federal grant has helped with funds to subsidize these clinics. In fact, the Congress has decreed that every effort should be made to maximize parent participation. Hence, the legal status of these services are prescribed without getting parental consent or giving notification. This is termed "informed consent" that has replaced the word "permission" - as given this help in order to prevent illegitimate birth or abortion.

We have noted clinics receiving Federal funds to notify the parents about each one that has been given. One of the national leading newspapers has created the term "sexual rights" anti-patriotism against us and we are being criticized for imposing the privacy of young people. A judge has granted an injunction against enforcement of our rule.

I have watched TV panel shows discuss this issue, have read columns pontificating on our error but no one seems to mention morality as playing a part in the subject of sex.
Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And what is the parents right to give counsel or advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their lives?

Are we going to object to court decisions? Many of us in court would like to know what parents think about this intrusion into their family by courts.

While we're at it, we might also ask why it is that an unwed mother can take advantage of our welfare regulations to obtain an abortion without her parents knowledge or consent. Is such a provision in our welfare program constitutional?

Past parental permission is required for any abortion.

And we all know there are parents who for whatever reason have not communicated with their children as they should. But there are millions who have.
- 6 -

And with your biblical keynote, I say today, "Yes, let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never falling stream."

(Applause.)

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus that I have talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must never forget that no government schemes are going to perfect man. We know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is sin and evil in the world. And we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights once a source of disunity and civil war is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-semitism or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country. (Applause.) I know that you have been horrified, as have I, by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice. Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate those hate groups in our midst. The commandment given us is clear and simple: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Applause.)

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom, but not just for ourselves, but for millions of others around the world.

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as President, in answer to a direct question, I pointed out that, as good Marxists-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out, I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas -- that is their name for religion -- or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat.

Well, I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary fact of Soviet doctrine illustrates an historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930s. We see it too often today. This does not mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them. I
tend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful
tent, to remind them that it was the West that refused to use its
clear monopoly in the '40's and '50's for territorial gain
d which now proposes 50-percent cuts in strategic ballistic
missiles and the elimination of an entire class of land-based inter-
diate-range nuclear missiles. (Applause.)

At the same time, however, they must be made to under­
and we will never compromise our principles and standards. We
will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief
in God. (Applause.) And we will never stop searching for a genuine
peace, but we can assure none of these things America stands for
rough the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some.

The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous
aud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is
at we must find peace through strength. (Applause.)

I would agree to a freeze if only we could freeze the
viets' global desires. (Applause.) A freeze at current levels
weapons would remove any incentive for the Soviets to negotiate
sincerely in Geneva, and virtually end our chances to achieve the
major arms reductions which we have proposed. Instead, they would
hieve their objectives through the freeze. A freeze would reward
the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup.
would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of
United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces
increasingly vulnerable. And an honest freeze would require
extensive prior negotiations on the systems and numbers to be limited
on the measures to ensure effective verification and compliance.
Of the kind of a freeze that has been suggested would be virtually
possible to verify. Such a major effort would divert us completely
om our current negotiations on achieving substantial reductions.

A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very
minent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a
mendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the
old war and communism and our own way of life were very much on
people's minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly,
ough, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than any­
ing -- " And I said to myself, "Oh, no, don't. You can't -- don't
y that." But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I would
ther see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have
em grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in
" (Applause.)

There were thousands of young people in that audience.
ey came to their feet with shouts of joy. They had instantly
recognized the profound truth in what he had said, with regard to
the physical and the soul and what was truly important.
to give equal treatment to religious and nonreligious student groups, even when the group meetings were during the students' own time. You can see, can't you, how the First Amendment has been turned on its head, how a constitutional provision designed to promote religious expression has been used to stifle that expression. And you can see, can't you, the irony of those who call themselves "liberals" using their position of power to deny to millions the time-honored right of religious expression in public places.

I think you should know that both Senators Denton and Hatfield have proposed legislation in the Congress on the whole question of prohibiting discrimination against religious forms of student speech. I strongly support that legislation, and, with your help, I think it's possible we could also get the constitutional amendment through the Congress this year.

And let me add here that, like you, I have been deeply concerned about recent controversies in several States between religious schools and State educational authorities. No one questions the right of the individual States to have a voice in establishing certain minimum standards for the education of our children. But, on the other hand, religious schools are entitled to make basic decisions about their curriculum and not be forced to march in lockstep to the directives of State bureaucrats.

Now in discussing these instances of the arbitrary imposition of liberal views, we would be remiss not to mention a Supreme Court decision more than a decade ago that, quite literally, wiped off the books the statutes of 50 States.
More than a decade ago in Supreme Court decision [redacted], protecting the rights of unborn children. "Abortion on demand" is a great moral evil that takes the lives of 14 million unborn children a year. Human life legislation ending this tragedy will someday pass the Congress -- and you and I must never rest until it does. Unquestionably, it can be proven that the unborn child is not in the womb to a time of right to life, liberty, and property of happiness must be protected.

You may remember that when abortion on demand began many warned that the practice would lead to a decline in respect for human life, that the philosophical premises used to justify abortion on demand would ultimately be used to justify other attacks on the sacredness of human life, even infanticide or mercy killing. When these warnings were first spoken, many of these in the intelligentsia and the political world scoffed at them. But, tragically enough, they proved all too true: only last year a court in Indiana issued an order permitting the death by starvation of a handicapped infant.

When that baby's death came to light, I directed the Health and Human Services Department to make clear to every health care facility in the United States that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects all handicapped persons against discrimination based on handicaps, including infants. And we have taken the further step of requiring that each and every recipient of Federal funds who provides health care services must post and keep posted in a conspicuous place a notice stating that "discriminatory failure to feed and care for handicapped infants in this facility is prohibited by Federal law."

In addition, recent legislation introduced in the Congress by Representative Henry Hyde not only increases restrictions on
publicly-financed abortions, it also addresses this whole problem of infanticide. I urge the Congress to begin hearings on this legislation, to address the problem of infanticide, and adopt legislation that will protect the right of all children, including the disabled or handicapped, to the right to life.

Now, in surveying the effect of several decades of liberal, secularist philosophy — the wreckage, for example, left by the decisions like those on abortion and school prayer — it is easy to grow discouraged. But we must never forget that we now stand at a turning point, a time when the old liberalism — decadent and dying — is being replaced by a new political consensus, a consensus that wants Government to perform its legitimate duties, such as maintaining domestic peace and our national security, but otherwise to leave the people alone.

One recent survey of thousands of Americans by a Washington-based research council concluded that Americans were far more religious than the people of other nations; 95 percent of those surveyed expressed a belief in God and a huge majority believed the Ten Commandments had real meaning for their lives.

Another study of 3,000 Americans by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance found that, in contrast to the views of the critics mentioned earlier, the following practices were found wrong by large majorities of average Americans: adultery, 85 percent; Americans disapprove of adultery, 88 percent; then rape, pornography, abortion, and drugs.
And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief.)

I think the items we have discussed today are the political agenda of the future. Remember, for the first time the Congress is openly and seriously debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues -- that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and a moral renewal. With your biblical keynote, I say today let "justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream."

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus I have talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must never forget an important distinction between our moral philosophy and that of the liberal secularists. Unlike them, we know that no Government schemes are going to perfect man; we know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as the theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is evil in the world, and we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. And that is why in talking about America we must never forget that, like any other human entity, Our Nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal.
The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights, once a source of disunity and civil war, is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-Semitism or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country. I know you have been horrified, as have I, by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice.

Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate these hate groups in our midst. The commandment given us is clear and simple: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

And I want to mention today another dark legacy of our past -- one that we are also now attempting to address in Washington. For many years in America we tolerated the existence of powerful syndicates of organized crime. As the years went by, these national syndicates increased in power, influence, and sophistication. Recently, in the enormous growth of the illegal drug trade, we have seen the tragic results of this permissiveness and the climate of professional lawlessness it fostered. Only a short time ago, this trade was spreading murder and mayhem throughout South Florida. Today, through the South Florida Task Force headed by Vice President Bush, we have a handle on it. We've cracked down on this drug trade in Florida, and now we're bringing on 200 new prosecutors and 1,260 new investigators to extend that task force model to 12 other regions throughout the United States.
Yes, we are going after the drug cartels. But we're not going to stop there. Through a new presidential commission and several other initiatives, we intend to expose and prosecute the infrastructure of organized crime itself. We mean to cripple their enterprises, dry up their profits, and put their leaders behind bars where they belong.

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom -- not just for ourselves but for millions of others around the world. And this brings me to my final point today, and by the way, it's another illustration of the gulf between the views of the professional elites and those of everyday Americans.

During my first press conference as President, I pointed out that as good Marxists-Leninists the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, whether it be murder, torture, or whatever. We would consider someone who jumped out of an airplane and said he was going to commit suicide "morally". I said that we would do well to keep this in mind during our negotiations with them.

Well, once again this caused a stir. I saw several accounts that truncated my remarks and suggested they were nothing more than name-calling. Other accounts suggested that it was a breach of diplomacy to be that candid about the Soviets.
This misrepresentation is frequently repeated accompanied by a change that my share of interpreting accusers had making it impossible for me to have any kind of contact with the Soviet leadership.

Now — putting aside for the moment the fact that the same pundits and opinion makers are rarely upset when the Soviets say much worse about us every day in their press — I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, a guiding spirit to the Soviet leadership, who wrote in 1920: "We repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas or ideas that are outside class conceptions. (Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. Everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat.)"

I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary insight into Soviet doctrine illustrates an historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930's; we see it too often today, as in many aspects of the nuclear freeze movement. This does not mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them, but merely just as we look back in wonder at the future historians, looking back at our time, will be shocked by the private and moral blindness of the unilateral disarmers. (Curly, they will note the real proportions of the threat to peace, that it was the West that refused to use its nuclear monopoly in the forties and fifties for territorial gain and which now proposes 50-percent cuts in strategic ballistic missiles and the elimination of an entire class of land-based, intermediate-range nuclear missiles, and that it was not the West that interened by military proxy in Angola, in Ethiopia, in South Yemen or Central America; that it was not the West that invaded Afghanistan, suppressed Polish..."

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A number of years ago I heard a young man, addressing a tremendous gathering in Calcutta, say, during the time of the cold war when communism and our own way of life were very much on people's minds, speaking on that subject. Suddenly I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than any in the world, but I would rather see them die than..."

"...I thought I was right by that. But I had under estimated him. He said: 'I would rather see them die than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God.'"

There were thousands of young people in that audience. They came to their feet with shouts of joy. They recognized the profound truth in what he had said.

Let us pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will overcome the fog of knowing death.

But until they do let us be aware that while they—"
Solidarity, forced labor, or waged chemical and toxic warfare (Afghanistan and Southeast Asia).

Surely, those historians will find in the councils of the Marxist-Stalinists—the proponents of the supremacy of the state, who declared its omnipotence over individual man, who predicted its eventual domination of all peoples of the Earth—surely historians will see there...the focus of evil in the modern world. It was C. S. Lewis who in his unforgettable Screwtape Letters wrote:

"The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid 'dens of crime' that Dickens loved to paint. It is not done even in concentration camps and labor camps—in those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried and minuted) in clear, carpeted, warmed and well-lighted offices by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices."

Because these "quiet men" do not "raise their voices," because they sometimes speak in soothing tones of brotherhood and peace, because, like other dictators before them, they are always making "their final territorial demand," some would have us accept them at their word and accommodate ourselves to their aggressive impulses. But, if history teaches anything, it teaches: simple-minded appeasement or self-delusion about our adversaries is folly—it means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom.

So I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military inferiority to the Soviet Union. You know, I have always believed that old Screwtape reserves his best efforts for those of you in the Church. So in
your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride — the temptation to blithely declare yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong, good and evil.

I ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you bargain away, for the sake of a few glowing minutes on the nightly news and a little cooling from the glitter set, your vital support for this Administration's efforts to keep America strong and free, while we negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world's nuclear arsenals and many other threats to the elimination.

While America's military strength is important, let me add here that I have always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith.

(Whittaker Chambers, the man whose own religious conversion made him a "witness" to one of the terrible traumas of our age, the Hiss Chambers case, wrote that the crisis of the Western world exists to the degree in which the West is indifferent to God, the degree to which it collaborates in Communism's attempt to make man stand alone without God. For Marxism-Leninism is actually the second oldest faith, he said, first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden with the words of temptation: "Ye shall be as gods."
The Western world can answer this challenge, he wrote, "but only provided that its faith in God and the freedom he enjoins is as great as Communism's faith in man."

I believe we shall rise to this challenge; I believe that Communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material but spiritual, and, because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man. For, in the words of Isaiah:

"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increased their strength . . . but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength . . . they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary . . ."

Thank you and God bless you.
Nuclear Freeze - Insert

I have just described some of the contrast values and historical record demonstrated by the Soviet Union and the United States, especially during the last decade. It is in this light that we are pledged to assure strong deterrent forces which can preserve the peace and protect the flowering of freedom. It is in this light that we must -- in the face of the continued Soviet military build-up -- modernize our too long neglected armed forces and must restore the margin of safety. It is in this light that we must work for real reductions -- at equal and verifiable levels -- in the world's nuclear arsenals.

But we can assure neither deterrence, nor freedom, nor meaningful and stabilizing reductions through the so-called nuclear freeze resolutions being proposed by some. The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud.

A freeze at current levels of weapons would virtually end our chances to achieve the major arms reductions which we have proposed and on which we are currently negotiating with the Soviet Union in Geneva.

-- A freeze would reward the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military build-up and would codify the significant advantages they have obtained in a number of strategic areas.

-- A freeze would prevent the essential and long-overdue modernization of US and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces increasingly vulnerable.
A freeze, would require extensive prior negotiations on the systems and numbers to be limited and on the measures to ensure effective verification and compliance. But such a major effort would divert us completely from our current negotiations on achieving substantial reductions.

I believe it must be plain to every single American, indeed to all the world who want, as I do, effectively to reduce the arsenals and risks of war, that a freeze at current levels of arms involves dangerous illusions which grievously damage the cause of peace, of freedom, and of genuine arms control.

This Administration's far-reaching arms reductions proposals left the freeze proposals in the dust a long time ago. Even the Soviet Union has, in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) proposed reductions in current arsenals.

Would it really be wise, or moral, to abandon the serious Geneva reductions negotiations in favor of a freeze at current high levels? Should we really be removing the incentive for the Soviet Union to negotiate reductions to far lower and equal levels of arms?

I certainly believe not, as I am sure you believe not. And I am sure the American people don't believe it either. Indeed, I believe that support of the US reductions proposals in Geneva, and support of our modernization programs can be the greatest lever for assuring security and peace and for providing the Soviet Union with an incentive verifiably to reduce, yes, to reduce, not freeze, the current arsenals and risks of war.
The President: Thank you. Thank you very much. And reverend clergy all, Senator Hawkins, distinguished members of the Florida Congressional delegation and all of you, I can't tell you how you have warmed my heart with your welcome. I'm delighted to be here today.

Those of you in the National Association of Evangelicals are known for your spiritual and humanitarian work. And I would be especially remiss if I didn't discharge right now one personal debt of gratitude. Thank you for your prayers. Nancy and I have felt their presence many times in many ways. And believe me, for us they've made all the difference. The other day in the East Room of the White House at a meeting there, someone asked me whether I was aware of all the people out there who were praying for the President and I had to say, "Yes, I am. I've felt it. I believe in intercessory prayer." But I couldn't help but say to that questioner after he'd asked the question that -- or at least say to them that if sometimes when he was praying he got a busy signal it was just me in there ahead of him. (Laughter).

I think I understand how Abraham Lincoln felt when he said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."

From the joy and the good feeling of this conference, I go to a political reception. (Laughter). Now, I don't know why but that bit of scheduling reminds me of a story -- (laughter) -- which I'll share with you. An evangelical minister and a politician arrived at Heaven's gate one day together. And St. Peter, after doing all the necessary formalities, took them in hand to show them where their quarters would be. And he took them to a small single room with a bed, a chair and a table and said this was for the clergyman. And the politician was a little worried about what might be in store for him. And he couldn't believe it then when St. Peter stopped in front of a beautiful mansion with lovely grounds, many servants and told him that these would be his quarters. And he couldn't help but ask, he said, "But wait, how -- there's something wrong -- how do I get this mansion while that good and holy man only gets a single room?"

And St. Peter said, "You have to understand how things are up here. We've got thousands and thousands of clergy. You're the first politician who ever made it." (Laughter) (Applause).

But I don't want to contribute to a stereotype. (Laughter).
So I tell you there are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And, yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideas and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants." Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And it was George Washington who said that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret of America's greatness and genius -- and he said:

"Not until I went into the Churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America. America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." (Applause.)

Well, I am pleased to be here today with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last, best hope of man.

I want you to know that this administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities -- the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God.

Now, I don't have to tell you that this puts us in opposition to, or at least out of step with, a prevailing attitude of many who have turned to a modern-day secularism, discarding the tried and time-tested values upon which our value civilization is based. No matter how well intentioned, their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. And while they proclaim that they are freeing us from superstitions of the past, they have taken upon themselves the job of superintending us by government rule and regulation. Sometimes their voices are louder than ours, but they are not yet a majority. (Applause.)
An example of that vocal superiority is evident in a controversy now going on in Washington. And since I'm involved, I've been waiting to hear from the parents of young America. How far are they willing to go in giving to Government their prerogatives as parents?

Let me state the case as briefly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent sometime ago established a nationwide network of clinics to offer help to these girls and hopefully alleviate this situation.

Now, again, let me say, I do not fault their intent. However, in their well-intentioned effort, these clinics have decided to provide advice and birth control drugs and devices to underage girls without the knowledge of their parents.

For some years now, the federal government has helped with funds to subsidize these clinics. In providing for this, the Congress decreed that every effort would be made to maximize parental participation. Nevertheless, the drugs and devices are prescribed without getting parental consent or giving notification after they've done so. Girls termed "sexually active" -- and that has replaced the word "promiscuous" -- are given this help in order to prevent illegitimate birth or abortion.

We have ordered clinics receiving federal funds to notify the parents such help has been given. (Applause.) One of the nation's leading newspapers has created the term "squeal rule" in editorializing against us for doing this and we're being criticized for violating the privacy of young people. A judge has recently granted an injunction against an enforcement of our rule.

I've watched TV panel shows discuss this issue, seen columnists pontificating on our error, but no one seems to mention morality as playing a part in the subject of sex. (Applause.)

Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And isn't it the parents' right to give counsel and advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their entire lives? (Applause.)

MORE
Many of us in government would like to know what parents think about this intrusion in their family by government. We're going to fight in the courts. The right of parents and the rights of family take precedence over those of Washington-based bureaucrats and social engineers. (Applause).

But the fight against parental notification is really only one example of many attempts to water down traditional values and even abrogate the original terms of American democracy. Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged. (Applause). When our Founding Fathers passed the first amendment they sought to protect churches from government interference. They never intended to construct a wall of hostility between government and the concept of religious belief itself. (Applause).

The evidence of this permeates our history and our government. The Declaration of Independence mentions the Supreme Being no less than four times. "In God We Trust" is engraved on our coinage. The Supreme Court opens its proceedings with a religious invocation. And the Members of Congress open their sessions with a prayer. I just happen to believe the schoolchildren of the United States are entitled to the same privileges as Supreme Court Judges and Congressmen. (Applause). Last year, I sent the Congress a constitutional amendment to restore prayer to public schools. Already this session, there's growing bipartisan support for the amendment and I am calling on the Congress to act speedily to pass it and to let our children pray. (Applause).

Perhaps some of you read recently about the Lubbock school case where a judge actually ruled that it was unconstitutional for a school district to give equal treatment to religious and nonreligious students groups, even when the group meetings were being held during the students' own time. The first amendment never intended to require government to discriminate against religious speech. (Applause).

Senators Denton and Hatfield have proposed legislation in the Congress on the whole question of prohibiting discrimination against religious forms of student speech. Such legislation could go far to restore freedom of religious speech for public school students. And I hope the Congress considers these bills quickly. And with your help, I think it's possible we could also get the constitutional amendment through the Congress this year. (Applause).

More than a decade ago, a Supreme Court decision literally wiped off the books of 50 states statutes protecting the rights of unborn children. Abortion on demand now takes the lives of up to 1½ million unborn children a year. Human life legislation ending this tragedy will some day pass the Congress and you and I must never rest until it does. (Applause). Unless and until it can be proven that the unborn child is not a living entity, then its
right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness must be protected. (Applause.)

You may remember that when abortion on demand began many, and, indeed, I'm sure many of you warned that the practice would lead to a decline in respect for human life, that the philosophical premises used to justify abortion on demand would ultimately be used to justify other attacks on the sacredness of human life, infanticide or mercy killing. Tragically enough, those warnings proved all too true: only last year a court permitted the death by starvation of a handicapped infant.

I have directed the Health and Human Services Department to make clear to every health care facility in the United States that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects all handicapped persons against discrimination based on handicap, including infants. (Applause.) And we have taken: the further step of requiring that each and every recipient of federal funds who provides health care services to infants must post and keep posted in a conspicuous place a notice stating that "discriminatory failure to feed and care for handicapped infants in this facility is prohibited by federal law. It also lists a 24-hour, toll-free number so that nurses and others may report violations in time to save the infant's life. (Applause.)

In addition, recent legislation introduced in the Congress by Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois not only increases restrictions on publicly-financed abortions, it also addresses this whole problem of infanticide. I urge the Congress to begin hearings and to adopt legislation that will protect the right of life to all children, including the disabled or handicapped.

Now, I'm sure that you must get discouraged at times, but you've done better than you know, perhaps. There is a great spiritual awakening in America -- (applause) -- a renewal of the traditional values that have been the bedrock of America's goodness and greatness. One recent survey by a Washington-based research council concluded that Americans were far more religious than the people of other nations; 95 percent of those surveyed expressed a belief in God and a huge majority believed the Ten Commandments had real meaning in their lives.

And another study has found that an overwhelming majority of Americans disapprove of adultery, teenage sex, pornography, abortion and hard drugs. And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief. (Applause.)

I think the items that we've discussed here today must be a key part of the nation's political agenda. For the first time the Congress is openly and seriously debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues -- and that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and a moral renewal and with your biblical keynote
And with your biblical keynote, I say today, "Yes, let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream." (Applause.)

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus that I have talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must never forget that no government schemes are going to perfect man. We know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is sin and evil in the world. And we are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights once a source of disunity and civil war is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-Semitism or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country. (Applause.) I know that you have been horrified, as have I, by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice. Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate these hate groups in our midst. The commandment given us is clear and simple: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Applause.)

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom, but not just for ourselves, but for millions of others around the world.

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as President, in answer to a direct question, I pointed out that, as good Marxists-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out, I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas -- that is their name for religion -- or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat.

Well, I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary fact of Soviet doctrine illustrates an historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930s. We see it too often today. This does not mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them. I
intend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful
intent, to remind them that it was the West that refused to use its
nuclear monopoly in the '40's and '50's for territorial gain
and which now proposes 50-percent cuts in strategic ballistic
missiles and the elimination of an entire class of land-based in-
termediate-range nuclear missiles. (Applause.)

At the same time, however, they must be made to under-
stand we will never compromise our principles and standards.
We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief
in God. (Applause.) And we will never stop searching for a genuine
peace, but we can assure none of these things America stands for
through the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some.

The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous
fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is
that we must find peace through strength. (Applause.)

I would agree to a freeze if only we could freeze the
Soviets' global desires. (Applause.) A freeze at current levels
of weapons would remove any incentive for the Soviets to negotiate
seriously in Geneva, and virtually end our chances to achieve the
major arms reductions which we have proposed. Instead, they would
achieve their objectives through the freeze. A freeze would reward
the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup.
It would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of
United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces
increasingly vulnerable. And an honest freeze would require
extensive prior negotiations on the systems and numbers to be limited
and on the measures to ensure effective verification and compliance.
And the kind of a freeze that has been suggested would be virtually
impossible to verify. Such a major effort would divert us completely
from our current negotiations on achieving substantial reductions.
(Applause.)

A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very
prominent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a
tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the
cold war and communism and our own way of life were very much on
people's minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly,
though, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than any-
thing -- " And I said to myself, "Oh, no, don't. You can't -- don't
say that." But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I would
rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have
them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in
God." (Applause.)

There were thousands of young people in that audience.
They came to their feet with shouts of joy. They had instantly
recognized the profound truth in what he had said, with regard to
the physical and the soul and what was truly important.
Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness -- pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth -- they are the focus of evil in the modern world. It was C.S. Lewis who, in his unforgettable Screwtape Letters, wrote: "The greatest evil is not done now in those sordid 'dens of crime' that Dickens loved to paint. It is not even done in concentration camps and labor camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried, and minuted) in clear, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice."

Because these "quiet men" do not "raise their voices," because they sometimes speak in soothing tones of brotherhood and peace, because, like other dictators before them, they're always making "their final territorial demand," some would have us accept them at their word and accommodate ourselves to their aggressive impulses. But, if history teaches anything, it teaches that simple-minded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom.

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. You know, I've always believed that old Screwtape reserved his best efforts for those of you in the church. So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride -- the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.

I ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you withhold your support for our efforts, this administration's efforts, to keep America strong and free, while we negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world's nuclear arsenals and one day, with God's help, their total elimination. (Applause.)

While America's military strength is important, let me add here that I have always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith.

Whittaker Chambers, the man whose own religious conversion...
made him a witness to one of the terrible traumas of our time, the Hiss-Chambers case, wrote that the crisis of the Western World exists to the degree in which the West is indifferent to God, the degree to which it collaborates in communism's attempt to make man stand alone without God. And then he said, "For Marxism-Leninism is actually the second oldest faith first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden with the words of temptation, 'Ye shall be as gods.'"

"The Western world can answer this challenge," he wrote, "but only provided that its faith in God and the freedom he enjoins is as great as communism's faith in man."

I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material but spiritual. And because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man. For in the words of Isaiah: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increased strength ... But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary ..." (Applause).

Yes, change your world. One of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Paine, said, "We have it within our power to begin the world over again." We can do it doing together what no one church could do by itself. God bless you and thank you very much. (Applause).

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