

A CATHOLIC FOR PRESIDENT? - - THREE CHRISTIAN
REFORMED PERIODICALS AND THE 1960 ELECTION

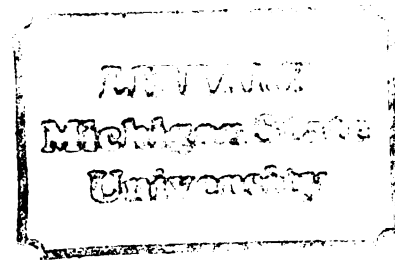
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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

HENRY JAMES HUISJEN

1976

THESIS





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ABSTRACT

A CATHOLIC FOR PRESIDENT?--THREE CHRISTIAN REFORMED PERIODICALS AND THE 1960 ELECTION

By

Henry James Huisjen

When John F. Kennedy ran for President of the United States in 1960, he faced one problem common to no other candidate: he was a Roman Catholic, and no Catholic had ever been elected to the office.

Kennedy had to convince the Democratic party and the public that his Catholicism did not make him incapable of popular election to the presidency, that it did not make him unfit for the presidency and that it did not represent a threat to the constitutional separation of church and state in America. The religious issue followed Kennedy throughout the campaign.

This study investigates the performance of three Protestant religious periodicals with regard to their treatment of the religious issue of the 1960 campaign and election. The periodicals--the Banner, Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet--are journalistic efforts from within the Christian Reformed Church, a

Protestant denomination in America of Dutch Reformed background. The periodicals did not regularly deal with presidential politics and political issues, but in 1960 they dealt extensively with Kennedy's Catholicism, an issue that appeared to have both political and religious significance.

Primary findings of the study are that (1) the periodicals as a whole and individually dealt more with John F. Kennedy's religion than with other matters or issues related to the 1960 campaign and election; (2) the periodicals as a whole and individually identified temporal applications of Roman Catholicism--the civil and political implications of the election of a Catholic to the presidency--rather than non-temporal aspects of Catholicism--Protestant distaste for the personal religious practice of Catholics--as the crux of the religious issue; (3) the periodicals as a whole and the Banner and Torch and Trumpet individually were generally unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy for reasons of religion; (4) the opposition posture of the Banner and Torch and Trumpet did not change over the course of the campaign and was apparently not influenced by events of the campaign that might have had a resolving effect on the religious issue; and (5) support in the periodicals for points of view opposing the Kennedy candidacy on religious

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1. The first step in the process of the development of a new product is the identification of a market need. This is done by conducting market research, which involves gathering information about the current market and the needs of potential customers. The next step is to develop a concept for the new product, which involves creating a detailed description of the product and its features. This is followed by the development of a business plan, which outlines the financial and operational aspects of the new product. The final step is to launch the product into the market and monitor its performance.

2. The second step in the process of the development of a new product is the development of a concept. This involves creating a detailed description of the product and its features. The next step is to develop a business plan, which outlines the financial and operational aspects of the new product. The final step is to launch the product into the market and monitor its performance. The third step in the process of the development of a new product is the development of a business plan. This involves outlining the financial and operational aspects of the new product. The final step is to launch the product into the market and monitor its performance. The fourth step in the process of the development of a new product is the launch of the product into the market. This involves monitoring the performance of the product and making any necessary adjustments.

Henry James Huisjen

grounds was based far more frequently on history and dogma than on current events of the campaign and election.

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Director of Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH AND THE THREE PERIODICALS	17
III. THE PERIODICALS AND THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE	25
IV. A QUANTITATIVE REVIEW OF THE COVERAGE	42
V. FURTHER DISCUSSION	68
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Election-Related Topics, by Item	49
2. Identification of Crux of Religious Issue, by Item	53
3. Posture of Periodicals Toward Kennedy's Catholicism, by Item	56
4. Posture of Items Over Time	60
5. References Cited as Support in Items Opposing Kennedy	61

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Study

The study investigates three Protestant religious periodicals with regard to their treatment of the religious issue--the Catholicism of the Democratic candidate, John F. Kennedy--involved in the 1960 presidential campaign and election. Its purpose is to examine the approach of the religious periodicals to a matter of both religious and political concern.

The subjects of the study are the three most prominent general-interest periodicals associated with the Christian Reformed Church: The Banner, the periodical of greatest circulation among the three and an official weekly publication of the Christian Reformed denomination; the Reformed Journal, a monthly journal of discussion and opinion; and Torch and Trumpet, also a monthly of discussion and opinion.

After presenting an account of events of the 1960 campaign, the study introduces in greater detail the periodicals and the denomination they represent. The study then reviews material dealing with the election and the religious issue found in the periodicals and

subjects that material to a methodological four-part content analysis. A discussion of the findings ends the study.

Religion and the 1960 Campaign

On January 2, 1960, at a press conference in Washington, D.C., Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts formally announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. Until the nominating convention, still six months away, Kennedy would be in competition with four other Democrats. Three, like himself, were members of the United States Senate: Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas and Stuart Symington of Missouri. The fourth, Adlai Stevenson, was the former governor of Illinois and the party's defeated candidate of 1952 and 1956. Beyond the convention waited a fifth rival, a Republican, Vice President Richard M. Nixon.

During his drive to overcome each of the other candidates, Kennedy would be forced to deal with a situation common to none of them: he alone was a Roman Catholic, and no Catholic had ever been elected President of the United States. Kennedy would have to convince his party and the public that his religion did not make him either unsuitable for the office or incapable of election to the office.

The question of the suitability of a Roman Catholic

for the presidency has its roots in the American concept of religious freedom embodied in the constitutional separation of church from state. Early American colonists, primarily refugees from religious persecution, were sensitive to the impositions of churches that achieved political dominance--the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church--in Europe. Their descendants translated that sensitivity to the first part of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Reflecting the political background of the Roman Catholic Church abroad, Catholic doctrine has often contended that church and state should be united and that the authority of the Roman Catholic Church is such that it should have power as a state church to dictate public policy. The Syllabus of Errors, for example, issued by Pope Pius IX in 1864, rejected the notion that church and state should or could be separate.¹ It also denounced as error the idea that the state should not recognize Catholicism at the exclusion of all other forms of worship as well as the idea that each individual should be free to choose his own religious

¹Anne Fremantle, ed., The Papal Encyclicals (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1956), p. 149.

practice.²

The combination of Catholic dogma and history were sufficient to produce the view that, in 1960, the election of a Roman Catholic to the American presidency might lead to authoritarian Catholic control over America at the expense of religious and political freedom. Billy Graham, the Protestant evangelist, said that Protestants might well hesitate to vote for a Catholic because the Roman Catholic Church, having its own ministers and ambassadors, was a secular as well as a religious institution.³ Two Protestant theologians, Eugene Carson Blake, a Presbyterian leader, and G. Bromley Oxnam, a Methodist bishop, predicted in Look magazine that the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency would increase the direct influence of the Catholic Church over American government and society. They wrote:

We worry about how a Catholic President could square his political duties with the "official" position of the church to which he owes his allegiance, on questions that range from the use of public funds for parochial schools, or the rights of Americans to birth-control information, to such larger political issues as the separation of church and state and the conduct of foreign affairs.⁴

²Ibid., p. 152.

³"The Religion Issue (Contd.)," Time, August 29, 1960, p. 14.

⁴Eugene Carson Blake and G. Bromley Oxnam, "A Protestant View of a Catholic for President," Look, May 10, 1960, pp. 31-32.

Nonadherents to that view contended that American Catholicism required special consideration because of its adaptibility to the American environment. Will Herberg, educator, theologian and sociologist, said the process of Americanization had brought Catholic thought on the problem of church and state into line with American experience and tradition.⁵ In John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, Lawrence Fuchs, a political scientist, wrote:

To see American Catholicism . . . primarily in terms of unrefuted encyclicals and canon laws produced in the European environment was to miss the point of the uniqueness of the American spirit. . . . American Catholics have been gripped by the experience of American history, shaped and transformed by it, while, in the main, remaining true to the Church. They have been able to drink deeply of the wine of freedom and prosper within the Church of Rome.⁶

John F. Kennedy repeatedly asserted his belief in the concept of church-state separation and his independence from papal domination in nonreligious matters. At the announcement of his candidacy, Kennedy said:

I would think that there is really only one issue involved in the whole question of a candidate's religion--that is, does a candidate believe in the Constitution, does he believe in the First Amendment, does he believe in the separation of church and state. When the candidate gives his views on that question, and I think I have given my views fully, I think the subject is exhausted.⁷

⁵Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, rev. ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 150.

⁶Lawrence H. Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), pp. 239-40.

⁷"Kennedy in Race; Bars Second Spot in Any Situation," New York Times, January 3, 1960, p. 1.

James M. Burns, an early Kennedy biographer, reported that Kennedy was mystified by arguments against his candidacy based on elaborate interpretations of church law and did not care to be burdened by papal proclamations as he worked toward the presidency.⁸

"It's frustrating," Kennedy remarked during the campaign. "I've made my views clear month after month and year after year. . . . but it seems difficult to ever give some people the assurance they need that I'm as interested in religious liberty as they are."⁹

Related to the question of suitability in 1960 was the matter of political expediency: would a presidential candidate's Catholicism be an insurmountable handicap among voters? Only one Roman Catholic, Governor Al Smith of New York, had previously run for the office as a major-party candidate. In 1928 Smith, a Democrat, carried only eight states and their 87 electoral votes while his opponent, Herbert Hoover, won the election with the 444 electoral votes of forty states. The popular vote favored Hoover by the wide margin of 21 million to 15 million.

During the 1928 campaign Smith was the target

⁸James MacGregor Burns, John Kennedy: A Political Profile (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961, p. 247.

⁹Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 193.

of considerable attack because of his Catholicism and in spite of his public protests that his faith was not a threat to the separation of church and state in America. The opposition ranged from polite, defensive discussion in church organs to open, slanderous hate in an eruption of booklets, handbills and pamphlets.¹⁰ It was warned that if Smith were elected the Pope would move to America, all Protestant marriages would be annulled and Protestant children would be declared bastards.¹¹

Smith blamed his defeat on bigotry aroused by his Catholic faith. He called the question of his religion the "most un-American and undemocratic issue that could raised against any man" and insisted that the issue had had a "startling effect" against him in the campaign. "It is amazing . . . that such countless thousands of people are so stupid as to believe the absolutely false and senseless propoganda that was whispered around," he wrote.¹²

Analysis of the election of 1928 has suggested

¹⁰Richard O'Connor, The First Hurrah: A Biography of Alfred E. Smith (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p. 207.

¹¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 128.

¹²Alfred E. Smith, Up To Now (New York: The Viking Press, 1929), pp. 412-13.

that factors other than religion may actually have been crucial in Smith's defeat. The country, under Republican administrations since 1921, was still very prosperous;¹³ and Hoover, already a popular hero, enhanced his status by remaining above the religious controversy.¹⁴

Democratic presidential candidates, Protestants, had been overwhelmed in 1920 and 1924 and Republicans had gained congressional power in 1924 and 1926, establishing a trend.¹⁵ Another factor was that Smith, as a critic of prohibition, a big-city politician, an Irish-American and a liberal governor of New York, had political liabilities other than his religion.¹⁶

If Al Smith's experience demonstrated that a presidential candidate who was a Roman Catholic would be fiercely opposed on religious grounds, it did not demonstrate conclusively to all that a presidential candidate who was a Roman Catholic could never be elected. "To Kennedy people, then," Burns wrote, "the lesson of Al Smith for presidential politics in the 1960's is that Al Smith is no lesson."¹⁷

¹³Schlesinger, Crisis, p. 128

¹⁴Fuchs, Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 68.

¹⁵Peter H. Odegard, "A Catholic for President?" in Religion and Politics, ed. by Peter H. Odegard (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1960), pp. 166-67.

¹⁶Cushing Strout, The New Heavens and New Earth: Political Religion in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 255-56.

¹⁷Burns, John Kennedy, p. 252.

Kennedy chose to use the 1960 presidential primaries to test his strength among voters. Hubert Humphrey was the only other Democratic candidate to actively do the same, and the first confrontation between the two came in the Wisconsin primary on April 5. Although Kennedy won the primary with 56 percent of the vote, the results were not considered decisive. Kennedy had shown strength in Humphrey's native territory, but Wisconsin contained a percentage of Catholics greater than the national average--32 percent as opposed to 23 percent nationally¹⁸--and the open primary system there allowed voters to cross party lines. "Kennedy's candidacy has produced great emotional response among the Catholics," a state official said before the election. "They'll cross over in droves to vote for Kennedy in the primary."¹⁹ Humphrey declared that since Wisconsin was far from a typical state, his own performance deserved to be judged in light of all the special factors; after the primary he insisted that the crossover of Republicans had been a large factor in the outcome.²⁰

¹⁸"Kennedy Victor Over Humphrey; Nixon Shows Wisconsin Strength," New York Times, April 6, 1960, p. 34. Other estimates of the Catholic population in Wisconsin ranged from 30 percent to 32 percent; estimates on the Catholic population nationwide ranged from 20 percent to 26 percent.

¹⁹"Palmistry & Promise," Time, March 7, 1960, p. 15.

²⁰"Kennedy Victor," New York Times, April 6, 1960, p. 34; "Religion Played Big Victory Role, *ibid.*, p. 34.

The results of the West Virginia primary on May 10 were decisive. The population of West Virginia was less than 5 percent Roman Catholic and crossover voting was not allowed. Religion was the major concern. In the middle of the campaign Kennedy flew to Washington, D. C., to appear before the American Society of Newspaper Editors along with the other declared presidential candidates, and he chose to speak on the religious issue. "I am not the Catholic candidate for President," he said. "I do not speak for the Catholic Church on matters of public policy--and no one in that church speaks for me. . . ." In the same speech, he said: "I believe the American people are more concerned with a man's views and abilities than with the church to which he belongs."²¹

Kennedy won the primary with 61 percent of the vote and Humphrey withdrew as a candidate for the nomination. There was no serious opposition to Kennedy in any of the remaining primaries and he swept them all.

Having demonstrated his strength in the primaries, Kennedy captured the presidential nomination on the first ballot at the Democratic National Convention at Los Angeles in July. Johnson and Symington, who had worked for the nomination behind the scenes while avoiding primary campaigns, and Stevenson, who had

²¹"Texts of Speeches by Kennedy, Symington and Humphrey at Editors' Convention," *ibid.*, April 22, 1960, p. 16.

not actively campaigned at all, trailed Kennedy in that order. Their first ballot votes combined did not approach his total. Johnson was chosen as Kennedy's running mate. In his acceptance speech at the Los Angeles Coliseum, Kennedy said: "I hope that no American . . . will waste his franchise and throw away his vote by voting either for me or against me solely on account of my religious affiliation. It is not relevant."²²

Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy publicly debated several matters during the fall of 1960--the stature of the United States abroad, the quality of American leadership, the proper extent of federal participation in domestic affairs--but Nixon refused to raise Kennedy's religion as an issue. At the same time, religion remained an important part of the campaign. "It's a matter of continuing interest," Kennedy said. "What we prevented in West Virginia was its becoming the only issue . . . but . . . it will come on the stage again."²³

On September 7, the Citizens for Religious Freedom, a group of 150 prominent Protestant clergymen, released a 2,000-word, five-point statement expressing doubt about the advisability of the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency. The five points were (1) that the Catholic Church was a political organization; (2) that

²²"Texts of Kennedy and Johnson Speeches Accepting the Democratic Nomination," *ibid.*, July 16, 1960, p. 7.

²³Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 175.

the Catholic Church had repeatedly denied the individual's right to freedom of religion; (3) that the Catholic Church had persecuted non-Catholics in countries where it was dominant; (4) that the Catholic Church had attempted to break down the separation of church and state in America and would pressure a President of the Catholic faith to do the same; and (5) that a President who was a Roman Catholic would be unable to represent the American tradition of religious liberty because Catholic policy would not allow him to participate in interfaith affairs without the permission of the Catholic Church. The statement did not attribute the religious issue directly to John F. Kennedy, but rather blamed its existence on "the nature of the Roman Catholic Church which is, in a very real sense, both a church and a temporal state."²⁴

The producers of the document represented thirty-seven denominations and included Norman Vincent Peale, preacher, syndicated columnist, radio lecturer and author of a best-selling series of books on selling books on self-confidence and positive thinking; Daniel A. Poling, editor of the Christian Herald, a Protestant periodical with a monthly circulation of 427,000;²⁵ L. Nelson Bell,

²⁴"Protestant Groups' Statements," New York Times, September 8, 1960, p. 25.

²⁵N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1961), p. 708.

executive editor of Christianity Today, another Protestant periodical with a biweekly circulation of 176,000;²⁶ and Harold J. Ockenga, former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, a Protestant group that later urged its member ministers nationwide to deliver anti-Kennedy sermons to their estimated 10 million parishioners on October 30, Reformation Sunday, the annual observance of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.²⁷

While the statement by the Citizens for Religious Freedom called for discussion free of hate-mongering, bigotry, prejudice or unfounded charges,²⁸ some anti-Kennedy literature revealed emotions reminiscent of 1928 and the Smith campaign. To Kill Protestants warned that the Roman Catholic Church still claimed the right to execute heretics;²⁹ The Pope's Intention in America: A Fateful Situation Revealed said that Roman Catholicism was America's greatest enemy;³⁰ Lincoln's Assassins linked the Catholic Church with Lincoln's death in 1865.³¹

²⁶Ibid., p. 174.

²⁷"Anti-Catholic Groups Closely Cooperate in Mail Campaign to Defeat Kennedy," New York Times, October 17, 1960, p. 24.

²⁸"Protestant Groups' Statements," Ibid., September 8, 1960, p. 25.

²⁹Patricia Barrett, Religious Liberty and the American Presidency (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 114.

³⁰Ibid., p. 95.

³¹Ibid., p. 89.

At a locally televised appearance in Texas before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 12, Kennedy delivered his ultimate public response to his religious opposition. In a cumulative speech drawn from previous statements to the American Society of Newspaper Editors during the West Virginia campaign, to the Democratic National Convention in July, to press conferences and to a Look magazine interviewer,³² Kennedy reviewed his positions on the major points of the religious controversy--separation of church and state, political independence from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, freedom of religion--and then answered questions from the audience of four hundred clergymen. He said that an unresolvable conflict between his conscience and the national interest would cause him to resign from the presidency and that he had no reservations about subscribing to the required oath of office. Kennedy made one request:

I ask you tonight . . . to judge me on the basis of my fourteen years in the Congress . . . instead of judging me on the basis of these pamphlets and publications we have all seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic Church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other centuries, and rarely relevant to any situation here.³³

³²Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 189.

³³"Transcript of Kennedy Talk to Ministers and Questions and Answers," New York Times, September 13, 1960, p. 22.

It was Kennedy's definitive treatise on the religious issue. Films of the appearance were used on behalf of his campaign until the election. The New York Times declared that Kennedy's statements had made his religious affiliation irrelevant to his fitness for the presidency.³⁴ Daniel A. Poling, a member of the group that had questioned Kennedy's suitability less than a week before, said that Kennedy, with a magnificent speech and a courageous stand, had resolved the matter.³⁵

Other Protestants were still not convinced. The Citizens for Religious Freedom released an official response that praised Kennedy's speech as complete, clear and reassuring; but the response also declared that the question would not be completely settled until the Roman Catholic Church endorsed Kennedy's views.³⁶

The clamor over John F. Kennedy's faith did not cost him the presidency. On November 8, 1960, he defeated Richard Nixon by 113,000 of the nearly 69 million votes cast in the election. The electoral vote tally was 303 to 219. The religious issue by itself apparently had an offsetting effect on the popular vote. Analysis by the Survey Research Center at the University

³⁴Editorial, "The Religious Issue," *ibid.*, September 14, 1960, p. 42.

³⁵"Poling Praises Kennedy's Stand on Religion Issue," *ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁶"Protestant Group Applauds Kennedy for Houston Speech," *ibid.*, p. 33.

of Michigan has indicated that Kennedy gained 4.3 percent of the two-party vote across America because of a coreligionist appeal to Roman Catholics who might otherwise have voted for Nixon; at the same time, he lost 6.5 percent of the two-party vote because of anti-Catholic voting among non-Catholic Democrats and Independents who might otherwise have voted for him. The net effect was that Kennedy lost an estimated 2.2 percent of the vote nationwide because of his Catholicism.³⁷

³⁷Angus Campbell et al., Elections and the Political Order (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 86-93.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH AND THE THREE PERIODICALS

The Christian Reformed Church is a Protestant denomination established in 1857 by Dutch immigrants in Michigan who seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church because they believed that body was losing its orthodoxy in the American environment.¹ Conservative Christian Reformed doctrine, based on the teachings of John Calvin formulated in the sixteenth century during the Protestant Reformation, remained intact as the denomination endured among immigrants and Americans of Dutch ancestry and gradually expanded beyond the Midwest. In 1960 the church numbered 236,000 members and 541 congregations in twenty-six states and eight provinces of Canada.²

The desire to remain orthodox has led the denomination to maintain a policy of some isolation throughout its history. Well into the twentieth

¹John Kromminga, The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1949), pp. 30-34.

²Christian Reformed Church, Yearbook 1960 (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publishing House, 1960), p. 42.

century, the Dutch language was preferred over English by the Christian Reformed people in both social and church situations;³ the official weekly publication of the denomination, De Wachter, was printed in Dutch and not until 1914 was an English-language companion periodical acquired. The Christian Reformed people have established a separate system of church-related elementary and secondary schools as well as three colleges and a seminary. Calvin College and Calvin Seminary, founded in 1876 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, are quota-supported denominational institutions.

In 1914 the denomination purchased the Banner, a Reformed periodical, and made it the weekly English-language organ of the church. The Banner, printed in Grand Rapids, was edited as a part-time activity by a clergyman appointed by the Christian Reformed Synod until 1944, when the position of editor-in-chief became a full-time appointment.

A controversy over the Banner arose in 1950 when Henry J. Kuiper, the editor, used the Banner as a forum to promote his suspicion that some faculty members at Calvin College were unfit to teach there because they held and propogated socialist views acquired in

³Kromminga, Christian Reformed Church, pp. 93-100.

the graduate schools of secular universities.⁴ At the time of the controversy a project intended to provide an alternative Christian Reformed voice to the Banner was already in the process of development and in March, 1951, the Reformed Journal, a Christian Reformed monthly independent of official denominational control and funding, began publication in Grand Rapids. The editors of the Reformed Journal, in an introductory policy statement, wrote that the paper would be aimed toward "the more thoughtful and responsible element" of the Christian Reformed constituency and would promote fruitful discussion from a Reformed viewpoint of a variety of matters and opinions relating to Christian life and thought. "We do not find ready-made answers to the large questions which press upon us . . .," they wrote. "The Church must find them and relate them to the concrete and moving aspects of her life."⁵

A month later Torch and Trumpet, also an independent Christian Reformed project, began bimonthly publication in Grand Rapids. And although its editors denied that the birth of Torch and Trumpet was in any way related to the birth of the Reformed Journal, they wrote that they expected the two journals to follow

⁴Henry J. Kuiper, "Some Observations on Flynn's 'The Road Ahead,'" Banner, August 25, 1950, pp. 1028-29. Debate on the matter reappeared with regularity through the issue of December 22, 1950.

⁵Reformed Journal, March, 1951, pp. 1-2.

quite different methods in furthering the interests of the Reformed faith. The editors expressed "a serious concern for the welfare of Zion" because of a "flood-tide of anti-doctrinal, man-centered modernism" that threatened Reformed churches. "We believe the disease of religious and doctrinal indifference is making insidious progress among us, and we would indoctrinate our people with the truth of God," they wrote.⁶

Torch and Trumpet, published by Reformed Fellowship, Incorporated, left its bimonthly format and began to appear monthly except June and August in 1955.⁷ The Reformed Journal, a publication of the William B. Eerdmans Company, remained a monthly but discontinued August publication in 1954. Both periodicals as well as the Banner have used the mail for the bulk of their distribution. All three periodicals in 1960 appeared in an 8½-by-11½-inch format; the Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet were twenty-four-page publications while the Banner regularly covered thirty-two pages.

In 1960 the Banner had a circulation of 39,000; by then the Christian Reformed Dutch-language

⁶"Why?" Torch and Trumpet, April-May, 1951, p. 1.

⁷In 1971 Torch and Trumpet was renamed Outlook.

periodical, De Wachter, had a dwindling circulation of 5,600.⁸ The Banner was edited by John Vander Ploeg, a Christian Reformed clergyman appointed to the position in 1956 at the retirement of Henry J. Kuiper. After his own retirement from the Banner and the ministry in 1970, Vander Ploeg became managing editor of Torch and Trumpet.

The editorial board of the Reformed Journal in 1960 included Harry R. Boer, missionary to Nigeria; Lester DeKoster, professor of speech and director of the library at Calvin College and later, following John Vander Ploeg's retirement in 1970, editor of the Banner--the first nonclergyman to hold that position; James Daane, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church in Los Angeles, California; George Stob, pastor of the Richfield Christian Reformed Church in Clifton, New Jersey, and former professor of historical theology at Calvin Seminary; and Henry Stob, professor of ethics and apologetics at Calvin Seminary.

The editorial committee of Torch and Trumpet

⁸Ayer and Son's, 1961, p. 495. Circulation figures for the Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet in 1960 are not available; earliest available records indicate that the Reformed Journal had a circulation of about 2,500 in 1966 (Standard Periodical Directory, 1967, p. 798) and that Torch and Trumpet had a circulation of 3,310 in 1964 (Torch and Trumpet, November, 1964, p. 2). A reasonable estimate is that their combined circulation in 1960 was something less than 5,000.

in 1960 consisted of Edward Heerema, pastor of the Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids; William Kok, a Christian Reformed minister emeritus; Henry J. Kuiper, also a minister emeritus and editor of the Banner from 1929 to 1956; Rein Leetsma, pastor of the West Leonard Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids; and Henry R. Van Til, associate professor of Bible at Calvin College.

Because the Banner is a denominational publication intended to appeal to and satisfy a wide range of interests, discussion of elections and election issues in its pages has ordinarily been bland, nonpartisan and noncommittal. The Banner is forbidden by the Christian Reformed Synod to endorse candidates or publish news or views purely political or economic in nature.⁹ It offered fewer than a dozen articles on presidential politics in 1956 and again in 1964, national election years during which religion was not a political issue (although the Republican vice presidential candidate in 1964, William E. Miller, was a Roman Catholic); election-related material in those years avoided election issues and instead concentrated on general discussion of a Christian's obligation to participate in the national

⁹Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1941 (Grand Rapids: Office of the Stated Clerk, n. d.), p. 125.

political process.

Faced with the issue of John F. Kennedy's Catholicism in 1960, the Banner allotted an uncharacteristic amount of space and discussion to the election. John Vander Ploeg, the editor, saw the religious issue as one of overriding importance to the denomination in that election because of the unforeseen possibilities it involved.¹⁰ According to Vander Ploeg, the Banner had both the right and the responsibility to address the matter in spite of the political overtones. Early in 1960 he wrote:

With respect to candidates for political office a church paper must of necessity tread carefully. However, when a religious issue is clearly involved in anyone's candidacy for an office so important as that of President of the United States, the necessity and propriety of a discussion of that issue can hardly be called in question.¹¹

The Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet, free from the official denominational restrictions imposed on the Banner, both ignored the 1956 election. In 1964 Torch and Trumpet printed a few general Banner-like items on politics before the election and the Reformed Journal became involved in a discussion of Barry Goldwater and the politics of the right that extended to more than fifteen articles and replies and carried several months beyond the election.

¹⁰Letter from John Vander Ploeg, February 16, 1976.

¹¹John Vander Ploeg, "A Roman Catholic in the White House?" Banner, March 11, 1960, pp. 4-5.

Both magazines dealt specifically with the religious issue in 1960. Edward Heerema of Torch and Trumpet, like Vander Ploeg, considered it his journal's responsibility to speak to the Kennedy candidacy because of Kennedy's Catholicism,¹² and in the view of Lester DeKoster, a Reformed Journal editor in 1960 and editor of the Banner since 1970, there was no need for religious periodicals to hesitate in dealing with a political issue of apparent religious significance because the loyalties of a citizen who is also a church member crisscross to the extent that they are inseparably tangled.¹³

¹²Letter from Edward Heerema, March 23, 1976.

¹³Letter from Lester DeKoster, February 9, 1976.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIODICALS AND THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE

The Banner was the first periodical of the three to deal with the religious issue in 1960 and the only periodical to deal with the matter during the first several months of the year. In a feature article written before John F. Kennedy's formal announcement of candidacy, Gerrit Hoeksema, a retired Christian Reformed minister, mentioned both Kennedy and Governor Edmund G. Brown of California as potential presidential nominees who were of the Catholic faith. Hoeksema wrote that the attitude that religion was irrelevant to the upcoming campaign was "false and dangerous" because belief in fundamental religious truths would inevitably carry over into a candidate's public life. And because Protestantism was a firmer defender of political and religious freedom than Catholicism was, Hoeksema declared, a Protestant was preferable to a Roman Catholic as President. "If this be prejudice, make the most of it," he wrote.¹

"It is necessary to object to having a Roman Catholic in the office of the presidency as these lines

¹Gerrit Hoeksema, "A Catholic for President?" Banner, January 1, 1960, p. 10.

are intended to do," John Vander Ploeg wrote in an editorial in March. Vander Ploeg contended that since, in his view, a President who was a Roman Catholic would be forced either to recognize the authority of the Pope and the church over the state or else be disloyal to his faith, the candidacy of a Roman Catholic was dangerous and only a Protestant who was willing to take a "calculated risk" would vote for a Catholic in a presidential election.²

In the same edition of the Banner Harold Sonnema, a Christian Reformed clergyman, expanded on Vander Ploeg's contention. Sonnema insisted in a feature item that Catholic doctrine rather than the thinking of democratically minded Catholic individuals was binding on the actual public policy of Roman Catholics in government and that such doctrine was at variance with the Constitution of the United States. The article read at one point:

Fact is, the Roman Catholic Church, though she parades herself as the citadel of democracy, is a wolf in sheep's clothing. A Catholic president, by virtue of his own profession, could not honor, uphold and defend our constitutional principles of freedom.³

²John Vander Ploeg, "A Roman Catholic in the White House?" *ibid.*, March 11, 1960, pp. 4-5.

³Harold Sonnema, "The Foe Within the Gates," *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

As the preconvention campaign intensified through the primaries in Wisconsin and overwhelmingly Protestant West Virginia, the charge that religious opposition to the Kennedy candidacy was the result of bigotry became more prominent. Both the Banner and Reformed Journal showed sensitivity to the accusation. Richard J. Frens, commenting on the West Virginia primary in "The World Today," his weekly column in the Banner, wrote that for an anti-Kennedy voter to base his opposition on the word of Roman Catholic authority was neither bigotry nor intolerance--and that the label of bigot actually fit those who made the accusation more readily than it fit those who questioned Kennedy's suitability on rational religious grounds.⁴ Lester DeKoster, the first to write on the campaign in the Reformed Journal, made a distinction between the personal or religious aspects of Catholicism, which he dismissed as irrelevant to the campaign, and the political pretensions of Catholicism, which, he declared, were significant to responsible citizens and worthy of discussion. "To rule out such discussion as bigotry, as dragging in the 'religious issue,' is in itself muddle headed and fanatical," DeKoster wrote. He further commented that the possible effect of the authoritarian claims of

⁴Richard J. Frens, "That 'Bigot' Still on the Loose," *ibid.*, May 20, 1960, p. 10.

the Roman Catholic Church on Senator Kennedy was a problem that every voter would "ultimately have to solve for himself in the polling booth."⁵

Reader response to election-related material in the Banner first appeared in June, when W. F. Rylaarsdam protested in a published letter that the Banner was attempting to dictate the Christian Reformed vote and in that sense was demonstrating the same intolerance it criticized in the practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Rylaarsdam also argued that Calvinist Protestant history demonstrated political intolerance equal to that practiced by the Catholic Church in the past and that those who feared the intrusion of Rome in state affairs showed little faith in the American system of checks and balances.⁶

None of the periodicals dealt with the upcoming election during the summer of 1960; John Vander Ploeg later wrote in the Banner that the political conventions in July had not provided proper material for coverage by a church publication. But in the same editorial Vander Ploeg disputed the statement made by John F. Kennedy in his acceptance speech at Los Angeles that religion was not relevant to the campaign. Religion was

⁵Lester DeKoster, "Catholicism and the Presidency," Reformed Journal, May, 1960, pp. 5-6.

⁶Letter, W. F. Rylaarsdam, Banner, June 17, 1960, p. 22.

relevant, Vander Ploeg wrote, because Christianity demanded every part of a person's life--including his politics--or it was worth nothing at all.⁷

In September the Banner and Torch and Trumpet quoted from a pamphlet, "America is a Catholic Country," allegedly issued by J. J. O'Connor and the Catholic Committee for Historical Truth. The pamphlet said the Roman Catholic Church had a rightful claim on America and called on Catholics to throw off party labels, unite and vote as a bloc to make America truly Catholic. John Vander Ploeg used the O'Connor quotation to illustrate the relevance of religion in his editorial on that subject;⁸ Torch and Trumpet quoted O'Connor without comment.⁹

The pamphlet was a fake; the Catholic Committee for Historical Truth did not exist.¹⁰ The Banner acknowledged that it had been informed of the hoax and retracted its editorial reference a month later while insisting that religion nevertheless remained relevant to the campaign.¹¹ Torch and Trumpet never again mentioned J. J. O'Connor and the Catholic Committee for Historical Truth.

⁷John Vander Ploeg, "Religion is Relevant--Also in Politics," *ibid.*, September 16, 1960, pp. 4-5.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹"America is a Catholic Country," Torch and Trumpet, September, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁰Patricia Barrett, Religious Liberty and the American Presidency (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 61.

¹¹John Vander Ploeg, "It May Have Been A Hoax," Banner, October 4, 1960, p. 5.

Lester DeKoster again emphasized the distinction between the religious and political aspects of Catholicism in a September editorial in the Reformed Journal. He predicted that John F. Kennedy would have to face the legitimate issue of "political Catholicism" until the end of the campaign, and wrote:

So long . . . as Protestants insist on the slipshod of journalese by using the term "religious issue" when they mean quite other issues, so long they will oblige Kennedy supporters to insist with equal absurdity that "religion plays no part in politics," and, moreover, so long they will lay themselves open to the charge of bigotry.¹²

Ralph J. Danhof, the stated clerk of the Christian Reformed Church, presented a heavy dose of history and theology in the Banner to support opposition to John F. Kennedy on religious grounds as the fall campaign began. In successive September articles Danhof set out to prove that a "Roman Catholic President" would be unable to maintain the American democratic principle of the separation of church and state "and at the same time remain a loyal and faithful follower of the Roman Catholic Church and share the blessings of the Holy Father, the Pope." Danhof wrote that the heritage of America was Protestant and not Catholic in any way, although Roman Catholics did benefit from the freedoms rooted in the Protestant tradition. To support

¹²Lester DeKoster, "The 'Religious' Issue," Reformed Journal, September, 1960, p. 4.

his contention that Catholicism was incompatible with democracy, Danhof cited Catholic textbooks and unre-
futed antidemocratic papal proclamations reaching back
as far as 1075 A.D. and Pope Gregory VII, 1302 and
Pope Boniface VIII, and 1832 and Pope Gregory XVI.
Danhof also expounded at length on the Syllabus of
Errors issued by Pope Pius IX in 1864.¹³

In his second piece Danhof maintained that not
to assent to such proclamations was for a Catholic a
mortal sin and sufficient reason for excommunication from
the church. According to Danhof, independent
Catholic Americanism was an insignificant force in the
face of the power of the Catholic hierarchy and tra-
dition. "Remember, Pope John XXIII must vindicate the
position of Pope Leo XIII who declared that separation of
church and state is a fatal principle," he wrote, and
added that a "Roman Catholic President" would have no
choice but "yield respect and obedience to this papal
pronouncement."¹⁴

Only the Banner among the three periodicals
printed letters-to-the-editor regarding the election.
Responding to the September articles by Vander Ploeg and
Danhof, A. Posthuma expressed appreciation for the

¹³Ralph J. Danhof, "Do We Want a Roman Catholic
President?" Banner, September 16, 1960, pp. 6-7, 15.

¹⁴Ralph J. Danhof, "Do We Want a Roman Catholic
President?" (part II), ibid., September 23, 1960,
pp. 6-7, 23.

guidance they had given and wrote that for Calvinists to support a Roman Catholic for the presidency was an inconsistent departure from the ideals of the Protestant Reformation;¹⁵ Peter P. DeBoer, on the other hand, said that Danhof's use of history was inaccurate and that Kennedy's own reassuring actions had shown him to be "in the mainstream of a great American political tradition."¹⁶ Carroll E. Keegstra wrote that Danhof misunderstood the nature of Catholic doctrine and that the possible church-state dilemma faced by a Catholic in public office was a matter of little concern in relation to political qualifications.¹⁷ Danhof's replies to the critical letters stated that the official Roman Catholic church-state positions rather than interpretations of history and doctrine or John F. Kennedy's speech at Houston were of primary importance--and that those positions remained unrefuted.¹⁸

"In spite of what Senator Kennedy says, he is not free of the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church,"

¹⁵Letter, A. Posthuma, *ibid.*, October 14, 1960, p. 22.

¹⁶Letter, Peter P. DeBoer, *ibid.*, October 28, 1960, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷Letter, Carroll E. Keegstra, *ibid.*, January 13, 1961, p. 22.

¹⁸Reply, Ralph J. Danhof, *ibid.*, October 28, 1960, p. 19; Reply, Ralph J. Danhof, *ibid.*, January 13, 1961, p. 22.

one reader wrote,¹⁹ while another suggested that the dilemma faced by the Roman Catholic, whose religion demanded control over every part of his life, was the dilemma faced also by the Calvinist, whose religion demanded the same--"and people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."²⁰ A subscriber from California wrote that the "Sons and Daughters of the Reformation" fully agreed with the warnings given in the Banner against the election of a Catholic;²¹ another from New Jersey objected that the Banner was attempting to legislate one "official mind" in the church by suggesting to readers that to vote for Kennedy was the same as repudiating the American Constitution and the Protestant Reformation. "Nothing could, of course, be further from the truth," he wrote.²² Vander Ploeg finally terminated such discussion of the election in January, 1961.

In October Richard J. Frens, producer of the column "The World Today" in the Banner, predicted five consequences of the election of a Catholic to the presidency: (1) The Roman Catholic hierarchy would have made "tremendous strides toward its goal of making

¹⁹Letter, Henry DeLeeuw, *ibid.*, October 28, 1960, p. 19.

²⁰Letter, M. Howard Rienstra, *ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹Letter, John Van Mouwerik, *ibid.*, November 18, 1960, p. 22.

²²Letter, N. H. Beversluis, *ibid.*, November 11, 1960, p. 22.

America Catholic"; (2) the public would not immediately notice any difference from a non-Catholic administration, since "Roman Catholics have always favored the long-range program and believe in the long-pull"; (3) if the Roman Catholic hierarchy decided it should interfere in a suddenly critical situation in order to advance the interests of the Catholic Church, fierce pressure would be exerted on the President; (4) if the President yielded to such pressure, many American Catholics would be disappointed and perhaps shocked into renouncing their allegiance to the Pope; and (5) the sun would rise and set on schedule and the stars would hold their courses and Frens would still take his coffee black.²³

Torch and Trumpet first commented extensively on the religious issue in October, when Henry R. Van Til wrote that Protestant opposition to John F. Kennedy was not unreasonable or irrational. According to Van Til, one's religion would necessarily affect his politics; a Christian is bound to obey God rather than men. But, he continued, while the Protestant conscience is subject to "the Law and Work of God," the Catholic gives that allegiance first to the Pope "as one who rightfully demands unquestioning submission and obedience of the

²³Richard J. Frens, "Campaign Smear Tactics," *ibid.*, October 14, 1960, p. 10.

intellect and the will." Van Til dismissed Kennedy's promise that religion would not take preference over his oath to uphold the Constitution as inconsistent with Roman Catholic history and practice. Van Til concluded:

To the true Protestant, who kneels before God but not to men the prospect of having the President of these United States kneeling before some Papal Nuncio on a state occasion would be most galling. If this be prejudice, let us make the most of it!²⁴

A regular feature in the Banner, "Other Churches in the News," was produced in 1960 by Peter Van Tuinen, a Christian Reformed minister in California. Van Tuinen's approach to John F. Kennedy's Catholicism, revealed in his observations on news items involving other churches, differed from that of other contributors to the Banner. In June he commented that the possible effect of Kennedy's religion on church-state relations was a state matter, not a church matter, and that when churches officially opposed Kennedy on the grounds of separation of church and state they were, by interfering in civil matters, cancelling out the very concept they were attempting to preserve.²⁵ During the fall campaign, Gustav Weigel, a Jesuit theologian, publicly defended Kennedy's ideas on independence, asserting that they were

²⁴Henry R. Van Til, "Should Protestants Help Elect a Roman Catholic President?" Torch and Trumpet, October, 1960, pp. 7-8.

²⁵Peter Van Tuinen, "Southern Presbyterian Centennial," Banner, June 17, 1960, p. 8.

consistent with Catholic theology.²⁶ His statements were dismissed as insignificant by Richard J. Frens in the Banner.²⁷ Van Tuinen, in a report on the Jesuit's views appearing a week after Frens' observation, wrote:

What appears to this writer as the real religious issue is that neither of the major party candidates for the presidency has given any public evidence of a realization that the moral and spiritual state of the nation constitutes a greater danger to our nation's welfare than many of the dangers that they envision and promise to meet.²⁸

John H. Bratt, professor of Bible at Calvin College, answered questions posed by readers in another regular feature in the Banner, "The Reader Asks." Late in October Bratt addressed the following question: "Is it more advisable to vote for a 32nd degree Mason (I think you will agree that many former presidents were high in the lists of Masons) than for a devoted Roman Catholic?" Bratt's response was that, all other qualifications being equal, it was indeed more advisable for one to vote for a Mason than for a Roman Catholic because Masonry had no political objectives while the Roman Catholic Church was always interested in political

²⁶"Church & State (Contd)," Time, October 10, 1960, p. 27.

²⁷Richard J. Frens, "Ruler of the Round World," Banner, October 21, 1960, p. 10.

²⁸Peter Van Tuinen, "Catholic Political Control Disowned," *ibid.*, October 28, 1960, p. 8.

control and domination.²⁹

Each of the periodicals presented one specific election-day editorial. John Vander Ploeg in the Banner told readers to vote gratefully, intelligently, responsibly and prayerfully--and avoided any mention of the religious issue.³⁰ In the Reformed Journal, Lester DeKoster mentioned religion as one issue among several, including big versus small government, the candidates themselves and international relations, but failed to take a position on the matter.³¹ Only Torch and Trumpet took a militant stand. Edward Heerema, on behalf of the rest of the editorial staff, reviewed anti-Kennedy arguments based on history, dogma and Catholic oppression of non-Catholics in other countries; he wrote that the views of dissident Catholics in America were not relevant to the issue because they had no standing in the church, and concluded "with an earnest plea" in italics: "Do not let your vote help strengthen the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. A vote that strengthens the hand of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is a vote against your own religion."³²

²⁹John H. Bratt, "A 32nd Degree Mason or a Devoted Catholic?" *ibid.*, November 4, 1960, p. 4

³⁰John Vander Ploeg, "How to Vote on Election Day," *ibid.*, November 4, 1960, p. 4.

³¹Lester DeKoster, "The Issues: 1960," Reformed Journal, October, 1960, pp. 3-4.

³²Edward Heerema, "Should We Help Strengthen the Roman Catholic Church in the United States?" Torch and Trumpet, November, 1960, pp. 8-9.

The religious issue remained alive after November. "Now that our national election is over, it may not be amiss to pause a few moments for sober reflection," Christian Huissen, a Christian Reformed minister, wrote in the Torch and Trumpet of January, 1961. Huissen protested against the public political activities of Calvin College faculty members who had favored Kennedy and decried the "reprehensible campaign ethics" of the Kennedy campaign, including the initiation of political rallies on Sundays and the "language of the gutter" used by former President Harry S. Truman. On the religious issue Huissen declared that Kennedy's professed adherence to the principle of separation of church and state did not alter the fact of his allegiance to the Vatican, and added: "Sad to say, some Protestants put their loyalty to the Senator's party and their support of the dubious principle of the welfare state above their concern for the danger of a stronger Roman Catholic influence in our political institutions."³³

George Stob produced a final editorial on the election for the Reformed Journal in December. "Now that the campaign is ended and the 'religious issue' has been exploited to the maximum, it is possible that fears of papal domination of American government will go into mothballs until 1964," he wrote. Stob expressed

³³Christian Huissen, "Post-Election Musings," *ibid.*, January, 1961, p. 7.

the view that perhaps nobody really feared Vatican control of the White House--that the real problem for many was the "big adjustment" involved in having a leader whose pattern of worship stood "under the prejudice of being Roman Catholic." He wrote:

To the evil of the Democrat, in whom some find the spectres of a "welfare state" and a "pink trend," there is added the horror of a Roman Catholic and the ogres of Medieval Inquisition and the power pressures of an Almighty Church. And in characteristic revulsion there comes back into modern times a renewed medieval urge to holy war.³⁴

A month after Christian Huissen's article in Torch and Trumpet, Lambertus Mulder, a Canadian Christian Reformed minister, presented a number of observations on the campaign and election contrary to the points of view that had appeared in the periodical to that time. After reading Christian Reformed periodicals, Mulder reported, he had derived the impression that, if John F. Kennedy were elected, "Protestants had better write a poignant obituary to the sacred principle of democracy." The worries of the periodicals were unfounded, Mulder contended, because American churches--Catholic and Protestant--had become secular to the extent that religion, unfortunately, had little actual effect on public life; the church-and-state argument was, in his opinion, merely an "old stand-by skeleton dragged out of its closet." Of the choice between Nixon and Kennedy,

³⁴George Stob, "Aftermath," Reformed Journal, December, 1960, p. 4.

Mulder wrote: "I am not after the scalp of any editor and I don't want to sound cynical, but what is so good about a Quaker who has violated his principles and what is so bad about a Catholic who publicly renounces the decrees of the Vatican?"³⁵

Torch and Trumpet dealt for the last time with the religious issue in March, 1961, when Henry J. Kuiper, the former editor of the Banner, responded to Mulder's February article. Kuiper explained that although Torch and Trumpet was not an open forum and Mulder's views were not in agreement with those of the editorial staff, the periodical did allow for the expression of differing opinions. He then maintained that Torch and Trumpet had actually opposed John F. Kennedy's election less because of his Catholicism than because of his liberal economic principles and policies and expressed the hope that God would bless Kennedy as President "but at the same time open the eyes of all Americans to the danger and futility of a federally managed economy."³⁶

John Vander Ploeg returned to the religious issue in a December editorial review in the Banner of the events of 1960. He commented that the presidential campaign had revealed that it was now possible for a

³⁵Lambertus Mulder, "So It's Kennedy," Torch and Trumpet, February, 1961, pp. 13-14.

³⁶Henry J. Kuiper, "Yes, It's Kennedy," Torch and Trumpet, March, 1961, pp. 7-8.

Roman Catholic to become the leader of the world and had also demonstrated "that one may be expected to be smeared as a bigot if he insists on meeting Rome's official church-state position head-on."³⁷ In a final editorial that appeared at the time of the Kennedy inauguration in January, 1961, Vander Ploeg wrote that although Republicans and militant Protestants were smarting at the prospect of seeing John F. Kennedy move into the White House, it was the duty of every Christian to support the new President and actively pray for his success.³⁸ The Banner did not deal with the issue of John F. Kennedy's Catholicism again.

³⁷John Vander Ploeg, "Retrospect and Prospect--1960-1961," Banner, December 30, 1960, p. 5.

³⁸John Vander Ploeg, "The Christian Citizen--Spectator or Intercessor?" *ibid.*, January 27, 1961, pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER IV

A QUANTITATIVE REVIEW OF THE COVERAGE

Introduction

The data in this chapter result from a methodological content analysis of writing in the three periodicals dealing with the 1960 presidential campaign and election; the analysis involves the procedures below.

Hypotheses

The survey is dependent on four developed guiding hypotheses and one subhypothesis. The hypotheses are:

(1) A greater number of election-related items dealt exclusively or in part with the religious issue than dealt exclusively or in part with any other matters relating to the 1960 presidential campaign and election. All the periodicals had written about national elections in other years, but had not been faced in those years with a campaign issue of religious significance. It was anticipated that, as a consequence of the existence of a religious issue in 1960, examination of the three religious periodicals would reveal that they devoted the

bulk of their election-related material to the religious issue and rarely dealt with the campaign and election apart from it.

(2) A greater number of items in the periodicals identified temporal applications of Roman Catholicism than identified nontemporal aspects of Roman Catholicism as the crux of the religious issue. Theodore C. Sorenson, a Kennedy aide and biographer, wrote of two factors involved in the religious issue: actual concern over the question of church-state relations and mere anti-Catholic prejudice--or bigotry. The anticipation of the survey was that the periodicals identified civil and political implications of the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency rather than matters relating to Catholic worship or personal practice (or Protestant distaste for Catholics and Catholicism) as the most important components of the religious issue.

(3) Election-related items of discussion dealing with the religious issue and unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy were more frequent than election-related items of discussion dealing with the religious issue and neutral or favorable to the Kennedy candidacy. It was anticipated that articles in the periodicals in which writers discussed Kennedy's Catholicism and

¹Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 193.

expressed views and opinions on the religious issue would be found to have been generally opposed to his election.

(4) Events of the campaign did not affect the opposition posture of the periodicals toward the Kennedy candidacy. Building on the third hypothesis, this hypothesis predicts that events of the campaign or the time of the campaign that could have affected religious opposition to Kennedy--primary victories, nomination, endorsements, Kennedy speeches and actions--did not alter the posture of the periodicals over time. The hypothesis suggests that opposition to Kennedy for reasons of religion was strongly rooted in matters outside the campaign or--a subhypothesis--that support for points of view opposing the Kennedy candidacy on religious grounds was based more frequently on history and dogma than on current events of the campaign and election.

Method

Testing of the hypotheses was accomplished through content analysis of material relating to the 1960 presidential campaign and election appearing in the three periodicals from January, 1960, the month of John F. Kennedy's formal announcement of candidacy, until the end of discussion of the campaign and election. Discussion was considered to have ended if,

in issues of the periodicals appearing after the election, editors closed the discussion or if election-related material was absent from the periodicals for five or more consecutive issues. Under those criteria, the study deals with election-related material appearing in the Banner from January, 1960, through January, 1961; election-related material appearing in the Reformed Journal from January through December of 1960; and election-related material appearing in Torch and Trumpet from January, 1960, through March, 1961.

All election-related items appearing in the periodicals during the months designated above were chosen for examination. An item was considered election-related if it dealt entirely or in part with specific events or issues of the campaign, including religion, when religion was mentioned in connection with the campaign; with the nature of national elections in general; or with activities related to the campaign of noncandidates (including, for example, general discussion of the approach of Christian citizens to national political affairs or discussion of the partisan political activities of Calvin College faculty members).

The main unit of analysis selected for the testing of the first four hypotheses is the item, or the entire article. The item was chosen because of its reliability as a clearly recognizable and graphic

unit applicable across the variety of formats encountered in the periodicals (editorials, features, news items, letters and replies). The numbers of items dealing with particular subjects and taking particular positions--and the formats in which those items appear--reveal a great deal about the approaches of the periodicals to the election and the religious issue. The item is also a suitable unit of analysis for this study because of the limited variation of theme within each article. Most articles, not being news reports, involved the promotion of a specific and definite point of view and were therefore built throughout upon a single concept. Another limiting factor on theme variation within items was the brevity of the articles. A majority of election-related items covered one page or less and only three extended to more than two pages.

The unit of analysis used to test the subhypothesis is the reference, or the support cited to back up the particular argument or point of view presented in an item.

The periodicals represented the outlook of one group, the Christian Reformed denomination, and for that reason the study treats the periodicals as an aggregate in the analysis of election-related material. But each periodical deserves as well to be treated as an entity with its own independent approach to the

campaign and election, and the preponderant number of items appearing in the weekly, the Banner, could influence the results as to present a misleading picture of the overall view of the election and campaign taken by the three periodicals if the three were treated only as a unit; for those reasons the analysis also deals individually with the Banner, Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet.

For the purposes of analysis, items in the periodicals, as mentioned above, were classified as editorials, features, news items, letters and replies. Editorials were identified as items designated as such in the periodicals (under the heading "As We See It" in the Reformed Journal²) and were expressions of opinion. Features were identified as items, apart from editorials, produced by staff members or contributors and expressing personal opinions, observations or points of view. Letters-to-the-editor and immediate printed replies to such letters were not grouped with features but were placed in separate classifications of their own. News items were identified as items containing news treated as news alone without comment or observation from staff members or

²George Stob has indicated in a letter (February 5, 1976) that editorials in the Reformed Journal reflect the opinions of the individual writers and do not necessarily represent the collective views of the entire editorial staff.

contributors to the periodicals. Items of news containing additional comment or observation were classified as features.

Because of the carefully and clearly designed procedures employed in the analysis as well as the use of the item as the primary unit of analysis, the reliability of the survey is assumed. However, due to the limitations of time, money and other resources, a mathematical test of reliability has not been performed.

Results

Table 1 presents the data generated to test the first hypothesis. Four categories were devised for the placement of items. In the category Religion were placed items that dealt with--mentioned or discussed--the religious issue alone and did not present it in relation to or along with other campaign issues or nonpolitical matters. Items that dealt with the religious issue and with other nonpolitical matters not related to the national campaign or election (for example, a review of a church's convention proceedings, which included a statement on the upcoming election) were collected in the second category, Religion and Other Nonpolitical Matters.

The third category, Religion and Other Political Matters, gathered items that dealt with the religious issue along with other political matters--including

Table 1--Election-Related Topics, by Item.

	Religion	Religion and Other Nonpolitical Matters	Religion and Other Political Matters	Other Political Matters Alone
<u>Banner</u> (n=50)				
Editorials	3	3	0	2
Features	16	3	0	5
News Items	2	1	0	0
Letters	8	0	3	1
Replies	2	0	0	1
Total	31	7	3	9
<u>Reformed Journal</u> (n=5)				
Editorials	1	0	2	0
Features	1	0	1	0
Total	2	0	3	0
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u> (n=8)				
Editorials	1	1	0	1
Features	1	0	3	0
News Items	1	0	0	0
Total	3	1	3	1
<u>All Periodicals</u> (n= 63)				
Editorials	5	4	2	3
Features	18	3	4	5
News Items	3	1	0	0
Letters	8	0	3	1
Replies	2	0	0	1
Total	36	8	9	10

Note: Relevant news items, letters and replies did not appear in the Reformed Journal; letters and replies did not appear in Torch and Trumpet.

other election issues, campaign events, activities of candidates and noncandidates relating to the national election, and the general Christian approach to politics in a national election year.

Items dealing only with political matters apart from the religious issue were placed in the fourth category, Other Political Matters Alone. No items dealt both with political matters apart from the election and with nonpolitical matters.

The data support the hypothesis that more election-related items dealt with the religious issue than with other matters relating to the campaign and election. They indicate that, as an aggregate, the periodicals printed 36 items on the religious issue by itself and, altogether, 53 items dealing exclusively or in part with the religious issue. Items devoted completely to political matters apart from the religious issue numbered only 10, and items dealing entirely or in part with political matters apart from the religious issue numbered 19.

The Banner devoted 38 of 50 items to the religious issue by itself and 43 of 50 items exclusively or partially to the religious issue; only 12 items dealt with political matters other than the religious issue and only 9 of those items dealt entirely with political matters apart from the issue.

The data indicate that the Reformed Journal and Torch and Trumpet had a greater tendency to present the religious issue as one issue among other election-related matters than did the Banner, which tended to isolate the religious issue and deal with it exclusively. In the Reformed Journal, 2 items dealt with the religious issue alone; and while none dealt alone with political matters other than religion, 3 items dealt both with the religious issue and other political matters. (One of those items dealt with the religious issue only very briefly, dismissing it as a "mild" problem, and then moved on to a lengthy discussion of other political matters.³) Torch and Trumpet produced 7 articles dealing completely or in part with the religious issue, including 4 dealing with the religious issue at the exclusion of other political matters; an additional 4 items dealt with other political matters, and one of those dealt exclusively with political matters apart from the religious issue.

The classification of articles by format in Table 1 becomes significant in the examination of later hypotheses.

³Amry Vanden Bosch, "The Christian's Political Responsibility," Reformed Journal, October, 1960, pp. 4-9.

Table 2 displays the data produced in the testing of the second hypothesis. Items dealing with the religious issue were placed in the category Temporal if, in presenting or discussing the religious issue, they stressed the civil or political applications of Roman Catholicism as the main point of concern-- applications relating to political and religious freedom; church control over state matters; Catholic Church dictation of voting habits; or the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in situations where it had achieved positions of civil dominance.

The second category, Nontemporal, was devised for items that stressed only nontemporal aspects of Catholicism as the basis of the religious issue-- Catholic ritual, theology and religious practice, as matters distasteful to Protestants and others and at the root, perhaps, of an anti-Catholic prejudice that carried over into politics.

Items that stressed both temporal applications and nontemporal aspects were placed in the category Both and items identifying other concerns as the basis of the religious issue or not giving any rationale at all for the existence of the issue were placed in the category Neither.

The hypothesis that the periodicals identified temporal applications rather than nontemporal aspects of

Table 2--Identification of Crux of Religious Issue,
by Item.

	Temporal	Nontemporal	Both	Neither
<u>Banner</u>				
Editorials	3	0	0	3
Features	18	0	0	1
News Items	2	0	1	0
Letters	10	0	1	0
Replies	2	0	0	0
Total	35	0	2	4
<u>Reformed Journal</u>				
Editorials	2	0	1	0
Features	2	0	0	0
Total	4	0	1	0
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u>				
Editorials	2	0	0	0
Features	4	0	0	0
News Items	1	0	0	0
Total	7	0	0	0
<u>All Periodicals</u>				
Editorials	7	0	1	3
Features	24	0	0	11
News Items	3	0	1	0
Letters	10	0	1	0
Replies	2	0	0	0
Total	46	0	3	4

Catholicism as the crux of the religious issue is supported overwhelmingly by the data. They indicate that none of the items in the periodicals identified nontemporal aspects of Catholicism alone as the basis for the existence of the religious issue and only 3 articles--one of which was a letter, an item not produced by the periodical in which it appeared and another of which was a news item printed without comment or observation from anyone associated with the periodical in which it appeared--emphasized both temporal and nontemporal concerns as being at the base of the religious issue. The data show that at the same time, 46 of 53 items identified temporal applications of Catholicism alone as the crux of the religious issue.

Peter Van Tuinen's item in the Banner that contended that the religious issue really involved far more than Catholicism was placed in the category Neither⁴ as were 3 editorials in the Banner that stressed only the relevance of the religious issue to the campaign and election and did not further elaborate on the issue.

The data suggest that the accusation of bigotry was one taken seriously by the periodicals

⁴See p. 36 above.

and a matter that they attempted to cope with or counteract by attaching a church-state rationale to nearly every item they produced on the issue of John F. Kennedy's Catholicism.

Table 3 displays the results of the testing of the third hypothesis, which involves the predicted opposition to the Kennedy candidacy of items of discussion dealing with the religious issue. The categories devised for the analysis are arranged, excluding those sections designated Other, to demonstrate a spectrum of approaches to John F. Kennedy's Catholicism as a political issue--approaches ranging from most favorable (Catholicism an Asset) to most unfavorable (Catholicism a Disqualifying Factor). The Other subcategories were devised for the location of items that fit into a major category but not into one of the specific subcategories.

For items that viewed Kennedy's Catholicism as a factor that enhanced his suitability for the presidency the subcategory Catholicism an Asset was devised. The subcategory Catholicism a Handicap Overcome was established for items expressing the view that Kennedy had effectively overcome the problem of his Catholicism through his public stands and proclamations.

In the neutral subcategory Religion No Issue

Table 3--Posture of Periodicals Toward Kennedy's
Catholicism, by Item.

	Favorable			Neutral			Unfavorable		
	Catholicism an Asset	Catholicism a Handicap Overcome Other		Catholicism No Issue	Catholicism One Issue Among Many Other		Catholicism a Serious Factor	Catholicism a Disqualifying Factor	Other
<u>Banner</u> (n=38)									
Editorials	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0
Features	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	9	0
Letters	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	3	1
Replies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	1	1	0	4	2	5	8	16	1
<u>Reformed Journal</u> (n=5)									
Editorials	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Features	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u> (n=6)									
Editorials	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Features	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0
Total	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0
<u>All Periodicals</u> (n=49)									
Editorials	0	0	0	0	4	2	2	3	0
Features	0	0	0	1	1	4	9	10	0
Letters	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	3	1
Replies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	1	1	0	5	5	6	12	18	1

were placed items that viewed the question of Kennedy's Catholicism as irrelevant to his suitability for the presidency; items that viewed Kennedy's Catholicism as one legitimate campaign issue among other campaign issues but did not take a position of favor or disfavor were assigned to the subcategory Catholicism One Issue Among Many.

Items expressing the view that Kennedy's Catholicism presented a problem of suitability to be seriously considered by voters were entered in the subcategory Catholicism a Serious Factor. Items taking the position that Kennedy's Catholicism by itself definitely rendered him unfit for the presidency or made him a candidate undeserving of Protestant votes were placed in the subcategory Catholicism a Disqualifying Factor.

Of the 53 items in the periodicals dealing with the religious issue, 49 were chosen for examination in this stage of the analysis. Four items previously classified as news items (Table 1) were not selected because they did not necessarily contain views or observations of staff members or contributors.

The data partially support the third hypothesis. The periodicals as a whole and the Banner and Torch and Trumpet individually presented a predominant number of items unfavorable to the candidacy of John

F. Kennedy. In all the periodicals, 31 of 49 articles analyzed were unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy while only 2 items were favorable and 16 were neutral. When letters are discounted as items not actually produced by the periodicals, the data show that 26 of 38 items were unfavorable while none were favorable and 12 were neutral.

In the Banner, 25 of 38 items examined-- 20 of 27 when letters are excluded--were unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy. Among those 20 unfavorable items, 14, or slightly more than half, were strongly opposed to Kennedy to the extent that they were assigned to the category containing items most unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy. The items from the Banner assigned to the subcategory Other under the category Neutral, 4 in all, are items that mentioned the religious issue or presented the various views of the issue but did not take a position or even deal with the issue in terms of significance or lack of significance. Features generally were more unfavorable to Kennedy in the Banner than editorials were; while John Vander Ploeg took an anti-Kennedy position editorially, he also in two neutral items treated the religious issue as one issue to be considered among many and stopped short of expressing an opinion unfavorable to Kennedy. The other neutral

editorial placed in the subcategory Other is his January, 1961, call for support of Kennedy in spite of Protestant and Republican disappointment.⁵

In Torch and Trumpet, 4 of 6 election-related items dealing with the religious issue were unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy on religious grounds and 2 of those 4 items were strongly opposed to Kennedy; an additional 2 items were neutral and none favorable.

In the analysis of the Reformed Journal the hypothesis is not supported. Although no items were favorable to Kennedy on the grounds of his Catholicism, 3 items were neutral while only 2 were unfavorable; and neither of those was strongly unfavorable.⁶ The neutral editorial placed in the subcategory Other is George Stob's retrospective piece of December, 1960.⁷

Table 4 and Table 5 display the data resulting from testing of the fourth hypothesis and the related subhypothesis, which deal with the opposition posture of the periodicals over time. Data taken from

⁵See p. 41 above.

⁶An interesting sidelight to the two unfavorable items is that Lester DeKoster, who produced both of them, actually spoke out in favor of John F. Kennedy during the campaign--to the chagrin of many Christian Reformed constituents, several of whom, maintaining that Calvin College faculty members would better keep such views to themselves, expressed their displeasure in letters to the Banner. Christian Huissen's look back at the campaign in Torch and Trumpet (see p. 38 above) was also critical of DeKoster's political activities.

⁷See p. 39 above.

Table 4--Posture of Items Over Time.

	Editorials			Features			Letters			Replies		
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
January-August (n=11)												
<u>Banner</u>	0	0	1	0	2	6	0	1	0	0	0	0
<u>Reformed Journal</u>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	0	0	1	0	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
September-November (n=29)												
<u>Banner</u>	0	2	1	0	1	9	2	2	5	0	0	1
<u>Reformed Journal</u>	0	1	1	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u>	0	1	1	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	0	4	3	0	2	10	2	2	5	0	0	1
After November (n=9)												
<u>Banner</u>	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<u>Reformed Journal</u>	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u>	0	0	0	0	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	0	2	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1

Table 5--References Cited as Support in Items
Opposing Kennedy.

	Editorials	Features	Letters	Replies	Total
<u>Banner</u>					
Dogma	2	14	2	2	20
History	1	7	2	0	10
Current Events	0	1	1	0	2
Other	3	7	2	2	14
<u>Reformed Journal</u>					
Dogma	1	1	-	-	2
History	0	1	-	-	1
Current Events	0	0	-	-	0
Other	1	0	-	-	1
<u>Torch and Trumpet</u>					
Dogma	2	1	-	-	3
History	1	1	-	-	2
Current Events	0	1	-	-	1
Other	1	3	-	-	4
<u>All Periodicals</u>					
Dogma	5	16	2	2	25
History	2	9	2	0	13
Current Events	0	2	1	0	3
Other	5	10	2	2	19

the categories Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable filled previously in the examination of the third hypothesis (Table 3), with the corresponding sub-categories omitted, were used in the examination of the fourth hypothesis. The data of Table 3 were divided into three chronological units: January through August, 1960; September through November, 1960; and December, 1960, to the dates when election-related material no longer appeared in the periodicals.

Outstanding campaign events with a possible resolving effect on religious opposition to the Kennedy candidacy occurring during the early campaign months encompassed by the first category include Kennedy's statement at the announcement of his candidacy; his primary victories, especially in Wisconsin and heavily Protestant West Virginia; his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors during the West Virginia campaign; and his nomination and statement on religion in his acceptance speech at the Los Angeles convention.

Events of the second category include nationally prominent campaign appearances, especially the speech before the Presbyterian ministers in Houston; the refusal of Richard Nixon and Republicans to raise the religious issue; and the election itself.

The third category does not directly relate to events occurring after November but involves items in the periodicals produced from a post-election perspective.

The data appearing in Table 4 partially support the fourth hypothesis. During the first period, 7 of 10 relevant items appearing in the Banner and the only item appearing in the Reformed Journal were unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy; in all, 8 of 11, or 73 percent, of the items were unfavorable to Kennedy. During the second designated period, the time of the fall campaign and the period during which the greatest number of relevant items appeared, 19 of 29, or 66 percent, of the items were unfavorable. When letters are excluded the previous figures change to 8 of 10, 80 percent, and 14 of 20, 70 percent, respectively, indicating that the frequency of opposition to Kennedy among items dealing with the religious issue varied little and remained high through the periods encompassing the campaign and election.

The period after the election shows a change. Only 4 of 9, 44 percent, of the post-election items were unfavorable to Kennedy for reasons of religion after the election; when letters are excluded the figure changes to 4 of 8, or 50 percent. Apparently the election of John F. Kennedy finally dampened the

written opposition to his candidacy; the hypothesis is not verified for the post-election period.

Examination of the periodicals individually reveals that the frequency of items unfavorable to Kennedy for reasons of religion in the Banner also remained high throughout the campaign and dropped off after the election, but that items of opposition in Torch and Trumpet (which did not deal with the religious issue until September) remained highly frequent through both the fall campaign and the post-election period.

The Reformed Journal, as shown in the discussion of the third hypothesis, did not produce a preponderance of items opposed to Kennedy on religious grounds; but the data of Table 4 do reveal that while the only relevant article appearing in the periodical during the first period was unfavorable to the Kennedy candidacy, only 1 of 3 items appearing during the second period was unfavorable and the only item appearing during the third period was neutral. What opposition the Reformed Journal demonstrated toward the Kennedy candidacy lessened over time.

The subhypothesis speculates that, if the opposition posture of the periodicals was not altered over time by events, a reason for that lack of change might be that the periodicals viewed the religious issue less in terms of the events of the election year

than in terms of history and dogma, matters not directly related to the campaign and election. Results of the testing of the hypothesis appear in Table 5. The unit of analysis, the reference, was defined as the evidence or support cited as the reasoning behind a point of view opposing Kennedy on religious grounds in items previously determined to have been in opposition to Kennedy because of his Catholicism.

The category History was designed to contain references to the term itself (for example, a reference to "the lesson of history"); examples from the history of the Roman Catholic Church; references to history in countries where Roman Catholicism was or became a state religion; references to other situations before 1940 (an arbitrary cutoff) in which the Catholic Church exercised political power or coercion; or references to the history of Protestantism with respect to Roman Catholicism.

In the second category, Dogma, were placed references to Catholic doctrine; references to Catholic theologians and theological textbooks; and references to papal proclamations and encyclicals.

The fourth category, Current Events, was designed for supporting references to events of the campaign; events directly related to the campaign

(including prominent endorsements or statements of opposition); actions and speeches of candidates; or specific actions of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to the American election.

The third category, Other, was established for references not applicable to the categories History and Dogma and also unrelated to events of the campaign and election.

In this stage of the analysis, the citing within a single item of multiple representatives of a particular category (several examples from Catholic history, for instance) was counted as one reference.

The data support the hypothesis, both for the periodicals as an aggregate and for each periodical individually. Where references were used as support for opposition to John F. Kennedy on religious grounds, references to dogma (25) and references to history (13), 38 in all, far outnumbered the trio of supporting references to current events.

The data also reveal, however, than an unexpectedly high number of references (19) were placed in the category Other; a further audit of those references is appropriate. In the category Other, 7 supporting references involved the contemporary political or civil practices of the Roman Catholic Church in other countries; in addition, 8 references

involved the writings of other Catholics in various periodicals and nontextbook settings; and 4 involved John F. Kennedy's background--specifically, his refusal to participate as a Catholic representative in an interfaith religious service at Philadelphia in 1950, presumably at the instruction of his Catholic superiors.

CHAPTER V

FURTHER DISCUSSION

It is clear that the issue of John F. Kennedy's Catholicism was the primary concern of material that dealt with the 1960 presidential campaign and election appearing in the three Christian Reformed periodicals. And it is also clear, in light of the data presented above, that the existence of the religious issue was what led Torch and Trumpet and, to a greater extent, the Banner to be uncharacteristically occupied with that election.

The Reformed Journal, the one periodical of the three that wrote extensively on political topics in other years, produced the fewest number of items dealing with the election and the religious issue in 1960 and was the only periodical not to take a strong editorial stand against Kennedy because of his Catholicism. Only letters-to-the editor and an occasional item by Peter Van Tuinen broke the pattern of opposition to Kennedy in the Banner, and the only item of discussion appearing in Torch and Trumpet that did not view the Kennedy candidacy with disfavor was produced by a guest contributor whose views

were rebutted a month later by a member of the editorial staff.¹

Religious opposition to Kennedy in the periodicals, the study suggests, was expressed largely in terms of history and dogma--reflecting, perhaps, the traditionally strong theological orientation of the Christian Reformed people. The nature of the opposition may have resulted from a tendency on their part, because of the Christian Reformed heritage of orthodoxy, to conscientiously view the traditions and teachings of other faiths in the same way they viewed the traditions and teachings of their own--as necessarily binding on every part of the life of a believer, no matter what the environment or situation. That outlook might explain why, in spite of everything John F. Kennedy said or did short of renouncing his own Catholicism, opposition in the periodicals remained unabated.

The extent to which Republican versus Democrat may have been covertly involved in the discussion of the religious issue is not clear. No political endorsements came from any of the three periodicals, but the Banner and Torch and Trumpet were explicit in their recommendations that readers not vote for Kennedy.

¹See pp. 39-40 above.

It was suggested during the campaign that the pre-dominately Republican Christian Reformed constituency would have had less interest in the matter had Richard Nixon been a Roman Catholic and John Kennedy a Protestant;² and George Stob in the Reformed Journal expressed the view after the election that Kennedy's Catholicism may have merely reinforced opposition to the Democratic party among the Christian Reformed people.³

While the opposition posture of the Banner developed only around the issue of Kennedy's Catholicism, Torch and Trumpet, free from denominational restrictions, did combine opposition to Kennedy for religious reasons with opposition for political reasons. No discussion of Kennedy's politics appeared in the periodical before the election; Torch and Trumpet reacted vehemently against Kennedy's Catholicism alone in an October feature and a November editorial.⁴ Yet Henry J. Kuiper later contended that opposition to Kennedy by the staff of Torch and Trumpet had actually had less to do with Kennedy's religion than with his economic policies.⁵

²Letter, N. H. Beversluis, Banner, November 11, 1960, p. 22,

³See pp. 38-39 above.

⁴See pp. 34-35, 37 above.

⁵See p. 40 above.

The data indicate that the periodicals identified the concept of church-state relations, or temporal applications of Catholicism, as being at the base of the religious issue; yet the three showed no reluctance as religious periodicals to deal with an issue of state or political concern. The periodicals were anxious about the preservation of the separation between church and state, but they obviously did not feel that that separation demanded silence on political matters from religious sources.

Religious journalism is virtually untapped as an area of research and this study is very limited in scope. Further studies might extend this project across a broader, more representative sample of religious periodicals or might examine the approach of religious periodicals to a larger number of pertinent issues--federal aid to private schools, prayer in public schools, the tax-exempt status of churches, birth control, abortion--that have implications for both church and state.

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