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John Fitzgerald Kennedy, The Catholic Issue,
and Presidential Politics, 1959-1960

by
Timothy J. Sarbaugh

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May
1987

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VITA

The author, Timothy Jerome Sarbaugh, attended high school at San Joaquin Memorial in Fresno, California. After a tour in the United States Army, he began his undergraduate studies at San Jose State University, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1978.

For the next two years, he worked toward his Master degree in history at the same institution. In 1980, he finished his Master Thesis, "Irish-American Republicanism in California, 1900-1936." For the next two years, he taught and wrote articles for publication.

In 1982, he began his Doctoral studies at Loyola University under the direction of Professor Lawrence McCaffrey. Currently, he is teaching at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington

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CHRONOLOGY OF
JOHN F. KENNEDY AND THE CATHOLIC ISSUE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
March 1959	Kennedy's <u>Look</u> Interview.
November 1959	Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Birth Control.
April 1960	West Virginia Primary, Kennedy's Associated Society of Newspaper Editors Speech.
May 1960	<u>Osservatore Romano</u> and Italy's Elections.
July 1960	Kennedy becomes Presidential Candidate of the Democratic Party.
September 1960	Norman Peale's Manifesto, Kennedy's speech to Houston Ministers, Statement of 166 Catholic laymen.
October 1960	Puerto Rican Hierarchy's instruction on local elections, Reformation Sunday.
November 1960	Kennedy becomes first Catholic President of the United States.

INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest American prejudices is anti-Catholicism. From the first landing of the pilgrims to the deistic principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence, Americans formed a cultural tradition with an inherent hostility toward Catholicism. The Puritans of the Reformation and the Founding Fathers of the Enlightenment provided the emotional and intellectual basis for America's anti-Catholicism. They portrayed the Catholic Church as authoritarian, anti-democratic, superstitious, intolerant, and statist. Catholicism was the foremost enemy of religious and individual liberty. It became and simply was anti-American. Intrinsic in this anti-Catholic tradition was the exclusion of any Catholic from the highest office in the land, the presidency of the United States.¹

In such a hostile environment and determined to become first-class citizens, Catholics settled, survived, and thrived in the United States in spite of numerous outbursts of bigotry. Roughly one hundred years after the Constitutional Convention, the inconceivable, or impossible,

¹James Hennesey, S. J. American Catholics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 36-39.

happened. Charles O'Connor became the country's first Catholic presidential candidate in 1872. O'Connor, a prominent New York attorney, was unexpectedly nominated as a result of internal dissension within the Democratic party. A splinter group, which broke away from the Democratic party after it nominated Horace Greeley at its national convention, selected O'Connor as its candidate. The election results proved the futility of O'Connor's protest candidacy. The first Catholic presidential candidate collected only 29,000 votes compared to 3 million for Greeley and 3.5 million for Grant.² Fortunately the unfeasibility of O'Connor's candidacy mitigated the fires of anti-Catholicism and failed to raise the ugly head of bigotry. One political analyst has noted, "Because the contest was really between Greeley and Grant, O'Connor's candidacy did not produce a flood of vitriolic anti-Catholic literature comparable to that thrown against Al Smith in 1928."³

Fifty years later, the second Catholic presidential candidate, Al Smith, emerged, and unlike O'Connor, he was the viable presidential candidate of the Democratic party. Governor of New York and representing the new constituency of urban ethnics and Catholics that emerged as a result of the great wave of immigration at the turn of the century,

²Lawrence H. Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), p. 153.

³Ibid.

Smith posed a serious challenge to the tradition of "No Catholic in the White House." Protestant Americans perceived Smith's candidacy as a threat to the virtues of Americanism. If he were elected, Protestants feared the pope would take over the country, destroying the country's heritage of separation of church and state and of religious, political, and individual freedom. The editor of the Christian Century, a non-denominational journal, summarized Protestant hysteria over a Catholic in the White House. "They (Protestants) cannot look with unconcern upon the seating of the representative of an alien culture, of a medieval Latin mentality, of an undemocratic hierarchy, and of a foreign potentate in the great office of the President of the United States."⁴

The intolerant decade of the 1920's that produced the Red Scare and revived the Klu Klu Klan intensified the religious rancor, hysteria, and hate in this presidential campaign. "It was a field day for bigots," observed James Hennesey, S. J., a leading Catholic historian. The result was a crushing defeat for Al Smith. In the popular vote, Smith received 15 million ballots to Herbert Hoover's 21.5 million. Smith was resoundingly overwhelmed by an

⁴Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism pp. 67; Hennesey, American Catholics, pp. 252-253.

electoral college vote of 444-87.⁵ In hindsight, historians have reinterpreted the reason for Al Smith's defeat. Anti-Catholicism was not the explanation. Even if Smith had been Protestant or if the Democratic party had chosen another candidate, there was no possibility of beating the opponents major appeal -- "Republican prosperity." Smith's less than American (urban-ethnic) public image, his stalwart support of anti-prohibition forces, and his association with the corrupt politics of urban machines also contributed to his downfall. Finally, Smith exacerbated the religious issue by failing to respond to anti-Catholic accusations. Regretfully, the few times that he did break his silence ended up being defensive and wrathful harangues, which only gave more credence to the "Popish Plot."⁶

Whatever the final judgment scholar's will make concerning Smith's defeat in 1928, Smith and the American Catholic Church and community were convinced that the major culprit was anti-Catholicism. Frightened, humiliated and deeply hurt, Catholic-Americans, inheriting a psychological scar that they were undesirable and disloyal aliens, took up a posture of bitter retreat and a mentality of defensive

⁵Hennesey, American Catholics, pp. 252-253; Albert J. Menendez, John F. Kennedy: Catholic and Humanist (New York: Prometheus Books, 1982), pp. 18-19.

⁶Menendez, John F. Kennedy, pp. 18-19; Fuchs, Kennedy and Catholicism, pp. 69-70; Richard Hofstadter, "Could a Protestant have beaten Hoover in 1928?," Reporter, March 17, 1960.

ghettoism. Catholics were convinced that America was, and would be, a Protestant country with a Protestant president.

Contrary to this pessimistic forecast of his religious community and contrary to the country's centuries old anti-Catholic tradition, John Fitzgerald Kennedy became the first Catholic president of the United States only 30 years later. Kennedy's victory in 1960 seemed to have accomplished the impossible. It denied and shattered the seemingly inherent logic of the cultural tradition in American history. It is this great break with the past that this study will scrutinize. Simply put, how and why did John F. Kennedy become the first Catholic president in 1960? How did he avoid another 1928? How was the campaign of 1960 different from that of 1928? Historians have failed to address adequately these questions. By narrowly focusing on the candidate himself, and the Protestant dimension of the religious issue, they have overlooked completely the Catholic issue and its indispensable role in John F. Kennedy's election victory.⁷ This study defines the

⁷Elias Macropoulos, "The Treatment with Reference to the Roman Catholic Issue, of the Democratic Candidates in the Presidential Elections of 1928 and 1960," (Ph.D. New York University, 1966); Beryl McClarren, "The Southern Baptist State Newspapers and the Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960," (Ph.D. Southern Illinois University, 1963); David Smith, "Al Smith and JFK: The Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 & 1960," (Ph.D. Southern Illinois University, 1964); Teddy Lisle, "The Catholic Impediment: JFK and the Religious Issue during the 1960 Presidential Campaign,"

Catholic issue as the reactions of the American Catholic hierarchy and press to Kennedy's pursuit of the highest office in the land.* Ultimately, these reactions allowed Kennedy to avoid a remake of 1928 and to succeed where Smith failed. Lastly, the study will reveal the impact Kennedy's campaign and election had upon the Catholic community as well as religious relations in the United States.

(Ph.D. University of Kentucky, 1982); Patricia Barrett, Religious Liberty and the American Presidency, (New York: Herder & Herder Co., 1963); Dulce, Berton. Religion and the Presidency, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1962); Lawrence Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, (Des Moines: Merideth Press, 1967); Paul Lopatto, Religion and the Presidential Elections, (New York: Praeger Studies, 1985); Albert Menendez, John Fitzgerald Kennedy: Catholic and Humanist, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1978); Albert Menendez, Religion at the Polls, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977); In fact, the only time the Catholic issue emerged was to stress the antagonism between Kennedy and the Church. See Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 122-127.

*See Appendix.

CHAPTER I

AN AMERICAN CHURCH AND CANDIDATE

America between the years 1945-1960 was different from Al Smith's America. Protestant America was being metamorphosed. Demographic, social and economic changes of postwar America presaged the demise of the cultural hegemony of Protestantism and the emergence of a new pluralism. By the end of this period, Anglo-Protestants consisted of only one-third of the country's 171 million population, while Catholics had more than doubled in numbers to comprise 26% or roughly 40 million of the nation's inhabitants.¹ Catholic Americans experienced economic and social success and acquired a new found confidence in their political future. Will Herberg, journalist and sociologist, observed in 1955 that "American Catholicism has successfully negotiated the transition from a foreign church to an American religious community. It is now part of the American way of Life."²

¹Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960 (New York: Pocket Books, 1961), pp. 270-271.

²Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholics and Jew, (New York: Doubleday and Co., revised 1960), pp. 175.

Americanization coupled with social acceptance spawned the necessary breeding ground for the rise of the American-Catholic politician, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. It made it possible for a Catholic to consider once again running for the highest office in the land and to transform his faith into a political asset in 1956.

After Al Smith's defeat, the American Catholic Church turned its attention away from politics to the building of a structurally sound and efficiently run administration to meet the educational and spiritual needs of its membership. This brand of "brick and mortar" Catholicism reached its "zenith" in the 1950's, culminating in a great outburst of devotionism and boosterism.³ Having fought bravely in World War II and being a direct beneficiary of the G. I. Bill of Rights, Catholics encountered economic and social upward mobility, became a part of America's middle-class suburbia, and for all intents and purposes, were Americanized. By the end of the decade, theologian Gustave Weigel opined that this good fortune had created an "American" church.

At the present moment the American Catholic Church is neither a harassed minority nor a belligerent group. It is more prone to conservatism than radical change. Its tendency is toward American chauvinism rather than anything anti-American. It is rather contemptuous of

³Jay Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985), pp. 352-260. Don Brophy, ed., The Story of Catholics in America (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 123-130.

what is foreign, even when visible in the Church elsewhere. Its generosity, activism,⁴ and optimism are probably more American than Catholic.

Catholics had become 100% American. Their pure Americanism propagated a smugness and self-importance in the Catholic community in terms of its role in American society. They began to see themselves as the last reservoir of spiritual and moral values for both American and Western civilization. As the last spiritual bastion against godless secularism and materialism, the American Catholic Church implemented a vigorous missionary policy throughout the country. The saving of souls became a patriotic duty. To be a true Catholic was also to be a good American. Fulton J. Sheen's television program, "Life Is Worth Living," spearheaded this drive to save America by making it Catholic. This conversion drive peaked in 1960 when nearly 150,000 Americans converted to Catholicism.⁵

Pure Americanism also led Catholics down the path of politics again with a new found confidence and purpose. During these years of the Cold War, the Church's hierarchy became stalwart supporters of Senator Joseph McCarthy and fervent leaders in the anti-communist crusade.⁶ Thomas T.

⁴Gustave Weigel, "Protestant-Catholic Dialogue," Catholic Mind, Vol. 57, Sept.-Oct. 1959, pp. 390-391.

⁵Dolan, The American Catholic Experience, pp. 391-394.

⁶One should consult, Donald Crosby, God, Church and Flag: Senator Joe McCarthy and the Catholic Church (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

McAvoy, historian and priest, exhorted fellow Catholics that only second to presenting the Christian gospel to fellow Americans was the primary responsibility of Catholic Americans to participate in the political and social life of the nation. Catholic political activism, McAvoy believed, would imbue society with Catholic social principles and values. McAvoy's call was heeded. By 1955, seventy-two Catholics sat in the House of Representatives and ten Catholics had been elected to the United States Senate. Catholics such as Edmund Muskie, Eugene McCarthy, Robert Wagner, and John F. Kennedy became leading national politicians. McAvoy was especially pleased with the appearance of such Catholic leadership in American political life. "It marks the emergence of many Catholic political leaders who found no conflict between their Catholicism and their Anglo-American tradition."⁷

The increase of Catholic power and influence in American politics was not looked favorably upon by all American citizens. Non-Catholics--Protestants, secularists, and liberals--feared the impact this rise in political power would have upon the country's tradition of individual liberty and religious freedom. They were still apprehensive about an institution they thought symbolized persecution, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and conformity. Paul Blanshard,

⁷Thomas T. McAvoy, CSC, "This American Catholicism," Catholic World, Vol. 190, November 29, 1959, pp. 118-119.

a Congregational Minister, lawyer, and leading Protestant propagandist, capsulized the bigoted anxieties, doubts, and misconceptions of anti-Catholicism in his work, aptly entitled, American Freedom and Catholic Power. Blanshard's major thesis was that the Catholic Church was an inveterate enemy of American freedom. In this regard, it was second only to Communism. Blanshard envisaged the crushing of American freedom and the First Amendment by Catholic authoritarianism. He depicted Catholic Americans with two allegiances, one to the pope, the other to the constitution. When the two loyalties conflict, Blanshard argued, papal obligations would take precedence over constitutional principles. Finally, when the Catholic Church had acquired enough political power, he foresaw it, at the behest of the pope, rescinding the constitution and coercively imposing upon the country Catholic beliefs and morals.⁸

Thirty percent of his fellow Protestants agreed with Blanshard that under no condition did they desire a Catholic in the White House.⁹ The remaining seventy percent did not espouse the bigoted beliefs of Blanshard but did entertain some legitimate fears and concerns about Catholicism's compatibility with American democracy. Will Herberg in his

⁸Paul Blanshard, American Freedom and Catholic Power (Boston: Beacon Press, revised 1952), pp. 1-30.

⁹Albert J. Menendez, John F. Kennedy: Catholic and Humanist (New York: Prometheus Books, 1982) p. 25.

book, Protestant, Catholic and Jew, presented a sociological explanation for Americans' anti-Catholic response to the emergence of Catholics into the mainstream of American life. He characterized contemporary American society as one based upon a "transmuted Pot" of three cultures, Protestant, Catholic, and Jew.¹⁰ Religion was the foci of these three cultures, defining a member's identity, and delineating his or her purpose in life. According to Herberg, religion in this sense was the soul of one's social and cultural identity, and ultimately the reconciler of Americanism with the country's religious and economic diversity. Such a tripartite division in culture, Herberg contended, explained the increase in Catholic power and symbolized the end of Protestant America, a demise Protestants attempted to thwart by anti-Catholic protests.

What seems to be disturbing many Protestants is the sudden realization that Protestantism is no longer identical with America, that Protestantism has, in fact, become merely one of three communities with equal status and equal legitimacy in the scheme of things. This sudden realization, shocking enough when one considers the historical origins of American life and culture, appears to have driven Protestantism into an essentially defensive posture, in which it feels itself a mere minority threatened with Catholic domination.¹¹

It also explained the Protestant defensiveness that made Blanshard and others "vehement champions of an extreme

¹⁰Herberg, Protestant, Catholic and Jew, pp. 102-103.

¹¹Ibid., p. 251

doctrine of the separation of church and state" and that portrayed Catholics as "un-American, undemocratic, alien to American ways, and prone to place loyalty to the Church above loyalty to state and nation."¹²

Some Catholics responded to these unfounded accusations of disloyalty with the same bitterness and defensiveness of Al Smith. A new generation of Catholics, however, sought to understand the foundations of Protestant fears. They concluded that such fears were based upon past and present misconceptions of the American Church and its doctrines, and that a campaign was needed to demonstrate to concerned non-Catholics that the true principles of Catholicism were compatible with the constitution. James M. O'Neill, a Catholic layman and scholar, participated in this campaign of understanding by providing the definitive reply to Blanshard's charges in his Catholicism and American Freedom. In this book, O'Neill undermined Blanshard's argument point by point, concluding that it was more a fictional account of what Blanshard had envisioned Catholic America to be, than what it actually was.¹³ John Courtney Murray, S. J., a leading American theologian, provided the rational Catholic response to anti-Catholicism in his work,

¹²Herberg, Protestant, Catholic and Jew, pp. 251-253.

¹³James O'Neill, Catholicism and American Freedom (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), pp. 246-268.

We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflection on the American Proposition. In his preface, Murray confidently approached the compatibility controversy.

The question is sometimes raised, whether Catholicism is incompatible with American democracy. The question is invalid as well as impertinent; for the manner of its position inverts the order of values. It must, of course, be turned around to read, whether American democracy is compatible with Catholicism.¹⁴

Murray argued that, contrary to popular opinion, most Catholics fully supported the First Amendment. He and fellow Catholics realized the importance of prohibiting an established state religion in order to keep civil and religious peace in America's pluralistic society. "It is in fact the only view that a citizen with both historical and common sense can take."¹⁵ Murray reassured non-Catholics that if ever the day would come when Catholics would represent a political majority in the country, there would be no Catholic take over of America. The pope would not sit in the White House. A Catholic-American president, like previous presidents, would be limited in his actions by the constitutional and institutional limitations built in the American system of government. Murray further insisted that Catholic obedience to the clause of the First Amendment was based upon a moral imperative to promote the common good in society:

¹⁴James Courtney Murray, S. J., We Hold These Truths (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. ix.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 23

He, the American-Catholic, takes the highest ground available in this matter of the relations between religion and government when he asserts that his commitment to the religion clauses of the Constitution is a moral commitment to them as articles of peace in a pluralistic society.¹⁶

While O'Neill and Murray attempted to demonstrate the theoretical and rational compatibility of Catholicism and American democracy, Catholic politicians such as John F. Kennedy undertook the more difficult task of demonstrating this compatibility in concrete actions and words to the American electorate. In 1946, John F. Kennedy, a decorated war veteran, successfully ran for Congress in Massachusetts. Six years later, he became a United States Senator. In 1956, when Kennedy considered the possibility of being Adlai Stevenson's vice-presidential running mate for the Democratic party, he encountered the anti-Catholic ghost of Al Smith and had to weigh for the first time the political liabilities of his Catholic faith. His father, employing the religious issue as his rationale for his son not to run for the vice-presidency, insisted that Stevenson would lose, and with his son on the ticket, political analysts would attribute the defeat to his Catholic faith which could only hinder his future chances for national office.¹⁷ Theodore Sorensen, advisor and friend, as well as other members of

¹⁶Murray, We Hold These Truths, p. 78.

¹⁷James MacGregor Burns, Kennedy: A Profile (U.S. Information Service, 1960), pp. 60-61.

Kennedy's staff, prevailed upon him the necessity to run. Such an opportunity would catapult him into the national political limelight, increasing his chances for the presidency in 1960.¹⁸

Determined to seek and win the vice-presidential candidacy, Kennedy publicly defended the compatibility of Catholic and American principles. More importantly, he endeavored to convince fellow politicians that his faith would not be a liability to the Democratic ticket, as it was purported to be in Al Smith's campaign of 1928. In two separate memorandas, one composed by Sorensen and the other by John Bailey, a leading figure in Connecticut Democratic politics, Kennedy divulged his theory that his Catholicism was, in fact, a political asset.¹⁹ He first undermined the mythology surrounding Al Smith's defeat. He argued that it was fallacious to believe that Smith lost because of his faith. It was "Republican Prosperity" and the candidate's wet, urban, and ethnic background that defeated the Democratic party in 1928.²⁰ Kennedy insisted that his candidacy possessed none of Smith's deficiencies. He

¹⁸Burns, Kennedy: A Profile, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹Theodore Sorensen, "Memorandum for Democratic Nominee in 1956," (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810; John Bailey, "The Democratic National Ticket: An Analysis of Available Data and Polls," (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810.

²⁰Ibid.

maintained that he could win the election for the Democrats by attracting the large Catholic vote that had switched to Eisenhower in 1952 and that was strategically placed in states with the largest electoral votes. With him on the ticket, it meant the winning of 14 key states and 261 electoral votes for the Democratic party because "Catholics voted not as union members or farmers or women or old people but as Catholics. There is or can be a Catholic vote."²¹ Sorensen concurred with Kennedy's Catholic scenario: "Kennedy, on the ticket, would attract all of these voters, particularly the Catholics, back to the Democrats. If Stevenson can carry the South and if Kennedy can get the Catholic Democratic vote back, the Democratic party will win in November."²²

✕ Kennedy, thus, adeptly disarmed his anti-Catholic opponents by transforming his faith into a political asset for himself and his party. He went to the Democratic Convention in Chicago as a "Catholic vote-getter." After Adlai Stevenson had won the presidential nomination of his party, he announced that the convention delegates would decide who his vice-presidential running mate would be.

²¹Theodore Sorensen, "Memorandum for Democratic Nominee in 1956," (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810; John Bailey, "The Democratic National Ticket: An Analysis of Available Data and Polls," (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810.

²²Ibid.

". . . I have concluded to depart from the precedents of the past. I have decided that the selection of the vice-presidential nominee should be made through the free process of the convention."²³ Immediately, convention delegates began to lobby for their favorite candidate, and the selection process turned into a struggle between Kennedy and Estes Kefauver. In the end, the candidate from Tennessee defeated his formidable Catholic opponent. On the brighter side, Kefauver did not win because of Kennedy's faith, but, as Sorensen explained, because of numerous strategic blunders made by Kennedy's staff on the convention floor.²⁴

Kennedy supporters as well as political analysts perceived a great victory in Kennedy's defeat. Overnight, they maintained, this viable vice-presidential candidate had become a well-known and respected national leader of the Democratic party. McCall magazine observed that "when the convention was over it had crowned only one hero -- John F. Kennedy."²⁵ Arthur Schlesinger Jr. concurred.

I wanted to say that, however, the V.P. contest came out, you clearly emerged as the man who gained most during the convention. You hit the bull's eye on every one of your appearances; and your general demeanor and effectiveness made you in a single week a

²³ Burns, Kennedy, pp. 186-188.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 188.; Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy, (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), pp. 101-103.

²⁵ Press Clipping, McCall, 1956 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810.

national political figure. You are bound to be in everyone's mind from now on in any future consideration of national candidates.²⁶

James MacGregor Burns boldly predicted that "In this moment of triumphant defeat, his campaign for the presidency was born."²⁷

Kennedy, encouraged by these voices of optimism, began to campaign unofficially for the presidential candidacy of the Democratic party. He was convinced he had overcome and buried Smith's tragic legacy. He had confronted publicly the religious issue, transformed it into a political asset, and most important, conveyed a public image of an American and not a Catholic candidate. Catholic liberal scholar and journalist, John Cogley, thought that this was the major difference between Smith's failure and Kennedy's success.

John F. Kennedy is no Al Smith. He is much closer to the enduring Protestant image of the President than the self-made man who grew up on the East side of New York . . . Kennedy is the American Catholic arrive . . . If the tradition which has kept Catholics out of the White House is to go, the image Kennedy projects will provide a fairly painless transition. The stereotype of the Irish-Catholic politician, the pugnacious, priest -- ridden representative of an embittered, embattled minority, simply does not fit the poised, urbane, cosmopolitan young socialite from Harvard.²⁸

²⁶Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr. to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 21, 1956 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1956), Box No. 810.

²⁷Burns, Kennedy, p. 187.

²⁸John Cogley, "A Catholic for President?," Commonweal, April 10, 1959, p. 53.

CHAPTER II

BETRAYER OF HIS OWN KIND:

KENNEDY AND THE CATHOLIC ISSUE IN 1959

Next to birth control and Pope John's announcement of the Vatican Council, the top religious news story of 1959 among the country's some forty million Catholics was the likelihood of a Catholic presidential candidate.¹ During this year, Kennedy expressed his views on the religious issue in an exclusive Look interview. He hoped that his interview would allay Protestant fears and, once and for all, bury the religious issue before the official presidential campaign began the following January. His interview did mitigate some of the more moderate anti-Catholics, but surprisingly, it incurred the wrath of the American Catholic hierarchy and diocesan press. To them, he became a betrayer of his own kind. At the end of the year, Kennedy once again found himself in an uncomfortable religious controversy

¹Boston Pilot, January 2, 1960, p. 8; other important religious news stories for the year were: Bishops condemn the use of birth control, Mother Seton was declared venerable, Krushchev visits the United States for 12 days, President Eisenhower told news conference that the he saw no reason why a Catholic should not be elected president.

because of the hierarchy's pastoral letter on birth control. When 1960 dawned, Kennedy realized that he had to appease both Protestant and Catholic sensitivities if he were to become the next president of the United States.

With the presidential campaign approximately twelve months away, Kennedy had a long conversation with Dr. Henry Knox, former presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, about church-state issues and anti-Catholicism. After the meeting, Kennedy was convinced that Protestants, even "eminent ones," still had doubts about his religious views and his relationship with church officials.² Wanting to convince Protestants and other non-Catholics that he believed in separation of church and state and that as president he would make his decisions independent of Church dogma and papal influence, Kennedy submitted to an interview with Fletcher Knebel, a nationally respected journalist.

I gave the interview on my own initiative because I felt that the questions which were raised were matters which reflect honest doubts among many citizens and because I felt that frank answers might help to remove this problem from a political context. In giving these answers, I was simply stating candidly my firm belief that a Catholic can serve as the President of the United States and fulfill his oath of office³ with complete fidelity and without reservation.

The contents of Kennedy's interview were published

²Fletcher Knebel, "Democratic Forecast: A Catholic in 1960," Look, March 3, 1959, pp. 16-17.

³John F. Kennedy, Memorandum, March 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998.

in the March 3rd issue of Look magazine. Kennedy succinctly stated his views on the controversial church-state issues. As a Catholic, he perceived no difficulty in maintaining absolute fidelity to his presidential oath; his Catholicism would not impede his overriding responsibility to his constitutional duties. "Whatever one's religion in private life may be, for the office holder, nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts -- including the First Amendment and the strict separation of Church and State."⁴ He also vehemently opposed sending an American ambassador to the Vatican in Rome because "Whatever the advantages might be in Rome -- and I am not convinced of these -- they would be more than offset by the divisive effect at home."⁵ He finally rejected direct federal aid to parochial schools. "The First Amendment to the Constitution is an infinitely wise one. There can be no question of Federal funds being used for support of parochial or private schools. It's unconstitutional under the First Amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court. I'm opposed to the Federal government's extending support to

⁴Fletcher, "Democratic Forecast," Look, pp. 16-17.

⁵Ibid. Richard Cardinal Cushing, Oral History Interview, (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript p.3 Cushing gave his opinion on this issue. "That was an absurd objection against the election of President Kennedy. I do not know one member of the hierarchy in the United States who in my lifetime favored such a step. Undoubtedly there were some, but I never knew them."

sustain any Church or its schools."⁶

Kennedy's interview did manage to assuage some Protestant fears but, to his chagrin and surprise, it "drew a less enthusiastic reaction from Catholics than anti-Catholic bigots."⁷ The aspect of the interview that most disturbed Catholics was Kennedy's "nothing takes precedence over the oath" statement, a statement his Catholic critics called a "pretty pathetic" espousal of godless secularism to appease bigots.⁸ The American Catholic hierarchy found it necessary to publicly state its disagreement with Kennedy in its national Catholic Almanac. Separation of religion from one's public life was impossible, according to American bishops; the Catholic conscience must interact and adjudge the constitutional oath. The bishops reminded Kennedy that "The demands of integrity require him to be answerable to God for actions whether public or private."⁹ Thurston Davis,

⁶Ibid. Richard Cardinal Cushing, Oral History Interview, (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript p.3 Cushing gave his opinion on this issue.

"That was an absurd objection against the election of President Kennedy. I do not know one member of the hierarchy in the United States who in my lifetime favored such a step. Undoubtedly there were some, but I never knew them."

⁷The Tablet, February 28, 1959, p. 6.

⁸Donald McDonald, The Catholic Messenger, "Some 250 Percent Americanism," February 26, 1959, p. 12.

⁹Catholic Almanac, (1960), pp. 109-110. Entitled "Catholic Candidate for the Presidency: Catholic Conscience vs Constitution," the article ended by giving advice on how Catholics should vote. "Competence and integrity are the basic criteria of the fitness of any candidate, not because he is or is not a Catholic."

S. J., editor of America, the national Jesuit weekly magazine, was taken aback by it. "Mr. Kennedy doesn't really believe that. No religious man, be he Catholic, protestant, or Jew, holds such an opinion. A man's conscience has a bearing on his public as well as his private life."¹⁰

Ave Maria's editor, John Reedy, C.S.C., accused Kennedy of being a proponent of godless secularism. "Something indeed does take over the obligation to uphold the constitution -- namely conscience. No man may rightfully act against his conscience. To relegate your conscience to your private life is not only unrealistic but dangerous because it leads to secularism in public life."¹¹ The San Francisco Monitor concurred. "The mouthing of such a phrase is a surrender to secularism by those who would divorce public morality from religion and God from public life."¹² The most vitriolic and ruthless attack emerged from the pen of Robert Hoyt, editor of the St. Joseph-Kansas City Register. "If this is an American doctrine, I'm leaving for Tahiti." He called Kennedy a fascist who was

¹⁰Thurston, Davis, "On Questioning Catholic Candidates," America, March 7, 1959, p. 651.

¹¹John Reedy, "Catholics and the Presidency," Ave Maria, March 7, 1959, p. 18.

¹²Father Mark Hurley, "Question Mark?," San Francisco Monitor, March 6, 1959, p. 4. Hurley continued his diatribe against Kennedy, accusing him of appeasing such bigots as Blanshard and concluding that he should have "bad-mouthed" this bigotry.

unable to keep his own conscience. His oath statement was "the same doctrine as the one used by Nazi torturers and assassins in the Nuremberg trials. They committed crimes in absolute obedience to their superiors and laws of their land."¹³

The most damaging charge against Kennedy in the Catholic press was that he betrayed his own kind by submitting to such a bigoted interview in order to appease Protestants.¹⁴ To the San Francisco Monitor, the interview symbolized the compromise and humiliation of every Catholic in the United States.¹⁵ Gerard Sherry of the Catholic Review was enraged by Kennedy's interview. "Unfortunately, a Catholic president is something quite a number of bigots still can't stomach. These bigots question the loyalty of a Catholic presidential candidate solely on religious grounds . . . he appears to have gone overboard in an effort to

¹³The Catholic Week (Birmingham, Alabama) March 20, 1959, p. 6. According to Hoyt, Kennedy was not a Catholic if he had to be reminded by Catholics and by even "good Protestants" that his ultimate loyalty was not to the state but to God.

¹⁴National Catholic Welfare Conference: Religious News Service (Microfilm: University of Notre Dame). Report entitled "Questioning of Catholic Candidate Regarding Their Americanism is condemned by Newspaper Editorials," March 2, 1959, pp. 59: 1394-1399. Provided a brief summary of the negative responses of the Catholic press toward Kennedy's participation in the interview.

¹⁵J. Hurley, "Question Mark?," San Francisco Monitor, March 6, 1959, p. 4.

placate the bigots."¹⁶ The Catholic Messenger, viewing the entire episode with "considerable dismay," concluded, "It is unpleasant to see a Catholic Senator in the awkward position of bending over backwards as he tries to prove his loyalty to the Constitution. The whole affair is rather insulting and should not be dignified by serious attention."¹⁷ The Steubenville Register of Ohio expressed similar frustration and exasperation in its future hope: "Some day, we should like to see a Catholic, when questioned about the possible conflict between his Church and the Constitution to stand up and say: 'It's none of your business how I feel on these matters. Accept me for what I am, not for what I believe. If you can't do this, then satisfy your prejudice and vote against me.'¹⁸

Catholic journals disparaged Kennedy's submission to such a religious test. Two specialized journals for the

¹⁶NCWC: Religious News Service, March 2, 1959, pp. 59-1395.

¹⁷Donald McDonald, "Some 250% Americanism," Catholic Messenger, February 26, 1959, p. 12. McDonald advised that Catholics should not allow Blanshards to ask such questions and quoted Will Herberg for an explanation of Kennedy's actions. "American Catholics have been so eager to become Americans that they have overdone this job. They have become 250% Americans. You get the most violent reaction to the slightest slur on the American Way of Life from Catholic Americans."

¹⁸NCWC: Religious News Service, March 2, 1959, pp. 59-1396. Father James E. Quinn, "Art of the Possible," the Lafayette Edition of Our Sunday Visitor, March 3, 1959, p. 2A.

American Catholic clergy, The Priest and Homiletic and Pastoral Review, usually reticent on political matters, were disappointed with Kennedy and disenchanted with Catholic politicians.¹⁹ "For there are Catholics who look to political expediency or who are ill-informed on the natural law in making their decisions and there are undoubtedly Catholics who bend over backwards and act in reverse just to emphasize their freedom of control by the Vatican."²⁰ America, after depicting the interview as "insulting," "discriminatory," "humiliating," and "a remnant of the bad old days of Knownothingism,"²¹ summarized the feelings of its entire editorial staff. "Our own reaction to the controverted Look interview is one of impatience at the earnest Massachusetts Senator's efforts to appease bigots rather than of disagreement with the positive points he made. A Catholic political candidate, if he must make a profession of his faith, should not seem to give quarter to religious bigotry, even at the risk of having his words distorted."²²

¹⁹The Priest, Vol. 15, January 1959, pp. 6-13; The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, Vol. 59, April 1959, pp. 625-629.

²⁰Editorial, "Catholics in Politics," The Priest, Vol. 15, January 1959, pp. 6-13.

²¹Davis, "Questioning Catholic Candidate," America, March 7, 1959, p. 651; Also consult "Third Degree for Catholics," editorial in America, March 14, 1959, p. 675.

²²Ibid., p. 651.

Not all Catholics, however, were Kennedy antagonists. Kennedy did have some tentative and adamant supporters among his religious peers in the hierarchy and the press. Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., dean for religious communities at the Catholic University of America as well as a renowned American theologian, refused to make any specific comments on Kennedy's Look interview but advised the public and supporters of Kennedy that he would give him the "benefit of the doubt." He assured Americans that there was no conflict between Catholicism and the constitution, but if one did emerge, "God's law must come first."²³ Richard Cardinal Cushing, long-time family friend and confessor, interpreted Kennedy's Look interview and Catholic press reaction as an example of how statements may cause "unintentional confusion." He thought that Kennedy had given straightforward answers, yet the quotes used by the press were trite, while the commentaries were extensive. He was especially displeased that these questions had to be asked at all. "I think it is a great pity . . . They are certainly ridiculous when presented to a person in public as long as Senator Kennedy."²⁴

²³NCWC: Religious News Service, "Asserts Exemplary Catholic would make best type of Public Official," March 9, 1959, pp. 59-1594.

²⁴Boston Pilot, March 14, 1959, p. 1; Father Philip Kelley to John F. Kennedy, March 10, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998. Father Kelley wrote to Kennedy to praise Cushing "who certainly gave you his blessing." John

The editor of the Michigan Catholic adjudged Kennedy's oath statement as necessary to convince non-Catholics of a Catholic president's loyalty. "The senator is merely saying that he foresees no conflict in conscience between his duty as a Catholic and his duty, if he were president, to uphold the constitution."²⁵ The leading liberal journal Commonweal, run by Catholic laypersons, concluded that the time was ripe for Catholics to correct false and misleading images of the Church and to replace religious bias with religious tolerance. This was not the time to cry religious test. Kennedy's interview symbolized the challenge all Catholics must encounter to become involved in American life.²⁶ Finally, Father Raymond Gribbin in his article, "The Catholic President: A President who would violate his oath of office would make himself an enemy of God," said Kennedy espoused sound Catholic doctrine. "All Catholics by force of obligation must consider all oaths in such a manner, for to violate one's oath is to turn one's back on God. It is a mortal sin." If violation of an oath were as "egregious as murder," Gribbin contended, Catholics would examine their

F. Kennedy to Father Kelley, Letter, March 18, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998. Kennedy's thank you note.

²⁵ Editorial, "Senator Kennedy's Stand," Michigan Catholic, February 26, 1959, p. 4.

²⁶ Commonweal, "A Catholic for President," March 6, 1959, p. 587.

conscience before taking any oath and find that the presidential oath was compatible with Catholic principles. "The oath taken by the president of the United States is an oath that may be taken in good conscience by any Catholic . . . he will put nothing before it. His allegiance to the pope then will be carried out in perfect harmony with the demands of the oath."²⁷

In spite of these few voices of support, the American Catholic church in its newspapers was very outraged by Kennedy's interview. Nearly a decade later, John Cogley wrote:

I don't think you can exaggerate the reaction to that Look article in the Catholic press, particularly because it was a very negative and very naive reaction, and I thought, a very politically unsophisticated reaction. It indicated to me at the time that

²⁷Reverend Raymond William Gribbin, "The Catholic Candidate: A Catholic Who Would Violate His Oath of Office Would Make Himself an Enemy of God," Our Sunday Visitor (National Edition), February 28, 1959, p. 2. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. defended Kennedy against a few of his Protestant critics. Consult Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Dr. Robert Sampson of the First Methodist Church, Letter (John F. Kennedy Library: Special Correspondence-Arthur Schlesinger), Box No. 32. He argued that Kennedy by his oath statement was faithfully adhering to a presidential tradition. "I know of no president who had even said that his religion took precedence over his oath to uphold the constitution." He then concluded that since "religion is a private matter in a free society," Dr. Sampson and other critics were attempting to "Blackball Kennedy." Schlesinger also wrote letters in defense of Kennedy to the editor of Christianity and Crisis. Schlesinger to John F. Kennedy, Letter March 26, 1959. Schlesinger to editor of Christianity and Crisis, Letter, April 7, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998.

they hadn't²⁸ thought through this whole question very seriously.

Naive or not, Kennedy realized that he had failed to take into account Catholic response to his Look interview. He did not anticipate Catholic hostility. His close advisor, Theodore Sorensen, contended, that Kennedy, unlike Al Smith, was preoccupied with challenging the Catholic liability charge, and casting doubt on the suspicions of "Americans of good will." In the end, allaying Protestant fears obscured and took precedence over Catholic sensitivity.

To end those suspicions and to end the tradition against a Catholic president, he knew he had to answer not only reasonable questions but many unreasonable questions as well. He knew he could not afford to be defensive, angry, impatient, or silent, no matter how many times he had heard the²⁹ same insulting, foolish, or discriminatory questions.

Realizing the error in his strategy, Kennedy came to his own defense in a memorandum sent out of his Washington, D.C. office to Catholic critics. He stressed that his interview was not intended to be an exhaustive treatise on Catholic thought concerning the obligations of the officeholder in a democratic society. He argued that such an ambitious undertaking would have been presumptuous on his part

²⁸Oral History Interview, John Cogley, February 20, 1968 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 46. Cogley also explained how this involved his first communication with Kennedy in his life. After reading his series in Commonweal, Kennedy sent him a note of thanks and later incorporated his advice in his Houston Speech.

²⁹Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 108-113.

"since I am trained neither in philosophy, theology, or Church history."³⁰ The purpose of his interview was to show that a Catholic can be a loyal President. Commenting on his oath statement, he emphasized that history demonstrated the compatibility of the presidential oath and conscience because no previous president had resigned or violated the oath. Such a compatibility was ostensible. "I should have thought it self-evident that all men regard conscience as an essential element in all human decisions . . . Indeed, the oath of office would be a meaningless gesture were it not for the principles which conscience imposes."³¹ Lastly, Kennedy maintained that he was not a bigot appeaser" . . . quite frankly, I do not feel that I have made any compromises; and I certainly am not, as you suggest, attempting to placate any particular group, anti-Catholic or otherwise. I am merely trying to state in my own way what I consider to be orthodox principles regarding the relationship between a Christian politician and his beliefs."³²

³⁰ John F. Kennedy to Citizen, Memorandum, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.; John F. Kennedy to Father Robert Whelan, Letter, July 15, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 998. NCWC: Religious News Service, "Kennedy Comments on Editorials," March 3, 1959, pp. 59-1595.

In the aftermath of the Look interview, Time magazine conducted a poll to determine the extent of co-religionist support for Catholic presidential candidate. Fifty-two percent, more than half of the Catholic participants, admitted they would be willing to switch political parties to vote for one of their own kind as president. Ninety-five percent of Catholics interviewed said that they would prefer a candidate who shared their politics as well as their religion.³³ The Alamo Register's local poll, which comprised one thousand students enrolled in San Antonio's Catholic institutions of higher learning, found that a majority preferred Kennedy.³⁴ Organizing a fifty-state listening poll, Newsweek administered a survey of the country's Catholic community -- clergy, politicians, and rank and file. Newsweek deduced from its findings a composite picture of what it thought to be the views of a typical or average Catholic voter. The average Catholic voter discerned no conflict of loyalties between Catholicism and Americanism; would vote only for the best qualified candidate; sought to expunge religion from the campaign but realized it was an impossible task; wanted, despite apprehensions about the prematurity of a Catholic candidate

³³"Politics: Can a Catholic Win?, Time, May 18, 1959, p. 23. The findings also revealed that 58% of all U.S. Catholics were Democrats.

³⁴Alamo Register, December 10, 1959, pp. 1, 11. Out of 987 ballots, Kennedy received 345 or 35%, while Nixon received 227 or 23%.

and about the possibility of the resurfacing of the bigotry of 1928, a Catholic to run for the presidency; and even more than that, wanted him to win -- to break the last major symbol and bastion of Protestant America.³⁵

These polls provided some comfort to Kennedy but they did not obfuscate his political judgment. Such a hostile reaction convinced Kennedy that he could not take Catholic support for granted, and that he would have to be more circumspect in his statements concerning Catholicism and politics. Even more important, these polls and the whole Look episode persuaded him that the Church's hierarchy "was out to get him," and "out to embarrass him." According to John Cogley, Kennedy thought that some Republican bishops "disliked the liberal tenor of his thinking," while others revealed "a kind of resentment sometimes that here he was, a Harvard man, the boy who didn't go to Catholic schools, being the nation's number one representative of Catholicism . . . and also a fear that his style was altogether too secularized for their tastes."³⁶ He also suspected that the Catholic clergy did not want a Catholic president because "A Catholic could no longer be a persecuted minority, an attitude that makes for cohesiveness among the laity."³⁷

³⁵"Do Catholics really want a Catholic President?," Newsweek, December 21, 1959, p. 27.

³⁶John Cogley, Oral History Interview, February 29, 1968 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 38-40.

³⁷Ibid.; "Report from the Capital," Jubilee, May,

Kennedy's suspicions of the Catholic hierarchy were given more credence in November 1959 when American bishops published their pastoral letter, "Explosion or Backfire?" that opposed birth control.³⁸ The bishops contended that there was a concerted and systematic effort to convince Americans that the government should provide public funds for promoting artificial birth control. They opposed any public assistance for artificial birth control, abortion, and sterilization. They claimed that the "population explosion" was "hyperbolic propaganda." It was a "smoke screen behind which a moral evil may be foisted on the public." According to them, birth control was not the only solution. Scientific studies in agricultural production could meet the need of a rapidly expanding world population, and unlike birth control, increased food production was "morally" acceptable under the natural law of God. The bishops' pronouncement admonished:

Never should we allow the unilateral guess-estimates of special pleaders to stampede or terrorize the United States into national or international policy inimical to human dignity. For the adoption of the morally objectionable means advocated to forestall the so-called 'population explosion' may backfire on the human race.³⁹

1959, pp. 2-5. "Do Catholics really want a Catholic President?," Newsweek, December 1959, p. 28.

³⁸Hugh J. Nolan, ed., Pastoral Letters of the U.S. Catholic Bishops 1941-1961 (USCC: Washington, D.C., 1984), Vol. 2, pp. 221-225.

³⁹Ibid., p. 224; Editorial "Easy Way Out," Ave Maria, December 12, 1959, p. 17. Editor considered birth

The American Catholic church considered birth control a very serious matter. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., posed the question whether a Catholic druggist could sell contraceptives. Connell concluded that if a druggist did, he was "guilty of a grave sin."⁴⁰ He was a public sinner and should be refused the sacraments. To Connell, the use of any artificial means of contraception violated the sacrament of marriage and God's natural law. There were only three acceptable methods of regulating conception: defer marriage, protracted continence, and periodic rhythm. These three methods protected "the true order of the ends of marriage and preserved the natural integrity of the marriage act."⁴¹ Theological Studies summarized the clerical argument against contraception.

In summary, then, each single act of coition is a natural sign of the mutual, procreative love of two partners. Coition is the symbol of natural marriage and of the supernatural, which later is, in turn, the symbol of Christ's union with his Church.

control a specious solution. "Birth control might seem at first glance to be the easiest way out of a difficult problem . . . To solve the problem of population pressures by a policy inimical to human dignity would be folly indeed." John L. Thomas, S. J., "The Catholic Position on Birth Control," Catholic Mind, January-February 1960, pp. 239-243; John P. Leary, S. J., "Is Birth Control the State's Business?," February 22, 1960; Vital Speeches (1960), pp. 377-379.

⁴⁰ Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "The Sale of Contraceptives," American Ecclesiastical Review, Vol. 140, June 1959, pp. 120-123.

⁴¹ William J. Gibbons, S. J. "World Population and World Food Supply," Catholic Almanac (1960), pp. 96-106.

Contraception is evil because it falsifies this sign. Contraception is wrong because it is a fictitious symbol of love, a substitution, of what, in truth symbolizes monstrous selfishness for what symbolizes utter self-giving . . . Contraception was evil; it was a flat rejection of God's interjection.⁴²

Catholic bishops perceived the need to publicly express their opinion on birth control because of recent developments. In July 1959, the President's Committee to study the United States Assistance Program, headed by William Draper, suggested that the United States help other countries, upon request, "in the formulation of their plans designed to deal with the problem of rapid population growth."⁴³ The committee recommended that the government should support such programs in the United Nations. This Draper Report was generally interpreted as recommending the distribution of birth control information. It also became noted for the popularization of the term "population explosion," which implied and rationalized the need and support of birth control programs.⁴⁴

The great historian and philosopher, Arnold Toynbee,

⁴²Paul M. Quay, S. J., "Contraception and Conjugal Love," Theological Studies, Vol. 22, December 1961, p. 40.

⁴³James Reston, "Kennedy Opposes Advocacy by U.S. of Birth Control," New York Times, November 28, 1959, p. 1. Editorial, "Birth Control Debate," The Sign, January 1960, p. 10.

⁴⁴Archbishop Karl J. Alter, "Twisting of Birth Control Issue Charged," Catholic Transcript, February 11, 1960, p. 10; Archbishop Alter delivered the speech "To Keep the Record Straight" to a layman's retreat organization of Cincinnati.

spoke in favor of a birth control program in Rome on November 2. The following week CBS presented an hour long program which was widely regarded by the clergy as "propaganda for artificial birth control."⁴⁵ Finally, the same week that the bishops met to draw up their pastoral letter, the National Conference of the Planned Parenthood Association held its convention in New York City. The conference delegates passed a resolution which implied eventual acceptance of the program by the Catholic Church: "that no doubt the Catholic Church would in the course of time modify its own ethical position on artificial birth control."⁴⁶

All these events, especially the last suggestion of a deferred acquiescence, prompted American bishops to proclaim the Church's positions on birth control. Bishop Karl J. Alter, chairman of the Administrative Board of the NCWC, attempted to explain that the church did not want to generate controversy but had to make the statement when events seemed to indicate that an effort was underway "to foster the adoption of artificial birth control as part of a

⁴⁵ Archbishop Karl J. Alter, "Twisting of Birth Control Issue Charged," Catholic Transcript, February 11, 1960, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Also see New York Times, December 3, 1959, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Alter, "Twisting of Birth Control . . .," Catholic Transcript, February 11, 1960, p. 10.

national policy in granting foreign aid."⁴⁷ Despite Alter's good intentions, the issuance of the pastoral letter undermined whatever good Kennedy's Look interview had accomplished and raised the religious issue once again. It revived non-Catholic fears and suspicions about a Catholic president's ability to take a stance independent of such moral pronouncements. Kennedy, Sorensen noted, was outraged with the Church's hierarchy. "The Senator was sharply irritated that so sensitive and divisive an issue had been needlessly dragged into the headlines on the eve of his official campaign. The bishop's declaration furthered his belief that the hierarchy did not want him to be a candidate."⁴⁸ William E. Bohn, a Catholic and editor of the New Leader, a journal sponsored by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, agreed with Kennedy's assessment in his article "No Chance for Kennedy."⁴⁹ According to Bohn, the nomination and election of Kennedy was "nothing more than a bright dream of his optimistic youth." After reading numerous commentaries and talking to many observers, Bohn concluded that the former attractive candidate may as well call off his presidential campaign.

⁴⁸Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 126-127.

⁴⁹William E. Bohn, "No Chance for Senator Kennedy," New Leader, January 18, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files), Box No. 535; George Meany, Oral History Interview, July 16, 1964 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 12-17. Meany generally observed that labor remained uncommitted until the Democratic Convention that summer.

That statement of the Bishops was the most unfortunate piece of public relations activity I ever observed . . . But the position itself is not what provided the greatest shock. What disturbs many people is the tone of the pronouncement. These men speak like dictators. And because they talk that way a fine, intelligent, patriotic citizen named John Kennedy has not the remotest chance to be nominated as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States.⁵⁰

In an effort to demonstrate his autonomy to non-Catholics, Kennedy submitted to a telephone interview with James Reston of the New York Times. Kennedy articulated his independent position on birth control at home or abroad by the United States government. Promotion of birth control, especially in underdeveloped countries, he could not support.

We have to be very careful on how we give advice on this subject . . . Accordingly I think it would be the greatest psychological mistake for us to appear to advocate limitation of the black, brown, or yellow peoples whose population is increasing no faster than in the United States . . . For the United States to intervene on this basis would involve a kind of mean patriotism, which I think they would find most objectionable.⁵¹

Reston then asked Kennedy if his position on birth control was in any way influenced by the sixteen bishops who drew up the pastoral letter. Kennedy rejoined with an emphatic "No." He argued that his position was independently formulated, held long before the pastoral letter, and

⁵⁰Bohn, "No Chance for Senator Kennedy," New Leader, January 18, p. 6.

⁵¹Interview between Senator John F. Kennedy and James Reston of the New York Times, November 17, 1959, Copies, (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, 1960 Campaign Files, Religious Issue), Box No. 1001.

unscathed by hierarchical influence. He reassured Reston that any decision that he would make concerning birth control as a public official would be "in accordance with his oath to do whatever was in the best interests of the United States."⁵² In his commentary on the interview, Reston drew one major lesson from the entire episode.

The current controversy over birth control has at least made one thing clear. That is the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is not acting in a way to promote the candidacy of Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts or any other Roman Catholic.⁵³

Kennedy was relieved to see the year come to an end without any further incidents. The events of 1959 taught him that the Catholic dimension of the religious issue could prove hazardous to his winning of the presidency. He could not politically afford the charge, "Betrayer of his own kind." Henceforth, he realized that, in his quest to mitigate anti-Catholic forces, he would have to monitor the reaction of the American Catholic Church. The birth control controversy shattered Kennedy's vision of a campaign impervious to and absent of bigotry. Alfred Scanlan, a strong Kennedy supporter, eloquently verbalized the anxieties of the Catholic presidential candidate on the eve of the campaign.

⁵²Ibid.; Bishop James A. Pike Episcopal Bishop of San Francisco, also stated that the Catholic Bishops had "condemned . . . millions of people of less fortunate parts of the world to starvations, bondage, misery, and despair."

⁵³James Reston, "Kennedy Opposes . . . Birth Control," New York Times, November 28, 1959, pp. 1, 12.

So far as the present state of America is concerned, including the election which lies ahead in 1960, any public dispute concerning artificial birth control is, as both President Eisenhower and ex-President Truman have labeled it, a 'false' issue. But, I am afraid it may be more than just false; it may be a contrived issue, and therefore a fraudulent one. There are disturbing circumstances which suggest that the issue may have been raised for the purpose of masquerading an opposition to the presidential aspirations of Senator John Kennedy, which otherwise would stand exposed as an opposition arising solely out of undiluted bigotry.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Alfred L. Scanlan to Editor of Washington Post, Letter, December 11, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, 1960 Campaign Files, Religious Issues), Box No. 1001. Also consult Editorial "Why Pick on Kennedy?," Ave Marie, December 12, 1959, pp. 16-17.

Chapter III

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH: KENNEDY AND THE CHURCH DURING THE 1960 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

In early 1960 two books, Bishop James Pike's A Roman Catholic in the White House and Paul Blanshard's God and Man in Washington, were published.¹ Both authors argued that a Catholic should not be president of the United States because he would be influenced and manipulated by the Vatican. When Kennedy announced his candidacy for the presidential nomination of the Democratic party, he and the Church, fearing a remake of the sectarian conflagration in 1928, submerged their antagonisms and tacitly cooperated to defend the faith. To circumvent another 1928, the Church's leadership and press advocated a policy of political neutrality toward the candidates, began their own campaign

¹George Gilmary Higgins, "Blanshard Back at Old Stand," The Yardstick, February 8, 1960 (George Hilmary Higgins Papers: Catholic University of America Archives), Box No. 49; "Paul Blanshard: New Title, Same Old Story," The Catholic Messenger, February 18, 1960, p. 10. "Paul Blanshard: New Book, Same Old Plot," Boston Pilot, February 6, 1960, p. 5., Gustave Weigel, S.J., "Bishop Pike and a Catholic President," Ave Maria, May 28, 1960, pp. 20-21.

of rational responses to anti-Catholic charges, and enjoined all Catholics to remain calm in the face of these bigoted attacks. Kennedy became a defender of the faith with his campaign speech to the Associated Society of Newspaper Editors, maintaining Catholicism and Americanism were compatible. With such a public defense and with both proclaiming Kennedy "Not a Catholic Candidate," Kennedy became the presidential candidate for the Democratic party and the Church prematurely declared the demise of the religious issue.

When the presidential primaries began, some leading Catholic politicians of the Democratic party looked with disfavor upon the running of any Catholic because it was simply a lost cause -- a Catholic candidate could not win the election.² In a conversation with Joseph Kennedy, David L. Lawrence, governor of Pennsylvania, explained why he could not support his son. "I said to him, 'Mr. Kennedy, I'd love to be for your boy. I'd love to see him president of the United States, but I don't think he can win. I don't think any Catholic can win.'³ Senator George McGovern of South Dakota opposed Kennedy's candidacy because he feared

²Do Catholics Really Want a Catholic President?," Newsweek, December 21, 1959, p. 27.

³David L. Lawrence, Oral History Interview, January 22, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 27.

the detrimental ramifications that a Catholic candidate would have upon state and local elections. "I feared the impact of the religious issue on our part of the country. It is a strongly Protestant area. It was an area that very decisively rejected Al Smith's bid in 1928. I knew something about the religious character of the area and I feared the religious issue."⁴ In January of 1960, David Lawrence, Chicago mayor Richard Dailey, New York governor Robert Wagner, and California governor Edmund Brown met for breakfast at a local hotel in Washington, D.C. During the course of the discussion, Brown came out in full support of Kennedy: "I thought that in spite of the fact that he was a Catholic and that there had never been a Catholic president, and there was Catholic prejudice, unquestionably, that we should forget about that because this man had the best chance of being elected the president of the United States."⁵ The best the other Catholic politicians could do was remain "open-minded" about Brown's assessment of the situation; for most believed that "the Catholic religion would be almost a bar sinister."⁶

⁴Senator George McGovern, Oral History Interview, April 24, 1964 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 9.

⁵Edmund G. Brown, Oral History Interview, July 26, 1964 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 4-7. Brown wanted to set down on record that at this breakfast "I was the real protagonist of John F. Kennedy."

⁶Ibid.; Also consult David Lawrence, Oral History

Leadership of the American Catholic Church agreed with this pessimistic political outlook of the Kennedy candidacy. Father Charles Rice in a Newsweek poll observed, "The Catholic people got badly burned in 1928 and I can't see any advantage in stirring up the bitterness again. Personally, I wish that Kennedy would not run."⁷ Father Robert Drinan, S. J., Dean of Boston College Law School, admitted that "Catholics are deeply divided on the subject of a Catholic running for President. Most are fearful we may get a terrific black eye out of this situation, that if Kennedy is defeated, his defeat may be attributed to his religion."⁸ Thinking that Americans were not ready for a Catholic president, Cardinal Cushing, a long time supporter of Kennedy's since 1956, halfheartedly predicted Kennedy's campaign victory.

But I feared it was still too early for a Roman Catholic to buck the strong, if mostly, silent, tides of religious prejudice. Nevertheless, I was convinced if anyone could break through that wall of prejudice, our best hope was with John F. Kennedy. More than any other Catholic of the twentieth century he was capable

Interview, January 22, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 3-4, 7. Lawrence was also soft in his support of Kennedy because of his loyalty to Adlai Stevenson. Eugene McCarthy supported Stevenson as well.

⁷"Do Catholics really want a Catholic President?," Newsweek, December 21, 1959, p. 28.

⁸Ibid.

of facing this herculean challenge.⁹

John Sheerin, a paulist father and editor of the Catholic World, took a dimmer view of Kennedy's prospects. "I would say that the American people are unwilling to vote for a Catholic president. The majority of voters are not emotionally and psychologically mature enough to conquer bias and cast a ballot for a Catholic."¹⁰

More dreaded among the Church leaders than anti-Catholicism's adverse impact upon Kennedy's nomination was its detrimental effect upon religious relations in the United States. With a Catholic in the running, they feared the spread of anti-Catholicism and the concomitant rise of Catholic belligerency, the two primary ingredients for a sectarian conflagration. To avoid such a confrontation during the primaries, the Church's hierarchy established a policy of political neutrality among the clergy. The three leading national journals for clerical instruction delineated the precise meaning and full implication of this

⁹Richard Cardinal Cushing, Oral History Interview, (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 3-5; Richard Cardinal Cushing, Speech, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files: Church and State Folder), Box No. 535.

¹⁰John B. Sheerin, CSP, editor, "How Fair Are Kennedy's Critics?," Catholic World, March 1960, Vol. 190, pp. 333-335; "The 1960 Presidential Campaign: A Jubilee Poll," Jubilee, March 1960, pp. 9-15; "Priest Discusses Catholic Vote for President," The Tablet, April 9, 1960, p. 1.

policy.¹¹

The Priest ordered clerics to adopt a non-partisan stance in the primary campaign. It advised its readership that priests essentially had two roles in society. They were citizens of the United States, owing a duty to the state to be intelligently informed on political issues and to vote wisely. But, foremost, they served as a spiritual and moral guide for Catholic citizens. They should educate and consult them on certain moral-political issues and encourage capable Catholics to become involved in politics, basing their activism on Catholic social principles. The Priest observed that lack of clerical guidance led to the travesty of 1928 and has allowed a small minority of atheists to dictate to Catholics the acceptance of secularized education. This must not be allowed to continue, urged the journal. Priests must not neglect their major responsibility: "His job is to alert the people to issues and candidates concerning justice and Catholic social principles."¹²

Father Aidan Carr, editor of the Homiletic and Pastoral Review, admonished priests about the longstanding tradition that "Priests have no business being in Politics."

¹¹"Do Catholics Really Want a Catholic President?," Newsweek, December 21, 1959, p. 28.

¹²E. F. Garesche, S. J., "The Priest in Politics: A Non-Partisan Interest," The Priest, Vol. 15, December 1959, pp. 1002-1007.

But this did not mean "total indifference" to certain pieces of legislation and politics in general. Such a stance was irresponsible and could be detrimental to the Catholic community. Priests should speak out on moral and religious issues. Priests should not openly support any candidate. "Nothing will stir up bigotry more readily than the boast: Father so and so says I'm the man for the job." In the end, Carr demanded that priests be actively concerned about issues but not committed to a candidate or party.

Whatever may be the political leaning of the priest, his smartest course is not to show his hand. This isn't being wishy-washy. It's common sense in the view of the universal responsibilities of the priesthood. He can vote as he wishes and, when the election is over, congratulate the winner . . ."¹³

Francis J. O'Connell, editor of American Ecclesiastical Review, reiterated the same themes. He reminded priests that they were forbidden to take part in political affairs directly. Yet when public events or matters concern the "greater good of religion or country," a priest may be the purveyor of certain Catholic principles "without in any way campaigning for any candidate." He counseled priests to have a posture of charity when confronted with bigoted attacks. Not confrontation but prayer would enlighten the ignorant enemy.¹⁴

¹³Aidan Carr, "Priest in Politics," Homiletic & Pastoral Review, May 1960, p. 688.

¹⁴Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "A Catholic for President," January-June 1960, American Ecclesiastical Review, Vol. 142, pp. 271-273.

If the spirit of anti-Catholic bigotry pervades the land in the near future, they must retain the spirit of charity toward those who are hostile to the Church, ascribing their antagonism to ignorance rather than malice. And Catholics should be urged to pray that such persons may be enlightened so that they will come to understand correctly the Catholic Church and Catholic doctrine.¹⁵

O'Connell further advised priests to consult the rank and file about the proper criteria that should be followed when voting. Under all circumstances, a Catholic must vote for the best qualified candidate or else commit a sin.

If a Catholic cast his ballot for a candidate because he was a Catholic and passed over a non-Catholic, who, in his estimation, would make a better president, he would be guilty of a sin. In other words there should be no Catholic party in our land.¹⁶

Monsignor Frederick Barnes, editor of the Catholic Messenger, prescribed the same policy of political neutrality and Catholic responsibility for diocesan newspapers in the presidential campaign. He discerned two roles for the Catholic press. An editor should not openly support or oppose a candidate, but this neutrality on political matters should give way to a public activism when the candidate's religion was attacked. "At this point, it became a religious matter for the paper's serious attention." In fact, Catholic papers had an obligation to

¹⁵Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "A Catholic for President," January-June 1960, American Ecclesiastical Review, Vol. 142, pp. 271-273.

¹⁶Ibid.; In short, a Catholic was bound in conscience to vote for the candidate best suited for office.

report in their pages every bigoted attack against Kennedy, and to defend publicly the position that Catholicism was compatible with true Americanism.¹⁷ Barnes forewarned that such a policy would result in the name of Kennedy appearing in the paper many times, and at first glance, would appear that it was conducting a publicity campaign for him. Such an interpretation simply was not true, and such a policy was not an endorsement of Kennedy but a defense of the Catholic faith. Barnes concluded that diocesan newspapers should follow such an editorial policy as long as the Catholic Church in America was on trial and not Kennedy's political qualifications. Once Americans decided to vote for the man and not against his faith it should cease.¹⁸ The Northwest Progress in its editorials advised Catholics to react responsibly to bigoted attacks. "My point is that Catholics should practice patience even until it hurts in the coming political campaign." According to the paper's editor, Catholics must address charges of reasonable critics, but ignore the unreasonable attacks upon their faith. "In the long run, if Catholics act patiently under the temptation of anger, it can prove to reasonable Protestants that the Catholic Church is not running for the presidency and that

¹⁷ Monsignor Frederick Barnes, "Senator Kennedy," Catholic Messenger, February 4, 1960, p. 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.

the pope has no designs on the White House."¹⁹

One of the initial charges in the primaries was that there existed a Catholic voting bloc which was directly controlled by the Vatican. The Church went on the defensive, saying such a "Catholic vote" was a myth. The Catholic Digest argued that "Catholic voters are just as free, unfettered, intelligent, and divided in their voting preferences as any other group." Catholics, to say the least, were many things -- Democrats, Republicans, Irish, Polish, anti and pro labor.²⁰ There was no official Catholic party line or monolithic Catholic political interest group seeking to take over the country. Such attacks provoked the ire and concern of Father George Higgins, a leading Catholic spokesman for social and labor reform. In his syndicated weekly commentary, entitled "No Party Line for Catholics," Higgins reported the different opinions that emerged at the recent Catholic Economic Association Conference in Washington, D.C. Catholics disagreed on right to work legislation and union shops. These palpable differences, Higgins concluded, "can serve to remind some of our jittery non-Catholic friends that

¹⁹John Sheerin, "Campaign will test Catholics' Patience," Northwest Progress, January 22, 1960, p. 4.

²⁰Elmo Roper, "The Myth of a Catholic Vote," Catholic Digest, Vol. 24, February 1960, pp. 31-32.

American Catholics are not identical peas in a political pod."²¹ Father Ralph Gorman in The Sign vehemently denied that "There existed a monolithic Catholic line on the issues which are handed down from the pope to bishops and priests who pass it on to the lay people of the church."²²

In an attempt to dissipate Catholic anger over anti-Catholicism, the Catholic press uncovered the roots and the historical reasons for this blinded prejudice. Such knowledge, the editors hoped, would lead to understanding. America explained to its readers that a Catholic president represented a dreaded turning point to anti-Catholics. It symbolized the death of Protestant America and the birth of pluralistic America. America argued that two hundred, and as recent as thirty years ago, the United States was a Protestant country. Yet in three decades this has all changed. "Today in 1960 we are certainly not a Catholic country, nor are we on the way to becoming one. But we have virtually ceased to be Protestant . . . Thus, it is dawning on us today that America has entered a Post-Protestant Era."²³ The journal believed that the 1960 campaign for the

²¹George Higgins, "No Party Line for Catholics," The Yardstick, January 4, 1960.

²²Father Ralph Gorman, "Disagreements among Catholics," The Sign, October 1959, p. 12.

²³Thurston Davis, "Our Post-Protestant Pluralism," America, March 5, 1960, pp. 673-675.

presidency represented the first national manifestation of this cultural pluralism. Protestant bigotry and bitterness would be exhibited in the campaign because Kennedy, being Irish-Catholic, represented an attempt to conquer the last symbol of Protestant America -- the presidency.

Throughout these months, however, the fundamental fact should be kept in mind that 1960 is not 1928. Today America is Post-Protestant in orientation. For better or worse, America in 1960 is pluralist. Today, whether anybody happens to like it or not a Cabot or Kennedy²⁴ is pretty much a chip off the same old block.

Victor C. Ferkiss, professor of political science at St. Mary's College, Moraga, California in the pages of The Catholic Digest brought to the attention of Catholics what he considered to be a new anti-Catholic group, the urbane, sophisticated intellectuals who feared the influence of any religion in American life. These "agnostic secularists" perceived all religions as "quaint survivals of an unenlightened past" and wanted Catholicism to remain a foreign and despised thing.²⁵ They interpreted the recent rise of Catholics and religious orthodoxy in the 1950's as a threat to their blueprint of a secular society, "a vision of a homogenous America untroubled by religious absolutes and religious divisions." Thus, secularists, along with Protestants alike, did not want a Catholic president.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 674-676.

²⁵Victor C. Ferkiss, "Why not a Catholic President?," Catholic World, Vol. 190, February 1960, pp. 273-280.

The inviolability of the White House is thus the last symbolic bastion of the belief that Catholics are a tolerated group of outsiders rather than full-fledged members of the American community. The vision of an America in which Catholics do not matter -- a vision shared by both the religious and anti-religious opponents of a Catholic candidacy -- would be visibly shattered by the inauguration of a Catholic president. It is the psychological need to preserve the image of America rather than any rational fear of what a Catholic might do with the actual powers of the presidency, which accounts for the dynamism of current opposition to a Catholic in the White House.²⁶

Like the Catholic community, Kennedy was forced to confront directly the forces of anti-Catholicism during his Democratic primary campaign or else be defeated by them. The religious issue posed its greatest challenge to Kennedy's nomination during the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries. In both of these primaries the religious issue was widely discussed, deliberated, and debated. On May 5, Kennedy defeated Humphrey in Wisconsin, a state whose population was 31% Catholic. Winning with 56% of the popular vote, his victory was neither decisive or overwhelming as had been predicted. He did capture most of the state's Catholic vote, sweeping the heavily Catholic and old Joe McCarthy districts. He also received a large percentage of the Catholic Republican crossover vote.²⁷

Despite the numerous questions asked about his faith in the

²⁶Victor C. Ferkiss, "Why not a Catholic, President?," Catholic World, Vol. 190, February 1960, p. 275.

²⁷Theodore White, The Making of the President 1960, (New York: Pocket Books, 1961), pp. 111-120.

state campaign, it was these results -- Catholics voting for Kennedy and non-Catholics voting for Humphrey -- that catapulted religion into prominence in the primaries. The results confirmed all prior suspicions of non-Catholics, especially a Catholic voting bloc that was attempting to put Kennedy into the White House.

The Catholic press wasted no time in responding to the seemingly intransigent "Catholic vote" charge. Monsignor Franklyn J. Kennedy, assistant editor of the Catholic Herald Citizen of Milwaukee, was especially irritated by this accusation because it implied that priests told Catholics how to vote in the pulpit and in the confessional. The Sunday before the primary election, Kennedy maintained, 2,000 priests in 1,214 pulpits conducted themselves admirably and impartially. "It is safe to say that not one of the priests told his parishioners which candidate to vote for."²⁸ In fact, the only time a priest would tell Catholics to vote for or against someone was "when there is a known Communist-atheist running for office."²⁹ The Boston Pilot called the Catholic vote charge "absurd!" The rationale behind such a charge was to create a counter Protestant vote, thus dividing the community along

²⁸ Monsignor Franklin J. Kennedy, "Should We Tell Readers What Candidate to Vote for?," Catholic Herald Citizen, March 19, 1960, p. 2 and "The Catholic Vote," May 7, 1960, p. 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

religious lines.³⁰

The Catholic journal, Ave Maria in its special report on the Wisconsin primary admitted that Catholics voted for Kennedy, and explained why religion played a major role in Kennedy's victory.

In the opinion of this writer, it is precisely due to the unsavory activities of a few bigots that a great number of Wisconsin Catholics registered a determined protest in the form of a vote for the Catholic candidate.³¹

Although such a development could mean the polarization of the American religious community, argued the journal, the Catholic support for Kennedy in Wisconsin demonstrated to all other Americans that forty million Catholics "like other religious or racial minorities, are capable of expressing a spontaneous vote against prejudice."³² In the same issue, Professor Eric Waldmon, chairman of the political science department at Marquette University, declared the Wisconsin results refuted the existence of a Catholic vote. Catholics voted for Kennedy not because he was Catholic but because Americans were anti-Catholic. Both local and national news media, concluded Waldmon, have distorted the primary results. "Such a distortion was a disservice to our

³⁰ Editorial, "Simmer Down," Boston Pilot, April 9, 1960, p. 4.

³¹ Editorial, "Wisconsin's Catholic Vote," Ave Maria April 30, 1960, p. 16.

³² Ibid.

nation."³³ The editor of Commonweal realized Kennedy received the majority of Catholic votes and, as a result, feared a political battle along religious lines, declaring that "the religious issue is now firmly a part of the campaign more than ever." He then attempted to explain the source of voter solidarity.

". . . we believe that it reflects only the natural desire of a very large minority to achieve symbolic recognition that they are, finally, more than second-class citizens. It does not represent a Catholic plot. The Church as such has no stake in the election of a Catholic as President; it does not seek nor could it receive special favors from any Catholic who might be president. Indeed, we could go further; we do not think American Catholics would support a Catholic candidate who sought favors³⁴ from the Catholic Church which were denied others.

As a result of Wisconsin's returns, religion became the paramount issue in Kennedy's primary campaign in West Virginia. James Wine, future director of religious relations in Kennedy's presidential campaign, observed: "This was really the first time that the issue had come out in full bloom, both locally where the battle was being fought at the time as well as attracting national attention and involving the Protestant clergy to the extent that it did."³⁵ With

³³ Dr. Eric Waldmon, "Special Report: The Wisconsin Primary," Ave Maria, April 23, 1960, pp. 16-17.

³⁴ Editorial, "The Religious Issues," Commonweal, April 22, 1960, pp. 79-80.

³⁵ James Wine, Oral History Interview, January 26, 1967 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 10-11.

Catholics only comprising 5% of its population, West Virginia would be the public testing ground for the charges and counter charges of Catholics and anti-Catholics. It would also demonstrate to politicians and voters whether Kennedy was a viable presidential candidate whose appeal crossed sectarian lines and included the non-Catholic vote.³⁶

The Boston Herald ran the headline, "Kennedy Set to Face Full Religious Issue Test in West Virginia."³⁷ Kennedy encountered a strong Protestant opposition that claimed a Catholic in the White House would establish "a dictatorship by telephone from the Vatican." He needed to capture this illusive non-Catholic vote, which seemed to escape him with the widespread publicity of the religious issue in the state. A West Virginia poll showed Kennedy with a 40% lead over Humphrey in 1959, but a more recent 1960 poll gave Humphrey a 20% edge over Kennedy. This drastic shift in voting preference was attributed to religion: "But no one in West Virginia knew you were a Catholic in December 1959. Now they know."³⁸ They knew because of coverage the issue

³⁶Theodore White, The Making of the President, pp. 120-137.

³⁷"Kennedy Set to Face Full Religious Issue Test in West Virginia," Boston Herald, April 20, 1960, p. 1.

³⁸White, The Making of the President, p. 121; Also consult Editorial, "Fabricated Issue," Catholic Transcript, April 14, 1960, p. 4.

received in the nation's press.

Nationalization of the religious issue exhumed an obscure event out of Kennedy's past. In December 1947, Congressman Kennedy accepted, then rejected, an invitation to speak at a fund raising dinner for the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia. He was invited by Dr. Daniel A. Poling, chairman and editor of the Christian Herald Magazine. The chapel was dedicated to the memory of four World War II military chaplains, two Protestants (one Poling's son), one Catholic priest, and one Jewish Rabbi. On February 3, 1943, the four chaplains were aboard an American ship which was torpedoed while off the coast of Greenland, killing seven hundred men. They gave up their life preservers to soldiers, and then, joining together in prayer, sank to their deaths.³⁹

Dr. Poling headed this fund drive for the interfaith Chapel of Four Chaplains, which was to be located in the lower level of Philadelphia's Grace Baptist Temple and which was to contain a separate altar for each faith. Kennedy initially accepted his invitation to attend the memorial dinner at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. But a few days later he declined because of the religious undertones of his invitation. He could only attend as a "public officer."

³⁹Editorial "Senator Kennedy and the Chapel," Commonweal, January 29, 1960, pp. 479-480.

I was happy to accept. A few days before the event, I learned . . . that I was to be the spokesman for the Catholic organization. I further learned the memorial was to be located in the sanctuary of a church of a different faith. This is against the precepts of a Catholic Church. Because of this fact, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia was unable to support the drive. Therefore, I felt I had no credentials to attend in the capacity in which I had been asked.⁴⁰

Dr. Poling was very upset with Kennedy's actions. He maintained that he had invited Kennedy as a "Congressman from Massachusetts." He accused Kennedy of submitting to the pressure of the local Catholic hierarchy. At the time, Cardinal Dougherty refused to cooperate with the Four Chaplain fund drive because the chapel was to be located in a Protestant church, a violation of Canon Law. Poling inferred the following explanation for Kennedy's withdrawal. ". . . you did not decline an invitation, you accepted an invitation, and then at the request of his Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty, you abruptly cancelled the engagement."⁴¹ The controversy was not resolved then, and thirteen years later, Poling revived it in the pages of his magazine, implying that Kennedy was not as independent of his Church as he was claiming.⁴²

⁴⁰John F. Kennedy, Press Release, January 14, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers; Religious Issues File of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

⁴¹Dr. Daniel A. Poling to John F. Kennedy, Letter, June 30, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers; Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

⁴²Poling-Kennedy Correspondence, Letter, January-July 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential

Kennedy became restless and irritated over the extensive coverage in the press of the Poling incident and the so-called "Fabricated Issue." He had to resolve, neutralize, or mitigate the effects of such news reporting, if he were to win in West Virginia. Would a presentation of his religious views to a national forum be necessary? His own personal staff was divided on what to do. His Washington staff suggested that he avoid such a direct attack upon the religious issue. "It was simply too explosive!"⁴³ His local West Virginian advisors recommended a direct confrontation, a position supported by Kennedy's Harvard intellectuals such as legal scholar, Archibald Cox. He wrote Kennedy at the time encouraging him "to make a very serious, full dress speech upon the relationship between Church and State." Cox argued that such a speech would accomplish three important things. It would demonstrate Kennedy's capacity to once and for all remove the religious issue from the political realm. It would convert a "sizeable group" of non-Catholics with thoughtful and serious reservations about his capacity to be a Catholic president without any interference from his Church. Finally, it was the appropriate time to address this problem prior to the Democratic Convention when it might be

Papers; Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box 1015. Contains seven pieces of correspondence.

⁴³White, The Making of the President, p. 127.

perceived as party doctrine and not as his individual philosophy.⁴⁴

Kennedy decided to confront the issue in his address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 21 in Washington, D.C. He changed his scheduled talk from "America's stake in the Underdeveloped World," to "Religion and Politics."⁴⁵ In the beginning of his address he boldly implicated the nation's press in creating the need to change his topic. "I have decided, in view of current press reports, that it would be appropriate to speak to you today about what has been widely called the religious issue in American politics."⁴⁶ He emphatically denied that he was trying to be the first Catholic president or was seeking the Catholic vote. "I want no votes solely on the account of my

⁴⁴Ibid.; Archibald Cox to John F. Kennedy, Letter, April 8, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files), Box No. 534. He ended by informing Kennedy that Lucian Pye at MIT and Mark Howe of Harvard would develop the speech into writing, and as for Pye, he "is the most ardent of your making a speech now."

⁴⁵"Kennedy Set to Face Full Religious Issue Test in West Virginia," Boston Herald, April 20, 1960, p. 1. Theodore Sorensen, "The Catholic Issue in Politics," Speech, February 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1033. Sorensen, a Unitarian, served as major advisor to Kennedy on religious issue until James Wine replaced him after the Democratic National Convention. Sorensen's speech was probably the primary foundation upon which Kennedy's ASNE speech was based.

⁴⁶New York Times, April 22, 1960, pp. 16-17; John Fenton, The Catholic Vote (New Orleans: Hauser Press, 1960), pp. 132-140.

religion . . . I do not want any vote cast for me for such illogical reasons." Defining the religious issue as a "misunderstanding" of his own religious convictions and as a "suspicion" of a so-called Catholic vote, Kennedy forewarned the editors that they had a grave responsibility beyond the reporting of the facts and the writing of "lofty editorials deploring intolerance." They should ensure that religion would not become the dominant issue of the campaign.

And the press, while not creating the issue, will largely determine whether or not it does become dominant -- whether it is kept in perspective -- whether it is considered objectively -- whether needless⁴⁷ fears and suspicions are stilled instead of aroused.

Kennedy revealed how the press up until his speech magnified and oversimplified the religious controversy, while ignoring the vital and significant issues. Editors throughout the Wisconsin primary highlighted the religious issue above farm legislation, foreign policy, defense, civil rights, labor unions, and price supports. One newspaper article, Kennedy noted, used the word "Catholic" twenty times in fifteen paragraphs. He contended, that until national coverage in the press impressed upon the voters of West Virginia that religion was the decisive and critical issue in the upcoming primary, most were oblivious or indifferent to it.

⁴⁷New York Times, April 22, 1960, pp. 16-17.

I do not think religion is the decisive issue in any state. I do not think it should be. I do not think it should be made to. And recognizing my own responsibilities, in that regard,⁴⁸ I am hopeful that you will recognize yours also.

Kennedy rhetorically formulated and answered three questions: Is the religious issue a legitimate one in the campaign? Should voters be analyzed purely in terms of Catholic and anti-Catholic predilections? Was there any justification for solely applying the religious test on the office of the presidency? There was only one instance, according to Kennedy, in which the religious issue was valid and that was the concern over ecclesiastical pressures and obligations upon the president to act against the national interest. Kennedy rejoined: "I have answered the question many times. My answer was -- and is -- No!" As far as he was concerned, to generalize in terms of Catholic and anti-Catholic votes distorted American political reality. If such criteria were acceptable, he could just as readily use the weather as a tool of analysis. "I ran strongest in those areas where the average temperature in January was 20 degrees or higher, and poorest in those areas where it was 14 degrees or lower. . ."⁴⁹ To simplify the motivations of Jews, Protestants, and Catholics to such an extent was submitting them to a religious test:

⁴⁸New York Times, April 22, 1960, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁹Ibid.

To submit the candidates to a religious test is unfair enough -- to apply it to the voters themselves is divisive, degrading, and wholly unwarranted.⁵⁰

Kennedy thought that to apply a religious test to presidential candidates was unwarranted, especially since he was not a Catholic candidate. "I am not a Catholic candidate for president. I do not speak for the Catholic Church on issues of public policy -- and no one in that Church speaks for me." In the long run, Kennedy insisted upon his independent stand from the Church. "Do not expect me to explain or defend every act or statement of every Pope or priest in this country or some others in this century or the last . . ." ⁵¹

Kennedy concluded his oration by considering his course of action in face of the religious issue. He could simply withdraw from the contest to avoid religious controversy and accept the vice-presidential nomination to placate Catholics in the country. But Kennedy could not follow such a course: "I find that suggestion highly distasteful. It assumes the worst about a country which prides itself on being more tolerant and better educated than it was in 1928. America cannot admit to the world that one third of its population was forever barred from the White House."⁵² He would run for the presidency instead,

⁵⁰ New York Times, April 22, 1960, pp. 16-17.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

proceeding through the primaries, nominations, and election, and if bigotry showed its invidious face, so be it. He ended with a vigorous stand behind his position:

But regardless of the political outcome, the issue is here to be faced. It is my job to face it frankly and fully. And it is our job ⁵³ to face it fairly, in perspective and in proportion.

"Thank God!" for his speech and for such a great defender of the faith, proclaimed the editor of Ave Maria. His response typified the jubilant response to his oration by the Catholic press.⁵⁴ West Virginians also reacted positively to Kennedy's call, "Not a Catholic Candidate." They presented him with a comfortable 2 to 1 victory margin over Hubert Humphrey in the primary election. The country realized that the primary's outcome was not due to religion but to other non-religious factors such as his charisma, his appeal to the poor, his efficient campaign organization, and his obtaining of support from FDR's son.⁵⁵ His victory convinced fellow Democrats that he could capture the non-Catholic vote. David Lawrence's convictions were shaken. Although still behind Stevenson, Lawrence admitted that Kennedy's victory in West Virginia "shook my thinking a bit about whether or not he could win."⁵⁶ State Democratic

⁵³New York Times, April 22, 1960, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁴Ave Maria, May 7, 1960, p. 16; NCWC, May 1960

⁵⁵Editorial, "A Fading Political Issue," Commonweal, May 27, 1960, pp. 219-220.

⁵⁶David Lawrence, Oral History Interview, January 22, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History

leader, W. H. Holt of West Virginia, declared that the results clearly demonstrated the attractiveness of a Catholic president.

. . . Sometimes I think it would do this country a 'power' 'o good' to have a Catholic for president. It would do away with once and for all the religious bugaboo that bothers a lot of people and could promote tolerance among his people . . ."⁵⁷

The morning after his victory in West Virginia Kennedy announced that "the religious issue was buried."⁵⁸ The Catholic press voiced a similar optimism. Commonweal concluded that the religious issue "was certainly dealt a damaging blow but it is still too early to offer the funeral oration."⁵⁹ America concurred. "On all sides, finally, the West Virginia vote won a warm welcome as grounds for hoping that the religious issue might be on the wane in the political arena."⁶⁰ The magazine's Washington correspondent, Mary McGrory, ended her commentary on the following

Collection), Transcript, p. 4; Senator George McGovern, Oral History Interview, April 24, 1964 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 11. McGovern noted that he was behind Humphrey until West Virginia. After Kennedy's victory, McGovern asked Kennedy for an appointment on his staff.

⁵⁷W. H. Holt to Senator Cramer of Boston, Letter, April 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files), Box No. 535.

⁵⁸Editorial, "A Fading Political Issue," Commonweal, May 27, 1960, pp. 219-220.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Editorial, "West Virginia Votes," America, May 21, 1960, p. 271.

auspicious note.

The conquest of prejudice, however, means that Senator Kennedy need no longer name his religion as an obstacle to nomination. More than that, as he said at an early morning press conference at his jubilant headquarters in Charleston: 'I think that after the campaign in this state, it will not be necessary to mention it again.' All present would certainly say a 'fervent' Amen to that.⁶¹

Lastly, the Providence Visitor argued in its editorial that a Catholic was the best possible presidential candidate for the country. "No one could be better qualified for the leadership of our country than a Catholic. A Catholic is in touch with the fullness of grace and saving truth."⁶²

These Catholic commentaries and Kennedy's own purview of the religion controversy seemed to be accurate up through the Democratic National Convention. At the end of May, the Vatican newspaper, Osservatore Romano, published an article that argued the Church had a special role to play in temporal affairs, and in this case, advised all Catholics to vote for the anti-Communists in the upcoming election. Such church intervention in politics before West Virginia would have generated a war of diatribes and accusations in the United States. But once news of the story came to America,

⁶¹Mary McGrory, "Washington Front," Commonweal, May 21, 1960, p. 275. Editorial, "The Catholic Vote," The Tablet, May 14, 1960, p. 12. The Paper's editor was pleased with results in West Virginia's primary. "It indicates that the ugly factor of religious prejudice has been discarded in that state."

⁶²Editorial, "Is Catholic Best Possible Candidate?," Providence Visitor, June 3, 1960, p. 3.

only a few non-Catholics made it an issue in Kennedy's campaign for the presidency. Catholics, of course, denied any complicity with the paper's position and said such a pronouncement was only applicable to Italian politics. One Catholic journal wrote at the time: "It would be uncandid to pretend that the editorial was not an embarrassment to Catholics in many countries."⁶³

The Democratic National Convention took place during this period of religious concord. Only a few certain quarters harbored any religious doubts about Kennedy and were ineffectual in preventing the Convention's nomination of Kennedy as the Democratic party's presidential candidate.⁶⁴ On July 15, 1960, Kennedy delivered his acceptance speech to the convention's delegates, directing his opening remarks to his faith. "I am fully aware of the fact that the Democratic party, by nominating someone of my faith, has taken on what many regard as a new and hazardous risk -- new, at least, since 1928."⁶⁵ Kennedy assured his captive audience that their trust and confidence in him on this issue was not unwarranted. He would uphold the

⁶³Editorial, "Osservatore Romano," Boston Pilot, June 4, 1960, p. 4. Editorial, "A Bewildering Article," America, June 25, 1960, pp. 390-391.

⁶⁴White, The Making of the President, pp. 180-215. John McCormack, Oral History Interview, 1977 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p.3.

⁶⁵"John F. Kennedy's Acceptance Speech in Los Angeles," Vital Speeches, (1960), pp. 610-612.

constitution and the nation's interest above any religious pressures or obligations emanating from the Church's hierarchy, as evidenced by his past fourteen-year public record. His religious affiliation was simply not "relevant."⁶⁶ "I am telling you now that you are entitled to know: That my decisions on every public policy will be my own -- as an American, a Democrat, and a free Man!"⁶⁷

After Kennedy's nomination and acceptance speech Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York sent him a note of congratulations "on your wonderful victory" and told him how he stayed up until 4:15 a.m. to hear the final nomination results.⁶⁸ The Catholic Messenger rejoiced in Kennedy's victory: "It is the clearest sign that the written religious test for the Presidency is losing its hold."⁶⁹ The Northwest Progress in its editorial interpreted Kennedy's success as symbolizing the political downfall of bigotry: "that the ghost of prejudice and bigotry has so often stalked the American convention's halls has at last

⁶⁶John F. Kennedy's Acceptance Speech in Los Angeles," Vital Speeches, (1960), pp. 610-612.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Francis Cardinal Spellman to John F. Kennedy, Letter, July 14, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence-Spellman), Box No. 33.

⁶⁹Editorial, "Nomination," Catholic Messenger, July 21, 1960, p. 12.

been dispelled."⁷⁰ The Advocate advised Catholics to take great pride in Kennedy's nomination and to rejoice in the fact that the United States had greatly matured since 1928. Kennedy was "a tribute to the virtues of his Catholic character and to the gifts of his Catholic mind and personality."⁷¹ It was miserable out tonight, maintained the San Francisco Monitor, for the few remaining "dens of bigotry in the United States."⁷² The Catholic Action of the South in New Orleans unequivocally proclaimed that Kennedy's nomination had undermined the validity of any future religious test.⁷³

The primary campaign began with fear of another 1928 and ended with the declaration of the demise of the religious issue. Kennedy had become the Catholic presidential candidate of the Democratic party for several reasons. Perhaps the most important was the politically neutral stance of the Catholic hierarchy and press coupled with their importunings of fellow Catholics to remain calm and understanding toward bigoted attacks. This made more credible the remarks of Kennedy in his ASNE speech. Never-

⁷⁰ Editorial, "A Test of Statesmanship," Northwest Progress, July 15, 1960, p. 4.

⁷¹ Editorial, "Nomination," Catholic Messenger, July 21, 196, p. 12.

⁷² Editorial, "It's Miserable Out Tonight," San Francisco Monitor, July 15, 1960, p. 12.

⁷³ Catholic Action of the South, July 24, 1960, p. 1.

theless, underlying this cooperation between the Church and Kennedy in their attempt to circumvent the religious rancor of Al Smith's day resided a politically conservative and liberal Catholic opposition.

CHAPTER IV

'NOT A CATHOLIC CANDIDATE': CATHOLIC OPPOSITION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHT AND LEFT

Not all Catholics celebrated Kennedy's nomination as a symbol of the demise of the religious issue. Perusing the pages of Dorothy Day's newspaper, the Catholic Worker, readers would have received inadequate coverage of Kennedy's entire primary campaign and victory. The featured articles of the Catholic Worker concerned civil rights, pacificism, humanitarianism, and civil disobedience. Not Kennedy but Tolstoy, Thoreau, and Ghandi were the men of the hour. Not bigotry but poverty and nuclear destruction were of paramount concern.¹ Day's indifference was surpassed by anguish among other Catholic editors, clerics, and politicians.

¹The Catholic Worker (Microfilm: University of Notre Dame). Day had her regular serial "On Pilgrimage," describing her travels throughout the United States. Also see George Gilmary Higgins, The Yardstick: Catholic Tests of Social Order, 1959 (George Gilmary Higgins Papers: Catholic University of America Archives). Contained complete set from 1945-1981, Box No's. 49-50. Father Higgins also ignored the Kennedy campaign. As the director of the Social Action Department for the National Catholic Welfare Conference, he prioritized working class problems in his column, The Yardstick, subtitled "Catholic Tests of a

They opposed Kennedy, perceiving him not as a Catholic candidate but as an unsavory liberal or conservative politician.

John Courtney Murray, S. J., the great American theologian, was a moderate conservative Republican who opposed Kennedy. A firm supporter of Dulles' foreign policy and of Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, Murray maintained that his opposition to Kennedy had nothing to do with the fact that the candidate was Catholic. Although the Kennedy staff sought out Murray's advice on theological matters -- the most noted instance being Sorensen's call to him concerning the Houston speech -- Murray was "not eager" to see John Kennedy elected president. He considered Kennedy an intellectual "lightweight" and was critical of his liberal philosophy. "He took a dim view of Stevenson and a dimmer view of Kennedy."² Cogley, a close friend of Murray's, recalled that, after receiving a telegram from Robert F. Kennedy asking him to join the campaign staff, Murray advised him not to accept and not to have "anything to do with those people."³

Social Order." Higgins championed the causes of the poor and of social justice, and was particularly worried about the survival of such causes among Catholics who moved up on the socio-economic ladder and then into the suburbs.

²John Cogley, Oral History Interview, February 20, 1968 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 30-32.

³Ibid.

Throughout the primaries William F. Buckley's conservative National Review magazine took a unique perspective on the religious issue and opposed Kennedy's candidacy. Although he perceived the bigoted anti-Catholic attacks as "an unhealthy impulse to let loose on the body politic," Buckley thought that religion should be an issue, that voters should know whether a candidate was Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or a non-believer. Without such knowledge of the candidate's religious background, a voter "will be making a superficial judgment. It would be ridiculous to forget the religious faith if one of them ran for an office that decides issues of property, civil disobedience, and war."⁴ With the above assumption in mind, Buckley formulated his magazine's position concerning the primary in West Virginia:

We are against Senator Kennedy for President but not because he is a Catholic; and we are against Herbert Humphrey, though not for his Protestantism. But at the same time, in forming our judgment, we do not overlook their religious ties.⁵

The National Review disliked Kennedy's attempt to be "everything to everyone," a position and image that was based upon insincerity. Kennedy's insincerity allowed him to be the "beneficiary of the voters' own moral misapprehensions." His balancing act of ambivalence

⁴Editorial, "Is Religion an Issue," National Review, May 7, 1960, p. 285.

⁵Ibid.

resulted in votes "of both the pro-McCarthy Irish and the anti-McCarthy members of the Harvard University Faculty."⁶ Especially disturbing to Buckley and others on his staff was Kennedy's liberalism. They attacked his support of state welfare, his belief in big government, and his advocacy of negotiations with the Communists.⁷

The Wanderer, a reactionary conservative lay Catholic newspaper out of St. Paul, Minnesota, decried Kennedy's liberalism. Founded in 1867, the newspaper was based upon a tradition of anti-liberalism, secularism, atheism, and communism. During the primary, it summed up its purpose:

It is in the first place historic liberalism which continues to pave the way for worldwide atheistic communism. It is still liberalism's characteristic brand of moral relativism and indifferentism which constitutes the ugly boil . . . and the big question today still is who will lance the boil -- Catholicism or the International?"⁸

According to The Wanderer, Kennedy espoused the following despicable liberal principles. "He consistently expressed predilections for centralized government and welfare statism with its built-in tendencies toward mechanistic regimentation and object dehumanization."⁹ Most deplorable,

⁶John Chamberlain, "The Chameleon Image of John F. Kennedy," National Review, April 23, 1960, pp. 261-263.

⁷Ibid.

⁸The Wanderer, January 7, 1960, p. 4.

⁹Editorial, "The Religious Issue," The Wanderer, September 22, 1960, p. 4.

Kennedy received the backing of the leftist Americans for Democratic Action, ADA, a group The Wanderer characterized as a "malodorous hodgepodge of rabid ideologies, fuzzy-mined, egg-heads, Harvard beatniks, materialistic do-gooders of every red and pink shade."¹⁰ Finally, the newspaper found fault with Kennedy's approach to the religious issue because it allowed him to obscure the fact that he was not a product of parochial schools and that in London he was the understudy of a socialist professor.

In any case, the religious issue injected into this campaign to date has been and continues to be a misleading and deceptive tactic, to say the least. Without much regard for the long range social and religious consequences, it was primarily concerned and designed, so it would seem, as a calculated expedient, a mere 'vote catcher' device, and as such it has miserably failed to give the electorate the true measure and worth of the Democrat's leading contender either as a bonafide Christian statesman or seasoned Catholic. On these basic issues among others, the voters are still in the dark.¹¹

The Tablet, a conservative Catholic newspaper under the authority of New York's Francis Cardinal Spellman, still admired Senator Joseph McCarthy. "Senator McCarthy, almost alone and against tremendous odds, alerted this nation to

¹⁰ Editorial, "Catholic in Politics," The Wanderer, May 26, 1960, p. 4. Mrs. Harvey to John F. Kennedy, Letter, June 8, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence), Box No. 999. Mrs. Harvey charged Kennedy with the same association with the ADA. "However, I accuse you of not being a good Catholic because of your connection with the Americans for Democratic Action."

¹¹ Editorial, "Catholics in Politics," The Wanderer, May 26, 1960, p. 4.

the communist menace within, as no man before or since has done."¹² Harboring such memories, the paper's editor attacked Richard Rovere's recently published study that presented an unfavorable view of McCarthy. Rovere was a communist and anti-Catholic, while his book was "repulsive" and at best "irresponsible trash."¹³ Kennedy entered the fray when he publicly expressed his admiration for Rovere's scholarship. R. Emmet Kane in the "Reader's Column" of The Tablet published an open letter to Kennedy. Kane admitted that he had been a Catholic-Democrat for years and that he was looking forward to Catholic in the White House. But Kennedy's approval of Rovere's book and his delineation of its merits had changed Kane's mind.

The shock occasioned today by your endorsement of Rovere's uncharitable and untruthful biography of McCarthy, has forced me to change my estimate of you . . . I can find no excuse for you nor can I trust your judgment for approving of Rovere's book and its proven false statements about a fellow Catholic patriot who is prevented by death from defending himself. I am sorry I can no longer endorse you.¹⁴

¹²Don Zirkel, "Richard Rovere's Book on Senator Joe McCarthy," The Tablet, July 11, 1959, p. 21.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴R. Emmet Kane, "Readers Forum," The Tablet, August 8, 1959, p. 6. Kennedy's reply was published in the paper. He apologized for the misinterpretation of his remarks which were only meant to concern the merits of the book and the skills of its author. His remarks were not meant to be a judgment on the "complex McCarthy character." Also consult "Weird Logic, Timid Souls vs. Student Loyalty Oaths," The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, Vol. 59, April 1959, pp. 625-629.

The best known of Kennedy's Catholic conservative opponents was Juniper D. Carol, a Franciscan theologian and editor of Marianist Studies. Carol epitomized the anti-liberalism and anti-communism of the Catholic right. His article, "Kennedy for President: A Catholic Priest says No!" appeared in the ultra-conservative magazine, Human Events, after Kennedy's nomination.¹⁵ In it, Carol presented himself as a concerned citizen who would not be so presumptuous as to tell his readers whom to vote for. Instead, he would advise his reading audience "as to the type of candidate they ought not vote for." According to Carol, to cast a ballot for any liberal candidate would be a disservice to the country. Liberal beliefs in welfare statism, world government, and unionized labor represented dangerous encroachments on individual and national liberties. Carol perceived liberal policy toward communism -- tolerating subversives in the country, aiding communistic governments, and promoting negotiations and cultural exchanges with the Soviets -- as buttressing the growth and domination of this diabolical ideology throughout the world. Carol promised to do all in his power to stop such a

¹⁵Dr. Juniper B. Carol, "Kennedy for President: A Priest says No!" Human Events, July 28, 1960, pp. 313-314; Also reprinted in the The Wanderer, May 26, 1960, p. 5 and in John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers: Religious Issue Files of James Wine, Box No. 1020.

development: "Frankly, the frightening prospect of yet another liberal Administration makes me shudder."¹⁶

Carol opposed Kennedy because he embodied this liberal ideology. Carol maintained that Kennedy's record in Congress over the past two years palpably demonstrated his liberal tendencies. Ninety-three out of ninety-seven votes found Kennedy on the same side with Hubert Humphrey, "the most obnoxious egg-head in Congress." Kennedy's 100% rating from the ADA and his befriending of the president of the United Auto Workers, Walter Reuther, who was "a ruthless labor dictator and one of the most mischievous socialist leaders in the country, should be enough to chill the enthusiasms of the most fanatic Kennedy backers." Carol concluded that Kennedy was the wrong man to provide the strength, courage, and leadership to stave off the "Russian Bear."¹⁷

Numerous reprints of Carol's article were distributed throughout the country. In some Catholic circles, Carol was accused of disseminating hate literature and abetting the cause of anti-Catholic bigots. Editor, Donald McDonald, referred to the whole conservative Catholic right -- Carol, the Tablet, The Wanderer, and the National

¹⁶Dr. Juniper B. Carol, "Kennedy for President: A Priest says No!" Human Events, July 28, 1960, pp. 313-314; Also reprinted in the The Wanderer, May 26, 1960, p. 5 and in John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers: Religious Issue Files of James Wine, Box No. 1020.

¹⁷Ibid.

Review -- as "anti-Kennedy reactionaries" and "outright blackguards." They all suffered from a pathological and moral sickness.¹⁸ A fellow priest accused Carol of violating his proper role as a priest. Numerous Catholics complained that Protestants and other non-Catholics opposed to Kennedy took advantage of Carol's article, in particular, when they wanted to downgrade him in the eyes of his co-religionists.¹⁹

Carol came to his own defense. He first noted that the editor of Human Events deleted a couple of paragraphs from his original manuscript. In these missing paragraphs, he denounced the Republicans for following the same "liberal line" on many issues as the Democrats, especially their stance toward communism.

The editor said he had no room for those two paragraphs. The point I am making is that: I was not trying to promote one party at the expense of the other. I am not interested in politics as politics, but I am very much concerned about the moral problems involved, such as socialism and the appeasement of communism. I agree with you that non-Catholics will use my article to further their own bigotry. I regret that as much as you do, but I feel that such people would twist even the words of the pope or of Christ to suit their own purpose.²⁰

¹⁸Walter L. Matt, "On This and That," The Wanderer, September 15, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁹Father Boniface Fielding to John F. Kennedy, Letter, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1020.

²⁰Ibid.

Carol's defense fell upon deaf ears. One concerned Catholic citizen wrote Kennedy after he had read Carol's article: "I'm so mad, I could spit."²¹ Another Catholic could not believe that such a diatribe could flow from the pen of a Catholic priest: "We are very reluctant to believe it was actually written by a priest, since being Catholics ourselves, we never heard of anything quite like it, and never thought such a thing reasonable."²² One Catholic bluntly informed Kennedy that the author of the article was not a Catholic priest.²³ In his reply to these concerned Catholics, Kennedy reassured them that Carol's article did not represent the official position of the Catholic Church. He explained that Carol's diatribe was "merely an expression of the extreme right wing economic and social opinions of Father Carol himself."²⁴

²¹Gertrude E. Mullen to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 22, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1020.

²²Mr. & Mrs. James O'Connor to Democratic National Committee, Letter, October 11, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008.

²³Miss Grace Ede Villiers to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 28, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1004.

²⁴J. Arthur Lazell to Mr. & Mrs. James O'Connor, Letter, October 31, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008.

Conservative Catholics were also antagonistic toward the Americanization of the Catholic community, a process which Kennedy symbolized and which eroded Catholic principle in favor of secularist beliefs. Monsignor Irving de Blanc, director of the National Catholic Family Bureau, was disturbed by the effect American society had upon Catholic practices and beliefs. Findings from a recent study of his bureau clearly demonstrated that Catholics utilized contraceptives as readily as non-Catholics. Dismayed by these findings and convinced that American influence was the cause, de Blanc called for Catholics to withdraw from mainstream America, to avoid undue exposure to non-Catholic culture, and to return to the ghetto to preserve the foundations of their faith. Such a retreat was the panacea to the erosion of Catholic morality and convictions. "Catholics should not have close associates who are in a different religious situation. You soon compromise with a cultural pattern."²⁵ The editor of Ave Maria, after studying the report of de Blanc's bureau, agreed that Catholic practice of birth control and divorce signified a dangerous secular trend and the emergence of a morals gap. "What these figures really demonstrate is our alarming morals gap between beliefs and practices of Catholics. The simple fact is they do not seem to practice

²⁵ Editorial, "Back to the Ghetto?," Commonweal, July 16, 1960, p. 16.

what they preach."²⁶ This hypocrisy existed because Catholics lived in a non-Christian society. "It is geared to secular goals and values; it is monumentally indifferent to religious values."²⁷ The Tablet despised this Americanization trend that Kennedy symbolized and that reduced the number of new converts to the Church. "We believe more converts are attracted to the Church of firm principle than a Church of weakened compromise. So the way to correct and amend recent trends and strengthen the Church is to believe in a return to orthodoxy."²⁸

In the end, Human Events published an article by one of its assistant Catholics editors, Nicholas T. Nonenmacher. He summarized conservative antipathy toward Kennedy. He contended that if there was going to be a Catholic vote, it would be against and not for Kennedy. Catholic conservatives, according to him, will demonstrate that tribal affinity will not help Kennedy in his quest for the presidency. "In sum, just being a Catholic will not make it easier for Jack Kennedy to get Catholic votes."²⁹

²⁶ Editorial, "The Morals Gap," Ave Maria, July 16, 1960, p. 16.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Editorial, The Tablet, March 12, 1960, p. 11.

²⁹ Nicolas T. Nonenmacher, "Will Catholics Defeat Kennedy?," Human Events, August 11, 1960, pp. 345-346; Reprint in John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine, Box No. 1020.

Most Catholic liberals eventually supported Kennedy in his presidential campaign. But, before and even a short time after his nomination, liberal support was tenuous at best. The editors of Commonweal, America, and Ave Maria, Dorothy Day, George Higgins, Eugene McCarthy, and David Lawrence were Catholic liberals who along with Jews and intellectuals questioned Kennedy's liberalism and who looked to Adlai Stevenson for leadership and to Eleanor Roosevelt for inspiration. Kennedy needed the support of these American liberals. Arthur Schlesinger advised Kennedy on his liberal dilemma. He explained that liberals remained demobilized by and uncommitted to Kennedy because they supported Stevenson, were suspicious of Lyndon Johnson, and disliked Kennedy's organizational and machine politics. Without issue-oriented liberals to spark the campaign, Kennedy was left with the only remaining distinguishing tag -- "the Catholic candidate, and fanatics have been allowed to make religion the dominant issue in the campaign."³⁰ Schlesinger drew up a plan of action to attract liberals to his campaign. He suggested that Kennedy would have to reiterate that he was more liberal than Nixon, that he would have to utilize more rhetorical flourishes in his orations, and that he would have to meet with this issue-oriented

³⁰Arthur Schlesinger to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 26, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence-Schlesinger), Box No. 32.

segment of the electorate. Once these things had been accomplished, Schlesinger thought that issue-minded liberal Democrats would enter Kennedy's campaign, giving it "steam," dissipating "the profound air of lethargy," and eradicating the religious issue once and for all.

The only way to do this is to fill the vacuum -- to charge the campaign with intellectual and emotional content -- to make people think of you in so many other ways that the question of your faith recedes into the background -- all this means to enlist the enthusiasm of the kinetic Democrats³¹ who alone can convert the campaign into a crusade.

In a subsequent letter to Kennedy, Schlesinger discussed his participation in a meeting of the Board of Directors of the ADA (Americans for Democratic Action). Schlesinger observed these issue-minded people perceived Nixon as "trouble," and half-heartedly supported Kennedy because they were uncertain about Kennedy's political beliefs. One board member confided in Schlesinger: "It isn't what Kennedy believes that worries me. It's whether he believes in anything."³² Schlesinger reminded Kennedy that it was this group that could revitalize his campaign and bury the religious issue. But Schlesinger discovered another impediment at the meeting, one that was perhaps insurmountable among a few liberals. "Some liberals I am

³¹Arthur Schlesinger to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 26, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence-Schlesinger), Box No. 32.

³²Ibid.

ashamed to say, are secret anti-Catholics. But not many, and certainly not many at this meeting."³³

Another explanation for liberal antagonism toward Kennedy was the stormy relationship between his family and Eleanor Roosevelt, the supposed embodiment of true liberal doctrines. A firm believer in civil liberties, Mrs. Roosevelt for years had accused Kennedy of "too much profile and not enough courage" on such issues as McCarthyism and civil right.³⁴ Lawrence Fuchs, a liberal, Jewish professor of political science was a close friend and colleague of Mrs. Roosevelt; they both taught courses at Brandeis University for several years.³⁵ As early as 1959, Kennedy sought out Fuchs for an explanation of Mrs. Roosevelt's aversion toward his bid for the presidency. Kennedy defensively and categorically attributed his liberal opposition to "prejudice." It was the only plausible explanation of liberal support for Stevenson even though he could not win. "They're just prejudiced against Catholics." And as far as Mrs. Roosevelt was concerned, Kennedy

³³Arthur Schlesinger to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 26, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence-Schlesinger), Box No. 32.

³⁴Peter Collier and David Horowitz, The Kennedys, (New York: Warner Books, 1984), pp. 299-300. James MacGregor Burns, John F. Kennedy: A Political Profile (New York: Avon Books, 1959), pp. 93-95, 133-152.

³⁵Lawrence Fuchs, Oral History Interview, November 28, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 7-16.

believed: "Well, it's just a matter of prejudice; it's an argument she had with my father thirty years ago."³⁶

Fuchs agreed with Kennedy to a certain extent. Not all but some liberals were anti-Catholic. "They had a tremendously strong disposition to disbelieve the possibility of a Catholic being a free, independent and liberal President of the United States." Fuchs defended Mrs. Roosevelt, however, exonerating her of any inkling of anti-Catholicism." . . . she had the kind of mind that did not stereotype people. She never said anything like 'Well, Catholics are like that!'" Although she disagreed with Spellman and other members of the American Catholic hierarchy on matters of church and state, Fuchs contended, she harbored no "prejorative feelings about Catholics as such." In fact, she perceived Kennedy only as a person. "She did not view Kennedy as a Catholic at all. I mean, she saw him as a person. We never talked about Kennedy as a Catholic."³⁷ What still perturbed Mrs. Roosevelt about Kennedy was his inaction during the days of McCarthy, when American civil liberties were in their greatest danger. While Kennedy sat back in his hospital bed, the "greatest menace of the nation" rampaged throughout the country. In

³⁶Lawrence Fuchs, Oral History Interview, November 28, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection, Transcript, pp. 7-16.

³⁷Ibid.

spite of his later explanations and censure of McCarthy, she still doubted Kennedy's courage. Mrs. Roosevelt was deeply committed to Adlai Stevenson, whom, according to Fuchs, she considered one of the greatest statesmen of the country.³⁸

Kennedy's winning the presidential nomination of the Democratic party in July 1960 transformed Mrs. Roosevelt into a reluctant supporter of Kennedy. This transformation can be traced in the Kennedy-Roosevelt correspondence between January 1959-August 1960. The correspondence was initiated by one of Mrs. Roosevelt's articles critical of Kennedy, claiming that he would be made president by his father's unlimited spending. For several months, Kennedy denied her charge. His persistence finally persuaded Mrs. Roosevelt to admit that the sources for her accusations were unreliable rumors and to proffer a retraction that Kennedy said was not necessary.³⁹

After the Democratic convention, Mrs. Roosevelt agreed to meet Kennedy at Hyde Park in Chicago on August 7. At the end of this meeting of reconciliation, she announced

³⁸Lawrence Fuchs, Oral History Interview, November 28, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 7-16.

³⁹Kennedy-Roosevelt Correspondence, January 1959-August 1960, Letters (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence -- Eleanor Roosevelt), Box No. 32. As late as May 1960, Mrs. Roosevelt still had doubts about Kennedy or any Catholic president to resist the pressures of the church and uphold the separation of Church and state. "I'm not sure Kennedy could do this."

to the press that she would campaign for Kennedy. In a letter to a close acquaintance, she divulged her change of heart about the candidate.

I also had the distinct feeling that here was a man who could learn. I liked him better than I ever had before because he seemed as little cock-sure, and I think that his mind was open to new ideas.⁴⁰

She did confide to her friend that she still had some reservations so she was willing to accept only the nominal position of the Honorary Chairperson of Kennedy's Citizen Committee. Such a position allowed her the luxury of maintaining a wait and see attitude, becoming more active and involved in the campaign on the basis of what she coined "Kennedy's personal progress." She closed with a note of optimism: "I will be surer of this as time goes on, but I think I am not mistaken in feeling that he would make a good president if elected."⁴¹

With Stevenson's defeat and with Mrs. Roosevelt's conversion, American liberals, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, began to support Kennedy, filling Schlesinger's emotional and intellectual void in the campaign. But some rank and file liberals remained unconvinced because of the religious issue. Kennedy's Catholicism was too great of a

⁴⁰Eleanor Roosevelt to Mrs. Mary Lasker, Letter, August 16, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Special Correspondence -- Eleanor Roosevelt), Box No. 32.

⁴¹Ibid.

handicap to overcome in order to win in November. Frank A. Simon, a Protestant-liberal and political activist in California, foreboded as much only one month after Kennedy's nomination.

I was very enthusiastic about the party's chances after the convention, but that enthusiasm has faded. I believe they will beat you with religious prejudice. About two weeks ago I started a campaign of getting my friends registered to vote. To my amazement I found several of my Democratic friends voting for Nixon because you are Catholic. It appears we have not come very far since 1928 . . . I don't see how you can possibly convert the people by November 8th. There is a big percentage of Protestants who will vote against you. I don't see much hope⁴² in your carrying but a few more states than Al Smith.

Simon advised Kennedy that no matter how great his efforts were to neutralize the religious issue, they would all be in vain. There simply was not enough time, and Americans were not ready for a president of his faith. Simon did present what he thought to be the only remaining viable alternative for Kennedy to follow to ensure a victory for the Democratic party in November.

There is an alternative -- resign in favor of Senator Johnson. I believe Johnson would be a sure winner, in fact I believe any⁴³ top Democrat other than a Catholic would beat Nixon.

In spite of these voices of opposition on the Catholic right and left, the American Catholic church

⁴²Frank A. Simon to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 24, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1010.

⁴³Ibid.

celebrated Kennedy's nomination. It, however, was to be a premature celebration of bigotry's demise. Frank Simon's foreboding was more accurate. For these days of concord and victory would soon be forgotten in the trenches of religious strife. A Texan poll at the time revealed the change in the offing. Whereas in 1959 Kennedy led Nixon by a comfortable margin of two to one, this poll placed Nixon five percentage points ahead of Kennedy. The reason for this turnabout in the voter's preferences was religion. "Today mainly because of the build up of the religious issue Kennedy would publicly face defeat in this predominately Protestant but traditionally Democratic state."⁴⁴ Dale Francis in his syndicated column seemed to convey a realistic view of the situation. Proclaiming a "Time for Love," he predicted that the next three months of campaigning would be a time when "Catholics will be bombarded by religious attacks unequalled since 1928. Catholics must be prepared to combat this hate with its greatest enemy -- love."⁴⁵

⁴⁴John Belden, "The Texas Poll," June 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files), Box No. 535; Also consult, James Wine, "Anti-Catholic Material," (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine) Box No. 1017, Folders 1-18.

⁴⁵Dale Francis, "A Time for Love," Our Sunday Visitor (National Edition), July 31, 1960, p. 6714. Also see, Editorial, "Kennedy Nomination," Catholic Week, July 22, 1960, p. 6. It feared that Kennedy's nomination would be used as "bait" to mount an anti-Catholic crusade in the South.

CHAPTER V

KENNEDY AND CATHOLIC AMERICA ON TRIAL:

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1960

John F. Kennedy and Catholic America faced their true religious trial during the 1960 presidential campaign. Beginning in August, anti-Catholic bigots were resurrected when they realized that in ninety days a Catholic could be in the White House. This group feared the "onward march of totalitarian Roman Catholicism" and the ominous portent for America's future: "It is a safe bet that America will be a Roman Catholic country in eight years."¹ During this trial, Kennedy and the Church cooperated and defended themselves against these charges that portrayed them as un-American. The rationale behind their defense was to avoid a repeat of 1928 with all of its religious rancor, hatred, and strife. While Kennedy, the politician, was more reasonable in his response to such outlandish charges, numerous Catholics were

¹Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, "Four Approaches to a Catholic Presidential Candidate," The Catholic Messenger, September 28, 1960, p. 8.

incensed and bitter about these attacks and considered such a trial unnecessary and unjust. The official position of the Catholic Church and its press was a continued neutrality to the political fortunes of Kennedy and restraint to scurrilous voices of Catholic antipathy. Kennedy became the first Catholic president because both he and his Church mitigated religious hysteria and persuaded non-Catholics with honest doubts.

A California Baptist minister observed: "The moment the Democrats nominated a Roman Catholic, they transformed 10,000 Baptist preachers into active politicians."² The anti-Catholic groups on the periphery of the political spectrum became more active and more conspicuous during the month of August, so much so, that Bruce Felknor, director of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, presaged that the levels of bigotry in 1960 could possibly surpass those in 1928.³ James Reston in the New York Times acknowledged that bigotry was becoming more acute, and Kennedy's campaign headquarters was inundated with anti-Catholic mailings.⁴

²"The Issue That Just Won't Die," Newsweek, September 28, 1960, pp. 61-63.

³New York Times, August 25, 1960, p. 1.

⁴Ibid.: Mrs. Eugene Meyer to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 24, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008.

John Kennedy, you are not fit for the Presidency of this great Christian nation. Roman Catholicism is not Christianity and you know it. How intelligent people can be enslaved to such ignorance, superstition, and paganism is more than I can undersand . . .⁵ Read the bible Mr. Kennedy and you'll learn the truth.

One of Kennedy's supporters in Zanesville, Ohio informed Kennedy that a bogus and scurrilous oath of the Knights of Columbus was being "widely distributed in the area." She was upset because, according to the so-called oath, Catholics throughout the world were helping the pope exterminate all those of the Protestant faith. Each Catholic swore "That I will urge a relentless war secretly or openly against all heretical Protestant, as I am directed to extirpate them from the face of the earth . . ."⁶ To accomplish this end, the oath sanctioned all Catholics to maim, torture, murder, and "rip up the stomachs and wombs of the women and crush the heads of their infants against the

⁵Lillian Burnette to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 6, 1960, (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issue Files of James Wine) Box No. 1002. Also consult John McNamara to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, Religious Issues Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008. McNamara sent Kennedy numerous clippings from leading newspapers of Alabama that not only told "lies," but "preyed on ignorance and bigotry." He was upset about anti-Catholicism while at the same time approving of segregation. "My Brother, Msgr. McNamara of Savannah, Georgia, is an integrationist. I do not agree with either you or him on that question. I believe in equal rights -- voting and education -- but certainly not mixing or intermarriage.

⁶Mrs. Alice M. Dunn to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 22, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1003

wall in order to annihilate their execrable race."⁷ The Priest in its editorial "Foul Play" recalled that in Al Smith's campaign of 1928 bigots in Pittsburg hired a woman who was pregnant to walk the street garbed in a nun's habit. Just as denigrating to Catholics in 1960 was the widespread dissemination of two leaflets throughout the United States, America is a Catholic Country and The Pope for President.⁸ America's editorial, "Ghost That Rides Again," foreboded the worst: ". . . there are growing signs that a certain lunatic fringe among the sects is determined to evoke the long dead bigotry of the 1920's during the battle for the presidency."⁹

The vice-presidential candidate of the Democratic party, Lyndon B. Johnson, decried the outburst of religious intolerance after John Kennedy's nomination. "The way to size up a man is to look him in the eyes, and I have looked in Jack Kennedy's eyes. No human being in the world is

⁷Mrs. Alice M. Dunn to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 22, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1003. Other documents that discuss the bogus oath and its history: Walter D. Harris to Robert Kennedy, Letter, August 19, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015; J. Arthur Lazell to Mr. Arthur S. Landacre, Letter, August 31, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files), Box No. 1015.

⁸Editorial, "Foul Play," The Priest, September 1960, pp. 745-746.

⁹Editorial, "Bigotry Rides Again," America, September 3, 1960, p. 586.

going to dictate his decisions. He is going to do what is best for America."¹⁰ In an attempt to weaken this chorus of bigotry and to lessen its impact, Nixon announced on August 22 that, in his campaign for the presidency, religion was not and would not be an issue.¹¹ At the end of August, Kennedy received a lengthy letter from John Kenneth Galbraith. In it, he discussed religion's impact on politics in the farm belt areas of the country. After talking with at least one hundred journalists, farm leaders, and Democratic farmers, he concluded that "Religion in the rural corn belt, Great Plains, and down into rural Texas has become an issue greater than either income or peace."¹² He recommended that Kennedy address the agricultural problems in the national media -- posthaste. "It will help to crowd out the religious issue but it must be done quickly before these attitudes harden as they surely will." Most important, Galbraith stressed that Kennedy should focus upon the study and resolution of the American farmers' hardships by Congress. Therefore, his major message should read:

I know some farm people have reservations concerning my religious faith; I tell you why these reservations are groundless, I warn you of the danger of being

¹⁰Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 86th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 16 (Washington, D.C., 1960), pp. 804-805.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²John Kenneth Galbraith to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 25, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1004.

diverted by this issue into attitudes which will make permanent,¹³ all of the problems we have not had a chance to solve.

These voices of concern and advice were heard by John Kennedy and his campaign staff -- Robert Kennedy, Ralph Dungan, Theodore Sorensen, and John Hooker, Jr. They began to organize and direct efforts either to eradicate or neutralize the religious issue in the campaign. Their first concerted action was to produce a campaign memorandum that contained numerous statements made by Kennedy addressing his Catholic faith.¹⁴ It covered the entire religious controversy that had developed since Kennedy's Look interview in 1959 -- separation of Church and state, federal aid to education, birth control, and the Poling incident. The memorandum also cited favorable positions held by Catholic and non-Catholic leaders and had a section on Al Smith in which it undermined the myth that religion was the major cause of his defeat. The carefully constructed document ended with these words of Kennedy:

I don't think that my religion is anyone's business but my business. Is any one going to tell me that I lost this primary day when I was born and baptized forty-

¹³John Kenneth Galbraith to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 25, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1004.

¹⁴"Senator Kennedy and the Catholic Question," Memorandum, August 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

two years ago?!¹⁵

Besides composing and distributing this memorandum, Kennedy and his advisors, firmly believing that he would win "unless defeated by the religious issue," decided to establish a special committee devoted to neutralizing the religious tensions in the campaign.¹⁶ The Community Relations Committee would be responsible for all intrusions of religion in politics, answering all correspondence concerning Kennedy's faith, compiling a fact book on the religious question for all staff members; directing mailings to key Protestant areas as well as Democratic leaders across the nation, establishing a dialogue with Protestant editors and ministers, and obtaining the active support of Protestant leadership on local, state, and national levels.¹⁷ James Wine, a lay leader of the National Council

¹⁵"Senator Kennedy and the Catholic Question," Memorandum, August 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015. Also see Robert Kennedy to Representative Ken Hechler, Letter, August 31, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue File of James Wine), Box No. 1015. Eventually the Democratic National Committee compiled its own Memorandum on Kennedy and the Religious Issue: J. Arthur Lazell to Mr. John Baker, Letter, September 12, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015; The Memorandum, September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015 and "Memorandum on the Religious Issue," Boston Herald, September 9, 1960, p. 1.

¹⁶"Memorandum on the Religious Issue: Community Relations Program of Action," August 15, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

¹⁷Ibid.

of Churches, was the committee's director. John Cogley, a liberal Catholic layman, and Arthur Lazell Jr., a Protestant minister, served as Wine's two assistants.¹⁸ Wine became director for two reasons. He believed that a candidate's faith should be no bar from public office and that Protestants needed to reveal their true convictions about religious freedom.¹⁹ He explained that the title of his committee -- "Community Relations" -- was inclusive of all citizens.

We reasoned that we were going to have a religious issue in the mind of the voter, whether or not he had anything to do with the Church and consequently, in terms of all groups.²⁰ So that was the way we finally decided upon the tag.

Wine succinctly expressed his primary task as director: "It was to say that the religious issue and all its ramifications were my responsibility."²¹ The major

¹⁸James Wine to Steve Smith, Interoffice Memorandum, September 14, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015; Charles A. Gauld to James Wine, Letter, August 26, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015; James Wine, Oral History Interview, January 26, 1967 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, pp. 10-14, 22-23, 25-29; John Cogley, Oral History Interview, February 20, 1968 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 32.

¹⁹James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 22-23.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 28-29.

²¹Ibid.

thrust of his program was directed at Protestants and not Catholics. He did not seek to convert anyone but "to ferret our high areas of prejudice and neutralize anti-Catholicism." Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen advised Wine that to effect neutralization his staff's response to bigotry must not display animosity which might alienate reasonable anti-Catholics. It should be a well-balanced and logical argument that would not only neutralize bigotry in the campaign but persuade reasonable Protestants to vote for Kennedy in spite of his Catholic faith.²²

Wine's "Projected Analysis of Simulation on the Religious Issue," portrayed this neutralization strategy as the biggest vote getter for Kennedy.²³ His simulation concluded that Kennedy already had experienced the worst Protestant defections because of his Catholicism. He could

²²"Memorandum on the Religious Issue: Community Relations Program of Action," August 15, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issues Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015. John Jay Hooker, Jr., Oral History Interview, February 2, 1966 (John F. Kennedy Library: Oral History Collection), Transcript, p. 40. Mr. Hooker managed the religious issue before Wine's arrival in Washington, D.C. He was especially close to Robert Kennedy who appointed him to the temporary position on the campaign staff in the early days. He made the following observation concerning Robert Kennedy and the religious issue. "Bob felt very deeply about this. This was a matter about which he had enormous conviction. His brother's religion was not relevant to his brother's ability to run the nation."

²³James Wine, "Analysis of Simulation on the Religious Issue," September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

only gain votes. "On balance he could not lose further from forthright and persistent attention to the religious issue but gain." Wine thought that Kennedy must not sweep the "religious issue under the rug." Instead he should promote among certain groups -- reasonable non-Catholics, Catholics, and other minorities -- that a vote against him was an act of religious intolerance. They would resent such overt prejudice. Such an approach would minimize further defections and maximize Kennedy's votes based upon disapproval of religious prejudice.²⁴ Wine distributed these simulation results to his state coordinators, recommending the implementation of this strategy with one restrictive stipulation.

It should be clearly understood that the working policy with regard to this issue from the onset of the campaign is and has been to meet the issue only when raised by others. On no occasion have we or will we provoke the issue -- rather to combat an attack, but more particularly to answer questions factually, on all phases of the issue.²⁵

As events unfolded, Wine need not have worried about his staff raising the religious issue first. As early as September, he reported that his office was handling 150

²⁴James Wine, "Analysis of Simulation on the Religious Issue," September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

²⁵James Wine to Co-ordinators, Interoffice Memorandum, September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

letters per day and forty-one out of state calls.²⁶ Protestant leaders and ministers accommodated Wine on this matter as well. On September 6, 1960 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. one hundred and fifty Protestant personages, representing 37 different sects, met as "Citizens for Religious Freedom" to dedicate themselves to the proposition that "Jack Kennedy's Roman Catholicism would by no means be forgotten as an election issue." Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, one of the country's prominent Protestant leaders, presided over the conference. The author of The Power of Positive Thinking and the leader of Manhattan's Marble Collegiate Church whose following rivaled that of Billy Graham's declared at the meeting: "Our American culture is at stake. I don't say it won't survive, but it won't be what it was."²⁷ Those present issued a two thousand word statement that "served to make religion the most emotional issue of the 1960 election." The resolution accepted by the group charged that no Catholic president could remain impervious to Vatican influence and pressure. "It is inconceivable that a Roman Catholic President would

²⁶James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 25-29.

²⁷"The Campaign: The Power of Negative Thinking," Time, September 19, 1960, pp. 21-22; "That Religious Issue: Hot and Getting Hotter," Newsweek, September 19, 1960, pp. 37-38. Dr. Daniel Poling, editor of the Christian Herald was the other important Protestant leader at the conference.

not be under extreme pressure by the hierarchy of his church to accede to its policies . . ." Because of this inseparable connection, the resolution concluded that a Catholic was not qualified to be president of the United States.²⁸

Religious leaders of all persuasions and supporters of Kennedy were shocked and, in some cases, incensed by Peal's manifesto. Peale was supposedly one of the most respectable and reasonable Protestants. His actions in Washington shattered this image of tolerance. Peale even experienced opposition among his own flock. Congressman Yale Huffman of Wheatridge, Colorado, one of Peale's faithful followers, found his recent pronouncement very "painful" because it was using religion for political gain. "The statement of 150 preachers was calculated to influence votes; it was a political statement issuing from religious figures."²⁹ Huffman demanded that Peale publicly admit his grave error in waving the flag of religious intolerance.³⁰

²⁸The Campaign: The Power of Negative Thinking," Time, September 19, 1960, pp. 21-22; "That Religious Issue: Hot and Getting Hotter," Newsweek, September 19, 1960, pp. 37-38. Dr. Daniel Poling, editor of the Christian Herald was the other important Protestant leader at the conference. Some Protestants saw a position on Catholicism as the same as a soft position on Communism. Dr. Harold J. Ockenga of Boston's Park Street Church compared Kennedy to Khrushchev, saying that each "is a captive of a system."

²⁹Yale Huffman to Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Letter, September 9, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1012.

³⁰Ibid.

Leading liberal Protestants condemned Peale's actions. Dr. Reinhold Nieburhr stated, "Dr. Peale and his associates . . . show blind prejudice."³¹ John C. Bennet, Dean of the Faculty at the Union Theological Seminary, contended that the Washington meeting symbolized "a Protestant Underworld that stirs undisguised hatred of Catholics."³² Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, expressed profound "distress" by Peale's attempt to transform the presidential campaign into a "Religious Holy War" and "to provide a cloak of respectability to the forces of bigotry in this country."³³ On September 11 Richard Nixon, while on "Meet the Press," was asked about Peale's recent statement. He rejoined that it betrayed the democratic process because it sought to determine the election on religious grounds. He absolved his campaign of any guilt of raising the religious issue. "As far as I am concerned, I have issued orders to all of

³¹"Bennet and Niebuhr Repudiate Religious Attack on Kennedy's Candidacy," Press Release of Liberal Party of New York State, September 9, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1018.

³²Ibid., In Time, September 19, 1960, p. 22. James A. Pike, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California, denounced Peale: "Any argument which would rule out a Roman Catholic just because he is a Roman Catholic is both bigotry and a violation of the constitutional guarantee of no religious test for public office."

³³"Statement by Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath," President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, September 13, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1019.

the people in my campaign not to discuss religion and not to raise it. I will decline to discuss religion."³⁴

With such an overwhelming negative response, Peale found it necessary to explain his actions. He renounced all association with the Washington statement and sent the "Citizens for Religious Freedom" the following telegram: "Please do not include me in any further meeting or activities in your group. It will not be possible for me to participate anyway."³⁵ Peale insisted that "I was not duped . . . I was just stupid. I went innocently like a babe in the woods." He denied press reports that the meeting in Washington, D.C. was the "Peale Group," and maintained that he was invited to attend "A Study Conference for the purpose of examining the whole philosophical question of the relationship of freedom to religion."³⁶ He contended that he had nothing to do with the organizing efforts, presided only over the morning session, and did not prepare the released statement. He did admit that he had failed to foresee the statement's impact on the political campaign.

³⁴Richard M. Nixon, "Meet the Press," September 11, 1960, The Speeches of Vice President Nixon: Presidential Campaign of 1960, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.), pp. 12-14.

³⁵Dr. Norman Vincent Peale to Charles B. Feeney, Letter, September 1960, (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Files of James Wine), Box No. 1009.

³⁶"Pastors and Politics," Newsweek, September 26, 1960, p. 42.

"I sincerely did not mean it to be so, but perhaps I will be a wiser person in the future -- at least, let us hope so."³⁷ Completely "distraught" by the entire fiasco, especially "the injection of myself into political publicity which is actually contrary to my own nature . . ." Peale tendered his resignation to his Church elders who rejected it. Although dismayed and contrite, Peale maintained that he did nothing wrong. "I do not feel that I was wrong in attending the meeting, but it may have been unwise under the circumstances."³⁸

While on the campaign trail in California, Kennedy responded on the day that Peale statement was released.

I do not accept the view that my Church would place pressures on me. The great struggle today is between those³⁹ who believe in no God and those who believe in God.

Wine and his committee on Community Relations initially considered the "Peale Affair" a very serious threat and devised a plan of counterattack.⁴⁰ Wine decided that the counterattack should be based upon constitutional, nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and moral grounds. Leaflets

³⁷Dr. Norman Vincent Peale to Fellow Church Members, Letter, September 15, 1960, (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1002.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Time, September 19, 1960, p. 22.

⁴⁰James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 35-40.

should be printed and distributed that contained quotes of important lay and clerical Protestant leaders who denounced the Peale manifesto. He also proposed a special effort among minorities, especially Blacks. To acquire the support of Blacks, he recommended assistance from Black ministers:

Negro parishioners traditionally look to their pastors for guidance in all areas of living. This influence should not be underestimated as these ministers are the key to political attitudes of their flocks.⁴¹

Wine's plan of counterattack was rendered ineffectual because, as already seen, the Peale episode backfired and was scorned as an intolerant attack upon America's precept of religious freedom. Wine determined that ". . . through bad judgment and naivete on their own parts they pretty well punctured the balloon without us having to do anything. As a consequence, we took no counteraction. Once Peale disassociated himself from the statement, it faltered and fell apart."⁴²

As September progressed, Newsweek voting polls revealed, "One key to the election, about all agree, is the religious issue."⁴³ Throughout the election, reporters

⁴¹James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 35-40. Ruth W. Kingman to Ken O'Donnell, Memorandum, September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issues Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

⁴²James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 35-37.

⁴³"Will Voters Vote Their Faith?" Newsweek, September 26, 1960, pp. 42-45. Article provides findings of its fifty state listening poll of Peale's impact on voters.

discovered, "The issue of Kennedy's Catholicism is being talked about in practically all states, and in some almost to the exclusion of every other political topic."⁴⁴ It appeared, in spite of Peale's resounding backfire, the incident did catapult the religions issue into permanent national prominence throughout the remainder of the campaign. According to Wine, Peale, if nothing else, revived the more reasonable charges against a Catholic president, which proved to be the most difficult to answer. Protestants still were disturbed by Kennedy's Look interview and its compartmentalization of his religion and public life. Wine realized Protestants could simply not believe or accept this dichotomy of faith and politics. "Protestants believe I am a Christian and it affected my daily life, so it doesn't make sense that the monolithic and authoritarian posture of the Catholic Church will not affect him."⁴⁵ Another persistent accusation emboldened at the time among non-Catholics concerned Catholic political power.

It was the idea that there would be control by the American political Catholic group, that the cabinet would be full of Catholics, that the Supreme Court would be full of Catholics, that the Catholic Church

⁴⁴"Will Voters Vote Their Faith?" Newsweek, September 26, 1960, pp. 42-45. Yet report did leave room for speculation on its conclusion. "Clearly, not all Catholics are for Kennedy, and not all Protestants are against Kennedy."

⁴⁵James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 51-53.

in this country would become a political entity -- not necessarily a political entity that was controlled by the Vatican, but a political entity that would have a political head in this country.⁴⁶

Taking into account the growth of Catholics in strength and numbers and Catholic dominance in key, electoral areas, Wine and others perceived Protestant trepidation of the emergence of a large Catholic interest group in American politics as legitimate and difficult to reason away.⁴⁷ In order to dispel these revised or emboldened reservations, Kennedy realized that he had to confront the religious issue in a speech that would receive national attention.⁴⁸ While in the eye of Peale's religious storm, Kennedy accepted an invitation to address the Greater Houston Ministerial Alliance Conference on September 12.⁴⁹

⁴⁶John Jay Hooker, Jr., Oral History Interview, Transcript, p. 40.

⁴⁷Ibid., After reading a batch of Kennedy's religious mail, John Cogley concluded that in addressing these rational objections to his faith, Kennedy should approach it as a constitutional issue and avoid all theological questions. John Cogley, Five Page Memorandum, September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1018.

⁴⁸The Democratic National Committee, headed by Senator Henry Jackson, also worried about Republican use of the religious issue to their advantage. Senator Jackson was concerned about Nixon's indifference and inaction to his party's manipulation of anti-Catholicism. "Nixon must take positive action and demand that it be stopped right now." Senator Henry Jackson, Statement of the Democratic National Committee, September 16, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Theodore Sorensen Papers), Box No. 15.

⁴⁹James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 60-66.

Prior to Peale's manifesto, Dr. Herbert Meza, a leader of the Houston ministers, had invited Kennedy to participate in the conference. Kennedy, Wine, and others could not agree on whether or not to accept the invitation. Some considered it "an unwise confrontation in the "Bible belt" to an audience of conservative fundamentalists.⁵⁰ Even Wine, who favored acceptance, had very serious apprehensions about the conference.

It was set up for somebody who really wanted to make a mockery of it. If somebody had tried to torpedo it by bringing up a number of Ministers who would simply be crying to ask all kinds of questions that would be irrelevant, but any treatment of which could militate against you no matter how you look at it like⁵¹ 'When did you stop beating your wife?' kind of thing.

Despite these apprehensions, all resigned themselves to Kennedy's participation if he were to win or lose the upcoming election on a basis other than his religious affiliation. Wine realized the importance of the speech in his campaign to persuade reasonable critics. "There was no doubt in my mind it would make or break us. I felt that strongly about it and said so."⁵² Kennedy's Houston speech

⁵⁰James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 60-66.

⁵¹Ibid., This anxiety over the meeting was exemplified by Wine's careful attention to the details of the format Kennedy and others would follow at the meeting. James Wine to John Seigathaler, Letter, September 4, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

⁵²James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 60-66.

was researched by Cogley and Wine, composed by Sorensen, and edited with the help of John Courtney Murray. While on the plane to Houston, Cogley drilled Kennedy with possible questions the ministers might ask. Cogley recalled that during the flight both seemed anxious about winning his Protestant audience at the expense of alienating Catholics. "He did not want Catholics to think he sold out the Church, so he had to walk a tightrope."⁵³

In Houston, Kennedy prefaced his speech by noting that "world communism and poverty" were more important concerns than the so-called religious issue. "These are the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues -- for war and hunger and ignorance and despair know no religious barrier." But because he was a Catholic and because the real issues were being eschewed, he thought it was necessary for him to once again state "not what kind of Church I believe in, for that should be important only to me -- but what kind of America I believe in."⁵⁴ He proclaimed his belief in an America in which

⁵³John Cogley, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 11, 45-46. Cogley called September the "famous" month of the religious issue. During the brainstorming session, Kennedy wrote out his answers on paper because his throat was hoarse.

⁵⁴Complete text of John F. Kennedy's speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960. William David Smith, "Alfred E. Smith and John F. Kennedy: The Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960," (Dissertation, Southern Illinois University, June 1964), p. 314.

separation of state and church was absolute, religious intolerance was eradicated, and the American ideal of brotherhood prevailed.

This is the kind of America I believe in -- and this is the kind I fought for in the South Pacific and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested that we might have divided loyalty, that we did not believe in liberty, or that we belonged to a disloyal group that threatened the freedom for which our forefathers died.⁵⁵

Kennedy then declared, "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who happens to be Catholic. I do not speak for the Church on public matters -- and the Church does not speak for me." He reassured his audience that he would make all of his presidential decisions based solely on the nation's interests. No ecclesiastical pressure, power, or threat of punishment could compel him to do otherwise. But, if his official duties and obligations violated his conscience or vice versa, which he believed remotely possible at best, ". . . then I would resign my office."⁵⁶

The question and answer period was dominated by the familiar accusations that had hounded Kennedy since his Look interview in 1959: federal aid to education, the

⁵⁵Complete text of John F. Kennedy's speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960. William David Smith, "Alfred E. Smith and John F. Kennedy: The Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960," (Dissertation, Souther Illinois University, June 1964), p. 316.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 317.

appointment of an ambassador to Rome, the Poling incident, and his commitment to separation of church and state.⁵⁷ One comment raised the ire of Kennedy. It was the suggestion that he compile a statement of his views on church and state and submit it to the Pope for his authorization. Kennedy responded that he would refuse to ask for Vatican approbation, as he would refuse to submit to Vatican authority as president. When the questioner persisted after his answer, Kennedy curtly responded:

I don't have to have the approval in that sense. I have not submitted my statement before I read it to the Vatican. I did not submit it to Cardinal Cushing . . . it seems to me that I am the one that is running for office of the Presidency and not Cardinal Cushing and not anyone else.⁵⁸

He ended his verbal foray by assuring those present that he did not think that the questions asked were unfair or unreasonable or were motivated by prejudice or bigotry. He colored his closing remarks with a slight twist of humor.

I want you to know that I am grateful to you for inviting me tonight. I am sure I have made no converts to my church./laughter/But I do hope that at least my view, which I believe to be the view of my fellow Catholics . . . may be of some value in at least assisting you to make a careful judgement.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Complete text of John F. Kennedy's speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960. William David Smith, "Alfred E. Smith and John F. Kennedy: The Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960," (Dissertation, Southern Illinois University, June 1964), p. 317-328.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 322.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

Kennedy's Houston speech proved to be the major turning point in the campaign. Cogley, looking back in hindsight, realized its significance. "But I felt if he got the nomination he wouldn't be defeated on this score only (religion). I think I was wrong now because I believe if it had not been for the Houston thing he couldn't have been elected."⁶⁰ Kennedy's forensic masterpiece did not bury the religious issue but it did manage to remove the honest doubts of most reasonable non-Catholics. Hooker observed, "Those people who were sincere became convinced by the statement in Houston. I think he got 95% of the people who were reasonable on the subject whose doubts were genuine. I think he overwhelmingly sold himself on that question."⁶¹ Sorensen parroted Hooker's assessment.

It made unnecessary any further full-scale answer from the candidate, and Kennedy, while continuing to answer questions, never raised the subject again. It offered in one document all the answers to all the questions any reasonable man could ask. It helped divide the citizens legitimately concerned about Kennedy's views from the fanatics who had condemned him from birth.⁶²

The Houston speech notwithstanding, the unreasonable attacks continued. Wine received one letter

⁶⁰John Cogley, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 48-49.

⁶¹John Jay Hooker, Jr., Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 48-49.

⁶²The Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), p. 218. For examples of reasonable Protestants persuaded by Kennedy's speech in Houston see:

from a Protestant who perceived one way Kennedy could win in November. "If you will leave the Catholic Church, you will get the votes that will make you our president."⁶³ Throughout the remainder of the campaign, American households received countless anti-Catholic mailings, chain letters, leaflets, and pamphlets. Abolish the Nunneries and Save the Girl, Kennedy Supports Pope Order of Segregation by Creed, and To Kill Protestants were a few examples of the anti-Catholic tracts in circulation at the time.⁶⁴

Robert W. Evans to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 16, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issues Files of James Wine), Box No. 1003 and Mrs. Robert Alexander to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 19, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1002. Henceforth, Kennedy's campaign packet on the religious issue contained a copy of his Houston speech. A film of his performance in Houston was also widely distributed throughout the country during the campaign. "Memorandum on Religion Packet," Research Division of the Democratic National Committee, September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Democratic National Committee Press Releases 1958-1960), Box No. 1034. Assisting Kennedy's attack on the religious issue was the first of four televised debates against Nixon on September 26th in Chicago. "Some 70 million adults, nearly two-thirds of the nation's adult population watched or listened to the first debate." Americans observed Kennedy at his forensic best, and the result was "Protestants no longer thought of Kennedy only as a Catholic." Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 222-229.

⁶³Mrs. Hallies Blake to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 21, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files), Box No. 1002. For another example of bigoted reaction to Kennedy's speech see C. Ralph Youngblood to John F. Kennedy, Letter, October 7, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files), Box No. 1012. Youngblood concluded "I must confess the more you talk the more confused you make your stand of your position of your religion in politics."

⁶⁴Patricia Barret, Religious Liberty and the American Presidency, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963),

Felknor's Fair Campaign Practices Committee in 1962 analyzed 1,383 reports of unfair anti-Catholic campaign literature. Felknor estimated that 20 to 25 million pieces of such literature were distributed, and he discerned four different types of anti-Catholicism in the materials: "5% vile, 25% dishonest, 35% unfair, and 35% responsible."⁶⁵

Despite this plethora of anti-Catholic materials, the religious issue only twice threatened in October to reach the heights during the days of the Peale controversy. Three prelates of Puerto Rico, Archbishop James Davis, Bishop John McManus, and Bishop Luis Martinez, enjoined all church members not to vote for Governor Marin's Popular Democratic Party which supported government sponsored birth control programs. Catholics who disobeyed this injunction would be excommunicated.⁶⁶ It did not take long for American non-Catholics to portend a similar incident of the

pp. 28-29. This work summarized the report of Bruce L. Felknor's Fair Campaign Practices Committee. Its appendix contains a complete list of anti-Catholic material by the committee, pp. 60-125.

⁶⁵Ibid., Also see Bruce Felknor to Theodore Sorensen, Letter, September 22, 1961 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files), Box No. 1015. He enclosed in this correspondence to Sorensen a fourteen page list of anti-Catholic literature which contained approximately 350 different titles. Numerous examples of this bigoted press are also contained in The Uncatalogued John F. Kennedy Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Notre Dame.

⁶⁶"Sticky Issue," Newsweek, October 31, 1960, p. 21. "The Biggest Issue," Newsweek, November 7, 1960, p. 20.

church controlling the state when Kennedy became president. According to Cogley, "it started up the whole controversy again," simply because the bishops' actions in Puerto Rico acted as a confirmation of earlier Protestant fears.⁶⁷

Wine initially thought the issue "a tough one." He issued orders to treat the incident as they did the Osservatore Romano article. Wine contended that Puerto Rico's predicament was not applicable to the religious issue in the current presidential campaign," that it was strictly a local situation and that it involved the Church primarily."⁶⁸ It was a flagrant distortion of reality to compare it to Kennedy or the American Catholic Church. Marin's Democratic party and Puerto Rico's Catholic Church were completely separate of both mainland institutions. Wine thought it was necessary to reiterate Kennedy's long-standing position on such matters. "Senator Kennedy has stated on many occasions that he considers it wholly improper and alien to our Democratic system for Churchmen of any faith to tell the members of their church for whom to vote or for whom not to vote."⁶⁹ In the end, only a few

⁶⁷Cogley, Oral History Interview, p. 14.

⁶⁸Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 55-57.

⁶⁹Ibid., Kennedy's Campaign Form Letter in Response to Inquiries about Puerto Rico, November 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issues Files), Box No. 1015.

Americans seemed concerned about the Puerto Rico incident.

To everybody's surprise, it didn't blow up nearly as big as everybody thought it was going to. I remember around the center the day the Bishops' statement came out that everybody thought this was the end of the line. And I must say that I felt somewhat that way, too . . . The best thing to do was nothing because Kennedy was in the spot of having been embarrassed by these bishops and he didn't want to escalate⁷⁰ the whole thing. And it seemed to work out all right.

A week before Reformation Sunday, 40 fundamentalist sects of the National Association of Evangelicals, horrified by the prospect of a Catholic president, attempted to transform October 30 into a day of national protest.⁷¹

Charles Kuralt reported from Illinois during this week of preparation and discovered the religious issue alive and well in the Midwest. "We did not come to Illinois to report on the religious issue. We came here to report on the trend of the campaign and found religion a major factor in it."⁷²

At the end of his sojourn through the state, he concluded that Protestants would primarily vote against Kennedy and Catholics would vote for him.⁷³ In contrast to Illinois' polarization, Reformation Sunday turned out to be more

⁷⁰John Cogley, Oral History Interview, Transcript, p. 15.

⁷¹"Sticky Issue," Newsweek, October 31, 1960, p. 21.

⁷²Charles Kuralt, "The Contest for a Key State," CBS Television, October 28, 1960, The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy: Presidential Campaign of 1960 (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961), pp. 309-316.

⁷³Ibid.

rhetoric than actual fact. Wine could recall only two minor incidents in New Jersey and Washington, D.C. "I think it would have been very hurtful had it been widespread. Given the time and the setting it would have caused a lot of people to have second thoughts, I think."⁷⁴ The protest failed; only the lunatic fringe rallied around this banner of religious bigotry. As in the case of Puerto Rico, Wine and his staff were pleased and relieved.

While Protestants failed to fill the streets on Reformation Sunday, Kennedy appeared on "Face the Nation." Of course the major topic of discussion was religion. He was asked if he would give another public exposition on his religious convictions before the election. He rejected such a proposal. "No, I don't think that there is any reason . . . after all my statements and after my record has been carefully scanned for fourteen years . . ."⁷⁵ Kennedy did not conceal his irritation with uproar over his Catholicism.

If 90% of the population were Catholics, I would still be opposed to it (Union of Church and State). Why is it -- we 35 million Catholics -- what is it in their record that makes anyone think that they are not as devoted₆ to this ideas of separation of Church and State?

⁷⁴James Wine, Oral History Interview, Transcript, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁵John F. Kennedy, "Face the Nation," CBS Television, October 30, 1960. Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy: Presidential Campaign of 1960, pp. 323-338.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 336.

During the last week before the election, "The hate literature continued to pour forth."⁷⁷ Kennedy's campaign headquarters received numerous pieces of bigoted correspondence. O. W. Reece of Oklahoma, an Evangelical minister, wrote him a vicious letter, telling Kennedy that Americans were nauseous over his attempt to buy the election "with the tainted millions of booze money which you got from your now thoroughly discredited father."⁷⁸ Reece would not be deceived by his comments. The plain and simple fact was that the Pope and his fellow Catholics wanted to control America.⁷⁹ Bob McGee's special television report, "The Campaign and the Candidates," reported that the delegates at the Texas Southern Baptist Convention resolved: "We believe this (religion) is one of the legitimate factors in the formation of a decision to cast a ballot."⁸⁰ On the day before the election, Kennedy appeared on New Hampshire

⁷⁷"The Biggest Issue," Newsweek, November 7, 1960, p. 20. Bishop Pike admitted that the ugliness of the bigotry has made him "more defensive of Mr. Kennedy's position."

⁷⁸O.W. Reece to John F. Kennedy, Letter, November 1, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1009.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Robert McGee, "The Campaign and the Candidates," NBC Television, Joint Appearance of Vice-President Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy: The Presidential Campaign of 1960, (United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C.: 1961), pp. 362-370.

television. He entertained several questions from his audience and callers. Inevitably his religion was the major thrust of one query. "If elected, will your actions as president be influenced by your Church?" Kennedy revealed his relief that his trial was at an end. "Well, I suppose this is perhaps the last time that question will come up . . . I am glad to have the opportunity to answer that one for the last time."⁸¹

After Kennedy's nomination, Catholics were completely taken aback by the resurfacing of scurrilous prejudice. Andrew Greeley, steeped in dialogue, pluralism, and understanding, admitted his shock when he wrote, "that the upsurge in irrationalism seemed completely unexpected."⁸² In a short time this shock among Catholics quickly transformed into anger and bitterness. Edward Taylor's animosity emanated from his letter to Kennedy. "We are having the screws put to us by bigoted men who would be known as religious leaders were their reprehensible techniques to fail them." He thought Kennedy's acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention was excellent and recommended that he provide the country's bigots with "the

⁸¹Television Program, "John F. Kennedy Interview," Manchester, New Hampshire, November 7, 1960, Speeches of John F. Kennedy: Presidential Campaign of 1960, p. 944.

⁸² Andrew Greeley, "The Yardstick," The Alamo Register, September 18, 1960, pp. 4, 9.

same kind of hell again."⁸³ He commanded Kennedy to "Give them Hell, and speak loudly. You're being too nice about everything. Too logical. The people don't want cool squared logic on an emotional issue."⁸⁴

John Ziegler and his entire family of seven had taken a vacation in the South. They were very upset with finding a strong presence of anti-Catholicism there. ". . . we were shocked beyond words at the vicious anti-Catholic bigotry campaign that is sweeping the country. As converts and proud of our new religion, we demand Senator that you make a nationwide talk. The sooner you give this talk, the quicker we can get at these bigots."⁸⁵ The Catholic Week of Birmingham, Alabama in its editorial, "U.S. Catholics Libeled," expressed similar sentiments of bellicosity. It recommended that all Catholics unite and close ranks behind their bishops in defense of their Church. Once united, Catholics must be unrelenting in their attack against prejudice.

We must make these people realize that lying does not pay, that the world has moved on since their hate campaign of 1928, and that they cannot treat Catholics with the same impunity in the world of today. We must

⁸³Edward F. Taylor to John F. Kennedy, Letter, August 25, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1000.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵John Ziegler to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 2, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1012.

drag them into the light and expose them to the world as the real conspirators against this nation. We must call the bluff of these conspirators, we must unmask and uncloak them in their anonymity.⁸⁶

A Catholic attack, based upon righteousness and resentment, became prevalent. John R. Rush in his letter to the editor of The Tablet insisted that Catholics coalesce into one voting bloc in opposition to prejudice. Catholics opposed to such a concerted attack were, at best, "unrealistic" and, at worst, "betrayers of their own kind."

Instead of trying to eliminate bias on the part of our separated brethren, we should try and eliminate bias of Catholics against a Catholic for president. The Catholics who are against Kennedy are the same ones who often say, 'look what they did to Al Smith.' What do they mean by that? If Senator Kennedy is defeated we can't say for years to come 'look what they did to Jack Kennedy.' It will be look what we did to Jack Kennedy.⁸⁷

Another letter expressed disgust with Kennedy's obsequious stand in the face of such attacks. "I see no reason why the Catholic community should feel any particular pride in his nomination. Senator Kennedy has tried to disassociate himself from that community to the point of near apology for his religious affiliation in his acceptance speech."⁸⁸

Conservative journalist, L. Brent Bozell implied that

⁸⁶ Editorial, "U.S. Catholics Libeled," Catholic Week, September 16, 1960, p.

⁸⁷ Letter to the Editor, John Rush, The Tablet, August 6, 1960, p. 7.

⁸⁸ "The Reader's Forum," The National Review, August 20, 1960, p. 7.

Kennedy was overall to blame for the religious issue.

Finally, the Democratic candidate could produce salutary consequences for all concerned by spending less time disassociating himself from his Church, and more of it explaining those teachings and practices that give concern.⁸⁹

Peale's manifesto intensified feelings of resentment and anger among Catholics. In his letter to Kennedy, C. W. O'Mara's displeasure was self-evident. "I as a Catholic am a little tired and disgusted when you as my representative first as president and second as a fellow Catholic and third as a fellow American are pointed to as a traitor."⁹⁰ Bitterness flowed from O'Mara's pen in his concluding remarks.

I went through the 1928 campaign. Filthy and dirty it was, this time we Catholics deserve better. We are not traitors, second-class citizens to be distrusted. We are not slyly waiting to turn our country over to the Pope. We are single-minded and intelligent. We love our country and you are big enough to lead it. You as representative of the American Catholics are pointed to as the Arch-traitor. You are condemned to the role of subservient serf of the country to the Pope who is waiting to take over America . . . How Stupid!⁹¹

Peale even stirred the pen of William Buckley in the pages of his National Review. In his editorial "A Little

⁸⁹"The Catholic Issue," L. Brent Bozell, The National Review, September 24, 1960, p. 171.

⁹⁰C.W. O'Mara to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 7, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008.

⁹¹Ibid.

Positive Thought for Norman Peale," Buckley explained that his magazine found Kennedy an undesirable presidential candidate because of his accommodation of Communism and his advocacy of a welfare state. But in spite of his opposition to Kennedy, Buckley could not agree with Peale's apprehension of Kennedy's religion. "Mr. Kennedy is a disappointment and a serious threat, but not, as Dr. Norman Peale so recklessly suggests, because he is Catholic."⁹² Buckley assured Peale that Vatican control over Kennedy was an impossibility. The Church's authority was infallible on matters of morality and doctrine but "where moral and civil law conflict, the Church will distinguish the authority of Ceasar." Peale's pope hunting as interpreted by Buckley implied that all Americans desired a president who was beyond the influence of religious morality, who was "the self-sufficient Autonomous man, and who would make all of his own rules." Buckley feared such a president. "God save us from such an event. Most of us are guided prescriptively -- by tradition, by habits of mind, and conscience, and morals."⁹³

Catholic Republican, George Dickenson, was upset with the political consequences of Peale's actions. In a

⁹²William Buckley, "A Little Positive Thought for Norman Vincent Peale," The National Review, September 24, 1960, pp. 168-169.

⁹³Ibid.

letter to Peale, he sarcastically suggested that the Democratic party should send him a note of thanks for his generous assistance. He saw the need for such action because Peale's manifesto turned many Catholic Republicans into Democrats. "Your brand of bigotry will influence many Republicans of Catholic faith to vote for Senator Kennedy."⁹⁴ Dickenson canvassed Catholic Republicans in his district and found that a majority of them had decided to vote against Nixon. Dickenson reminded Peale that Catholics never felt a special rapport with Kennedy, a man who was never really close to the Catholic Church. But his statement has changed all this.

I am sure that the majority of Americans of all faiths will now place you along side of the southern jack-leg preacher, who is educated, ignorant, intolerant, and stupid. You now have joined what has ⁹⁵come to be known in this country as the Lunatic Fringe.

Anti-Catholicism generated by Kennedy's nomination and Peale's statement in some instances provoked a more optimistic response among Catholics. A Few Catholics viewed this resurgence of bigotry as a time ripe with opportunity. As far as the editor of the San Francisco Monitor was concerned, Catholics who found Kennedy's candidacy uncomfortable, who decried "Jack, Go Home!," and who

⁹⁴George W. Dickenson to Norman Vincent Peale, Letter, September 12, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files), Box No. 1012.

⁹⁵Ibid.

disliked being on the "Hot Spot" because of their faith, wanted to return to the days of the ghetto "when no one even cared about their religion or way of life."⁹⁶ These "Dog in the Manager Catholics were spineless and feared giving public witness to their faith. But now we are on trial. He has brought the searchlight into our corner. He has shown that a faith is not only to be lived but defended."⁹⁷ The editor thought that Kennedy's nomination had provided Catholics with an audience, both concerned and inquisitive about their religious beliefs. If Catholics were successful in explaining their faith, the editor, using a football analogy, concluded that Catholics will never again be "second-class guards, good enough to hang around the locker room but never classy enough to make the starting line up."⁹⁸ The Catholic Transcript suggested that "Some good may come of this gross evil." The bigotry is out in the open to be adjudged for its scurrility, injustice, hyperbole, and hate. Commonweal noted that the Peale fiasco was not only the "highpoint of religious bigotry in this campaign but the turning point." The turning point represented the identification and criticism of unreasonable

⁹⁶"Jack, Go Home!," San Francisco Monitor, September 23, 1960, p. 24.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

sources of prejudice by both Catholics and non-Catholics.⁹⁹ Archbishop Connally of Portland, Oregon, although shocked and outraged by the anti-Catholicism of fair-minded Protestants comprising Peale's group, was optimistic that such pronouncements would extinguish the fires of prejudice.¹⁰⁰ Connally believed that irrational anti-Catholicism would lead to the paradoxical result of Catholic converts who despised such religious intolerance. "This verification will drive thousands of non-Catholic friends and neighbors into the Church and we must be prepared to meet them"¹⁰¹

Such propitious forecasts of anti-Catholicism were believed only by a Catholic minority. Most Catholics were indignant and harbored intense feelings of animosity toward their non-Catholic accusers. Church leaders and Catholic editors realized that the religious issue was not buried by Kennedy's nomination. Fearing religious strife and the ghost of Al Smith, they upheld their primary campaign strategy of political neutrality and Catholic responsibility. They called on fellow Catholics for calm and restraint. America's editorial staff announced it was

⁹⁹"Catholicism and the Campaign," Commonweal, September 23, 1960, pp. 507-508.

¹⁰⁰"Archbishop Connally Deplores Current Attack on Church," Northwest Progress, September 30, 1960, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

"No time for anger." They advised Catholics to remain calm, even though they were convinced that the country "was apparently right back where we were thirty years ago."¹⁰² What especially disturbed these editors was not the bigots of the lunatic fringe but the "rational bigoted pseudo-urbanites such as Norman Peale and Dr. Poling." They were dismayed that men of such stature could ally themselves with "the theologically bankrupt Protestant underworld of bigotry." Such false accusations deserved no answer. To do so would give them validity and distract from the real issues of the campaign.

The saddest thing about Dr. Peale's excursion into national politics on this level is that he is bound to divert needed energies and precious time into totally unprofitable channels of ignorant, enervating, and bigoted controversy. The problems to which he calls attention are pseudo-problems. Yet their unfortunate capacity for distracting and misleading even the intelligent citizen is so great that they tend to drive the real problems off the limited horizons of public attention.¹⁰³

Monsignor George Kelley in the pages of America beseeched Catholics that it was "A Time for Keeping on Shirts." He predicted that the religious conflagration would perhaps become worse than 1928, and advised fellow Catholics not to react to these despicable charges against American Catholicism. "Do not answer such idiocy nor react

¹⁰² Editorial, "No Time for Anger," America, September 24, 1960, pp. 689-690. The entire issue was devoted to anti-Catholicism in the presidential campaign.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

with typical resentment or anger, or your own bigotry. I will only dignify the charges of bigots."¹⁰⁴ At the very least, Kelly recommended that Catholics adhere to the Coolidge Campaign slogan, "Keep Cool," maintaining a reasonable and proper perspective on this current anti-Catholic hysteria.

Plenty of fertilizer will be used to propagate bigotry this fall. Let us use the DDT of common sense to keep it from growing in our own yards. The Catholic Church has survived much more vicious and much more intelligent attacks than these made by southern bigots.¹⁰⁵

Ave Maria's editor, John C. Reedy, reiterated Kelley's sage advice. Charity was the proper Catholic reaction to bigotry which was a "sickness of mind and soul." Catholics had no reason to fear such a cancer. "This bigotry constitutes no threat to the Church in the United States."¹⁰⁶ Reedy reminded Catholics that they were no longer an immigrant minority but forty million full-fledged Americans. Because these forces of intolerance were innocuous, he discerned Catholic demeanor as the most ominous dimension of this potentially explosive situation. "The real danger comes from the difficulty in controlling ourselves, in the avoidance of political muscle-flexing by

¹⁰⁴George Kelly, "A Time for Keeping on Shirts," America, September 24, 1960, pp. 700-701.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶John Reedy, "The Editor's Desk," Ave Maria, September 17, 1960, p. 2.

successful Americans and by a defensive minority."¹⁰⁷

Later, he reported a large Catholic response of charity but still warned of the dangers of falling into a retreat of anger.

The real issues in this all-important campaign are political and not religious. The greatest disservice we could do to our nation and our Church would be to allow the campaign to be dragged down to the depths by a handful¹⁰⁸ of rabble-rousing and religious hucksters.

Although he admitted that ". . . I am hurt by their attacks, I feel a deep sense of frustration at their charges," Dale Francis in his syndicated column "To Talk of Many Things" implored Catholics to counter these unreasonable and unconscionable attacks with Christian patience and understanding. "We are the ones who must act. It will not be easy but we must meet hatred with kindness. It is a time for love."¹⁰⁹ The Advocate, subsequent to Peale's fiasco, instructed members of the faith to perceive their predicament as "a wonderful opportunity of practicing the virtue of charity." Suspicion of Catholic patriotism

¹⁰⁷ John Reedy, "The Editor's Desk," Ave Maria, September 17, 1960, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ John Reedy, "How Should We Answer Them?" Ave Maria, September 17, 1960, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Dale Francis, "A Time for Love," Our Sunday Visitor, (National Edition), September 18, 1960, p. 6. He suggested that Catholics should react in the following way to prejudicial attacks: "by being better Catholics, by loving even those who attack your faith, by not allowing them to make you angry or bitter."

stemmed from ignorance and not malice; it was this ignorance that had engendered the religious tension in the 1960 Presidential campaign. Catholics, therefore, were the true culprits. "They had failed to adequately explain their faith to non-Catholics. They had failed to live up to their responsibilities, in removing this non-Catholic shortcoming"110

Renowned theologians and church leaders felt compelled to publicly state their positions during the campaign, becoming most conspicuous with the advent of Peale in Washington. John Courtney Murray asked Catholics to remain tranquil and imperturbable, despite his open admission that anti-Catholicism was in full bloom.

The brutal fact became increasingly clear. 'The Oldest American Prejudice,' as anti-Catholicism has rightly been called, is as poisonously alive today as it was in 1928, or in the eighteen nineties or even in the eighteen-forties . . . The ancient anti-Papal text is embellished by a new set of footnotes. The time worn anti-Catholic prejudice is cloaked in semblance of "rationality."¹¹¹

Shocked by the renewal of anti-Catholicism, Bishop John Mussio of the Steubenville diocese in Pennsylvania denounced Peale's platform of "filthy insinuations and rigamarole of dirty innuendoes," and boasted that Catholics were true American patriots.

¹¹⁰ Editorial, "With Charity," The Advocate, September 15, 1960, p. 8.

¹¹¹ Frontpage, America, September 24, 1960, p. 702.

We love our country with the same love we love our God. To betray the one would be to betray the other. If they will not take our proven word, what do they want? That we give up our Catholic faith? To force us into this choice in order to secure the full rights of American citizenship would be to make those very rights henchmen¹¹² to tyranny and a mockery of their significance.

In spite of his unsettled state, Bishop Mussio demanded that his co-religionists remain "calm and controlled when faced with anti-Catholic agitation," asking them to adhere to the Church's policy for all American-Catholics -- to be good and loyal citizens.¹¹³

This position of restraint and understanding compelled the leadership of the Church to penetrate and shed its ghetto mentality in order to respond rationally to anti-Catholic charges and to explain fully their faith to non-Catholics. Archbishop Karl L. Alter, in his essay "Nineteen Questions About A Catholic President," presented the official reply of the American Catholic Church.¹¹⁴ Methodically, he refuted all current accusations about the Church's role in American politics: Catholic loyalty, birth control and education policies, appointment of Vatican

¹¹²Press Release, "Bishop Mussio Condemns Spread of Anti-Catholic Bigotry in Presidential Campaign," September 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1016.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Karl J. Alter, Archbishop of Cincinnati, "Nineteen Questions about a Catholic President," Catholic Mind, September-October 1960, pp. 440-449. Originally published in The Sign, July 1960, pp. 11-14, 65.

Ambassador, and the volatile church-state relationship.

Alter wisely assuaged American fear of Catholic intolerance.

The fear that we as Catholics will use religious tolerance here to gain ascendancy in our country and then, having achieved political hegemony, proceed to deprive our fellow citizens of freedom of speech in religion, freedom of conscience, or impose our convictions upon them, willy-nilly, is utterly unwarranted by any doctrine of the Catholic Church, as well as by the consistent pronouncements of the American Hierarchy. We seek no privileged status; we proclaim our full adherence to the provisions of the constitution as of now as well as for the future.¹¹⁵

Another official Catholic promulgation consistently referred to throughout the remainder of the campaign was an address given by Gustave Weigel, professor of Ecclesiology at Woodstock College in Maryland. Entitled "A Theological Consideration of the Relations between Church and State," Weigel's address expressed his sense of disappointment, frustration, and even desperation with the persistence of non-Catholic doubts about the sincerity of Catholic commitment to the Constitution and religious freedom. Weigel divulged his trepidation. "At this moment what we are discussing can be explosive and destructive."¹¹⁶ After discussing the roots of non-Catholic fears, the feasibility of dialogue, the Church's stand on church-state relation-

¹¹⁵Karl J. Alter, Archbishop of Cincinnati, "Nineteen Questions about a Catholic President," Catholic Mind, September-October 1960, pp. 440-449. Originally published in The Sign, July 1960, pp. 11-14, 65.

¹¹⁶"Text of Father Gustave Weigel's Address on Church and State," The Catholic Transcript, October 6, 1960, p. 11.

ship, and the extent of Catholic support of religious tolerance, he described all Catholics in public office as devoted servants of the nation's common good and as stalwarts of religious liberty.

I conclude with a personal testimony. I have been working theology for 30 years. I have always admired and loved my country with its institutions and history. I can sincerely say that there is absolutely nothing in Catholic doctrine which would prevent a Catholic from holding public office on any level according to the letter and spirit of our American laws.¹¹⁷

Weigel's and Alter's discourses on Catholicism and Americanism inspired America to remind non-Catholics that Catholic patriotism represented a two-hundred year heritage. The Church's leadership since its inception to the present -- Archbishop John Carroll, Bishop John England, Archbishop John Hughes, James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop John T. McNicholas -- was a strong advocate of religious freedom and tolerance. It was, in fact, because of this tradition, that the American Church had created "one of the most flourishing and promising Catholic communities that has ever existed."¹¹⁸ The magazine concluded that the real issue was not Kennedy's personal faith but the Catholic Church and its teachings. This tradition of Americanism

¹¹⁷ "Text of Father Gustave Weigel's Address on Church and State," The Catholic Transcript, October 6, 1960, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Editorial, "On Religious Toleration," America, September 24, 1960, pp. 690-696.

should clarify all non-Catholic perceptions of Catholics being "Un-American," of their not accepting "the constitutional relationship between the government and religion as defined by the First Amendment."¹¹⁹

This rational Catholic defense, based upon self-restraint, was the Church's public stance throughout the campaign. Such a posture entailed a neutral reaction to the Democratic presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy. Afraid of raising Catholic resentment, of reinforcing Protestant trepidation, and of revealing any inkling of favoritism towards Kennedy, Catholic clergy, journals, and newspapers were factual and not interpretative in their comments on Kennedy's Houston performance. Nevertheless, some members of the Catholic laity unleashed their anger and disgust. Mrs. Sylvia Murch, deeply impressed with Kennedy's Houston speech, admonished that Nixon had better not win because of anti-Catholic sentiment. "Senator Kennedy, I do not want to sound bitter, believe me, I am not. I am just disgusted and discouraged. I live in the suburbs where 3/4 of the families are Catholic and believe they are really bursting with anger over this religious matter."¹²⁰ T. P. Cyrus of

¹¹⁹ Editorial, "On Religious Toleration," America, September 24, 1960, pp. 690-696.

¹²⁰ Mrs. Sylvia Murck to John F. Kennedy, Letter, October 7, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008.

Texas commended Kennedy on his oration but perceived it as appealing only to borderline moderates. "The Hardshell Baptists were not convinced."¹²¹ In order to completely alienate and isolate the beliefs and aims of these hardliners, Mr. Cyrus suggested the following scenario; one, he insisted, was his and not that of a crank's.

I suggest that the Democratic Party itself prepare and circulate anti-Catholic literature and posters of the mostly vile and bigoted exaggeration -- I mean Hitler hatred stuff -- which I believe would effectively separate moderates from the extremists.¹²² What I propose to do is to out babble the Baptists.

One hundred and sixty-six Catholic laymen also broke this official position of silence by the Church in an attempt to demonstrate to non-Catholics that Kennedy's views were congruous with other American-Catholics.¹²³ In defiance of clerical authority, these laymen resolved, that with bigotry rampant in the country, Catholics had a responsibility not to retreat in silence but to make their position clear to their fellow Americans as Kennedy was doing. Catholics must break out of their ghetto and explain their faith's devotion to religious liberty, and to the sanctity of private conscience. According to these laymen,

¹²¹T.P. Cyrus to John F. Kennedy, Letter, September 13, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1003.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Barret, American Presidency, pp. 164-166.

Catholics were not Catholic citizens but American citizens who happen to be Catholic. As true Americans, Catholics based their public and private acts upon the following precept.

In his public acts as they affect the whole community the Catholic is bound in conscience to promote the common good and to avoid seeking any sectarian advantage. He is also bound to recognize the proper scope of independence of the political order.¹²⁴

By October, Catholic clergy and laity had explained their position to non-Catholic neighbors and critics. Preaching calm and restraint, the American Church's reply to the Puerto Rico incident was very predictable and understandable. Richard Cardinal Cushing's response was typical. He insisted that American Church leaders would be "totally out of step" in telling American voters how to vote. In an attempt to reassure fellow Americans that the American Catholic Church was a separate institution from Puerto Rico's Church, he said:

We must repeat that whatever may be the custom elsewhere, the American tradition of which Catholics form so loyal a part, is satisfied simply to call to attention moral questions with their implications and leave to the conscience of the people the specific political¹²⁵ decision which comes in the act of voting.

Sheerin in his Catholic World wrote: "This bombshell was a surprise and shock to us in view of our constant and

¹²⁴Barret, American Presidency, pp. 164-166.

¹²⁵"Kennedy Campaign Form Letter on Puerto Rico," October 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1015.

insistent assurances to Protestants that our hierarchy has no political aspirations." Throughout the campaign thus far, Sheerin insisted that the Church has purposely avoided meddling in politics or influencing the Catholic vote. Most clergy, in fact, "favored the non-Catholic candidate." In closing, Sheerin promised that what happened in Puerto Rico would never happen in America "because the American Bishops have no desire to cast suspicions on American Catholic loyalty to and support of the First Amendment."¹²⁶

The Church's neutral political stance outraged a few lay Catholics like Mrs. Rita Menick. In a letter to Wine's Community Relations Committee, she complained that Kennedy was fighting the Catholic Church's battle "alone!." Such a cumbersome responsibility to fall upon the shoulders of one man was unfair and unjust. The Church and its hierarchy were pathetic in its stance of neutral retreat in this time of crisis. She conveyed to Wine that she failed in her efforts to provoke the entrance of the Church into the political fray in its own defense. Her request to Cardinal Spellman and the National Welfare Conference to reissue the 1948 statement on separation of Church and State went unanswered. Such action on the Church's part, she insisted, "was not necessarily to elect Kennedy, but to clear the air for millions of American Catholics who want to look at this

¹²⁶John Sheerin, "The Embarrassing Puerto Rican Pastoral," Catholic World, December 1960, pp. 132-136.

election unemotionally.¹²⁷

Concern over bigotry dominated the Catholic community up to election day. As balloting day approached, the National Review printed some of the most commonly expressed Catholic jokes. "A Protestant slogan: Eliminate the Middleman and Vote for Pope John. Nixon's Slogan: If elected I will go to Rome. Definition of bigotry: A Yale Catholic who won't vote for Kennedy because he want to Harvard. A Democratic cocktail: one part southern comfort, and two parts Holy water."¹²⁸ This satirical litany by the National Review divulged its disdain and its impatience with the survival of this "bogus issue." Father Gorman in the Sign revealed irritation with bigotry's longevity. "For several months, we have had an exhibition of religious bigotry similar to that of the presidential campaign of 1928. Few thought there could be such an outbreak again. Even intelligent and experienced observers of the American scene underestimated the power of what has been referred to as the Protestant underworld."¹²⁹ The major source of

¹²⁷Mrs. Rita Menick to James Wine, Letter, October 26, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1008; Also follow-up letter of October 27, 1960, Box No. 1008.

¹²⁸Editorial, "Going Around," The National Review, October 8, 1960, p. 201.

¹²⁹Father Gorman, "Bigots, 1960 Model," The Sign, November 1960, p. 14.

Gorman's exasperation was the persistent repetition of questions by non-Catholics that had already been answered one hundred times before. "Such a constant recurrence signified a belief that American Catholics individually and as a group were lying when they declare their adherence to the Constitution. That is bigotry!"¹³⁰ Gorman advised Catholics to ignore such bigoted importuning and to realize that the Church would neither lose or gain by the outcome of the presidential elections.

Lawrence Fuchs in his article "Religious Vote-Fact or Fiction?" also argued that religion would be insignificant in the outcome of the election. 1928 was not relevant or even comparable to 1960. Nixon was not Hoover, and perhaps most important of all, Kennedy was not Smith. Fuchs was convinced that Kennedy would win in spite of his faith because he was the best qualified candidate. He did admit that Kennedy's Catholicism would affect the votes of Protestant liberals and Jews, anti-Catholic bigots, and conservative Catholics. But overall, Fuchs maintained that the election results would demonstrate, "the pluralism and variety of opinion within American Catholicism, and the primary party loyalty over religious faith."

The Catholic factor, which will be talked about, will not be as important a vote determinant as people think. Millions of Catholics will swell with Catholic

¹³⁰Father Gorman, "Bigots, 1960 Model," The Sign, November 1960, p. 14.

pride because Jack Kennedy heads the Democratic party ticket, but the overwhelming majority of them would have voted Democratic anyway.¹³¹

That religion was not and should not be a factor in the election became the Catholic theme during the final week of the campaign. The fact that the Church had maintained a neutral position concerning the candidates reflected the lack of religion's influence. The Catholic Sentinel boasted that no other religious group was as "neutral as the Catholic Church." Of the 53,796 Catholic priests listed in the 1960 Catholic Directory, only one priest injected himself into the political arena -- Father Juniper Carol.¹³² Official Catholic reticence was illustrated in the St. Louis' Parish Bulletin of Bellevue, Washington. It published the following policy regarding campaign literature.

No partisan campaign literature of a political nature should be distributed, or a speech given at a Guild meeting or any other parish function. Parish lists, Guild lists, or any list pertaining to the parish must not be given to advertising agencies, merchants, or political parties. This is the ruling of the Archdiocese and must be strictly enforced.¹³³

Monsignor George Casey, while praising his fellow priests

¹³¹Lawrence Fuchs, "The Religious Vote-Fact or Fiction?" The Catholic World, October 1960, pp. 9-16.

¹³²Editorial, "President Kennedy," Catholic Sentinel, November 10, 1960, p. 1.

¹³³Saint Louis Parish Bulletin, October 16, 1960 (John F. Kennedy Library: Religious Issue Files of James Wine), Box No. 1007.

for doing a remarkable job of keeping politics out of the Church, restated the noble purpose for imposing such self-control.

Let me also tell you that this determination of the Catholic priests of the United States to avoid politicking at this time is neither a tactic nor a feint. It is a high purpose to keep first things first, and that is the communication of God's will and the dispensing of his saving grace to souls. It is not for anybody's political sake, but for religion's sake.¹³⁴

The Catholic press importuned Catholics to vote for the best qualified candidate regardless of his faith. The Boston Pilot commanded Catholics to vote and vote intelligently.¹³⁵ Reedy in his Ave Maria advised his fellow Catholics to vote their conscience and not to feel embarrassed about voting for a non-Catholic "if for the right reason." Reedy reassured Catholics of religion's lack of influence on election day. "Our ballots will be cast on non-religious grounds . . . and we feel so will the ballots of the vast majority of Americans."¹³⁶ The Catholic Sentinel implored Catholics not to vote out of the hate for Protestants. Instead, "we must give back love, which as we

¹³⁴George Casey, "Priest and Politics," Boston Pilot, October 22, 1960, p. 4.

¹³⁵Editorial, "Time for Decision," Boston Pilot, November 5, 1960, p. 4.

¹³⁶Editorial, "How a Catholic Should Vote?" Ave Maria, November 5, 1960.

know is the basis for all Christ's teachings."¹³⁷ The Texas Catholic advised its readers not to cast a vote of revenge. "These bigots will receive their just punishment in the hereafter, when God will decide which souls will go to heaven and which souls will go to hell."¹³⁸ Finally, Our Sunday Visitor editor lamented that only six out of ten persons would vote in the upcoming election. He impressed upon Catholics that it was a moral duty to vote and to vote wisely for the common good.¹³⁹

Three days before the election the editor of America observed that there had been a larger circulation of hate literature in 1960 than in 1928. In spite of this augmentation, the editor commended his peers for their lack of resentment and bitterness and for never acting as a partisan protagonists of John F. Kennedy. "Catholics in the United States can be proud of how their priests and their Catholic press conducted themselves with such admirable restraint during these trying times."¹⁴⁰ According to the

¹³⁷ Editorial, "Vote As a Free Citizen," Catholic Sentinel, November 3, 1960, p. 1, 28.

¹³⁸ Gordon O'Neill, "The Godless . . . Versus . . . The Grace of God," The Texas Catholic, November 12, 1960, p. 1. He penned article three weeks before election.

¹³⁹ Editorial, "Politics and You," Our Sunday Visitor, (Lafayette Edition), October 19, 1960, p. 2A.

¹⁴⁰ Editorial, "Voting Is Our Duty," America, November 5, 1960, p. 162.

editor, Catholics will not base their franchise upon religion but upon two critical aspects of the country's needs -- exceptional leadership and a strong foreign policy.¹⁴¹

Reedy in Ave Maria echoed similar sentiments as the campaign neared its end. He was pleased with Catholic moderation in spite of bigoted attacks and in spite of the harboring of inner resentment to these charges of "disloyalty or stupidity." Reedy insisted that if the Catholic candidate won the election, it would not be a victory for the Church, and if he lost, it would not be a defeat for the Church. The election was a political event whose ramifications would affect the entire citizenry of the country. Reedy, in his closing remarks, drew one lesson he hoped Catholics had learned as a result of this tumultuous campaign: "We also know that we have a serious obligation to make ourselves and the Church better known and better understand by our fellow citizens."¹⁴²

Robert Hoyt in the pages of Kansas City-St. Joseph Register provided the most realistic assessment of the campaign and its impact upon the Church on the eve of the election. Although he commended fellow Catholics for their

¹⁴¹Editorial, "Voting Is Our Duty," America, November 5, 1960, p. 162.

¹⁴²John Reedy, "The Editor's Desk," Ave Maria, November 5, 1960, p. 2.

restrained response to the unreasonable charges of anti-Catholics, he feared that the religious issue in the campaign and the election result would determine whether the American Catholic future would be directed by ghettoism or dialogue. The main thrust of his advice was really an attempt to separate the election results from the religious issue in the hopes of circumventing a retreat of bitterness on a larger scale than in 1928.

My own feeling is that the Church does not stand to gain or lose greatly from the election itself. The general trend toward the integration of Catholics into the life of the country was not begun by Kennedy and its continuance does not depend on his personal fortune. The important question is not whether the trend continues, but whether Catholics will be able to preserve and deepen their Catholicity as they assume the responsibilities of full civic and social acceptance. The question is not only what Catholics stand to gain, but what they have to offer.¹⁴³

John F. Kennedy won the election, becoming the first Catholic president of the United States. Kennedy won 303 electoral college votes to Nixon's 219. In terms of the popular vote, it was one of the closest in election history: Kennedy 34, 221, 349, and Nixon 34, 108, 456.¹⁴⁴ Most contemporary commentators attributed Kennedy's one hundred thousand vote margin to his religion. Newsweek determined that Kennedy's Catholicism had a positive impact on the

¹⁴³Robert Hoyt, "Opinion Worth Nothing," America, (Reprint) November 4, 1960, pp. 171-175.

¹⁴⁴Catholic Quarterly Almanac, 86th Congress: 2nd Session, Vol. 16, pp. 804-809, 1025.

election results, because Kennedy's overall strategy was to trade the little states for the big states. "As a result of this strategy, one of the great issues of the campaign -- the Catholic faith of Kennedy -- took a turn that on balance resounded to his advantage."¹⁴⁵ Newsweek was willing to concede that religion had "contributed heavily if not decisively," to his losses in smaller states such as Tennessee, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Indiana, and Iowa.

But these losses had been much more than offset by victories in New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Kennedy's Catholicism had been a decided asset, not only because it won him many Catholic votes but also because the anti-Catholic propaganda it inspired won him the sympathy of Liberal Protestants and Jews.¹⁴⁶

Time magazine agreed with Newsweek's analysis of the election results. It concluded that Kennedy's Catholicism "was certainly a factor in his favor in the big cities, where Catholics are most heavily concentrated, though the Catholic vote was not so monolithic as Kennedy had hoped."¹⁴⁷ John Wicklein of the New York Times remarked that "a strong, silent Protestant vote cut into Senator John F. Kennedy's margin of victory . . . but was offset by a more strategically placed Catholic vote which aided the

¹⁴⁵"Election Blue Extra," Newsweek, November 14, 1960, p. EE2.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷"Analysts Disagree on Role of Religion Played in Elections," The Catholic Messenger, November 17, 1960, p. 1.

senator in large states he needed to win."¹⁴⁸ Samuel Lubell, the political analyst, inferred the same rationale for Kennedy's victory over Nixon. "How the electoral vote fell indicates that Senator Kennedy's religion helped rather than hurt his election chances."¹⁴⁹ Even the post-election Gallop Poll, taking into account that out of the country's population of 180 million, 40 million or 22.8 per cent were Catholic, demonstrated that the Catholic vote for Kennedy was strongest in the regions that consisted of the big states with large electoral votes -- East and Midwest.¹⁵⁰

Catholic Vote

Region	Kennedy	Nixon
East	77%	23%
Midwest	81%	19%
South	75%	25%
West	74%	26%

One year after the election, the Brookings Institute analyzed the election in The Presidential Election and

¹⁴⁸"Analysts Disagree on Role of Religion Played in Elections," The Catholic Messenger, November 17, 1960, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰"Post-Election Analysis-The Catholic Poll," Gallop Poll, 1960, pp. 1692-1693. Also provided a regional breakdown of the Protestant vote. Kennedy's greatest support among Protestants was in the south: Kennedy 47% and Nixon 53%. In the Midwest Kennedy received 38% of the Protestant vote, in the West 37% of the Protestant vote, and in the East only 28% of the Protestant vote.

Transition 1960-1961.¹⁵¹ V.O. Key's essay "Interpreting the Election Results" acknowledged that "the most marked accreditations to Democratic strength 1956-1960 occurred in states with extremely high proportions of Roman Catholics," and confirmed previous interpretations that the religious factor "was of overwhelming importance in shifting voters in the 1960 election."¹⁵² He, however, perceived political loyalties as very intricate and complex. Although there was a dramatic increase in the Democratic vote in Catholic areas in the Northeast and Midwest, there were other heavily Catholic areas failing to produce such conspicuously biased results. Although Kennedy ran behind Stevenson in the Protestant South, there were other Protestant areas he ran ahead in. Key attributed these diverse voting trends to the religious issue's impact on party affiliations. "Of the appeals peculiar to the campaign, the religious issue evidently far outweighed the others. For some people, it reinforced the pull of partisanship; for others it ran counter to the tugs of party loyalty."¹⁵³ In the final analysis, Key maintained that Kennedy captured most but not all of the Democratic Catholic defectors of 1956 and

¹⁵¹Paul T. David, The Presidential Election and Transition 1960-1961 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1961).

¹⁵²Ibid., pp. 150-176.

¹⁵³Ibid., pp. 155-158, 174.

received the same vote amongst Protestant Democrats in 1960 as in 1956 -- roughly 38%. This twin influence of party and religion convinced Key that "Probably the best guess is that Kennedy won in spite of rather than because of the fact that he was Catholic."¹⁵⁴

Later scholars have also debated the detrimental or beneficial impact that religion had on Kennedy's election. Albert Menendez concluded: "He (Kennedy) could not have won without a respectable Protestant showing, but his outstanding triumph among Catholics and Jews who turned out in large numbers, saved the day for him."¹⁵⁵ The net Catholic gain for Kennedy, according to Menendez, was 12.1 million votes and net Protestant loss was 13.6 million. All told, therefore, 26 million of the 68 million presidential votes were determined by the religious issue. Due to traditional party preferences, Kennedy did best among the Southern Protestants with 47% of their vote and worst among Northeastern Protestants with 28% of their vote. The heaviest anti-Catholic voting occurred in the Border states such as rural Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee.¹⁵⁶ Essentially, Menendez concluded, Kennedy owed

¹⁵⁴Paul T. David, The Presidential Election and Transition 1960-1961 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1961), pp. 175.

¹⁵⁵Albert J. Menendez, Religion at the Polls, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 78.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

his victory to both Protestants and Catholics.

Paul Lopatto attributed Kennedy's victory to the Catholic vote. "This election contest, which witnessed an inordinate amount of attention being paid to Kennedy's religious affiliation, resulted in the mobilization of millions of Catholic voters behind the Democratic candidate."¹⁵⁷ Taking a historical perspective of the 1960 election in the 1980's, he determined that it was the last time a Democratic candidate would be the beneficiary of the heretofore traditional party loyalty amongst Catholics. Prejudice had induced Catholics to revert to their traditional party preference in 1960, despite the fact that their economic interest had drastically changed from the days of FDR. Social mobility since World War II had catapulted a large majority of Catholics from the working class to the middle and upper classes, which induced a swing to the Republican party. But this tenuous Catholic support of the Democratic party in the 1960 election was shattered by Kennedy's victory and assassination. These two events rendered anti-Catholicism null and void in subsequent presidential campaigns and elections and transformed Catholics into loyal Americans. According to Lopatto, "This new acceptance meant that in the future it would be easier

¹⁵⁷ Paul Lopatto, Religion and the Presidential Elections, 1960-1980, (New York: Praeger Studies, 1985), pp. 67, 162.

for many Catholics to support a Republican party that had so often in the past acted as a vehicle for the nativist and anti-Catholic elements in the political system."¹⁵⁸ Thus, over the next 20 years, more and more Catholics found it in their interest to join the Republican party.¹⁵⁹

Whether Kennedy's political strategy of capturing Catholic ballots in states with the largest electoral votes allowed him to win the election because of, or in spite of, his faith does not detract from the importance of the candidate's and the Church's successful avoidance of a repeat of 1928 in the presidential campaign. Kennedy's Houston speech and Community Relations Committee cautiously undermined the charge of Catholic political disloyalty. The American Catholic Church discredited bigoted accusations by providing numerous explications on sensitive Church-State issues, by maintaining its stance of neutrality toward the political fortunes of either candidate, and by imploring its members to endure the crisis with impartiality and understanding. Although Kennedy and the Church did not eradicate anti-Catholicism from the campaign, they did contain its hate and rancor. This containment dislodged bigotry as a significant factor in the election results,

¹⁵⁸ Paul Lapatto, Religion and the Presidential Elections, 1960-1980, (New York: Praeger Studies, 1985), pp. 67, 162.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 162-163.

persuaded non-Catholics with honest doubts that Catholicism and Americanism were compatible, and once and for all, shattered the seemingly ageless American tradition of "No Catholic in the White House."

EPILOGUE

The Catholic Church celebrated Kennedy's victory and its role in preventing a sectarian conflagration. The election of the first Catholic president represented a psychological victory that meant Catholics had become first-class citizens. Editors of The Catholic Press declared boldly the death of bigotry and announced the ushering in of a "New Frontier in Religious Relations," characterized by tolerance and understanding. Monsignor Francis Lally, editor of the Boston Pilot, was pleased with the election results which proved that "The mass of Protestants considered the religious issue at least a secondary one" and which symbolized the death of bigotry.

Kennedy was doubtless correct when he said he buried the religious issue in the Hills of West Virginia. He might have added that he preached its eulogy in Houston and that the American people raised a massive monument over its grave on Tuesday.¹

The Trenton Monitor declared that "Naturally, there is a pride among Catholics . . . and there will be fervent

¹"Religious Issue Dead," Monsignor Lally Says," The Catholic Messenger, November 17, 1960, p. 1.

prayer for his success."² The Providence Visitor proclaimed that never again will the hardcore bigotry "be dignified with public respectability."³ The Catholic Herald-Citizen of Milwaukee proclaimed the official burial of Catholic American second-class citizen status. The San Francisco Monitor ordered fellow Catholics to tear up their second-class citizen cards and declared that "The irresponsible teenage years are over. Catholics have matured to adulthood because Kennedy's victory broke the walls of prejudice and ended the days of Catholic exile in American society."⁴

Even The Tablet joined in the celebration. It congratulated Kennedy on his victory. "His is an historic triumph and all will rejoice in the fact that a Catholic has been elected president -- that 1960 has put to rest the allegation that this great land of ours practiced religious discrimination for its highest office."⁵ The paper's editor reminded Margaret Sanger to keep her promise about moving out of the United States, and facetiously speculated how many Kennedys would Sanger have birth controlled out of

²"Diocesan Papers See a Defeat for Bigotry," The Catholic Messenger, November 17, 1960, p. 1.

³Ibid.

⁴Editorial, "The Breakthrough," San Francisco Monitor, November 11, 1960, p. 16.

⁵Editorial, "Our New President," The Tablet, November 12, 1960, p. 10

existence.⁶ The Alamo Register exemplified the tribal pride as well as thanks for Kennedy's triumph. "A Catholic can be pardonably proud in Kennedy's election. He can be proud that a giant barricade to his own potential as a citizen has been removed."⁷ Kennedy was a Catholic hero as well as an "American Hero."⁸ Francis J. Connell in the American Ecclesiastical Review encouraged Catholics to share in celebration with all Americans. "We have reason to rejoice that at last a Catholic has been regarded worthy of the presidency by a sufficient number of Americans. But rejoice as Americans rather than Catholics."⁹

Kennedy's win engendered Catholic praise for the liberal secularists. America compared the New Republic's 1928 and 1960 reaction to a Catholic presidential candidate. It discovered that in 1928 the New Republic ignored the Catholic issue, printing only one editorial, a book review, and two letters.¹⁰ In contrast, thirty years later, the

⁶Editorial, "Our New President," The Tablet, November 12, 1960, p. 10

⁷Dick Meskill, "In the Shadow of San Fernando," The Alamo Register, November 10, 1960, p. 1.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Francis J. Connell, "Now That the Election Is Over," American Ecclesiastical Review, June 1961, pp. 1-14.

¹⁰Editorial, "Catholicism Comes of Age," America, December 17, 1960, p. 389.

magazine devoted its March 21 issue to Catholics in America, printed numerous editorials defending Catholics, and published book reviews that clarified the Catholic position on Church-State issues. "This change in the treatment of the Catholic issue between 1928-1960 is a significant development in the liberal secular mind. On its own, it marks Catholicism's Coming of Age in American Society."¹¹ This emotional bliss influenced the editor of the San Francisco Monitor to predict the rise of another minority in American society. "It is an indication that America is growing up, though painfully. It is now a time to ask another question: What about a Jew in the White House, or an American of yellow skin and slanted eyes, or a Negro? The day may not be far off."¹²

Catholic enthusiasm and optimism was infectious. James Wine, who fought in the trenches of religious bigotry throughout the campaign, declared the demise of intolerance and the birth of religious understanding. "Both Catholics and Protestants have been enlightened about each other. They found they had much more in common than they suspected before. Everyone knew where the differences lay -- they were the things that got talked about -- but no one bothered

¹¹Editorial, "Catholicism Comes of Age," America, December 17, 1960, p. 389.

¹²Editorial, "The Breakthrough," San Francisco Monitor, November 11, 1960, p. 389.

to notice how much both groups shared. The climate is right for cooperation and the friendly exchange of ideas; now it's up to individuals -- and I think they are ready for it."¹³ Journalists of the secular press concurred with Wine. The New York Journal American described the election as "a momentous milestone on the road to religious tolerance."¹⁴ The Pittsburg Post-Gazette offered Kennedy's triumph as proof that "religion is not a barrier to public office in the United States."¹⁵ Rabbi Richard C. Hertz of Detroit concluded: "Brotherhood is no longer a wild dream. I believe bigotry was dealt a hammer blow by those who realize that what a man stands for must become more decisive than what his religious label is."¹⁶ Finally, the bliss of winning seemed to temper Catholic assessment of the severity of their trial of bigotry. Robert Hoyt in Jubilee concluded that the anti-Catholicism of 1960 was less severe than past outbreaks and contemporary prejudices against Blacks and Jews.

In retrospect, the ordeal of American Catholicism was not really much of an ordeal. This is easy to say now, of course, because the anti-Catholic agitation

¹³"End of an Issue," Newsweek, November 28, 1960, p. 82.

¹⁴"Religious Issues," The Catholic Messenger, November 17, 1960, p. 12.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶"End of an Issue?" Newsweek, November 28, 1960, p. 82.

failed the accomplishment of its objective. It was tiresome, irritating sometimes, humiliating to listen to the slander and read the calumny; but despite all the noise, the thing was mild compared with the trials our Catholic forebears suffered here and those our contemporaries are suffering elsewhere. Suppose a Jew had been nominated; the filth would have piled up to our ears. Consider what happened when Mr. Lodge dared to suggest -- quelle folie -- the possibility of a Negro in the cabinet. I suggest that Catholics who felt they were being put to an ultimate test had lost their sense of proportion.¹⁷

In the aftermath of Kennedy's victory, some Catholic editors blamed their own community for the existence of bigotry in the presidential campaign. According to these observers, religion was an issue because of one major Catholic American shortcoming that was exhumed and accentuated by the presidential campaign -- the ostensible lack of religious educated leaders among its laity. The Providence Visitor argued that Kennedy's political struggle revealed "the horrifying ignorance" of Catholic lay persons about their faith.¹⁸ This Catholic disability contributed to the distorted image that non-Catholics had of the Church. When lay persons were approached by other Americans with questions about their faith, "It was too plain that they did not have the

¹⁷Robert Hoyt, "Kennedy, Catholicism, and the Presidency," Jubilee, December 1960, pp. 12-16.

¹⁸Editorial, "A First Catholic President," The Providence Visitor, November 10, 1960, p.4.

answers."¹⁹ The Denver Catholic Register depicted Catholic lay persons as incapable and unwilling to explain their faith to concerned non-Catholics and recommended that such a deplorable shortcoming must be eradicated to avoid future calamities.

I have the impression that there are many more Protestants than Catholics who are acquainted with the contents of Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors. It is going to take more to dispel Protestant fears of the Church than the simple reassurances of Catholics who do not know the issues. It is going to take knowledge.²⁰ It is time we started gathering that knowledge.

Ave Maria insisted that, now with a Catholic president, it was more urgent than ever for Catholics to be knowledgeable of Church doctrine. "John F. Kennedy, as well as you, will be constantly asked about your Church's position on any issue. Today's American Catholics will have to be better informed about the teachings of their religion than any previous generation was or they will be responsible for their ignorance."²¹

The dearth of Catholic lay leadership was another significant source of non-Catholic misunderstanding and bigotry during the past year. Kennedy improved this area of

¹⁹ Editorial, "A First Catholic President," The Providence Visitor, November 10, 1960, p.4.

²⁰ Edward Smith, "Catholic Ignorance, Protestant Fear," Denver Catholic Register, November 17, 1960, p. 4.

²¹ John Reedy, "The Editor's Desk," Ave Maria, November 26, 1960, p. 2.

deficiency by speaking out as a member of his faith, independent of the Church's hierarchy. "He asked no Cardinal, Bishop, or priest to become his spokesman. It probably amazed some American Protestants that thought this was even impossible."²² Robert Hoyt was impressed with Kennedy's example of lay leadership in the Church. But he also noted the statement of the 166 laymen as another illustration of autonomous action. To Hoyt, the content of the statement was not as important as the act itself -- a conscious and public act by the laity entirely independent of clerical authority. "It was the confidence the signers displayed in taking this initiative; confidence, first, in their ability to express the American Catholic consensus; and second, in their right as Catholics to address themselves to the public without prior consultation with clerical authorities -- all this without creating any suggestion of disrespect for clerical prerogatives."²³ In the end, Hoyt contended that this novel development in the Church -- the emergence of an independent Catholic lay leadership -- was quintessential if Catholics were to allay all Protestant fears and to erase all Protestant doubts about Catholic loyalty.²⁴

²²John J. Kane, "The New Frontier in Religious Relations," Ave Maria, November 26, 1960, p. 2.

²³Robert Hoyt, "Kennedy, Catholicism, and the Presidency," Jubilee, December 1960, pp. 12-16.

²⁴Robert Hoyt, "Kennedy, Catholicism, and the

Underlying this reasonable scrutiny of the sources of bigotry was a realistic foreboding over the Church's future role in this "New Frontier" in American religious relations. The Catholic Herald Citizen after its initial celebration cautioned fellow Catholics that the real trial was just beginning.²⁵ The Michigan Catholic agreed that the first Catholic president and his community "will be more closely scrutinized."²⁶ The New World of Chicago asked Catholics to pray for the president's and their community's successful passage through this crucial state in the process of becoming accepted Americans.²⁷ Father Ralph Gorman, editor of the Sign, argued that the major consequence of Kennedy's election and campaign was its divulging of a less than desirable and misconceived public image of the Church. Americans believed that the American Catholic Church owed

Presidency," Jubilee, December 1960, pp. 12-16. Also, see Robert Hoyt, "Church-State Relations, 1960," Ave Maria, December 31, 1960, pp. 5-6. He noted that another positive aspect of the campaign was that "Catholics of high and low degree were forced to restate doctrine in terms of the modern American context." He listed the following as examples: speech by Gustave Weigel, questions and answers by Archbishop Karl Alter, statement of 166 Catholic lay persons, Murray's We Hold These Truths, and Kennedy's Houston speech.

²⁵Editorial, "A Memorable Election," The Catholic Herald Citizen, November 19, 1960, p. 2.

²⁶Editorial, "The World Watches," The Michigan Catholic, November 10, 1960, p. 1.

²⁷Editorial, "A Time for Prayers Rather than Cheers," New World, November 18, 1960, p. 4.

its first allegiance to a foreign power, wanted to destroy religious liberty in the country, sought union of church and state, desired to use civil legislation to impose its morality on all Americans, and as an organized interest group, feigned concern about others in society "when she thinks she can derive some selfish advantage." Horrified by such misconceptions and wanting to dispel them, Gorman called for "Operation Understanding." For such operation to be successful, an educated lay leadership was needed to emerge and to make a conscious and public effort on local, state, and national levels to disseminate the true image of American Catholicism.²⁸

John F. Kane, former director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, believed that the future of the American Church was inextricably linked to the fortunes of this first Catholic presidency, which would either promote religious harmony or disharmony in the country. Kennedy would have to walk a tightrope, displaying no favoritism toward the Catholic Church. Fellow Catholics, Kane admonished, must walk the same tightrope, fostering understanding, while not abusing their new status in society with an outburst of sectarianism. Kane resolved, "Kennedy must be viewed as an American president. One can only

²⁸Ralph J. Gorman, "The New President," The Sign, January 1961, p. 6 and "Public Image of the Catholic Church," pp. 7-8.

sincerely hope that whatever his achievements may be -- and Americans may hope that these will be many -- there should be no Catholic tendency to make capital out of it on a religious basis."²⁹ George Kelly in the pages of America recognized the difficult role Catholics would have to undertake for the next four years. "Catholics face the paradoxical task of keeping shirts on and taking them off." Catholics must keep shirts on when President Kennedy is criticized by non-Catholics. Such criticism must be perceived not as prejudice but as an honest difference of opinion. Catholics, on the other hand, must be willing to take their shirts off when attempting to explain their faith to other Americans. Although the old religious issue was badly wounded on November 8, "We can do much to make that wound mortal during the next four years!"³⁰

Foremost a realistic and skillful politician, Kennedy was more circumspect about this "New Frontier in Religious Relations." He disagreed with other Catholics that the religious issue was dead in American politics. His election demonstrated that a Catholic could be elected to the highest office in the land, "but the real test was not

²⁹John J. Kane, "The New Frontier in Religious Relations," Ave Maria, December 17, 1960, pp. 9-11.

³⁰George Kelly, "The Years Ahead," America, January 21, 1961, pp. 502-504.

his election but his administration."³¹ The real test was the continued vigilance by his non-Catholic opposition as to whether or not he would succumb to the influence of his Church leaders while in office. Sorensen expressed both his and Kennedy's concern about the religious implications of his actions as president. "But if his conduct of the office was in keeping with his campaign pledge and constitutional oath, then, while unreasoning bigotry would always remain and legitimate church-state questions would always be raised, the unwritten law against a Catholic president would not only be temporarily broken but permanently repealed."³²

From the first days of his presidency, Kennedy walked a tightrope of religious neutrality, never advocating for his fellow Catholics, basing all of his policies on constitutional grounds, and frequently stressing in actions and words his independence from the hierarchy's authority and influence. Not to show any favoritism to any faith, Kennedy's staff and cabinet members consisted of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and secularists. Pierre Salinger wrote: "President John F. Kennedy's personal staff was an unlikely mixture. We were Catholics, Protestants, Jews. We came from the East, Midwest, and the Far West, and from

³¹Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy, (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), p. 400.

³²Ibid., pp. 400-401.

backgrounds of poverty and wealth."³³ Salinger observed, the only thing they held in common was salary and "a total" commitment to the president.³⁴ A simple response to Pope John XXIII's congratulatory note of January 20, 1960 proved to be a major and critical undertaking in the president's attempt to dispel suspicions of collusion between the Vatican and the White House. His advisors issued precautionary guidelines that he should follow in composing and sending his return note. Because the United States did not maintain diplomatic relations with the Vatican, he should send his note directly from the White House to the Pope without passing through the American embassy at Rome. Just as important to his advisors was this second stipulation: The text of the President's reply should not be released in Washington.³⁵ By following these procedures and by carefully crafting the note, Kennedy and his advisors believed they followed the course least likely to incite Protestant fears and suspicions of papal influence in the White House.³⁶

³³Pierre Salinger, With Kennedy, (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 63-70.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Walter J. Stoessel, Jr. to White House, Memorandum, February 1, 1961 (John F. Kennedy Library: Pre-Presidential Papers, President's Office Files), Box No. 28.

³⁶Ibid., Also contains Kennedy's note of thanks to Pope John XXIII. Kennedy's papers contain additional.

Unfortunately, Kennedy's vigilance of non-Catholic fears and sensitivities throughout his presidency terminated the Church's celebration of his victory and his "New Frontier in Religious Relations." The volatile Catholic dimension of the religious issue was revived. Like the days of the Look interview, the Church hierarchy and press took umbrage with the effect that Kennedy's appeasement had upon his presidential decisions. Catholic ire, disagreement, and frustration erupted over such issues as federal aid to parochial schools, prayer in the public classrooms, Civil Rights, Vietnam, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy's adroit handling of his presidential religious trial until his untimely death is another critical episode to be told by historians. But in the end, his assassination ensured that future presidents of the United States never again would have to face the same challenges of the oldest of American prejudices.

correspondence to Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI. See John F. Kennedy to Pope John XXIII, Letter, May 7, 1963 (John F. Kennedy Library: President's Office Files), Box No. 31; Press Release on Pope John's death, June 1963, Box No. 31, and Pope Paul VI to John F. Kennedy, Letter, July 11, 1963, Box No. 32.

CONCLUSION

In 1960, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected the first Catholic President of the United States. The American tradition of "No Catholic in the White House" was shattered. Kennedy succeeded in 1960 for many reasons. In the postwar world, the United States was undergoing a cultural transformation. Protestant America was becoming pluralistic. Catholic America was transforming. This religious community was leaving its ghetto past behind, experiencing upward social and economic mobility, and was emerging as a potent force in American politics. Catholic-America was becoming Americanized.

Kennedy's rise to national prominence in the 1950's was built on the foundations of pluralism and the Americanized-Catholic community. Kennedy himself represented this new breed of an American-Catholic politician who felt comfortable with the country's Anglo-American tradition. His non-Catholic education and privileged upbringing also manifested themselves in his public image of pure Americanism. Unlike Smith, his ethnicity and religion were afterthoughts to his pervasive Americanism.

Beginning in 1956 when he sought the vice-presidential bid of the Democratic party and up until his election in 1960, Kennedy openly and directly confronted the religious issue. In 1956, he overcame the ghost of Al Smith by persuading Democratic leaders that there was a solid Catholic vote in the American electorate. His being a Catholic was, therefore, a political asset and not a liability. Although he lost the vice-presidential candidacy, he became a nationally recognized leader of the Democratic party and a viable contender for the presidency of the United States.

Kennedy defended his faith throughout his pursuit of the highest office in the land. In 1959, he assuaged Protestant fears in his Look interview. During his primary campaign, he delivered an overpowering speech to the Associated Society of Newspaper Editors in which he declared, "I am not a Catholic candidate." During the presidential campaign, he presented his Houston speech (perhaps the most eloquent of his career) in response to Peale's manifesto. Up until the last day of the campaign, Kennedy answered queries about the compatibility of his faith with the constitutional obligations of the presidency. Although at times exasperated, Kennedy, unlike Smith, never once retreated into a posture of bitterness, resentment, or defensiveness. By fielding all questions and by demonstrating his independence of the Church's hierarchy in

words and deeds, he conveyed to his fellow citizens an image of an American candidate who happened to be Catholic, and as a result, received 38% of the non-Catholic vote.

Just as important as Kennedy's allaying of Protestant fears was the Catholic issue. Kennedy first encountered the unexpected Catholic dimension of the religious issue after his Look interview in 1959. His oath statement which severed religious and public life engendered the criticism and wrath of the Church's hierarchy and press. They perceived his comments as a shocking espousal of godless secularism and as a humiliating attempt to appease anti-Catholic bigots. Kennedy became a "Betrayal of his own Kind." The tension between Kennedy and his Church heightened over birth control. He was convinced that the untimely issuance of the bishops' pastoral letter on the eve of the campaign proved the hierarchy's inherent animosity for him and their disapprobation of his election. Filled with trepidation and anxiety over both the Catholic and Protestant dimensions of the religious issue, he announced his nomination in January of 1960.

The fear of a repeat of the bigotry of 1928, however, brought the American Catholic Church and candidate into a fortuitous and cooperative defense of the faith. The West Virginia primary raised anti-Catholic fears and criticism of a Catholic vote. Now the Church and press perceived the candidate as a victim of bigotry and adhered

to certain principles in reacting to anti-Catholic charges. Together, they maintained a posture of political neutrality toward the political fortunes of any candidate, willingly explained the compatibility of Catholicism and Americanism to non-Catholics, and enjoined fellow Catholics to remain calm and to forgive their ignorant accusers. After Kennedy won in West Virginia and the nomination at the Democratic convention in July, the Church and press championed Kennedy as a "Defender of the Faith" and declared prematurely the demise of the religious issue.

But in September, the Peale proclamation revived Catholic fears of bigotry's influence. Until election day, the Catholic hierarchy and press upheld Kennedy as defender of the faith and adhered to its primary strategy of Catholic neutrality and responsibility. Never once did they resort to name calling or to raising the walls of defensiveness or bitterness. Instead of generating a sectarian conflagration, the Church prevented it by containing the volatility of bigotry. On election day, Kennedy was deeply indebted to his most unlikely ally for his non-Catholic vote.

Pluralism, an Americanized Church and candidate, Kennedy's direct confrontation of the religious issue, the fear of another 1928, and the strategically located Catholic vote were all significant factors in the election of this country's first Catholic president. But just as, or

perhaps, more important in Kennedy's election and the avoidance of a remake of 1928 was the campaign of neutrality and restraint conducted by the American Catholic hierarchy and press. All told, these factors converged to destroy the oldest of American prejudices -- "No Catholic in the White House." In the end, Kennedy's election removed anti-Catholicism as a serious consideration in future presidential politics, symbolized the demise of Protestant America and the birth of pluralistic America, and finally lowered the walls of Herberg's three cultures, opening up avenues for dialogue and understanding.

In terms of the Catholic community, Kennedy's campaign and election represented a psychological victory and cultural triumph. Catholics had been raised to first-class citizen status. They were now fully accepted Americans. These two years also exhumed the appalling ignorance of the Catholic laity and the frightening lack of lay leadership in the Church. Hierarchy and press alike realized that these shortcomings would have to be addressed to ensure the future of the American Catholic church. Finally Kennedy's and the 166 laymen's independent pronouncements represented a liberalizing trend in the Church that its hierarchy would have to face in the future and eventually accept.

The question will always be asked: what would have happened if Kennedy had lost the election? Would the

country have been set back decades in religious relations? Would the anti-Catholic tradition still be alive and well today? Would Catholics have returned to their ghettos and refused to embrace the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II? Fortunately, these are only "if" questions of which historians can make provocative speculations, an indebtedness historians owe to the American Catholic hierarchy and press.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

VITAL STATISTICS OF THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN 1960

U.S. Catholic Population: 40,817,302 out of 171,238,845.
Archdiocese: 26 Diocese: 113 Parishes: 16,896

CLERGY

Cardinals: 5

Francis Cardinal Spellman, New York
James Francis Cardinal McIntyre, Los Angeles
Richard Cardinal Cushing, Boston
John Cardinal O'Hara, Philadelphia
Albert Cardinal Meyer, Chicago

Archbishops: 32

Bishops: 170

Priests (Diocesan and Religious): 53,796

Brothers: 10,473

Sisters: 168,572

PRESS

Readership: 25,932,461

Publications: 575

Diocesan Newspapers: 113

Circulation (Leading Newspapers): Our Sunday Visitor:
913,331; The Tablet: 140; The New World:
178,139; San Francisco Monitor: 49,866; Boston
Pilot: 86,288.

Leading Periodicals: Catholic Digest: 760,744; The Sign:
345,129; America: 48,1004; Commonweal:
20,006.

Source: The Official Catholic Directory and The Catholic
Almanac, 1960.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Timothy J. Sarbaugh has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

June 24, 1957

Director's Signature

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