

THE RELIGIOUS "ISSUE" IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

I. What Leading Protestant Denominations Have Said About Intruding Religion Into The Campaign

"We reject as false [the proposition] that the attitude of certain religious groups towards the religious responsibility of public officers in the exercise of their office is such as to justify the exclusion of their members from public office in a free democratic society To disqualify any citizen on the grounds of his religious affiliation seems indefensible on the basis of the record."

-- Committee on Social Trends, National Lutheran Council (June 1959)

"In our free society, a man's religious affiliation should not automatically commend or condemn him to the intelligent voter. His personal integrity and views on real, concrete issues should be the voter's guide for decision."

-- Presbytery of Minneapolis (March 1960)

"It is repugnant both to democratic principles, as well as to God . . . to use a man's religious commitment or lack of it, as a test to either qualify or disqualify him for public office, especially the Presidency of the United States, because of its world-wide influence and power. It is repugnant to have a voter either accept or reject a candidate by the simple test of his religious convictions."

-- National Methodist Board of Social and Economic Relations (March 1960)

"The Council of Christian Social Action unequivocally states its conviction that no citizen should be denied nomination by a political party or election to the office of President on grounds of race, religion or ethnic origin. To accept as unwritten law, or to assume, that no Roman Catholic should be President of the United States would amount to a denial of fundamental American principles and would infringe liberties guaranteed by the Constitution."

-- United Church of Christ (1960)

"It is the responsibility of the members of our churches to vigorously oppose appeals to religious bigotry as a factor in elections. Voting should be based primarily upon a candidate's personal integrity, his leadership competence, and his stand on central issues."

-- National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. (February 1960)

"Democracy can be betrayed by religious discrimination or dishonest and unfair practices in political campaigns."

-- Dr. Edwin T. Dahlberg, President, National Council of Churches (February 1960)

"There are many valid issues upon which the forthcoming Presidential campaign should be waged, but voting for or against a candidate on the basis of his religious affiliation is not one of them."

-- Crusader, American Baptist Magazine (March 1960)

"It ill behooves Episcopalians whose brother churchmen have had the Presidency so often, to speak against the right of any religious person to hold the Presidency because he expresses the Catholic faith of Christ."

-- The Living Church, Protestant Episcopal Magazine (June 1959)

The Issue

"The issue is not primarily how others interpret the authority and mission of the Roman Catholic Church but how the Roman Catholic candidate himself interprets that authority and mission."

-- Bishop James A. Pike, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California.

"The major error of those who specialize on the dangers of Roman Catholicism is their tendency to assume that the Church is a vast monolithic system effectively controlled by a master plan at the center. The fear that Roman Catholics in American public life may be agents of such a centralized system is without foundation . . . If non-Catholics open their minds to the fact of diversity within Catholicism they will lose many of their fears of Catholic power."

-- John C. Bennett, Dean of Union Theological Seminary and Co-Chairman with Reinhold Niebuhr of the Editorial Board, Christianity in Crisis

II. Senator Kennedy's Views

A. In General

"... on any bill coming before me on this or any other subject, I would act in accordance with what I thought to be in the public interest, and not in accordance with the dictates of any ecclesiastical authority or group."

-- Letter to Dr. George S. Reamey, Editor of the Virginia Methodist Advocate,
March 11, 1960

"Whatever one's religion in his private life may be, for the office holder, nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts -- including the First Amendment and the strict separation of Church and State ..."

-- Look magazine interview, March 3, 1959

B. On Public Funds for Parochial Schools

"There can be no question of Federal funds used for support of parochial or private schools. It's unconstitutional under the First Amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court. I'm opposed to the Federal Government's extending support to sustain any Church or its schools..."

-- Look magazine interview, March 3, 1959

"I made clear my opposition to this principle ... and most recently voted on the Senate floor, when the Federal Aid to Education Bill was under consideration, against the Morse Amendment to permit private and parochial schools to receive such aid...."

-- Letter to Dr. George S. Reamey, Editor of the Virginia Methodist Advocate,
March 11, 1960

C. On an Ambassador to the Vatican

"I am flatly opposed to appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican. Whatever advantages it might have in Rome -- and I'm not convinced of these -- they would be more than offset by the divisive effect at home."

-- Look magazine interview, March 3, 1959

D. On Birth Control

"I would base my determination as to whether I should approve such a law on my personal judgment as President as to what would be in the interest of the United States. If it became a law of the land, I would uphold it as the law of the land."

-- James Reston interview, New York Times, November 27, 1959

"While the Indians and others have made it clear that they would not seek funds for this purpose -- and, of course, are already receiving any and all information they want from this or any other country -- I have nevertheless made it clear that any nation which is using public funds for such purposes should not for this reason be penalized by a reduction in its foreign aid. A Catholic Surgeon General has permitted State Public Health Agencies to use Federal funds for the establishment of birth control clinics. In any event, on any bill coming before me on this or any other subject, I would act in accordance with what I thought to be in the public interest, and not in accordance with the dictates of any ecclesiastical authority or group."

-- Letter to Dr. George S. Reamey, Editor of the Virginia Methodist Advocate,
March 11, 1960

E. On Preference for Any Church

"No church should undertake to impose its views on public agencies, and no public agency should single out for attack any church or church organization. Under the First Amendment our government cannot -- directly or indirectly, carelessly or intentionally -- select any religious body for either favorable or unfavorable treatment."

-- Wire to Reverend Harold Brown, President, Oregon Council of Churches,
April 15, 1960

F. Senator Kennedy's Record

"Kennedy notes that he has opposed a number of positions taken by Catholic organizations and members of the hierarchy. He attended non-Catholic schools, from the elementary grades to Harvard. In Congress, Kennedy favored aid to Yugoslavia, aid to Communist satellite states and the naming of Dr. James B. Conant as our first ambassador to West Germany. Some Catholic groups opposed the first two, and Catholics generally bridled at Conant because of his opposition to parochial schools."

-- Fletcher Knebel, Look magazine, March 3, 1959