The Presidential Other: Religious Minorities and Presidential Politics

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ABSTRACT

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The Presidential Other: Religious Minorities and Presidential Politics

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Religion matters in presidential politics. In order to be successful a candidate seemingly has to be able to openly discuss faith and understand the political definitions of moral values in the public sphere. This thesis will show through two case studies the pervasiveness of the “Catholic Question” of the twentieth century. A third case study shows the importance of understanding political definitions of religion in order to effectively communicate a candidate’s values to voters. These case studies are then applied to members of contemporary minority religions as a way of illustrating the continued importance of religion in presidential politics. The findings show that religion remains a component in voters selection of a presidential candidate.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING RELIGION IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

The roots of bigotry run deep in America. From the very conception of our nation groups and individuals within our society have been marginalized both socially and politically. A seemingly contradictory aspect of American history is the high degree of religious intolerance exhibited by citizens of a country punitively founded on religious freedom. Religious others have always been present in American society, especially those whose beliefs have historically fallen outside of the Protestant idea for what is normal, acceptable, and moral. This conceptualization of morality translates into religious bigotry and fear of the religious other.

One such group that is of particular fascination in terms of electoral politics is American Catholics. American Catholics have but once seen a member of their faith be elected to the office of the presidency, and only three times have they seen a member of their faith even nominated for the highest office in the land. Only one member of the Catholic faith has assumed the office of Vice President. Throughout history prominent and well-respected members of society have been vocal in their opposition to Catholic presidential candidates. As this paper will demonstrate, this opposition stems mainly from fears that a Catholic president would be more loyal to the Pope and Vatican than to the Constitution and the American people.

Examining anti-Catholic prejudice in American politics also means exploring the evolution of Catholicism in the twentieth century. There was an observable shift within the Church over the course of this time period, moving away from a strict adherence to Church doctrine. This resulted in the creation of multiple varieties of Catholicism. In the
contemporary Catholic Church one notices both conservative parishioners whose views mirror those of Evangelical Protestants, yet also liberal Catholics who focus on the social message of scripture (e.g., charity and good works). This is best illustrated by viewing two major political actors in the United States: House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia. Both are members of the Roman Catholic faith; however both fall on starkly different sides of the political debate.

These different strains of Catholicism illustrate the openness of the Church in terms of its members. One example comes in the form of activist Dorothy Day. Day converted to Catholicism in 1927 and was one of the founders of the Catholic Workers Movement (Fisher, 1989). The Catholic Workers Movement practiced Catholicism through the lens of social justice and charity. The Catholic Workers Movement, which still exists, states that the organization is “committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken” while also protesting against “injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms” (Catholic Workers Movement, 2011).

Conversely, there are American Catholics who espouse views that are much different from Dorothy Day. One prominent example would be Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Antonin Scalia. Many Catholics have argued that capital punishment violates Catholic doctrine; however Justice Scalia supports capital punishment. In an essay on the subject, Scalia wrote, “My vote, when joined with at least four others, is, in most cases, the last step that permits an execution to proceed. I could not take part in that
process if I believed what was being done to be immoral” (Scalia, 2002). Justice Scalia attributes this view to his conceptualization of the free will doctrine, which he says is “the ability of man to resist temptations to evil, which God will not permit beyond man’s capacity to resist—is central to the Christian doctrine of salvation and damnation, heaven and hell” (Scalia, 2002).

Faced with these differing opinions on Catholic doctrine, one cannot help but ask “which is correct?” The answer depends largely in part on the individual’s view of Catholicism. This relationship with the Church is a major factor in the case study of Senator John Kerry in 2004. For Catholics who hold views similar to Justice Scalia, Kerry was “not Catholic enough” by their standard of strict adherence to Church doctrine. Conversely, Kerry viewed himself as being “Catholic enough” because of his intense personal faith and devotion to the Church. Mirroring several Protestant denominations, Kerry viewed religion as intensely personal and inherently private. These opposing views contrast each other in the Kerry case study, illustrating both the divide among parishioners of the Catholic faith and the importance of religion in presidential politics.

Scholarly work on religion in presidential politics gained more attention after the 1980 presidential election. In 1980 Ronald Reagan brought religious groups together with traditional political organizations in order to form a winning coalition. Some early academics did research on the Kennedy campaign in 1960, but this literature began to emerge after 1980 as a result of the Reagan Revolution and the rise of the Religious Right. This literature is important in order to illustrate the significance of faith in presidential elections, and to show the political effectiveness of religious advocates. The
literature provides a lens through which one is able to best understand the evolving role of religion in presidential politics.

In 1967 sociologist Robert Bellah attempted to define the role of religion in American politics through the lens of what he called “civil religion.” Following Rousseau’s definition, Bellah described civil religion as the belief in “the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and punishment of vice, and the exclusion of religious intolerance” (Bellah, 2005). Bellah argued that Americans collectively embrace a civil religion, a religion with its own symbols, values, and rituals that sometimes run counter to those of their chosen faith. Bellah used President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address to show evidence to the interwoven nature of actual religion and the civil religion embraced by the electorate (Bellah, 2005).

Researchers Kevin Coe and David Domke take Bellah’s farther. In their article “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives” Coe and Domke attempt to look at the rise of religion in politics through not only the use of symbols and sociological ideas, but through the use of rhetoric. The authors note that while Kennedy opened the door, those who have followed have not been afraid to use, as they call, “God talk” (Coe & Domke, 2006). In terms of the contemporary presidency, Coe and Domke find that Reagan and the three presidents who followed him employed “God talk” substantially more than those before (Coe & Domke, 2006). Following in line with Bellah’s article, Coe and Domke found that both Reagan and George W. Bush overtly linked religious rhetoric with patriotism (e.g., emphasizing freedom and liberty). Coe and Domke’s research shows that beginning with John
Kennedy in 1960 and moving forward through electoral history, religious narratives and been intermixed with the traditional American narrative; and even more importantly, this indicates the rise of religion in politics since Kennedy and the need for research in this field in order to give a more well-rounded view of politics, decisions, and behavior.

Stephen D. Johnson and Joseph B. Tamney studied the role of this new-found religious political movement by examining the first time the movement was thought to be exceptionally effective: the 1980 election. Their article “The Christian Right and the 1980 Presidential Election” explores the idea that in 1980 religious conservatives felt “motivated by a belief that a moral and spiritual decline” was “endangering the nation” (Johnson & Tamney, 1982). As a result of this decline and fear for the direction of the country, Christian conservatives openly entered into the political arena to advocate on behalf of candidate Ronald Reagan. Johnson and Tamney note that this organization mixed both evangelical leaders and secular Republican operatives. They identify the leaders of this new coalition as televangelist Jerry Falwell, fund-raiser Richard Viguerie, and political operative Paul Weyrich (Johnson & Tamney, 1982).

In order to study the overall effect of this new coalition, Johnson and Tamney conducted a telephone survey using 262 people who live in researchers Robert and Helen Lynd’s “Middletown” which is, in actuality, Muncie, Indiana (Johnson & Tamney, 1982). In this study they only use individuals who had indicated that they intend to vote in the upcoming 1980 presidential election. The survey was conducted by telephone interviews administered by “trained sociology graduate and undergraduate students” the week prior to the 1980 election (Johnson & Tamney, 1982). The interviews measured four
dimensions of the Christian Right: political involvement, civil religion, religious fundamentalism, and voluntary prayer in school.

Johnson and Tamney’s findings run counter to the claim that the religious right had an overwhelming effect in electing Ronald Reagan in 1980. One major aspect of their study is that they also look at each respondents socioeconomic standing. An example is that among “highly educated people, civil religion was related to supporting Reagan” while among those who were less educated civil religion was associated with support for President Carter (Johnson & Tamney, 1982). Johnson and Tamney go on to say that Reagan’s support came from those who typically identify themselves as being conservative Republicans, people who would have voted for Reagan regardless of religion; and individuals who were angry with the high level of inflation. This finding runs counter to the claim that Reagan’s victory was the result of more religious people and organizations becoming politically active.

Eric Woodrum examined the 1984 election in his article “Moral Conservatism and the 1984 Presidential Election.” Woodrum began by stating that both Durkheim and Weber argue that a “consequence of social development is that commonly held moral convictions are diminished” and that “secular rationality” prevails in modernized societies (Woodrum, 1988). Woodrum said that in modern pluralistic societies like the United States “traditional moral absolutes are regarded progressively as less plausible and less relevant to public life” (Woodrum, 1988). As a result of this turn away from the profane, moral conservatives advocate for issues that re-assert a traditional value base with moral absolutes, and crusade against a perceived culture of liberalism and
modernity. Much like prior authors, Woodrum argues that moral conservatism had little to no impact on the landslide re-election of Ronald Reagan in 1984.

Woodrum conducted his study in Raleigh, North Carolina three weeks prior to the November election. This study looked at social demographic variables (such as age, race, gender, education) as well as church membership, religious denomination, and political ideology. Roughly 50% of the respondents identified themselves as being “moderates” while the remainder identified themselves as either political conservatives or liberals (Woodrum, 1988). To assess moral conservatism, Woodrum developed an index to determine the level of agreement respondents had on “salient contemporary issues,” which included a scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and statements regarding conservative positions on abortion, pornography, prayer in schools, homosexuality, and sexual relationships outside of marriage (Woodrum, 1988).

Woodrum concluded his study by finding that neither moral conservatism nor moral liberalism have a strong enough position to be used alone to mount a national campaign. He went on to argue that Reagan’s victory was due in large part to the “politicalization of conservative moral issues…attracting voters who traditionally support the Democratic Party” (Woodrum, 1988). Woodrum concluded that the influence of moral conservatism “will remain obscured unless it is presented by a party or candidate not otherwise unattractive to the very segments of the electorate most receptive to conservative moral appeals” (Woodrum, 1988).

Corwin Smidt and Paul Kellstedt examine religion in presidential politics in a post-Reagan Era in their article “Evangelicals in the Post-Reagan Era: An Analysis of
Evangelical Voters in the 1988 Presidential Election.” The absences of President Reagan’s name on the November ballot left considerable doubt surrounding which party evangelicals would support in the election, with a substantial portion of Reagan’s victory coming from Southerners who had previously identified with Democrats (the so-called “Reagan Democrats”), most observers began to wonder whether or not these voters would return to the Democratic Party or remain Republican voters (Smidt & Kellstedt, 1992).

In order to study this topic, Smidt and Kellstedt drew on National Election Studies data from 1980, 1984, and 1988 to see if there had been any changes in politicalization and partisanship throughout the 1980s. They also developed a three-pronged criteria for determining which participants were eligible for their study: To qualify, respondents first had to say that religion played a significant role in their lives, second they had to define themselves as “born again” Christians, and finally they had to identify with the statement “God’s word and all it says is true” (Smidt & Kellstedt, 1992).

Smidt and Kellstedt came to three main conclusions. First, there had indeed been a substantial ideological shift over the course of the 1980s for white evangelicals. Smidt and Kellstedt argued that this shift solidified in Reagan’s second terms, and was most prevalent in young voters; a conclusion they argued would be felt in future elections (Smidt & Kellstedt, 1992). A second finding was that throughout the decade evangelicals had become substantially more politically active. This finding is noteworthy because, prior to the 1980s, evangelicals had been less likely to actively participate in political activity than their nonevangelical counterparts. This study also found that white
evangelicals are much more likely to be partisan in their voting (specifically favoring the Republicans) than nonevangelicals, especially in the American South. This finding is particularly important because not only are evangelicals becoming more politically inclined, but they are becoming partisan in their preferences, likewise a shift from the prior reality. Finally, they conclude that geographic region plays a role in this change. Specifically, the growing divide between white evangelical Protestants and nonevangelicals is seen most prevalently in the American South.

Stephen Johnson returned to Muncie, Indiana, in order to examine the 1992 presidential election. Johnson examined whether or not differences between denominations has an influence on voting behavior. Specifically, he looks at Catholics, conservative Protestants and mainline Protestants in order to see what factors, if any, influence one denominations support for President George H.W. Bush and another’s for Governor Bill Clinton (Johnson, 1994). Furthermore, Johnson wanted to see if there are also social and psychological variables that influence the ways in which members of these three denominations vote.

Johnson noted that it is relatively clear-cut what it means to be a Catholic; however, he does attempt to define the differences between mainline and conservative Protestants. Essentially, he differentiates between the two by saying that conservative Protestant denominations generally “emphasize a evangelical or fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible” and that “obedience to God” should be the single largest factor in one’s life (Johnson, 1994). Johnson describes mainline Protestants as less concerned about saving souls and more focused on social goods, such as “equal justice
for all” (Johnson, 1994). Johnson argued that this could be considered a subcategory of conservative Protestantism. Essentially, members of the Christian Right are more extreme in their fundamentalism and are more likely to order public officials to adhere to their form of evangelism.

In order to conduct this study Johnson took a randomly selected sample of 505 residents in Muncie, Indiana. The phone interviews were conducted a week and half-to-four days prior to Election Day. The researchers over-sampled the Catholic population in order to generate data that would represent the views of Catholics on a variety of issues. A questionnaire was developed in order to test each respondent’s viewpoints on issues as well as religiosity. By combining measures of religiosity and socioeconomic demographics, Johnson hoped to be able to find a plausible relationship between the three religious dimensions and vote choice.

Johnson’s study found that there were no major group differences in the vote choice and party preference among any of the three religious dimensions; however the study did conclude that there are differences in what relates to voting among the groups (Johnson, 1994). Johnson finds that social class was a major determining factor for Catholic voters. Essentially, lower class voters supported Clinton while those of the higher economic classes did not (Johnson, 1994). Conservative Protestants had the strongest relationship with religious fundamental thought. Those who were identified in this group voted based on what candidate fit best with their evangelical viewpoints (e.g., conservative social issues). Johnson found that this did in fact have a relationship on vote choice (Johnson, 1994). According to the results of this study, mainline Protestants had
no distinct characteristic or trait that related to vote choice. However, Johnson did note that a possible reason for this was that his study did not adequately measure this variable within the differing context of Protestants (Johnson, 1994).

Jeffery Cohen noted that for the first time since John F. Kennedy a religious other was on the ballot in the 2000 presidential election. Joseph Lieberman, a Jewish Senator from Connecticut, was selected as the Democratic Party’s nominee for vice president. This was just the second time since 1960 that an “other” had been placed on the national ticket since (the first being Geraldine Ferraro as Walter Mondale’s 1984 running mate). In his article “The Polls: Religion and the 2000 Presidential Election: Public Attitudes Toward Joseph Lieberman” Jeffery Cohen addressed the notion of religious otherness in presidential politics.

Leading up to Lieberman’s nomination some pundits and members of the Jewish faith feared that Lieberman’s nomination could hurt the Democratic ticket in the November election. Much like 1960, the commonly held view was that latent bigotry and, in the case of Lieberman, anti-Semitism would greatly hinder Gore’s chance of victory (Cohen, 2005). Cohen noted that Lieberman’s announcement at the Democratic National Convention was followed by an immediate boost in support for Gore. However, this finding could be attributed to a post-convention bounce.

In order to study what kind of effect Lieberman’s religion had on the 2000 election Cohen looked at National Election Study data, public opinion polls, and gathered religious and demographic information. While the theoretical assumption expected some type of negative feeling toward Lieberman, Cohen’s study found that feelings toward
Jews played a minimal role in the 2000 Election (Cohen, 2005). Cohen also found that Lieberman actually had broad support for his candidacy. Cohen concluded by saying that these results show that norms have changed over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century: Americans are more open to diversity in their leadership choices, and more willing to accept a candidate who is not like them. These findings offer a departure from previous literature and opinion on this topic; unlike during the Kennedy campaign the religious prejudice that was so pervasive appeared to have been a nonissue in the 2000 Election.

Four years after President Bush’s election, the president was up for re-election in November. Bush was wrapping up his tumultuous first term, which consisted of terrorist attacks, wars being fought on two fronts, and murmurs of illegitimacy surrounding the Supreme Court decision that ended the 2000 Florida recount. Bush and chief strategist Karl Rove set out to form a Reagan-style coalition of conservatives, especially evangelical conservatives, in order to win re-election and to legitimize his standing as President of the United States.

The article “Religious Influences in the 2004 Presidential Election” looks at this notion of coalition building in an attempt to see just how much of an effect religious voters had on the outcome of the 2004 election. Researchers Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green began by looking at both the campaigns of President Bush and his challenger Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. Bush and Rove began to implement a “comprehensive” strategy aimed at “mobilizing religious traditionalists, especially evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics, into the Republican camp” (Guth et
Policy positions on issues like stem-cell research, same-sex marriage, and abortion were framed with intent of attracting these voters to the Bush camp (Guth et al., 2006). President Bush also appointed more evangelicals to executive and judicial posts than many other presidents had before. He also used a rhetorical strategy that framed decisions, policies, and actions in a religious context; especially in regard to the military effort in Iraq and Afghanistan and whether or not America should be a global peacekeeper (Guth et al., 2006).

Conversely, Kerry’s “religious strategy” was “reactive and erratic”, while Senator Kerry was a practicing Catholic he had difficulty garnering support from the religious community (Guth et al., 2006). Ultimately, Kerry was unable to convince segments of voters that he was religious enough to be president. Kerry’s liberal positions on issues like abortion caused a substantial split within his religious community; as a result he was barred from taking communion at some diocese throughout the campaign (Guth et al., 2006). While Bush frequently discussed faith and religion, Kerry appeared uncomfortable talking about faith because he viewed it as a private, personal, matter (Sabato, 2006).

In order to study faith in the 2004 Election, Guth et al. broke religion down into two perspectives: “ethnoreligious” and religious restructuring. The first perspective identifies religion and religious groups as “historic denominations” beginning in Europe and traveling to America; these Protestants later broke off into two subgroups: Evangelical and Mainline (Guth et al., 2006). Conversely, the religious restructuring model says that American religion has been “divided into factions holding two opposing world views” (Guth et al., 2006).
Guth et al. found that faith and religion played a substantial role in the 2004 Election. They note that in the election Republicans depended heavily on “Evangelical Protestants, Latter-day Saints, and traditionalists from all major (and most minor) religious traditions” with the rest of their support coming from centrists in the major denominations (Guth et al., 2006). Democrats, on the other hand, garnered support from religious minorities; however the vast majority of their support came from secular voters. This study directly counters work done in the 1980s in regard to Reagan and concludes that religion, and religious based coalition building (as done by President Bush and Karl Rove), played a crucial role in the 2004 election.

G. Scott Morgan, Linda Skita, and Daniel Wisneski examined the idea of faith and religiosity as vote predictors in their article “Moral and Religious Convictions and Intentions to Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election.” The authors conducted a survey consisting of 436 participants made up of 208 Democrats, 67 “Moderates/other” and 161 Republicans (Morgan et al., 2010). Their study measured political identification and strength of identification, what the respondents viewed as the most important issues, issue-specific moral convictions, and intent to vote (Morgan et al., 2010).

After analyzing the results of their study Morgan, Skita, and Wisneski found that respondents level of “issue-specific morality and religious convictions did indeed have distinct effects on intentions to vote” (Morgan et al., 2010). They found that those respondents who were high in their moral convictions about their most important issues ranked higher on their intent to vote. Interestingly, when the respondents most important issue was one held with weak moral conviction, “increased religious conviction had a
demotivating effect” (Morgan et al., 2010). While this study did nothing to measure level of partisanship or candidate preference, it did show that religion now plays an important role in mobilizing voters. Essentially, those who are high in moral conviction and issue-specific morality are likely to vote.

Throughout the history of human society multiple others have been created. These others are created as a response to minorities within a given society. Those who do not fit into the confines established by privileged members of society are relegated to the fringes of the polity. Rogers Smith argued that reading American history without examining the existence of the other yields an inaccurate view of the countries history. Smith wrote that American history contains multiple examples of what he calls “ascriptive hierarchies” (Smith R. M., 1993). Smith argued that historically “men were thought naturally suited to rule over women … within both the family and polity … White northern Europeans were thought superior culturally – and probably biologically – to black Africans, bronze Native Americans, and indeed all other races and civilizations” (Smith R. M., 1993).

As other scholars have claimed, this system of hierarchical inequality was not the result of prejudice alone. Over time both intellectual and political elites developed justifications for the unequal system. These justifications included “inegalitarian scriptural readings, the scientific racism of the ‘American school’ of ethnology, racial and sexual Darwinism, and the romantic cult of Anglo-Saxonism in American historiography” (Smith R. M., 1993). The United States came to prominence as a result of these social relationships. According to Smith, the “ideologies and practices that
defined the relationships” between the white male majority and marginalized groups are essential for understanding the history America (Smith R. M., 1993).

Various researchers have argued that societal others are not born, but rather created by members of that society. In order to create a dominant group there must also be the creation of a group of subordinates. These subordinate groups are created through the process of stigmatization by the majority. In *The Social Psychology of Stigma* Todd Heatherton argued that societies stigmatize others out of fear. Fear, Heatherton argued, that actions taken by individuals would threaten a society’s way of life (Heatherton, 2000). One way marginalization occurs is when an individual or group espouses a set of values that are contradictory to those in power. When these individuals who challenge cultural norms and values “gather in groups, and gain access to powerful socialization institutions (e.g., as educators or clergy) or media . . . they more effectively threaten desired socialization practices and, as a result, will become more greatly stigmatized” (Heatherton, 2000).

Others are subjugated because their value set is seemingly different than that of the dominant group. As a result, this perceived difference in values illicit fear of the other from the dominant group within a society. Fear is then translated into prejudice and projected onto the outside group. Psychological fear translates into public policy that reinforces the projected stereotype. Examples include white citizens enslaving and denying rights to African Americans, women being denied equal wages and suffrage by men, and homosexuals being denied the ability of marry by heterosexuals. In each
example public policy has been implemented as a way of keeping those members of the “out group” subordinate and marginalized.

Cultural narratives play a role in the stigmatization of others. In this sense an individual is stigmatized whenever he or she embody characteristics that are different than the culturally accepted national narrative. Academic works on “narratives” in the United States have argued that the country was founded on both liberal principles and exclusionary elements. There is scholarly agreement that Americans have adopted a narrative that the country was founded on “virtues of political participation, social equality, and economic self-reliance” yet evidence also points to nativist sentiments (Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990). Citrin, Reingold, and Green argued that there is “widespread acceptance” of the idea that genuine Americans are those who both “speak English and believe in God” (Citrin et al., 1990). With this finding the authors claimed that an individual’s perception of American identity will influence his or her views of minorities. Marginalization will result whenever societal minorities both exhibit behaviors and profess views that are contradictory to the dominant cultural identity narrative. Research has shown that fear of the other can illicit extreme, even paranoid exaggerations.

Richard Hofstadter described fearing the other as being part of a “paranoid style” in our political system. Hofstadter used the term “paranoid style” because it “adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy” that is necessary when discussing fear of the other (Hofstadter, 1964). Like Rogers Smith, Hofstadter argued that the “paranoid style” is an old phenomenon that reoccurs whenever
the majority feels threatened by the presence of the other. Hofstadter examined fear of Illuminism, Freemasons, Catholics, as historical examples of culturally paranoia.

The danger of the “paranoid style” is that individuals who practice the paranoid style will go to great lengths to defeat the other. These individuals see no reason to negotiate or compromise, they believe they are literally fighting to save their way of life. Of these individuals, Hofstadter wrote, “Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, what is necessary is not compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish” (Hofstadter, 1964). Hofstadter describes the paranoid’s viewpoint as -

distinctly personal: decisive events are not taken as part of the stream of history, but as the consequences of someone’s will. Very often the enemy is held to possess some especially effective source of power: he controls the press; he has unlimited funds; he has a new secret for influencing the mind (brainwashing); he has a special technique for seduction (the Catholic confessional). (Hofstadter, 1964)

Delusions are created by those in power in order to spread fear and demonize the other.

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine presidential elections in the United States from the perspective of religious others. The next three chapters consist of case studies from three different presidential campaigns: Al Smith, John F. Kennedy, and John Kerry. These campaigns are worth examining from the perspective of religious others because in each case the candidate’s Catholicism played a major role in the election. Each campaign faced different obstacles, but each campaign also had to overcome issues surrounding the candidate’s faith. For Smith the difficulty was prejudice against Catholics mixed with the recent revival of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). In the case of
Kennedy, it was a commonly held view following Smith’s defeat that a Catholic could not win the presidency, coupled with facing the same religious questions as Smith. John Kerry departed from this pattern drastically because for him the case was not his Catholicism, but instead the strength and degree of his devoutness as a Catholic. Instead of being considered _too_ Catholic Kerry was thought by some to not be Catholic enough, his liberal voting record and pro-choice views put him at odds with stringent followers of Catholicism. In doing so, Kerry faced a voting coalition of Evangelical Protestants and Conservative Catholics who would vote based only on morality and values.

The concluding chapter of this thesis will examine three current groups who are the current religious “others” in American politics. These groups include members of the Mormon and Muslim faiths and atheists. Studying these three groups was especially topical in the summer of 2011 because there were two Mormons vying for the Republican presidential nomination for the 2012 election cycle, only two Muslims were serving in Congress, and a stigma attached to those who profess no particular religious faith. These groups represent marginalized religious entities in American politics. By looking at the religious marginalization of the past, one is able to not only discuss the otherness associated with these groups but also project what the future may hold electorally for individuals who fall into one of these three categories.
CHAPTER 2: A CATHOLIC FOR PRESIDENT? THE 1928 ELECTION

After two successive Republican presidents Democrats hoped win the Oval Office in 1928. With the Teapot Dome scandal still in recent memory, and eight years of Republican control of the Oval Office, Democrats believed that 1928 would be the year the electoral tides turned. Contributing to the Democrats’ sense of confidence was the fact that the Republican Party’s nominee would be Herbert Hoover. While Hoover had been successful in business and public service, he had never actually sought elected office. Hoover’s public service consisted of chairing the Commission for Relief in Belgium during World War I and serving as Secretary of Commerce in the administration of President Calvin Coolidge. Although popular, Hoover had never been tested electorally, which Democrats thought could lead to a victory in the general election.

To challenge Hoover, Democrats turned to a leader from the largest industrial state in the nation: New York Governor Al Smith. Smith was a devoted Democrat who had experience in multiple levels of government. Smith had not only been elected to the New York State Assembly, but eventually became Speaker of that body. His time in the State Assembly taught him the inner-workings of state government and the legislative process. Smith took this political education and won New York’s gubernatorial election. The political experience and expertise of Smith vastly surpassed that of Hoover.

While Smith had the political experience necessary to seek the presidency, his candidacy was not without problems. A main to obstacle Smith was his opposition to Prohibition. In 1928 the country was divided between the “Wets” and “Drys” – those who opposed Prohibition and those who supported it. This issue was among the hottest
debates of the time, and strong beliefs held by each group led to resentment toward the opposition. Another drawback to the Smith candidacy was his devotion to the Democratic Party. In New York devotion to the Party did not simply mean straight-ticket voting, volunteering, and monetary contributions. To be a successful Democrat in New York also meant that a candidate had to be well-acquainted with the political bosses of Tammany Hall, the political machine that controlled Democratic politics in the Empire State by nominating candidates and controlling Party patronage. Outside of New York Tammany Hall exemplified the grossest amount of big city political corruption. In the late 1920s Al Smith had been a Tammany devotee for many years. Perhaps the greatest obstacle for Smith was his religion: Al Smith was a Roman Catholic.

Roman Catholics had been the target of prejudice long before the 1928 presidential election. Prior to this election no major party had nominated a member of the Roman Catholic faith to be either president or vice-president. Likewise, nativist third parties and organizations targeted Catholics as being anti-American and portrayed members of the faith as being outside of what these people believe to be “true” American actions and values. Two years prior to the election Roman Catholics accounted for only 16% of the total population in the United States (Silva, 1962). Conversely, the Census Bureau estimated that 27.4% of the population identified themselves as “Protestant” in 1926 (Silva, 1962). While these figures show that neither Catholics nor Protestants had an overwhelming number of citizens who were professed adherents to the faith, Catholics were in the minority. The possibility of a Catholic being president, and the subsequent
nomination of Smith, awoke the ire of anti-Catholic sentiments in America -- sentiments that would be present long after the campaign of 1928.

In 1927 the Ku Klux Klan saw a rise in membership and began to go “on march in great strength, wielding the lash and tar brush, its hooded face lighted by the fiery cross, as Catholic, Jew, and Negro were hunted and scourged” (Graham, 1945). The April 1927 edition of Atlantic Monthly published an open letter to Al Smith written by a Mr. Charles C. Marshall; this letter was later republished in “all the important newspapers of the country” (Graham, 1945). In Marshall wrote to Smith that “your fellow citizens attribute to you as a loyal and conscientious Roman Catholic, which in their minds are irreconcilable with that Constitution which as President you must support and defend, and with the principles of civil and religious liberty on which American institutions are based” (Marshall, 2011). In order to highlight Marshall’s notion that a Catholic would be subject to dual-allegiances, Marshall quoted the Catholic Encyclopedia by saying, “In case of direct contradiction, making it impossible for both jurisdictions to be exercised, the jurisdiction of the Church prevails and that of the State is excluded” (Marshall, 2011). The letter requested that Smith clarify his position on issues like education, religious favoritism, and national sovereignty.

While this letter was widely publicized, Smith was not entirely convinced that the question of his faith was the paramount issue of the election. Smith thought the religious subject was “born out of bigotry” and he wanted to “dispatch the issue as quickly as possible” (Hostetler, 1998). Likewise, as a result of his belief that the problem itself was the result of bigotry, Smith “sought to downplay and, if possible, avoid the religious issue
by ignoring it” (Hostetler, 1998). However, the wide distribution of the letter meant that Smith could not simply ignore the question. Smith rebutted Marshall’s letter in the May issue of *The Atlantic* titled “Catholic and Patriot.”

In his response Smith attempted to provide answers to the multiple questions asked of him by Marshall in the previous letter. Smith said, “I believe in the worship of God according to the faith and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. I recognize no power in the institutions of my Church to interfere with the operations of the Constitution of the United States or the enforcement of the law of the land” (Smith, 2011). Smith directly addressed the concern that as a Catholic he would be unable to simultaneously fulfill his Constitutional duties to the office of president and his commitments as a member of the Catholic faith, saying, “I believe in the absolute separation of Church and State and in the strict enforcement of the provisions of the Constitution that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (Smith, 2011). Smith’s concluding remarks stated his hope for a future America where an individual’s religious preference would not disqualify that person from public service, writing, “In this spirit I join with fellow Americans of all creeds in a fervent prayer that never again in this land will any public servant be challenged because of the faith in which he has tried to walk humbly with his God” (Smith, 2011).

Nearly a year later, in June of 1928, delegates to the Republican National Convention gathered in Kansas City, Missouri to formally select a nominee for president. Prior to the convention President Calvin Coolidge announced that he would not seek another term as president, which left Commerce Secretary Hoover as the front runner for
the nomination. Secretary Hoover and Senator Charles Curtis won their nominations for President and Vice President on the first ballot. In his acceptance speech, Hoover chose to address Prohibition. Specifically, he spoke of the division this issue caused the nation stating that where there is strong public support for the Eighteenth Amendment, it was serving its purpose. However, in those areas that oppose Prohibition the measure had led to a return to liquor racketeering. Hoover said, “on the one hand to return to the old saloon with its political and social corruption, or on the other to endure the bootlegger and the speakeasy with their abuses and crime” (Hoover, 2011). Yet Hoover stopped short of providing an alternative to Prohibition.

Two weeks later national Democrats gathered in Houston, Texas, in order to nominate the candidates of their party. On the second day of the convention fellow New Yorker Franklin D. Roosevelt officially put Al Smith’s name in nomination. Roosevelt said that the Democratic Party was offering the American people a candidate who “has the will to win – who not only deserves success but commands it. Victory is his habit – the happy warrior, Alfred Smith” (Peel & Donnelly, 1974). After Roosevelt put Smith’s name in nomination the Tammany delegates allowed out-of-state supporters to lead the charge in exalting Smith. Al Smith won the nomination on the first ballot and became the Party’s candidate for president. The convention settled on convention chair Joseph Robinson, a senator from Arkansas. Senator Robinson could not have been more different than Smith: Robinson was a Southerner, a Protestant, and a Dry (Peel & Donnelly, 1974). The contrasting nominees led one writer to remark “the Democratic
donkey with a wet head and wagging dry tail left Houston” at the end of the convention (Peel & Donnelly, 1974).

The convention, however, did not end without controversy. Smith ignored the “Catholic Question” as much as possible because he thought that the issue was rooted in bigotry. Smith did not feel the same way about Prohibition. Smith’s message to the attendees openly stated his support for a change of the current national Prohibition law. He also said that while it is the people who must ultimately decide the direction the country is to take on policy, it is “the duty of the chosen leader of the people to point the way which, in his opinion, leads up to a sane, sensible solution of a condition which . . . is entirely unsatisfactory to the great mass of our people” (Peel & Donnelly, 1974).

Smith’s words angered the Southern delegation, leading prominent Virginia politico Bishop Cannon (a Methodist) to say that “had the southern delegation had time to consider the message Smith before the summary adjournment of the convention, they would have bolted and nominated a Dry” (Peel & Donnelly, 1974).

After Smith became the official nominee for the Democrats the drawbacks of his candidacy came to the forefront of political debates and discussion. One of the largest issues, as stated earlier, was Smith’s Catholicism. One early argument the Smith opposition made was to try to associate Al Smith with the Vatican. The goal of this strategy was to make voters think that a vote for Smith was, in effect, a vote for the Pope. A second prong of this strategy was to tie Smith’s anti-Prohibition stance to his Catholic faith. James S. Vance, general manager of the Ku Klux Klan sponsored weekly newspaper Fellowship Forum, was quoted as saying that the real issue of the election was
“protestant Americanism versus Rum and Romanism…With righteousness superseded by Rum and Romanism, America becomes a vassal of the Vatican and a stink-slide of booze and corruption” (Lichtman, 1979). Vance also attempted to tie Smith and Catholicism to Europe, thereby playing on nativist sentiments. Vance said that citizens had to decide whether “to remain a Nation of thoroughbred Americans or to be turned into a dumping ground for the scum of Europe and Asia” (Lichtman, 1979).

The anti-Catholic sentiment faced by Smith did not come from a small subsection of American public opinion, but from prominent Protestant leaders. Reverend George W. McDainel, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, publicly admonished Smith for kissing the ring of a Catholic Cardinal (Finan, 2002). Leaders of the Methodist church likewise took public issue with the candidacy of Smith. After Smith’s nomination the *Wesleyan Christian Advocate* published an article stating “Governor Smith has a constitutional right to run for President, even though a Catholic…And we have a constitutional right to vote against him because he is a Catholic” (Finan, 2002). Yet another Methodist, Bishop Adna Wright Leonard, publicly denounced Smith, saying “no governor who kisses the Papal ring can come within gunshot of the White House” (Graham, 1945). Dr. Charles L. Fry asked a gathering of Lutherans if the United States should “have a man in the White House who acknowledges allegiances to the Autocrat on the Tiber, who hates democracy, public schools, Protestant parsonages, individual right, and everything that is essential to independence?” (Finan, 2002).
Visual propaganda was also used to tie Smith to the Vatican and drunkenness. One cartoon titled “Cabinet Meeting - If Al Were President” depicted cardinals sitting around a table being led in a discussion by the Pope. Smith himself is not seated at the table, but instead was serving liquor to the attendees. The fireplace mantle is decorated by numerous bottles labeled “XXX” for alcohol (Moore, 1968). The message appeared to be that if Smith were to win the election, he would be nothing more than a bartender to Catholic leaders. One of the many pieces of anti-Catholic visual propaganda that were circulated before the election contained a mock obituary for the Democratic Party. In this obituary the cause of death was listed as “an over-dose of Tammany and Romanism” and requested that no flowers be brought to the gravesite because “the grave will be decorated with fruit jars and whiskey bottles” (Finan, 2002).

Within the confines of the Empire State the political machine had power, but outside New York Tammany seemed to represent all that was wrong with electoral politics. Speaking to a gathering of Kansas Republicans, a Mr. William Allen White told the audience “It is not that Governor Smith is a Catholic and a wet which makes him an offense to the villagers and town dwellers, but because his record shows what kind of President he would make – a Tammany President” (Moore, 1968). Republicans attempted to mix Smith’s association with Tammany Hall and his faith into a plausible reason to vote against him. The message sent by anti-Smith activists was clear: Smith was a pawn for Tammany Hall and if elected president he would continue to be a puppet, only this time it will be the Vatican pulling the strings. Robert Schumer, a Los Angeles minister, for example wrote in a pamphlet that “Al Smith is distinctly Rome’s candidacy.
It has been fostered by Tammany, for years recognized as an active ally of Rome. It is headed by Rome’s active chamberlain to the Pope . . . If America desires a President born and raised in a foreign atmosphere, politically trained and promoted by a foreign political machine . . . that man may be had by electing Al Smith” (Slayton, 2001). By attempting to link Smith to a foreign power Schumer was playing on internal fears of nativist Americans, those voters who are fearful of the “other” in American society. If that failed, then Schumer could fall back on his criticism of Smith for his association with Tammany.

Unlike later campaigns the Ku Klux Klan played a role in disseminating information. The 1920s proved to be a powerful decade for the Klan, not since the immediate aftermath of the Civil War had the hooded knights wielded such power in American society. In 1928 the Klan was a full political force in America. Protestant minister John Roach Straton received a letter from a Mrs. Caroline Bond who claimed to know the “keys to the secret of Roman Catholicism” as revealed to her by a friend whose husband had ties to the Knights of Columbus (Slayton, 2001). This secret, she wrote, was that in the “book of sacred rules of the Catholic Church” it stated that “when opportunity offers itself in a time and place under cover – it is the will of the Almighty God as a Roman Catholic to tear out the womb of any Protestant woman – for by so doing you abolish the perpetuity of that Satanic following” (Slayton, 2001). J. H. Fletcher, secretary of the Bay Shore, Long Island, chapter of the Klan, wrote to Straton saying “this fight is not only a battle against Rome, but against all of the evil forces in America, cutthroats, thugs, and the scum from the cesspools of Europe” (Slayton, 2001).
Hoover largely stayed out of the debate over religion. A Quaker himself, Hoover might have feared that the pendulum of Protestant ire could very easily turn against him. Quakers had been persecuted because of their belief in nonviolence (even in the event of defending his or her country) (Finan, 2002). Hoover, however, did respond to the anti-Catholic propaganda on occasion. Hoover responded after a Republican national committeewoman was caught writing a letter that was anti-Catholic in sentiment. Of the event Hoover said, “Whether this letter is authentic or a forgery it does violence to every instinct I possess, I resent and repudiate it” (Finan, 2002). The committeewoman, however, did not lose her position.

Appointees of the Coolidge Administration likewise did not hesitate to get involved in the anti-Smith campaign. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, an assistant attorney general, went to speak to the Ohio conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in September of 1928. The Ohio conference attendees were likewise mulling over a resolution declaring support for candidate Hoover. Willebrandt appealed to the morality of members of the church in her speech, saying,

There are 2,000 pastors here. You have in your churches more than 600,000 members of the Methodist Church in Ohio alone. That is enough to swing the election. The 600,000 friends have friends in other States. Write to them. Every day and every ounce of your energy are needed to rouse the friends of Prohibition to register to vote. (Finan, 2002)

The organized Smith opposition wanted to make it clear that if Protestant voters were unsure as to whether or not Catholicism rendered Smith an immoral choice for the presidency than his anti-Prohibition stance did.
On the eve of Election Day 1928, Al Smith and his wife took up residence at New York’s Biltmore Hotel. The location was strategically selected so the candidate could walk out the next morning, cross the street, and cast his ballot. After voting Smith asked to be left alone for the afternoon until election returns started to come in. After polls closed Smith went to the Seventy-first Regiment Armory to listen to election results (Finan, 2002). As results came in the news became painfully clear: Al Smith had lost the election. When the final votes were tallied Hoover accumulated 58.2% of the popular vote to Smith’s 40.9%, an electoral landslide (Slayton, 2001).

Following the election Smith gave conflicting explanations to multiple confidants about his defeat. Charles Michelson of the *World* reported that “Governor Al Smith’s philosophy of his defeat is that again it has been demonstrated that the American people do not vote for a candidate but against one. He attributes his defeat first to prosperity, second to Prohibition, and only third to bigotry” (Finan, 2002). However, privately Smith told Frances Perkins that “to tell you the truth, Commissioner, the time hasn’t come when a man can say his beads in the White House” (Finan, 2002). Although he never publically admitted it, privately Smith was bitter that his faith had cost him the presidency (Finan, 2002).

Smith and the Democrats underestimated Hoover and the Republicans. During the 1920s the Republican Party was associated with economic prosperity, and Hoover was no exception. The stock market had not yet crashed and the decade was still experiencing the “Roaring ’20s.” While there had been major public scandals (e.g.,
Anderson Teapot Dome) the Republican Party was still associated with good economic times and American affluence.

Democrats inaccurately viewed Hoover as a political novice. Since Hoover had not been a candidate for elected office, they assumed his inexperience would result in the victory of a political veteran like Smith. However, even though Hoover had not been an elected official, he was a national player who enjoyed substantial public approval. He was well known as a successful businessman and a devoted public servant because of his service during World War I and with the Coolidge Administration as Secretary of Commerce. Unlike Smith, Hoover had the full support of his party resulting in a united front. The divided public sentiment over Prohibition also split Smith’s political base. Some members of the Democratic Party supported him as a result of his anti-Prohibition stance, while some Democrats opted to vote for Hoover because they supported the national Prohibition law. The united front presented by the GOP coupled with the powerful national Republicans (who had been in power for the greater portion of the decade) made the Hoover team formidable.

Socially, Smith was the victim of deep-seated religious bigotry from Evangelical Protestants. As a result of his position on Prohibition, voters could mask their vote against Smith due to his faith. Essentially, individuals were able to vote against Smith because of his stance on liquor, when in reality voters may have supported Hoover as a result of Smith’s Catholicism. The GOP strategy of tying Smith to liquor peddlers and Tammany corruption worked hand-in-hand with biases against Catholicism to form an insurmountable voting coalition for the general election. It is difficult to say whether or
not Smith’s Catholicism was the direct cause for his defeat, but thirty-two years later
Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy would have to face the same “Catholic
Question” in his own bid for the presidency.
Almost three decades after Al Smith’s the “Catholic question” was still pervasive in American politics. Since Smith no Catholic had even been nominated for the presidency, and the stigma attached to Catholic candidates still remained prominent in public dialogue. Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a young politician from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with an abundantly wealthy father, thought that he could overcome anti-Catholic sentiments in 1960 and become president. The focus early on was indeed centered on Kennedy’s potential rise to the Oval Office; but four years prior to 1960 Kennedy sought a stepping stone to the presidency. With Eisenhower running for re-election the playing field was wide open for a Vice-Presidential Candidate for presumptive nominee Adlai Stevenson in 1956. Kennedy’s father opposed the idea of him seeking the nomination (because Joe Kennedy assumed Eisenhower would win in overwhelming fashion, and the potential was there for JFK’s Catholicism to become the scapegoat for a Stevenson loss) Kennedy decided to let aide Ted Sorensen test the political waters (Schlesinger, 2002).

Ever the Kennedy loyalist, Sorensen dove into his new task with great fervor. One of the first major political moves made by Sorensen was to issue what is now known as the “Bailey Memorandum.” Sorensen compiled a seventeen page memorandum that came to the conclusion that a Catholic running mate for Stevenson in 1956 would help, not hinder, Kennedy’s effort to win the presidency. He stated that while Smith may have lost in 1928, his nomination brought a substantial number of Catholics into the political arena, specifically to the Democratic Party, and these voters in swing states could
potentially put Stevenson over the top in a general election (Carty, 2004). Sorensen later wrote of the memorandum,

I demonstrated that recapturing the Catholic vote was more important to the Democratic ticket in 1956 than either the Southern/border vote or the farm vote. Another appendix listed additional states, beyond the fourteen, with sizable portions of Catholic voters, stating that I had excluded them from my analysis because they were not among key swing states, or because their Republicanism was too strong to claim them among possible states that a Catholic vice presidential nominee could bring back to the party. Including them, I wrote, would be dismissed as speculative – as if the entire memorandum were not speculative in assuming that there was such a thing as a Catholic vote. (Sorensen, 2008)

Sorensen asked Connecticut Democratic Party Chairman John Bailey to assume credit for the writing and circulation of the memorandum (Carty, 2004).

Sorensen’s action contributed to Kennedy moving from the position of a long-shot candidate to a possible nominee. As the Democrats began the 1956 convention in Chicago there was a sense of anticipation as to whom Stevenson would choose as his running mate. Kennedy gave the nominating speech for Stevenson, whose nomination was accepted on the first ballot. After winning the nomination Stevenson now had to choose a candidate to support for the second position on the ticket. Stevenson threw the nomination process open to the floor of the convention. While Johnson announced that the Texas delegation would be casting votes for Kennedy, Albert Gore, Sr, announced that the Tennessee delegation would be voting for their native son Estes Kefauver, which “set off the stampede” that put Kefauver over the top (Schlesinger, 2002). Kennedy did not become the vice presidential nominee in Chicago, but he had seen hope in his ability
to garner enough support on the national stage to be a contender for the presidency in 1960, regardless of his Catholicism.

After Chicago, Kennedy began to lay the groundwork for what would turn into his presidential campaign in 1960. Much like the lead-up to the Chicago Convention, Kennedy relied heavily on his aide Ted Sorensen during this pre-primary time period. Following the convention, Kennedy and Sorensen began making extensive travels throughout the country. Kennedy found that his political stock had increased. He became a favorite on the campaign trail for the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket, as well as a favorite for state and local candidates. These trips would take both men into every state at least once before the official start of the next presidential campaign (Sorensen, 1965).

In addition to honing his skill as a national politician, Kennedy also catered to the future convention delegates. During these trips he spoke to crowds and potential voters, but likewise met with state legislatures and labor conventions (Sorensen, 1965). Kennedy knew these would be the main players in 1960, the local representatives and members of organized labor (traditional supporters of the Democratic Party). It was during these trips that Kennedy expanded the scope of his message and began to speak at colleges and universities.

The basic travel plan and early campaign strategy was crafted by Sorensen. For Christmas in 1956, Sorensen had given Kennedy a blank map of the United States, with areas shaded to correlate with the percentage of that state’s delegation that had supported Kennedy for the vice-presidency in Chicago (Sorensen, 2008). Kennedy and Sorensen were able to see where they had to do the most work, and which areas would be safe for
1960. Likewise, the contacts made during this time would prove to be invaluable. Kennedy spoke to both large and small audiences in every state, and in doing so had the chance to introduce himself to each area in person. Instead of waiting until 1960 and running the risk of letting his primary opponents dictate what the campaign narrative would be, Kennedy began crafting the message before the others had the option. In addition to that, Kennedy and Sorensen took the names of influential Democrats in each area in order to compile a “Christmas card list” to further gain footing among established partisans (Sorensen, 2008). Senator Kennedy also went to great lengths to make acquaintance with the local press in the areas he traveled. In so doing, he was able to establish a relationship with members of the media who would eventually be covering his bid for the presidency. Kennedy was becoming acquainted with the press, which allowed him to present himself as a political leader, not just a Catholic politician, before the 1960 presidential campaign began.

Throughout the primary Kennedy benefited greatly from his father’s wealth. Kennedy was able to set up a ground operation during the four years leading up to the 1960 primary. Before the primary season began, the Kennedy team had established organizations on the ground in every state, an action that caused quite a commotion with former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (Donaldson, 2007). Regardless of Mrs. Roosevelt’s disapproval, Senator Kennedy effectively used his father’s money to establish an unparalleled ground organization.

While Joseph Kennedy’s wealth played a crucial role in his son’s campaign, Senator Kennedy was not absolved of the past transgressions of the Kennedy family
patriarch. Joe Kennedy’s open rift with President Roosevelt and his support of England’s policy of appeasement towards Adolf Hitler angered the vast majority of liberals in the American political sphere (Donaldson, 2007). Along with that, Joe Kennedy’s anticommunist rhetoric and support of the Republican Party’s overly anticommunist platform and policy proposals (specifically, his support and friendship of Wisconsin Republican Joe McCarthy) angered liberals even more. As a result of his family’s track record, Senator Kennedy had to account for both his Catholicism and his liberalism.

Kennedy formally announced his bid for the presidency on January 2, 1960. As Ted Sorensen notes, Kennedy was but forty-two years old (previously no person that young had ever won a presidential election), he was a Roman Catholic (no member of the Catholic faith had been elected to the presidency), he was a Senator (only one Republican and no Democrat had gone from the Senate to the White House), and he was from New England (an area which had not given the nation a nominee in over a hundred years) (Sorensen, 1965). But this did not deter Senator Kennedy, in his brief announcement he spoke of his vision for America. He declared that any candidate who hoped to become the Democratic Party’s nominee should be willing to enter the primaries in order to allow voters to fairly assess each candidate. Kennedy concluded his statement by saying

For 18 years, I have been in the service of the United States, first as a naval officer in the Pacific during World War II and for the past 14 years as a member of the Congress. In the last 20 years, I have traveled in nearly every continent and country - from Leningrad to Saigon, from Bucharest to Lima. From all of this, I have developed an image of America as fulfilling a noble and historic role as the defender of freedom in a time of maximum peril -- and of the American people as confident, courageous and persevering. It is with this image that I begin this campaign. (Kennedy, 1960)
Along with the Senator from Massachusetts in the primaries there was Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, Governor Michael DiSalle of Ohio, Senator George Smathers of Florida, and Governor Pat Brown of California. In addition to that list there were also members of the Party presumed to be nominated at the Convention regardless of the primary results, such as former Democratic Party nominee Adlai Stevenson and the enormously powerful Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson. While Kennedy’s pre-campaign travels had far surpassed any of his competitors, it would certainly take more than visiting states and spending Joe Kennedy’s money for Senator Kennedy to win the presidency.

In 1960 television was a new and previously untapped resource. Eisenhower had used television in 1952 and 1956, but on a limited basis. Kennedy used this new medium to gain national exposure. He realized early on that he could gain more coverage, popularity, and exposure from national news reports than by campaigning to convention delegates (Donaldson, 2007). Senator Kennedy left the nuts-and-bolts campaign operations, such as delegate counting, for his campaign staff while he went out in search of media exposure. With this strategy Kennedy was able to do two things: first and foremost he was able to gain the reputation of being a winner, and thus benefit from the public’s positive reception of him; and secondly he was able to address the question of his Catholicism in a way that presented him as a candidate for president and not as the Catholic candidate for President.

Likewise this campaign showed a distinct departure from the traditional way of getting nominated. Prior to 1960, primaries had not been a major factor in winning the
nomination. The 1960 primary highlights the old style versus the new style of campaign politics. While Kennedy was traveling, Majority Leader Johnson believed that by staying in Washington and letting the people see him at work governing in the Senate, the nomination would naturally be given to Johnson. Kennedy, in comparison, opted to compete in the primary and use television to gain national exposure and become better known outside of New England (Donaldson, 2007).

With the increased popularity of television, people were now paying attention to the physical attractiveness of each candidate: the attractive candidates gained an edge while the elder statesmen lost appeal (Donaldson, 2007). Television gave candidates the opportunity to project an image to voters that the campaign team had crafted. Kennedy used television to his advantage, and the American people soon fell in love with not only the Senator but with his family as well (Donaldson, 2007). Kennedy won the New Hampshire primary with no competition, and won eight others with limited resistance. The primaries in Ohio, Florida, and California went to each state’s native son with no other candidate competing. The primary competition came down to two states: Wisconsin and West Virginia.

Hubert knew that his chances of becoming the nominee in 1960 were slim at best. What Humphrey could do though was wreck the Kennedy nomination by winning in either of these primaries. On the surface, that would seem incredibly likely: Humphrey served as one of the senators from Minnesota, which directly neighbors Wisconsin, and he had a good reputation in the state. West Virginia provided a similar setting for Humphrey: a rural state whose population was roughly 95% Protestant (Fleming, 1992).
Politically, West Virginia became a solid state for Democrats during and following the tenure of President Roosevelt, and the state was heavily dominated by organized labor (Fleming, 1992). Humphrey believed that his record and strong support from organized labor would put him over the top in at least one state, thus giving him more power in determining the nominee at convention.

In Wisconsin Humphrey was both out-campaigned and outspent. Kennedy put his father’s money to good use by purchasing television and radio ads, opening campaign offices, and distributing flyers and brochures. Humphrey spent $150,000 during the Wisconsin primary; Kennedy doubled that figure (Rorabaugh, 2009). Likewise, Humphrey staffed his campaign with local Minnesota politicos, his Senate staff, and former campaign workers. Humphrey was unable to mirror his local success on the national stage.

Kennedy’s Catholicism became a significant campaign issue in Wisconsin. While Kennedy and Humphrey held similar policy positions, and the Republicans were going to nominate Vice President Richard Nixon by default, the press corps needed an issue to write about; they began to write about Kennedy’s Catholicism (Donaldson, 2007). In addition to the press coverage of religion, anonymous anti-Catholic mail pieces were sent out to households throughout the state (Donaldson, 2007). On Election Day Senator Kennedy won; he pulled above 56% of the total vote and won six out of ten districts (Donaldson, 2007). While this victory was a great motivator for Kennedy, the districts he won were predominately Catholic; he now had to go to West Virginia and show that he could win a race in a state with a smaller proportion of Catholics than Wisconsin.
Kennedy went into Wisconsin with a major advantage: Humphrey had spent most of his campaign funds in Wisconsin and moved on to West Virginia essentially broke. As in Wisconsin, anti-Catholic literature was distributed in the fairly large counties of Cabell and Kanawha (Fleming, 1992). One way Kennedy overcame this negative campaign tactic was to project a well-crafted image. As Fleming points out Kennedy focused “on his war record, his family, his wit and personality, his intellect . . . he overcame the stereotype held by many who imagined an Irish Catholic ward politician, big-bellied with a red face, loud and garish in dress” which was the direct opposite of John Kennedy (Fleming, 1992). Kennedy traveled throughout the impoverished state, speaking to coal miners, touring mines, making speeches in former coal towns, and speaking to potential voters. At the end of the day on May 10, 1960 Senator John F. Kennedy was declared the winner of the West Virginia Primary. This win made Kennedy the frontrunner for the Party’s nomination.

Kennedy won a majority of primary elections in 1960, but was not guaranteed the Party’s nomination. Winning a primary only gave the candidate a certain number of delegates. This meant that even though Senator Kennedy had the most primary victories, he still lacked the magic number of delegates to be declared the nominee. The morning before balloting; Robert Kennedy convened an early-morning meeting of the Kennedy campaign team. Robert Kennedy ran through the convention list in hopes of getting an accurate look at where the votes were going to fall that evening. During the meeting, he told the team “I don’t want generalities or guesses…I want the cold facts” (Schlesinger, 1965). Essentially, the younger Kennedy thought that if his brother had 720 votes by the
time the roll-call vote came to Washington State, enough delegates would shift to Senator Kennedy to give him a win (Schlesinger, 1965). This assumption was accurate: Kennedy stood at 710 votes as the delegates from Washington were called upon, and the predicted shift to Kennedy began. At the end of the balloting process, Kennedy had garnered enough votes to become the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee.

Kennedy’s victory did not mean that his work had concluded with the Party. There were still many delegates who were angry that Adlai Stevenson had not been nominated again (as he had been in 1952 and 1956), and there were others who were inherently distrustful of the Kennedy family. Kennedy’s nomination of Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson hardened these sentiments. Several delegates felt that they had been double-crossed by a ruthless and conniving political machine. These sentiments weighed heavily on the new nominee as he prepared for his acceptance speech in front of these frustrated delegates. The task at hand for Kennedy was to assure voters that he was the candidate best suited for the presidency, and that his Catholicism would not cost him the election.

This speech provided Kennedy with an opportunity not only to answer questions about his candidacy, but to debut the message that would be pervasive throughout the course of the campaign. The message being conveyed was that Kennedy’s faith would not dictate the way that he governed or the decisions he would make as president. The importance of this speech was not lost on Ted Sorensen. Sorensen said that one key aspects of the speech was “an effort to allay anti-Catholic suspicions” (Sorensen, 1965).
In order to quiet fears of Kennedy’s Catholicism, Kennedy used this speech to directly address questions surrounding his faith. Kennedy’s Catholicism had been an issue throughout the primary season, and if it went unaddressed it surely would remain an issue in the general election. Acknowledging this, Kennedy directly addressed the issue of his Catholicism by saying, “I am fully aware of the fact that the Democratic Party, by nominating someone of my faith, has taken on what many regard as a new and hazardous risk -- new, at least since 1928” (Kennedy, 1960). At this point, Kennedy introduced a key portion of his message that would be reiterated throughout the course of the campaign: that he should be judged fairly based on his record and that the American people should trust in his ability to differentiate between the sacred and the profane. Kennedy went on to say that the American people should trust him to uphold -

the Constitution and my oath of office, to reject any kind of religious pressure or obligation that might directly or indirectly interfere with my conduct of the Presidency in the national interest. My record of fourteen years in supporting public education, supporting complete separation of Church and State and resisting pressure from sources of any kind should be clear by now to everyone. (Kennedy, 1960)

Kennedy closed by saying that he hoped no American would vote for him based on his faith and that they would, likewise, not vote against him because of his faith Kennedy concluded this segment of his acceptance speech by stating “I am saying to you that my decisions on every public policy will be my own, as an American, as a Democrat, and as a free man” (Kennedy, 1960).

The Kennedy camp dealt with the issue of faith in a manner that was starkly different than that of Al Smith in 1928. Instead of dismissing the issue of faith because of a belief that the notion was grounded in bigotry, the Kennedy camp appeared to know
that the issue was important to Protestant voters (the majority of Americans) and that Kennedy’s Catholicism would not inhibit him from effectively serving as President of the United States. While examining the text of Kennedy’s speech one might assume that his responses adequately overcame Protestant opposition to his Catholicism. However, his nomination only opened the flood gates of religious prejudice within the American populace. While the Kennedy camp struggled to find a way to overcome Catholic prejudice, the Protestant establishment was trying to find a way to support Vice President Nixon while simultaneously not looking like bigots.

Protestant powerhouse Reverend Billy Graham had spent the summer of 1960 touring Europe on a series of “crusades” which, eventually led to a meeting on August 17, 1960 of American clergymen in Switzerland to discuss the upcoming election (Casey, 2009). Throughout the course of the summer months Reverend Graham had been exchanging correspondence with Vice President Nixon in regard to the fall campaign. In this series of correspondence, Graham advised Nixon not to nominate a Catholic for the position of Vice President, but instead to nominate a solid Protestant that evangelicals could “rally behind” (Casey, 2009). Reverend Graham also offered strategic advice for Vice President Nixon; he said that Nixon should attempt to find a way to encourage Protestant bloc voting (Carty T., 2004). In addition, Reverend Graham said that President Eisenhower should campaign for Nixon in areas with few Catholic voters, specifically in the region from Kentucky to Texas. Thomas Carty said that Reverend Graham also called on President Eisenhower to, as Carty said, “exploit nativist anti-
Catholicism in the so-called southern Bible Belt” because doing so would attract voters to the Catholic issue and “thus turn voters to the Republican candidate” (Carty T. , 2004).

Reverend Graham was joined in his opposition to Kennedy by his contemporary, Norman Vincent Peale. Peale was likewise attempting to organize Protestants in order to turn out a pro-Nixon vote on Election Day. The culmination of Peale’s effort to organize came on September 7, 1960, 150 representatives from 37 different Protestant denominations gathered at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. to discuss the general election (Casey, 2009). The meeting was held behind closed doors. According to Shaun Casey the meeting consisted of seven speeches made during the course of the day, as well as strategy sessions to determine how they could oppose Kennedy because of his Catholicism in a manner that “preserved plausible deniability for various parties” (Casey, 2009).

Attendees were also given several pamphlets and “fact sheets”. These pamphlets were designated to give the voter information on what the organizers felt were key points regarding the role the Catholic Church could potentially play in a Catholic president’s administration. Much like the anti-Catholic pamphlets that were distributed in the major primary states, the message of these pamphlets was that a member of the Roman Catholic faith could not adequately, and fully, serve the office of president due to the demands the Church puts on individual members. One portion of the pamphlet read, “We cannot afford to gamble with freedom. Inform yourself on the facts in the religious issue…and vote your conscience” (Casey, 2009).
Attendees were also given a voter’s manual that outlined the core argument for Protestant opposition to Kennedy. Writers of the manual attempted to phrase their opposition in a way that aimed at minimizing offense towards member of the Catholic faith, while still opposing Kennedy’s campaign. For example, the first of ten points said that Roman Catholicism is a religion that many good people belong to, but it is also a political force (Casey, 2009). Because, the manual argued, the two cannot be separated, the organizers of the meeting implied that allowing a Roman Catholic to become president meant ceding religious freedom and liberty to The Vatican.

Speeches that were made during the conference directly argued that a Catholic president would not make the correct policy decisions as president. A Reverend Harold J. Ockenga argued that a Catholic president could not be trusted on three main policy questions: federal aid to parochial schools, foreign aid, and government appointments. In each of the three instances, Reverend Ockenga said, a Catholic president could potentially give the “right’ Protestant answer” while on the campaign trail, but then do the opposite once elected to office (Casey, 2009). While the organizers of the conference outlined the basis of Protestant opposition to Kennedy, they did not focus on the senator’s stated policy positions on the issues they raised during the conference.

As the one-day event came to a close, the organizers released a general statement summarizing the consensus of the conference. The statement argues that “the current Roman Catholic contender for the Presidency states specifically that he would not be so influenced” by his faith, yet “his church insists that he is duty-bound to admit to its discretion” (Carty T., 2004). In addition, the statement also put forth similar policy
arguments that were made by speakers during the course of the Mayflower meeting. For example, one portion of the statement claimed that in countries where Catholics controlled the government, the Church had “seized control of the public schools, staffed them with nun teachers wearing their church garb, and introduced the catechism and practices of their church” (Carty T., 2004)

The Kennedy campaign knew that a response was necessary. As a result, Kennedy accepted an invitation to speak at the Great Houston Ministerial Association on September 12, 1960. Initially, Kennedy had been skeptical of this invitation, but after the Mayflower meeting he knew that he must address this issue and do so in a way that speaks directly to Protestants. Speaking in Houston would give Kennedy the opportunity to “make a dramatic declaration of independence from his church’s political involvement in order to allay the lingering suspicions of many Protestants” (Menendez, 2011).

Kennedy opened his speech by saying that more pressing issues faced the nation other than his religion. Kennedy cited the spread of Communism, including Cuba, and poverty in the Appalachian region (most notably, West Virginia). His focus then turned to the question of religion, and the fear Protestants had regarding his faith. Specifically, he stated his belief that the issues of true importance for the country had been blurred by conversations regarding his religion. Kennedy then addressed directly concerns raised at the Mayflower meeting, saying,

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 religion
differs from the President who might appoint him, or the people who might elect him. (Kennedy, 1960)

He followed that statement by saying that America should be a country that is not officially Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish and that the leaders of the nation should not be bound to obey any religious body of any faith.

Kennedy told the audience that prejudice against one faith could in the future be turned at another. Kennedy said that while in 1960 there may be suspicion toward Catholics, “in other years it has been -- and may someday be again -- a Jew, or a Quaker, or a Unitarian, or a Baptist” (Kennedy, 1960). This section of the speech is poignant because his opponent, Vice President Nixon, was a member of the Quaker faith. By using this specific line Kennedy seemed to be indicated that he was no different spiritually than Vice President Nixon, and made the point that if religious bigotry is to go unchecked, the finger of doubt could easily be pointing at members of other faiths.

This message of equality continued throughout the course of the speech. Kennedy’s concluding point argued that patriotism knows no religious litmus test. Kennedy said that an America free of religious injustice was “the kind of America I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe” (Kennedy, 1960). Kennedy noted that with the great heroes of The Alamo (Crockett and Bowie) died “Fuentes, and McCafferty, and Bailey, and Badillo, and Carey” (Kennedy, 1960). The speech ended by Kennedy asking the audience to judge him not on his faith, but on his prior service in Congress and on his political views.
While Kennedy and his team worked diligently to spread their message, more had to be done to maximize the odds of victory on Election Day. The key to victory was in building a solid voting coalition that would be able to activate voters for Kennedy. To do this, the Democratic Party returned to its political base. The Party “relied on a minority coalition of Catholic, Jewish, and African Americans” who came together to form a “powerful coalition” (Carty, 2011). In order to unite this coalition of minorities, former President Truman and the Democratic National Committee portrayed the Democratic Party as “bigotry’s eternal foe” (Carty, 2011). By doing this the Party and the Kennedy team activated Catholic voters, while simultaneously trying to appeal to other marginalized groups, as well as white liberals, in the population. By uniting those who have been traditionally marginalized, and activating Catholic voters, Democrats thought that they had brought together a winning coalition.

Even with the support from traditionally marginalized groups, the general election was extraordinarily close. Vice President Nixon carried two more states than Senator Kennedy, yet lost the popular vote. Kennedy also garnered more electoral votes than Nixon. At the end of the evening, Kennedy had received 49.7% of the vote to Nixon’s 47.5%, John F. Kennedy had been chosen to become the 35th President of the United States, and the first member of the Roman Catholic faith to ever be elected to that office.
CHAPTER 4: REPORTING FOR DUTY – THE 2004 ELECTION

In 2004 Senator John Kerry sought to become the second Roman Catholic in American history to be elected president. Controversy still surrounded the outcome of the 2000 general election, leaving some members of the electorate questioning the legitimacy of President Bush’s administration. The controversy surrounding the 2000 election, mixed with a divided public opinion on the direction of the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan led many to believe that President Bush’s re-election would be substantially more difficult than his 2000 campaign.

Kerry demonstrated devotion to his country throughout his life. He began his career in the military, serving in the Vietnam War in the 1970s. The war stayed on Kerry’s mind for the rest of his life. After serving in Vietnam, Kerry became active in anti-war protests and worked with other activists to lobby Congress to end military operations in Southeast Asia. One observer of the 2004 campaign noted that Kerry fully represented the idea that the Vietnam War, for those who served, will never really end (Thomas, 2004). Early in the primary season Howard Dean had considerable momentum going into Iowa.

After of his anti-war activism, Kerry ventured into politics. Kerry was defeated in a run for the House of Representatives in 1972, but rebounded by going back to school to get his law degree, and eventually became a District Attorney. Shortly thereafter Kerry decided to run for Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts; running with incumbent Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. The Dukakis-Kerry ticket won on Election Day, giving Kerry his first elected position. After Massachusetts’ junior senator Paul
Tsengas stepped down from the Senate in 1984, Kerry decided to run for the United States Senate. Kerry won the nomination and general election and then went to Washington, where he served with then-Senior Senator Ted Kennedy.

Much like the Kennedys, Kerry was reared in a traditional upper-class New England environment. This way of life became engrained into his mind. His difficulty to show off stemmed from the internal “stern, patrician voice” that preached “modesty, humility, duty” – the same voice that influenced generations of privileged New Englanders (Thomas, 2004). As a teenager Kerry attended the posh New England prep school St. Paul’s and then went on to graduate from Yale University. Kerry’s mother routinely told him the importance of duty, serving, and being virtuous; later in life Kerry would say that his mother’s last words to him were “integrity, integrity, integrity” (Thomas, 2004).

Incumbent President George W. Bush was born in Connecticut but called Texas his home. He was born into a political family: his grandfather, Prescott, was a United States Senator and his father, George H.W. Bush, would serve as both vice president under Reagan and then as President after winning the 1988 election. George W. Bush, like his father, attended Yale and joined the military. After an unsuccessful career in business George W. Bush entered politics. He successfully ran a gubernatorial campaign in Texas, defeating popular incumbent Democrat Ann Richards. After becoming the first Texas governor to win re-election for a second consecutive four-year term, political insiders began to look at Bush as a possible presidential nominee in 2000. Bush entered the Republican primary and became his Party’s nominee. The vote count in 2000 was
razor-thin, and ultimately decided whenever the Supreme Court ruled to halt the on-going Florida recount. George W. Bush had become the 43rd President of the United States, and only the second son of a former president, following John Quincy Adams, to ascend to that office.

Kerry could not face President Bush without first winning the Democratic nomination in the primaries. Aside from Dean, another possible contender was a young Senator from North Carolina named John Edwards. Edwards was a smooth-talking southerner with a wily smile and a social justice agenda. Dean excited crowds with his enthusiasm and capitalized on the internet to raise a substantial amount of funds. Kerry, conversely, was not physically attractive or enthusiastic; his speeches were thought to be long winded and ultimately forgettable. Heading into Iowa, the task in front of Kerry appeared daunting: finding a way to defeat Dean and bring legitimacy to his campaign.

In Iowa, Howard Dean was the apparent front-runner, and certainly the signs pointed to a Dean victory on election night. However, Dean’s strategy of busing-in out of state college students (wearing bright orange hats, no less) was good in the sense that he got volunteers out on the ground making contact with voters. What Dean did not factor into the equation was that this could potentially alienate rural Iowa voters who did not like out of state volunteers trying to influence their votes (Thomas, 2004). Two days prior to the caucuses Jim Rassmann, who served with Kerry in Vietnam, was flown into Iowa to speak with Kerry. After Rassmann called the campaign office to see if there was any way he could help with the primary, the campaign flew him into Iowa to participate in an event that would be televised across the state. On the night of the caucus, Kerry
came in first, followed by Edwards and the former front-runner Howard Dean. Following Deans now-famous scream, Kerry won the New Hampshire primary the following week and, essentially, became the Party’s nominee (Thomas, 2004).

Unlike the prior two cases, religion played a different role for Kerry in the 2004 election. Like Smith and Kennedy before him, Kerry was a member of the Roman Catholic faith. Yet after 1960, it appeared as though Catholics would no longer vote for another Catholic as a result of religious solidarity. In 1928 voters feared that a Catholic president would potentially be more loyal to the Church than to the country. Seventy-six years later, voters seemed to be less concerned with a candidate’s relationship to the Vatican and more concerned with his or her stance on “moral issues.” In 2004 the concept of moral issues had been defined in large segments of the public sphere to denote conservative social policy positions. Given the politicized definition of values, Kerry’s liberal voting record appeared to be at odds with voters who were concerned with moral issues. Values had been politicized following the rise of the Religious Right and the 1980 presidential election.

In the 1980s Ronald Reagan forged a voting coalition of traditional conservative Republicans, and evangelical Christians. This coalition came together to support candidates who, like Reagan, advocated for limited government and openly discussed faith. More so, these religious conservatives demanded their leaders to support policies that were in line with their Christian faith, such as opposing abortion, and opposing same-sex unions.
The importance of this new voting group was not lost on the president or his advisers. From the time the Bush took office in 2001, Karl Rove worked to cultivate a strong relationship with the Christian Right. Rove, more than anyone else, knew that if President Bush were to be successful in his re-election bid, he would have to have substantial backing from Evangelical Christians. During President Bush’s first term Rove diligently sent notes, photos, anniversary cards, and White House Christmas-party invitations to important members of the Religious Right (Thomas, 2004). Rove was attempting to build a “Red State army” consisting of “evangelicals, flag-waving small-town and rural American Dreamers; ‘60s-hating, pro-death penalty, anti-gay marriage social conservatives” whom he hoped would make up the “new Republican majority” (Thomas, 2004).

In order to understand the issue of religious conservatives; one must attempt to define “moral values.” A term with concepts of morality that are both ambiguous and relative. But what is important regarding the 2004 election is the politicization of values. Values were defined, and then used, by Republicans who associated “values” with a certain type of policy, they were able to link morality with political positions. In terms of the 2004 election, “moral values” have been defined as issued associated with, “abortion, school prayer, and gay marriage” adding that some voters would even add “affirmative action to this list” (McMahon, Rankin, Beachler, & White, 2005). Given a list of seven issues that they consider to be the most important facing the country, in 2004 22% of voters (these people made up the values voter bloc) chose “moral values” as the single most important set of issue in the upcoming election (McMahon et al., 2005)
Like Al Smith, Kerry had negative baggage heading into the election season. Other than Catholicism, Smith’s association with Tammany Hall was a major hindrance to his presidential campaign. In 2004 Kerry had to contend with his association with “Hollywood.” While Kerry was not active in the film industry, to Evangelical voters Hollywood symbolized the epitome of moral corruption. The argument made in 1928 that Tammany Hall represented social and political depravity was replaced in 2004 with Hollywood. McMahon et al. noted that religious voters saw the behavior of Hollywood as being representative of changing social tides (McMahon et al., 2005). It appeared that religious voters felt that Hollywood was pushing the country toward secularism.

Karl Rove was aware of the importance of religious voters in the upcoming election. Bush himself was keenly tuned to the importance of faith as an electoral tool. Following the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001 Bush used religious rhetoric to frame his argument for beginning, and later continuing, to use American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bush framed the debate in terms of good versus evil; in this sense America represented all that was good, right, and holy in the world while those who attacked the United States represent all that is evil. By portraying the United States as the perennial force for good, he was also able to use his rhetoric to equate freedom with foreign policy goals. One example of this came in May 2004 when President Bush said:

Freedom is on the march, and American and the world are more secure because of it. I believe in my heart of hearts that every person in the world wants to live in a free society, I believe this because I understand that freedom is not America’s gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman of this world. (Sabato, 2006).
Bush had no problem professing his personal beliefs in regard to faith, but Kerry had a difficult time communicating his views on religion. Kerry viewed religion as intensely personal and private. In July 2004 a Pew Research poll found that 43% of American Catholics knew that Kerry was, in fact, a fellow Catholic (Sabato, 2006). Misunderstandings between Kerry and religious voters are vital to conceptualizing the role of faith during this campaign. Although Kerry was a practicing Catholic, he might not have felt the need to share his views with his audience. When Kerry did speak about his faith, he was not as forceful as President Bush. For example, when he discussed faith with the magazine *Christianity Today* Kerry said:

> I'm a Catholic and I practice, but at the same time I have an open-mindedness to many other expressions of spirituality that come through different religions. ... I've spent some time reading and thinking about [religion] and trying to study it, and I've arrived at not so much a sense of the differences, but a sense of the similarities in so many ways; the value-system roots and linkages between the Torah, the Qur'an, and the Bible and the fundamental story that runs through all of this, that ... really connects all of us. (Stricherz, 2004)

Whereas President Bush could summarize his faith in a soundbite, Kerry presented the statement as if he were lecturing on the Senate floor. Kerry’s presentation of his faith did not mean that he was not devoutly faithful, but instead illustrates the miscommunication between Kerry and voters on the issue of faith.

Like the previous two case studies Kerry too had a Catholic problem. However, the problem was not that he was Catholic, but instead the manner of his Catholicism. As Larry Sabato noted in his book *Divided States of America*, “a telling quip heard throughout the campaign was that if John F. Kennedy was too Catholic for the nation, John Kerry was not Catholic enough” (Sabato, 2006). The conservative branch of the
Catholic Church strictly adhered to Church doctrine, which placed them at odds with political liberals. At the same time, issues like same-sex marriage and civil unions for homosexuals had been politicized by Republicans. Republicans took terms like “morality” and “values” and linked them to policy positions like opposing both abortion and homosexual civil rights. This resulted in Kerry appearing “not Catholic enough” by the standards of conservative Catholics and Evangelical Protestants. These voters appeared to view Kerry’s policy positions as antithetical to their moral values.

Conversely, Kerry seemed not to grasp the magnitude of the politically defined morality as a result of his personal view of Catholicism.

Kerry believed that faith and politics are separate. Kerry believed that it was indeed possible to be a good Catholic and still hold pro-choice political views, that the Church could adequately dictate matters of spirituality and faith, but that matters of the state were increasingly more complex. Questions of the state should be answered by legislators independent of religious influence. The merits of this argument have, and surely will continue to be, debated. However, to John Kerry, being pro-choice did not disqualify him from being a practicing Catholic, or a viable presidential candidate.

Compounding the issue of Kerry’s Catholicism and his liberal voting record were the several high ranking members of the Catholic hierarchy opposing Kerry’s candidacy. One such opponent came in the form of Bishop Michael J. Sheridan, Bishop of Colorado Springs, who published a letter he penned to the Diocese of Colorado Springs titled On the Duties of Catholic Politicians and Voters. In this letter Bishop Sheridan outlined the importance of the November election, while speaking to the Catholic electorate on the
importance of choosing a candidate who did not violate God’s law in matters of public legislation and policy. In this letter Bishop Sheridan states, “Anyone who professes the Catholic faith with his lips while at the same time publicly supporting legislation or candidates that defy God’s law makes a mockery of that faith and belies his identity as a Catholic” (Bishop Sheridan, 2004). Bishop Sheridan spoke directly to social issues such as abortion, saying, “The November elections will be critical in the battle to restore the right to life to all citizens, especially the unborn” (Bishop Sheridan, 2004). Bishop Sheridan warned that any Catholic choosing to vote for a candidate who held such views would be at odds with Church doctrine and their salvation would be in danger, saying:

There must be no confusion in these matters. Any Catholic politicians who advocate for abortion, for illicit stem cell research or for any form of euthanasia ipso facto place themselves outside full communion with the Church and so jeopardize their salvation. Any Catholics who vote for candidates who stand for abortion, illicit stem cell research or euthanasia suffer the same fateful consequences. (Bishop Sheridan, 2004)

Unlike the 1960 election, American Catholics in 2004 did not feel compelled to vote for another Catholic simply because they shared a religion.

Between November 2003 and the general election fifteen bishops in fourteen states made public statements in support of denying Kerry communion (Gray, Perl, & Bendyna, 2006). These official statements were not confined to southern states. Outside of the South, Bishops and priests in the mid-west and northwest also were among those making statements in support of denying Holy Communion to the Senator.
Another high-ranking member of the Roman Catholic Church in Colorado came to the media forefront for his opposition to Kerry. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, of Denver, issued a “thinly veiled endorsement of Bush” in October 2004 (Crotty, 2005). Archbishop Chaput said that the greatest issue facing the country today was that of abortion and that Catholics should vote in November for the pro-life candidate (Crotty, 2005). Reporting on this story, The New York Times wrote, “He stopped short of telling them whom to vote for, but he reminded them of Mr. Kerry's support for abortion rights. And he pointed out the potential impact his re-election could have on Roe v. Wade” (Kirkpatrick & Goodstein, 2004). The Archbishop never officially endorsed a specific candidate, but Kirkpatrick and Goodstein did state that, in their opinion, Archbishop Chaput made it clear that “there is only one way for a faithful Catholic to vote in this presidential election, for President Bush and against Senator John Kerry” (Kirkpatrick & Goodstein, 2004).

Bush and Kerry might have believed that they could carry the Catholic vote. Catholics in the twentieth century had, predominantly, self-identified as Democrats and voted accordingly. Another factor that Kerry pointed to was that Bill Clinton had done well among Catholic voters in 1992 and then again in 1996 (Crotty, 2005). Influencing Kerry was the fact that Catholics considered themselves Democrats, and historically voted accordingly. Conversely, President Bush also appeared to think that this would be a group of voters that he could win. Republicans pointed to Ronald Reagan’s performance in 1980 and Bush’s strong performance in 2000 (Crotty, 2005).
Each candidate seemingly knew that by carrying the Catholic vote, he would also take the Hispanic vote. As a result of the high rate of immigration into the United States, 2004 saw many more Latino voters than previous elections. Ethnic minorities have traditionally voted for Democratic candidates; this voter history seemingly would benefit the Kerry campaign. However, Latino voters represented a group of people who had emigrated from staunchly Catholic nations. These voters believed strongly in Church doctrine on social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, and thus were conservative on issues of like abortion. Because Bush already advocated for conservative moral values, and had went to great length to court Catholic voters, he appeared to think he could carry both groups.

As the campaign cycle began to reach the final push, Kerry began to put emphasis on his faith and religious viewpoints. Kerry attended mass every weekend and Holy Day during the final months of the campaign (Crotty, 2005). He began giving speeches that interwove faith and policy. One example came on October 4, 2004, when Kerry gave a speech that “drew connections between his belief, the Bible, and economic justice” (Crotty, 2005). While in rhetoric he began to put emphasis on his faith, he did not tamp down the flames of conservative Catholic anger. Another example of Kerry angering conservative Catholics came in Florida on October 21, 2004, when Kerry appeared at an event supporting embryonic stem cell research with the widow of actor Christopher Reeves (Crotty, 2005). This event occurred on the same day that President Bush met with Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia. Kerry was apparently never able to convince
voters that it was possible to still be a good Catholic while simultaneously holding liberal views. This view of faith ultimately lost out on Election Day.

President Bush garnered 51.1% of the popular vote to Kerry’s 48.3%, giving the President 286 electoral votes to Kerry’s 252. Evangelical Christians appeared to turn out in large numbers to support President Bush.

Of the 22% of voters who claimed that moral values were the most important issues facing the country, 80% of those individuals supported President Bush and only 18% supported Senator Kerry (McMahon, Rankin, Beachler, & White, 2005). Twenty-two million evangelical voters turned out to support President Bush, and of the 23% of voters who described themselves as Evangelical Christians, President Bush won 78% of that vote (McMahon et al., 2005). The President also increased his support among Latino voters, garnering 44% of the Hispanic vote in 2004 – up from 35% in 2000 (Nelson, 2005).

President Bush also did well with Catholic voters. With Catholic voters Bush defeated Kerry 52%-47% after the votes were tallied (McMahon et al., 2005). Among Catholic voters who attended mass weekly President Bush carried 56% of these voters to John Kerry’s 43%. Leonard Leo, a Catholic adviser to President Bush, said that “the Catholic vote helped carry the president across the finish line” in the battleground states of Ohio and Florida (McMahon et al., 2005). As Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde have said, “for a Catholic to fail to win majority support among Catholics was a major obstacle that Kerry could not overcome” (Abramson, Alrich, & Rhode, 2006).
In 2004 John Kerry seems to have lost the presidential election due to his inability to understand the importance of the political definition of values within the campaign. While Kerry may have out-debated Bush on policy issues, he was unable to convince a large number of voters that he was a better choice than President Bush. In contrast, President Bush connected with voters in regard to their fear of changing social tides. Bush used rhetoric that was overtly religious, albeit ambiguous. For example, although President Bush would use the term “God,” he would never denounce those who used the term differently. He would campaign as a fundamental Christian, but would not hesitate to speak to members of other denominations (e.g., Catholics, Jews, etc) who may share similar conservative views. Ultimately, Bush framed the debate over the issues in terms that connected morality and faith to public policy. Whether or not Kerry had the correct policy answers, Bush’s ability to connect with voters on an emotional level caused voters to trust him.

President Bush effectively mobilized religious voters to not only vote, but to go out and actively campaign for the president. Bush’s activists were “solidly conservative, strongly Republican, critical of government, and focused on traditional morality” and were more likely to “adhere to a new civic gospel that justifies political action in defense of traditional morality” (Green, Rozell, & Wilcox, 2006). Likewise, these activists were “agents of value” during this election, with organizers pulling from the ranks of “highly traditional evangelical Protestants…middle-class and middle-aged, included more women, belonged to traditional nuclear families, and lived outside of major metropolitan areas” (Green et al., 2006). This group of activists worked to educate, activate, and
mobilize voters in 2004. By mixing the appeal of the Bush candidacy, with the grassroots effort of religious activists, one is able to understand why President Bush won re-election in 2004.
CONCLUSION: THE CONTEMPORARY OTHERS

The goal of this thesis has been to show that religion matters in presidential politics. The three case studies presented highlight the obstacles religious minorities face when their faith differs from mainstream America. American Catholics were marginalized well into the twentieth century; the political prejudice Catholic candidates faced were a result of that. Yet as one marginalized religion becomes accepted, others are pushed to the fringes.

One contemporary faith that falls into the category of religious other is members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly referred to as Mormons. In the summer of 2011 two prominent Mormons were running for the Republican Party’s presidential nomination; former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and former Utah Governor and Ambassador to China Jon Huntsman. Romney and Huntsman both had considerable political experience and held political views in line with the Republican Party, emphasizing small government and a pro-business economic outlook. As Mormons, they were members of reportedly one of the most conservative religion in America; 59% of Mormons responded to a Gallup survey by identifying themselves as politically conservative (Newport, 2010). This conservatism translated into identification with the Republican Party, with 63% of Mormons identifying themselves as Republicans (Saad, 2009).

Both Romney and Huntsman had spent their political careers with the Republican Party. Jon Huntsman served in the presidential administrations of both Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Huntsman was later elected as a Republican Governor of Utah;
serving two terms. Mitt Romney successfully ran as a gubernatorial campaign in heavily Democratic Massachusetts as a Republican. After his term concluded Romney was considered a front-runner for the 2008 Republican nomination for president. Prior to entering the presidential race, Huntsman and Romney had been successful in state politics.

Yet even with their political success and expertise, Huntsman and Romney still faced concerns over their religion. While Mormons hold similar social and political views as conservative Protestants, religious skepticism remained present. Christian conservatives appeared to be hesitant to support a Mormon candidate because Protestants are unsure if Mormons classify as Christians. Carroll Doherty reported that 31% of white Evangelical said that they would not support a Mormon candidate for president (Doherty, 2011). A parallel can be drawn to Catholicism. While Catholics held political views that mirrored mainstream Democrats, Catholic candidates still had to answer the “religious question.”

Conservative voters appeared to be saying that while they agree with Mormons on policy, they still do not agree with Mormons. In 2011 early polls showed that Mitt Romney was the front-runner for the 2012 Republican nomination. Yet this changed almost overnight when Texas Governor Rick Perry entered the race. Conservatives seemingly chose to support the candidate that most resembled them when choosing between a Mormon and a Protestant. Governor Perry was a social and political conservative, successful in politics, and a Protestant. The early support for the Mormon candidate eroded after an, conservative white Protestant entered the race.
Likewise, Jon Huntsman’s moderate Mormonism and his moderate political views failed to gain support from either religious Republicans or political moderates. Unlike other 2012 Republican presidential candidates, Huntsman openly stated his belief in evolutionary theory and supported the scientific claim that humans have contributed to global warming. Holding moderate views did not appear to benefit Huntsman; his campaign failed to gain traction prior to the Iowa Caucus and New Hampshire Primary. Not only did Republicans appeared hesitant to support a Mormon who espoused strong conservative views, political moderates and non-Evangelical conservatives seemed equally apprehensive about supporting a moderate Mormon. Regardless of qualifications and policy positions, Romney and Huntsman were seemingly overshadowed by the Protestant candidates. While Mormon candidates have had a difficult time gaining political support, they have had more success than Muslims candidates.

Muslims are one of the most feared groups in American society. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 anti-Muslim sentiments had become pervasive in American society. Since the attacks survey results have shown that Americans view the Muslim faith as being inherently violent and different from their own (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009). Fear increases the otherness of Muslims. Religious voters not only appear to view Islam as foreign, they also seem to be afraid of its members. When viewed through small lens (e.g., mainstream media) Muslims appeared to be violent, anti-American terrorists. This slanted portrayal results in an inaccurate characterization of the entire religion. Much like Protestants feared that a Catholic president would be a servant
of the Vatican, religious voters seem to fear that a Muslim presidential candidate would be an agent of Radical Islam and the Middle East.

Yet another marginalized group is American atheists. A full examination of the importance of religion in American politics cannot overlook citizens who have no religion. Religious voters seem to fear that an atheist president would erode the countries moral values. Since the debate over faith has been framed using religious rhetoric it is difficult to imagine how an irreligious candidate could successfully overcome the question of faith. For religious voters not having a chosen faith is both abnormal and a violation of their way of life. For those who are religious, faith often plays a vital role in daily life; and to knowingly and willingly make a choice to waiver eternal salvation is antithetical to virtually everything they view to be true. Fear of secularization seems to be pushing atheists farther away from what is considered normal and closer to the fringes of society.

Understanding religion might be vital to being successful in American politics. A candidate must prove that he or she has both adequate leadership skills as well as religious faith. Specifically, being faithful enough to engage in a public dialogue where values have been politicized. As the case of John Kerry shows, simply having a religious grounding is not enough. A successful candidate, specifically one from a marginalized group, should probably recognize the political definitions of moral values in the public sphere. Once the definitions are established the candidate must then weave his or her personal views into a message that fits those definitions.
The case studies provided in this thesis examine the relationship between Protestant and Catholic voters and candidates for the presidency. By examining anti-Catholic prejudice in electoral politics one is able to see the obstacles that the religious other faces in terms of being a successful presidential candidate. Another aspect this thesis considers is the changing moral environment. While the issues in 1928 and 2004 were different, the concept of morality seemed to be the most salient issue for voters. Whether it was Smith’s Catholicism and anti-Prohibition stance or Kerry’s pro-choice and pro-civil union views, these issues galvanized Protestant voters and activated them on Election Day.

Religious others are marginalized by mainstream members of society. The difference of the others faith seems to present a challenge to mainstream morality. As Hofstadter noted, the majority responds to others with fear and anxiety. The paranoid style causes baseless rumors and accusations to become part of public dialogue. A practice of this style was seen in the twentieth century when anti-Catholic activists attempted to associate Catholicism with foreign entities, corruption, and immorality. Some Protestants reacted similarly to Muslims following 9/11; attacking any Muslim other as being violent, anti-American, and terrorists. In 2011 Mormons who held the same political views as conservative Protestants still faced difficulty because of religious differences.

Once these biases are established, political and academic reasons for justification arise. As Rogers Smith argued, once an other has been established those in power begin presenting rationales for perpetuating inequality. For example, African Americans were
thought to be intellectually and culturally inferior to white citizens, so it was argued that they should be enslaved for their own benefit. American Catholics faced this in the twentieth century by Protestants who claimed a Catholic candidate would be more loyal to the Pope than to the United States. The end result appears to begin with practice of the paranoid style and end with cultural reinforcement of inequality. The paranoid style allows for fiction to be presented as fact in the public sphere. After allegations are introduced, the majority provides social or “scientific” evidence to support marginalization. This seemingly creates a cycle that perpetuates disparity among social groups. Religious others present mainstream America with a perceived values change, and as a result they are caught in this cycle.

Yet as the societal environment changes, it seems, so does the religious other. Throughout the twentieth century there was an observable shift in regard to Catholicism. At the beginning of the century, Catholic candidates were marginalized; however, with the approach of the new millennium Catholics moved from the fringes into the mainstream. This shift happened as values were defined in the public sphere to denote specific policy views. This resulted in conservative Catholics and Evangelical Protestants finding commonality on policy issues. Political commonality allowed Catholics to leave the fringes and became accepted into the mainstream. With Catholics became more readily accepted, other minority religions became the new other.

Being able to openly discuss faith has become a necessary qualification for presidential candidates. Individuals seeking the presidency are subject to public scrutiny, and their personal faith is no exception. In order to be successful a candidate must
demonstrate both an understanding of the importance of faith as well as the political context of the debate. Ultimately, in order to win the presidency a candidate must communicate morality in a way that mirrors the political definition of values.
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