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Religion as a factor in the defeat of Alfred E. Smith in the election of 1928

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RELIGION AS A FACTOR IN THE DEFEAT
OF ALFRED E. SMITH IN THE
ELECTION OF 1928

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
College of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ronald Eugene Isetti
January 1960

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INTRODUCTION

ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN AMERICAN HISTORY

America was founded primarily by Protestants, the Puritans in New England and the Anglicans in the South. Granted, Maryland was established as a refuge for Catholics, and the Pacific Coast and the Southwest areas were colonized by Spanish and French Catholics, but eventually in each one of these sections of the country Catholicism was submerged by Protestantism. Maryland never was populated by any considerable number of Catholics, and even though the Toleration Act of 1649 did grant them religious freedom, it was soon disregarded by the Protestants, who passed punitive legislation against the Church. During the Gold Rush thousands of Protestant Americans migrated to California, and within a matter of years the Catholic culture of the Spanish and Mexican periods was drastically decreased in influence. The Southwest, perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, was likewise transformed by the coming of the Protestant settlers.

A deep rooted anti-Catholic bias was brought to Jamestown in 1607 and vigilantly nourished in all the thirteen colonies from Massachusetts to Georgia. There were, however, two notable men whose tolerance shined brightly in this dark age of intolerance. These two precursors of the now traditional American tolerance of all religions were Roger Williams, the Rhode Island

Seeker, and William Penn, the Pennsylvania Quaker, With the exception of these men and their followers, most of the colonists were intolerant of any religion but their own, especially so of the Catholic Church. Their prejudicial attitude is best expressed in a poem known by almost every New Englander and quoted in numerous pamphlets and almanacs.

Abhor that whore of Rome
 And all her blasphemies,
 And drink not of her cursed cup.
 Obey not her decrees.¹

Consistent with this bias against the Church of Rome, many colonies forbade the saying of the Mass, made the making of converts a capital offense, and imposed heavy fines for educating children in the Catholic religion. In Maryland, any child who apostatized to Protestantism might take possession of everything his parents owned.² But not only Catholics were persecuted; other minority religious groups, including many Protestant dissenters, suffered a similar fate.

After the Revolutionary War, the Catholics, who numbered less than 25,000, began to be accepted by the Protestant majority. "The patriotic part played by Catholics during the war, the influence of the French Alliance, the growing consciousness of the extreme complexity of the American religious pattern"--

¹Theodore Maynard, The Story of American Catholicism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 91.

²Ibid.

all of these factors helped to dilute the traditional anti-Catholic bias.³

From the close of the Revolutionary War to the opening of the Civil War, the Catholic Church was beset with the knotty problem of nationalism, which came from within and from without the Church. The demand of each national group, especially the Germans, for autonomous parishes with native priests seriously undermined the catholic nature of the Church. In attempting to overcome this divisive force in the Church, many of the bishops vigorously opposed the dissipation of the fold into separate national churches. Further, the emergence of recalcitrant groups of lay trustees, who attempted to "run" the individual parishes, was even more completely suppressed by the hierarchy. Many Protestants, favorable in both tradition and doctrine to the congregational form of church government, found in the "undemocratic" attitude of the bishops another evidence of the basic opposition of the Catholic Church to American institutions.⁴

Another source of friction and distrust between the Church and the Protestants was the flood-like immigration of European Catholics to the United States during the 1850's. As

³John T. Ellis, American Catholicism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 21, 37.

⁴Ibid., pp. 44, 45, 46.

a result of the fear of both the foreigner and the Catholic Church, the Know-Nothing Party, a militantly anti-Catholic and an ultra-nationalistic organization, was created. It was founded in New York in 1849 as the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner."⁵ Fearful of the growing strength of the Roman Catholic Church as reflected in a phenomenal increase in membership and in the rapid construction of churches, convents, and parochial schools, the members of this party launched a violent anti-Catholic campaign, which was aggravated by the actions of a tactless papal nuncio and the radicalism of the immigrant press. Hysteria overcame many Americans, and some even feared an imminent Catholic take-over of the republic.⁶

The Know-Nothing movement came to an end when the Civil War sank all lesser problems under the surface of society, but in 1887 a new wave of religious intolerance inundated sections of the country. In that year, the American Protective Association was formed at Clinton, Iowa, having as its purpose to control the growing influence of the Catholic Church and the immigrant.⁷ This organization ran its course, and after the First World War, anti-Catholic sentiment decreased in spite of

⁵Fred W. Wellborn, The Growth of American Nationality (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 789.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Michael Williams, The Shadow of the Pope (New York: Whittlesey House, 1932), p. 95.

the continued existence of the Ku Klux Klan, an anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, and anti-Negro organization.

The growing patriotism of the Catholic population, the Church's vigorous support of the "Social Gospel," and the accommodation of Catholics to American democratic institutions--all of these factors helped to make the Church of Rome more acceptable to the majority of Americans. Nonetheless, there was still a considerable amount of latent anti-Catholic feeling in the country, especially in the South. Therefore, when Alfred E. Smith, a Catholic, became the Democratic presidential candidate in 1928, animosity towards the Catholic Church, which hitherto had been submerged, came to the surface during the campaign.

Some people, especially Catholics, went so far as to maintain that it was religious prejudice that cost Smith the election. The purpose of this essay will be to determine the veracity or falsity of this interpretation of the cause of Smith's defeat in the election of 1928, in the hope that a careful representation of the past will enable us to understand the living present and to predict the uncertain future.

CHAPTER I

THE MARSHALL LETTER AND SMITH'S REPLY

Nineteen twenty-eight was an election year and who the Democratic and Republican candidates for the presidency would be was a topic of lively and widespread conversation throughout the country. Calvin Coolidge's cryptic statement that he did not "choose to run in 1928" opened up the party nomination to other anxious Republicans. Prominent among the G. O. P. aspirants was ex-Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois, who despite his advanced age of sixty-eight, had a large following. Another possible contender for the Republican nomination was Vice President Charles C. Dawes. He had much executive ability, but constant feuding with the Senate had cost him needed Congressional support for the nomination. Not to be overlooked by the Republican leaders as a possible presidential candidate was the liberal isolationist, Senator William C. Borah of Idaho. But the name on the lips of the rank and file Republicans was that of Herbert Hoover, a successful engineer qualified to manage the complicated business of the national government. Besides, Hoover had been the Secretary of Commerce, a Wartime Food Administrator, ex-Chief of Belgian and Russian Relief, and a great humanitarian.¹

¹Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr., and Nelson Manfred Blake, Since 1900 (New York: Macmillan Company), p. 426.

Among the Democratic hopefuls for the party nomination were Governor Albert J. Ritchie of Maryland and Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana, but certainly the strongest and most popular contender was Alfred E. Smith. Although Smith had lost the nomination in 1924, in the same year he was reelected to the governorship of New York, even though Coolidge carried the state. Then in 1926, the Happy Warrior, as Smith was affectionately called, was elected to an unprecedented fourth term as the chief executive of the Empire State.² "His progressive social and economic views and his strategic political position made him a logical candidate of the Democracy in 1928."³ Still Al Smith had some severe political handicaps; he was a devout Roman Catholic, an articulate foe of Prohibition, and a product of Tammany Hall.

Never in the history of predominantly Protestant America had a Catholic been elected to the presidency, and many Protestant Americans, especially in the South, shuddered at the idea of having a Romanist chief executive. As it became increasingly evident that Smith would be the Democratic presidential candidate, many Americans began asking disturbing questions concerning possible conflicts between Smith's religious beliefs and

²Ibid., p. 427.

³Henry Steele Commager, Living Ideas in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 520.

the proper discharge of the duties of the presidency. In March of 1927, Smith received a letter from Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the Atlantic Monthly, containing a forthcoming article which raised doubts concerning the governor's qualifications for the office of the president in view of his Catholicism.⁴ The open letter, which was to appear in the April issue of the magazine, was written by Charles C. Marshall, an experienced New York lawyer and a High Church Episcopalian, who felt that he himself might become a Catholic if he were less concerned about the temporal power of the Church.⁵

In the introductory paragraphs of the open letter to the "Honorable Alfred E. Smith," Mr. Marshall expressed pride in seeing Smith's rise from "a humble state" to become the Democratic presidential candidate.⁶ Further, the New York lawyer expressed his genuine respect for the governor's liberal political record of honesty and fair play, for Smith's morality, and for his filial devotion to his religion. With these formal albeit sincere amenities out of the way, the attorney began his

⁴Emily Smith Warner, The Happy Warrior (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 181.

⁵Norman Hapgood and Henry Moskowitz, Up From the City Streets (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1927), p. 314.

⁶Charles C. Marshall, "Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith," Atlantic Monthly, CXXXIX (April, 1927), pp. 540-49. All further quotations and factual material to footnote number seven--Hapgood and Moskowitz, op. cit., p. 315 --come from Marshall's open letter.

vigorous questioning concerning the effect of Smith's religious beliefs upon his qualifications as a candidate for the highest office in the United States government, having as the object of this interrogation, to elicit from the governor a clear statement of his views concerning possible conflicts between the U. S. Constitution and the Catholic Church. In the opinion of Mr. Marshall, this was not an unreasonable request, for because of certain unique claims of the Church of Rome whether, to what extent, and how Roman Catholics should participate in politics had always been perplexing questions for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Even Pope Leo XIII admitted this by saying that "it may in some places be true that for most urgent and just reasons, it is by no means expedient for Catholics to engage in public affairs or to take an active part in politics."

Of great concern to Mr. Marshall was the claim of the Catholic Church to be the One True Church of Christ. Pope Leo XIII in the Christian Constitution of States (1885) maintained that the Catholic Church was the only church to which God had given certain rights. In the opinion of Mr. Marshall this doctrine could only lead to the intolerant position taken by Pope Pius IX in the Syllabus of Errors (1864). In this encyclical, the Pope emphatically stated it was an error to believe that other Christian churches should be tolerated. When Catholics do tolerate other religions it is by favor and not by right. According to Leo XIII, the Church, in effect, tolerates

other Christian churches in order to attain the higher goal of peaceful human intercourse. Quite pointedly, Mr. Marshall asked Smith how he regarded these claims in view of the constitutional provision which gives freedom to all religions as a natural right and not as a favor.

Another teaching of the Church which disturbed Marshall was the doctrine that "it is not lawful for the state any more than the individual either to disregard all religious duties or to hold in equal favor different kinds of religion." In America there is no state religion, and all churches are free and equal by constitutional right. According to Smith's questioner, almost everyone believes that this is the best of all possible systems, but Pope Leo XIII in Catholicity in the United States stated that "it would be erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the most desirable status of the Church." Further, the Catholic Church teaches that it is also false "to believe that it would be universally lawful or expedient for the Church and the state to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced." And yet, as Mr. Marshall was careful to point out, the United States Constitution reads "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The Catholic Church also teaches that, although the State and the Church are autonomous and free within their own distinctive spheres, when a conflict arises between the temporal

and spiritual powers, the Church is always supreme. Quite explicitly yet in somewhat different language, the Catholic Encyclopedia confirms this teaching by stating "that in case of direct contradiction, making it impossible for both jurisdictions to be exercised, the jurisdiction of the Church prevails and that of the State is excluded." Pope Pius IX, stating the Catholic position in a somewhat negative manner, said in The Syllabus of Errors that "to say. . .in the case of conflicting laws enacted by the two powers, the civil power prevails, is in error." To further complicate the problem, the Church alone claims the "sovereign discretion" to determine who has the jurisdiction in a case of conflict. This, according to Marshall, shows "that she [the Catholic Church] may in theory and effect annihilate the rights of all who are not Roman Catholics, sweeping into the jurisdiction of a single religious society the most important interests of human well-being." The New York attorney asked Smith how he personally regarded these claims. Would he as a president work in favor of Catholic schools, Catholic views on marriage and divorce, and Catholic objectives in foreign relations.

Mr. Marshall expressed the belief that since Catholic schools teach the doctrines of dogmatic intolerance and the supremacy of the Church over the State, they were spreading disloyalty to the country. Here, according to the attorney, was an excellent example of a possible conflict between the

temporal and spiritual powers. No doubt in this case, as well as in any other, the Church would claim complete jurisdiction in deciding what was good Catholicism and what was disloyalty. Most certainly the state in order to protect and preserve itself would likewise claim final authority in the matter. The Episcopal lawyer asked the governor on which side he would stand if he were elected to the presidency.

The New York attorney went on to say that through the annulling power, the Catholic Church had in the past destroyed the bond of civil contract. In order to prove his assertion, he cited the famous Marlborough Annulment as an excellent case in point. The facts in this controversy are few. Two Protestants were married by the Episcopal Church in New York City, and this union was solemnized within and authorized by the State of New York. The couple took up residence in England and had two children. After twenty-five years of marriage, the wife sued for divorce on the grounds of gross misconduct on the part of the husband. The divorce was granted, and later both parties contracted civil marriages. The wife's second husband was a Roman Catholic; and, therefore, an annulment of the previous marriage seemed desirable. The civil governments of the United States and England refused to grant an annulment, but the Pope, disregarding the judicial rulings of the two countries, granted the woman the annulment on the theory that she had been under duress and fear at the time of her marriage

to her first husband. According to Marshall, the decree granting the annulment was based on an ex parte hearing--only on the testimony of the interested witnesses and not on the evidence gathered by the two governments in question. Believing that this action on the part of the Roman Catholic Church utterly disregarded the sovereign prerogatives of the American and British governments, the New York attorney asked Smith if "such proceedings were consistent with the peace and safety of states."

During the twenties, the anticlerical government of Mexico had persecuted the Catholic Church. Mr. William D. Guthrie, an eminent Catholic jurist, at the request of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of the United States, prepared a statement on the Mexican problem, advocating an armed invasion of our Southern neighbor in order to secure the rights of the Church. Mr. Marshall believed that although many Americans deplored the manner in which the Mexican government was treating the Church and its prelates, they would strongly object to intervening into the internal affairs of the Mexicans, merely to safeguard the prerogatives of the Roman Church. Smith's interrogator asked him if he, as a Catholic president, would in this instance allow the Mexican people to apply Mexican standards in purely Mexican affairs or follow the voice of the Church as if it were "that of God, believing that those who would not heed it would be threatened with eternal perdition."

Further, the New York attorney stated that Smith would be personally powerless to overcome the Church's firm stand on such matters as education, divorce, and the Mexican problem. How could it be possible for a Catholic president to override the decisions of the Pope, who claimed to "hold upon this earth the place of Almighty God?"

Revealing his Anglican sympathies, Smith's questioner cited the historical conduct of the Roman Catholic Church in England as an example of its treasonous activities against a sovereign state. He recalled that the Pope "deposed" Queen Elizabeth, the legitimate monarch, and then in 1886 under the pontificate of Leo XIII beatified John Felton, simply because he nailed up the papal decree proclaiming the queen's usurption. In 1850, the English government generously restored the Roman Catholic hierarchy under Cardinal Wiseman. In gratitude for this beneficent action, the Roman Catholic Church humiliated the people and government of England by declaring the Anglican orders invalid. Such, according to Marshall, is the infamous policy of the Church!

In conclusion, Marshall expressed his belief that

Nothing will be of greater satisfaction to those of your fellow citizens who hesitate in their endorsement of your candidacy because of the religious issues involved than such a disclaimer by you of the convictions here imputed or such an exposition of the questions here presented, as may justly turn public opinion in your favor.

Mr. Marshall's letter revealed much learning and a remarkable familiarity with papal pronouncements, but Al Smith, being a simple and unassuming Catholic whose faith was that of a child rather than a theologian, was honestly confused by the article.⁷ Initially, he adamantly refused to answer the open letter, but Mrs. Henry Moskowitz, his "Colonel House," and Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, a Jewish jurist, persuaded him to write a refutation, answering each question posed by Marshall with scholarly documentation. Possessing little knowledge of theology, Smith turned to an old friend and a distinguished American, Father Francis P. Duffy, for assistance in drafting a suitable reply.⁸ Choosing Father Duffy to help in the preparation of Smith's retort was a sagacious decision, for the priest had attracted national fame as the heroic chaplain of the 165th regiment during World War I and as a consequence of his splendid army record had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Ribbon of the Legion of Honor. His patriotism would therefore be beyond question.

A tentative copy of the Smith reply was given Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York, for final approval. The prelate gave his hearty endorsement to the refutation and described it as being "both good Catholicism and good

⁷Hapgood and Moskowitz, op. cit., p. 315.

⁸Warner, op. cit., p. 182.

Americanism."⁹ Consequently, in the May issue of the Atlantic Monthly, the Smith reply appeared.

Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the magazine, moved by the sincerity and cogency of the governor's refutation, felt obliged to write an introduction to Smith's return letter, which deserves to be quoted in its entirety.

This is an historic incident, historic for the country and for the Church. Now for the first time in the republic's history, under a constitution which forever forbids religious tests as qualifications for office, a candidate for the Presidency has been subjected to public questioning as to how he can give individual allegiance to his country when his church restricts the freedom of his choice; and the candidate has answered--answered not deviously with indirection, but straightforwardly, bravely, and with a clear ring of candor.

It is an issue of infinite possibilities. Is the principle of religious tolerance, universal and complete, which every schoolboy has repeated for one hundred and fifty years, mere platitudinous vapidness? Can men worshipping God in their different ways believe without reservation of conscience in a common political ideal? Is the United States of America based on a delusion? Can the vast experience of the Republic, Protestant, and Catholic, churched and unchurchd, succeed?

And this is the converse of the question: Will the churches suffer their members to be really free? Thou shalt have no false gods, thundered the Jewish Jehovah from Sinai, and ever since the gods of the churches have demanded that their control be not abridged nor diminished. But as the creeds clash about us, we remember that not in political programmes only may religion have its place separate and apart from politics, from public discussion, and from laws of society. Quite elsewhere it is written, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

The discussion has served its purpose. Not in this campaign will whispering and innuendoes, shrugging and hunching, usurp the place of reason and argument. The thoughts rising almost unbidden in the minds of the least bigoted of us when we watch a Roman Catholic aspire to the Presidency of the United States have become matters of high, serious, and eloquent debate.¹⁰

Mr. Smith began his retort by offering his gratitude to Mr. Marshall for defining the issues for the country. He went on to explain that he was personally anxious to present a disclaimer for the convictions imputed to more than twenty million of his fellow American Catholics. At first he had thought to answer with faith, but later he decided upon a scholarly refutation of each point. Admitting that he himself would be unable to write such a reply because of his meager knowledge of papal decrees and church history, Smith thanked Father Duffy for his invaluable assistance in writing the reply.¹¹

As the most obvious proof of the falsity and misrepresentation of Marshall's statements, the governor offered his personal political record as evidence, noting that "if there were a conflict between the Catholic Church and the government".

¹⁰Ellery Sedgwick, Introduction to "Catholic and Patriotic: A Reply to C. C. Marshall," Atlantic Monthly, CXXXIX (May, 1927), p. 721.

¹¹Alfred E. Smith, "Catholic and Patriotic: A Reply to C. C. Marshall," Atlantic Monthly, CXXXIX (May, 1927), p. 721. All further quotations and factual material in this chapter come from the aforementioned source.

I, of all men, could not have escaped it, because I have not been a silent man, but a battler for social and political reform. These battles would in their very nature disclose the conflict, if there were any." Further, Smith pointed out that Roger Brooke Taney and Edward Douglass White, both of whom were Chief Justices of the Supreme Court and Catholics, suffered no apparent conflict between the two loyalties and the two duties. Neither did the thousands of American Catholic soldiers hesitate for a moment in making the supreme sacrifice for their country.

With regard to the views expressed in the decrees of the various popes, Smith quoted Cardinal Newman to the effect that these papal pronouncements have "no dogmatic force." In matters outside of dogma, Catholics may and do have legitimate differences of opinion. The governor frankly admitted that "so little were these matters [the quotations from the popes used by Marshall] the essence of my faith that, I, a devout Catholic since childhood never heard of them, until your letter."

Concerning the rights of non-Catholic churches, Smith quoted from Dr. John A. Ryan's The State and the Church. In this systematic exposition of Catholic teaching with regard to relations with the state, the Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Catholic University of America stated that "when several religions have firmly established themselves and taken root in the same territory, nothing else remains for the state than to

exercise tolerance towards them all, or, as conditions exist today, to make complete religious liberty for individuals and religious bodies a principle of government." Quite clearly, Smith declared that he would tolerate Protestant Churches not as a favor but because they were given that right in the Constitution.

Further, Smith explained that dogmatic intolerance means simply that the Church recognizes no deviation from complete acceptance of dogma on the part of the individual Catholic. The Catholic should, nay, must be tolerant for as the Catholic Encyclopedia states "the intolerant man is avoided as much as possible by every highminded person. . . The man who is tolerant in every emergency is alone favorable."

Since the Church respects the rights of non-Catholic churches and since she is bound in principle to a policy of toleration, Archbishop Ireland could say that the constitutional provision prohibiting the establishment of a state religion and yet insuring the free exercise of religion "was a great leap forward on the part of the new nation towards personal liberty and the consecration of the rights of conscience."

The Catholic Church, therefore, does not desire the union of church and state, for as Archbishop Dowling has stated, "so many conditions for its accomplishment are lacking in every government of the world that the thesis may be regulated to the limbo of defunct controversies," and even though Pope Pius IX

declared that separation is not always advisable, "he had more than once expressed his satisfaction with the arrangement obtaining in the United States." Further, Archbishop Ireland has written that "religious freedom is the basic life of America, the cement running through its walls and battlements, the safeguard of its peace and prosperity. Violate religious freedom against Catholics, our swords are at once unsheathed. Violate it in favor of Catholics, no less readily do they leap from the scabbard."

Smith also maintained that there can be no fundamental conflict between the church and state. As Dr. Ryan has stated, "the Catholic doctrine concedes, nay, maintains that the state is coordinate with the church and equally independent, supreme in its own sphere." Quite admittedly, the Church does teach that the state can not interfere with purely spiritual matters, but such a doctrine is neither unusual nor revolutionary, nor is it particularly Catholic, for as Smith poignantly pointed out, Article XXXVII of the Articles of Religion of the Protestant Episcopal Church declares that "the Power of the Civil Magistrate extendeth to all men, as well as Clergy as Laity, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual."

Even though the Pope does demand of each Catholic complete allegiance in matters of the spirit, the Supreme Pontiff, according to Smith, can never issue orders in purely

civil matters. Cardinal Gibbons has said that if the Pope did so, "he would be offending not only against civil society, but against God." The conscience of a Catholic "would bind him absolutely to disobey because with Catholics conscience is the supreme law. . ."

Being firmly committed to the Constitution, Mr. Smith promised continued support of the public schools, noting that under his administration New York State maintained one of the largest and most excellent school systems in the nation. Proudly, the governor pointed out that whereas in 1919, the state of New York spent \$9,000,000 for education, under his long administration this amount was steadily increased until in 1927 expenditures for public schools reached an all time high of \$82,000,000. Not only did Smith support the public schools; he also praised and loved his Catholic education, which had taught him tolerance and good citizenship. There could be no more eloquent testimony to the truth of this statement than Smith's own life.

According to Smith, the annulment of the Marlborough marriage had no effect whatsoever upon the laws of the United States or England. The decree merely defined the status of the parties involved as communicants of the Church. Such Ecclesiastical action is neither dangerous to society nor harmful to the safety of states, for almost all churches, including the Protestant Episcopal Church, refuse to recognize

the ecclesiastical validity of divorces granted by civil tribunals. The decrees of the government of any Church, whether Roman Rota or the Tribunal of the Episcopal Church, in no way affect the status of its members as citizens of a particular country.

With regard to the Mexican question, Smith pointed out that the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Episcopate in America, although warning that the foundations of Christian civilization were being undermined, supported a policy of non-intervention. The governor himself recognized the right of no church to ask for armed intervention by this country in the affairs of another, merely for the defense of the rights of that Church.

According to Smith, Marshall reached the high point of absurdity when he maintained that the papal decree declaring the invalidity of the Anglican orders was an insult against the people and government of England. At the request of the Anglican priests themselves, the Pope in an Apostolic Letter rendered a decision concerning the authenticity of the Anglican priesthood; this pronouncement, which merely declared that the priests of the Church of England did not have the sacerdotal gifts possessed by the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, was neither directed against England nor the citizens of the Empire; it was simply an adverse reply to the request, nothing more and nothing less.

In conclusion, Alfred E. Smith, Democratic candidate for the presidency, Catholic and patriot, with profound sincerity, disarming candor, and firm conviction, summarized his creed as an American Catholic in the moving and eloquent words which follow:

I believe in the worship of God according to the faith and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. I recognize no power in the institutions of my Church to interfere with the operations of the Constitution of the United States or the enforcement of the law of the land. I believe in the absolute freedom of conscience for all men and in the equality of all churches, all sects, and all beliefs before the law as a matter of right and not as a matter of favor. I believe in the absolute separation of Church and State and in the strict enforcement of the provisions of the Constitution that Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. I believe that no tribunal of my church has any power to make any decree of any force in the law of the land, other than to establish the status of its own communicants within the church. I believe in the support of the public schools as one of the cornerstones of our American liberty. I believe in the principle of non-interference by this country in the internal affairs of other nations and that we should stand steadfastly against any such interference by whosoever it may be urged. And I believe in the common brotherhood of man under the common fatherhood of God.

In this spirit I join with my fellow Americans of all creeds in a fervent prayer that never again in this land will any public servant be challenged because of the faith in which he has tried to walk humbly with God.

CHAPTER II

THE CONVENTIONS, THE PLATFORMS, THE CAMPAIGN

Governor Smith's reply, which was anxiously awaited by both the general public and the leaders of the two major parties, was "well received by the press and elicited a good many expressions of approval from representatives of other faiths."¹ One reporter declared that the governor's refutation

. . . should forever make it impossible for the form of a public man's religious faith to become a political issue in this country. It was statesmanlike in its simplicity, in its transparent genuineness, in its freedom from every vestige of personal impatience or irritability, and in the dignity and directness of its style. In every respect it is worthy to stand beside other landmarks in the history of American progress.²

Despite the cautious attitude taken by the Democratic leaders in assessing the positive impact of Smith's reply, many more party members flocked to the Happy Warrior's Bandwagon, which had been put under the able reins of John J. Raskob, a vice president of General Motors, who was a devoted friend and supporter of the Democratic candidate.³ In view of

¹William MacDonald, "Aspects of the Presidential Campaign," Current History, XXVI (June, 1927), p. 465.

²Anonymous, "Marshall-Smith Correspondence," Outlook, CXLV (April 27, 1927), p. 522.

³Frank Graham, Al Smith American (New York: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), pp. 185-6.

the growing popular strength behind Smith's nomination, both Democrats and Republicans alike expected him to capture the party's nomination, but these same people were fully aware that the opposition to Smith as a Wet and a Catholic could develop at the Democratic Convention in Houston and wreck the governor's chances for nomination and approval, just as it had in 1924.

So concerned were Catholics with the possibility of a defeat for Smith on religious grounds, either at the convention or at the polls, that some people began talking about the formation of a Catholic political party. Stanley Frost, a Washington journalist, predicted that the creation of such a party would be accompanied by "direful consequences."⁴ The editor of Commonweal, a national Catholic lay journal of current thought, termed the idea of forming a Catholic party as being fantastic, pointing out that it would be difficult if not impossible to organize Catholics for any other than religious purposes and that the Vatican looked with considerable ill favor on American Catholic political parties.⁵ William Bennett Munro, Professor of Government at Harvard, declared

⁴Stanley Frost, "Will There Be A Catholic Party?," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), pp. 809-817.

⁵Michael Williams, "The Pope and the Catholic Party," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), pp. 817-822.

that a Catholic Party in the United States was unlikely on practical grounds, for American politics functioned on state lines and Catholics were certainly not strong enough in separate states to have a strong influence on national issues.⁶

At the Democratic Convention in Houston, opposition to Smith because of his Catholicism and his Wetness was quickly stamped out, and on the first ballot the governor of New York received the party candidacy.⁷ "Governor Smith's capture of the Democratic nomination represented a remarkable achievement in American politics--let no man mistake that! Defeated four years earlier, he has had a walkover in 1928 despite all the prejudice against him because of his religion, his 'wetness,' and his affiliations with Tammany Hall."⁸ In order to placate the South, Joseph Taylor Robinson, a "Protestant, Dry, and anti-Negro" Senator from Arkansas, was chosen as Smith's running mate.⁹ Meanwhile, the Republican Convention at Kansas City had awarded Herbert Hoover the coveted nomination on the first ballot. Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas was chosen to be the

⁶William Bennett Munro, "Political Suicide for a Catholic Party," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), pp. 822-25.

⁷Barck and Blake, op. cit., p. 427.

⁸Oswald Garrison Villard, "Governor Smith the Nominee," Nation, CXXVII (July 11, 1928), p. 30.

⁹Oswald Garrison Villard, "Smith and Robinson," Nation, CXXVII, (July 11, 1928), p. 27.

Republican vic-presidential candidate.¹⁰

The Democratic platform was neither inspiring nor vigorous. Avoiding any mention of the League of Nations, it promised an honest effort to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment, advocated a moderate tariff, and condemned Coolidge's farm policy, without offering a clear-cut solution. The Republican platform was also a cautious document, promising to continue national prosperity, advocating the establishment of a farm marketing system, and committing the party to a "vigorous" enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment. The international planks of the platform declared for disarmament and the outlawing of war. True to the isolationist leanings of the G. O. P., membership in the League of Nations was opposed.¹¹

Even though the party platforms were dull and non-committal, the candidates themselves were firm and outspoken concerning the issues at stake. These issues, on which Smith and Hoover took their stands, were personal and social, rather than political. Both candidates assumed conservative positions with regard to the farm problems and tariffs, and by 1928 agitation over United States membership in the League of Nations had nearly died out.¹² The vital issues of the campaign were

¹⁰Barck and Blake, op. cit., p. 426.

¹¹Ibid., p. 427.

¹²Albert Bushnell Hart, "Cross Currents in the Election," Current History, XXIX (December, 1928), p. 369.

the prosperity of the country, Smith's Catholicism, Smith's Tammany Hall affiliations, and Prohibition.

Smith's campaign for the presidency got into full gear on the fifteenth of September. On this day the Democratic presidential candidate departed from New York on a special eleven car train, which in fifteen days was to take him through a dozen states, where he was to make seven major addresses. On September nineteenth, Smith gave an important speech at Omaha, Nebraska, before a receptive and applauding audience of 10,000. After his warm and friendly reception in this Nebraska city, Smith boarded his train, bound for Oklahoma City. On the journey to this Southern city, Smith encountered ominous signs of religious intolerance. He was confronted with "circulars, hand-sheets, and placards that screamed the most dastardly canards against the integrity and morality of the Catholic Church and its adherents."¹³ Methodist Bishops Mouzon, Moore, Cannon, and Du Bose, Doctor Hugh K. Walker of the Presbyterian Magazine, and Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Assistant Attorney-General of the United States, had all interjected the religious issue into the campaign.¹⁴

¹³Warner, op. cit., pp. 216,217.

¹⁴Albert Bushnell Hart, "Religion and Prohibition in the Presidential Election," Current History, XXIX (November, 1928), p. 314.

Deeply hurt by the charges made against him as a Catholic, Smith felt compelled to make his views known with regard to these assaults at Oklahoma City.¹⁵ In that city's colosseum before the largest audience Smith had ever addressed, he began his speech by saying,

I shall discuss tonight and denounce that wicked attempt...to inject bigotry, hatred, intolerance, and un-American sectarian division into a campaign which should be an intelligent debate of the important issues which confront the American people. I shall speak openly about which people have been whispering to you.

After begging the people to "decide this election upon the great and real issues of the campaign and nothing else," Smith described those individuals and organizations which were spreading hatred of the Catholic Church as being

...totally ignorant of the history and traditions of this country and its institutions. They breathe into the hearts and souls...of millions...hatred of their fellow countrymen because of their religious beliefs. Nothing could be so foreign to the teachings of Thomas Jefferson. Nothing could be so contradictory to our whole history. Nothing could be so false to the teachings of our Divine Lord himself.

Continuing his impassioned plea for tolerance, Smith declared,

...I do not wish any member of my faith in any part of the United States to vote for me on religious grounds. I want them to vote for me only when in their hearts and consciences they become convinced that my election will promote the best interests of the country. By the same token, I can not refrain from saying that any person who votes against me simply because of my religion is not, to my way of thinking, a good citizen.

¹⁵Warner, op. cit., p. 218.

Let me remind the Democrats of this country that we belong to the party of Thomas Jefferson, whose proudest boast was that he was the author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Let me remind the citizens of every political faith that the statute of religious freedom has become a part of the sacred heritage of our land. The constitutional guaranty that there should be no religious test for public office is not a mere form of words. It represents the most vital principle that was ever given any people.

I attack those who seek to undermine it, not only because I am a good Christian but because I am a good American and a product of American institutions. Everything I am and everything I hope to be, I owe to those institutions.¹⁶

Herbert Hoover shared Smith's indignation that religion had been made an issue in the campaign. Detesting the use of religious hatred by Smith's opponents, the Republican candidate declared that "by blood and conviction I stand for religious tolerance in both act and spirit. I have stated that I nor the Republican Party want support" on the basis of religion.¹⁷

The Democratic Arkansas Gazette, although admitting that Hoover himself had not and would not use the religious issue in furthering the Republican cause, insisted that he and his managers would have to take more energetic measures in curtailing the use of Smith's faith by Republican campaigners than "indulging in fine talk about their love of tolerance."¹⁸

¹⁶Graham, op. cit., pp. 199, 200, 201.

¹⁷Hart, "Religion and Prohibition in the Presidential Election," p. 314.

¹⁸Anonymous, "The Religious Issue in the Open," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 13, 1928), p. 9.

Another pro-Smith newspaper, the Lynchburg News, believed that Hoover should "bring out the dismissal of party agents responsible for making an issue of religion; let him get rid of them or refrain from complaint when the less than cynical receive his noble protestants with shrugs and smiles." Other journals like the Asheville Times took an opposite view and praised Hoover's stand on the religious issue as being courageous and intellectually honest.¹⁹

Few people accused Hoover of being prejudiced, but many agreed with the Brooklyn Eagle in its assertion that the Republican candidate was afflicted with an extraordinary number of supporters who were using Smith's religion to insure his defeat and Hoover's victory. The Caldwell incident, the Willebrandt affair, and the Street episode are three instances which seem to indicate that the G. O. P. was not above fanning the fires of religious strife.²⁰

Mrs. Wille W. Caldwell, a Republican National Committee-woman from Virginia, wrote a letter to the Washington Post in which she urged loyal Americans "to save the United States from being Romanized and rum-ridden, and the call is to the women to do it." Hoover resented and repudiated this statement and declared that "such an attitude was entirely opposed to every

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

²⁰Ibid.

principle of the Republican Party," but Senator Glass of Virginia told the Washington Post, "I think Mrs. Caldwell was indiscreet enough to write exactly what every Republican campaign whisperer is saying, and what many political preachers who traffic in notoriety and make merchandise of religion are proclaiming from the platform and the pulpit."²¹

Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Assistant Attorney-General of the United States, electrified an assembly of ministers and laymen at a Methodist Conference in Ohio by urging them to pray and work for the day when all of the 600,000 Methodist votes in the state were cast for the Dry Republican candidate and not for the Wet Democratic aspirant. Many Democrats accused her of using the Prohibition issue as a front for a more intense antagonism for Smith on religious grounds, but Mrs. Willebrandt denied this and said that her speech had nothing to do with the Democratic candidate's religion.²² Smith didn't believe the Assistant Attorney-General, and in his Oklahoma City speech, he declared that Republicans high in the party councils were encouraging the use of the religious question. With regard to the Willebrandt incident, the Democratic candidate asked

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

What would be the effect upon these same people if a prominent official of the government of the State of New York under me suggested to a gathering of pastors of my church that they do for me what Mrs. Willebrandt suggests be done for Hoover?...²³

Another instance in which the religious issue was used to the advantage of the C. O. P. involved Oliver S. Street, a Republican National Committeeman from Alabama, who circulated a handbill in the South which contained the following anti-Smith and anti-Catholic statements:

The Roman Catholic Church traditionally and historically has always stood and does now stand for certain political, civil, and social principles.

Among these purely political principles for which every Bishop of Rome (Pope) has declared that the Catholic Church stands for are:

The union of Church and State with the State subordinate to the Church; opposition to religious liberty; opposition to freedom of speech; opposition to freedom of thought and conscience; opposition to freedom of the press.

In a struggle in Smith's breast between the Democratic party and the Roman Catholic Church for the control of Smith's actions the Democratic party would find itself impotent.²⁴

Street received a strong rebuke from Republican Party headquarters in Washington and was advised to keep to the announced policy of the National Committee in the future. Still, Democratic newspapers like the Birmingham News were not satisfied

²³Graham, op. cit., p. 200.

²⁴Anonymous, "Governor Smith's Religion," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 13, 1928), p. 9.

that this slap on the hand action did much to squash the "slanders and lies that no Republican would circulate in the East...but are spread through the South," and although repudiated at headquarters, "in the South they are accepted at face value and even flaunted and defended by some Republican campaign managers."²⁵

Nonetheless, countless Republicans, both the leaders and members of the rank and file, joined with Democrats, Independents, and individuals of other political persuasions in echoing the sentiments of the Cleveland Plain Dealer when it asserted that

...the Democratic candidate is being victimized by a prejudice which violates decency, nullifies a fundamental principle of popular government, and puts to shame the solemn convictions of American statesmen from Washington to Roosevelt.²⁶

Even though some G. O. P. campaigners did use the religious issue to Hoover's advantage, it would be erroneous to conclude that the Republican party was engaged in any widespread program to discredit the Catholic Church or to use Smith's religious beliefs against him. Hoover's protests against religious intolerance were sincere, and no doubt the majority of the Republicans did not wish to have the support

²⁵ Anonymous, "The Religious Issue in the Open," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 13, 1928), p. 9.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

of those who were opposed to the Democratic candidate because of his Catholicism.

CHAPTER II

AL SMITH: CATHOLIC, WET, AND TAMMANY

It is unfortunate but true that despite Smith's many sincere and lucid declaimers of the convictions imputed to him as a Catholic, the most articulate and bitterest opposition to the governor's candidacy came from those who attacked him for his Catholicism. Although intolerant individuals could be found in every part of the nation, the most intransigent and best organized of Smith's adversaries were to be found in the fundamentalist, non-drinking South. In many ways the Solid South held the key to Smith's election chances. Would the South remain in the Democratic camp, or would it vote against the party's candidate on religious grounds and thus assure his defeat? There were those who felt that "the Democrats of the South would be sensible to their unique opportunity and great responsibility. They would...lay forever the Banquo's Ghost of American politics." They would overcome the spectre of religious prejudice, and "when the standards were unfurled, the Democrats of the South would be found serving under the flag of Jefferson, the champion of religious liberty."¹ Others like Reverend James A Logsdon believed that it was an "illusive

¹Martin Conboy, "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), p. 589.

dream" to think that Smith would carry the South. He declared that

...these rock-ribbed Anglo-Saxon states [of the South]... have always stood for the highest ideals of Americanism. They never have and never will stultify their conscience by voting for any man who represents a foreign potentate. This historic and glorious old southland will never swallow the Pope of Rome. November 6, 1928 will witness a rebuke of the papacy that will be remembered through the ages. Keep your eyes on the South!²

Prominent among the organizations which attacked Smith because of his religion was the Ku Klux Klan; which, although it could only claim 150,000 members, was nevertheless influential in molding mass votes by propoganda under the guise of militant patriotism.³ One Klan handbill entitled "How to Tell A Klansman" maintained that he is "a white man," "a Protestant," and "a native born American." Further, a member of the Klan "upholds virtuous womanhood," "opposes trash immigration," "opposes Political Rome," and "stands for America and Americans." The propoganda sheet concluded by asking "Every American Should Be Interested, Are You?"⁴

Hiram W. Evans, Imperial Wizard of the Klan, in an article in Current History declared that he and the organization

²Gustavus Myers, History of Bigotry in the United States (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 322.

³Ibid.

⁴From a Klan handbill reproduced in Michael Williams, The Shadow of the Pope (New York: Whittlesey House, 1932), p. 273.

he represented was "unaffected by the 'modernist' cult which dominates thought in centers of retarded assimilation" and therefore not ashamed to expose the treacherous political activities of the Roman Catholic Church. Maintaining that American freedoms had been won against the arms and Inquisition of the Romanist Church, the Imperial Wizard listed these fifteen refutations of Smith's declaimers.

1. The difference between religion and politics. Mr. Smith does not see it.
2. His assumption to speak for his Church. All evidence of authority is lacking.
3. His denial of a conflict [between the State and the Church] does not remove the conflict.
4. His charge that Mr. Marshall garbled quotations. Disproved by further evidence.
5. Are these doctrines held in America? Mr. Smith's denial disproved by further evidence.
6. Distinction between Americans and other Catholics. No evidence.
7. The patriotic services of Roman Catholics; true and admirable but without bearing.
8. That this is a defunct controversy. Mark Twain once authorized a statement that the report of his death was exaggerated.
9. His responsibilities for the doctrines of his Church. An evasion in reply. He was asked whether he accepted them and does not even deny responsibility.
10. The Roman Catholic attitude toward toleration. Mr. Smith's denial again disproved by further evidence.
11. The supremacy of his Church over the State. We still await an answer.

12. Disloyal teaching and control of schools.
Answered by evasion.
13. His Church's jurisdiction over all marriages.
answered by evasion, backed by both ignorance and
misinformation.
14. His Church's right to send us to war against
Mexico. A satisfactory explanation for himself.
15. Beatification as a reward for treason. No answer.⁵

As compared to later attacks against Smith by members of the Klan, the views expressed by Evans in this article were restrained, indeed, for during the campaign they stopped at almost nothing that would tend to discredit both the Democratic candidate and the Catholic Church. Supporters of the Klan helped circulate a forged oath attributed to the Knights of Columbus. This bogus pledge "could not, as a seemingly genuine document, fail to present Catholicism as a ghastly thing." The pledge purported to represent the Knights of Columbus members as unwilling to give allegiance to a Protestant or Liberal ruler, vowing eternal opposition to Protestants and Masons, and pledging continual warfare, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants, and Masons, regardless of sex, age, or condition, striving for the extirpation of all these enemies of the Church by hanging, burning, boiling, strangling, and burning them alive.⁶

⁵Hiram W. Evans, "The Catholic Question as Viewed by the Ku Klux Klan," Current History, XXVI (June, 1927), p. 563.

⁶Myers, op. cit., pp. 326-327.

Even though in 1913 upon the findings of a group of thirty-three degree Masons themselves, a Congressional Committee, which was chairmanned by a high ranking Mason, branded the oath as being fake and libellous, many anti-Smith agitators and country preachers circulated copies of the "repellent concoction," and many people believed it to be authentic. Actually, the simple oath of the Knights of Columbus merely bound all of its members to support the Constitution of the United States, and in accordance, to perform conscientiously all duties as citizens in the interest of their country.⁷

Those opposed to Smith and the Catholic Church continued to distribute copies of the oath, and in order to give it credence they cited the spurious document from the Congressional Record, ignoring the condemnatory report made. In order to turn the minds of the electorate against a Catholic presidential candidate, millions of copies of the oath were circulated throughout the country, especially in the South. Even a radio station was utilized in broadcasting the bogus pledge. Having no other recourse, the Knights of Columbus decided that nothing short of criminal prosecution could stop the distribution of these libellous documents. Several people were arrested and convicted of circulating the bogus oath, but the damage had already been done.⁸

⁷Ibid., pp. 327-328.

⁸Ibid.

Besides spreading false rumors and fake pledges, the Klan indulged in other forms of "campaigning," which are traditionally associated with this organization. At Wauhatchie, Alabama, 200 Klansmen held a party at which they gleefully hanged Al Smith in effigy. During the "ceremony" one of the leaders of the Klan bitterly denounced not only Smith but the Pope of Rome.⁹ Many times during the presidential campaign, fiery crosses were burnt in front of the houses and businesses of Smith supporters. One such instance occurred in New Jersey where members of the Klan built a twelve foot cross, covered it with oily rags, placed it in a large grease can, and then burned it in the back of a stationary store owned by Patrick Madden, an articulate booster of Smith.¹⁰

The most vicious attacks against the Democratic candidate and his Church could be found in widely-circulated paper-bound books and pamphlets, which purported to expose the Catholic Church. The New Menace, which boasted of being the leading anti-Catholic paper in the United States, strongly urged its subscribers to read the paper bound volume entitled Crimes of the Popes and Convent Horrors and several pamphlets (selling variously from two to seven cents) with titles such as Conquest of the United States, Popery in the Public Schools, Platform and Program of the Roman Catholic Political Machine,

¹⁰News item in the New York Times, September 16, 1928, p. 18.

and Roman Oaths.¹¹ The Fellowship Forum, which claimed "More Than A Million Readers," included in its book department Alien Rome, The Story of the Inquisition and House of Death and Gate of Hell; in advertising this last book, the public was urged to "help free 100,000 slaves from the aforesaid House."¹² From The Nailsplitter, which extolled itself as being "the greatest anti-papal monthly on the American continent," and as a force which the "Roman Catholic Church fears more than any other anti-papal Publishing House," came Edith Gorman's fifty-seven year old book, Convent Life Unveiled, Life of a Carmelite Nun or the Papal Blunder of the Ages, The House of the Good Shepherd, A Revelation of Actual Practices in Vogue Behind the Prison Walls of the Catholic Slave Pens, etc.¹³ Other anti-Catholic books and pamphlets circulated by the prejudiced were Three Keys To Hell, Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion, and Traffic in Nuns.¹⁴

Not only was there an abundance of books and leaflets attacking Smith and the Catholic Church, but many newspapers, especially those published by the Ku Klux Klan and fundamentalist

¹¹Myers, op. cit., pp. 315-316.

¹²Ibid., p. 316.

¹³Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁴John A. Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," Current History, XXIX (December, 1928), p. 379.

Protestant Churches, were no less vituperative in their denunciation of the Democratic candidate and the "infamies" of his Church. The Kourier Magazine of Atlanta, a Klan mouth-piece, devoted the bulk of its columns to lashing the Catholic Church. Another source of anti-Catholic sentiment was The American Standard of Birmingham, another Ku Klux Klan organ. A North Carolina monthly, The Yellow-Jacket, specialized in "exhuming and addressing afresh the old scare of a general slaughter of Protestant heretics once Rome fastened its clutches upon America." The Protestant, a monthly published in Washington, D. C., maintained that its "patriotic mission" was to safeguard American freedom against the devious plans of the Jesuits, the Knights of Columbus, and other Catholic organizations. In conjunction with the American Protestant Alliance this periodical, claiming to be militantly patriotic, agitated for an amendment to the Constitution which would deny citizenship to anyone who acknowledged allegiance to the Pope. Further, The Protestant proclaimed that it was "a thinking man's magazine" because it was found in some libraries.¹⁵

The attacks upon Smith and the Church in all the publications opposed to the Catholicism were on the same low level, not stopping at the most obvious falsehoods. The Nailsplitter declared that this country was not ready for a president who

¹⁵Myers, op. cit., pp. 315-316.

would "get the vote of the vice-trust, the gamblers, the red-light and the dope ring...the vote of the Jew-Jesuit movie gang who went sex-films and Sunday shows to coin millions through the corruption of youth." "Nothing," according to this journal, "but a heroic campaign would keep him (Smith) right out of the White House and save America."¹⁶

During the campaign, many accounts of the "infamies" of convent life were circulated. One such tract entitled Convent Horrors, or the Hole in the Wall told the story of one Barbara Ubrick, "who for twenty-one years was locked in a stone dungeon eight feet long and six feet wide in the basement of a convent because she refused to surrender her virtue to a Roman priest." During her long confinement, the tract maintained that she "never saw the face of a human being, never saw the daylight, and never had water to wash with." Her "clothes rotted off her back, and hair grew out all over her body." The recalcitrant "nun" was fed on "mouldy bread and potato peelings and water once a day," and when the authorities were able to "rescue" her from her captivity, she weighed only forty pounds. Further, this publication admonished American Protestants to wake up and save Americans from the "hands of Rome and forever abolish the nunnery system..."¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 324.

¹⁷ From a tract entitled, "Convent Horror or The Hole in the Wall," reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 255.

Another tract, advertising a thirty cent book entitled Nunneries, pictured two nuns and a priest smothering to death an illegitimate child spawned from the immorality of the convent. This pamphlet urged its readers to buy this "master-piece," which promised to explain "how a nun was murdered in one Montreal convent and how Madam Shepherd was seduced." Further, it claimed to offer authentic records of child births in a convent, and it even offered to reveal "why nunneries are within high walls, barred windows and huge bolted doors." For information concerning this "interesting" book, you were asked to write to the Protestant Book House in Detroit, Toledo, or Los Angeles.¹⁸

In an advertisement of convent "exposures," circulated by this same printing house, the name of Jesus was called upon to aid in the emancipation of "the thousands of white slaves... who are groaning and crying and praying for deliverance." According to the author of this tract, one N. L. Eastman, it was the "confessional box which feeds the nunneries and the orphanages and many prisons and graveyards." "Destroy these two institutions," he declared, "and Romanism is dead." He concluded his plea for "the plaintive, heartbroken...suffering women of...the carnal houses of death and hell" by imploring the "Merciful God to wake the sleepy Protestants to a sense of

¹⁸From a tract reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 255.

their responsibility to help free these precious, blood bought, deceived women."¹⁹

Numerous "ex-priests" and their wives were called upon by those opposed to Smith's religion to reveal the "truth" about the Catholic Church. In a lecture to be given in Baltimore, Maryland, Mrs. James K. Boyland, whose husband had been a Roman Catholic priest for nine years, was to attempt to "educate" the American public concerning the Catholic Church. According to the poster, Mr. Boyland, himself, was "desirous of conveying to the women of America the message he gives to men only." Unfortunately, "ordinary ethics" would forbid him to do so. Consequently, his wife has undertaken to perform this task. Only women over sixteen were allowed to attend this "dignified" lecture. Admission for the talk was thirty-five cents per person.²⁰

Those opposed to Smith for his Catholicism eagerly sought to convince the American public of the Democratic candidate's subservience to Rome. One handbill, widely circulated throughout the South and Middle West, pictured an obedient Smith kneeling at the feet of a smiling bishop. The caption read "and he asks the American people to elect him president."²¹ A Ku Klux Klan leaflet distributed in New York

¹⁹From a tract reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 275.

²⁰From a poster reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 268.

²¹From a handbill reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 266.

City declared "that any who kneels before his fellow man, kissing hand or ring, will do the bidding of that fellow man."²²

The Anti-Al Smith Club of Waycross, Georgia, nailed up numerous posters inviting the public to a Labor Day Picnic, where "a nationally known speaker" would talk on "Tammany's Wet, Pope Loving Candidate, Al Smith." Those attending would enjoy "free lemonade, mineral water, and shower baths."²³

The Protestant, a vigorously anti-Catholic publication, declared in large black headlines "Smith Must Be Annihilated." It maintained that "the destiny of America hanged (sic.) on the outcome of the election," and urged its readers to cast their vote for Hoover and not for "the Wet, Roman Catholic creature of Tammany Hall."²⁴ The Bulletin of the Sons and Daughters of Washington called upon its subscribers to "absolutely bar Alfred E. Smith, the candidate of the Papal-crat Party from the White House."²⁵

One cartoon used on anti-Catholic handbills pictured a black robed priest about to put a rosary over the head of Uncle Sam. The caption read, "Here, Sam, just slip this over your

²³From a poster reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 262.

²⁴From The Protestant, Volume VIII, Number 5 of July, 1928, as reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 253.

²⁵From The Bulletin, Volume X, Number 9 of September, 1928, as reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 256.

neck and 'we' can rule the universe."²⁶ Another cartoon used in many leaflets and tracts showed a Catholic priest attempting to enter a car labeled "U. S.," which was driven by Uncle Sam, but the incarnate symbol of America rebuked the prelate, saying, "Not in the front seat, daddy--your Uncle Sam can handle the wheel."²⁷

The foes of Smith and the Catholic Church even circulated bogus Lincoln "prophecies." One such spurious document quoted Lincoln as saying,

I do not pretend to be a prophet, but though not a prophet, I see a dark cloud on the horizon, that cloud is coming from Rome. It is filled with tears of blood. The true motive power is secreted behind the thick walls of the Vatican, the colleges and schools of the Jesuits, the convents of the nuns, and the confessional boxes of Rome.²⁸

Even the action of the Pope with regard to the Magna Carta was used to represent Catholics as being opposed to liberty. The New Menace in its largest type blurted out this headline:

WHEN THE POPE NULLIFIED ENGLAND'S MAGNA CARTA, FIRST GREAT DOCUMENT OF LIBERTY WAS DECLARED NULL AND VOID FOR ALL CATHOLICS AND OF NO EFFECT IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE BY POPE'S DECREE. THAT WHICH IS GOOD ROMAN CATHOLICISM IS ANTI-AMERICANISM. POPE INNOCENT ABSOLVED BRITISH SUBJECTS FROM ALLEGIANCE TO THE CROWN AND SET AT NAUGHT THE FIRST GREAT CHARTER OF LIBERTY WRUNG FROM A TYRANT

²⁶From a cartoon reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 267.

²⁷From a cartoon reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 258.

²⁸From a bogus Lincoln "prophecy" reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 269.

KING.²⁹

Even more false than these one-sided assertions concerning the Magna Carta were the rumors started by a rampant anti-Smith whispering campaign. It was rumored that Church authorities had bought a convent near Washington to house the Pope, who would move into his new quarters as soon as Smith was elected. Some churches in the South displayed pictures of Smith dedicating the Holland Tunnel under the Hudson River between New York and New Jersey. Many gullible church members were led to believe that the tunnel was not to lead to New Jersey, but to the basement of the Vatican, just 3,500 miles away.³⁰

It is unfortunate but true that even Methodist and Baptist pulpits in the South were used to broadcast evil reports concerning the Democratic candidate and his Church. In some sections of the South, preachers told their congregations that if Smith was elected the Pope would be housed in the White House. The people were also warned by their ministers that in the event of Smith's election, the only legal marriages would have to be performed by priests and that all American schools would be "Romanized." The widespread use of the pulpit for

²⁹Myers, op. cit., p. 324.

³⁰Alfred E. Smith, Up to Now (New York: The Viking Press, 1929), p. 413.

political purposes became such a notorious scandal that late in the campaign the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church passed a resolution ordering that the Church was not to be used for political ends.³¹

Prominent individuals as well as political and church groups helped to fan the flames of religious intolerance. Bishop James Cannon of the Methodist Church stated in public that Catholics taught that no Protestant could be saved, that the United States government was morally obliged to promote and profess the Catholic faith, that all non-Catholic marriages were adulterous, and that public schools were a damnable heresy.³²

The Reverend J. M. Haldeman of the First Baptist Church, Broadway at Seventy-Ninth Street, New York City, in one of his sermons maintained that the ambition of the Romanists was to make America Catholic. Further, he declared that the great issue in the campaign was not Prohibition, but whether a Catholic or a Protestant would rule the country.³³

Another New York City minister who preached against Smith was Reverend B. J. Wilkinson of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In one of his sermons, he declared that the Pope backed Smith

³¹Myers, op. cit., pp. 325-326.

³²Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 379.

³³Myers, op. cit., p. 318.

for financial reasons as well as for religious ones. "The supreme head of Roman Catholicism tells that America is the Vatican's greatest benefactor. No wonder he wants Al Smith as President. The greatest revenue by Rome today comes from America," declared the cleric.³⁴

Perhaps the greatest use of the pulpit as an organ for spreading anti-Smith and anti-Catholic views was made in the South. The Reverend John Ham of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta often preached against the "Romanized and liquorized" Democratic presidential candidate and the "insidious propaganda of the New York newspapers, which are under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and the liquor interests."³⁵

Dr. Bob Jones, a widely-known Methodist evangelist in the South, although a fiery prohibitionist, repeatedly declared, "I'd rather see a saloon on every corner than a Catholic in the White House." Further, he told his many revival audiences that Catholics were idol worshippers who didn't believe in Christ.³⁶

Besides giving impassioned sermons against Smith and his Church, many Protestant ministers cooperated with the Klan in distributing anti-Catholic literature. The Reverend V. de Francesco, pastor of the Methodist Church in Paterson, New Jersey,

³⁴News item in the New York Times, July 3, 1928, p. 3.

³⁵News item in the New York Times, July 16, 1928, p. 4.

³⁶Myers, op. cit., p. 326.

was arrested for distributing handbills without a license. These circulars which the minister was handing out announced a coming Klan meeting and contained such expressions as "men and women, keep the Roman menace out."³⁷

Not only ministers, but influential public figures were outspoken critics of Smith because of his Catholicism. Perhaps the most notorious and fanatical government official opposed to the "Romanist" presidential candidate was Senator Thomas J. Heflin of Alabama, who personally carried on a vigorous campaign "against the effort to Romanize the government of the United States." In a speech at Ellwood Park, New York, long a headquarters of Klan activities in that part of the state, Heflin gave an impassioned speech against the Catholic Church before a crowd of 1,000, one hundred of whom were guards assigned to protect the life of the speaker.³⁸ While the Senator was urging his listeners to help preserve American ideals against the force of Roman Catholicism, the Police "passed among the crowd, feeling in an unobtrusive manner the pockets of the bystanders, "hoping to detect those who might be carrying guns." Heflin was able to complete his speech by proclaiming that "the day is coming when every Protestant in the United States will

³⁷ News item in the New York Times, October 4, 1928, p.2.

³⁸ News item in the New York Times, July 6, 1928, p. 23.

thank God there is a Klan. It is the bulwark of the nation."³⁹

Rigid police precautions were also taken when the Senator spoke against the Catholic Church at an Independence Day celebration before 25,000 Klansmen at the corner of Locust Avenue and Rockaway Boulevard in Jamaica, New York. Smith had also been asked by Klan leader, Major Emmet D. Smith, to address this gathering, being guaranteed "absolute safety... no heckling, no disorder, no distasteful circumstances or appearances" if he did so, but he declined, excusing himself by maintaining that he had two previous commitments.⁴⁰

In a lecture at Woodbridge, New Jersey, Senator Heflin gave a speech on "The Dangers that Threaten American Government." This two hour diatribe against the Roman Catholic Church was given in an open amphitheater in back of the Ku Klux Klan Kastle, and the sponsors charged fifty cents admission and an extra fifty cents to a dollar for a chair. After the lecture "Hoover for President" buttons and anti-Smith and anti-Catholic literature were distributed.⁴¹

Many people like Senator Heflin opposed Smith for his religion; still others were against the Democratic candidate because of either his Prohibition stand or his affiliations

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰News item in the New York Times, July 2, 1928, p. 2.

⁴¹News item in the New York Times, July 23, 1928, p. 6.

with Tammany Hall. All of these issues were so intimately related to one another that soon thousands and then possibly millions of Americans associated Catholicism with Wetness and Tammany Hall and Protestantism with Dryness and honesty in government. This makes it exceedingly difficult to determine how much opposition to the Democratic candidate and how much support for the Republican candidate and vice versa were the result of religious prejudice or sincere conviction concerning the continuance or repeal of Prohibition or the inadvisability of electing a man from the New York political machine.

With regard to Prohibition, Smith promised to enforce the law, but he strongly recommended the modification of the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment, leaving liquor control in the hands of the states.⁴² It was therefore not surprising that for those who sought the repeal of the Liquor Control Amendment, Smith was "the Moses who might point the way out of Prohibition."⁴³ On the other hand, Hoover gave faint praise to the "noble experiment," declared that he was against the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, and promised to work out the liquor problem constructively.⁴⁴

⁴²Alfred E. Smith, "Albany Acceptance Speech," Congressional Digest, VII (September, 1928), p. 237.

⁴³Ernest Gordon, The Wrecking of the Eighteenth Amendment (Francestown, New Hampshire: The Alcohol Information Press, 1943), p. 154.

⁴⁴Herbert Hoover, "Stanford Acceptance Speech," Congressional Digest, VII (September, 1928), p. 234.

It is relatively safe to say that in the South opposition to Smith as a Catholic and as a Wet was so closely intertwined that it was, in effect, one and inseparable. For the fundamentalist, non drinking Southerner, who like the W. C. T. U. believed that Prohibition was "God's present to the nation." The question was simply: "Shall Dry America, a country with prohibition imbedded in its Constitution elect a 'cocktail President?'"⁴⁵ As the governor of New York who fought against the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment, attempted to block the passage of the Mullen-Gage State Law Enforcement Code, and then after the passage of this act actively labored for its repeal, Smith was anathema to the dry Bible-belt. Southerners shuddered to think that Smith "had been a frequenter of saloons while they existed...had put his foot on the brass rail and blown the foam off the glass."⁴⁶

The most powerful organization opposed to Smith for his Wetness was the Anti-Saloon League, "a confederation...fanatic in its way in bringing about laws prohibiting the making and sale of liquor."⁴⁷ No less intensely antagonistic to Smith, both for his Catholicism and his stand on the Prohibition issue,

⁴⁵Herbert Asbury, The Great Illusion (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1950), p. 143.

⁴⁶James Cannon, "Catholic, Tammany, Wet," The Nation, CXXVII (July 4, 1928), p. 9.

⁴⁷Myers, op. cit., p. 317.

was Methodist Bishop James Cannon, probably the one man most responsible for injecting the religious issue into the campaign. As the leader of thirty-one dry groups at the Democratic Convention in Houston, he had opposed Smith's candidacy and agitated for and was instrumental in getting a pro-Prohibition plank in the party platform. When, however, Smith repudiated this plank and advocated modification of both the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment, Cannon bolted the Democratic Party in favor of the Dry Republicans, calling Smith's rejection of the party line "an action of brazen political effrontery" and "a shameless proposition of political double-dealing." Establishing headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, the cleric launched a campaign against Smith in fourteen Southern and border states. During the campaign instigated by Cannon, Smith was even accused of drinking from four to eight cocktails a day.⁴⁸

Joining Bishop Cannon in his zealous campaign against the Wet Democratic candidate were Bishop Mouzon of Charlotte, Bishop Moore of Dallas, and Bishop Du Bose of Nashville, all of whom were high ranking clerics in the Methodist Church. The four Dry churchmen issued a joint statement calling upon all the clergy and laity of the Church to oppose the "election to the Presidency of a man whose personal and official record both

⁴⁸Asbury, op. cit., pp. 324-326.

brand him as the outstanding enemy of national prohibition."⁴⁹

The popular Southern evangelist, Billy Sunday, gave numerous speeches in which he also condemned Smith's Prohibition stand. At the Ocean Grove, New Jersey auditorium, he preached on "crooks, cork screwers, bootleggers, and whiskey politicians," and proclaimed that "they shall not pass--even to the White House."⁵⁰

Ironically, these Protestant clergymen by vigorously opposing the election of Smith for his Wetness were doing exactly what they had for years been accusing the Catholic Church of doing. According to the New York Times, "if...an equal number of Catholic Bishops were to attempt to control the Catholic vote of this country, no one would be louder or fiercer in condemning them than these very same" Protestant ministers.⁵¹

Consistent with the Southern identification of alcohol with Catholicism, Bishop Cannon described Smith as being ecclesiastically as well as politically and personally Wet. After all, hadn't Osservatore Romano declared that the "attempt to enforce prohibition in America has become so useless, not to say dangerous, that it would be better to abolish it, especially since

⁴⁹News item in the New York Times, July 27, 1928, p. 1.

⁵⁰News item in the New York Times, September 2, 1928, p. 6.

⁵¹News item in the New York Times, July 29, 1928, p. 6.

unbridled passion is always more rampant as soon as there is an attempt to enforce complete abstinence?" Hadn't the Cardinal Archbishops of New York and Boston publicly criticized the "noble experiment?"⁵² Hadn't Cardinal O'Connell once stated that "Catholic tradition" befriended "the immemorial beverages of the old world?" Many Protestants and non-drinkers believed that there was "a well organized Catholic movement toward modification of the Volstead Law. The Catholic Church works steadily. Takes its time, knows how to get results, and is never in a hurry."⁵³

The campaign against Smith as a Wet was no less vicious than the opposition to him as a Catholic. One widely circulated four page leaflet entitled, "Thirty Reasons Why Protestants Should Be Sure to Vote for Alcohol Smith," warned that a vote for the Democratic candidate would "contribute a boy to fill a drunkard's grave; to furnish a daughter to add to the Red Light District by the gin-fizz route."⁵⁴

A cartoon featured in the Fellowship Forum was entitled, "Will Dry Protestants of the South Put Their Worst Foe in the White House?" It pictured Smith as a ruffian driving a loaded beer truck on which was this placard: "Make America 100%

⁵²Cannon, "Catholic, Wet, and Tammany," p. 9.

⁵³Gordon, op. cit., pp. 148, 153.

⁵⁴Myers, op. cit., p. 325.

Catholic and Illiterate." A priest was depicted running after the "booze wagon" yelling to Smith: "Mr. President, allow me to suggest that I will receive your confession and advise you." Next to this cartoon an article cautioned its readers that "hordes of satellites of the papal mind" that are steering the Smith campaign "were spreading a false rumor that even if elected Smith would be powerless to weaken the Liquor Prohibition Amendment or nullify the national prohibition law." According to The Fellowship Forum, "intimidated and controlled newspapers and dispensers of papal goose-grease to unwary Protestants are playing up this deceptive propaganda under the direction of the Jesuitical steering committee of the candidate of the Roman Catholic Church Party. The plan is to lull to sleep as many Protestant and dry votes as possible between now and November 6th."⁵⁵

The present writer does not wish nor is he capable of passing moral judgment on Prohibition. No doubt, the noble experiment did achieve some worthwhile social goals in curbing alcoholism and its attendant evils, but nonetheless this essentially Protestant reform measure was looked upon by many as an infringement of personal liberty; and, unfortunately, the Eighteenth Amendment, although noble in purpose, indirectly promoted thousands of illicit stills, encouraged organized

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 321.

gangs of bootleggers and racketeers, and stimulated the bloodiest crime wave in the nation's history. Large sections of the population began seriously questioning the value of Prohibition, and throughout the country many discernible signs prefigured the repeal of an experiment which had been an obvious failure. Ignoring the widespread violations and the general impotence of the law's mandate, many non-drinkers in the conservative South as well as in the North and West assumed the situation to be ideal. Treating Prohibition as a sacred and immutable institution, many Southern fundamentalists, almost in panic through fear of the unlikely partners of Liberalism and Catholicism as represented in Al Smith, used "every ruse that malicious scurrility could devise to combine Smith's religion...with the inevitable restoration of the liquor traffic."⁵⁶

Throughout the campaign, many people objected to Smith's Tammany Hall associations as well as to his views on the Liquor Control Amendment. Certain elements in the self-styled "aristocratic" South belittled his humble beginnings in the congested East Side of New York. According to the General Secretary of the American Protestant Alliance, as compared to the "dignified, intelligent" Republican candidate, Smith was the "brazen, blatant, and blaring...darling of Tammany."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 321.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 323.

One Reverend Doctor John Roach Straton of the Calvary Baptist Church in New York City declared that "the wicked shall turn into hell and all the nations that forget God, and if we Tammanize the United States by putting the greatest living Tammany tool into the Presidency we will deserve our fate."⁵⁸

Many Klan cartoons which were circulated throughout the country in 1928 attempted to show a connection between Smith's Tammany Hall affiliations and his Catholicism and Prohibition stand. One such cartoon entitled "Hail! Hail! The Gang's All Here!" pictured a corpulent Catholic priest embracing the Tammany Tiger with one arm and a red nosed drunk, representing the "Wet Crowd," with the other. All three were gazing upon a picture of Al Smith, their candidate for the presidency.⁵⁹

No doubt, many conservative "Anglo-Saxon" Southerners ever fearful of the rising influence and prominence of the Irish and Southern European immigrants and the Catholic Church, resented a presidential candidate who came up from the city streets via the Tammany Hall route rather than from a high class, established Protestant family.⁶⁰ Still many Americans, sincerely attracted to the "peerless leader of the people," took pride in

⁵⁸News item in the New York Times, September 3, 1928, p. 3.

⁵⁹From a Klan cartoon reproduced in Williams, op. cit., p. 160.

⁶⁰Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 378.

sharing in Smith's remarkable ascendancy from oblivion to national prominence. So powerful was Smith's appeal and so persuasive were his ardent publicists that it seemed as if Tammany Hall had been refurbished and purified by the Happy Warrior.⁶¹

⁶¹Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 723.

CHAPTER IV

THE REACTION TO THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE

Just as important as the prejudice provoked by Al Smith's candidacy was the reaction to it, not only by Catholics, but by Protestant leaders and by the general public as reflected in the secular press. So much attention has been given to the more undesirable and unpleasant aspects of the anti-Catholic propaganda broadcast during the campaign that many Americans are unaware of how this religious intolerance was received and how it has shaped enduring attitudes. This chapter addresses itself to the task of exploring this interesting aspect of the religious issue in the election of 1928.

Many Protestant clergymen publicly condemned the use of the pulpit for political ends. Warren A. Candler, Senior Bishop of the Methodist Church in the South, admonished his fellow ministers to "preach Christ and Him Crucified. Do not preach politics."¹ In an open letter which appeared in a Baptist magazine, The Christian Index, Doctor John D. Well cautioned preachers to remember that the pulpit was not theirs; "It is the Lord's, and His pulpit is not a political stump from which to make political speeches."² Besides preaching against

¹News item in the New York Times, July 17, 1928, p. 3.

²News item in the New York Times, July 26, 1928, p. 4.

using the Church as a political rostrum, many ministers refused to collaborate with obviously political organizations. The Reverend A. J. Gearhard of the First Methodist Church of Charlestown, West Virginia refused to allow the W.C.T.U. to meet in his church, justifying his action by saying "it is not so important to know who is the President as to know who is Christ Crucified."³

Doctor Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University told Michael Williams, a prominent Catholic writer, that he was sorrowfully surprised to find how widespread was anti-Catholic sentiment in circles quite far removed from the Ku Klux Klan. Said Doctor Butler:

I take occasion to record the fact that no one who loves his country and who has any comprehension of the intellectual and spiritual foundations on which it rests can be otherwise than deeply moved and profoundly shocked by the widespread exhibitions of ignorance, intolerance and religious bigotry manifested on every side.

To what a pass has the nation come when millions of those who have passed through the common schools, and many of them also through institutions of higher education, are still willing weapons of a religious hate and a malice that are as immoral as they are un-Christian and anti-American! Does all this mean that somewhere in the not distant future another Gibbon is preparing a world-shaking work on the decline and fall of Christianity?

What a travesty it is on our much-vaunted progress that in this year of grace, nineteen hundred and twenty-eight, we should see repeating on a gigantic scale the worst practices of the Spanish Inquisition, of the Puritan persecutions and of the witch hunters, all of which we had

³News item in the New York Times, July 25, 1958, p. 2.

fondly supposed to belong to an almost forgotten past!

The foundations of America are under attack. A vast army of straight-thinking, fine feeling, broad-minded, liberal men and women should spring to their defense in a way that will make their complete and permanent defense both quick and secure. This is no time for cowardice, time-servers, legalistic word-splitters or "Well, Now's."⁴

Other non-Catholic churchmen and laymen, agreeing with Bishop Cannon that Smith's religion was a legitimate issue, joined with The Fellowship Forum in describing those who condemned the use of Smith's Catholicism in assuring his defeat and Hoover's victory as being "the pin-headed white-livered crowd; the jealous or foolish...the posing popularity seeking who will betray their cause for a few pats on the back from a crowd that is looking for the chance to knife them."⁵

Disagreeing with those who made religion an issue in the electioneering, many American newspapers, probably the majority, supported Smith's plea for tolerance and condemned those who attacked him for his Catholicism. The Louisville Courier-Journal, the Memphis Commercial-Appeal, the Nashville Tennessean, the Atlanta Constitution, the Columbia Record, the Montgomery Advertiser, and the Miami News--all of these Southern newspapers praised the courage and candor of the governor's Oklahoma City speech, in which he deplored the use of religion in the campaign,

⁴Williams, op. cit., pp. 290-291.

⁵Myers, op. cit., p. 323.

rebuked those Republican leaders who were not above using religious intolerance to the advantage of Hoover and the party's cause, appealed to Democrats to be true to the principles of Thomas Jefferson, and condemned those who were sowing the seeds of religious strife.⁶

"It is religion that is at the bottom of the whole movement against Smith," declared the Norfolk Virginia-Pilot, and the Hartford Courant, a Republican newspaper, found it hard to believe that the propaganda used against the Democratic candidate and his Church "should convince or fool anybody when access to the truth is so easily available..., but the fact remains that thousands have been poisoned by it."⁷

Other journals like the New York Evening Post, although disapproving of the use of Smith's Catholicism in the campaign, felt that the governor had made too much of the religious issue in his Oklahoma City speech, for "by assuming the good faith of the majority of his fellow citizens and ignoring the minority of bigots, he would have gone through without making bigotry his main, emotional issue." Another editorial in the same newspaper stated that the governor's anti-intolerance speech brought "the Smith campaign squarely back of the half-boastful, half-cry baby stage." The Kansas City Star and the Indianapolis Star

⁶Anonymous, "The Religious Issue in the Open," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 13, 1928), pp. 7, 8, 9.

⁷Ibid., p. 9.

supported this opinion by agreeing that the Democratic candidate had put too much emphasis on "petty" intolerance.⁸

In his Oklahoma City Speech, Smith declared that "the cry of Tammany Hall is nothing more or less than a red herring that is pulled across the trail in order to throw us off the scent. I know what's behind it, it's nothing more or less than my religion." Some newspapers objected to the governor's statement that his Tammany Hall affiliations were being used as a screen for religious prejudice. The Indianapolis News bluntly commented that it was hardly tenable to believe that Tammany was a front for religious intolerance. Maintaining that it wasn't fair to charge that a man who opposed Tammany Hall was a man who opposed Smith because he was a Catholic, the New York Herald agreed with the Philadelphia Inquirer when it expressed the belief that Smith talked religion to divert attention from Tammany.⁹

Still other journals refused to believe that Prohibition was always used to cover up a deeper antagonism for Smith as a Roman Catholic. "There are thousands of sincere drys who actually believe in Prohibition," declared the Camden Post, and "without considering Smith's religion, they oppose him because they think of him as the enemy of the dry cause."¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 8.

⁹Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰Ibid.

Consistent with the press's interpretation of its right to journalistic freedom, newspapers like the Portland Oregonian, although deploring religious hatred, stubbornly refused to put the religious issue beyond the pale of discussion, declaring that they could discuss

...anything and everything about a candidate for the Presidency, even the kind of hat he wears and the breadth of his smile, and they do it in spite of everything that may be done by Chairman Work and Chairman Raskob to restrain them.¹¹

The reaction on the part of Catholics to the religious intolerance of the campaign was mixed. Whereas ranking Catholic prelates refrained absolutely from entering into the controversy surrounding Smith's religious beliefs, Catholic publications, being considerably more articulate, expressed disdain for those who professed anti-Catholic views, attempted to vindicate Tammany Hall, belittled Prohibition, and defended the teachings of the Church. Still, all Catholics, whether liberal or conservative, Dry or Wet, prelate or pauper, agreed that the Church should commence a vast public relations program in an attempt to counteract the falsehoods being spread by those who opposed Catholicism.

Even before Smith's Oklahoma City speech, Bishop James A. Griffin of Springfield, Illinois, issued an official directive to all the priests in his diocese. Believing that the

¹¹ibid.

country was in the midst of a political campaign which had attracted the attention of the whole world, the Midwestern prelate felt compelled to declare that "the Catholic Church, true to her consistent historical position throughout the entire history of our country, takes no part in this campaign."¹²

Further Bishop Griffin stated:

We therefore expect, and should circumstance warrant, we command all priests of our diocese to leave to those outside the Catholic Church the un-holy, unjust, unwise, and un-American task of dragging religion into partisan politics.

We issue this order not because any of our priests have been guilty but merely as a protection to one and all during a campaign where bitterness is being fostered by the forces of bigotry; and as a proof to the world that we mean what we say when we assert today, as our predecessors asserted in their day, that the Catholic Church is not interested in partisan politics.¹³

The Catholic clergy's complete public detachment from the religious issue is also illustrated by a letter written to the New York Tribune by Father Patrick F. Seanlan, editor of The Tablet, a Roman Catholic weekly published by the Diocese of Brooklyn. Quoting from Bishop O'Reilly of Fargo, North Dakota, Seanlan pointed out that

You will find no Catholic prelate, or anyone who has a right to speak in the name of the Catholic Church, denouncing the candidate of one of the great parties and indorsing the candidate of another. Under every President the Church has made splendid progress, and in her labors to extend the

¹²Williams, op. cit., p. 284.

¹³Ibid., pp. 284-285.

kingdom of God she never encountered any oppressive legislation. She is bound up with no party politics, and no voice that you are bound to respect will ever speak to you otherwise than I am speaking. My advice to you, then, is this: Cast your vote for the candidate who in your opinion has the clearest light to do good, and who has the courage to follow that light.¹⁴

Doubtless, the restraint exercised by the Catholic clergy and hierarchy in not lashing back at the attacks made upon Smith and the Church made a profound impression on many Americans. Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the Atlantic Monthly, in a letter written to the New York Sun asked that he be allowed

...to bear public and admiring testimony to the dignity, the forbearance, and the good citizenship of the Roman Catholic clergy in America. I doubt indeed whether our history affords us an instance of a large and cohesive body of men, who, under the bitterest provocation, have better kept their self-control and self-respect.¹⁵

Sedgwick believed that the Catholic Church, although quite alien to most Americans, had taught the country a lesson in manners and morals. Truly, the Catholic Church in America was in every sense American, and the Americanism so often preached by Ireland and Gibbons was being put into practice by Al Smith, and whereas he condemned "Protestant bigotry" to the limbo where it belongs, the editor declared that "the conduct of the Church, high above reproach in this bad crisis, will not

¹⁴Anonymous, "Governor Smith's Religion," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 20, 1928), p. 32.

¹⁵From Ellery Sedgwick's Letter to the New York Sun, as reproduced in Williams, op. cit., pp. 286-87.

be forgotten."¹⁶ Obviously, Sedgwick's sentiments represented the most favorable appraisal of the Church's conduct during the campaign; nonetheless, the Catholic clergy, in this instance, deserved the praise given it, even if the editor's letter was fulsome.

In an effort to make the American public believe that the Catholic Church was not engaged in a conspiracy to put Smith into the White House as a prerequisite to an eventual Catholic coup d'etat, a vast public information campaign was organized, perhaps spontaneously, to spread the Church's side of the religious issue. Accordingly, John J. Naskob, Smith's campaign manager, released the following quotations of prominent Catholic leaders to the secular press:

Archbishop Ireland: "To Priest, to Bishop or to Pope, who should attempt to rule in matters civil and political, to influence the citizen beyond the range of their own orbit of jurisdiction that are the things of God, the answer is made: 'Back to your sphere of right and duties, back to things of God.'"

Cardinal Gibbons: "In matters concerning the civil welfare, or that of this country, every Roman Catholic is as free as any other citizen to act as his wisdom and conscience dictate."

Cardinal Newman: "Were I a soldier or sailor in her Majesty's service in a just war, and should the Pope suddenly bid Catholics to retire from her service, I should not obey him."

Bishop England: "Let the Pope and Cardinals and all the powers of the Catholic world united make the least encroachment

¹⁶Ibid.

on that Constitution, we will protect it with our lives. Summon a general council. Let that council interfere in a mode of our electing but a turnkey in a prison--we deny the right; we deny the usurption."

According to Haskob,

These statements clearly show that the citizens of America have nothing to fear in the way of Catholic religious domination in American civil or political affairs through the election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency.¹⁷

Furthermore, Smith's campaign manager pointed out that there was not a single instance during the Democratic candidate's long administration as governor of New York that he favored a Catholic because he was a Catholic. Neither did the Catholic Church interfere in any way whatsoever in the government of the State of New York. Nor has anyone charged Catholics who have occupied high judicial positions up to the Chief Justiceship of the United States Supreme Court of being unpatriotic or unnecessarily favorable to their co-religionists.¹⁸

Besides attempting to assure the American people that Smith, if elected to the presidency, would not be under the thumb of the Pope, the Catholic Church endeavored to present its teachings to the public in as clear as terms as possible, hoping that lucid and sincere explanations would help to dispel the ignorance and resentment which was being aroused in the

¹⁷Anonymous, "Governor Smith's Religion," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 20, 1926), p. 32.

¹⁸Ibid.

minds of many people by the accusations made against the Church. In an issue of Current History, this excerpt from "The Parish Monthly" of the Church of Our Lady of Mercy in the Bronx was reprinted.

Catholics do not believe-

- That the pope is God.
- That the pope can do no wrong.
- That the pope has temporal rights in America.
- That the pope can claim their political allegiance.
- That the pope can nullify laws, oaths, and contracts at will.

They do not believe-

- That the marriages of Protestants are invalid.
- That the children of Protestants are illegitimate.
- That married Protestants are living in sin.
- That the contract with Protestants may be broken.
- That Protestants may be hated and persecuted.
- That Protestants will all be damned.

They do not believe-

- That public schools are evil.
- That they ought not be supported by taxes.
- That education ought not to be free and universal.
- That it ought not be compulsory only when necessary.

They do not believe-

- That they can buy forgiveness of sin.
- That they can purchase freedom from purgatory.
- That they can get indulgence to commit sin.
- That sin can be forgiven without repentance.

They do not believe-

- That images may be worshipped.
- That any body or thing may be worshipped or adored.
- "in the heavens above, or the earth below, or the waters beneath the earth" but the one true God.¹⁹

¹⁹William Franklin Sands, "Catholics Uphold Americanism," Current History, XXVI (June, 1927), p. 574.

Although the Knights of Columbus took no action as a body during the campaign, other Catholic groups kept up strenuous efforts to meet the general charges made against the Church by the deluge of articles, pamphlets, and books which abounded in attacks on Catholicism. The Catholic Laymen's League of Georgia distributed an abundance of informative literature concerning the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church and wrote numerous letters to Georgia newspapers, answering many charges made against Catholics. Our Sunday Visitor, a popular weekly published in Huntington, Indiana, established an information bureau which published and distributed thousands of booklets in an attempt to counteract the more blatant written assaults being directed against the Church of Rome. The Paulist Press, the America Press, and the Catholic Truth Society, all of New York, also participated in the Church's information campaign.²⁰

The Calvert Associates of New York printed and circulated a popular booklet entitled The Calvert Handbook of Catholic Facts. Incidental to the publication of this little book, a committee of prominent Protestants, Catholics, and Jews placed full-page advertisements in daily newspapers throughout the country in order to secure as wide a sale of the handbook as possible. Some newspapers refused to run the advertisement,

²⁰Williams, op. cit., pp. 287-288.

maintaining that it was a sly effort on the part of the Democrats to use the religious issue in favor of Smith.²¹

Nonetheless, several hundred thousand copies of the Handbook of Catholic Facts were sold, and orators, public officials, and newspapers made extensive use of the information contained in the booklet. Unfortunately, the book was hastily written; and it, therefore, contained numerous errors. Its publication was stopped, despite the demands of people in the South for additional copies of the handbook.²²

Some Catholic publications like the Catholic World did more than attempt to spread the "true" teachings of the Church; they lashed back at the critics of both Smith and the Catholic Church. The Catholic World described the intolerant foes of the Democratic candidate and his Church as being "impervious to reason" and completely ignorant of the real teachings of Catholicism or the principles of Democracy.²³ It agreed with the New York Times in labeling anti-Catholicism as a "slimy and un-American superstition which has threatened to dominate public life."²⁴ With regard to the Marshall letter, Bertrand

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Anonymous, "Editorial Comment," The Catholic World, CXXVII (April, 1928), p. 104.

²⁴Bertrand L. Conway, "The Pope and the Constitution," The Catholic World, CXXVII (June, 1928), p. 320.

L. Conway, a noted Catholic writer, branded it as being "a lawyer's trick to prejudice the jury," for although the New York lawyer showed himself to be kindly disposed towards Smith, he then proceeded to denounce the governor's principles with vehemence, still claiming to be friendly and objective.²⁵

Besides defending the Church and condemning her enemies, many Catholics attempted to refurbish Tammany Hall and to point out the failures of Prohibition. Charles Willis Thompson suggested that perhaps Tammany wasn't "the rottenest den of political infamy that ever existed on American soil."²⁶ Others went even further and maintained that

...today Tammany was as clean and as decent as any political machine in any state. In its worst days Tammany could not hold a candle to the corrupt machines of Pennsylvania, Illinois, or Indiana, not to mention the machine in Washington, that was responsible for the iniquities of the Harding regime. The Tammany issue is obviously unreasonable, and... rooted in prejudice...²⁷

With regard to Prohibition, Monsignor John A. Ryan declared that it was "emotionalism, fanaticism, lack of balanced judgment, disregard of democracy and of individual rights, excessive political pressure, improper activity of the churches" which contributed to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment.²⁸

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Charles Willis Thompson, "The Tammany Monster," The Catholic World, CXXVIII (October, 1928), p. 5.

²⁷Anonymous, "Editorial Comment," The Catholic World, CXXVII (April, 1928), p.103.

²⁸John A. Ryan, "The Anti-Saloon League," The Catholic World, CXXVIII (November, 1927), p.137.

The editor of The Catholic World believed that "Prohibition is a farce, a tragic farce, and something ought to be done about it."²⁹ Others maintained that if Smith, per impossible, was elected, "the country...would not get wetter more rapidly under him than any other man, Republican or Democrat."³⁰

Obviously, many Americans did not feel that Prohibition had been a complete failure, that Smith had purified Tammany Hall, and that religion should not be an issue in the campaign; consequently, they voted against the Democratic candidate and defeated his presidential aspirations. Needless to say, many Catholics were deeply disappointed that Smith had lost the election. Feeling a need to rationalize or perhaps being genuinely philosophical, many Catholics acclaimed Smith as the real victor in the contest. Said the editor of The Catholic World:

Congratulations to Governor Smith! In all simplicity and sincerity, with no attempt at irony or paradox, The Catholic World salutes him as victor in the recent contest. Our Church from the beginning has had a custom of felicitating martyrs. She calls the day of their death, dies natalis, "birthday," and She considers them not victors but conquerers. So, with true Catholic instinct, we congratulate the real hero of the campaign. He preferred honesty rather than success, outspoken frankness rather than diplomatic silence, and defeat rather than dishonor. He gave

²⁹Anonymous, "Editorial Comment," The Catholic World, CXXVII (April, 1928), p. 103.

³⁰Anonymous, "Editorial Comment," The Catholic World, CXXVIII (December, 1928), p. 362.

voice to what all thoughtful people in America have been thinking: that prosperity does not excuse corruption; that prohibition is impossible; that the attempt to enforce it is farcial, tragic, and demoralizing; that something can be done and must be done to save the country from hypocrisy; that religious bigotry is rampant, and threatens our national existence; that the power trust is laying plans to throttle prosperity.³¹

Some emotional Catholics went to the extreme of proclaiming Smith to be a prophet, "and like a prophet he was slain, a martyr to the truth." Still, there was no need for despair, for the children of those that killed the prophet like the children of the Bible would build the martyred hero a monument. And

...Smith's monument is already a-building. Its foundation is laid in the hearts of some sixteen million people, who not only voted for him but gave him an affection the like of which has not been seen since the days of Abraham Lincoln.³²

Many more Catholics believed that the "god of Prosperity" had assured Smith's defeat. They were nauseated by the cry of Prosperity, which, in the opinion of the editor of The Catholic World, was preached in place of righteousness. More than a few Americans wondered if the "insidious tactics" of the Power Trust, the treason and corruption of Teapot Dome, the defalcations in the Veteran's Bureau, and the "prodigious graft" of the Ohio gang had been a fair price to pay for "the chicken in

³¹Ibid., p. 354.

³²Ibid., p. 355.

every pot, and the automobile in every garage."³³ It was Prosperity which stuffed the belly but stifled the soul. Smith was defeated by

...the golden statue, mutatis mutandis,...the Great God Prosperity; the jealous god who will have none other god beside him; a wicked god whose crimes must not be rebuked; whose worship justifies all vices and covers all sins; a cruel god who burns in a fiery furnace all who do not prostrate themselves abjectly before him; in a word the Great God Prosperity,...the idol refurbished--the Almighty Dollar!³⁴

Even though it was the Republicans who harped and harped on Prosperity to the exclusion of almost all else, the Democrats were also guilty of giving into the god of the Almighty Dollar, for they flung out the banner of "Honesty and Prosperity." "If you preach honesty, why lug in Prosperity?" asked the editor of The Catholic World.³⁵

As one might expect, many Catholics believed that "those who fought Smith because of his religion found the prohibition issue a convenient camouflage." After all, Smith wasn't exactly the sponge that would wash the Eighteenth Amendment off the blackboard. According to one Catholic writer, he couldn't even change one syllable of the "mendacious" Volstead Act without the consent of Congress, and Congress couldn't repeal either

³³Ibid., p. 356.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

the Act or the Amendment without a mandate from the electorate. Americans must have realized this, and yet the Democratic candidate was still called a friend of the saloon and a protector of prostitution. Actually,

...Smith's sin was not that he threatened to bring back "booze." You can't bring back what has never been away. His sin was that he said out loud to a hundred million people what you and I say to one another.³⁶

Some of Smith's co-religionists found it hard to believe that the American people could register their indignation of Tammany Hall and conveniently forget the scandal of Teapot Dome. The editor of The Catholic World was convinced that the public was not oblivious to the "crimes" of the Republicans, and had a Woodrow Wilson or a Grover Cleveland run in Smith's place, the G. O. P. would have gone down to ignominious defeat. Why then didn't the American People vote against the corruption of the Republican machines, in Washington and elsewhere, by casting their ballots for the Democratic candidate? Without taking Smith's Tammany Hall affiliations into consideration and being momentarily unaware of Coolidge's honest administration, more than a few Catholics, and not without some justification, maintained that many Americans were more fearful of Smith's religion than the graft of the Republican Party.³⁷

³⁶Ibid., p. 359.

³⁷Ibid.

There were those Catholics who believed that honesty, not his Tammany connections, was one of Smith's biggest "crimes." Whereas Hoover was diplomatic and non-committal, Smith was candid almost to the point of being naive. According to one Catholic writer, the American public has oftentimes been suspicious of honesty. Yes, we do have the legend of "Honest Abe," but when Lincoln ran for the presidency, he was called the most vile names, and even when he was in the White House, the flood of vituperation did not ebb. In truth, it wasn't until his death that his fellow countrymen recognized and admired his true genius. Rather grandiloquently, The Catholic World declared that Smith was destined for a similar fate.³⁸

Catholics were naturally pained to see one of their own number rejected principally or even partially because of his religion. "But we can survive the slap," declared one Catholic. The Church could take the blow and wait for more propitious times. Furthermore, numerous Catholics claimed to be unconcerned "about the political victory of one who happens to be Catholic." Proudly, they pointed out that, even though no Catholic had ever been president, the Church had grown from 25,000 to 20,000,000 in just a century and a quarter. Further, the editor of The Catholic World boldly stated that the Church didn't even want a Democratic president, pointing out that

³⁸Ibid., p. 357.

Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft understood the Catholic Church better than Wilson.³⁹

Tending to exaggerate, some Catholics declared that their "zeal was for principle, and not for personal advantage, in the recent election. We were more anxious about the Constitution than the Catholic Church." They also maintained that the Church would not wither up and blow away now that its members had been told--"with such unnecessary and brutal over-emphasis"--that a Catholic can not aspire for the presidency. Actually, many Catholics felt that they were more in harmony with true Americanism than those who were supposed to have attempted to deny Catholics the right to be Americans. Further, numerous Catholics honestly believed that the "triple alliance"--the Ku Klux Klan, the anti-Saloon League, and the cohorts of Bishop Cannon--was the real loser in the campaign. Some went so far as to declare that if this "unholy" alliance held together and functioned with equal success once more, it would die with victory.⁴⁰

With obvious emotion and rashness, and possibly with a degree of rancor, the editor of The Catholic World expressed the belief that one more victory like the election of 1928 would ruin Protestantism. A few more such victories would make the

³⁹Ibid., p. 359.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 358, 361.

Constitution a scrap of paper. "And when this comes to pass," moaned the journalist, "the beautiful experiment in government begun in 1776 will be ended." Lincoln's prayer and prophecy at Gettysburg would be voided, and instead of having a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, we would have "a government of the bigots, by the bigots, and for the bigots." Invoking the name of God, this Catholic prayed that bigotry would not be the death knell of the republic; rather let it "be hoisted with its own petard." Then the nation would begin to live. Jefferson, Lincoln, and Smith would be vindicated.⁴¹

Despite the excessive nature of this reaction to Smith's defeat, it does contain some truth; and, doubtless, it does represent what many Catholics must have felt. What is most uncanny about the The Catholic World's appraisal of the election results was the truth of its prophecies. Prosperity was throttled; Prohibition was repealed; the Harding administration and other corrupt Republican political machines as well as Tammany Hall received adverse verdicts from the bar of history, and Smith has been called a champion of honesty, justice, and fair play.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 362-363.

CHAPTER V

ELECTION ANALYSIS

On the eve of the election both candidates expected victory, but when all the votes were finally counted, Hoover won by a landslide. The Republican candidate received 444 electoral votes to Smith's 87.¹ The usually solidly Democratic South deserted the party candidate, and Hoover was victorious in Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia-- states never carried by the G. O. P. since Reconstruction days. Although the Happy Warrior carried Massachusetts and Rhode Island, he lost his own state of New York. Despite the fact that the Democrats won in only eight states, Smith's popular vote of 15,016,443 was impressive when compared to the nine million votes given to James M. Cox and the eight million votes given to John W. Davis in 1928. Hoover received 21,392,190 votes; Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate, was given 267,420 votes, and William Z. Foster, the Communist candidate, received only 48,770.²

The prevalence of so many social and political issues and the scarcity of any vital political issues makes it difficult

¹Edwin Emerson, Hoover and His Times (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1932), p. 89.

²Barck and Blake, op. cit., p. 429.

to ascribe with any unshaken confidence what share of the outcome of the election should be given to any one issue. Still there are those who maintain that in the election there was a "dominant" issue, which because of its overriding importance would compel the voter to cast his ballot for the opponent of the one for whom it would have been cast if this issue had not been present.³ "Prohibition, Prosperity, Protestantism, and Prejudice" were most often mentioned as the weighty issues in spelling Smith's defeat.

It is almost certain that the election was not decided, one way or the other, on political issues. Both Smith and Hoover advocated remarkably similar tariff, farm, and water control programs. The Democratic candidate, in view of the unsavory record of the political machine of which he was a leader, was understandably reluctant to bring up the issue of corruption in government, specifically the Republican oil scandals. Even when Smith did present progressive programs with regard to government reorganization, farm relief, and unemployment, the people didn't "care enough about these issues to rally to his standard on account of them."⁴ Actually the absence of any decisive political issues was clearly an advantage

³Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 377.

⁴Fabian Franklin, "Analyzing the Election Results," Current History, XXIX (December, 1928), pp. 370-371.

to the party in power. "Normally the Republicans were in the majority. They had the stronger political machine, the immense strength derived from Federal patronage, better party discipline, an overpowering business and journalistic support, and more money--always more money."⁵

An excellent case can be made for prosperity as the dominant issue in the campaign. Granted there was a degree of farm distress in the Middle West, but the extent of this agricultural recession was grossly overestimated by both sides, for "if the farmers were [in large numbers] anything as badly off as they had been represented, they would have voted for Smith."⁶ Even though unemployment was increasing, and the coal and textile industries were in a state of minor depression, "taking the population as a whole...no people in any country... were better fed, better housed, better clothed than were the people of the United States, with more leisure time and more educational and recreational facilities than any other people ever had."⁷

During the campaign, Harvey Firestone, the wealthy tire manufacturer, stated that

⁵Frank R. Kent, "The Democrats in 1928," Scribner's Magazine, LXXXVI (November, 1927), p. 516.

⁶Franklin, loc. cit., p. 371.

⁷James Cannon, "Causes of Governor Smith's Defeat," Current History, XXIX (December, 1928), p. 373.

...for the most part prosperity has been quite generally diffused in the United States during the past four years ...I believe that under the Republican administration of Mr. Coolidge we have had a clear evidence of good statesmanship, and that the election of Mr. Hoover will continue this prosperity which is now so well established.⁸

Feeling a sense of well being in the capitalist order, the majority of the electorate shared Firestone's confidence in "American business and its political instrument--the Republican Party"⁹ and consequently turned a deaf ear to Smith's oftentimes highly constructive and imaginative proposals. Therefore "as an explanation of the Republican victory--not indeed the full extent of the victory, but of a victory of decisive proportions--prosperity is in itself quite sufficient."

It must be pointed out that prosperity didn't necessarily mean that Smith's defeat was certain before the campaign began. However, it does indicate that his election would have only been possible if there had been an issue or factor "as sweeping and powerful as that which prosperity made in favor of Hoover."¹⁰ As has been previously stated, there was no such issue in the campaign.

Rightly or wrongly, many Americans in practice associated Republicanism with prosperity. Further, it is a basal yet nonetheless obvious fact that during the previous sixty years,

⁸Harvey Firestone, "Smith, Hoover, and Prosperity," Forum, LXXX (November, 1928), p. 750.

⁹Anonymous, "This Week," New Republic, LVI (November 14, 1928), p. 366.

¹⁰Franklin, loc. cit., p. 371.

Americans had elected twelve Republican presidents and only four Democratic presidents.¹¹ Wishing not to upset the apple-cart of normalcy and fully enjoying both the prosperity and moral insensitivity of the post war era, "probably the majority of the voters [except in the South] made their choices between the candidates mainly if not exclusively on the basis of habitual party affiliation."¹² Smith himself must have realized that even before the campaign began the odds against his election from the point of view of tradition and precedent were two to one. This factor should not be overlooked.

Actually, many disillusioned liberals interpreted the results of the election as being but another indication of the strangle hold the Republican Party had on America. Being disgusted with Big Business, the "god of Prosperity," and the party which had given the country the Dohenys, the Sinclairs, the Falls, the Denbys, and the Daughertys, these progressive thinkers believed that the country had "again voted to continue in office a selfish and reactionary government, which should, for its sins, long ago have been reduced to impotence."¹³

Still, we should not for an instant depreciate either the ability or the vote attracting power of Herbert Hoover.

¹¹Cannon, "Causes of Governor Smith's Defeat," p. 373.

¹²Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 377.

¹³Anonymous, "Hoover Wins," Nation, CXXVII (November, 14, 1928), p. 510.

The Republican presidential candidate had traveled extensively, gained success as a mining engineer, served in various fields of government administration, ranging from foreign relations to agriculture, and had been justly acclaimed for his humanitarian efforts as the leader of post war relief organizations. Many Americans looked upon Hoover as a "national asset of incalculable value," whose "extraordinary prestige, at home and abroad, had not been fully capitalized for the benefit of his own people."¹⁴ Indeed, it would be difficult to discount Hoover himself as one of the most decisive factors in Smith's defeat.

Another issue which has been suggested as the dominant reason for Smith's failure in the election was his Tammany Hall affiliations. The present writer is inclined to reject the notion that Smith's connections with the New York City political machine had any major influence on the outcome of the election. It is to be admitted that some of the voters refrained from casting their ballots for the Democratic candidate because he was a symbol of the rising power of the "alien, non Anglo-Saxon" segment of our population, the man who not only came up from the city streets but represented both Tammany Hall and the

¹⁴George Horace Lorimer, "Hoover--A National Asset," Saturday Evening Post, CC (April, 1928), p. 32.

Catholic Church.¹⁵ Smith did challenge the Puritan ascendancy, and many Protestant voters throughout the country did react adversely to this challenge. Nonetheless, the vote against Smith for his "humble origins" was more than offset by those who, genuinely moved by the meteoric rise of the "heroic" leader of the people, did cast a yes vote for the Happy Warrior.

There are two reasons why the present writer believes that the Tammany Hall issue should be minimized when ascribing the appropriate degree of importance to the issues involved in the campaign and the consequent results at the polls. First, when the Tammany Hall issue was used, it was oftentimes closely connected with Smith's Catholicism and his Wetness, and even though many voters, especially in the South, did voice objection to the graft and corruption of the political machine of which Smith was the most prominent present day product, most of the electorate opposed the governor more for either his religion or his Prohibition stand than for his Tammany affiliations.

Second, despite the fact that Tammany Hall was the symbol of all corrupt political machines, it is difficult to believe that the American people could be highly sensitive to the notorious activities of Democratic political organizations like Tammany Hall and completely oblivious to the equally corrupt Republican administrations from the city ward to the Harding

¹⁵Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 378.

administration. It is true that Smith had been and was a loyal member of Tammany, but nonetheless he had also been honest, sincere, and deeply sympathetic with the working classes. No one could nor should gloss over the unsavory record of the New York political machine and its sticky-fingered, immigrant-exploiting leaders--men like Tweed, Croker, Foley, and Murphy. Neither could one describe the Hall as being merely a patriotic or charitable organization in view of its obvious political activities. Still, it is also true that the periodic corruption of Tammany had been more than matched and sometimes exceeded by Republican political machines elsewhere. "Obliterate the word Tammany, transfer the practices of the organization to a town less in the spotlight of the world's opinion, and cancel out the exceptionally rigorous exposures to which New Yorkers have subjected Tammany, and it would hardly be believed that the corruption practiced by Tammany differed much from that of dozens of other political machines of its time."¹⁶ The American people must have realized this.

In analyzing the results of the election many journalists, political scientists, and historians have completely overlooked a novel factor which could have had a crucial influence on the outcome of the voting. This new determining voice in national

¹⁶Walter Lippmann, "Tammany Hall and Al Smith," Outlook, CLXIII (February 1, 1928), p. 163.

politics was the vote of the women. Actually, the increase of women voters in some states was twenty-five per cent higher than it had been in 1924. Many women, although qualified to vote, had not done so four years earlier, simply because neither the issues nor the candidates aroused them. But in the election of 1928, the presence of issues like Religion, Prohibition, and Tammany Hall "afforded a rare basis for appeals to feminine susceptibility."¹⁷

Throughout the campaign a surprising percentage of the female electorate supported Hoover. Republican Women's Clubs were organized across the nation, and in order to drum up the vote for the party's candidate, the G. O. P. women campaigned vigorously among housewives and business and professional women.¹⁸ In the parlor and on the street, these Republican workers pleaded Hoover's cause. The Democrats also attempted to organize the female vote, but they were conspicuously less successful than the Republicans.¹⁹ Actually, many Democratic Women for Hoover Clubs flourished in various sections of the country.²⁰

¹⁷William Bennett Munro, "The Campaign in Retrospect," Yale Review, XVIII (December, 1928), p. 253.

¹⁸News item in the New York Times, September 6, 1928, p. 5.

¹⁹Munro, "The Campaign in Retrospect," p. 245.

²⁰News item in the New York Times, July 9, 1928, p. 2.

There are many possible reasons why women crossed party lines and voted for Hoover. No doubt, thousands of women, especially in the South and in the West, saw or thought they saw moral and social issues involved in the campaign. Generally speaking, the female voters were probably in favor of retaining Prohibition. More than men, they were more emotionally and morally sensitive to the evils of alcoholism. Further, women were doubtless more concerned with the unpleasant connotations created by Smith's affiliation with the corrupt Tammany machine. It is not unlikely that women, being somewhat more religious than men, were more easily swayed one way or the other by the religious issue.

It must also be admitted that the personality and upbringing of Al Smith were not that the majority of the women voters thought it should be in order to qualify for the dignified office of the presidency. On the other hand, Hoover's background, culture, personal tastes, and manners conformed to the female preconception of what a presidential candidate should be. Further, the Republican candidate's traditional association with "welfare work" was intensely appealing to women who had been taught to admire his humanitarianism through clubs, churches, and home magazines. And whereas the Democratic strategists had little appreciation of the effect of Smith's personality and his affiliations on the women's vote, the Republicans exploited this previously untapped source of voting strength and profited

enormously by so doing.²¹

Many women were also repelled by Smith's plump and unattractive wife, who was tasteless to the point of being gaudy. The Happy Warrior resented the jokes as to what figure his wife would make in the White House, and when a photographer asked her to take off some jewelry for a picture, Smith angrily burst out, "Leave Katie alone!"²² No doubt, many sophisticated female voters were offended by Smith's wife, and it is possible that some women voted against the Democratic candidate because of this aversion.

Smith refused to pretend that either he or his wife were anything but what they were. Al frankly admitted that he was a Catholic, a grandson of an Irish immigrant, and a poor boy from the sidewalks of New York. He refused to hedge when Hoover charged that he was taking the road to socialism and stood firm on his Prohibition views with the naive faith that his honesty and integrity would get across to the American people.²³

Besides the women's vote, there was another novel factor in the election which could have further assured Smith's defeat; this new phenomenon was the radio. The Presidential Campaign

²¹Munro, "The Campaign in Retrospect," p. 254.

²²Handlin, op. cit., p. 130.

²³Ibid.

of 1928 was the first one in which this new instrument of mass appeal was used, and unfortunately for the Democratic cause, Smith's heavy New York accent and his obvious lack of grammatical precision and oratorical eloquence might well have created unfavorable impressions in the minds of the American voters by conforming to the preconception of the Democratic candidate as being an illiterate and blatant product of Tammany Hall.

Many historians and political scientists, consistent with the traditional interpretation of the election, place the major responsibility for Smith's defeat upon the two issues of Prohibition and religion. As has been previously stated, it is difficult to distinguish between the opposition to Smith as a Catholic and the opposition to him as a Wet. During the campaign, the Springfield Republican declared that

...the connection between the religious aspect and the Prohibition aspect of this political contest is apparent in very much of the literature of the campaign. Start the religious topic and one runs into Prohibition in record time. Start on Prohibition and there is "Rome" just around the corner.²⁴

Not only in the South, but throughout the country the people themselves were unable in their own minds to differentiate between the two issues, yet the present writer is inclined to believe that generally speaking the opposition to the Democratic candidate because of his Catholicism overshadowed the animosity

²⁴Anonymous, "The Religious Issue in the Open," Literary Digest, XCIX (October 13, 1928), p. 7.

towards him as a foe of Prohibition. Still the potency of the liquor issue in the campaign is not to be drastically minimized, for as Will Rogers once warned,

...If you think this country ain't Dry, you just watch 'em vote; and if you think this country ain't Wet, you just watch 'em drink. You see, when they vote it's counted; but when they drink, it ain't. If you could register the man's breath that cast the ballot, that would be great for Al Smith. But the voting strength of the country is Dry.²⁵

Prohibition did figure largely in the campaign. Prohibition did unquestionably concern the American people. However, it loomed so prominently because individuals and organizations opposed to Smith on religious grounds oftentimes used his Wetness as a front for a deeper animosity for him because of his Catholicism. Actually, Smith never really seriously threatened the Eighteenth Amendment, and although he did recommend its eventual repeal, both he and the electorate must have realized that such action would require not only congressional support but favorable public opinion. In truth, Smith did little more than advocate comparatively minor changes in the Volstead Act. Therefore, "it seems unreasonable to believe that this would have caused the South to break a tradition of a hundred years standing and vote Republican."²⁶ Further, Smith could hardly have made a

²⁵Handlin, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁶Asbury, op. cit., pp. 325-326.

poorer job of enforcing Prohibition than Coolidge had made, and any man he might have appointed as Secretary of the Treasury would certainly not have put as much in the way of enforcement of the liquor laws as had Andrew Mellon.²⁷

Many newspapermen, historians, and political scientists like Wade H. Harris of the Charlotte, North Carolina Observer believed that "the liquor issue did not operate against Smith so potently as did the religious issue."²⁸ Others maintained that even if Smith had been a Dry Catholic, his chances for election would not have been materially improved. Conversely, a large percentage of journalists, among them Charles Michelson, maintained that if "Smith had been a Protestant, there would have been no doubt about his election."²⁹

The Nation declared that Hoover had won because of "Prejudice, Bigotry, Superstition, Intolerance, Hate, Selfishness, Snobbery, and Passion." Further, this left wing journal bluntly stated that Smith had been defeated because he didn't have "the right clothes, the right accent, the right education, the right association, and above all, the right faith."³⁰

²⁷Dixon Merritt, "Al Smith and the Solid South," Outlook, CXLVII (October 26, 1927), p. 237.

²⁸William H. Crawford, "What Will The South Do to Al Smith?," Outlook, CXLVII (November 2, 1927), p. 276.

²⁹Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 378.

³⁰Anonymous, "Hoover Wins," Nation, CXXVII (November, 1928), p. 510.

Many Catholics like Dr. John Ryan attempted to document a case for explaining Smith's defeat on the basis of the religious issue. This explanation for the results of the election goes something like this. The vote in Connecticut, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin was closely divided between Smith and Hoover. If Smith could have received just 10% of the vote cast for Hoover in these states he could have carried them and their electoral votes of 139. If the Democratic candidate had been able to garner 15% of the vote given to the Republican candidate in the states of Florida, Illinois, and Maryland, he would have carried them and thereby put 43 more electoral votes into his column. The total electoral votes so gained in addition to the ones he actually received would have given him three more than were necessary for his election. "No one who was acquainted with the extent of religious intolerance in these states can seriously doubt that these proportions of the persons supporting Hoover were so dominated by religious considerations that they would have voted for Governor Smith if he had been a Protestant."³¹

Still, it must be pointed out that just as there was an anti-Catholic vote, there was an anti-prejudice vote. Although it is virtually impossible to accurately estimate the extent of this vote, judging from the general attitude of the country and

³¹Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 380.

the reticence of many of those who claimed to be unaffected by religious prejudice, one would assume that the amount of the anti-intolerance vote, although possibly substantial, was small when compared with the voting power of those opposed to Smith because of his religion.

Neither are we to assume that the Catholic vote for Smith materially offset that of the prejudiced. Throughout the campaign numerous influential Catholics supported Hoover, and some Catholics, among them Judge Pierre Crabites, even feared that Smith's running for the presidency was a "serious menace to the Catholic religion," reasoning that Protestant America had not fully accepted Catholicism and that the attempt to push Smith down anyone's throat would draw the Church into a controversy where it would not have a fair opportunity to defend itself.³² Further, although doubtless the majority of both the clergy and the laity of the Catholic Church favored Smith's candidacy, few, if any, priests or bishops advocated the election of Smith from the pulpit.³³ Dire predictions concerning the formation of a militant Catholic political party failed to materialize, and throughout the campaign the majority of the Catholic clergy remained surprisingly quiet on the

³²Pierre Crabites, "It Is Time for A Catholic President?," Outlook, CXLVI (August 17, 1927), p. 505.

³³Ryan, "A Catholic View of the Election," p. 380.

religious issue. The Democratic party has oftentimes been powerful in the big cities where Catholic immigrants congregated. Ever since the election of 1884, the party of Jefferson and Jackson has been called a hotbed of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," and it is probable that Catholics, coming from the working classes, were more attracted to the Democrats than to the Republicans. If this is true, the majority of Catholic voters would have voted for the party candidate, whether he was a Protestant or a Catholic. For the above mentioned reasons it seems unlikely that the Catholic vote for Al Smith offset to any great extent the anti-Catholic vote.

This writer is reluctant to conclude that religion was the dominant factor in spelling Smith's defeat. No doubt, the governor's Catholicism was an important issue in the campaign, perhaps the most decisive, but the outcome of the election was not decided so much by the dominance of one issue over another as by the interaction of all the issues in the natural tension generated by this controversial campaign. Still, it is wrong to depreciate the importance of religious prejudice in the campaign and the voting results. Maybe Smith would not have won the election if he had been a Protestant, but the extent of his resounding defeat was doubtless due to the presence of a disturbing amount of anti-Catholicism among the American people. It is interesting to speculate if Hoover would have lost the election had he been a Catholic rather than a Protestant.

Besides the fact that the American public was not as tolerant as many had believed, there are other lessons which can be drawn from this election and the campaign which affected its outcome. First, there was less emphasis on party platforms and more popular interest in the candidates's acceptance speeches and campaign orations. Second, because of the wide use of radio and whistle stop tours, the importance of a candidate's personality and his associations was greatly increased. Third, in 1928 sentiment for the continuance of Prohibition was still strong, despite the obvious grumblings of discontent with the noble experiment. Fourth, the South was no longer "solidly" Democratic, and in the future the Republicans could look forward to increased voting potential south of the Mason-Dixon line. Fifth, future presidential campaigns would involve high pressure electioneering and staggering costs for advertising via the mass means of communication.³⁴

But the greatest lesson that can be derived from the campaign and the election is one of human understanding. As long as human nature is what it is, one can not hope to remove every vestige of religious prejudice. Still, we must strive for the ideal of universal tolerance with the confidence that the election of 1928 was a milestone on this road to complete equality and brotherhood, for although many Americans resorted

³⁴Munro, "The Election in Retrospect," pp. 247, 255, 258, 261.

undesirable tactics in denouncing Smith and the Catholic Church, countless others were completely repulsed by religious intolerance; their protests against prejudice and their high-minded appeals for reason and understanding stand as landmarks in the course of American civilization. Therefore, we should not look upon the Hoover-Smith campaign as a completely black mark in the history of our country; we should look upon it with a certain degree of satisfaction rather than regret. Catholics should not look with disdain upon the campaign and the election results, for despite the flood of obviously prejudiced anti-Catholic publications, the Church was given a fair hearing by the American people, and "thanks to the magazines and newspapers and to distinguished public men,...the people of America understand the evil of bigotry, the wrong and injustice of religious intolerance better than they did before the campaign started."³⁵

During the campaign, Senator Bruce of Maryland declared that "we are progressing by degrees, and a generation or two from now there will be genuine wonderment that any considerable number of people should have dreamed of making an issue of the religious faith of a candidate for the presidency in a land dedicated to the principles of civil and religious liberty."³⁶

³⁵Patrick Henry Callahan, "Religious Prejudice in the Election," Current History, XXIX (December, 1928), p. 381.

³⁶George Barton, "Religion in National Politics," Current History, XXVI (June, 1927), p. 562.

Only time can reveal the veracity or falsity of this prophecy. With the possibility that a Catholic will be nominated for the presidency this year, we will be given the unique opportunity to personally behold the revelation or refutation of this bold prediction.

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