"ONE NATION UNDER GOD": THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AS A RITUAL PRACTICE IN AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION

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THE ABSTRACT

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This document suggests and then illustrates a neglect in the study of American civil religious ritual. It argues that a primary carrier for American civil religion has been the public school system and that one vehicle used in the task of perpetuating the American identity has been the civil religious ritual of saying the Pledge of Allegiance which most American school children routinely perform at the start of each school day. The methodological approach used in this study of the Pledge ritual is a process analysis formulated by Ronald Grimes which combines the concern of sociology with that of history. Three key questions are dealt with: the process of change (a historical study); the social process effecting the ritual (this centers on the legal conflicts) and the processes which the ritual affect (this concentrates on grassroots responses to the ritual and the power, positive or negative, which it generates.

The negative power behind the ritual is a dynamic force which has left its mark in the legislature of the country and in the attitude of the adult population towards the Pledge of Allegiance. This paper identifies and explains four motivators which underlie much of the ritual processing, namely, consensus,

conflict, crisis and control. It concludes that the Pledge of Allegiance ritual is a dynamic force which reflects the growth and development of the civil-religious dimension of the American nation.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Although American civil religion was first labeled in 1967 in an article by Robert Bellah, the phenomenon was observed and described by a visiting Frenchman in the 1830's.

> On my arrival in the United States the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things.[1]

Intrigued by his nine month visit in America, Alexis de Tocqueville went home to France and produced his classic sociological study, Democracy in America. This "new state of things" as Tocqueville described it, continues to pulsate at the core of American democracy to this day. According to a 1980 Gallop Report, 90% of all Americans identified with some religious faith.[2] A study by Alfred Balitzer, "Some Thoughts About Civil Religion", concludes that democracy cannot survive without religion.[3]

By its very definition civil religion observes no arbitrary boundaries between the civil and the religious. Such

methodological openness permits a study of ritual in the context of government and politics. Clifford Geertz defined culture as

> an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.[4]

Accepting this statement, the Pledge of Allegiance is a ritual which transmits one aspect of culture from generation to generation. It is a contention of this thesis that a primary carrier for what is now referred to as American civil religion has been the nation's public school system. It is here where children are initiated into the American democratic system. They are taught the principles of democracy and are indoctrinated in the "American way of life".

Further, it is the contention of this thesis that one vehicle used in this task of perpetuating a sense of American identity is the Pledge of Allegiance. This ritual process has had a predominate role in the development and perpetuation of American civil religion, but its significance has been overlooked in studies of American civil religion. We shall demonstrate the neglect of the ritual process in American civil religious studies and then describe and evaluate the process as it is exemplified through the Pledge of Allegiance.

It is also a contention of this thesis that there are four predominant tensions which have shaped the dynamics of the Pledge of Allegiance ritual as it functions within the civil religious framework. Consensus has consistently been recognized as a function of civil religion, but its antithesis, conflict, has been largely ignored. The tensions between conflict and consensus have a dynamic interplay in society. They interact with tensions caused by crisis situations and control strategies. These four elements: consensus, conflict, crisis and control are of vital importance in unpacking the dynamics of ritual. These tensions are in process and must be identified and examined with tools appropriate to the task.

Ritual could be examined systemically in terms of contemporary relations or chronologically in terms of historical development. This raises the issue of the debate of sociology versus the history of religion. Ritual, itself, is an activity or process which has, of course, occurred in history. In order to gain the best perspective for an analysis of the Pledge of Allegiance, we shall use a method which combines a concern of sociology with that of history, the method of process analysis as defined by Ronald Grimes. Grimes identifies three components of process in ritual, the process of change, social processes

effecting the ritual and the processes which the ritual affect. By using these descriptors, we shall gain a comprehensive picture of the network surrounding the ritual both socially and historically. First we shall examine the process of change in relationship to the historical development of the Pledge ritual. Next we shall examine the social processes surrounding the Pledge. Lastly we will look at the actual process of ritual and evaluate its effectiveness.

The Pledge of Allegiance is a significant civil religious ritual which has been affected by and has affected consensus, conflict, control and crisis. Chapter two will begin the task of describing the interaction between these processes as they encounter each other historically, and sociologically.

FOOTNOTES

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America. ed. by Phillips Bradley. New York: Vintage Books Inc., 1956, p. 319.

2 Gallup poll, Phi Delta Kappan, 61:1, 1980.

3 Alfred Balitzer, "Some Thoughts About Civil Religion", Church and State, Winter 1974, pp. 31-49. Balitzer argues that democracy needs religion to formulate criteria for the application and legitimation of its rules.

4 Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion. Ed. MichaelBanton. A.S.A. Monographs, no. 3. London: Tavistock, 1966, p. 3.

Chapter 2

AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION AND RITUAL

The Exclusion of Ritual

The topic of ritual has been ignored in much of the liturature focusing on American civil religion. An overview of the work of key contributors to the understanding of American civil religion will prove this point.

Rousseau (1762)

The idea of a civil religion originated with the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He developed this concept in "The Social Contract" written in 1762. Rousseau argued for a republican system of government based on a social contract reflecting the general will of the populous. Tied to this agreement was the freedom of individuals to choose the conditions of the contract and the necessity of religion. Rousseau defined

his concept of religion quite precisely because he believed that traditional religions, specifically Christianity, perpetuated a divided loyalty between "other-worldly" interests of those of the state. The religious claim of ultimate authority over spiritual concerns wielded a power which cut across the social unity of citizens committed to the social contract. This religious tyranny "prevents them from being devoted at once to god and country," warned Rousseau.[1]

The religion that Rousseau had in mind as a necessity for his republican system of government was a purely civic

> profession of faith whose articles the sovereign is competent to determine, not precisely as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject.[2]

The dogmas comprising this civil faith consisted of four simple statements. First, the civil religion should include a belief in the extence of God as a Supreme Being who holds the destiny of the republic in his providence. Second, the religion requires a belief in life after death and divine retribution or reward for one's behavior as a spiritual license for social controls. Third, the religion should encourage tolerance of personal religious commitments as long as it does not encrouch upon the goals of the state as set out in the social contract. Fourth,

the religion must encourage devotion to the social contract and the laws of the land.[3]

These four doctrines provided the structure for Rousseau's concept of civil religion. Ritual did not appear within this framework. This was not an oversight since Rousseau understood religious institutional structures to be divisive and problematic for the republic because of their "other-worldly" dimension. Ritual was not considered part of the supportive stucture for the social order or necessary to achieve or maintain good citizenry.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1843)

Alexis de Tocqueville was one of the earliest observers of the role of the church in American democracy. This was analyzed in his book, Democracy in America. He found the stability and amicability between the church and state unique, especially when compared to his own French environment where the post-revolution government so strenuously opposed the re-establishment of the Christian state. He attributed the different attitude of Americans toward church-state relations to be a reflection of the attitude demonstrated by the founding fathers.

> "The greatest part of British America was peopled by men who, after having shaken off the authority of the Pope, acknowledged no other religious supremacy: they brought with them into the New World a form of Christianity which I cannot better describe than by styling it a democratic and republican religion.[4]

This religion was part of the structure of democracy. It supportedthe freedoms maintained by the society and even determined its survival. The freedom of choice meant that the people needed a basis from which to make wise choices. The church provided the ethical foundation for the freedoms that democracy gave its people. Tocqueville referred to the church as the first political institution. It was the "school" of republican virtue since it provided for society the mores upon which democracy was built. It supplied America with a sense of ethical purpose. Without this, freedom easily could have become a license for self-gain and abuse of others. Stated conversely, he warned,

> Emphasis on individual interest with no ethical or moral restraint so each is shut up in the solitude of his own heart is the road to a new despotism, perhaps far harsher than traditional authoritarianism.[5]

Tocqueville identified the role of religion in America as one of providing a national sense of ethical purpose which would serve as a maintenence structure for democracy. Ritual was not considered in his analysis of the American democratic and

republican religion.

Will Herberg (1955)

Will Herberg describes American civil religion as "The American Way of Life". He arrives at this understanding of civilreligion through a careful analysis of the common religion emerging from the life of the American people, society's ethos and history.

> It is an organic structure of ideas, values, and beliefs that constitutes a faith common to Americans as Americans, and is genuinely operative in their lives.[6]

Herberg suggests that Americans are devoted to this "American Way of Life". The values, ideas and the practices of the American people provide an "overarching sense of unity" whereby they identify themselves as American. Historically, Herberg sees the secularization of two religious movements, Puritanism and Revivalism as providing the structure for "The American Way". Puritanism bequeathed idealism and moralism, and Evangelicalism and its revival emphasis provided activism and pragmatism.

Civil religion is quite independent of mainline religions, but they have coexisted quite happily. The spiritual and

social dimensions of each reflect similar concerns. According to Herberg, the spiritual realm of civil religion is exemplified by belief in a Supreme Being, who is in control of America's sacred history. He names George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as its primary Saints. The moralism and idealism of Americans are two other areas which he designates as spiritual. He clarifies these terms with the examples of "brotherhood", the high value of cleanliness, faith in education and high respect for religion. Politically, civil religion supports the Constitution but maintains a separate identity from politics, economically it endorses "free enterprise", and socially, egalitarianism. Its symbols and practices cultivate an allegiance to America, a social responsiblity and a nationalism.

The civil religious practices which Herberg identifies are confined to social ethics or ideals of American culture. He describes these but does not investigate the theory of process which would have lead to an exploration of ritual.

Robert Bellah (1967)

Robert Bellah's initial paper on American civil religion caused a major furor.

> There actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalized civil religion in America.[7]

The concept was not new, but Bellah had given it a suitable name and had given it credibility through his interpretation of events surrounding the Kennedy administration. The phenomenon that interested Bellah was the fact that the nation maintained its Protestant image even as its first Roman Catholic president invoked God's guidance on the country. Bellah found his answer to this contradiction in the concept of civil religion.

Bellah argues that civil relgion is "a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality" which renders prophetic judgment on the nation.

> Without an awareness that our nation stands under higher judgment, the tradition of the civil religion would be dangerous indeed. Fortunately, the prophetic voices have never been lacking.[8]

Bellah maintains that American civil religion is an interpretation of the American experience in light of "ultimate and universal reality". America's past is couched in sacred history; her present is aligned with God's will, and her destiny is determined by God. The ethic based on this interpretation is peculiar to civil religion, and it functions as a source of

meaning and social solidarity for the nation.

> It [American civil religion] has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols.[9]

We see here, a cursory acknowledgement of the existence of civil religious ritual, but no attempt was made to understand the meaning or significance of it. He also fails to deal with it adequately in his article, "American Civil Religion in the 1970's" and in his most recent book co-authored by Phillip E. Hammond, Varieties of Civil Religion.

Phillip E. Hammond (1980)

"Religion refers to the imagery by which people make sense out of their lives--their 'moral architecture'," explains Phillip Hammond[10]. People do this in different ways and with differing levels of success. There is no social consensus as to the right way to achieve meaning in life. Religious pluralism is Hammond's definition for the ethical diversity emerging from this tolerence.

Hammond suggests that the separation of church and state is a type of religious pluralism that

> arises from a situation of competing meaning systems (that is, is essentially a political response to a *religious* state of affairs)

The competition for the authority to proclaim the "right way" results in confusion and is inadequate for society which will seek a more generalized common meaning system. Civil religion, according to Hammond, will express the degree to which a society is integrated. This means that religion will occur at points where conflict has been resolved. It also means that the law, as a tool for resolving conflicts, plays a principal role in the development of civil religion. As the religious institutions lose their influence because they no longer possess a monopoly on ultimate meaning, the legal institutions gain a religious and moral character. The courts, through their interpretation of the law, define the moral standards of the community at large.

> The "law" takes on this task to the degree that "religion" is denied it as a result of pluralism. The "internal morality" of the law informs and guides a judge even though the "external morality" (interests) of contending parties must remain of no concern to him.[11]

The law, according to Hammond, takes up the transcendent task of civil religion through its responsibility to create and maintain a system of justice whereby the will of God will be achieved. A discussion of ritual in civil religion was preempted by

Hammond's emphasis on the function of the law.

Ritual Addressed as Consensus

W. Lloyd Warner (1959)

The most prolific writer on the subject of ritual in American civil religion has been anthropologist W. Lloyd Warner who has studied ritual as a commemoration of the dead, which has centered around Memorial Day. He failed to handle the subject adequately, however, emphasizing only the cohesive component in civil religious ritual. He maintained that Memorial Day and other related ceremonies

> are rituals comprising a sacred symbol system which functions periodically to integrate the whole community with its conflicting symbols and its opposing autonomous churches and associations.[12]

While Warner noted that changes or additions to the ritual were interesting, it is important to know why and how these changes were implemented. It is also important to separate the ritual act from the ritual preparation and to identify the responses when possible.[13] If these changes in methodology had

been used, the concept of conflict would have emerged. One example of conflict centered around the change in which women were included as *objects* of the ritual. Another area of conflict with which Warner should have dealt is associated with the inevitability of death: the need to conquer fear (or be in control of death), the sense of helplessness and the finality and loss in this personal and community crisis.

Warner held the key to the power of the ritual but failed to use it when he said,

> "Death declared a holiday, not for itself but for the living, when together they could experience it and momentarily challenge its ultimate power.[14]

The ritual momentarily created a situation which could never be in reality. It overcame the discrepancy between what was and what ideal should have been. The dynamics involved in this process of coping with the tensions of conflict, crisis and control were ignored in Warner's study which would have added a significant dimension to his work. Because the process of ritual was slighted in Warner's study, his analysis lacks a comprehensive understanding of the moving forces of ritual.

Ritual in Process

The study of American civil religious ritual has been neglected. Part of the neglect has been due to methodological inadequacies. The 1960's saw a rediscovery of the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim which initiated a re-emphasis on the societal roles of religion. Durkheim was the father of structural functionalist analysis, an approach which analyzed the structures of society according to their interaction with the funtions of society.[15] Bellah, who identified civil religion in America, and Warner, who conducted a study of American civil religious ritual, identified consensus as an undergirding structure in civil religion using these tools of structural functional analysis.

A second classic work published in 1909, three years before Durkheim's, was The Rites of Passage by Arnold van Gennep. Van Gennep's theory involved an analysis of the ritual surrounding the normal changes in status which individuals undergo in life, birth, puberty, marriage and death. Change brings uncertainties which are generally perceived as threatening. During such times, both individuals and community seek protection and direction through ritual. The ritual involves three stages: a separation from the previous state, a transition or *liminal* phase, and the phase of consumation of *aggregation.*[16] This

effort was not as immediately influential as Durkheim's, but was instrumental in Bronislaw Malinowski's work on the element of magic in ritual ten years later.[17] During the 1960's van Gennep's theory was resurrected and served as the stimulus for the contributions of Victor Turner.[18]

Turner is a pioneer in process analysis. "Society seems to be a process rather than a thing--a dialectical process" is the premise on which Turner built his theory of *communitas* (cohort) and structure (positions of control), the two modalities of social interrelatedness.[19] This method views society in action, in becoming, in process. Questions concerning the use of ritual, its environment, its effect, and how and why it changes are things which process analysis investigates. This method of analysis has gained rapid acceptance. At a conference of the International Association for the History of Religions in 1979, Lauri Honko delivered a paper in which he maintained,

> Anthropologists are still vitally concerned to exhibit "structures" or social relations, ideas, and values, but they now tend to see these in relation to processes of which they are both the products and regulators.[20]

This type of analysis is not seen as a replacement, but rather a complement to the older approach.

Ronald L. Grimes, a current proponent of process analayis, describes ritual as embedded in social process.[21] He warns against summarizing the essence of ritual too quickly. Rituals are in process; they develop and they atrophy. They process the participants, the surroundings, objects and time. Grimes has classified these processes in which we capture the action and dynamic of ritual as:

a. the process of change which ritual *undergoes*
b. the social processes *surrounding* ritual
c. the work of processing which ritual *does* [22]

These three categories provide a comprehensive framework for examining the relationship of ritual to society and vice versa. In other words it questions the outside factors which influence ritual, the outside factors which ritual influences and the composition and development of ritual itself. We shall use these categories to organize our analysis of the Pledge of Allegiance as a ritual in American civil religion in the subsequent two chapters. First we shall look at the history of the Pledge of Allegiance and the process of change which it has undergone in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four we will deal with social processes of democracy and political implications surrounding the ritual. In Chapter Five we shall describe and evaluate the processing which ritual does.

Within the social process of ritual are four dynamic tensions: consensus, conflict, control and crisis. Observing how these operate in the process of ritual is extremely important for a comprehensive understanding of ritual. For the moment we will merely identify these tensions.

Consensus/Conflict

We have seen that the studies on American civil religion by Bellah and Warner have emphasized the pluralism in society and have concluded that civil religion plays a primary role in achieving consensus. Further, we have found that a function of ritual is also seen to be one of achieving consensus. Stated in Kenneth L. Schmitz's words, ritual is an "integrating, identity-making 'procedure'".[23] The process involves much more than that, however. Conflict, the antithesis of consensus, has caused tensions which have stretched ritual into new roles. Ritual, as symbolic action, is the mediator or stepping stone between the doctrine of civil religion and what actually transpires in society. Ritual engages in activity which bridges the gap or the incongruities between the two. In the Pledge of Allegiance, for example, the phrase "with liberty and justice for all", is not, of course, describing the realities of America, but

rather, an ideal American doctrine. Ritual also engages in the activity of mediating the differences within the group which has come together to perform the ritual.

Obviously, if differing people or groups are brought together, the differences must be accommodated. They can be ignored, and thereby included or accepted, sublimated, compromised or changed. Sublimation, of course, is only temporary and requires the least commitment to the group. Theoretically, the only differences which could exclude people from the group is the failure to qualify as a citizen or a citizen's personal desire for exclusion. American civil religion is open to all American citizens and, therefore, to every other difference. The theory that civil religion unifies society becomes praxis through ritual. Through a corporate ritual each participant is united with the other. The primary function of ritual is more than achieving consensus, however; it also entails coping with conflict.

Civil religion frequently becomes the battle ground for social conflicts. Ritual deals with conflict on levels of membership, ownership and procedure. Participants become part of the group through their willingness to perform the ritual. Those

outside the group are a source of potential conflict over membership in the group, or competition for ownership of the symbols involved in the ritual. The flag as the symbol of the United States has suffered much abuse as dissenting groups have protested various American policies. Flag burning is an aggressive act of violence which carries strong emotion for most Americans. This was largely a conflict situation on college campuses in the sixties.

While conflict can lead to violence, it can, in a more constructive vein, provide the vehicle for clarifying religious and political values. For example, various court cases have erupted during the last forty years over the mandatory requirement of the recitation of the Pledge in public schools. This ritual was eventually decreed a voluntary act.

Another potential area of conflict in riutal concerns its prescribed procedure. Each ritual has a right way to do things and certain things which must be done. Any violation of the rules constitutes religious defilement and a conflict situation.

The flag continues to be an example of a focal point in conflict situations because there are numerous ways to abuse the flag, and thereby sabotage patriotic endeavors.

The Pledge of Allegiance is full of real and potential conflict. Its words convey idealism, rather than reality. Would minority groups acclaim that there is liberty and justice for all? Is the United States under the rule of God? It hardly seems indivisible as it still bears the scares of its Civil War as Southerners yell, "Yankees, go home!" to passengers in cars with Northern license plates. We have already ascertained that a chief function of ritual is the task of overcoming discrepancies like these.

Control

Rituals are dynamic and can change according to the circumstances around them. These must be carefully controlled if the content of the ritual is to be protected from unwarranted change.

Ritual is an exercise in the strategy of choice. Choices are made to control the ritual, suggests Jonathan Z. Smith.[24]

A ritual must contain a prescribed routine which is not absolute. Adaptability is essential for a ritual to remain alive, but change must be carefully guarded. A sixth century text from Plutarch makes this point clear.

> At Athens, Lysimache, the priestess of Athene Polias, when asked for a drink by the mule drivers who had transported the sacred vessels, replied, "No, for I fear it will get into the ritual."[25]

The component parts of a ritual are meant to be significant. In this myth the priestess utilized her control over the temple area to prevent extraneous activity from becoming part of the ritual. The priestess was aware that ordinary things could easily become an important part of the ritual through their proximity to the sacred, in this case the temple area.

The Pledge of Allegiance, for example, is a ritual which utilizes the following prescribed formalities:

> Standing at attention
> Placing the right hand over the heart
> Looking at the United States flag
> Maintaining an attitude of reverence
> Speaking the pledge

These five things are always included as part of the ceremony. Through repetition and proximity things like when the pledge is said, where it is done and who leads it might also effect the ritual. If this happens part of the symbolic action for a particular group of participants might also include:

> When: at the sound of the beginning bell
> Where: around the flag pole

Leader: the principal

In the example of the Pledge ritual, the customary things which happen in proximity to the flag pole may be taken on as part of the ritual by those participating in it.

The capacity for ritual to change must be carefully controlled.[26] Change is vital to prevent a ritual from becoming obsolete. It must be adaptable to serve in new situations. The changes, however, must be carefully prescribed to maintain stability and thereby, credibility.

Ritual is not only controlled, it is a controller of both the participant and the environment, though these are sometimes camaflauged functions. Ritual controls the participants' overt behavior. Children know what is expected and jump to their feet when it is time for the Pledge ritual each school morning. The ritual becomes an exercise in controlling human conduct. At another level the pledge controls the participant through its structure as a spoken promise or an oath. The ritual is affirming the American identity of the "I" through the dialogue between it and the flag, the symbol of the nation. The participant is effectively dedicating himself to the idealistic nation which for that moment transcends the realm of possibility

and becomes reality. Through the ritual act the environment is also controlled. As Jonathan Smith says,

> Ritual represents the creation of a controlled environment....Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are.[27]

At another level, the "I" who is taking the oath is acting out a claim of ownership of the ritual. This ownership serves as the transmitter of the power behind the ritual which allows it to function as the mediator between reality and possibility.

Crisis

Ritual is used to overcome the tension in crisis situations, whether real or perceived. John F. Kennedy's assassination caused a nationwide distrubance perceived as a crisis. His Roman Catholic funeral included a dramatic display of national symbols and was a civil religious ritual in which most Americans participated through television coverage.

The pledge as an oath sworn to the flag has caused a legal

crisis situation when the children of Jehovah's Witnesses refused to participate in the Pledge ritual. The Jehovah's Witnesses brought their case to the Supreme Court in 1943 in the case West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette. The court ruled that freedom of speech also included freedom *not* to speak.[28]

This overturned an earlier ruling of 1940 when this "disloyalty" was perceived as a threat to the nation. The courts had ruled that religious liberty did not "exempt citizens from obedience to general laws applicable to all and not designed to restrict religious beliefs."[29]

Summary

In this chapter we have identified the need for a study of ritual in American civil religion. We saw that subsequent studies of ritual as consensus leave many unexplored possibilities in the study of ritual. The tensions between consensus and conflict, conflict and crisis and crisis and control are dynamic areas requiring analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Pledge of Allegiance as a ritual in civil religion. Ronald Grimes has suggested three areas of process in ritual, the processes which involved the environment or situation around the ritual, the

processes which happen to the ritual and the processes which the ritual does which we shall now use in our analysis of the Pledge as a ritual.

Footnotes

1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses. Trans and ed. by G. D. H. Cole. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1950, p. 139.

2 Ibid., p. 139.

3 Ibid.

4 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Trans. by George Lawrence. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 311.

5 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 508.

6 Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes", in American Civil Religion, edited by Russel E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1974, pp. 76-88.

7 Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", in AmericanCivil Religion, p. 21.

8 Ibid., p. 39.

9 Ibid., pp. 40-41.

10 Phillip E. Hammond, "Pluralism and Law in the Formation of American Civil Religion" in Varieties of Civil Religion, by Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980, p. 142.

11 Ibid., p. 160.

12 W. Lloyd Warner, The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 248.

13 Ibid., pp. 248-279.

14 Ibid., p. 266.

15 See the principal work of Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Trans. by J. W. Swain. New York: Collier, 1961.

16 Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage. Trans. by MonikaB. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1960.

17 Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1954. See also, George C. Homans, 'Anxiety and Ritual: the Theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown', American Anthropologist 43, 1941.

18 Victor W. Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1969.

19 Ibid., p. 203. Turner identifies three types of meaning through which ritual can be understood: exegetical, operational, and positional. Exegetical meaning is a standard verbalinterpretation; operational meaning is based on an analysis of all the elements that interrelate with the ritual and positional meaning is derived from the ritual's position in both time and space. Edmond R. Leach explains the concept of time in ritual as an "ordering of time". He says "We talk of measuring time, as if time were a concrete thing waiting to be measured; but in fact we create time by creating intervals in social life. Until we have done this there is no time to be measured." See his book, Rethinking Anthropology. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961, pp. 134-135. For a detailed discussion, of the three meanings see Victor Turner, Celebration: Studies in

Festivity and Ritual. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982, pp. 18-21.

20 Lauri Honko, "Theories Concerning the Ritual Process: An Orientation," in Science of Religion Studies in Methodology: Proceedings of the Study Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, held in Turku, Finland August 27-31, 1973. Ed. by Lauri Honko. Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979, p. 381.

21 Ronald L. Grimes, "Modes of Ritual Necessity." Worship 53:2, pp. 126-141.

22 Ibid., pp. 127-141.

23 Kenneth L. Schmitz, "Ritual Elements in Community" in Religious Studies V 17, 1981, p. 168.

24 Jonathan Z. Smith, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 56.

25 Plutarch, De vitioso pudore, 534C.

26 It is an interesting exercise to compair the symbolic action of the secular ritual of the Pledge of Allegiance to the sacred ritual of reciting the Lord's Prayer. The formalities around the Lord's Prayer include:

Kneeling
Folding the hands together
Bowing one's head
Maintaining an attitude of reverence
Speaking the prayer

The symbolic action of the Pledge follows the ritual of prayer quite closely giving it a religious quality. The pledge almost needs an "amen" at its conclusion, and children have sometimes given it just that. This similarity between civil religious ritual and religious ritual closely identifies the Pledge with the sacred. The symbolic action is an important part of the

ritual and is controlled quite closely.

27 Smith, p. 63.

28 West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943).

29 Minersville School District v. Gobitis. (1940).

Chapter 3

THE HISTORICAL PROCESS OF CHANGE

Introduction

The ritual of the Pledge of Allegiance focuses around a tricolored, rectangular piece of cloth. The limp textile takes on a stately majesty when viewed through the eyes of millions of Americans.

Carl Porter, Chicago's pre-eminent flagmaker, reported that US flag sales increased after the American invasion of Grenada, after the release of the hostages of Iran and after the American bombing of Libya. "Americans are sick of getting their rear ends kicked from around the world. When we kick back, up go flag sales, and flags."[1]

Americans wave their flags when their country demonstrates its power. The issue is not one of concern over the justification of such aggression but elation that they now know that they are in control. The flag, in the time and space of ritual, transforms the person at the end of the flag's staff

into a world power that makes other nations tremble. The sense of belonging achieved through identification with the flag intensifies a feeling of self-accomplishment.[2]

This flag that Americans wave and cheer and parade through the streets is a symbol of the "Republic for which it stands". The cloth drips with the sentimentality of the masses who have gained a sense of identity from it. A part of who they are is tied up with the attributes of the nation which they claim as theirs. When America falls from its pedestal for a certain segment of the population, the disappointment and contempt associated with that failure is often focused on the flag, for Americans have burned their flag too. Such acts of animosity cause further conflict as disputes flare over the flag's abuse.

The flag strikes a central nerve in the core of American citizenry. It is a powerful tool of manipulation. The Pledge of Allegiance, an oath sworn to the flag, carries similar power in its ritual form. Throughout its history, this salute ritual has been used in power plays executed by the political, social and economic spheres of American culture. These irruptions have initiated changes in the Pledge as well as the motivation behind its very inception. We will document these occurrences as we reconstruct the history of the Pledge.

The First Pledges and a Minor Change

A US flag was first flown over a Schoolhouse in May, of 1812, in Colrain, Mass. Years later, in 1890, James Upham, the circulation chief for The Youth's Companion, a child's magazine, used this idea to devise a way to revive patriotism in America. This was indubitably a publicity maneuver for his magazine. Historically, this period ushered in the transition from rural-village society to an urban-industrial one. Floods of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe added additional pressure to the socio-economic structure of the country. Compulsory education was introduced in the 1920's to help assimilate immigrant cildren into society both politically and economically.[3] It was an ideal time for a patriotic thrust.

Upham decided to promote flags for schools and published his plan for raising money to buy American flags for the children's schools in his magazine. Over 30,000 flags were purchased. Pleased with this success, Upham then felt it would be good to write a more suitable pledge than the simple:

> I give my hand and heart to my country, one nation, one language, one flag.[4]

This pledge of unknown authorship had been used since the 1800's, but mainly for public ceremonies.

Upham asked Francis Bellamy, a fellow staff member of the magazine, to help him write a new pledge. In 1892 they published the pledge in this form:

> I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands - one Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.[5]

The motive behind the Pledge was not altruistic. Utilizing staff to write the Pledge and publishing it in his magazine both indicate that the promotion of school flags and the Pledge were circulation features used to bolster the economic viability of his magazine which survived another thirty-seven years. Just a few months after the appearance of the Pledge in The Youth's Companion, it was publicly recited on October 12, 1892--the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America at Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois.[6] The flag sales and the rapid assimilation of the Pledge into culture indicate the economic success of his venture.

About thirty years after this public recitation, relatives of Upham and Bellamy fell into dispute about the authorship of the Pledge. This conflict over "ownership" reflected a struggle

for the social status attributed to the author of the Pledge which would have extended to his relatives as well. An investigation was called in 1939 in which a committee of two historians and one political scientist reviewed the evidence in order to determine authorship. The Pledge was eventually accredited to Francis Bellamy.

This version of the Pledge was commonly used until the National Flag Conference of 1923-24 where socio-political concerns motivated a change in the Pledge. This was due to concern over assimilating the vast number of immigrants in the country into American culture. Delegates to the conference suggested that the words "my flag" might conjure up another country's flag in the minds of foreign-born citizens. "The Flag of the United States of America" was substituted. By this time reciting the Pledge had become an everyday ritual for school-age children so this addition to the Pledge meant that the immigrant children would be readily subjected to patriotic indoctrination. The pledge remained unchanged for the next thirty years.

The Addition

In 1954 the pledge underwent another change when President

Dwight Eisenhower signed a resolution adding the phrase "under God" to the text. Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan had introduced the resolution to the Senate in February of 1954 with a quotation from a sermon by George M. Docherty which had been given at the New York Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. three days before.

> There is something not in the pledge, something that is a characteristic and definitive factor in the American way of life.
>
> Indeed, apart from the mention of the phrase "the United States of America," it could be the pledge of any republic. In fact, I could hear little Muscovites repeat a similar pledge to their hammer-and-sickle flag in Moscow. Russia is also a republic that claims to have overthrown the tyranny of kingship. Russia also claims to be indivisible.[8]

Ferguson also had included a statement defending the constitutionality of the change:

> Adoption of the resolution would in no way run contrary to the provisions of the first amendment to the Constitution. This is not an act establishing a religion. A distinction exists between the Church as an institution and a belief in the sovereignty of God. The phrase "under God" recognizes only the guidance of God in our national affairs, it does nothing to establish a religion. Neither will this resolution violate the right of any person to disbelieve in God or reject the existence of God. The recognition of God in the pledge of allegiance to the flag of our nation does not compel any individiual to make a positive affirmation in the existence of God in whom one does not believe.[9]

This passed the Senate and the House of Representatives unanimously and went to the president for approval in May of 1954.[10]

The Historical Perspective

This addition to the Pledge was a political move which will be understood more clearly as we examine the events surrounding it and other relevant history. A key question which we should ask is why had the Pledge of Allegiance remained "secular" until the 1950's? We might surmise that the need to link God and country so obviously had not been felt until this time. It already had been an underlying assumption. We might also correlate the need to concretely establish religion in American culture with times of social, political or economic instability.

The Founding Fathers, according to James Reichley, felt that the moral principles derived from religion were necessary to maintain the republican form of government.[11] Benjamin Franklin, for example, although he had boasted of resisting an evangelist's efforts to convert him, nonetheless confessed to holding religious principles and referred the nation's leaders to daily prayer during the deadlock of the Federal Constitution of 1787.

In that speech he said,

> I have lived, sir, a long time, and, the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth--that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed, in this political building, no better than the builders of Babel.[12]

This quotation illustrates the underlying religious assumption of the Founding Fathers as well as their tendency to turn to religion in times of crisis.

Another example of this occurred during the Civil War. The relationship between God and country was firmly entrenched in American culture in the 1860's when the motto "In God We Trust" was placed on its coinage.[13] This formal declaration of trust in God was adopted during the Civil War crisis.

The Supreme Court also has reflected this same phenomenon. The 19th century had left America isolated and fairly independent of the rest of the world. The turn of the century, however, brought a massive influx of immigrants and a whole new situation of urbanization and industrialization with which to cope. During the next two decades both outside and inside tensions mounted.

America's involvement in World War I, the weakened economy of the twenties and the full scale depression of the thirties caused turbulence. During this time of crisis the courts returned to religious affirmations. The court case of the Church ofhe Holy Trinity v. United States (1891), was quoted in Macintosh case in the 1930's. The Supreme Court said,

> " We are a Christian people, according to one another the equal right of religious freedom, and acknowledging with reverence the duty of obedience to the will of God".[14]

From these examples we can see a correlation throughout history of the need to identify the American nation with God occuring during a time of crisis. The circumstances around the fifties when the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance occurred, should, according to our thesis, include a looming threat to the American way of life which encouraged this reaffirmation of the nation's religious ties to God.

Circumstances Around the Fifties

The Threat

America was undergoing rapid change in the decades of the forties and fifties. Roosevelt's "New Deal" was a banner of improved social conditions for Americans; an emergence from the dustbowl and Depression of America of the late twenties and early thirties. Steady economic growth spawned vast cultural change. A million immigrants were welcomed to America each year. The baby boom also contributed to the rapid growth of the suburbs. World War II, the Korean War and the Cold War added their mark to this era. America's world view and her self-perception were changing.

After World War II the United States had emerged as a major political and economic force in the West and as the dominant political expression of democracy. This was due to Europe's debt to America, both financial and moral. The "Liberty Ships" which did indeed "rescue" Europe symbolized the attitude of America regarding her relationship with Europe. America's self-confidence was bolstered. For the first time American-style democracy now had economic, political and military muscle. However, certain ominous undertones emerged. The detonation of the atom bomb in 1945 indicated a sense of moral rectitude which

was essentially un-democratic. Martin J. Sherwin suggested, for example, that the atomic bomb may have been the first shot of the Cold War rather than the last shot of World War II.[15]

In the 1940's and 50's America emerged as a superpower concerned with international political decisions. The Cold War stance of the Western democracies, led by America against the socialist East dominated by the U.S.S.R., began during this time. Communism had replaced fascism as the primary enemy of democracy and the West. School children were taught that the democratic way was the last great hope of the world which was threatened by godless communism. In Eisenhower's first inaugural address, in January of 1953 he said, "We sense with all our faculties, that forces of good and evil are massed and armed and opposed as rarely before in history."[16] Eisenhower deplored communism over its lack of transcendant beliefs and its consequent de-humanizing tendency in a commencement address:

> According to that doctrine, there is no God; there is no soul in man; there is no reward beyond the satisfaction of daily needs. Consequently, toward the human being, communism is cruel, intolerant, materialistic.[17]

Clearly, Eisenhower was contrasting America's civil religion against communism's supposed irreligion.

The Cold War was seen as an attack on American free enterprise and religious faith. It was construed as a threat to all that America stood for, including the premises on which the nation had been built. In the early 1950's Senator Joseph McCarthy attacked communism at every opportunity. Americans were already upset with outside threats such as the numerous communist inspired uprisings in Jamaica and the Philippines, occupations of Taiwan, the Berlin blockade and the Chinese Civil War. But now McCarthy went further by suggesting that communism had become an inside threat. McCarthy, with his willing and attentive audience, became responsible for "grand inquisitions" and communist "witch hunts". A network of undercover agents, like Ronald Reagan in the Screen Actors' Guild, was organized to weed out this perilous threat to America. McCarthy's anticommunist campaign intimidated and vilified countless individuals.

"To many Americans, McCarthyism is Americanism" reported radio commentator, Fultin Lewis Jr. "McCarthyism is America with it sleeves rolled [up]", McCarthy told a Wisconsin audience in 1952. Even the title of his book, McCarthyism: The Fight for America, illustrated the attitude which McCarthy was promoting.[18] Many Americans were swayed by his energetic campaign to rescue America which took on the trappings of a religious revival. On the other hand, many were incensed by

his vindictive accusations. The word "McCarthyism" became a catchall term. Brooks Atkinson, theator critic of New York Times, blamed McCarthy for a bad season on Broadway. "He has driven all good playwrights into silence or trivialty." The New York Herald Tribune ran headlines on May 25, 1952 which read:

Rabbi Blames McCarthyism in College Raids
He says Danger of Voicing Dissention
Big Issues Makes Campus Restless

Stephen Ambrose cites a further example of McCarthy's influence during this time. He disputed with Eisenhower over whether the executive branch had the right to use executive priviledge to bar data from being released to congressional investigators. This McCarthy dispute made the headlines of a major paper instead of events of far greater importance, including the fall of Dien Bien Phu, and the Supreme Court case, Brown vs. the Board of Education which had occurred that same day. Eisenhower responded to the McCarthy frustration with the following press release:

> I regard it as unfortunate when we are diverted from grave problems--one of which is vigilance against any kind of subversion--through disregard of the standards of fair play recognized by the American people....And that is my last word on any subject even closely related to that particular matter.[9]

Although McCarthy was sensational, his credibility was practically nil to many who had dealings with him. In

retrospect, Ambrose considered him to be

> a species of nihilist; he was an essentially destructive force, revolutionist without any revolutionary vision, a rebel without a cause.[20]

Still, the communist threat was real to conservative Americans. Hollywood films like "Red Planet Mars", novelists like Mickey Spillane and a saturation of articles in popular magazines portrayed communism as a threat to American liberty. The crusade against communism was seen as a deterent against the disintegration of modern society. Blacklists, loyalty oaths and public harassment were tolerated for the "greater good" of protecting America. The secret John Birch Society, funded by small business executives, was established in 1958 to agitate against the alleged communist conspiracy. The radical right wing had found an emotive cause.

Stephen J. Whitfield portrays the fifties as an era of happy mediocrity, of anxieties rather than passions, of passivity, of immobility and a time when , "in the atmosphere of the Cold War, Americans staked out a claim as God's frozen people.[21] Basically, then, ' America's creative imagination and drive in all aspects of society had withered from fear of the icy cold threat of communism.

The trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg further illustates the state of silent paranoia that America was in during the fifties. In June of 1953, these two people were executed for passing secret atomic bomb information to the Soviet Union during World War Two. Uncertainties of the evidence and various ambiguities led to widespread interest in the trial. Three novels, Helen Yglesias's How She Died, E. L. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel, and Robert Coover's The Public Burning; a play, Inquest by Donald Freed and a documentary film, The Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg all give indication of a concern that a fair trial was prevented by the "paranoia" of the fifties.[22]

Almost oblivious to any outside criticism, the schools ardently inculcated cultural values of hard work and love of country to their students. They were strongly endorsed and encouraged through such rituals and pageantry as the honor roll and American Legion citizenship awards.

The Reaffirmation of Religious Ties

Although America was flexing new found muscles and gaining tremendous self-confidence and a aura of superiority, she was

also undergoing criticism for some questionable decisions and policies and was in her most paranoid state regarding the threat of commmunism. Thomas Dewey spoke out against this:

> The unity we seek is more than material. Our problem is not outside ourselves. Our problem is within ourselves.... Spiritually, we have yet to find the means to put together the world's broken pieces, to bind up its wounds, to make a good society.[23]

Religious organizations unaffiliated with specific denominations began to emerge. Several pro-American Christian groups like Christian Crusade and Church League of America were begun. The National Conference for Prayer promoted general religiousity with such slogans as "The family that prays together, stays together" or " Worship this week in the church of your choice". Church sponsored Boy Scout activities flourished and the "God and Country Award was introduced in the fifties.

Fundamentalism emerged as a reaction against the modernization which Christianity seemed to be undergoing. Fundamentalist crusaders like Frederick Schwarz, Bob Jones and Billy James Hargis were dedicated to a conservative political America. Hargis said,

> Patriotism and Christianity are very close to each other. It is impossible to be a true Christian and not be a true patriot. One who loves God also loves his country. Our

> forefathers believed in Jesus Christ and his atoning blood. . .American is and always has been a Christian nation.[24]

Almost as a buffer against the threat of communism, religion also began overtaking Washington. Prayer breakfasts and the addition of a prayer room at the White House, opening prayers at cabinet meetings and visits by Billy Graham began with the Eisenhower administration.[25] The Postmaster General dedicated a red, white and blue eight-cent postage stamp bearing the motto "In God We Trust" at a ceremony in which the President and the Secretary of State spoke on spiritual values. A bill was introduced which would require the post office to cancel mail with the slogan "Pray for Peace". Independence Day was declared a "day of penance and prayer."[26] And just six months after his inauguration, Eisenhower signed the document resolving that the Pledge of Allegiance include the words "under God".

In May of 1954 Congress had ended its business with several "vote-catching" bills with the November elections in view. One bill proposed to stop TV and radio advertizements for cigarettes and alcohol. Eisenhower opposed this suggesting, "What are we going to turn out to be--a police state?" A second one concerned the insertion of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. Eisenhower was very much in favor of this addition. Hagerty's Diary quotes the President "Why not get up a speech and

say that the only one who would be opposed to this would be a Communist?"[27] The following quote captures Eisenhower's conviction that adding the words "under God" was a significant change.

> From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty. To anyone who truly loves America, nothing could be more inspiring than to contemplate this rededication of our youth, on each school morning, to our country's true meaning.[28]

From Eisenhower's perspective the addition of the words "under God" to the Pledge has a socio-political implication in its quasi-religious use by American youth to rededicate their nation to God. The Pledge, then, became a more pronounced American civil religious ritual. Its very words linked religion and politics.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter we established the Pledge of Allegiance as a ritual of potential power as well as a potential tool of manipulation and control. We have seen how the Pledge and its changes were motivated by efforts to control society on the social, political and economic levels.

Through this brief study of the history of the Pledge we have ascertained that the Pledge originated through an economic venture of a magazine editor. Changes to the Pledge were motivated by socio-political concerns which took the form of major or minor crises. The Pledge became a tool of indoctrination of children, especially immigrant children. The most dramatic change to the Pledge for the concerns of this paper, the addition of "under God" occurred when the nation was suffering an alleged internal threat of communism. This addition served a dual purpose of reaffirming America's sacred history and aligning its present circumstances under the auspices of that same Supreme Being. During the country's troubled times, Americans wanted to know that God was looking on. This, of course, means that the addition of the words "under God" had religious, social and political implications.

We shall now narrow our focus to the grassroot level and examine the function and implications of the Pledge of Allegiance ritual as it is performed in the public schools. We shall move through the area of practice, or the ritual as performance, to the social dimension where we can evaluate the power of the ritual in life experience.

Footnotes

1 Martin E. Marty, "Sailing Through Waves of Patriotism," The Christian Century. July 16,-23, 1986. 103:640-1.

2 Americans can purchase flags which have been flown over the nation's capitol in their honor. A certificate come with the flag testifying to that fact and the day on which it was flown. See also, The World Book Encyclopedia, "Flag". Chicago: Field Enterprises, 1957, Vol. 6, p. 2585-2590a. A "code of ethics" has been designed for the flag which has also been incorporated into the law. How, when and where it must be displayed, how it must be carried, how it must be cared for and how it must be honored rules each required ritual.

3 David W. Noble, David A. Horowitz and Peter N. Carrol (eds.), Twentieth Century Limited: Volume 1 - America Through World War Two. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980, p. 31.

4 Leslie Fisher (ed), Participate in an American Partnership: A Handbook for Teaching Citizenship and Leadership, k-12. Oklahoma State Department of Education. Aurora, MO: MWM Press, 1982, p. 22.

5 Barbara C. King, "Behind the Pledge," Grade Teacher Vol. 89, no. 1, September, 1971, pp. 12-14.

6 "Pledge", The World Book Encyclopedia. Chicago: Field Enterprises, Inc. Vol. 13, 1959, p. 6419.

7 King, p. 12.

8 Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, Church and State in the United States. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964, p. 570.

9 Ibid., p. 571.

10 Ibid.

11 A. James Reichley, Religion in American Public Life. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985, pp. 340-360.

12 Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography. Putnan, n.d., pp. 185, 223.

13 U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XXXV, pt. I, p. 164.

14 See Stokes and Pfeffer, p. 564 and United States v Macintosh, 283 U.S. 625 (1930).

15 Martin J. Sherwin, "The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War," in American Vistas: 1877 to the Present. (eds.) Leonard Dinnerstein and Kenneth T. Jackson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 282-306.

16 Dwight Eisenhower, "Freedom in the Destiny of Man," in Peace with Justice. New York: Harper and Row, Publsihers, 1961, p. 159.

17 Ibid., p. 26.

18 Richard H. Rovere, in Senator Joe McCarthy. London: Metheun & Co., Ltd., 1960, p. 136, for example, cites numerous places where McCarthy has lied, changed figures and burned evidence in order to persuade his audience. According to Rovere,the 314 footnotes in his book, "butchered the truth". Seealso, David M. Oshinsky, A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy, New York: The Free Press, 1983, especially pp. 435ff.

19 Washington Post. March 4, 1954; New York Times, March 4, 1954.

20 Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower The President: Volume Two

1952-1969. London: George Allen & Unwim Publishers, 1984, pp. 12, 13, 200.

21 Stephen J. Whitfield, "The 1950's: The Era of No Hard Feelings," in American Vistas 1877 to the Present, Leonard Dinnerstein and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 337-356.

22 David W. Nobel, David A. Horowitz and Peter N. Carrol (eds.), Twentieth Century Limited: Volume II - America: World War Two to the Present. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980, pp. 379-382.

23 Ibid., pp.366ff.

24 Billy James Hargis, Communist America. . . Must it Be? Tulsa Oklahoma: Christian Crusade, 1960, p. 35.

25 William Lee Miller, pp. 41-42. See also Stokes and Pfeffer, Church and State. The Capitol prayer room had a stained-glass window of Washington at prayer and also panels displaying the observe and reverse of the Great Seal and Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The room also contained an altar, an open Bible, a candelabra and two kneeling benches. The decor in this room clearly reflected an attempt to link past and present, sacred and secular.

26 Elmer Davis disputed the "religious character" of the President by revealing that he had spent the day of penance and prayer catching four fish, playing eighteen holes of golf and playing bridge. Ibid., p. 42.

27 Hagerty Diary. 5.24.54. Housed at Eisenhower's Library, Abilene, Kansas.

28 Miller, pp. 45-46.

Chapter 4

SOCIAL PROCESSES SURROUNDING THE PLEDGE

Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance is a public school classroom ritual that began on October 21, 1892 at a National School Celebration. This early morning ceremony has been cemented to the classroom's daily routine.[1] Field trips may preempt classes; math and reading may be rescheduled for movies, but the Pledge always signals the beginning of each school day. Why is the school the social carrier for the Pledge ritual? Who places such emphasis on the Pledge and why? How does it effect the participants? What levels of control and conflict occur? What power does the ritual hold?

Legal Conflict

Legal controversies errupted in 1940 when the children of Jehovah's Witnesses were suspended from school for refusing to say the Pledge.[2] The public perceived this rejection of American nationalism as a threat. Public sentiment against this sect ran high as meetings were disrupted, meeting places were destroyed

and members were injured. The courts upheld the school expulsions in the interest of national unity. This decision was overturned three years later when Justice Jackson interpreted the first amendment to protect the practice of relgious belief unless it *directly* endangered the public.[3]

The Pledge of Allegiance continued to be an important public school ritual and was subjected to little questioning through the fifties. The following decade, however, brought confussion to school boards as they endeavored to reflect the changing legal status of the Pledge of Allegiance ceremony in the public schools. As the Court ruled on the various cases which came up, a changing attitude seemed to be emerging.

The sixties started with a burst of idealism as J.F. Kennedy's famous slogan "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" was popularized. The Peace Corps was ethusiastically received as a means to this end. This patriotic exuberance was short-lived, however, as the ever increasing entaglement in foreign policy caused doubt and misgiving. The Bay of Pigs invasion, the Vietnam War, the Cuban missile crisis, and the success of the Russian space program contributed to a strong downward swing. Orderly demonstrations of the Civil Rights movement gave way to the violent Berkeley

campus protests of the late sixties. The anti-authority spirit and mistrust of the government heightened with the tragic shooting of the four students on the Kent State campus in the early seventies. A vice-president and a president left office causing even more cynicism and mistrust of those in authority by the nation's youth. Patriotism had never been more seriously called into question.

The shift in patriotic attitude on the college campuses was reflected in court cases and legislation concerning the Pledge of Allegiance in the public schools. By 1963 New York State had legislation requiring a daily Pledge of Allegiance to the flag in the public schools.[4] New Jersey had a similar law that required that

> the pupils in each school district on every school day to salute the United States flag and repeat the following pledge of allegiance to the flag: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, which salute shall be rendered with the right hand over the heart....[5]

During the next decade the Pledge issue was shrouded in controversy. Two separate issues were being debated:

(a) how an objection to saying the Pledge should be handled and a deeper question,

(b) should the Pledge be said as a daily ritual in the public schools.

A scrimmage to determine the legality of the Pledge ceremony in the public schools had begun. The law required it, but the courts protected the students' rights not to participate.

On October 7, 1969 the law was tested against the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. Two students attending Junior High School 217, Briarwood, Queens, New York, were suspended for refusing to say the Pledge and for refusing to stand or leave the room.[6] Two days later a federal court injunction had the children back in the classroom until such time as the school board could prove that the actions of the students caused disruption or materially infringed on other students' rights.[7]

The New York City High School Principals Association encouraged a suspension of the ceremony until there was a definitive ruling. This news precipitated a public outcry in favor of the daily Pledge and a protest against the ruling which allowed students to remain seated during the Pledge.[8] The Deputy Education Commissioner then instructed the schools throughout New York to continue with the Pledge.[9] Public sentiment controlled school decisions regarding the Pledge.

The conflict arising from the Briarwood court case was one over control. The public was angered by those who refused to own and respect the symbolic act which they held in esteem. The students, however, had gained a negative control over the ritual by rejecting it. The public sentiment tied to the ritual and public's desire to regain control of the ritual blinded their tolerance for differing views. Up until this court case, grounds for refusing to say the Pledge had been based on religious objections. This decision allowed students to object to saying the Pledge on moral grounds. The former reason was barely tolerable, but the later was taken as a direct assult on democracy. A democratic principle was also at stake, however, so the struggle continued.

In other states, the Pledge was also involved in legislative controversies. Governor Mandel of Maryland signed a bill in May of 1970 requiring teachers to lead their classes in the Pledge. Also in May of 1970, however, Governor Sargent of Massachusetts vetoed a bill requiring daily recitation of the Pledge.[10] Mr B. G. MacArthur, principal of Exeter, New Hampshire, High School suspended the daily Pledge ceremony in his school but was overruled by his school board. The superintendent of schools in Monroe, Connecticut planned to limit the use of the Pledge in

order to stimulate thought about it when it was used. His policy was overruled by his local school board as well.[11]

In 1970 Commissioner Nyquist upheld Central School District #1 of Highlands, New York requiring students to either stand or leave the room while the Pledge was being said.[12] Nyquist's decision once again limited the rights of students. He did, however, help curb the pressure which school boards had put on students to comply with their rule concerning the Pledge by his ruling on the Board of Education of Central School District No. 1 of the Towns of Rush, Henrietta, Pittsford, and Brighton, Monroe County, New York who had adopted this policy:

> ...students who hold a sincere conviction giving rise to a conscientious objection to the Pledge of Allegiance shall establish this fact with a written statement indicating the reasons and rationale for such convictions. These written statements shall be signed by the student and his parents or those in parental relationship to him and shall be submitted to the principal of the school.

He ordered the board to:

> ...rescind its regulation requiring a written statement signed by the parents of a pupil who wishes to refrain from reciting the pledge of allegiance (sic).[13]

Finally with the 1973 *Goetz v. Ansell* decision, there appeared to be clarification of the issue.

> Any student may remain silently seated during the Pledge ceremony without threat of suspension, and without being asked to leave the room.[14]

This decision overturned the previous one by Niquist in 1970. It again reflected the sentiment of the *Barnette* verdict (1943) which is still considered a landmark. While delivering his verdict, Supreme Court Justice Jackson stated that

> ...ultimate futility of such attempts to compel coherence is the lesson of every such effort from the Roman drive to stamp out Christianity as a disturber of its pagan unity, to the Inquisition, as a means to religious and dynastic unity, down to the fast-failing efforts of our present totalitarian enemies. Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters. Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard...If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception, they do not now occur to us.[15]

The Pledge continued to hold strong public sentiment as a required ritual, but individual rights could no longer be ignored in the process. Justices Black and Douglas, concurring in *Barnette*, affirmed:

> ...words uttered under coercion are proof of loyalty to nothing but self-interest. Love of country must spring from willing hearts and free minds. [16]

Judge Kaufman's statement, in the landmark Court of Appeals decision of the Russo case in which Mrs. Russo lost her teaching position for abstaining from reciting the Pledge, also supported this thought:

> ...patriotism that is forced is false patriotism, just as loyalty which is coerced is the very antithesis of loyalty. [17]

Through these cases we have seen the courts' struggle to extend the protection of the First Amendment beyond its earlier interpretation of protecting a belief but judging a practice, to assessing a practice against the interests of the state. The practice under debate concerned civil religion, or religion and politics, which meant that the state had a vested interest in its decision. It was also concerned with an issue which evoked strong public reactions. A definitive ruling was difficult to achieve.

Proposed Changes to the Pledge

The Courts had upheld the right to conscienciously object to the Pledge ritual. Some people agreed with the objections that were being raised by students about the Pledge. After close

examination of the wording, several changes to the Pledge were suggested.

On December 1, 1970 former U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen Jr. proposed:

> I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and dedicate myself to the principle that the Republic for which it stands shall be in truth one nation, under God, indivisible, dedicated to liberty and justice for all.[18]

Dr. Whitney Smith Jr., director of the Flag Heritage Foundation, Lexington, Mass., proposed:

> I salute the flag of the United States of America by committing myself to the principle that the nation for which it stands shall ever be indivisible and dedicated to liberty and justice for all.[19]

The 1970 White House Conference on Children proposed:

> I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United Stats of America and to the republic for which it stands, and dedicate myself to the task of making it one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.[20]

A letter to the editor of the New York Times, suggested the following simplified version:

> I pledge allegiance to the United States of America, one

nation, in search of liberty and justice for all.[21]

A New York high school principal and senior class president started a "national campaign", to use their words, in 1970 to change the wording of the last phrase in the Pledge to "seeking liberty and justice for all". It failed.

None of the above mentioned ideas were seriously considered by Congress. Each of the proposed changes emphasized the "goal" or the need for America to work toward the liberty and justice for all. One can hypothesize that Congress felt that the proposed changes denigrated America, its forefathers and the principles on which it has stood for the last two hundred years by minimizing America's success in achieving its goals. As we noted in Chapter 2, a chief funtion of ritual, which we discussed in Chapter 2, is its ability to overcome the discrepancy between what ought to be and the reality of the situation. The Pledge could not offer itself in this capacity if it where changed from a ritual affirmation of an idealised vision of America into a statement of what America "ought" to aspire to be. So, intentional or not, Congress bolstered civil religion by defending the status quo.

Footnotes

1 Each state has jurisdiction over its own educational system and its legislature regarding the flag salute. No definitive study has been completed documenting the legislature policty of all fifty states towards the daily pledge slaute. It is clear, however, that it was generally assumed that school children said the pledge each day at school through comments like those of Eisenhower (see pp. 48, 49.) A sampling of the state legislature follows:

New York passed its statue in 1898 (NY Laws 1898, c.481-3).
Rhode Island in 1901 (R.I. Laws 1901, c. 818-4).
Arizona in 1903 (Ariz. Laws 1903, no. 19-3).
Kansas in 1907 (Kan. Laws 1907, c. 319-3)
Maryland in 1918 (Md. Laws 1918, c. 75-121).
Washington in 1919 (Wash. Laws 1919, c. 210-4).
Delaware in 1925 (Del. Laws 1924, c. 180-440).
New Jersey in 1932 (N.J. Laws 1932, c. 145-1).
Massachusetts in 1935 (Mass. Acts 1935, 258).

2 Minersville School District v. Gobitis 310 U.S. 586 (1940).

3 West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette 319 U.S. 624, 87 L. Ed. 1628 (1942).

4 52 N.Y. Jur. Schools #435.

5 N.J.S.A. 18A:36-3(c) 1968

6 New York Times, October 8, 1969, p. 35, October 10, 1969, p. 96.

7 Ibid., December 11, 1969, p. 37.

8 Ibid., Janury 26, 1970, p. 1 and 36.

9 Ibid., January 31, 1970, p. 33.

10 Ibid., May 31, 1970, p. 40 and June 7, 1970, p. 31.

11 Ibid., April 18, 1972, p. 35 and September 25, 1973, p. 35.

12 Matter of Bielenberg, 9 Ed. Dept. Rep. 196 (1970).

13 Decision 8252. Matter of Bustin, 10 Ed. Dept. Rep. 168 (1971).

14 Goetz v. Answell, 477 F. 2d. 636 (1973).

15 West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette.

16 Ibid.

17 Russo v. Central School District No. 1, Towns of Rush, Etc. 469 F. 2d 623 (2nd Cir. 1972).

18 Barbara C. King, Teacher, September, 1971, 89:1, p. 12.

19 Ibid., p. 14.

20 New York Times, December 19, 1970, p. 49.

21 Ibid., June 15, 1970, p. 23.

Chapter 5

PROCESSING THE PLEDGE RITUAL IN THE SCHOOLS

Grassroots Responses

So far we have only examined exceptional responses to the ritual which resulted in court cases. Most children and teachers participate in the daily ritual with little overt comment. We must explore the effect of the ritual on this majority group. What processing does the ritual actually do?

Teachers have often criticized the Pledge ritual because the words are too difficult for their students to understand. What do those thirty-one powerful words mean? Separately they are just words:

pledge	= a promise, a vow, word of honor.
allegiance	= loyalty, being true, being devoted
united	= all joined together
republic	= nation where the people elect or choose

their leaders and representatives

nation = a large group of many different people who have agreed to live under one set of rules

indivisible = cannot be divided or taken apart. (States cannot just pull out and be by themselves.)

liberty = freedom, the right to make a choice

justice = fairness

The symbols in the Pledge and the flag as the focus of the Pledge represent a whole complex of ideas. Their meaning has been invested through tradition and history. America's forefathers painstakingly mapped out a democratic government with checks and balances to maintain just rule. The Constitution and its amendments were drawn up to ensure freedom and justice. The Civil War left scars which the Pledge cannot ignore. Even McCarthyism left its tell tale sign through the 1954 addition of "under God". These various strands are woven together to give the words meaning greater than the sum of its parts. Together, these words, a pledge, become a symbolic activity, a ritual of patriotism. This cannot be the case, however, if the Pledge is not "owned" or personally meaningful to the person participating in the ritual.

Questions arising from the legal debate which took place in the sixties and seventies, concern the justification for such a

ritual in the schools. What does this act mean to the children preforming it? What are they saying? How does it make them feel? What feelings do they express publically? To answer these questions we must turn our focus to specific public school situations.

The Meaning

In merely twenty-three seconds, twenty-five squirming, boisterous children are transformed into orderly, respectable citizens. The bell rings and twenty-five students jump to their feet, placing right hands over hearts and opening mouths to begin reciting the Pledge. But how many of those twenty-five minds know what the mouths have said?

One complaint frequently levied against the daily ritual of saying the Pledge by school children is their lack of understanding. Many children not only fail to comprehend the meaning of the words to the Pledge, but also say the wrong words. The following list of malapropisms illustrates the problem:

* I pledge the pigeons to the flag...

* I pledge a legion to the flag...
* I took the pigeons to the flag...
* I led the pigeons to the flag...
* ...and to the republic for Richard Stans
* ...and to the republic for witches stand
* ...one naked individual
* ...one nation, under guard
* ...one nation, invisible
* ...one nation and a vegetable
* ...with liberty and just sticks for all.
* I pledge a lesson to the frog of the United States of America and to the wee puppet for witches' hands. One Asian, in the vestibule, with little tea and just rice for all.

Unfortunately, malapropisms in the Pledge of Allegiance seem to be part of a great American tradition among elementary school children and even some older students.[1] Many elementary public school teachers find it difficult to support the ritual because the words to the pledge are too long and the concepts beyond their students. While students may not comprehend the meaning in the Pledge, another aspect of the ritual has been clearly comprehended. The children know what they are supposed to do and successfully carry out the prescribed formalities. The ritual has become an exercise in controlling human beings, if nothing else.

The Obligation

Middle school and high school teachers have problems saying the Pledge, but usually for different reasons. Students have conscienciously objected to saying the pledge for several reasons. Certain religious groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, prohibit obeisance to graven images--which includes the flag. Some students feel that saying the pledge is hypocritical because of the words "with liberty and justice for all". Other students just find the ritual boring.

Hyman Kavett conducted a study on teacher attitudes towards the pledge and found that more than half faithfully carried out the procedure. Others were quite vociferous on the topic:

> There's a lack of meaning, no good sense, just plain silliness, in demanding a pledge to the flag on a daily basis. My students just won't do it!
>
> Students are too sophisticated for that ritual every single day. I get through the salute as fast as possible, and I don't make any fuss if some students do not participate.
>
> It's the same in my homeroom. The ceremony is a farce. We were without a flag for three weeks: someone stole it and no replacement was available. We used to salute the corner of the room.
>
> I salute the flag only on Friday during Assembly because

> I am visible there. I don't want to rock the boat. I like my job too much.
>
> I just go through the motions.
>
> I just don't bother.
>
> The pledge is broadcast over the school's intercom system and those students who want to pledge are told to stand; those who don't want too--with no questions asked--are told to sit quietly. It is over in a matter of seconds.[2]

A New Yorker magazine reporter, Daniel Lang, visited the school where Mrs. Susan Russo taught and witnessed a Pledge ceremony. (Mrs. Russo was at the time in a court case for refusing to participate in the Pledge ceremony.) Mr. Lang observed:

> Rittenhouse (an assistant principal) and I entered a homeroom a minute or two before its daily ritual got under way. The Pledge was over almost as soon as it began, the boys and girls facing a flag stationed in a corner of their room. I had no sense of being witness to a meditative occasion, as Breese saw it. A few students did not even say the words, and scarcely even for ideological reasons. One boy spent the time wrestling himself out of his sweater; another tossed a pencil into the air a few times; a boy and a girl gazed at each other.[3]

Daily recitation of the Pledge may ensure that all school children have memorized the Pledge, but according to their teachers and other observers, it has done little to inspire them to patriotism. Still most teachers feel obligated to engage their students in the daily ritual. The teachers are being

controlled by their felt sense of obligation.

The Control

So far we have only seen the Pledge ritual from the perspective of teachers and from a small group of students who have taken stands against saying the Pledge. Do the school children themselves feel that the ritual is meaningless? How do they feel when they say the pledge?

Eugene Freud and Donna Givner conducted a study on the Pledge in 1975. They interviewed forty-five children from several elementary schools in Nebraska, ranging from kindergarten through grade six and representing a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Their findings are interesting and significant. Nearly all of the children felt that the Pledge ritual was an important part of their school day. Their attitude about its inclusion in their daily routine ranged from enthusiasm in the lower grades to apathy and derision in the upper grades. Because a wide range of feelings were presented in the study, the results were classified in three groups:

primary grades = k, 1 and 2
middle grades = 3 and 4

upper grades = 5 and 6

Primary Grade Results: These children saw the Pledge as a beginning-the-day ritual. For some it almost took on a superstitious quality: "When we forget it means a bad day at school." The ritual of preparation was terribly important. This involved such things as getting up quickly, finding your heart, standing straight, looking at the flag, holding your heart with the right hand, saying it in unison. The children also saw the Pledge ritual as an opportunity for individual achievement (being the leader, knowing all the words, being the first one up). The group participation of the ritual created a meaningful group identity. The children knew that the meaning was supposed to be important. Some didn't know what it meant, some knew that it had something to do with their country and connected other symbols like the President, citizenship or America with it. Some built its meaning around God, a symbol with which they seemed familiar. Their responses indicated that understanding the meaning of the Pledge was insignificant to them, but the Pledge ritual was important as a behavior-controlling exercise.

Middle Grade Results: The children in these classes demonstrated fierce loyalty to America and her Pledge. Key words like "duty", "honor", "respect", and "liberty" were frequently used and readily explained by the children in the interview. Repeated references to the President indicated that he was their tangible symbol of Americanism. Brownies and Cub Scouts influenced the attitude of many children towards patriotism. One little guy espoused anticommunistic propaganda in his definition of patriotism: "You love America and you're a Republican like me...like President Nixon, not a pinko Commie." His favorite part of the Pledge is: "The part about the Republicans. They don't say anything about the dirty Democrats. The part he referred to was: "... and to the 'Republicans' for which it stands..." Although the meaning was important, competition between "us" and "them" was an important aspect of the Pledge ritual. The ritual enacted control over perceived enemies, foreign and domestic.

Upper Grade Results: These children demonstated an air of independence. Several rebelled against saying the Pledge; others admitted compliance because their teachers insisted. "The teacher makes you or you get detention." "We have to do it. It's a dumb thing they started in kindergarten, and I

guess every room has to do it." "We say it. I don't really care. President Nixon stinks. Everybody knows he'a a big liar. The Pledge means we've got a good country, but you shouldn't say it if the President stinks." Some of the fifth graders tied their patriotic statements to current events. "It's about the only thing kids can do for their country. It shows the President we think America is A-OK." "It means we'll fight for our country like the POW's." Freedom and liberty were seen as special privileges of Americans. "You're not a slave." "You can read anything you want to." "People aren't put in jail for no reason." Again we see control as a predominant feature in the Pledge. Some students rebelled in an effort to gain control. Others complied with their teachers, but admitted that they were being manipulated.

This study indicated that the meaning of the Pledge varied according to the age group analyzed but that an underlying function, that of control, remained constant. Younger children seemed content to be part of the group and found meaning in the act of controlled participation. The middle group tried to relate the pledge to life situations feeling that it helped them be good citizens. The oldest children tended to merely obey their teachers with deference

or in some cases, defiance to the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge ritual functioned in an overt capacity as a social control mechanism. Teachers did not identify it as such, but the children clearly saw the Pledge as a time to keep quiet, to be orderly and to obey the teacher. [4]

The Surroundings

How this daily ritual is presented and the attitude of the teacher seems to correspond with the way the children perceive the act. In the following examples children got excited about the Pledge when the teachers did.

A substitute teacher, Rosalie Minkow, helped sixth graders "discover what they really mean when they salute the flag". According to her article, the students were apathetic towards her questions concerning the Pledge. With repeated questioning, the impetus rose and the students began to grapple with the meaning of the Pledge for themselves. After some reflection on the first word of the Pledge, one student exclaimed, "Hey, we're all I's!" and the process of claiming ownership had begun. The discussion went on to include each phrase. The class was aware of recent civil rights

demonstrations. The teacher, sensitive to potential objections being raised over the "with liberty and justice for all" phrase, led the class back to the concept of "pledge" and the need for all Americans to promise to work toward the ideal of a nation where liberty and justice would in reality be for all. The class, then agreed that they had a responsibility to future generations to work toward the goal of a nation where more perfect equality for all would exist. The Pledge lesson ended with a feeling of responsibility and an exuberant "job to be done" attitude.[5]

Both teacher and students felt united through their pledge to improve America.

A school in Sacramento, California has attempted to make the Pledge ritual a meaningful ceremony. The students assemble in the front courtyard of the school each morning for a ceremony where acts displaying good citizenship are acknowledged and rewarded. This includes such things as picking up trash on the school grounds, acting as a school monitor, displaying good behavior and improving scholarship. Students who are recognized get pencils with the school's name printed on them as a reward. At the close of the ceremony a student leads the school in the Pledge of Allegiance.[6] At this school students know that being a good

citizen is important because their acts are rewarded. The ceremony is centered around the flag, and the Pledge is the culmination of each assembly. Because of this focal point, the Pledge functions as a behavior manipulator.

A kindergarten teacher documented the difference which she perceived on the first day of school in her Bicentennial Election Year class over previous classes. This, she felt certain was due to influences of the media.

> The children carried within them a year's etching of patriotism, inscribed by the blunt point of countless huckster tricks of the media. I couldn't see their tricolor hearts, but I sensed a difference from last year's group, a martial cheerfulness...[7]

Children are constantly bombarded with stimuli, oblivious to its influence--negative or positive. Parents, peers, the press, the Sunday School, television and of course, the teacher all play influential roles in the lives of children. A teacher's influence over his or her class has been recognized since the birth of public education in the United States. Teachers are trained to teach social skills and are taught the importance of classroom environment. They are expected to give conduct or citizenship grades. Teachers also control the setting for the Pledge ritual.

Public sentiment as to what constitutes the umbrella of moral education and how it should be implemented has changed over the years, though its main thrust has always been that the schools should reflect the "best values" of their communities. During the forties and fifties teachers preached love of God and country and the "correct" way to live. The students were, in fact, indoctrinated. The sixties and seventies were decades of protest and authority testing. They brought moral confusion on sexual mores, patriotism, and self expression/repression issues. Teachers surrendered their moral authority and moved into approaches like "value clarification". This method of instruction encouraged students to explore their own feelings about moral issues. Teachers remained neutral referees. The eighties is bringing another swing in the attitude towards moral education. Directives in citizenship and patriotism will again be included under the curriculum umbrella. Teachers are encouraged to help children become both smart *and* good. Traditional American values like love and respect of country, God and fellow man are back in vogue.[8] In her article,"Indoctrination into Freedom: John Childs Speaks for Today", June Edwards speaks about the need for children to be taught the principles of democracy through their use in the classroom,[9]

A kindergarten teacher, Joan Hawthorne, described her year long endeavor to teach her class the concept "vote" during the 1976 election year in her previously cited article. Her class "lived" democracy as they voted on whether to march or sing, chose candidates for a class president, resolved issues like whether girls could be president and what attributes make good presidents, and learned what it meant to win or lose.[10]

Current educators like McGowan, Plugge and Reynolds maintain that children of the eighties need civic literacy and civic competency -- areas in which children are basically ignorant at the moment. They must have the knowledge and behavior of good citizens. The authors note that this commitment to citizenship training is necessary because "America has entered an age of global crisis... In the turbulent years ahead, the electorate will make social decisions that might redefine the very nature of the American experience." They summarize the article, "Social studies educators agree that citizenship remains their discipline's primary mission."[11]

As in the forties and fifties, teachers are again being encouraged to formulate moral answers for their students. Pilot teacher education programs are being devised to develop curriculum, methods and training to enable teachers to

> "prepare informed, rational, and humane citizens for effective participation in a democratic political community"

according to a national conference of educators which was called in 1985.[12] As teachers become more aware of "civic learning" and its potential, and as they incorporate it into their curriculae, the incidence of "citizenship illiteracy" will decline. The articles cited above show that the climate that teachers generate for democracy are reflected in the attitude that children have towards their country, and towards the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledging ritual is a symbolic act of commitment to democracy. It is difficult to feel indifferent towards one and not the other.

The methodology of civic education is extremely important for this subject. Teachers are presently experimenting with this and discovering that their most positive student response has been when the students were actively involved in the democratic process. Democracy is the methodology of American government. It is a methodological experiment in freedom. Indoctrination is incompatible with democratic principles and thereby inappropriate for its propagation. Democracy must stand by its own principles, or fail its own test.

Teachers of the eighties are not prepared to lose control of

their classrooms and one must not equate learning about freedom experientially with a lack of control. Freedom has limitations which must be defined in the classroom just as they are in society. The pledge ritual will take on new meaning as children assimilate the meaning and significance of democracy.

The Power of the Ritual

We have already established the importance of meaning in ritual. We have cited examples where children participated in the Pledge of Allegiance ritual with little or no comprehension of its meaning and in some cases with little attention or enthusiasm. Some children used wrong words or said words they did not understand. Some refused to participate or did so out of fear. In these cases the ritual was mearly a repeated activity of manipulation and control. In most of these cases the power of the ritual was derived from its function of control.

In Kris Kristofferson's play "America", the power behind the Pledge of Allegiance ritual was vividly portrayed as a crowd of dejected and hopeless people rallied and banned together to make a last stand against communism. Each person "owned" the Pledge through repeating it over and over as their body and souls

struggled together to become one cause. For one brief moment before America's demise, the Pledge ritual overcame the discrepancy between what America was at that time, and what Americans had hoped it to be.

Conflict

Conflict plays a significant role in defining the power in ritual or symbolic expression. The literature has concentrated on the harmonizing factor of civil religion. C. Geertz says

> symbols function to synthesize a people's [a group's] ethos--the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aethetic style and mood--and their world view.[13]

While it is true that an important function of civil religion and its ritual is its unifying aspect, how it handles diversities is equally important.Not only can civil religious ritual bring different people together, it can also bring differing people together. Conflict is often held in abeyance during the observance/ performance of ritual. Victor Turner suggests that this phenomena might be related to the functions of the brain hemispheres. The left hemisphere controls logical, linear and classifying functions. During a ritual celebration this side may be dominated by the right hemisphere which controls sensory

perception which could easily be overwhelmed by the euphoria of the shared emotional state common to such an act.[14] The debatable issue here is how effective this unification is, because the differences have only been put aside momentarily and the left hemisphere of the brain was only temporarily blocked.

Another area of conflict involves protests where claiming a symbol, or conversely, the destruction of one, created a sense of power over the victim of the opposition. Flag burning during the political dissonance of the 1960's served as a vibrant symbolic gesture against the political structures which were claiming the symbol for their political stance. So in effect, we see the development of a battle to claim the symbol.

Children in the American International School of Cape Town used the Pledge of Allegiance from 1982-1985 in the same competitive way of weeding out "them" from "us", as only the American children were allowed to participate in the Pledge ritual. The founders of the school were adamant that South African Education was inferior to American Education and founded the school to preserve the "American Way" for their children. This "pro-American" attitude manifested itself in various ways in the school like the one just cited.[15] Another example of the dynamics behind the idea of "ownership" of the symbol is the

outrage that Americans felt when the flag was abused during the Iranian hostage crisis of the late seventies.

Students who refuse to participate in the Pledge ritual are involved in potential conflict situations which could disrupt into a group identity issue. Of the 375 students which I observed at Cimarron Elementary School in Houston, Texas, the nine children who refused to say the Pledge were Jehovah's Witnesses. Their identity with that religious sect compensated for any negative stimuli which might have arisen from not belonging to the group that was pledging. Teachers claimed that they were careful to ensure that the children were not victimized for their dissent.[16]

Court cases were cited in Chapter 3 where various students refused to say the Pledge. We concluded that students were free to choose whether to participate in the Pledge ritual or not. This choice, however, is influenced by teachers' authoritarian attitudes, by the way the ritual is presented, by peer pressure and by parental demands due to religious beliefs. These exterior factors influence the power behind the ritual.

Meaning is fundamental to ritualistic power. Some meaning

is gained by surrounding circumstances. Meaning can also stem from the ritual's function of control. But the ritual's real power comes from an identification with the meaning of the symbol, that is, when it is possessed or owned. A sense of belonging, whether it is positive ("we belong") or negative ("you do not belong") is equally important. The symbol is owned and becomes a tool for the person claiming it. The tool, through shared ownership, becomes a conveyer of unity, whether inclusive or exclusive, and, thereby a sense of identity is developed.

Shared ownership is vital in the celebrative moment when a ritual is performed. Individual people join together in a ritual which brings them together. This is a fragile moment. Its delicacy can be explored through this definition of celebration:

> Celebration is that ritual moment in which such enactments actually effect what they symbolize. In a celebratory moment the ritual action is a deed in which the symbols do not merely point, mean, or recall but embody fully and concretely all that is necessary for the moment...[17]

Often ritual participation does not become celebration. The key to this "fragile moment" is the words "all that is necessary" since that qualification may not always be met or even easily determined.

The flag, then, is a symbol of the Republic. But the Pledge

as a symbolic act of celebration can actually transform that Republic into a nation under God, individible, with liberty and justice for all. The ceremony is a religious rite which almost requires the "Amen" so often muttered at its conclusion. Does frequent repetition of a ritual spoil its celebrative effect? Ronals Grimes answers this question by focusing on the processing of the ritual.

> When rituals are culturally creative and for a moment accomplish what they signify, entropy is a fundamental law, and therefore whatever is achieved ritually begins to erode in the very moment of its success. Therefore we repeatedly pay the high cost of spilled symbolic blood as we await receptively the moment in which a celebration can make us one.[18]

Ronald Grimes suggests that repeating a ritual does not imply that it was unsuccesful in what it sought to accomplish. Rather, it has the never ending task of creating possibiity.

FOOTNOTES

1 Associated Press ran a story from Honolulu in which 111 ninth-graders were asked to write the Pledge and not one could do it correctly. The errors were chiefly Malipropisms like the above. (American Partnership, pp. 3-667.

2 Hyman Kavett, "How Do We Stand with the Pledge of Allegiance Today?". Social Education. March 1976. 40:3, pp. 135-140.

3 New Yorker. July 30, 1973, p. 47.

4 Eugene H. Freund and Donna Givner. Schooling, The Pledge Phenomenon and Social Control. Washington D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1975, pp. 1-21.

5 Rosalie Minkow. Instructor, February 1975, pp. 13 and 124.

6 James W. Marshall Elementary School. Student Recognition Program. Sacramento, California: Association of California School Administrators, 1984.

7 Joan Hawthorne, "I Pledge Allegiance." The Elementary School Journal. November 1977, 78:2, p. 83.

8 See articles like William Bennett, "'To Reclaim a Legacy': Text of Report on Humanities in Education," Chronicle of Higher Education, November 28, 1984 and Bill Honig, Last Chance for Our Children, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1985.

9 June Edwards, "Indoctrination into Freedom: John Childs Speaks for Today", Contemporary Education, Fall 1986, 58:1, pp.18-29.

10 Hawthorne, pp. 83-94.

11 Thomas M. McGowan, Lane Plugge and Virginia Reynolds,

"Generating an Elementary School Climate for Citizenship", Contemporary Education. Fall, 1986, 58:1, p. 25.

12 Ibid., p. 29.

13 C. Geertz, p. 89.

14 Victor Turner, Celebration, 1982, p. 21

15 This information was obtained from personal observation atthe school and from discussion with school faculty and students of the American International School of Cape Town.

16 This information was taken from surveys completed by the students and teachers and from personal observation of the classes at Cimarron Elementary School, Houston, Texas during the 1986-87 school year.

17 Ronald L. Grimes, "The Lifeblood of Public Ritual: Fiestas and Public Exploration Projects," in Celebration, 1982, pp. 272-283.

18 Ibid., p. 282.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

I have suggested that the Pledge of Allegiance is a significant civil religious ritual which has been affected by and has affected consensus, conflict, control and crisis. Although facts remain static, they are nonetheless embodied in interpretation and gain thier meaning from it. These four motivators contribute significantly to a comprehensive interpretation of the Pledge of Allegiance ritual.

Significance

The significance of the Pledge of Allegiance ritual is attested to by its prominent position in the public schools. For millions of school children it is the focus for the beginning of each school day. Congress continues to protect it from change. The judiciary branch of the government upholds its esteemed position and ensures that appropriate respect be given it even through its court rulings which have protected individual rights to abstain from participating in the pledge ritual. Its

significance is also affirmed through the 1954 addition of "under God" to the pledge. This was made during a time which was perceived as a crisis of communist infiltration. The reaffirmation or "dedication of our nation to God" by the nation's youth was considered inspiring by Eisenhower "to any who *truly* love America." The addition was considered an important antidote for the nation's paranoia over the threat of Communism.

The Four Motivators

It has been necessary to examine the pledge ritual in process to enable us to observe the various layers and networks that interact with the ritual. These have been uncovered to enable us to understand the dynamics of the ritual and the power behind it, and thereby have intensely enhanced our interpretation of it.

We have seen how the form of the Pledge of Allegiance has been effected by consensus, conflict, crisis and control. The inception of the Pledge of Allegiance stemmed from an issue of economic control on the part of The Youth's Companion magazine. Conflict broke out several years later over authorship of the pledge. Relatives of Upman and his assistant,

Bellamy fought to gain social and perhaps some economic control through this dispute. The success of the scheme to sell school flags, and the subsequent plan to create a pledge by the circulation chief, James Upham, hinged on the crisis which the American government was experiencing over the assimilation of immigrant children into American culture. This crisis not only ensured national support for the Pledge of Allegiance, but also motivated the first change in the Pledge which added an explicit reference to the country which the flag represented. The second change, the addition of "under God" was also made during a time of national crisis. Congressional concerns over Communist infiltration ran so high that consensus was easily achieved to pass the bill. Though numerous suggestions for additional changes to the Pledge have been made, none of these have carried sufficient congressional support for their adoption. The Pledge of Allegiance, then has been affected by the motivators of conflict, consensus, crisis and control with political and socio-economic implications. The Pledge of Allegiance has affected these same processes in society.

Consensus

One of the earliest functions of civil religion to be

identified was that of consensus. Bellah was intrigued by John F. Kennedy's administration. He found the emergence of national consensus in spite of a protestant nation finding itself led for the first time by a Roman Catholic a most surprising situation. Kennedy's use of neutral terms like "God" helped him establish his credability as a civil religious leader. The tradgedy of his death and subsequent funeral brought the nation together in a profound way. The nationally televised funeral, filled with civil religious symbol and ritual, further brought the country together through its mass participation in the event. These dynamic events contributed to the crystallization of Bellah's concept of civil religion centered around its role of consensus.

Consensus as a key function of civil religion was also supported by Phillip Hammond's interpretation of it. According to him, religious pluralism spawns ethical diversity which is expressed through the law. The law in turn endeavors to meet out justice which has been interpreted through consensus.

The Pledge of Allegiance ritual has achieved consensus in dramatic ways. Kris Kristofferson's use of the pledge in his play, America, is a hypothetical example. Another example occurred on September 16, 1987 when all US citizens were asked to turn on radios or television sets to join President Reagan, and

former Chief Justice Warren Burger in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Burger had resigned from his position in order to devote himself full-time to organizing the country's celebration of the Constitution's bicentennial which was September 17, 1987. The country's unison recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance launched the beginning of this "Celebration of Citizenship".[1]

Conflict and Crisis

Conflicts have broken out as both individuals and groups have resisted the control placed on them by others concerning participation in the Pledge ritual. Fear has been a contributing factor in the responce made to these disruptions of the status quo. Immigrant children, Jehovah's Witness', and communism were perceived as crises which threatened Americanism. Some of these conflicts have resulted in legal battles in which the Supreme Court has upheld the individual's right to refrain from participation. Other conflict situations have arisen over the sense of belonging, or inclusion/excusion tensions.

Control

Control has been a recurrent theme throughout this study. It is interesting that control in its extreme parlance, "indoctrination", is boldly used to describe a teacher's responsibility to his/her students in the article by Edwards. The eighties seem to reflect the image of the fifties. John Childs urged teachers in the fifties to defend America's freedom by taking an active role in creating a better society through moral indoctrination. Edwards adopts Childs' philosophy as she speaks out for the eighties:

> A force is at work in our society to disrupt if not destroy American Public schools, under the guise of saving them. Propelled by right-wing religious groups and supported by high-ranking officials in our government, the goal is to substitute narrowly defined, sectarian values for those democratic freedoms on which our country was based.[2]

Such a "John the Baptist" fanfare is unjustified and immitates those whom Edwards condemns. Her argument that human worth, opposition to all forms of discrimination, the preservation of the freedom of inquiry and criticism, freedom of speech and writing, healthy skepticism and other freedoms which enrich and liberate should be encouraged and taught in the schools demands a hearing. But surely she goes too far when she insists that "democracy is not automatically acquired; responsible and free citizens have to be molded."[3] To mold, that is to shape or form, does not permit the element of choice which is so intregal to

freedom. Can children understand democracy when the methods used to teach it are so incompatable with the subject matter?

At grassroots level we saw control emerging as a primary meaning behind the pledge. Children did not understand the words to the pledge, but they knew they were being controlled by their teachers. Also teachers felt compelled by state legislature, social pressure and public sentiment to lead their classes in daily pledge rituals.[4] In recent years teachers have been taught how, and are expected to control student environment to enhance their understanding of democratic principles. In essence then, we have a hierarchical structure of control: students are controlled by their teachers, teachers are controlled by the community, the community is controlled by the state and the state is controlled by the federal government.

Implications

From our investigation into the Pledge of Allegiance ritual we found control to have two distinct roles. The first emerged in the form of power plays to dominate or influence others through the ritual. Those attempting to utilize control in this way progressed downwards from the President, to Congress, to the

State, to the School Board, to the Superintendent of schools, to teachers.

The second distinct role of control concerned owning the ritual. Students found more meaning and power in the ritual when they owned it. The Pledge came alive to a sixth grade class when a boy exclaimed, "We're all I's." Identification with the Pledge transmited a power which enabled the ritual to speak to that individual.

We saw in our grassroots study that the ritual usually failed to convey significant meaning to the students who participated in the daily salute. In fact the longer this practice was repeated, the less meaning it held for the students. Children even began to resent and defy it. Similarly, the general adult attitude to the Pledge is directly linked to his/her memory of this childhood ritual. This has been demonstrated to me repeatedly as I have discussed my thesis topic with various Americans informally. In every case the attitude toward the Pledge was one of apathy. In preparation for the 1987 celebration of the Constitution, the Pledge was publicized and promoted in a way which indicated that the media was attempting to overcome adult apathy towards the pledge ritual. Kathy Kiely prepared Houstonians with her front page article, "'I Pledge

Allegiance' Blitz".

> You say you haven't done such a thing since homeroom period in grade school? You say you FORGOT THE WORDS?
>
> Not to worry. Nabisco Brands, Inc. Xerox Corp., the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, the National Association of Broadcasters and celebrities of the political, vinyl and celluloid kind are going to be filling your living room in the upcoming weeks to remind you of what they are.[6]

The Pledge ritual has clearly generatedan apathetic and sometimes negative attitude towards it by school children which in turn has affected the attitude of the general public. We can legitimately ask whose interest does the public school system serve, or specifically, whose interest does the Pledge ritual serve? We have identified an inversely proportionate hierarchical network in which those affected the most have the least say, namely the students. The dynamics of controlling versus being controlled advances upward to teachers, then tax payers--the community members--and lastly the government. This top level of control has a primary interest in seeking to maintain the status quo value systems and ideologies. It seems that an evaluation of its success through the Pledge ritual is in order. Perhaps it is partly because such control is difficult to justify, especially in a democratic country, that this issue has been largely ignored.

We dare not forget that the ritual holds its own power as well. While it has the ability to maintain or resist movement, it can also transform and energize. The same power can be used to change or redefine value systems and ideologies. If the ritual is in reality mediating a negative power, it seems that this fact should be recognized and dealt with. The Pledge of Allegiance is a significant civil religious ritual. It is a changing, growing concept of the relationship of the United States to its people whose hopes and aspirations it was founded to represent. While it may not be accomplishing that for which it was intended,[6] it is a dynamic force which reflects the growth and development of the civil-religious dimension of the American nation.

FOOTNOTES

1 The Houston Post, August 21, 1987, p. 1.

2 Edwards, pp. 18-29.

3 Ibid.

4 Huston ISD, the largest school district in Texas, has the Pledge printed under the "daily opening" category in their teacher lesson plans.

5 Post, August 21, 1987, p. 1. Another example of adult apathy and in this case cynicism towards the pledge was found written in the margin of the book by David R. Manwaring, Render Unto Caesar: The Flag-Salute Controversy. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 10. The book said, "Actually the flag ceremony, with its solemn trappings, unmistakable symbolism and mass participation, was designed to produce a purely *emotional* response. In this objective it probably was quite successful." Beside this the reader wrote "ha!".

6 "The Pledge of Allegiance has deep meaning for all Americans. Saying the Pledge is the traditional and accepted way for a person to state his loyalty and love for the United States and the Flag, and his belief in its democratic principles." ("Flag" World Book, p. 2583.)

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