ABSTRACT

ZACHARY DUKIC. Put Your Faith in the President: Christianity and Presidential Discourse. (Under the direction of Professor Agnes Bolonyai.)

This research is a continuation of a previous study, in which I analyzed direct references to “God” in presidential Inaugural Addresses and found that the quantity of God-references in presidential rhetoric increased over time. The present study examines patterns in presidential religious rhetoric among democrat and republican presidents and how these patterns demonstrate differences and similarities between the two political affiliations. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, I analyze Inaugural Addresses and State of the Union speeches from William Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, George W. Bush and Barack Obama for the presence of references to Christianity and how these references signal what I term “prophetic” and “petitionary” stance which demonstrates conservative and progressive framing of reality, respectively. I theorize that republican presidents more often display a prophetic stance and imply knowledge of God’s actions and obedience to Him while democrat presidents more often display a petitionary stance and describe the presidency as a shared responsibility between the president, the audience, and God. The data suggests that though there is significant variation between democrat and republican with both displaying prophetic and petitionary stances at different times, they appear to be more similar than different overall regarding references to Christianity in presidential rhetoric. The results indicate that conservative and progressive framing has reversed over time with the most recent democrat president indexing a progressive frame more than any other democrat president analyzed and the most recent republican president indexing a conservative frame more than any other republican president analyzed.

**Key words:** presidential rhetoric, prophetic stance, petitionary stance, democrat, republican