

Sentries of Separation:

Dimensions of Discourse on the Religious Issue during the 1960
Presidential Election

Kevin R McWilliams
Thesis Advisor: Professor Alan Brinkley
Second Reader: Professor Peter Awn
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Abstract

The presidential election of 1960 brought religious discourse in American politics to an unprecedented level of national consciousness. John F. Kennedy created a sensational moment as a Roman Catholic seeking the highest public office in the United States. Various groups resistant to any Catholic president organized to increase awareness of the separation of church and state. Faced with mounting opposition based on religion, John Kennedy and his campaign team created a group designed to face the challenges surrounding the issue. Dubbed Community Relations, the team handled every aspect of the religious issue for the Kennedy team. Ultimately winning the election, John Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic president, thereby overcoming the prejudice he faced during the campaign.

My research explores how the Community Relations team's activities, together with the actions of other religious-political groups such as Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, the National Council of Churches, increased and altered religious discourse within American politics. At a time when religious prejudice remained and objections for a Catholic president persisted, Kennedy encountered numerous challenges. Community Relations acted as the frontline of defense for religious freedom and tolerance locally and nationally. Community Relations, working together with groups such as the FCPC and the NCC, forged the legitimate practice of conducting religious political discourse in the United States.

Acknowledgements

My interest in the religious issue of the 1960 presidential election emerged while working on my thesis prospectus project in Professor Casey Blake's seminar the Historian's Craft during the spring semester of 2012. My goal that semester was finding an aspect of the campaign that offered new perspective and analysis. I found that, although historians mentioned James Wine and the Community Relations team briefly, no one conducted an in-depth analysis of the team's contributions and their interplay with other important groups. I am grateful for Professor Blake's guidance and the suggestions from my classmates. I am also thankful for the advice and edits of my fellow classmates in Professor Alan Brinkley's senior thesis seminar.

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I owe numerous thanks to the archives and manuscript libraries that aided my research. Primarily the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, the Library of Congress, the Presbyterian Historical Society, and the Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library all provided outstanding service and offered knowledgeable advice for which I am exceptionally grateful.

Finally, I thank my parents for encouraging my academic interests and helping me throughout my endeavors, which made me the person I am today.

Introduction

On a cold and snowy January morning in 1961, John F. Kennedy took the oath of office to become the President of the United States. Sworn in as the first Roman Catholic President, the inauguration symbolically tore down the wall of religious prejudice. Religion was a critical issue throughout the course of the 1960 campaign. Religious discourse permeates American politics and emerges periodically in the national dialogue. Debate over social issues such as Planned Parenthood and the legal definition of marriage are prevalent within American politics today. As a continuing topic in recent presidential elections, the intense religious emphasis during the 1960 campaign is worth evaluating. Understanding how important persons and groups shaped public discourse is essential to make sense of existing church and state relations in the United States. Interaction and debate between the campaign team of John F. Kennedy and groups such as Protestants and Other Americans United (POAU) throughout the 1960 election is the topic of this project. The relevant historical questions derive from the church-state issues that arose out of the emphasis on the candidate's religion during the 1960 campaign.

Having won the election, Kennedy ended the fierce debate over whether or not a Roman Catholic could win the presidency. What was not instantly clear, and what is important to discover, is the impact that answering this question had on the discussion about separation of church and state. This research will focus primarily on the internal mechanics of each side and their contribution to religious-political discourse. Primarily concerned with evolving religious discourse in politics, this project focuses more specifically on the style and influence Kennedy's team and other significant groups had persuading the public's opinions and beliefs, and their own interactions regarding church and state issues. To achieve this objective, this paper analyzes the evolving strategies of these groups for local and national campaigns and demonstrations.

Historians have analyzed the presidential election of 1960 from many angles, including the subject of a Roman Catholic president. A key concern of my thesis is to understand how Kennedy's team dealt with the matter of his religion by employing various tactics. Of particular importance are the local level procedures employed by Kennedy's Community Relations team. Equally important are the techniques POAU employed to deal with similar concerns and what strategies they devised to preserve and extend their fundamental belief in an absolute separation of church and state. What techniques did each faction utilize to disseminate their beliefs and what tactics did they employ to achieve their objectives? What was the impact that discourse had on the subject of church and state, and how did the general population perceive this issue? How did the mobilization of religious-political groups, such as POAU, shape the outcome of the election? Kennedy's victory in 1960 marked a key moment in the progression towards religious pluralism in the United States. Did it reflect, however, a transition towards an absolute separation of church and state or did it move towards greater integration of religious oriented debate in American political discourse?

Methods utilized to engage the religious issue and the impact these had on public and private discourse are critical elements of my research. Understanding how these political parties and organizations mobilized their campaigns to confront religion has potential to reveal much about the general feelings over politics and religion in the postwar era. This project will cover the period from 1959 through the entire campaign and will conclude with the election and its aftermath around 1961. Including the brief period before the campaign will give perspective to intergroup dynamics before the election began influencing various groups' agendas. Campaign procedures are the central means through which I will observe how particular groups, primarily JFK's campaign team and POAU, operated during its course. Although focused on 1960, it is

essential to observe the presidential campaign of Alfred E. Smith as well. In 1928, Smith was the first Catholic to seek the office on a major ticket. Understanding the role of religion in the 1928 election, and how contenders used the topic in campaigning, will help explain the evolution of the issue before the postwar era.

It is significant to explore the immediate aftermath of the 1960 campaign in order to understand the impact exchanges between these groups had on each other and the public. Major events of the election include the Democratic Party primaries of Wisconsin and West Virginia, the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom held on September 7 in Washington D.C., and Kennedy's speech before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 16. Historians have discussed these events in detail; therefore, they will only be included where essential to observe the dynamic between Kennedy, POAU, and other significant groups. Instead, this thesis will focus on the everyday dissemination of materials to the public and any additional areas where interaction between these sides occurred.

Historiography

Historians have analyzed the 1960 presidential election from numerous standpoints. Additionally, they have examined how religion functioned to shape major events from different angles. In the context of early postwar American politics, the idea of a Catholic president was a serious issue. Before John Kennedy ever declared his candidacy, many asked whether the United States public could ever elect a Catholic president. In 1959, James A. Pike published *A Roman Catholic in the White House*, which asked what would be the political ramifications of a Catholic President or Vice President. Pike raised the question after the re-emergence of religious-political issues when John Kennedy sought to be on the Democratic ticket for Vice-President in 1956.¹ Pike's argument was that any Catholic candidate would need to establish trust with the voting

¹ James Pike, *A Roman Catholic in the White House* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), 20.

public. He also stated that asking the question was not a religious test and did not constitute any form of bigotry, but is rather the “exercise of responsible citizenship.”² In 1963, Patricia Barrett published *Religious Liberty and the American Presidency*. Barrett sought to describe how the election results transformed Catholic relations in U.S. politics and what this meant regarding the advance of religious pluralism in the United States.

An additional line of historical thought focuses on the general election process. These works analyze the overarching trends during the election that led to John Kennedy’s victory over Richard Nixon. In this literature, historians discuss the religious issue as one aspect of the larger campaign process. Theodore H. White expresses these developments in his book, *The Making of the President 1960*. White describes religion in the campaign as Kennedy turning the issue into a debate about tolerance, thus neutralizing the ability of his opponents to employ religion in their campaigns.³ In White’s view, Kennedy branded himself as the candidate of tolerance. If his opponents fought on the religious issue, they would become religious bigots. In doing so, White describes Kennedy as a modern Catholic in a democratic society.⁴ Decades after *The Making of the President 1960*, W. J. Rorabaugh re-examined the topics presented by White in a more recent context. In *The Real Making of the President 1960*, Rorabaugh argues that White’s close proximity to Kennedy as a journalist covering the election influenced his attitudes and made his opinions biased.⁵ For this reason, Rorabaugh felt that the topic needed fresh analysis with an unbiased appeal.

Research for my thesis will center on James Wine and the community level strategies of the Kennedy campaign. The majority of these different histories do not recognize Wine’s lasting

² Pike, *A Roman Catholic in the White House*, 133.

³ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961), 243.

⁴ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 261-262.

⁵ W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 5.

contributions throughout the campaign. Shaun A. Casey elaborates briefly on Wine in his book, *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960*, but primarily on the surface of his activities and not in great depth or detail. I hope to explore more thoroughly the role that Wine played throughout the election and how he affected the dialogue between the Kennedy team and the public and between the campaign team and other influential groups such as POAU. Albert J. Menendez published *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election: An Analysis of the Kennedy Victory over Anti-Catholic Prejudice* in 2011. Menendez provides a brief overview of the election pertaining to the religious issue. He then delves into an expansive analysis of each individual state. Using polling data and local election results, Menendez explains that religion ultimately cost Kennedy more votes than it gained.

Two dissertations handle the impact religion had on the election. In 1981, Teddy David Lisle wrote *The Canonical Impediment: John F. Kennedy and the Religious Issue during the 1960 Presidential Campaign*. Lisle describes the various ways Kennedy's religion impeded his campaign in 1960. In 1987, Timothy Sarbaugh authored *John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the Catholic issue and presidential politics, 1959-1960*. Sarbaugh explains in-depth the way Catholicism operated throughout the campaign. Importantly, he describes the ways the Catholic Church, its publications, and important figures within the Church functioned in 1960. Both dissertations mention James Wine and the Community Relations team, but in no greater detail than later works including Shaun Casey's book on the subject.

What most of these historical works have in common is their discussion of how religion affected the election's outcome. A few of these conclusions hold that the election results moved the United States toward a more open pluralistic society, which it certainly achieved, while others questioned what religious bigotry remains. Another outcome examined how religion

affected actual voting patterns. These conclusions diverge generally between two opinions, that either the religious topic greatly influenced the outcome, or as some maintain, that it had no quantifiable impact. I am interested in how the combination of religion and politics in this election influenced public awareness and discussion of church-state issues. I am also concerned with the question of how different groups' tactics shaped future religious-political organizations to mobilize and affect public discourse. Finally, I am interested in how the discourse of this election legitimated the religious debate that occurred then and persists today.

Chapter One

Building the Walls: Separating Church and State, Growing Religious Intolerance

On the steps of Federal Hall in New York City, the first Capitol of the newly formed United States, George Washington took the oath of office becoming the nation's first President. Immediately following this historic event, the newly inaugurated president walked a few blocks down Broadway to Saint Paul's Chapel. He prayed in his personal pew, likely giving thanks for the challenges he overcame in the Revolutionary War and asking for assistance concerning the challenges he would face leading a new country. Washington belonged to the Trinity Church parish, as did many Founding Fathers including Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. Religion was an important aspect of daily life for these men. Throughout the history of the United States, religion played a significant role in politics, especially with regard to the Commander in Chief. A concise explanation of the dynamics between religion and politics before the 1960 campaign is necessary to evaluate the context and meaning behind the victory of John Kennedy becoming the first Roman Catholic to preside over the nation.

Church and state issues permeated the United States from its founding through the modern day. Pilgrims founded colonies based on their religious beliefs. They fled their homes abroad to escape persecution in order to live and worship freely. After the founding of the new nation, the Constitution established in the First Amendment that freedom of religion be made law for all Americans. Thomas Jefferson remarked that the framers of the new government constructed a "wall of separation between church and state."⁶ The First Amendment guaranteed the right to practice any religion and to voice beliefs freely. Article VI assured no person would

⁶ Thomas Jefferson to Danbury Baptist Association, correspondence, January 1, 1802, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html> (accessed February 4, 2013).

undergo a religious test before serving any public office. Finally, the Constitution barred the government from establishing or promoting any particular religion.

Freedom of religion became a cornerstone of the United States Constitution and a fundamental value sacred to Americans. Such great reverence placed on this feature of the First Amendment makes it ironically easy to forget the struggles endured to safeguard against oppression and bigotry. Several phases of America's early history saw individuals repressed and ostracized because of their religious beliefs. Defined early on as a nation of Protestants, the United States did not always live up to its ideal of religious liberty. Catholics experienced a great deal of intolerance under this restrictive structure. Historically, anti-Catholicism carried the appropriate classification of "America's oldest prejudice." In order to appreciate the sentiments and anxieties of prominent figures, both political and religious, during the election of 1960, it is imperative to examine the history that shaped their impressions of religion in American politics and the issue of church and state.

Nineteenth Century America witnessed numerous episodes of religious intolerance. Lyman Beecher embodied the early nativist tensions against American Catholics. Pleas against Catholics led to growing anxieties and culminated in some churches destroyed by arson. Nativist pressures became evident in presidential politics in the 1850s with the Know-Nothing Party. In 1856, the anti-Catholic party produced Millard Fillmore as a presidential candidate and won twenty-one percent of the popular vote.⁷ Though the campaign was unsuccessful, it reveals the degree of repression various religious groups, especially Catholics, experienced in the United States. Anti-Catholicism typically associated with some forms of nativism. As fresh immigrants poured into America, nativists protested their loss of preeminence. In the last three decades of

⁷ George M. Marsden, "Religion, Politics, and the Search for an American Consensus," in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 462.

the 19th century, approximately three million Catholics arrived followed by two million more in the following decade.⁸ Nativist sentiments escalated and in 1887 produced the American Protective Association, to defend traditional American institutions from Catholicism.

Nativist anti-Catholic sentiments pervaded the American landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century. Most notable in the political arena was the 1928 presidential campaign of New York Governor Alfred E. Smith. Before seeking the presidency, Smith served in the New York State Assembly, then became Sheriff of New York County, President of the New York City Council and finally Governor of New York State. He defined himself and his career as a social reformer of the Progressive Era. In the era of Prohibition, Smith fought fervently against the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act.⁹ Born and raised in New York, Smith identified closely with his Irish heritage and championed the immigrant cause. A final significant trait of this progressive politician was his religious upbringing in the Roman Catholic Faith. This last attribute played a leading role in his presidential campaign. Historians deliberate the degree of significance the religious issue played in 1928.¹⁰ What is important for this discussion, however, is that Smith was the first Roman Catholic nominee of a major political party. As a result, he experienced the full force of anti-Catholic sentiment existing during this period.

Discussion of the religious issue began with an articulation of ideas others would repeat three decades later. Charles C. Marshall wrote an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* bearing the

⁸ Robert T. Handy, "Protestant Theological Tensions and Political Styles in the Progressive Period," in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 232.

⁹ The National Prohibition Act, known as the Volstead Act, provided national enforcement mechanisms and legal definitions of intoxicating beverages clarifying the language found in the Eighteenth Amendment, which established prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the United States.

¹⁰ For discussion, see Shaun A. Casey, "The Ghost of Al Smith," in *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-29; Thomas J. Carty, "Protestant America or a Nation of Immigrants?: Al Smith, Joe Kennedy, and Jim Farley Pursue the Nation's Highest Office," in *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 27-47; and Albert J. Menendez, "Before Kennedy," in *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election: An Analysis of the Kennedy Victory over Anti-Catholic Prejudice* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 12-18.

title, “An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith.” In it, Marshall asked a series of questions directed at Smith concerning the interaction of church and state. The author explicitly raised the issue of the potential incompatibility of Roman Catholicism within the office of the president. Marshall requested a response from Smith by stating that avoidance of “the subject is to neglect the profoundest interests in our national welfare.”¹¹ The chief editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* described Marshall’s letter as “an historic incident” for both “the country and for the Church.”¹² The response continued, “Now for the first time in the public's history, under a constitution which forever forbids religious tests as qualifications for office, as candidate for the Presidency has been subjected to public questioning as to how he can give undivided allegiance to his country.”¹³

In August, the *New York Times* questioned whether political leaders would confront the religious issue directly or avoid an encounter. The article quoted a Louisiana judge who stated, “There is glory and fame and power for the first American political party that will confront this serpent of religious recrimination and defang it.”¹⁴ Marshall’s letter initiated the discourse on the religious issue that lasted through the following year’s campaign.

Al Smith responded publicly to Marshall’s letter the following month. The *Atlantic Monthly* published an article penned by Smith bearing the title, “Catholic and Patriot.” In direct response to Marshall’s questions, Smith declared that the “open letter” called to question the loyalties of twenty million American citizens who belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Smith professed, “I should be a poor American and a poor Catholic alike if I injected religious

¹¹ Charles C. Marshall, “An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith,” *The Atlantic*, April 1927.

¹² Alfred E. Smith, “Catholic and Patriot,” *The Atlantic*, May 1927.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *New York Times*, “Will They Face It or Run Away?” August 13, 1927.

discussion into a political campaign.”¹⁵ Enclosed in this response are issues analogous to those raised by Kennedy just over thirty years later. Smith discussed the role of Catholics in the Armed Services and the fact that he took an oath of office in New York nineteen times. “I believe in the absolute separation of church and state,” Smith declared emphatically.¹⁶ The strong stand and open disclosure received general praise. The *Baltimore Sun* published an article with responses from various press circles around the nation. It stated explicitly, “Time and again the opinion is expressed that the statement should remove for all time the religious issue from American politics.”¹⁷ That this widely accepted opinion was premature is an overstatement and marked only the beginning of the religious issue that developed in 1928. The discourse soon evolved into overt prejudice towards the Catholic faith and the Democratic contender.

Anxieties over religion began before any candidate secured the nomination of the Democratic Party. Arthur Henning surmised in early January that religion would become a leading issue in 1928. In an article for the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Henning concluded that if Smith received the Democratic nomination, “the religious issue will dwarf all other issues and will split parties and divide families.”¹⁸ Henning referenced the growing protests of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups devoted to anti-Catholicism. The Klan proved to be a significant instigator spreading malicious rumors and reports concerning Al Smith’s religion. Whispering campaigns proliferated during the campaign delivering hostile messages to numerous voters.

Prohibition entered into the discussion regarding religion and politics. In 1928, numerous people viewed the consumption of alcohol as a subject of both immigration and religion. Arthur

¹⁵ *New York Times*, “Will They Face It or Run Away?” August 13, 1927.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, “Nation’s Press Hails Smith’s Church Stand: Reply Ends Religious Issue Is General View Expressed in Editorials,” April 19, 1927.

¹⁸ Arthur Sears Henning, “Make Religion Big Issue in 1928 Campaign: Anti-Catholics Gird to Beat All Smith,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 8, 1928.

Henning quoted a Republican leader using a common phrase of the day that “‘Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion’ are going to figure prominently in this election.”¹⁹ Indeed prohibition, religion and nativism coalesced into a united front of opposition. For many Americans, Smith embodied all their fears: “The objection to him is that he is a wet Catholic, a Tammany Catholic, a Catholic from the tenements, the sidewalks and fish markets of New York.”²⁰ Smith prepared a pamphlet to allay fears that his religion and political affiliations influenced his decision. He answered the charge of favoritism by disclosing his past appointments, which numbered forty-seven Catholics and 129 Protestants out of 195 appointments.²¹ The Democratic National Committee published a campaign book that discussed candidates and issues in 1928 including a brief section on religion and its impact on the election. It declared that many faiths served the American people loyally. Fearing that anti-Catholicism undermined the religious freedom of the United States, the author celebrated past triumphs, “Under the Constitution, Jews and Catholics have served with honor in Congress, in the Cabinet, in diplomacy, and on the Supreme Bench.”²²

Al Smith’s concerted response to the religious issue he faced occurred during a speech on the subject he gave to an Oklahoma audience. In the speech, Smith defended his religious faith and his fervent devotion to the nation. He assailed Senator Owens and other Republicans for allowing the religious issue to sneak into the campaign.²³ “Sad, that in 1928,” Smith lamented stretching out his arms with clenched fists, “to see some Americans proclaiming themselves hundred percent Americans and then in the very document in which they make that proclamation

¹⁹ Arthur Sears Henning, “Liquor, Religion and Farm Aid the 1928 Issues: Lines are Drawn for Campaign,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 17, 1928.

²⁰ *Washington Post*, “Tolerance Dominant Issue, Dr. E.T. Devine Declares: American University Dean Urges Square Deal for Smith by Protestants,” October 13, 1928.

²¹ Special, “Smith to Fight Whisperers with Data on Appointments,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 6, 1928.

²² Henry van Dyke, “The Religious Issue: In Defense of Religious Liberty,” in *The Campaign Book of the Democratic Party*, Alfred E. Smith Papers, New York State Archives, Albany, NY.

²³ James O’Donnell Bennett, “Al Smith Denounces Intolerance: Charges G.O.P. Lets Religious Issue Creep In,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1928.

suggesting that I be defeated for the presidency because of my religious belief.”²⁴ During the campaign, Al Smith attempted to keep religion out of the discussion. His Oklahoma speech was one of the few times he addressed his religion openly.

Voters in the 1928 election ultimately selected the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, over Al Smith. Final vote counts revealed a landslide victory for the Republican candidate. Hoover received a substantial portion of the popular vote and an astounding number of the electoral votes. Smith carried only a few states from the Democratic “Solid South” along with Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He received a paltry amount of the popular votes and a slim number of eighty-seven electoral votes. Other factors lead to Smith’s defeat beyond his religion. For many years, the country benefited from the prosperity associated with Calvin Coolidge and the Republican Party. Herbert Hoover enjoyed no small quantity of this apparent success because of his time as the Secretary of Commerce. Smith’s defeat resulted from many issues including the national economic expedience and overt religious bigotry. Being the first significant Catholic contender, however, created a myth that his loss was a direct result of religion. It was a belief that gripped the minds of many politicians for decades after.

Roman Catholics experienced political success and failure in the decades between the elections of 1928 and 1960. James Michael Curley served as Mayor of Boston, Governor of Massachusetts, and a member of the House of Representatives. Frank Hague served as mayor of Jersey City for three decades from 1917 to 1947. During the New Deal era of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Father Charles E. Coughlin spread his political messages over the radio waves and became exceptionally popular. Possibly the most notorious Catholic politician was Joseph R. McCarthy, whose virulent Red Scare tactics infected all levels of society. James Hennesey noted appropriately that Roman Catholics during the early “twentieth century ran for public office and

²⁴ Ibid.

served in appointive posts at all levels of government.”²⁵ Except for Al Smith’s unsuccessful effort in 1928, however, no other Catholic attempted to obtain the office of the president. Even with increased political engagement, American Catholics faced increasing challenges as the United States transitioned into the second half of the twentieth century.

²⁵ James Hennesey, S.J., “Roman Catholics and American Politics, 1900-1960: Altered Circumstances, Continuing Patterns,” in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 247.

Chapter Two

Maintaining the Walls: Religion and Politics in Post-World War II America

Religion underwent significant transformation in postwar America. Robert Wuthnow describes these changes in the context of other great societal changes taking place during this period in his book: *The Restructuring of American Religion*. Wuthnow argues that because of socio-economic and cultural revolutions after the war, people began altering their perspectives concerning religion. Of special importance are the dynamics within the Catholic and Protestant Churches. A few examples of the changes taking place during the postwar era are how various faiths began altering their internal structures and institutional mechanisms.

Roman Catholicism in the United States confronted specific matters in the immediate postwar period. Comprehensive changes occurred within the church resulting from the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the first half of the 1960s. John T. McGreevy observed that the Catholic Church was transitioning from an old-world institution to one focused on modern concerns.²⁶ McGreevy explained that liberals and conservatives within the Catholic Church were beginning to distinguish themselves in the wake of church-wide reforms. Communism affected the group dynamics, in particular resulting from the rise of McCarthyism. The Catholic Church's ardent anticommunism stance added to the rift between the two political sects. Pertaining to the election, the issue of communism forced Kennedy to adopt a policy pleasing to both sides. Kennedy rejected the fervent anticommunism of Senator Joseph McCarthy to please liberals, while at the same time chiding former President Harry Truman for letting communism rise in

²⁶ John T. McGreevy, "Racial Justice and the People of God: The Second Vatican Council, the Civil Rights Movement, and American Catholics," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 221-254.

Asia under his watch.²⁷ This particular issue, of Catholicism and communism, demonstrated a distinct example where religion and politics overlapped and brought the religious issue to the nation's forefront.

American Protestantism underwent vast expansions in the decades after World War II, particularly among evangelicals. The Reverend Billy Graham began his crusades in the late 1940s moving across the country attracting numerous followers to the evangelical movement. College campuses saw an increase in student groups that promulgated Graham's message to a vast new community of young scholars. Groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship spread throughout many of the nation's colleges. During the 1950s, Protestant liberalism and conservative evangelicals remained indistinct; however, ideological divergence was increasing with the creation of groups like the National Association of Evangelicals.²⁸ Assemblies of interested people were forming across the nation. Expansion was the overall key feature of the evangelical revival of the postwar era.

Alongside increased religious tensions came the establishment of organizations designed to combat perceived aggressions and assuage Protestant fears. Established in 1947, Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State was the creation of a diverse group of "liberals and fundamentalists, of Councils of Churches and national and fraternal leaders."²⁹ Its creation was the result of increased fears over federal or state funding for parochial schools and the group energetically defended the Supreme Court's rulings in cases blocking such financial aid. Prominent members included Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, Glenn L. Archer, C.

²⁷ Thomas J. Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 113-115.

²⁸ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 181-184.

²⁹ C. Stanley Lowell, *Embattled Wall: Americans United: An Idea and a Man* (Washington D.C.: Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, 1966), 27.

Stanley Lowell, and Paul Blanshard. POAU fought vigorously for anything they believed upheld the absolute separation between church and state in the United States. While they opposed any religious community that sought government support, they primarily spent their time fighting the Catholic Church, which led to their reputation as a largely anti-Catholic organization.

Ecumenical forces converged in the 1950s by forming a group devoted to cooperation between several Christian communities. Founded in 1950, the objective of the National Council of Churches was to create harmony among diverse faiths in reaction to “the great sense of promise and peril that religious leaders felt in the postwar period.”³⁰ The NCC appeared when its predecessor, the Federal Council of Churches, merged with other ecumenical organizations to create a broad network of interlinked parishes. A wide range of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Evangelical churches joined under the unified banner of the NCC. In a letter to G. Bromley Oxnam, Glenn Archer declared his vision of “the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Southern Baptists, the Lutheran groups – all united working for the preservation of church-state separation.”³¹ Religious groups became increasingly prominent throughout the United States and began concentrating their resources.

Postwar America witnessed an increase in religious furor. Especially directed at Roman Catholics, many individuals and groups feared the loss of religious freedom in America. Paul Blanshard published *American Freedom and Catholic Power* in 1949. The book experienced substantial success selling over 240,000 copies, despite receiving certain criticisms.³² Blanshard questioned the Catholic hierarchy’s adherence to the American principle of separation of church and state. He illustrated this through Catholic attitudes toward topics such as education, marriage

³⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 82.

³¹ Glenn L. Archer to G. Bromley Oxnam, correspondence, May 14, 1951, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

³² Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), foreword.

and divorce, science, and communism. Blanshard asserted that it was not “possible to press home such questions in the Al Smith Campaign, because the American people did not know enough about the policies of the Catholic hierarchy.”³³ Debating the difference between intolerance and legitimate inquiry, Blanshard stated that a candidate’s religion “cannot give him immunity from a searching inquiry as to his own personal attitudes toward education, medicine, birth control, and censorship.”³⁴ Any candidate, in Blanshard’s opinion, “has no right to use his religion as a shield to conceal his views on these subjects, or to prevent reasonable questioning.”³⁵

Throughout the 1950s, POAU leadership observed presidential candidate’s positions on church and state issues. Their primary concerns included aid to parochial schools, official U.S. representation to the Vatican and other matters such as prayer in public schools. An excerpt from the groups manifesto reads, “Next to the Constitution itself, our public school system has been our strongest bulwark against the development of religious intolerance in our political life.”³⁶ Glen Archer wrote G. Bromley Oxnam in March 1954 to explain a political strategy to woo Catholic voters in the fall election. Republicans intended to endorse the appointment of an official representative to the Roman See to swing the Catholic vote towards the G.O.P.³⁷ POAU leadership considered these issues the most important to ensure the protection of American religious liberties and division between religion and government.

Influenced by increased religious debate, Protestants and Other Americans United took action during the 1956 campaign. Glenn Archer wrote to both the Republican and Democratic platform committees to discuss a plank on separation of church and state. His letter suggested

³³ Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, 350.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 349.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 349.

³⁶ A Ten-Year Balance Sheet of the Struggle for Church-State Separation, 1958, Series 2, Box 23, and Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, A Manifesto, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

³⁷ Letter between Oxnam and Archer, March 10, 1954, Series 3, Box 29, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

that the platform include provisions for laws excluding any federal funds to private schools or denominational hospitals and prohibiting any personal representative or official ambassador to the Vatican.³⁸ Neither Republicans nor Democrats adopted this recommended position in their policy papers. Nevertheless, POAU sought to influence the national level dialogue, especially concerning legislation dealing with federal or state aid to parochial schools, or establishing diplomatic ties with the Vatican City.

Skeptics pursued a response from the candidate regarding his position on church and state separation. Archer and Blanshard discussed the possibility of an advertisement similar to the open letter directed at Al Smith in 1928. They opened their publication with addressing the candidate, “Dear Mr. Catholic Candidate.”³⁹ The group intended to discover how a Catholic would uphold separation of church and state and desired to collect information on current sentiments of Catholic prelates. POAU claimed this was a valid approach for conducting their business. One of their publicists disagreed and resigned claiming that the article constituted a religious test for office.⁴⁰

Protestants and Other Americans United created a balance sheet to account for the group’s first ten years. In 1957, POAU listed six items as successful displays of upholding the wall of separation. These include primarily preventing public funding of parochial schools through Supreme Court decisions and actions on state and local levels, blocking President Truman from appointing a representative to the Vatican, blocking clerical censure of motion

³⁸ Glenn L. Archer, “Church-State Separation Plank Urged for Party Platforms,” *NEWS of P.O.A.U.*, July 27, 1956, Series 1, Box 14, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

³⁹ Protestant and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, “Dear Mr. Catholic Candidate... An American Voter Seeks an Honest Answer to an Important Question,” *Church and State*, Series 3, Box 31, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

⁴⁰ Stanley Lichtenstein, “P.O.A.U. Publicist Resigns over ‘Religious Test for Office,’” February 4, 1958, Series 1, Box 14, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

pictures, and increasing their own membership.⁴¹ This was an ambitious group with an energetic leadership and the election of 1960 tested their energies.

Another group formed during this period with the aim of ensuring fair play in campaigns for political office. Charles P. Taft established the Fair Campaign Practices Committee in the early 1950s to help ensure campaign discourse maintained high standards of ethics and integrity. The independent non-partisan group operated as an overseer to the methods and tactics political candidates employed throughout campaign cycles. It also checked facts, addressed complaints, and educated the public on differentiating proper campaign strategies from malicious stratagems. Educating the public was the committee's primary focus of concern. They believed educating the young population was critical in preventing widespread unethical and unfair campaigns—these included smear tactics and anything considered deceptive or dishonest.⁴² Taft believed efficiency would increase if people were better equipped to stop the most sinister campaign tactic: whisper campaigns. Ku Klux Klan associates utilized whispering techniques markedly against Al Smith throughout 1928. The Fair Campaign Practices Committee aimed to prevent the same kind of behaviors in the postwar era.

FCPC instilled a public distaste for unfair tactics reducing the tendency to execute coarse strategies. The committee released a bulletin in January 1957 that the election in 1956 was “one of the cleanest in years.”⁴³ In previous years, mudslinging rendered politicians ineffective unless they rolled up their sleeves and induced the same political libel. FCPC disseminated their messages through schools and other civic and church groups. On the religious front, Protestant

⁴¹ A Ten-Year Balance Sheet of the Struggle for Church-State Separation, 1958, Series 2, Box 23, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

⁴² Fair Campaign Practices Committee, Bulletin, vol. 2, no. 1, January 15, 1957, Box I:259, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁴³ Ibid.

ministries reaching close to “twenty million church members” distributed materials condemning smear tactics and demonstrating “the importance of maintaining high standards in political campaigns.”⁴⁴ This aspect is significant because of growing religious elements on the political landscape. By 1956, FCPC extended their cooperation to churches, including Protestants, Roman Catholic, and Jewish denominations to “focus public attention on the need for decent election campaigns.”⁴⁵ The collaboration with ecclesiastical communities proved meaningful in 1956 and the following years.

Kennedy sought the Vice Presidency in 1956, which again inserted religious debate into the sphere of presidential politics. Prompted by trends in recent voting patterns, the Kennedy team produced a document designed to show the benefits of having a Catholic on the ticket. Democrat Party Boss John Bailey released the document, written by Ted Sorensen, to avoid any claims that Kennedy used religion to his benefit. The “Bailey Memo,” as it became known, recognized that Catholic votes steadily moved away from Democrats in recent years, specifically in 1952 because of Dwight D. Eisenhower. The memo argued that having a Catholic on the Democratic ticket would increase support from coreligionists. It further reasoned Democrats would benefit from a concentration of Catholic voters in urban areas. These existed largely in industrialized states with significant Electoral College votes.

Not everyone shared the opinions of Kennedy and his supporters. Democratic Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn took a hard line against the Senator from Massachusetts regardless of his religion. “Well, if we have to have a Catholic, I hope we don’t have to take that little piss-ant

⁴⁴ Fair Campaign Practices Committee, Bulletin, vol. 2, no. 1, January 15, 1957, Box I:259, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁴⁵ Fair Campaign Practices Committee to Mr. P. M. Judd, correspondence, June 22, 1956, Box I:258, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Kennedy.”⁴⁶ Stevenson ultimately let the delegates decide his running mate. In an unprecedented method of selection, John Kennedy lost to Senator Estes Kefauver. Joseph Kennedy believed this outcome was the best outcome for his son. Losing the VP nomination in 1956 meant Kennedy’s “Catholicism could not be blamed for Stevenson’s loss to Eisenhower.”⁴⁷ Republicans swept the presidency with a plurality of the popular vote and an astonishing 457 Electoral College votes. Stevenson held the “Solid South” receiving their 73 electoral votes. It was unlikely a Democrat could defeat the extremely popular incumbent, and religion had the potential of becoming a scapegoat. Kennedy was victorious, however, because of his participation, which propelled him into the limelight of the Democratic Party. A successful presidential bid in 1960 appeared certain to many people, especially those close to Kennedy.

Sorensen and Kennedy discussed the ramifications of dealing with the questions of a candidate’s religion. The Senator understood that the “question of a so-called ‘Catholic conflict’ is a double edged sword which must be more carefully handled.”⁴⁸ He believed the best method was to make a “comprehensive and careful comment” in a speech, magazine article, or another forum addressed especially to experts well versed in their field.⁴⁹ Sorensen related the concern in terms of the candidate’s individual principles and inner conscience. “Senator Kennedy has at no time been influenced in his public decisions by any force,” Sorensen stated, “other than his own conscience and convictions, and his loyalty to his country, constituents and party.”⁵⁰ Senator Kennedy described his conscience as “so integral a part of my life, influencing my principles and judgment and personal conduct, that it would be impossible to make any separate list of items in

⁴⁶ W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸ Kennedy to Coffey, correspondence, December 9, 1957, Series Subject Files 1953-1960, Box 8, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, John F. Kennedy Library and Archive, Boston.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Theodore Sorensen, correspondence, November 28, 1956, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, Series Subject Files 1953-1960, Box 8, John F. Kennedy Library and Archive, Boston.

which being a Catholic helps or hinders me apart from all of the other influences which shape our lives.”⁵¹ In this regard, religion played no greater role than shaping certain aspects of Kennedy’s moral sense. Religion helped construct a dependable moral compass but it was not an all-encompassing dogma for how to make decisions or govern correctly.

Many Protestant leaders believed a Catholic candidate was irrelevant and unlikely to receive a nomination. Even with their energetic protests, certain individuals assumed there was nothing to fear from a Kennedy or a McCarthy. In August 1957, Blanshard disparaged the chances of any Catholic attempting to occupy the White House. “I do not believe that anybody is seriously considering [them] as presidential candidates,” Blanshard declared confidently. “I think they are being seriously considered as vice-presidential candidates. There is quite a difference.”⁵² Doubts existed about the possibility of a Catholic nominee even into the early phases of the 1960 election. When the prospect of a Catholic president appeared likely, anxiety gripped the minds of many individuals fearful of Church and papal influences.

Kennedy learned several important lessons during the 1956 campaign. He and his group of supporters recognized certain aspects of the nature of politics and the religious component. Using every bit of knowledge and wisdom gained, they cast their sights to 1960 and the White House. Religion entered the discussion and several skeptics questioned a Roman Catholic’s ability to uphold the wall of separation. Others possessed confidence in the adherence to separation of church and state as well as the ability of a Catholic to win the election. As 1960 approached, Kennedy’s prospects grew alongside fears and apprehensions. Religion developed into a critical issue, as it had since the first presidential inauguration. In the coming election,

⁵¹ Kennedy to Burns, correspondence, March 22, 1957, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, Series Subject Files 1953-1960, Box 8, John F. Kennedy Library and Archive, Boston.

⁵² Blanshard to Archer, correspondence, August 14, 1957, Box 24, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

individuals and organizations assembled to protect both religious freedom and separation of church and states.

Chapter Three

Navigating between Two Walls: Buildup to the Fall Campaign

The proper approach to developments of this kind is, I believe, simply to go on working positively for the common good and for the interest of our country and party.

–John F. Kennedy, letter to Mr. Shofner Dickerson

Events in 1956 served as a prelude to the momentous election of 1960. Echoing back to the campaign of Al Smith, religion became an important and controversial issue. Pertinent dialog relevant to the candidacy of a Roman Catholic amplified dramatically in 1959. In that same year, James A. Pike published his timely book *A Roman Catholic in the White House*. Pike addressed the questions and concerns of a Roman Catholic becoming President or Vice President. The book examined the subject of church and state separation in pluralistic twentieth-century America, and then contrasted these issues against Catholic doctrine. Finally, he made the distinction between religious bigotry and legitimate concern for a President's religion. Pike concluded that a voter must weigh their degree of trust in both the candidate and the candidate's church. "The asking of the question is not bigotry," according to Pike, "It is the exercise of responsible citizenship."⁵³ The election of 1960 saw varying degrees of both bigotry and legitimate discourse concerning the religious issue. The subject repeatedly surfaced throughout the course of the campaign testing the limits of tolerance and religious freedom.

Polling data revealed that religion had potential to influence voters in 1960. When Gallup issued a poll about possible religious affiliations of presidential candidates, those surveyed responded with general impartiality, but answers shifted dramatically, when asked about a candidate's particular faith. When asked about a Baptist, Catholic, or Jewish candidate, answers

⁵³ James A. Pike, *A Roman Catholic in the White House* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), 133.

varied slightly with strong majorities supporting a “well-qualified” individual.⁵⁴ Catholics and Jews suffered an almost uniform drop, however, of about twenty percent less in favor compared with the Baptist. Conversely, almost three quarters of responders stated they would not consider an atheist for President in 1960, even if the candidate were well qualified. In 1957, Americans answered strongly that religion possessed the ability to answer all or most of current problems, while a minor number believed it either too old fashioned or out of date.⁵⁵ People possessed sincere religious sentiments and, in some cases, were prepared to cast votes based on those feelings. The evidence suggested that a Catholic or Jewish candidate would suffer a disadvantage because of their faith. With these opinions prevalent in the national consciousness, the religious issue promised to remain a decisive subject in the coming election.

The Fair Campaign Practices Committee began looking at 1960 as a crucial year for their involvement in containing religious bigotry. FPCP leadership witnessed firsthand the growing trends during previous election seasons.⁵⁶ Their research displayed a large growth in unfair campaign tactics rising one hundred percent from 1956 to 1958.⁵⁷ The group noticed other trends emerging, including an increase in religiously oriented smear campaigns, with most attacks originating outside party organizations. The group organized a conference in March 1960 to discuss religion and its role in a fair campaign.

⁵⁴ Gallup Polls, Conducted by Gallup Organization, December 10 - December 15, 1959 and based on 1,527 personal interviews. Sample: National Adult. When asked how likely to vote for a well-qualified candidate depending on particular faiths, participants provided the following answers: Baptist: yes 94%, no 3%, no opinion 2%; Jewish: yes 72%, no 22%, no opinion 6%; Catholic: yes 70%, no 25%, no opinion 5%; Atheist: yes 22%, no 74%, no opinion 5%; and Negro yes 49%, no 46%, no opinion 5%.

⁵⁵ Gallup Polls, Conducted by Gallup Organization, March 15 - March 20, 1957 and based on 1,627 personal interviews. Sample: National Adult. Participants answered the question, “Do you believe that Religion can answer all or most of today’s problems or is it largely old fashioned and out of date?” with 82% that it can answer today’s problems, 7% that it is largely old-fashioned, and 11% no opinion.

⁵⁶ Ford Foundation Application Draft, 1959, Box I:260, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁵⁷ Report: The State-By-State Study of Smear: 1958, Box I:260 Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

John Kennedy engaged the religious issue directly before ever announcing his candidacy for president. In March 1959, he released an article in *Look* magazine openly engaging religion and the subject of a Catholic President. In the commentary, Senator Kennedy made it clear that he believed in an absolute separation of church and state. He specifically spoke out against federal aid to parochial or private schools.⁵⁸ Stating this unequivocally, he also mentioned the private nature of a person's religion and that whatever a person believes should remain "between him and his God."⁵⁹ In a provocative statement, Kennedy boldly said that if his conscience should conflict with the responsibilities of his office, he would resign rather than break either his conscience or the oath of president. "For the officeholder," he stated, "no obligation transcends his duty to live up to the Constitution."⁶⁰ Kennedy conveyed a strong personal message about his faith and its relation to his political leadership. Reaction to his message took on various forms.

Criticism of the *Look* article occurred on every side of the issue. Protestants condemned Kennedy. Catholics complained that the article was too secular and that it essentially gave in to a religious test.⁶¹ *Christianity and Crisis* blasted Kennedy for being "a secularist, a man with no religious sense."⁶² The Catholic publication *Ave Maria* charged Kennedy with a "serious flaw" in his thinking. "Something does indeed take precedence over the obligation to uphold the Constitution—namely, conscience," the article stated, "To relegate your conscience to your 'private life' is not only unrealistic, but dangerous as well."⁶³ Both the Protestant and Catholic religious press relegated Kennedy's statements to political pandering.

⁵⁸ *Look* Magazine Article, Interview, March 3, 1959, 17, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Digital Archives, Series 14, Subseries: Issues: Religious Issue Files, 1956-1959.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ John Cogley, interview by John F. Stewart, Santa Barbara, California, February 20, 1968, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1-2, 46-48.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁶³ *Ave Maria* article responding to Kennedy's *Look* article, "Assails view of Kennedy on Church and State, Dangerous says Catholic Organ," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 24, 1959.

Kennedy received some praise for his message on religion. John Cogley, a future member of the Community Relations team, published an article in *Commonweal* supporting the central points of the *Look* piece. Cogley defended Kennedy from charges that his statements were secular in nature. He stated clearly, “if a man can’t conscientiously live up to the oath of office, his moral obligation is to resign, for he shouldn’t try to play it both ways.”⁶⁴ These sentiments became a major part of the Kennedy message. Cogley recounted that Kennedy saw the article in *Commonweal* as a means to escape from the conflict he had with the religious press.

John Kennedy distinguished himself from his Irish Catholic background in the same way his father, Joseph P. Kennedy strove to dissociate his family from these roots. Joe defined his family in terms of their success, which reflected the highest degree of achievement in realizing the American dream. David Nasaw described Joseph Kennedy in his book, *The Patriarch*, as a man “on the quintessential American journey from outsider to insider”.⁶⁵ John Kennedy, like his father, received his education from private schools, such as Choate and Harvard, not parochial schools. As a result, the Kennedy household projected the image of a prosperous and thoroughly American family.

Joseph Kennedy had a strained association with his religion. He decried the criticism of the Catholic Press toward his son’s interview in *Look* magazine. Kennedy professed bluntly, “I deplore the pettiness of the Catholic Press and I deplore the weakness of some of the hierarchy for not speaking out, at least in some measure, in Jack’s defense.”⁶⁶ John’s mother Rose, however, had a strong sense of faith and commitment to her Catholic beliefs, which she imbued in her son Robert. Jacqueline Kennedy said of her husband, “I think it is so unfair for Jack to be

⁶⁴ John Cogley, interview by John F. Stewart, 2.

⁶⁵ David Nasaw, *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Turbulent Times of Joseph P. Kennedy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 721.

⁶⁶ Nasaw, *The Patriarch*, 723.

opposed because he is a Catholic. After all, he's such a poor Catholic. Now, if it were Bobby: he never misses mass and prays all the time."⁶⁷

Kennedy received criticism from prominent figures in his own party. Eleanor Roosevelt had concerns over Kennedy's youth and inexperience, but also his religion. She expressed her reservations publicly about Kennedy as a nominee because "if a Catholic is elected, he must be able to separate the church from the state. I'm not sure Kennedy could do this."⁶⁸ Former President Harry Truman also commented, and not favorably, on Kennedy's religious handicap. Eventually Kennedy alleviated their skepticism and transformed both into supporters, even if their support was somewhat restrained. Kennedy possessed numerous assets that helped him overcome the Catholic problem. He was charismatic, and he wooed women with his charm and youthful good looks. Kennedy was a decorated war hero, and he published a Pulitzer Prize winning book about former Senators that transcended party politics for the benefit of the nation. The candidate referred regularly to his military service when discussing his loyalty to the nation, an approach picked up later by Community Relations when responding to queries of allegiance in the volumes of mail they received.

In early February, the National Council of Churches learned of a threat to the First Amendment developing within the federal government. They discovered that a training manual for the United States Air Force contained spurious allegations against the organization and many of its member churches. The U.S. Air Force document titled "Air Reserve Center Training Manual, NR. 45-0050, Increment V, Volume 7" contained statements contradicting several key aspects of the Constitution's safeguards of religious freedom. It told Air Force students to "keep

⁶⁷ Quoted originally by Journalist Arthur Krock, but appeared in Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1981), 61; and Thomas J. Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 4.

⁶⁸ Eleanor Roosevelt quoted in Alan Brinkley, *John F. Kennedy* (New York: Times Books, 2012), 40.

in mind that public news media present only as much information as the Government wants to release.”⁶⁹ Additionally, the document declared that students remain aware of how specified churches cooperated with communism.

James Wine, an Associate General Secretary of the NCC, responded immediately to remedy the situation. He expeditiously sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates Jr. and Secretary of the Air Force Dudley C. Sharp protesting the creation and dissemination of a document criticizing American churches.⁷⁰ He condemned the manual and the message it contained. Wine articulated further, “Such a document is a patent contravention of the First Amendment to the Constitution.”⁷¹ Wine requested an immediate explanation from the Secretary of Defense since he wished to update the Council’s General Board at their next meeting, which convened only a few weeks later. The Secretary of Defense responded and stated that the Air Force pulled the manual from circulation amongst cadets and provided an explanation that top brass neither supplied the information nor reviewed it before its publication.⁷²

The National Council received support from many of its member churches for their stand opposing the Air Force manual. In a statement from the General Council of the American Baptist Convention, the group declared solidarity with the NCC deploring what they believed was “the subversion of the basic principles of Christian truth and American tradition.”⁷³ James Wagner affirmed similar pledges from the Evangelical Reformed Church in a statement to Representative John Moss. Wagner stated that the ERC “join in protesting Air Force Manual charging

⁶⁹ Statement by James Wine, National Council of Churches, Special Topics, 1951-1970, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. AF Manual, 15-10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Secretary of Defense to Wine, correspondence, February 17, 1960, Record Group 17, Box 6, Folder 19, National Council of Churches, Special Topics, 1951-1970, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

⁷³ Statement by the General Council of the American Baptist Convention, March 1, 1960, Record Group 17, Box 6, Folder 19, National Council of Churches, Special Topics, 1951-1970, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Communist infiltration in the churches with reference to the National Council of Churches of which the Evangelical Reformed Church is proud to be one of the founding members.”⁷⁴ Even Cardinal Spellman deplored the manual earning the praise of the NCC.⁷⁵

Leaders at the National Council declared the organization a bulwark upholding American freedoms. Roy G. Ross, General Secretary of the National Council, released a statement detailing the aims in opposing the manual:

The Council opposes and will continue to oppose “all efforts, official or private, subtle or overt, intended or otherwise, to use agencies of any branch of government or media of mass communication under government regulation to defame church institutions or leaders, to subject church loyalty to the poison of innuendo; to differentiate between religious groups in point of patriotism; and thus to undermine religion itself, the centuries-old nature of the American people as a religious people, and the essential unity of our nation in its life and freedom.”⁷⁶

Ross stated that by defending the Council’s loyalties, the group was defending the rights and duties “of religious communions and their members to study and comment upon issues, whether political, economic or social” protecting “liberty under law and justice.”⁷⁷ It was the obligation of responsible organizations like NCC to become involved in similar threats to national freedom whenever necessary.

Senator Kennedy responded to the situation with utter contempt for the manual. In his response, he derided the Air Force for seeking to impose limitations on the free speech of certain Protestant communities and specifically the National Council of Churches. Kennedy stated, “The manual itself represents a flagrant violation of the constitutional principle of separating church

⁷⁴ Wagner to Moss, Message from the Evangelical Reformed Church, February 19, 1960, Record Group 17, Box 6, Folder 19, National Council of Churches, Special Topics, 1951-1970, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

⁷⁵ *New York Times*, “Spellman Gets Thanks: Protestant Leader Lauds His Stand on Air Force Manual,” March 10, 1960.

⁷⁶ Roy G. Ross, Statement for the National Council of Churches, Record Group 17, Box 6, Folder 19, National Council of Churches, Special Topics, 1951-1970, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

and state.”⁷⁸ He further decried the lack of responsibility taken by the Air Force because they stated that thorough review of the manual had not occurred. “Under the First Amendment our Government cannot—directly or indirectly, carelessly or intentionally—select any religious body for either favorable or unfavorable treatment.”⁷⁹ Kennedy took a hard line against the dreadful actions of the government against a religious organization. He joined the National Council of Churches and its Associate General Secretary James Wine in a fight for religious freedom of all faiths and denominations.

The Air Force Manual controversy occurred at a time in the campaign when religion became increasingly prominent. Kennedy discussed the impact the issue had regarding religion and government. “Senator Kennedy used the occasion,” a *New York Times* article stated, “to deal with the religious question that has become a growing factor in his own campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination.”⁸⁰ The article mentioned the upcoming primary in West Virginia and the prospect of the religious issue coming to the fore because of the states largely Protestant population.

Sorensen and Wine maintained close contact after the Air Force Manual controversy. The two corresponded and discussed religious oriented political strategy. Wine offered useful advice periodically during the spring months, especially during the West Virginia primary. Shifting into the primary season offered a few case studies of how religion would play out as an issue during the general election season. Kennedy needed to demonstrate to the Democratic Party and the public his viability as a candidate and his ability to manage the various aspects of the religious issue. He participated in several state primaries, but two states, Wisconsin and West Virginia,

⁷⁸ Special, “Texts on Kennedy’s Stand,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1960.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Special, “Air Force Manual Decried: Kennedy Opposes Church-State Tie,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1960.

offered the clearest expressions of what Kennedy and Community Relations would face in the fall campaign.

Wisconsin was an important steppingstone in the Democratic primaries. Kennedy faced his primary competitor, Senator Hubert Humphrey, in a state bordering his rival's constituency. Religion played a conspicuous role in the way the electorate voted. Mostly split down religious lines, Kennedy received generally all the Catholic votes while Humphrey received a plurality of the Protestant vote. Election results demonstrated that Catholics in major urban areas brought in large numbers of the vote for Kennedy. Protestants, distributed mostly in rural areas, generally gave their votes to Humphrey. Wisconsin was a curious situation because the Democratic Party allowed cross voting during primary elections. This method provided a litmus test of sorts if Catholic Republicans would abandon their party during the regular election to support a coreligionist. Despite the emphasis on religion and the states voting patterns,⁸¹ Kennedy nevertheless left Wisconsin the victor.

In West Virginia, the media was beginning to notice the religious issue and turn it into a national subject. The Kennedy team responded to questions of religion directly when necessary, but attempted to avoid raising the issue. His pollster Lou Harris conducted surveys in the state concerning religion. He concluded that as people discovered the candidate's religion some changed their vote against Kennedy. Harris conducted initial polling as early as the summer of 1959. He verified early on that Kennedy had a sizable margin over Humphrey.⁸² Later, when campaigning accelerated and Wisconsin settled, Harris noticed his employer was losing the

⁸¹ Andrew R. Baggaley, "Religious Influence on Wisconsin Voting, 1928-1960," *The American Political Science Review* 56, no. 1 (March 1962): 66-70. Baggaley concludes that religious preference had an influence on Wisconsin voters. The religious split in Wisconsin made West Virginia a critical state for Kennedy to defeat Humphrey.

⁸² Ted Sorensen, "The Primaries," in *Kennedy: The Classic Biography* (New York: Harper Perennial Political Classics, 2009), 139. Early polling indicated that Kennedy lead Humphrey 70-30 in West Virginia.

strong lead. When Kennedy asked why he was declining in the polls, his staff told him frankly, “But no one in West Virginia knew you were a Catholic in December. Now they know.”⁸³

On prudent advice from his campaign staff, Kennedy faced religious concerns directly and confidently. He delivered a speech before the Associated Society of Newspaper Editors on April 21 in Washington D.C. “Every Presidential contender,” Kennedy asserted, “is dedicated to the separation of church and state, to the preservation of religious liberty, to an end to religious bigotry, and to the total independence of the officeholder from any form of ecclesiastical dictation.”⁸⁴ In the speech, Kennedy elucidated the responsibilities of the candidates, press, and voters; everyone involved in the electoral process. “But there are,” Kennedy stated assertively, “legitimate questions of public policy—of concern to religious groups which no one should feel bigoted about raising, and to which I do not object to answering, But I do object to being the only candidate required to answer those questions.”⁸⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Kennedy received a half minute of “enthusiastic applause at the end” and that not one of the four hundred participants had a single question for the candidate.⁸⁶

The campaign team managed the religious issue effectively, and Kennedy won the state primary. Because West Virginia was predominantly Protestant, Kennedy’s victory signified to many his ability to win as a Catholic. Indeed that state was a major victory, but the religious issue was far from being over as Kennedy hoped because the national media began discussing the religious issue in earnest. Both Wisconsin and West Virginia demonstrated the various ways religion began overshadowing other significant issues. As the candidates began their march

⁸³ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Harper Perennial Political Classics, 2009), 101.

⁸⁴ John F. Kennedy, “The Religious Issue in American Politics,” quoted in Albert J. Menendez, *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election: An Analysis of the Kennedy Victory Over Anti-Catholic Prejudice* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 231.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 233.

⁸⁶ Robert T. Hartmann, “Kennedy and Humphrey Deplore Church Issue: Candidates for Democratic Nomination Ask Tolerance Before Editor’s Convention,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1960.

towards the general election, the religious issue progressively occupied press coverage and became increasingly present in the national consciousness.

Fair Campaign Practices Committee created guidelines to ensure proper debate of the religious issue. The list established parameters for the candidates and others involved in the evolving discussion to differentiate between legitimate conversation and bigoted smears. Both candidates signed the document creating a sense of legitimacy to the conversation over religion in the 1960 election. Bruce Felknor, FCPC Executive Director, visited Washington D.C. in early 1959. The Kennedy team met with and agreed to secure financial support indirectly for the FCPC.⁸⁷ By September of the campaign year, about thirty local or regional Fair Campaign Committees existed throughout the nation.⁸⁸ These were autonomous organizations but received cooperation from Taft and his national team. FCPC created a vast network of overseers to regulate the upcoming showdown on the religious issue.

After a laborious primary race, Kennedy secured the nomination of the Democratic Party on July 13, 1960. The Democratic National Convention delegates made their decision on the first ballot. For the second time within four decades, the Democratic Party chose a Roman Catholic as their candidate for president. In his acceptance speech, the new candidate raised a glimmer of confidence regarding the impending battle. “The Democratic Party has,” Kennedy stated, “placed its confidence in the American people and in their ability to render a free, fair judgment—and in my ability to render a free, fair judgment.”⁸⁹ Kennedy now needed a comprehensive strategy to manage the issue of religion through the general election.

⁸⁷ Bruce L. Felknor to Charles P. Taft, correspondence, May 28, 1959, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁸⁸ Bruce L. Felknor, Special Campaign Period Report #1, September 23, 1960, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁸⁹ Ted Sorensen, *Kennedy: The Classic Biography* (New York: Harper Perennial Political Classics, 2009), 166.

Chapter Four

Resolute Gatekeepers: Formation of Kennedy's Community Relations Team

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. The definition of responsibility was exceedingly broad. It was to say that the religious issue and all its ramifications were my responsibility.

–James Wine, Oral History Interview

Morale was high for the Kennedy team as the convention ended and the election date began approaching. By August, only one issue caused apprehension for the campaign team leadership. In a memo, Ted Sorensen stated that everything was on track; the only hindrance to victory now would be the religious issue.⁹⁰ Kennedy and his team affirmed their previous stance of direct engagement with the issue. They achieved this by producing a comprehensive strategy to manage the issue both directly, but without provoking unnecessary debate. One significant aspect of this strategy was the creation of a team of specialists to handle various features of the subject in an honest and candid manner. Sorensen wanted the team to obviate potentially damaging scenarios from occurring. The team had to be versatile to deal with national and local outbursts of harmful and prejudicial operations. Community Relations managed all aspects of the religious issue, disseminated the vision and message of Kennedy to the public and engaged other prominent groups and individuals concerning religious freedom.

In August 1960, Robert Kennedy and Ted Sorensen officially hired James Wine and John Cogley to handle the subject of religion. Both men provided comprehensive understanding of the national religious dynamic. Before its inception, Ted Sorensen drafted a document outlining the intent and scope of the Community Relations team. Its primary goals were to attract Jewish votes and contend directly with the religious issue. Of particular interest are a number of the specific

⁹⁰ Theodore C. Sorensen, Memorandum on the Religious Issue, August 15, 1960, Series Campaign Files1959-1960, Box 25, James Wine Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Library and Archive, Boston.

tasks outlined in the memo. This group was responsible for working together with a number of other organizations including national, state and local committees of Protestant groups and councils, the Fair Campaign Practices Committee and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It specifically stated that the group should approach POAU and similar organizations to work with them if possible.⁹¹ In an interoffice memo sent to Ted Sorensen and Robert Kennedy, Wine indicated that he had friends “working inside” POAU, FCPC, and NCC.⁹² Accepting the position, Wine stated, “In my personal judgment, the religious question should not be an issue. It is my hope that I will be able to place these facts in proper perspective.”⁹³

Diverse opinions existed among Wine’s associates regarding the religious issue. A *New York Times* article announced Wine’s addition to the campaign team in August. Letters from throughout the Protestant community arrived at NCC headquarters regarding the news. Certain persons commended Wine’s commitment to promoting religious freedom while others derided his decision as a move against his church. Former colleague Edwin T. Dahlberg stated in a letter that he wished to dissuade Wine from taking the position but also believed in his motives and his service “to the cause of religious liberty and of Protestantism.”⁹⁴ Others held bitterly negative views of the decision to join Kennedy’s team. Several letters criticized Wine stating he sold out his church and his country for the prospects of money.

Community Relations responded to the flood of correspondence sent to the Kennedy campaign headquarters. James Wine, John Cogley, and J. Arthur Lazell answered the vast number of letters referencing religion. Thousands of letters inundated the team. Wine stated that

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² James Wine to Robert Kennedy, confidential interoffice memorandum, September 19, 1960, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Pre-Administration Political Files, General Subject File, 1959-1960, Box 47, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

⁹³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, “Kennedy Gets a Protestant to Handle Church Queries,” August 26, 1960.

⁹⁴ Dahlberg to Wine, correspondence, September 15, 1960, James Wine Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

he sent replies to 600-1000 letters weekly.⁹⁵ The copious amounts of letters Kennedy received contained diverse opinions regarding the religious debate. Letters discussed the separation of church and state, federal funding for parochial education, and the destruction of American values by a tyrannical pope.⁹⁶ Letters varied greatly from the absurd to reasonable, supportive to the obstructive. Early in the fall campaign, Wine said letters were mostly prejudiced or from unreasonable fanatics, but they became increasingly sincere in their intentions in the last few weeks of the campaign. Community Relations paid careful attention to mail with sincere, reasonable questions about Kennedy and his faith.⁹⁷

James Wine worked closely with localized groups to manage the issue within smaller communities. Citizens received information and campaign literature through a number of local venues. Opponents of a Catholic president operated in local areas, and it was important to counter their measures. Pastors delivered sermons and distributed campaign documents dealing with religious-political subjects. A pastor for the Central Baptist Church of Orange County publicized a sermon with the headline, “Compelling Reasons Why We Must Not Elect a Roman Catholic President.”⁹⁸ An ad for another local lecture announces, “Stop Wondering; find out why Church Politics, not religion (a private matter), rule out Kennedy.”⁹⁹ As an asset to the Kennedy team, Wine possessed a wide range of influence from his previous position within the National

⁹⁵ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, February 20, 1968, 13, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, and James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, January 26, 1967, 29-30, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

⁹⁶ Look in John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, Series 14.5. Issues: Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960. Correspondence Boxes 1002 through 1015.

⁹⁷ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 30-32.

⁹⁸ Central Baptist Church of Orange County, “Compelling Reasons Why We Must Not Elect A Roman Catholic President,” political advertisement, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum Digital Archive Files, Pre-Presidential Papers, Campaign Files, 1960, Subject Files: Advertisements, Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960.

⁹⁹ The Socialist Labor Party, “Socialist Labor Party: Free Lecture on Freedom Foe,” John F. Kennedy Library and Museum Digital Archive Files, Pre-Presidential Papers, Campaign Files, 1960, Subject Files: Advertisements, Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960.

Council of Churches. He had numerous local level contacts across the country and he maintained these close connections while serving as director of Community Relations.

Michigan was one of the strategic states mentioned in the “Bailey Memo.” Before leaving the NCC, Wine maintained contact with Harold C. McKinney Jr., the Director of General Operations for the Michigan Council of Churches. McKinney wanted to preserve a non-partisan character in his handling of the religious issue in Michigan. He believed this goal was achievable by following techniques of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee. He judged this would also ensure that “no religious block voting develops on a massive scale.”¹⁰⁰ On a countrywide level, the National Council of Churches produced a pamphlet discussing the “Christian Responsibility” during the election. In it, they described that their member churches “affirmed the necessity for an untrammelled exchange of ideas through speaking, teaching, preaching, assembling, voting, and the press and other mass media of communication.”¹⁰¹

Community Relations worked locally to reduce religious bigotry and promote religious tolerance and freedom. James Wine enlisted the assistance of Francis P. Miller to establish the Virginia Committee on Religious Freedom. Another example of how Community Relations operated locally, this subsidiary committee functioned in a variety of ways. In a statement of purpose, the group compiled a list of activities that included, “writing letters to the press or asking others to write, talking to friends who might influence public opinion, speaking on the subject when requested to do so, participating in discussion at public meetings, and answering attacks made on Senator John F. Kennedy because of his religion when a reply has to be made in

¹⁰⁰ McKinney to Wine, correspondence, August 15, 1960, James Wine Personal Papers, Series 1: Kennedy Campaign, Box 1, John F. Kennedy Library and Archive, Boston.

¹⁰¹ Division of Christian Life and Work, *Christian Responsibilities in the 1960 Elections*, National Council of Churches, February 25, 1960, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

the interest of freedom and fair play.”¹⁰² The committee, though organized by a request from Wine, was not entirely a group of Kennedy supporters. Some members stated their support for Nixon but remained committed to the group’s cause of “reason, tolerance and fair play.”¹⁰³

James Wine travelled continuously throughout the campaign meeting with leaders from various organizations and religious communities. In a memo to coordinators, Wine indicated that the religious issue was “regarded with a variety of attitudes across the country, depending upon locale—ranging from passive to severely critical.”¹⁰⁴ On one trip to New York in late September, Wine met with a large assembly consisting of several Jewish and Rabbinical groups. The purpose of the meeting was to establish contact to open their “channels of communication” and alleviate their hesitations by discussing the issue with Kennedy.¹⁰⁵ Wine had another meeting on October 4 with a group of Protestant clergymen in Washington D.C. A group like this was critical to the campaign because of their involvement with and understanding of Protestants. Wine stated that group members were “very familiar with the depth and extent to which religious groups affect social, economic and political forces in the country.”¹⁰⁶ They wanted to meet with Wine because they were interested in working with the campaign team. Similar meetings took place throughout the fall and helped the Kennedy team succeed in smaller localities.

Community Relations provided local level supporters with information and materials when necessary to manage the religious issue. Wine’s team produced a memo containing numerous statements Kennedy made and other pertinent information, including the Catholic

¹⁰² Virginia Committee on Religious Freedom, “A Statement of Purpose,” September 29, 1960, Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁰³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “Group Begins Anti-Bigotry Drive in State: Voters are Urged to Weigh Religious Issue with Care,” September 29, 1960.

¹⁰⁴ James Wine to Coordinators, memorandum, October 5, 1960, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Pre-Administration Political Files, General Subject File, 1959-1960, Box 47, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁰⁵ James Wine to Ted Sorensen, inter-office memorandum, October 1, 1960, James Wine Personal Papers, Series 1 Kennedy Campaign, Box 1, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Church's position on the subject and a full copy of his speech before the National Association of Press Editors.¹⁰⁷ Local campaign workers lauded the manual and frequently requested Wine to continue furnishing copies. Woodrow Cummings, a supporter from Tennessee, told Wine that a person can try to explain the religious issue "until you are red in the face" and fail to convince skeptics, but the memorandum allowed people to "read and mediate without any pressure."¹⁰⁸ Another supporter requested "a thousand" or more to put "in the hands of voters that seem to be disturbed about the religious issue."¹⁰⁹ A Kennedy-Johnson Headquarters in West Palm Beach, Florida requested 10,000 copies.¹¹⁰ In dealing with the religious issue on a local level, James Wine stated that these materials had been "very helpful."¹¹¹

In early September, a large group of prominent Protestants gathered in Washington D.C. to organize their efforts. The National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom assembled at the Mayflower Hotel on September 7 and began planning their autumn strategies. Glenn Archer, Executive Director of POAU, was a key attendee and provided a great deal of the organization for the event. Other important attendees included Norman Vincent Peale, Ramsey Pollard and other Protestant leaders including the Evangelical, Reverend Billy Graham.

Protestants and Other Americans United held their General Board meeting a day prior to the Peale Group. POAU invited many prominent Protestant leaders to the meeting. They hoped to organize the groups and discuss tactics for dealing with the religious issue as a unified front. POAU experienced substantial growth in literature circulation during the campaign. During their

¹⁰⁷ "The Memorandum," Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: "The Memorandum," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁰⁸ Woodrow Cummings to James Wine, correspondence, September 15, 1960, Religious Issue Files of James Wine, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: "The Memorandum," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence E. Harris to Robert Kennedy, correspondence, September 15, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: "The Memorandum," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹¹⁰ Nancy Thorpe to Allen Bugg, inter-office memorandum, October 6, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: "The Memorandum," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹¹¹ James Wine to Honorable Ken Hechler, correspondence, September 21, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: "The Memorandum," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

General Board meeting, the group distributed a graph depicting the powerful nature of this escalation. Distribution increased in “the past 12 months,” since the time *Look* magazine published Kennedy’s article, “greater than the size of our entire mailing list during our first ten years.”¹¹² Between 1959 and 1960, *Church and State* grew fifty-three percent from just under sixty thousand mailings to around one hundred thousand. As a percentage of the American population, the number of recipients does not appear substantial. The dramatic rise in public interest, however, demonstrates the seriousness of the issue. People became aware of the religious issue and sought information relevant to their concerns.

Community Relations prepared to respond to any backlash caused by the meeting in Washington D.C. Tensions grew around campaign headquarters of the potentially damaging side effects of the publicity surrounding the “Peale Group.” Wine and Cogley prepared to deal with any fallout. The press began discussing the meeting, which started falling apart as soon as the public became aware of its proceedings.¹¹³ Shortly after, Peale dissociated himself from the group and the message they produced. James Wine remembered a real fear of the situation initially, but he soon took the group less seriously.¹¹⁴ If the Peale Group demonstrated anything to the campaign team, it was that the religious issue remained visibly present and direct action was still necessary to combat any negative consequences it could still produce.

Responding directly to Protestant fears, Kennedy delivered a speech before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 16. Many historians have concluded that this speech was the turning point in the campaign regarding the issue of religion. Wine and Cogley

¹¹² Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Circulation September 1957—September 1960, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Records, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton.

¹¹³ W. J. Rorabaugh, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy’s Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 60. Rorabaugh discusses the public reaction to the statement produced by the group as appalled by its overt anti-Catholic nativism reminiscent of 1928.

¹¹⁴ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 6-7, 35-39.

jointly edited the speech before Kennedy addressed the group of Protestant ministers in Texas. Sorensen produced the speech initially with notes provided by both Wine and Cogley.¹¹⁵

Kennedy's Houston Speech clarified topics introduced early in his handling of the religious issue. After articulating his opinions in *Look* magazine, Kennedy received opposition over his comments about his conscience and the oath of office. The candidate mentioned on numerous occasions the inseparability of religious influence over his conscience. John Cogley believed it imperative "to unscramble the mess [Kennedy] got into in the *Look* article."¹¹⁶ In the Houston Speech, Kennedy stated candidly that if his conscience should ever conflict directly with the Constitution, he would resign the office. Cogley believed the only way to avoid this type of conflict was to leave the office. Kennedy's statement made clear his beliefs and responded to the harsh criticism he received in 1959.

Community Relations played an important role during the Houston Speech. James Wine established contact with Mark Meza of the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and negotiated the event's terms with him. Initially Meza wanted Kennedy to answer questions without giving a formal statement. Wine rejected this as unfair and ensured that the presentation included a speech before a brief amount of time for audience questions. After Wine clarified the details of the meeting, he and Cogley met the president, who was speaking at the Alamo, and flew with him to Houston. Cogley drilled Kennedy during the flight, asking questions both relevant to the political discussion as well as more difficult theological questions that might arise from the audience of well-informed ministers.¹¹⁷

Kennedy delivered the most refined version of the message he used throughout the length of his campaign. The imperatives Kennedy infused in the speech were an absolute church-state

¹¹⁵ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 44-45.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹¹⁷ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 10-11.

separation and that religion was influential but relegated strictly to the individual's private life. He espoused the philosophy that no church or religious dogma should influence any elected official in the execution of official duties. In his opinion, there was a partition between allegiance of faith and an oath to defend the Constitution.

I believe in an America, where the separation of church and state is absolute— where no Catholic prelate would tell the president, should he be Catholic, how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote—where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference—and where no man is denied public office merely because his faith differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him. I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instruction on public policy from the pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source—where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials—and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.¹¹⁸

Afterward, Kennedy answered questions from the audience. Only one attendee felt marginalized when his question was cutoff because time expired.¹¹⁹ This event marked the turning point in the campaign because Kennedy answered religious questions in the clearest and unequivocal manner since the *Look* article published a year earlier.

Team Kennedy scored another victory with a letter supporting religious tolerance from multiple respected religious leaders. On September 12, 1960, the same day as Kennedy's speech in Houston, one hundred prominent religious leaders across many faiths released a joint statement denouncing religious bigotry and listed a set of guidelines for the remainder of the election.¹²⁰ The list of signers included the Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and James Pike. John Cogley managed to assemble a large group of Catholic bishops to release a similar statement

¹¹⁸ John F. Kennedy, Speech before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 16, 1960, quoted in Albert J. Menendez, *John F. Kennedy: Catholic and Humanist* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1978), 120.

¹¹⁹ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 57.

¹²⁰ Menendez, *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election*, 28-29.

condemning the bigoted aspects of the campaign.¹²¹ The *New York Times* and other publications eventually published this statement and Community Relations had it distributed.¹²²

Kennedy never experienced the explosive frustration felt by Al Smith in 1928. At many times throughout 1960, Kennedy believed he answered legitimate concerns and that the issue was finished. Yet, the matter continuously revived and persisted. Wine remembered only a few instances when the candidate appeared frustrated at the recurrence of the subject. He thought “periodically it would mount up and disturb him a little bit, and then it would sort of float off.”¹²³ Wine and his team provided the assistance and knowledge of religious-political undercurrents beneficial to the Kennedy team. Community Relations used the Houston Speech and its message through the remaining weeks of the campaign. The group produced a recorded version of the speech and began distributing it as the definitive answer on the religious question. They also had a print version distributed with the memorandum they distributed earlier.¹²⁴ James Wine started notifying local operatives of the video in response to any questions that remained concerning religion.

Reverse bigotry became a cause of concern for Kennedy’s opponents. In October, leaders on the Republican side claimed that Democratic supporters engaged in a tactic the FCPC deemed an inappropriate tactic. William E. Miller, a Republican Representative, “charged the Democrats with launching a massive ‘bigotry in reverse’ propaganda campaign in an attempt to sway Catholic voters in large industrial states.”¹²⁵ Senator Morton, the Republican Committee Chairman, voiced concerns over a piece of “smear” literature that appeared at a Labor’s

¹²¹ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 37-38.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 68.

¹²⁴ Info from John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, Series 14, Subject Files: “The Memorandum,” John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹²⁵ Joan Lynott, “Democrats Charged with ‘Reverse Bigotry,’” *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1960.

Committee for Kennedy and Johnson gathering. Morton referenced a pamphlet that declares, “Don’t let the G.O.P.-lins Get You!”¹²⁶ The pamphlet stated plainly that voters should reject religious bigotry and vote for a choice of tolerance. Charles Taft released a statement that both candidates and their running mates were targets of such attacks and such charges “have been disapproved to the satisfaction of any reasonable man.”¹²⁷ He noted that both sides periodically had fervent supporters using the religious issue against their opponent, but with immediate mediation, the activity ceased.¹²⁸

Community Relations stated that the team never used religion for explicit political gain. John Cogley’s opinion was that “there was the normal amount of making lemonade when you find yourself with a lemon.”¹²⁹ Religion presented a legitimate challenge in the 1960 election. Faced with powerful opposition, Kennedy’s campaign team responded in an effective and reasonable manner. Even Richard Nixon engaged the issue, not explicitly in public, but in a covert fashion. Behind the scenes, Nixon courted religious leaders and even had Missouri congressman Orland K. Armstrong encourage anti-Catholic sentiments.¹³⁰ The Reverend Billy Graham maintained a close relationship with Nixon throughout the campaign and presented the invocation for one of his rallies. Graham stated continuously that religion would be a major issue but distanced himself from the political aspect of the subject. He insisted, however, that the next president be capable of handling the coming challenges and that there would be “no time to

¹²⁶ Labor’s Committee for Kennedy and Johnson, *Don’t Let the G.O.P.-lins Get You! That Irreligious Issue*, pamphlet, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston, and *Baltimore Sun*, “GOP Charges ‘Smear Sheets,’” *Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1960. Morton claimed the brochure depicted a voter accosted by a witch and a member of the KKK, though the figure easily resembles a ghost or ghoul.

¹²⁷ Charles P. Taft, Text of Statement by Charles P. Taft, November 4, 1960, Box I:260, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 43-44.

¹³⁰ Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President*, 104-106, 192-194.

experiment with a novice.”¹³¹ Graham believed the Republican candidate should raise the issue of religion publicly, though Nixon maintained his public stance that neither candidate should discuss religion.¹³²

As November approached, a few events caused concern for the Community Relations team. One episode involved a final thrust of protest scheduled for Reformation Sunday. Groups including the National Association of Evangelicals and its offshoot group Citizens for Religious Freedom planned a broad campaign for local congregations to rally against Kennedy. To counter this activity, Wine began contacting the vast network of Protestant leaders he established during the campaign and advised them against the protest.¹³³ Wine’s efforts proved successful and only a handful of congregations protested.

An incident involving Puerto Rican bishops triggered alarm for the Kennedy team and provided ammunition for their opposition. During Puerto Rico’s elections, Catholic bishops released a statement for their church members to vote against Governor Munoz Marin.¹³⁴ Similar to the Polling incident, Kennedy’s opposition used the bishop’s statement as proof that Catholics could not circumvent the Catholic Hierarchy’s authority. Kennedy solemnly confessed to Ted Sorensen, “If enough voters realize Puerto Rico is American soil, this election is lost.”¹³⁵ After initial panic over the situation, Kennedy and his team decided it best to avoid escalating the issue by doing nothing to provoke any disapproval.¹³⁶ Ultimately, Puerto Ricans reelected Marin with

¹³¹ Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 442.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 192-194.

¹³³ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 40.

¹³⁴ Albert J. Menendez, *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election: An Analysis of the Kennedy Victory Over Anti-Catholic Prejudice* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 32.

¹³⁵ Sorensen, *Kennedy: The Classic Biography*, 209.

¹³⁶ John Cogley, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 14-15.

a large plurality of votes and the issue disappeared.¹³⁷ Kennedy and his team avoided both conflicts that had the potential to derail his campaign and its message.

As November entered, tensions over the religious issue began to subside. On November 8, Americans cast their ballots electing John F. Kennedy the first Roman Catholic President by the narrowest electoral margin in U.S. history. Despite constant and fierce opposition, Kennedy's Community Relations team managed the religious issue effectively and contributed to Kennedy's victory over Richard Nixon. The subsequent dynamic of religious-political discourse that emerged was a direct result of their efforts to mitigate the religious issue during the campaign.

¹³⁷ Shaun A. Casey, *The Making of A Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194.

Chapter Five

A Wall Left Standing: Immediate Impact and Aftermath of Religion in the 1960 Election

Excitement appeared everywhere in the immediate aftermath of the election. The national spirit seemed rejuvenated. When everything was finished, John Kennedy proved that the nation could accept a Catholic in the White House. He won the presidency by the narrowest margin in the nation's history. Nevertheless, by winning the election, Kennedy proved that America was certainly becoming a more pluralistic nation. The wall of religious prejudice could not stand against the force of religious freedom exerted on it by individuals on the Community Relations team and within the Fair Campaign Practices Committee. Yet, what of the other wall, which separated church from state? What was its condition in the outcome of Kennedy's triumph? Had it withstood the effects of fierce debate waged during a critical and close election?

Fair Campaign Practices Committee officials compiled a postelection study on the religious issue's impact. The study compared the results of 1960 with those from 1928, but it also noted that no widespread effort existed then to collect "campaign literature" and other "political artifacts" for analysis by "future historians, politicians and concerned churchmen, scholars and journalists."¹³⁸ The FCPC sought to compile all available campaign literature from every state to study its effects. Analyzing such materials, they hoped, would benefit "agencies concerned with inter-faith dialog, with church-state relations and with the interaction of religion and politics."¹³⁹ They desired a comprehensive picture of how, when, and where materials were created and distributed and the overall nature of the issue in its political context.

Charles Taft deemed the FCPC's activities successful in maintaining the cleanest possible campaign. Despite allegations by Republicans of aiding Kennedy's victory, Taft believed that

¹³⁸ Fair Campaign Practices Committee, *A Post-Election Study In Depth: The Religious Issue in the 1960 Elections*, November 1960, Box I:260, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

without the actions of the FCPC, “reaction to the Protestant attacks would have been even more violent.”¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, the FCPC maintained amicable discussions with major groups, including the campaign teams and others such as the NCC and to some extent POAU. Of course, many fringe groups, nonetheless, engaged in vicious smear and whispering campaigns. Moving forward, Taft concluded that the campaign had benefited future religious discourse by clarifying the truly relevant issues in the discussion of religion and politics.¹⁴¹

Protestants and Other Americans United accepted the outcome and began to comprehend a clearer meaning behind the election. C. Stanley Lowell published *Embattled Wall* in 1966 to recount the history of the organization on its twentieth anniversary. Lowell devoted an entire chapter to the presidential election of 1960. Although the election caused POAU its “greatest days of strain,” according to Lowell, it also provided “an unprecedented opportunity to educate the American public in regard to church-state separation.”¹⁴² Despite their virulent and often bigoted stand against Kennedy because of his religion, POAU brought national attention to issues of church-state separation, including the debate over federal funding for parochial schools and an ambassador to the Vatican.

Kennedy maintained his firm stance of absolute separation of church and state throughout the short tenure of his presidency. In December of 1960, an editorial in *Church and State* warned the president elect about the promises he made during the election: “The record is known and it will be remembered.”¹⁴³ When parochial schools endeavored to procure funding from the federal government, Kennedy squashed all their attempts. POAU applauded Kennedy and his

¹⁴⁰ Taft to Roger Feger, correspondence, November 21, 1960, Box I:260, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁴¹ Taft to Miss Jo-Ann Price, correspondence, November 9, 1960, Box I:260, Charles P. Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹⁴² C. Staley Lowell, *Embattled Wall: Americans United: An Idea and a Man* (Washington D.C.: Americans United 1966), 53.

¹⁴³ Editorial, “President Kennedy,” *Church and State*, vol. 13, no. 11, (December 1960): 2.

Administration for their firm stance against such a break in the wall of separation. In *Embattled Wall*, Lowell commended Kennedy for remaining faithful to his pledge, and applauded POAU for working diligently to ensure Kennedy kept his promises.¹⁴⁴

POAU faced a number of challenges following the election. Shortly after Kennedy's victory, the organization lost their tax-exempt status as an organization. The IRS believed they crossed the line as a religious-political organization. After a hard fought battle in the courts, POAU regained their exempt status again. The group dropped Protestants from its name shortly after 1960 and began using its shorter name, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, or simply Americans United.

John Kennedy's election restored faith in religious freedom and the First Amendment. American Catholics especially felt their acceptance as equal citizens with the election of a co-religionist to the White House. Patricia O'Brien recounted the sentiments felt around her native Boston after the election. Spirits reawakened and people believed something great had happened. Her own family celebrated Kennedy's election as a symbol of Catholics' attaining a level of full citizenship.¹⁴⁵ Catholics around the nation celebrated the inauguration of one of their own. The *Philadelphia Tribune* reported that a representative from the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Greek Orthodox faiths said prayers at Kennedy's inauguration.¹⁴⁶ It was a fitting testament to the reaffirmation of the America ideal of religious pluralism.

Community Relations contributed significantly to the religious-political discourse of the 1960 election. James Wine humbly stated that his contribution was to provide advice and "not let the matter become sufficiently inflamed to where some tangential issue would offset appreciation

¹⁴⁴ Lowell, *Embattled Wall*, 70-71.

¹⁴⁵ Patricia O'Brien, interview by Ronald J. Grele, April 7, 1988, Columbia Center for Oral History, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, NY, 1-5.

¹⁴⁶ *Philadelphia Tribune*, "All Faiths Represented at Jan. Inaugural: Catholic, Greek Prelates, Rabbi on Program," January 14, 1961.

for the man himself.”¹⁴⁷ Ted Sorensen described Wine’s contribution generously stating, “No office in the Kennedy-Democratic National Committee headquarters worked harder or made more important contribution to the campaign.”¹⁴⁸

James Wine delivered a speech at Yale University on November 10, 1960 summarizing key points of the religious issue. “It seems to me,” Wine stated, “that we who are sincerely concerned about the cause of religion in this country would profit by examining what the major religious bodies said on this matter of church and state which relate to the 1960 presidential campaign.”¹⁴⁹ Going through a multitude of opinions raised throughout the campaign, Wine concluded that the heart of the issue was establishing tolerance for diverse views of religion and the role of government to neither limit nor exclude any person because of their beliefs. Anytime the principle of church and state separation is threatened, Wine believed there existed another “opportunity to resolve the question properly, without recourse to vindictiveness, bitterness, and distortion of the values inherent in the principle.”¹⁵⁰ This attitude guided Wine as the director of the Community Relations team through the election.

Religious discourse permeated the 1960 election and became legitimate with the election of the first Catholic President. In many ways, Kennedy underwent a religious test during the campaign. In deciding to handle the issue directly, he accepted that there were questions that needed answers before he could claim the Oval Office. This was not the same category of test barred by the Bill of Rights. Similar to the Air Force Manual episode, the religious issue of the 1960 presidential election uncovered serious problems in the United States regarding authentic

¹⁴⁷ James Wine, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, 75.

¹⁴⁸ Sorensen, *Kennedy: The Classic Biography*, 176.

¹⁴⁹ James Wine, “Yale Speech,” November 10, 1960, John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, Subject Files: Wine, James W.: Yale speech, 10 November 1960, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

religious freedom and separation of church and state. James Wine and John Cogley represent the core of the campaign in defending both aspects. Both individuals handled the religious issue on the national and local level. Before accepting positions on the Kennedy team, each encountered the shifting tide of religion and politics within the United States. The Community Relations team navigated the candidate through the religious-political terrain they knew and offered critical advice when necessary to ensure the existence of true religious freedom.

The 1960 presidential election demonstrates the way practical religious discourse should occur within a free and open society and within the parameters of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Both sides, James Wine and Glenn Archer represented guardians of the separation of church and state and the freedom of religion. Even though bigoted anti-Catholic rhetoric pervaded the discourse presented by the leading figures within POAU and similar agencies, the outcome of their actions contrasted with the defense of those rights for Catholics through the actions of Kennedy's Community Relations team and the Fair Campaign Practices Committee. Through his actions, James Wine reaffirmed the First Amendment rights for all Americans. In the aftermath, those involved in the 1960 religious debate developed successful and proper methods for conducting religious-political discourse within American politics. As religious camps coalesce, as with POAU before the election, it is the responsibility to challenge and breakdown the discussion from one's religion into a discussion of issues.

Leadership at POAU and other groups in the religious-political realm believed that John Kennedy maintained a strict separation of church and state during his presidency because of their oversight. Kennedy consistently asserted a stance against federal funding for parochial schools and appointing an ambassador to the Vatican among other issues. Opinions exist that, as a

Catholic, Kennedy had to uphold this hard line because he was under scrutiny at every step. If this is the case, was this an absolute separation of church and state?

Epilogue

In the decades after the 1960 election, the insertion of religious rhetoric and debate into modern political discourse continued as a result from the debate of the campaign. Several groups organized in the aftermath with a broad range of goals. Some organizations promote particular religious beliefs and endorse politicians based on those convictions. Conversely, others seek to restrain or completely separate religion from politics. Politicians discuss religion openly and debate how faith influences their decisions regarding specific issues. Presidential primaries contain religiously charged questions and campaign advertisements. Discourse on faith and politics have developed closely in the five decades since the 1960 election. One factor that has essentially remained unchanged is how campaigns remain devoid of widespread religious prejudice.

The message Kennedy delivered throughout the campaign, typified by the Houston Address, remains compelling even in our current time. An organization called the Freedom from Religion Foundation, originated in 1978 to promote a strict separation of church and state, used a segment of the speech for a commercial. The advertisement for the group juxtaposes the words and image of Kennedy with those of the Constitution. It asks for support to defend “the wall of separation of church and state.”¹⁵¹ This group and its missive, unlike Americans United during the 1960 campaign, seek to maintain a strict separation from all religions. Its purpose is to defend those affiliated with no religion, such as atheists and agnostics. The organization is active in “publishing books and pamphlets, in producing films and music, in awarding scholarships and in conducting court challenges of violations of the separation between church and state.”¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Freedom From Religion Foundation, “FFRF JFK Ad,” March 23, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3F0q5uP1cQ&feature=player_embedded (accessed October 13, 2012).

¹⁵² Freedom From Religion Foundation, “Getting Acquainted,” <http://ffrf.org/about/getting-acquainted> (accessed October 13, 2012).

Current trends indicate that active participation in organized religion is declining. In a report for National Public Radio, religion correspondent Barbara Bradley Hagerty showed that fewer Americans are identifying with one of the major religious institutions. She stated that Americans are still religious because “polls show that about 90 [per cent] of Americans actually believe in God. So what’s happening here is a decline in the trust of religious organizations.”¹⁵³ It will be interesting to observe how religious-political discourse withstands shifting trends in religion and decreased religious participation in young people. In 1960, Americans possessed strong loyalties to their religious and political beliefs. It is not clear how these changes will influence politics and elections. What remains important is protecting the freedom for any American, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof, to serve their country. Kennedy’s election and, much more importantly, the message he delivered, ensured that this is possible.

Pluralism remains and has increased since Kennedy broke through the wall of religious prejudice. In the 2007 Congressional election, Minnesota’s Fifth District elected Keith Ellison to the U.S. House of Representatives becoming the first Muslim member of Congress. In a deeply symbolic gesture, Ellison took the oath of office using a Qur’an owned by Thomas Jefferson. This historic episode demonstrates the continued expansion of pluralism in American politics and the breakdown of prejudice towards a candidate’s religion. Ellison’s election is especially significant because of its post-9/11 implication. The U.S. Congress has become increasingly diverse, by many different measures, but specifically concerning religion. In the 2012 election, the 113th Congress seated the first Buddhist Senator and the first Hindu House member.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ NPR Staff, “U.S. Still Religious, But Trust in Institutions Wanes,” *All Things Considered*, July 28, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/28/157538238/u-s-still-religious-but-trust-in-institutions-wanes> (accessed January 16, 2013).

¹⁵⁴ David R. Sands, “113th Congress Mirrors Increasingly Diverse U.S.,” *Washington Times*, January 7, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jan/7/113th-congress-mirrors-increasingly-diverse-us/?page=all> (accessed January 19, 2013).

While Protestants are still the majority their numbers are declining, and Catholics and Jews occupy a fair number of seats.

Becoming a member of Congress, however, is not attaining the presidency. Only time will tell if someone of a faith other than of Christianity will occupy the Oval Office. In the case of Al Smith and John Kennedy, the ultimate religious test occurred when they sought the White House. Whereas Smith was unable to break through the wall of prejudice, Kennedy proved it was possible to defeat the forces of religious intolerance. The resulting acceptance of increased religious dimensions within political discourse changed the way many conduct their campaigns for the presidency. Candidates often adhere to strict standards based on religious convictions to secure votes. Primaries yield candidates thoroughly vetted on how they intend to use their consciences to make decisions based on their beliefs. The election of 1960 established the legitimate use of religion in political discourse. Answering questions about religion, Kennedy demonstrated the importance of absolute church-state separation and that religion influenced an individual's conscience, but in practice, remained an aspect of their private life.

When someone references the United States as a Christian nation, it is evocative of the many previous declarations of America being a Protestant nation. We are much more certainly a religious nation. Though it appears even this might be changing. In a nation that believes in a separation between the political and the spiritual, whatever one's personal faith may be does not bar them from serving the public good. Their intentions must operate, however, for the benefit of all society. This promotes the other aspect of the First Amendment, allowing the freedom of speech and exchange of ideas and ideals. The election of 1960 not only broke the wall of religious intolerance, a barrier that prevented many Americans from serving their nation, but it also provided the forum for appropriate discourse on religious subjects within the political realm.

It is for this reason that religion remains a prominent feature of our political dialogue on a wide range of issues. At the same time, we must be cautious that intolerance does not distort our leader's views of the diverse religious beliefs found among Americans.

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