

## Summary

This diploma work analyzes the contemporary rise of the number of atheists in the United States of America, basing this presupposition on numerous nation-wide surveys, primarily conducted by Gallup Poll and Pew Research Center. It goes into depth on the definition of atheism and strictly delineates the meaning of this word and the use of its alternatives in the work. Given the fact that the thesis is written by a Czech author, it also provides necessary background covering the differences between Czech atheism and American atheism. Since the work is purposely not one of literary analysis but rather of socio-political and cultural nature, reasons for this decision are given in a separate subchapter analyzing Flannery O'Connor's novel *Wise Blood*.

History of atheism in America is touched upon in the beginning of Chapter 3, but since the fundamental focus of this work is on the contemporary state of affairs, the roots of modern atheism in America are sought after mainly in the twentieth century. In particular, the greatest causes of the weakening of church's power and the rise of secularism (or atheism, for that matter) are given as following: Madalyn Murray O'Hair's fights against church's influence in public schools and against its public funding; the argument about the non-scientific nature of belief and the general juxtaposition of science and religion; feminism; the sex abuse scandal of 2002 and other affairs which caused the church to lose its moral high ground; and last but not least the influence of media and the effects of globalization.

One other cause, which is elaborated on in its own chapter, is the movement of the New Atheism. Its historical background is traced back to the latter half of the twentieth century in order to show that there is not much which is particularly new about the movement. Subsequently, the basic features of it are described and analyzed. Finally, the effects of the New Atheist movement are considered.

The final chapter contemplates the potential future of godless America, drawing inspiration from many sources and suggesting multiple possibilities. In the end, the author suggests that the U.S. may develop in the same way the United Kingdom did, as represented in the poem "Church Going" by Philip Larkin.