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Luke Ebersole

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Religion and Politics

By LUKE EBERSOLE

ABSTRACT: The controversy over mixing religion and politics has not kept religion apart from government. Religious groups participate in a wide variety of political activities. But religious groups in the United States are not organized as political parties or political machines. There is a relation between religious affiliation and party affiliation. The correlation, however, does not usually indicate a "religious" vote. In part, the relation reflects socio-economic status. For Catholics and Jews it is very much a result of awareness of minority status. As minority awareness declines, trends in voting change. There is no pattern of voting for or against candidates because of their religion. The importance of religion in a presidential election cannot be assessed on the basis of other elections. The election of a Catholic president would not change the nature of our government, but it would have an effect on American politics.

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IN the controversy over mixing religion and politics, a distinction frequently is not made between religious political action and the joining of church and state. Without regard for its historical meaning, the principle of separation of church and state is often used as the chief basis for criticism of political activity by religious groups.

The legal basis for separation of church and state in the United States is contained in the provision of the First Amendment that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In the years since its ratification there has been considerable contention over its specific application, but there is rather general agreement that its authors meant to prohibit the federal government from regulating and supporting religion.¹ On the whole, the "wall of separation" has been well maintained.

The framers of the Constitution were equally concerned about the control that religion might exercise over government. The coin of disestablishment had two sides. At the same time that it granted freedom to religion from regulation by the state, it foreclosed a major means for religious domination of the state. There could be no state church or churches.

But separation of church and state as set forth in the First Amendment does not cover the whole range of relations between religion and government. Other than to disestablish the church or churches, it does not define the legal place of religion in government. Religious political movements, religious political parties, organized religious pressure groups, and church lobbying are

¹ Since 1925 the First Amendment has been interpreted to mean that the states also shall not regulate or support religion.

outside the purview of any Constitutional provision.²

PRESSURE AND LOBBYING

In practice, religion has not held itself aloof from government. Organized efforts to sway government in the name of religion have long been part of the political process. A survey of a few past movements and organizations shows how varied the political interests of religious groups have been. Since 1844 the Christian Amendment Movement has been attempting to have religious language written into the preamble of the Constitution. One of the purposes of the Know-Nothing Party was to prevent the election of any but staunch Protestants to public office. Churchmen played prominent roles on both sides of the political struggle over slavery. Immediately following its appearance in 1874 the Woman's Christian Temperance Union launched a prohibition campaign. The Knights of Columbus has attempted to use the machinery of government to achieve its ends. The Lord's Day Alliance was formed in 1888 to represent Protestant denominations in their efforts to secure the enactment of legislation to preserve Sunday rest and worship. In the present century the most conspicuous political activity of the churches was the drive for national prohibition under the direction of the powerful Anti-Saloon League. The Methodist Board of Temperance moved to Washington in 1916 in time to aid in the prohibition campaign. The National Council for Prevention of War, working closely with church groups, started its campaign in Washington in 1921. Between the First and Second

² The only other specific reference to religion is contained in Article 6: ". . . no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

World Wars many religious groups were active in the peace movement and opposed governmental action that might lead toward war.

Some of these older groups still continue their efforts to influence government in Washington. In addition, new organizations have appeared. A number of religious groups have formed agencies which have the assigned function of providing their constituents with information about government and also of representing their respective denominational or interdenominational church bodies before the federal government. The Catholic Church has had offices in Washington for more than four decades. Most of the Protestant agencies have maintained offices in Washington since the end of the Second World War. Among the groups with Washington offices are the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Legislative Committee of the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action, the Council for Christian Social Progress of the Northern Baptist Convention, several Methodist organizations, the National Lutheran Council, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Christian Science Committee on Publications, and Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State. This list might be expanded to include other national organizations and also groups that operate on the state and local levels.

The activities of such organizations vary greatly in the degree to which they are political. Some church agencies in Washington function only to channel information concerning legislation and governmental action to the church public. Others have become experts in the art of influencing government. They

take their place among the lobbyists in informing, advising, and persuading legislators and administrators. The efforts of many national and local groups consist chiefly of sporadic campaigns of propaganda and pressure. By passing resolutions, appointing delegations, calling mass meetings, and sending letters and telegrams, religious groups across the country pressure and protest, approve and disapprove governmental action.

There are many critics of the participation by religious groups in the affairs of government. Church political action agencies are often charged with taking positions that are not representative of their constituents. In many cases the charge is true, as it is true of other organizations that attempt to speak for large and heterogeneous groups. In their study of the Protestant Episcopal Church to find the relationship between parishioners' attitudes and official church policy on social issues, Glock and Ringer reported that on all but one issue on which the church has a committed policy the parishioners are divergent. The single area in which there is agreement is the United Nations. They also found that on most social issues the policy of the church is more liberal than the attitudes of parishioners.³ In a letter prefacing the final report of the National Lay Committee of the National Council of Churches, the chairman wrote:⁴ Clergy and laity active in organized Protestantism seemed to have lost the capacity to understand each other. We, as lay people, were alarmed and unhappy as the National Council assumed the right to speak increasingly on subjects in which

³ Charles Glock and B. B. Ringer, "Church Policy and the Attitudes of Ministers and Parishioners on Social Issues," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 21 (April 1956), pp. 148-156.

⁴ *U. S. News and World Report*, Vol. 40 (February 3, 1956), p. 47.

it was difficult to see ethical or spiritual content for that inarticulate and voiceless body called "34 million Protestants."

Some of the opposition, of course, follows from the premise that, no matter what the issues, organized religion has no place in government. Indeed, there are some critics who seem to believe that all pressure groups should be removed from government. They would prefer to have the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Farm Bureau, and other interest groups, along with religious groups, cease political activity and leave government to function in a pressureless vacuum.

No matter how religious groups resolve the issue of their proper place in government, it appears that their present organized pressure and lobbying efforts are not contrary to the intent of the Constitution. No church organization is in a position to dominate government in the United States. The political forces of religion are dispersed, not centralized. They often display disagreement, not consensus. Moreover, the attempts of religious groups to influence government are usually based on utilitarian and broadly ethical considerations, rather than on strictly sectarian and theological grounds. The churches in this country are not political rivals of the state. Religious groups are doing nothing more than participating in the democratic process of discussion, pressure, and consent by which government policy is formed.

NO RELIGIOUS PARTIES

Unlike religious groups in several European countries, religious groups in the United States have not formed political parties. Only once has a party with avowedly religious purposes achieved even a modicum of political power. The

Native American Party, which became the Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner or Know-Nothing Party, was committed to the election of Protestants. The program of the movement derived not from what it was for but from what it was against. In a predominantly Protestant country, the erection of Catholic churches, schools, and convents gave rise to a deeply rooted set of suspicions, fears, and hates. The Know-Nothing Party was the political embodiment of religious hostility. It fought against every form of Catholic influence in the United States. A few years after the peak of its strength in the middle of the last century, the Know-Nothing Party was dead. But Know-Nothingism has been felt many times in American politics in the small waves of Anti-Catholic and Anti-Jewish feeling that have moved across the nation.

Not only are there no religious political parties in America today; there are no politico-ecclesiastical machines comparable to the Anti-Saloon League in its day. Founded in 1895, the League grew into an organization supported by as many as 60,000 agencies and spending as much as \$2,500,000 a year. Although temperance societies in and outside of the churches co-operated, it was the churches that gave the organization its strength. The League had a simple and unchanging platform. It would settle for nothing less than destruction of the entire traffic in liquor. It was geared for quick and effective action toward this end. Control was centralized. Funds were bountifully supplied. League henchmen were located throughout the land. Most important, the League could employ the one sure method of exerting political pressure; it could control votes. At the height of its strength the Anti-Saloon League achieved unprecedented political power.⁵

⁵ See Peter H. Odegard, *Pressure Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928).

It cannot be alleged that there now exists a political machine prepared to deliver a bloc of Protestant votes, nor that there is a political machine able to deliver the Jewish vote. But the charge is made that the Catholic Church has a political apparatus that can control the Catholic vote throughout the United States. The case against this belief is stated by Elmo Roper.⁶

I think I can . . . dispel . . . the myth of a captive, precommitted Catholic vote. . . . Catholic voters are just as free, just as unfettered, just as intelligent, and just as divided in their voting preferences as any other group. . . .

One can only hope that both our politicians and our people will one day acknowledge what seems an obvious truth: that Catholics are many things. For example, they are not only Irish—they are Italians, they are Germans, they are Frenchmen, and they are Poles. Catholics are liberals—and they are conservatives. Catholics belong to labor unions—and Catholics are unhappy about labor unions. Catholics are Republican—and they are Democratic.

Most students of political behavior concur in the judgment that the Catholic Church does not constitute a political organization capable of delivering the vote of its members. Catholic laymen, like other laymen, are responsive to many political cues other than those that might be provided by church officials. Moreover, Catholic officials have demonstrated little inclination to present a united front in support of particular candidates for public office. Like the leaders of other churches, Catholic leaders are politically divided.

DO THEY VOTE RELIGION?

Despite the absence of religious political parties and of politico-ecclesiastical

⁶ *Saturday Review*, Vol. 42 (October 31, 1959), p. 22.

machines ready to deliver blocs of votes, is there a relation between religion and voting? Is there any indication that religion enters into the choice that the American registers at the polls? This is a complex matter involving many often contradictory factors. We shall consider only a few.

It is necessary to make a distinction between voting when local measures are at stake and voting in national elections. The greatest evidence of religious bloc voting or of occasional ecclesiastically encouraged voting is to be found below the level of national politics. It is apparent that at times local actions produce a religious vote. In 1948 in Massachusetts, Catholics voted in vast numbers because of a referendum measure to allow state health officials to disseminate birth-control information. In California in 1958, there was an outpouring of Catholics because of a referendum issue which would have made parochial schools subject to taxation.⁷ In local liquor referendums, organizations led by Protestant ministers sometimes arouse the "church vote." But in view of the difference in drinking habits among Protestants and within each denomination, such voting can hardly be called Protestant, or even Baptist or Methodist.

Turning to the broader question of the religious composition of political parties, there is some indication of a relation between religious affiliation and party affiliation. It is an elementary political assumption that although Protestants, Jews, and Catholics are both Republicans and Democrats, Protestants tend to be more Republican than Democratic, and Catholics and Jews tend to be more Democratic than Republican. The evidence, however, is not unmixed,

⁷ Peter H. Odegard, *Religion and Politics* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1960), pp. 123, 124.

and the relation between religion and party is probably not as consistent as is widely believed.

On the basis of a small-scale study of the 1948 election and a nationwide study of the 1952 election, the University of Michigan Survey Research Center provides some evidence concerning the voting behavior of Catholics and Protestants.⁸ In 1948 the Catholics contacted during this survey expressed a strong Democratic preference. Forty-nine per cent voted Democratic; 15 per cent of the nonvoters had a Democratic preference. This produced a total Democratic preference of 64 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of the Catholics surveyed voted Republican; 2 per cent of the nonvoters had a Republican preference. This produced a total Republican preference of 27 per cent. In 1952 the total Democratic preference among Catholics was 53 per cent, of which 43 per cent were voters and 10 per cent were nonvoters. The total Republican preference was 47 per cent, of which 41 per cent were voters and 5 per cent were nonvoters.

Protestants questioned by the 1948 study seem to have had a Democratic preference which did not show up in their vote. The total Democratic preference among Protestants was 53 per cent, of which 25 per cent were voters and 28 per cent were nonvoters. Thirty-four per cent of the Protestants had a Republican preference, of which 28 per cent were voters and 6 per cent were nonvoters. In 1952 the total Democratic preference among Protestants was 39 per cent—26 per cent voters and 13 per cent nonvoters. The total Republican preference among Protestants was 57 per cent—45 per cent voters and 12 per cent nonvoters.

In general, these findings conform to

⁸ Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1954), p. 71.

the assumed relationship between religion and party, but they show that the relationship is varied and sometimes tenuous. In a Democratic year, Catholics voted Democratic two to one. In a Republican year, Catholics divided their vote almost evenly, giving the Democrats a slight edge. Protestants, in a Democratic year, had a Democratic preference which they did not vote. In a Republican year they voted Republican not quite two to one.

In several studies of particular communities, Catholic-Protestant differences stand out more definitely. In Erie County, Ohio, in 1940, 60 per cent of the Protestants said they intended to vote Republican, whereas only 23 per cent of the Catholics indicated a Republican preference.⁹ In Elmira, New York, in 1948, Catholics voted Republican only half as much as Protestants.¹⁰

In the case of American Jews, the relation between religion and party affiliation has been marked. For many years Jewish immigrants gave their political loyalty to the Republican Party. But since the 1930's the Jewish vote has shifted to the Democrats. In 1936, Ward 24 in Chicago, which probably had a higher proportion of Jews than any ward in the nation, voted 96 per cent for Roosevelt. National surveys show that in 1940 and 1944 more than 90 out of 100 Jews voted Democratic. Since 1948 the Jewish Democratic vote has diminished but the decline has not been great.¹¹

⁹ Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), pp. 21, 22.

¹⁰ Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 64.

¹¹ Jewish voting trends have been analyzed by Lawrence H. Fuchs in *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956), and in "American Jews and the Presidential Vote," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 49 (June 1955), pp. 385-401.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Does the correlation between religion and party, whether great or small, consistent or fluctuating, actually represent a religious vote? So far as Protestants are concerned the answer is in the negative. Protestants are much too diverse in their political attitudes and behavior to be treated as one group. After an analysis of politico-economic attitudes in eight major religious groups, Wesley and Beverly Allensmith concluded as follows:¹²

Differences can be shown between major Protestant denominational groups which are as great as differences between such groups and non-Protestant groups. Thus differences between Congregationalists (taken as a group) and Catholics (as a group) are in general no greater than differences between Congregationalists and Baptists.

The source of Protestant political differentiation is not religious but economic. Among Protestants there is a close correlation between socio-economic status and political behavior.

With considerable justification, many political observers have also applied a socio-economic interpretation to the party identification of American Catholics. In *The Future of American Politics*, Samuel Lubell wrote:¹³

Because they came to this country late, these immigrants and their children were concentrated in the lower economic rungs. . . . Catholicism . . . coincided largely with discrimination and sweated labor, with immigrant minorities who were looked upon as inferior beings—in short, the lower class.

On the other hand, the Erie County and Elmira studies showed that when

Catholics and Protestants on various socio-economic levels were compared, Catholics voted more Democratic than Protestants on all levels.¹⁴ Catholics of high economic status voted more Democratic than Protestants of low economic status. In addition, liberalism or conservatism on economic issues was not the determining influence in party alliance. Catholics who agreed with the Republican position on economic issues were no more Republican than liberal Protestants. On each level of liberalism or conservatism, Catholics were more Democratic than Protestants.¹⁵ In Philadelphia, Glantz found no difference between Catholics and Protestants at the top level of stratification, but in the middle and lower classes there was twice as much Republicanism among Protestants as among Catholics.¹⁶ Thus while the economic status of Catholics has an important bearing on their party affiliation, it does not offer a full explanation.

For the Jewish group taken as a whole, the economic class theory of politics is not relevant. The economic position of American Jews has been improving rapidly. Yet while this improvement was taking place, the Jewish vote shifted from Republican to strongly Democratic. Within the group, economic differences have had little effect on voting in national elections. Political attitudes, too, appear to be unrelated to economic status. Only a relatively small proportion of Jews are manual workers, but they tend to share certain of the attitudes held by groups having a large proportion of workers.¹⁷

¹⁴ Lazarsfeld *et al.*, p. 22, and Berelson *et al.*, p. 65.

¹⁵ Berelson *et al.*, p. 66.

¹⁶ Oscar Glantz, "Protestant and Catholic Voting Behavior in a Metropolitan Area," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (Spring 1959), pp. 73-82.

¹⁷ Wesley and Beverly Allensmith, p. 381.

¹² Wesley and Beverly Allensmith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude: A Study of Eight Major U. S. Religious Groups," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (Fall 1948), pp. 388, 389.

¹³ Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 39.

MINORITY STATUS AWARENESS

What we see in the party affiliations of Catholics and Jews is not in a true sense "voting their religion." Religious issues are rarely involved. Whatever political consensus exists, and it is sometimes small, is not so much a result of religious cohesion as it is a result of awareness of minority status. Berelson, in Elmira, found the following:¹⁸

The more closely the members identified with their minority group, the stronger their Democratic vote. Regardless of the particular measure, those minority members who feel close to their own group (or who feel hostile to the out-group) are more likely to express the group's political preference (i.e., vote Democratic) than their fellows.

Religious intolerance, ethnic discrimination, low economic position, urban concentration, and residential segregation have all contributed in varying degrees to Catholic and Jewish minority feelings. In cities with large Catholic populations the Democratic party early became an agency of Catholic social participation, protest, and power. Once established, party allegiance tended to be transmitted within the group and from generation to generation.

One of the reasons why Jews first associated themselves with the Republicans was that Catholics were Democrats. But in the campaign of 1928 and during the 1930's, the Democratic Party came to be defined as the party of the city, of social protest, and of hope for minorities. Increasingly Jews found identification with the Democratic Party to be more compatible with their own status. When in the late 1930's and early 1940's Franklin D. Roosevelt became the symbol of opposition to Hitlerism and Jewish persecution, the Jewish sense of affinity with the Democratic Party was

intensified. For a period the Jewish transfer to the Democratic Party was almost complete.

The need for Catholics and Jews to hold to a minority-group political identification has greatly decreased in the last generation. Occupational and economic mobility, political and educational achievement, cultural assimilation, and increased religious tolerance have removed much of the reason for minority protest. Indeed, when the Michigan Survey Research Center attempted to measure the degree to which the relationship between religion and party is psychologically meaningful, it was discovered that most voters, including minority group members, do not think of their religious group as preferring a particular party.¹⁹

But even though the stimulus for minority political sentiment has weakened, minority-group patterns of voting persist. Without consciously voting as Catholics or Jews, people tend to vote like others who have had similar experiences and like the people with whom they associate most intimately. For urban Catholics and Jews these people are often members of their own religious group.

There is evidence, however, that the changing status of ethnic and religious minorities is causing political change. The Elmira researchers saw a decline in the Catholic Democratic vote. They also found more Republican voting among younger Catholics than among older Catholics. "The succession of generations seems to be softening the religious difference."²⁰ While Jewish defection from the Democratic ranks is small, there are signs that in some communities Jewish voting is beginning to

¹⁹ The investigators recognized that their results may have been influenced by the reluctance publicly to associate religion with politics. See Campbell *et al.*, pp. 206-15.

²⁰ Berelson *et al.*, pp. 69, 70.

¹⁸ Berelson *et al.*, pp. 71, 72.

move toward a pattern more influenced by economic status. For both Catholics and Jews it may be expected that as minority feelings diminish, occupation and economic and social class will gain in importance as determinants of their political behavior.

CANDIDATE'S RELIGION

Hitherto we have dealt with the party preferences of religious groups, irrespective of who the candidate may be. We are still left with the question of whether the religious affiliation of the candidate himself is a factor in the vote for or against him.

The argument that the religion of a candidate can help to attract support was used by the supporters of Senator John F. Kennedy in his bid for the Democratic vice-presidential nomination in 1956. According to their analysis, the Democratic Party was losing Catholic votes. They held that in 1952 Democratic Catholic candidates for Congressman, Senator, and Governor ran ahead of the Democratic presidential candidate. They argued, too, that a Catholic vice-presidential candidate would not hurt the party ticket. Thus, they took the position that Catholics would vote for a candidate because of his Catholicism, but that non-Catholics would not vote against him as a Catholic.

The claims of the Kennedy supporters were refuted by a group of social scientists in a study released by Ralph M. Goldman and John H. Romani.²¹ They showed that in 1952 there was no significant difference between the vote for Catholic and non-Catholic candidates. Catholic Congressional candidates ran ahead of the party ticket, but so also did non-Catholic Congressional candidates. Through an analysis of election results in states in which religion was claimed to be a factor, the study showed

that a large Catholic population did not give an advantage to a candidate who was a Catholic. At the same time, a large non-Catholic population did not put a Catholic candidate at a disadvantage. In every state the situation was the same. A pattern of religious voting could not be established. A study of this type cannot be interpreted to mean that Catholics never give special support to a Catholic candidate. But it does help to refute the assertion that Catholic candidates receive general and predictable Catholic support.

There can be no doubt that religious affiliation has been a factor in the making or breaking of many political careers. Catholics and Jews have held almost every type of public office. But the willingness of party leaders to accept them as candidates, as well as their own realistic aspirations, have frequently been governed by the rules of political "availability." For Catholics and Jews, availability has been influenced by religion. The same is true of Protestants in predominantly Catholic or Jewish areas.

RELIGION AND THE PRESIDENCY

The 1960 election has again raised the issue of voting for or against a presidential candidate because of his religion. Notwithstanding objections and disclaimers, religion was an issue from the beginning. In accepting the Democratic nomination, Mr. Kennedy made an effort to remove religion from the campaign when he expressed the hope that no American would waste his franchise by voting either for him or against him because of his religious affiliation. Earlier, however, Mr. Kennedy had recognized that religion was part of 1960 presidential politics. He warned Democratic leaders that if he did not receive the nomination, it would be taken to be on account of his religion, and the Democratic Party would suffer. The

²¹ *U. S. News and World Report*, Vol. 41 (August 17, 1956), pp. 44-46, 132-35.

implication was that rejection of a Catholic candidate would result in loss of Catholic Democratic support. At the same time a number of prominent Catholic political leaders and religious leaders were fearful that Mr. Kennedy's candidacy might meet with enough opposition to change the comfortable climate in which Catholics in public life have functioned.

Evaluation of the importance of religion in a presidential election is singularly difficult because there is little in the 1960 election that can be compared with the past. The campaign of 1928 was hard fought and even vicious. Religious prejudice was fully exploited. In some Democratic strongholds the Catholicism of the candidate outweighed party loyalty. Even so, in retrospect it appears that religion may not have been as decisive in the defeat of Al Smith as was originally supposed. Religion aside, 1928 was a year of battle between country and city, native born and foreign born, privileged and underprivileged, dries and wets. After a study of 173 counties in eight Northern states distributed across the country, Ogburn and Talbot concluded that prohibition sentiment was decidedly more important than anti-Catholicism in the Democratic defeat.²² Whatever the effect of the religious controversy in 1928, that campaign does not answer many questions about the present. The pattern of politics has changed, as have also attitudes on religion.

Studies of voting in local and state elections have limited relevance in assessing the influence of religion on a presidential vote. In local and state elections the religion of a candidate may not be known by many voters. In a presidential election the voter can

hardly fail to know. By common consent the presidency has been regarded as a public office requiring a unique set of political qualifications. Catholics and Jews have been mayors, senators, and governors, but no Jew has been a candidate for the presidency and only twice have Catholics been candidates. Voting to fill offices that have many times been held by members of all major religious groups cannot be compared with an election in which there is a Catholic candidate for the presidency.

Moreover, victory or defeat for Mr. Kennedy is not the test of the place of religion in presidential politics. Win or lose, many questions will remain to be answered. Did the Democratic candidate receive stronger Catholic support than usual? If so, in what areas? Did he lose votes among non-Catholics? If so, in what areas? In areas with large Catholic populations, what issues other than religion might account for strong or weak support? What issues other than religion might account for strong or weak support in areas with small Catholic populations? These and others are questions answers to which will need to wait for a careful analysis of the 1960 election.

CONSEQUENCES OF 1960

As this article is being written, the results of the election are not known. Nevertheless, a few observations about its possible consequences may be allowed. The election of a Catholic as president almost certainly would modify the pattern of politics. The sequel probably would be a strengthening of Catholic Democratic loyalty. It is likely that some Catholics would rally to the Democratic Party as the party that was again willing to disregard traditional religious qualifications for a presidential candidate. But such a gain for the Democrats could be temporary.

²² William F. Ogburn and Nell Snow Talbot, "A Measurement of the Factors in the Presidential Election of 1928," *Social Forces*, Vol. 8 (December 1929), pp. 175-83.

The net effect might be a loss of Catholic support inasmuch as the election of a Catholic president would further diminish the need for a minority-group political orientation. In the long run, any decline in out-group feeling would be expected to cause Catholic voting to be determined by more nearly the same factors as Protestant voting.

If Mr. Kennedy is defeated, the result will be different. No matter what the real reasons, defeat would be interpreted by many Catholics as a rejection of one of their own. There would be lingering frustration and consequent awareness of minority status until the last political door is opened. In this mood some intensification of Democratic allegiance might be anticipated.

It is not to be expected that the election of a Catholic as president would alter the structure of government. The fears of direct ecclesiastical control of a president grow out of a failure to understand the nature both of American Catholicism and of American government. That on some matters a Catholic president would hold attitudes influenced by his religion is to be assumed. Presidents who have been farmers, businessmen, educators, generals, and Protestants have not divested themselves of all prior attitudes upon entering the White House. The real question is whether the issues on which a Catholic president might feel bound by his religion are public issues, whether they are national issues, and whether they are clearly contrary to democratic tradi-

tion and practice. There are relatively few social issues on which Catholicism has an official position. Divorce, birth control, censorship, and state support of parochial schools are among the issues on which there is an official policy. Of these the major matter of national relevance is support of education. It is not inevitable that on this or any other policy a Catholic president would share or feel compelled to support the position of his church. Moreover, a president does not rule from a protected position of private preference. He governs in a public role delimited by traditions and precedents, pressures and counter pressures, Congressional co-operation and resistance, and political support and political punishment.

For those who are apprehensive about a Catholic in the White House, the contest would not end with the election. The actions of a president who is a Catholic would be vigilantly scrutinized. Every suspected move would become the subject of private and public discussion and would be filed for future political reference.

It is reasonable to assume that a Catholic in the presidency would be equally aware of public watchfulness. The presidency is the ultimate symbol of political acceptance, and it does not seem probable that a president who is a Catholic would wilfully and knowingly do anything to reverse the confidence of the electorate that the duties of his office can be fulfilled without partiality to any religious group.

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¹² **Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude: A Study of Eight Major U.S. Religious Groups**

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¹⁶ **Protestant and Catholic Voting Behavior in a Metropolitan Area**

Oscar Glantz

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