

"THE PROTESTANT CONTENTION": RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, RESPECTABILITY POLITICS, AND W. A. CRISWELL IN 1960

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Though rhetorical critics have been very attentive to John F. Kennedy's rhetoric during the 1960 campaign, less attention has been paid to that of his conservative Protestant antagonists. To address the omission, this essay considers W. A. Criswell's July 3, 1960 address, "George Truett and Religious Liberty," portions of which were reprinted and widely distributed as a pamphlet titled Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy. These texts, we argue, are exemplary of a larger Protestant strategy during the 1960 race. Because Kennedy's candidacy had prompted fierce vitriol from the anti-Catholic Right, conservative Protestant leaders from across the denominational spectrum tempered their attacks so as not to alienate centrist voters. Their measured adoption of religious freedom arguments allowed them to occupy the respectable middle, assailing Kennedy's Catholicism while parrying charges of religious bigotry. In Criswell's rhetoric, we find a pure distillation of this strategy, identifying it as a species of respectability politics with enduring appeal—this time from the Right.

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In their popular 2013 book, *Dallas 1963*, Bill Minutaglio and Steven L. Davis provide a narrative history of Dallas during the four years immediately preceding the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The work is a sort of braided biography, telling the interweaving stories of major players as they make their fateful way toward history. Featured in the text are John and Robert Kennedy, Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson, and Lee Harvey Oswald, of course, but also retail mogul Stanley Marcus, *Dallas Morning News* publisher Ted Dealey, Major General Edwin A. Walker, Congressman Bruce Alger, civil rights activists H. Rhett James and Juanita Craft, and a perhaps unlikely duo of preacher and parishioner—Pastor W. A. Criswell of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, and H. L. Hunt, the reclusive billionaire oilman who often sat in his pews.¹

The inclusion of Criswell and Hunt in this cast of characters has everything to do with a speech delivered by the former on July 3, 1960. Titled “George Truett and Religious Liberty,” Criswell’s address sought to persuade his Protestant auditors to vote against the Catholic candidate in that fall’s election. In it, he argued that a Catholic president must necessarily submit to the Vatican hierarchy, forcefully asserting a claim that had dogged Kennedy throughout his campaign and that would prompt his address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 12. For his part, the ultraconservative Hunt loved the speech. He partnered with First Baptist to publish portions of the text as a pamphlet titled *Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy* and used his considerable means to distribute it nationwide.²

Even without Hunt’s help, though, Criswell’s address would warrant consideration as a definitive artifact of the 1960 race. The speaker was pastor of the world’s largest Baptist church, after all, and would be twice elected to the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention within the decade. He gave voice to a major religious preoccupation of that political moment and provided a representative anecdote of prominent Protestant efforts to manage respectable concern and anti-Catholic bigotry. Yet despite his significance to the history of religion and politics in the twentieth-century United States, and despite his reputation as a skilled and powerful orator, Criswell has not received any sustained consideration from rhetorical critics.³ With particular attention to that 1960 speech, this essay seeks to correct the omission.

Specifically, we argue that Criswell's July 3 address offers a heuristic for understanding much conservative Protestant discourse during the 1960 election and, indeed, much conservative religious-political rhetoric arising in the decades since. Criswell's effort to disqualify a particular political candidate, advanced both against that candidate's religion and in purported defense of free religious expression, has the speaker walking a fine line between respectable concern and religious bigotry. Much like his conservative Protestant contemporaries, Criswell used religious freedom rhetoric to temper an essentially anti-Catholic message. And much like those who, in recent years, have opposed gay rights, Muslim rights, and universal health-care on religious freedom grounds, Criswell's rhetoric moderated a provocative viewpoint through an appeal to shared values.⁴ Carefully revised and reissued with funding from Hunt, Criswell's address demonstrated the utility of the religious freedom frame to hardline conservative advocates intent upon defending traditional power structures while also disclaiming association with reactionary elements. Their project, in short, has been to make conservatism respectable.

We begin with context, situating Criswell's speech within a discursive environment polarized by Kennedy's Catholicism. Though the candidate did benefit from Catholic bloc voting in certain quarters, his faith also triggered a wave of anti-Catholic bigotry, evidenced by speeches, radio broadcasts, and pamphleteering on the far Right.⁵ For conservative Protestants of the mainstream, the situation thus presented a challenging exigency—how to capitalize on anti-Catholic fears without being cast themselves as anti-Catholic bigots. Their strategy, we argue, involved using religious freedom appeals to align anti-Catholic arguments with a core American value. We turn, then, to a dual examination of Criswell's speech and subsequent pamphlet before concluding with a series of judgments about Criswell, religious freedom, and respectability politics—in 1960 and after.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RESPECTABILITY POLITICS IN 1960

Without question, John F. Kennedy's Catholicism played a central role in his presidential campaign, mobilizing millions of Catholic supporters and Protestant critics and providing much of the discursive foundation on which key disputes would build.⁶ Yet with few exceptions, scholarly interest in the race has focused far more squarely upon Kennedy's rhetoric than on

that of his foes.⁷ Harold Barrett, David Henry, Barbara Warnick, and Michael J. Hostetler have each considered Kennedy's rhetorical work, each referencing his Protestant critics primarily by way of context.⁸ Featured as interlocutors, they form the gauntlet through which the candidate must skillfully run. In his treatment of the Houston address, for instance, Henry observes that Kennedy arrived in Texas on his rhetorical toes, having already bobbed and weaved throughout the previous ten months. "On one hand," Henry writes, "Kennedy's performance at Houston may have been stimulated by a desire to purify the negative image produced by the attacks against him in the campaign, thus fulfilling a definition of *apologia*." But "on the other hand, however, when viewed in the context of a series of rhetorical transactions throughout the campaign, it may be argued with equal force that Kennedy was on the offensive at Houston, that he used an ostensibly defensive communication setting to question the tolerance and integrity of his inquisitors."⁹ Indeed, this is true. But viewed from the opposite perspective, from a population of Protestant clergymen intent on launching critiques while also deflecting charges of bigotry, Henry might have made a very similar claim about Kennedy's opponents, and with equal accuracy. They, too, were carefully managing offense and defense, simultaneously attacking the Catholic threat and shoring up their own claims to tolerance and integrity.

This balance was necessary because Kennedy's candidacy had stirred religious passions nationwide. In early 1960, James Reston worried in the *New York Times* that evidence of bloc Catholic voting in the Wisconsin primary may inspire bloc anti-Catholic voting in Protestant West Virginia, potentially inciting a new era of religious factionalism in the United States.¹⁰ Later, Cabell Phillips argued that widespread anti-Catholic sentiment in the South may prompt a resurgent Catholic vote in the more populous North.¹¹ Leo Egan observed that the role of religious bigotry was difficult to measure, in part because so few voters would admit to bigoted views, and in part because genuine bigots did not frame their position in those terms. As exemplary of this problem, Egan quoted one Nixon voter in Kentucky who, asked if Kennedy's Catholicism had informed his choice of candidate, dismissed the idea out of hand. "Not a bit," the man said. "I hate bigots. I hate them as much as I hate niggers."¹² The Catholic question thus raised problems for both parties. If Democrats had reason to worry about a bloc

anti-Catholic vote, Egan wrote, Republicans should worry about voters who “suddenly decide ‘I can’t be on the same side as the bigots.’”¹³

For conservative Protestant leaders working in support of the Republican candidate, the concern about siding with bigots was plain and palpable. We argue, in fact, that their embrace of religious freedom rhetoric represents a species of respectability politics practiced by white men on the Right, recasting a strategy historically attributed to black men and women on the Left. Coined by historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, the “politics of respectability” referred to the concerted efforts of African Americans, beginning in the early twentieth century, to counter popular racist assumptions through respectable dress, speech, and behavior.¹⁴ The idea has been further explored by historians Victoria W. Wolcott and E. Frances White and applied to contemporary examples by Fredrick C. Harris and Ta-Nehisi Coates, among others.¹⁵ In every case, it describes—often *critiques*—strategies of assimilation and subversion, whereby black actors work to confront and overcome white assumptions about their character and conduct. In applying the term to a different demographic, we have no desire either to dilute or to alter this history. We do suggest, though, that it may be more broadly applicable. In 1960, as in the decades that followed, white conservative Protestants frequently deployed religious freedom rhetoric to distance themselves from the angry fringe on their right, thereby establishing themselves at the respectable center of American values. Historian Edward H. Miller has written that ultraconservative rhetoric offered “cover” to moderate conservatives in the 1960s, applying the claim specifically to the political situation in and around Dallas. “By labeling ultraconservative doctrines ‘extremist,’” Miller writes, “the moderate conservatives could position themselves at the local and national levels as comparatively respectable and credible.”¹⁶ Just as black men and women adopted respectability politics to mark the separation between themselves and their caricatures, in other words, white conservative Protestants did so to distinguish their own right-wing views from those of the John Birch Society.¹⁷ In a democratic context, those on the outer reaches of any given spectrum may find value in a play to the respectable middle. In 1960, conservative Protestants built the model for a particular variant of that strategy, positioning themselves as mainstream figures with legitimate concerns about a Catholic presidency.

Consider, for instance, the case of Dr. Daniel A. Poling, former pastor of New York City's Marble Collegiate Church, former Republican candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, and then-editor of the influential *Christian Herald* magazine. For Poling, the critique of Kennedy's Catholicism was grounded in a very personal and emotional incident. In 1943, his son Clark was one of four chaplains killed aboard the SS *Dorchester* when it was torpedoed in the North Atlantic. According to witnesses, "the four chaplains" selflessly gave their lifejackets to four sailors and were last seen standing together in prayer as the ship went under. In 1951, the Chapel of the Four Chaplains was dedicated in Philadelphia, with Poling serving as its first pastor. Because the four chaplains had represented different faith traditions—two were Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jewish—representatives from each of their faiths were invited to attend the ceremony. Congressman John F. Kennedy was one of these. According to Poling, Kennedy first accepted the invitation and then reneged at the last minute, allegedly under orders from Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, archbishop of Philadelphia. In both his autobiography and in the December 1959 issue of the *Christian Herald*, Poling cited the incident as evidence of Kennedy's subservience to his Church.¹⁸

Poling's story circulated both quickly and widely, pushing the Catholic question to the forefront of the nation's political discourse and demanding an official response.¹⁹ Shortly after the appearance of the *Herald* article, Kennedy's father told the *New York Times* that the account was "inaccurate."²⁰ In January of 1960, Kennedy addressed the matter himself during a speech to the National Press Club, explaining that, while Poling's version of the story was factually true, he had drawn the wrong conclusions. Kennedy then issued a statement on the incident, claiming that, after accepting the invitation, he learned that he "was not being invited as a former member of the armed forces or as a member of Congress or as an individual, but as the official representative of a religious organization." Further, he "learned that the memorial was to be located in the sanctuary of a church of a different faith," which violated the precepts of the Catholic Church and left the Archdiocese of Philadelphia "unable to support the drive." Finally, Kennedy concluded, "I felt I had no credentials to attend in the capacity in which I had been asked."²¹ Pressed to respond to these claims, Poling said that Kennedy was "mixed up and confused," reiterating that "the only issue" was "whether the Roman Catholic church had exercised authority over Mr.

Kennedy while he was a Representative of Massachusetts.”²² Many prominent Protestants agreed. Though the Poling story would soon fade from headlines, it remained a fixture of their arguments throughout the race.

Indeed, by the time Criswell addressed his congregation on the matter, Kennedy’s apparent dual allegiance was being asserted by conservative Protestant clergy from across the nation and the denominational spectrum. It was embraced by Presbyterian Dr. Eugene Carson Blake and Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam,²³ by Southern Baptist Dr. E. S. James,²⁴ and by the advocacy group Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State.²⁵ In September, Poling joined with Dr. Norman Vincent Peale to found the National Conference of Citizens United for Religious Freedom, with members including evangelical stalwarts Harold J. Ockenga and L. Nelson Bell.²⁶ Though ostensibly created to oppose the Catholic candidate, the group stated its mission in explicitly respectable terms, declaring that “this religious issue should be handled with utmost discretion; that it should be discussed only in a spirit of truth, tolerance, and fairness, and that no persons should engage in hate-mongering, bigotry, prejudice or unfounded charges.”²⁷ Despite these high-minded goals, however, the group was fiercely protective of its privacy, refusing even to disclose the names of its rank and file. When the content of their deliberations was leaked to the press, the group was exposed as far more reactionary than advertised, and some expressed embarrassment that they had participated.²⁸ Thus did Kennedy’s Protestant foes grapple with the complexities of the Catholic question. Though the doctrinal differences separating such northeastern evangelicals as Poling, Peale, and Ockenga from a Southern fundamentalist like Criswell were real and substantial, the political incentives of 1960 had aligned the various factions in pursuit of a common goal—confronting the Catholic threat while effectively managing public relations. As one of the nation’s most prominent values, religious freedom provided them with a suitable means to that end.

W. A. CRISWELL, IN PULPIT AND PRINT

On July 3, Dr. W. A. Criswell took to his pulpit in the First Baptist Church of Dallas to speak out against the candidacy of John F. Kennedy for president. In several respects, the occasion was amenable to such a speech. Criswell was a conservative preacher with a history of controversial statements.²⁹ He

was speaking to a Southern Baptist congregation with a history of anti-Catholic sentiment. And he was doing so immediately before the nation's birthday, in a patriotic city long swept by strong currents of conservatism, controversy, and anti-Catholicism.³⁰ For a powerful orator like Criswell, the address swelled with barn-burning potential.

When he took the stage at First Baptist that morning, Criswell did not disappoint. Taking his cues from de facto allies like Poling and Peale, he framed his attack on Kennedy as a defense of religious freedom, assuring his listeners that they could—indeed, *must*—oppose the Catholic candidate in good conscience, without compromising either their patriotism or their shared commitment to Baptist values. In what follows, we analyze Criswell's rhetoric as it appeared in two venues—the First Baptist Church and, later, the pamphlet published with funding from H. L. Hunt. We begin with the context of the speech itself, focusing on the event as Criswell framed it. We turn then to the text of the pamphlet, examining how its careful revision of Criswell's remarks advanced an ultraconservative attack within a veneer of mainstream respectability. In Hunt, we find our perfect avatar—a fringe figure of the far Right drawing upon religious freedom appeals to usher his priorities into the political center. That Criswell's rhetoric was so useful in this effort aptly demonstrates the claim that we are asserting.

THE SPEECH

Ever since W. A. Criswell had been appointed senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, it was his custom to honor his predecessor, George Washington Truett, by delivering a memorial sermon on or near the anniversary of his death. In 1960, the occasion fell on July 3, and the speech was duly performed. And yet, though “George Truett and Religious Liberty” was delivered on a Sunday morning, in a church, to a congregation, we have so far resisted the temptation to call the address a “sermon.” Indeed, when he rose to speak that morning, Criswell disclaimed the term explicitly, warning his audience that his remarks on that day would be overtly political in nature:

Every Sunday, morning and night, three times every Lord's Day I preach a sermon on the Bible. Almost always, where I leave off in the text Sunday morning I pick up Sunday night. There is only one time in the year that I

depart from that sermonic procedure and that is when I prepare these special addresses on the anniversary of Dr. Truett's death. Now the sermon this morning has governmental overtones, and I do not want to hold you here under a false pretense as though you had come to listen to a sermon, and I deliver a political address. So I am going to give you an opportunity to leave, anybody that would like to leave.³¹

For Criswell, the political nature of his speech marked it as something other than sermonic, pushing it outside the generic bounds of appropriate church address. As he led the congregation in a "hymn written by a great Baptist preacher," he reiterated that anyone who had come to the church expecting a sermon would be free to exit at that time. The hymn was "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," a song addressed specifically to America. "While we sing that song," Criswell said, "anybody that would like to leave is privileged to do so; you are not going to hear a sermon this morning. You are going to hear an address, and it has, as I say, tremendous governmental overtones. And I am not asking you to stay; you are at liberty to leave."³² Aside from preparing listeners for a rhetorical departure, this disclaimer demonstrated both respect for the pulpit and sensitivity to the audience, while providing the added benefit of piqued curiosity. There is no indication, either in the audio or the historical record, that the congregation accepted the offer to leave.

True to his word, Criswell began the address with extended attention to Truett, honoring his commitment to religious liberty and recounting his dedication across a series of notable sermons. In 1918, Criswell recalled, Truett was one of 20 "outstanding preachers" selected by Woodrow Wilson to minister to American servicemen in Europe. Upon his return in 1920, he delivered an address titled "Baptists and Religious Liberty," standing upon the steps of the U.S. Capitol building and relaying the Baptist tradition to an audience of more than 10,000 listeners. "Indeed," Truett declared at that time, "the supreme contribution of the new world to the old is the contribution of religious liberty. This is the chiefest contribution that America has made to civilization. And historic justice compels me to say that it was preeminently a Baptist contribution."³³ In 1939, on the eve of World War II, Truett reissued this address at the Baptist World Alliance in Atlanta, this time under the title, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today." Again he recounted the long historical struggle for religious liberty, culminating in what he termed "the Baptist contention," which was "not for

mere toleration, but for absolute liberty.” “There is a wide difference between toleration and liberty,” Truett declared, “toleration implies that someone falsely claims the right to tolerate. Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a divine right. Toleration is a matter of expediency, while liberty is a matter of principle. Toleration is a gift from men, while liberty is a gift from God.”³⁴ He added, with memorable phrasing, that “it is therefore the consistent, insistent, and persistent contention of our Baptist people, always and everywhere, that religion must be voluntary and un-coerced, and that it is not the prerogative of any power to compel men to pay taxes for the support of a religious organization to which they do not belong, and in which creed they do not believe.”³⁵

Criswell quoted Truett extensively throughout the first two-thirds of the 45-minute address, employing an epideictic mode of speech to ground an argument about presidential politics. When he spoke in Truett’s words, his volume and rate increased, and his delivery became more forceful. When he transitioned back into his own lines, his rate slowed and his volume fluctuated with emphasis. As he shifted in the final third to make his case against Kennedy, Criswell drew upon Truett’s unimpeachable ethos to sanctify his own position. Across at least two decades and a pair of world-altering conflicts, he noted, Truett had remained firmly committed to the ideal of religious liberty. Two decades later still, as a Catholic stood upon the threshold of the White House, that timeless ideal had acquired fresh urgency. It was at this point that Criswell made his pivot to focus on Kennedy, and that his words began their entry into a pamphlet intended for broad circulation.

It is here, too, that we attempt a pivot of our own. Because the remainder of Criswell’s address provides the content for his pamphlet, we are going to let the printed version stand in for both. As we will see, there are certain risks attendant to such a move. But making it will allow us to focus on the rhetorical metamorphosis that most concerns us here—the transition from bigotry to respectability, by way of religious freedom.

THE PAMPHLET

When the final third of “George Truett and Religious Liberty” was reissued in pamphlet form, it featured at least three important changes. First, it

omitted *all* of the epideictic content. George Truett, whose life and ministry featured so prominently in the speech, was never mentioned in the pamphlet. The new title, *Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy*, reflected a shift in focus from preacher to politician. Second, entire sections of Truett's "Baptist Mission" address were plagiarized, with the lines that Criswell quoted in the speech now credited to Criswell himself. The first two paragraphs of the pamphlet, in particular, were completely misattributed. Third, and finally, Criswell's argument was revised and edited into a much cleaner and more articulate version of itself. His case was far stronger and more coherent in print than it had been in person and adapted to a far broader audience. Notably, every reference to "Baptist" in the speech—as in the case of the "Baptist contention"—was changed to "Protestant" in the pamphlet. While Truett claimed to speak only on behalf of his denomination, Criswell aspired to represent all of Protestant Christendom, from moderates and conservatives to fundamentalists and hard-liners, uniting them all in their shared commitment to religious freedom.³⁶ Thus did the printed text refine, expand, and amplify the force of Criswell's spoken appeal. Given the extent of these changes, the Criswell who spoke through the pamphlet bore little resemblance to the man who had spoken in the pulpit. He was the credited author and, indeed, much of the content had been included in his original address. But the departures were many and notable.

A close reading of *Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy* follows Criswell's argument across four contentions, each supported by examples. Like the disparate Protestant leaders referenced earlier in this essay, Criswell relied on religious freedom's formidable rhetorical power to bolster his case against Kennedy. First, he argued that Roman Catholicism was a religious-political institution desirous of power and control. Second, Catholics used their dual religious-political identity to straddle the wall between church and state, accumulating power gradually and then using it to stifle competing religions. Third, Kennedy was a political agent of Catholicism with a documented history of submission to Church demands. Finally, in light of these realities, it was fair to conclude that a Kennedy presidency would threaten religious freedom in the United States—a conclusion that, given the immutable standing of the value, should have disqualified the candidate. Together, these contentions provide

a concise representation of the respectable conservative argument in 1960, positioning itself in simultaneous opposition to Catholicism and to bigotry.

CONTENTION #1: CATHOLICISM IS POLITICAL

To preempt the charge of religious bigotry, Criswell opened his argument with the claim that Catholicism was not merely a religion. Rather, its religious character was subsumed within larger political ambitions, making it subject to the sort of critical scrutiny commonly applied to political parties during election cycles. Though the American tradition of religious freedom was vital and beyond reproach in his view, a line must be drawn before any institution that would use such protections to advance a political agenda. Thus after lauding this tradition and tracing its lineage directly to the formative influence of the “Protestant contention,” Criswell tried for the potentially awkward pivot. He explained why, in defense of religious freedom, a Roman Catholic could not be entrusted with the presidency.

If the Protestant contention had ensured religious freedom for all faiths and creeds, Criswell argued, the *Catholic* contention was bent only on hegemony.³⁷ “The most difficult situation is created any time that one speaks of the Roman Church,” he wrote. “It is a religion and we have an innate, congenital dislike in America to criticize another man’s religion. We believe in religious freedom. Every soul has its right to choose before God.”³⁸ It made no difference if a man wanted to be an atheist, a Muslim, a Hindu, an agnostic, a Mormon, a Christian Scientist, or a Roman Catholic, in Criswell’s view—the Protestant contention had made provisions for all and entitled all to respect. And yet, he argued, the Catholic contention had exploited this free space for political advantage. “Our problem, therefore, lies in this: that the institution of Roman Catholicism is not only a religion, it is a political tyranny.” It is “a political system that, like an octopus, covers the entire world and threatens those basic freedoms and those constitutional rights for which our forefathers died in generations past.”³⁹ Not only was political Catholicism undeserving of religious protection, in other words, but its subversive nature was a positive affront to all of those who had sacrificed to make such protections possible. Therefore, Criswell argued, Protestants could—indeed, *must*—oppose Catholicism on political grounds, distinguishing the protected right to free religious practice from

the creeping threat of political infiltration. When they did so, they might be criticized. But that criticism would only confirm Catholic double agency. "If we object politically," Criswell complained, "we are accused of being religious bigots. We are not attacking the religion nor are we attacking the institution. We are merely facing a political reality."⁴⁰

The challenge for Protestants, then, was to distinguish the religious from the political, opposing a religious-political power on purely political grounds and so defending religious freedom despite erroneous charges of religious bigotry. This was a fine line to walk. But it was made possible by the deliberate elevation and assignation of the term. Religious freedom trumped all other considerations in this framing, and it was unequivocally partisan. Criswell divided Christendom cleanly in two, granting Protestants ownership of religious freedom while condemning Catholics as the gravest living threat to its realization. This first contention thus laid the foundation on which to build a case.

CONTENTION #2: CATHOLICS ARE SUBVERSIVE

For Criswell, the dual, religious-political nature of Catholic civic life was evidenced by clear examples, each disclosing the devious threat they posed. For one, the Vatican declared itself a religious institution while also demanding diplomatic recognition as a political state. The symbol of the pope featured two keys, he observed; "one is the key of religious supremacy and the other is the key of sovereign political power."⁴¹ This duality operated at all levels of churchly civic life, providing important context for understanding the work even of nuns and priests in the public school system. These claimed the right to teach "in religious garbs and religious habits" on the grounds that they were Americans entitled to religious freedom. But when "the internal revenue collector seeks to have them pay taxes," Criswell claimed, "then they say, 'We are not other than representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and we pay no taxes.'"⁴² This was especially evident in the state of Ohio, then under its second consecutive Catholic governor, where "it is the law of the land" that "Roman Catholic nuns and sisters and priests in their garbs may be placed on the public payroll as schoolteachers," so that "when you pay income taxes, a part of that income tax goes to the support of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States

of America.” This tactic was “a concomitant and a corollary of high elective office when Roman Catholics are able to seize it,” Criswell stated. “The drive for tax money to support Roman Catholic institutions is relentless. It never, never withholds its pressures.”⁴³

Another example was evident in certain foreign countries, where the consequences of Catholic leadership had been unequivocal and clear. In the constitutions of such nations as Argentina, Paraguay, and Spain, Criswell argued, Catholic belief had been made requisite for ascension to the presidency, meaning that a non-Catholic could not rise to that office. (Though he cited these cases as exemplary of Catholicism’s commitment to unseemly religious tests, Criswell seemed inattentive to the symmetrical religious test that his own position implicitly affirmed.) And the outrages of Catholic political dominance were not limited to the merely political sphere—often they were more aggressive. “In the South American nation of Colombia,” he wrote, “during the past eight years, with a government dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, 49 Protestant churches have been destroyed; 34 Protestant churches have been confiscated, and 89 Protestant church leaders have been murdered.”⁴⁴ Criswell never cited a source for these figures, nor did he attribute the alleged violence specifically to Catholic individuals in the Colombian government—he noted only that it had occurred under their watch. But similar claims were being asserted widely in the discourse of the day, and it is entirely possible that readers would have encountered them before.⁴⁵

Because Criswell had previously separated the political nature of Catholicism from the attendant religious mission, his attack on political oppression was clearly distinguished from religious condemnation. Those who would accuse him of religious bigotry would first have to contend with his argument about Catholic ambiguity and grapple with the examples he had provided. And because he had already placed religious freedom squarely within the Protestant legacy, his critics would also have to explain why this core American value should be made vulnerable to a tradition bent on its suppression. Suffice it to say that by this point in the argument, Criswell had muddied the waters.

CONTENTION #3: KENNEDY IS SUBSERVIENT TO THE CHURCH

His audience primed with stories of tax dodging, religious tests, church suppression, and murder, Criswell turned to the true subject of the address.

"We are now faced with the possibility of a Roman Catholic, John Kennedy, being elected as the President of the United States," he wrote. "Let us get better acquainted with the Roman Catholic from Massachusetts."⁴⁶ To so acquaint his readers, Criswell relayed, at considerable length and in specific detail, the story of Kennedy's invitation, acceptance, and subsequent withdrawal from the 1951 dedication of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. Though the story had broken in December of 1959 and was much contested in January of 1960, Criswell clearly hoped to revive the discussion in the final months of the campaign. His account is worth relaying in full:

During the second World War, the American ship, Dorchester, was sunk by enemy fire. The four chaplains on the ship, two of whom were Protestants, one Jewish, and one Catholic, all gave their life preservers to four sailors and, locked arm in arm, they went down with the ship, each giving his life in order that one of his fellow Americans might live. After the war, the father of one of the Protestant chaplains, Dr. Daniel A. Poling, conceived the idea of building an inter-church chapel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in memory of the four chaplains. In the fall of 1950, he proposed to celebrate the occasion and to dedicate the chapel with a banquet in the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia. It was an inter-faith occasion. A representative of each of the three leading religions was invited to speak on that important occasion. The Honorable Charles P. Taft, Mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, was invited to speak for the Protestants. Senator Herbert H. Lehman was invited to speak for the Jewish faith and John Kennedy, of the United States Congress from Massachusetts, was invited—and accepted—to speak for the Catholic faith.

Dr. Poling relates how Mr. Kennedy notified him at the last minute that, although he had his speech prepared, he would have to cancel his appearance because his Eminence Dennis Cardinal Dougherty had requested him not to speak at the banquet and not to appear. Dr. Poling tried to reason with John Kennedy and pointed out to him that it was a civic affair and they were meeting, not in a Protestant church, but on neutral ground in a hotel. John Kennedy replied that he understood all this, and that he had done all he could do to change the Cardinal's position, but, and I quote John Kennedy, "As a loyal son of the church, I have no other alternative but not to come." It was too late to procure another speaker and there was no speaker representing the Catholic faith at the banquet.⁴⁷

Several elements of this account warrant comment. First, it is significant that Criswell limited himself to *Poling's* version of the events, omitting Kennedy's response and refusing to acknowledge his justifications. Even when quoting Kennedy directly, Criswell relayed what *Poling said Kennedy said* in private, rather than what Kennedy said officially both in print and before the National Press Club. Certainly the unverifiable words, "as a loyal son of the church, I have no other alternative" appeared more damning than his official claim about lacking "the credentials" to attend.

Second, Criswell introduced Poling only as "the father of one of the Protestant chaplains," without any reference to his larger public profile as a conservative Protestant clergyman, a former Republican candidate for office, cochair of the controversial Citizens United for Religious Freedom, and leading voice of the anti-Kennedy resistance nationwide. Poling was a famous figure in American Protestantism, so it is certainly possible that readers already knew who he was. But he was also primarily an East Coast figure, most recognized in Philadelphia and New York, so perhaps many did not. If Criswell's pamphlet marked their introduction to Daniel A. Poling, readers could be forgiven for thinking of him only as the grieving and jilted father of an American hero, with all of the ethos attendant to a character so pure.

Finally, there is a high-toned quality to the account that heightened the indignity of Kennedy's withdrawal—a quality entirely absent from the version presented in the speech itself. Criswell referenced the brave chaplains, Dr. Daniel A. Poling, the Honorable Charles P. Taft, Senator Herbert H. Lehman—even "his Eminence" Dennis Cardinal Dougherty. Declining an opportunity to rant and rave about the disgraceful, unreasonable, and unpatriotic behavior of the spineless congressman before the dictatorial priest, Criswell condemned by innuendo, conspicuously rising above petty mudslinging while allowing the one-dimensional narrative to speak for itself.⁴⁸ He argued by enthymeme, leaving the audience to fill in the carefully crafted and obvious blanks. And because he made a point of respecting every character, Criswell could again defend himself against charges of anti-Catholicism. He was only telling a story, with all due deference to the gentlemen involved.

For Criswell—as for Poling and his backers nationwide—Kennedy's actions in 1950 had spoken far louder than any of the eloquent assurances he had provided since. Though the candidate continually insisted that his

presidency would not be subject to church decrees or demands, his clear willingness to obey the hierarchy in even the smallest and most ceremonial of cases belied that insistence. "Is my President of the United States to be a man who could not come into one of my services lest he be contaminated by walking into the precincts of a Protestant church?" Criswell asked. "There are something like 80 million Protestant people in the United States of America. And the President of the United States, lest he offend the priest, or lest he offend the hierarchy, could not attend to Protestant religious service simply because he belongs to the Roman Catholic religion! As John Kennedy says, 'As a loyal son of the church, I have no other alternative but not to come.'"⁴⁹ Here, as throughout, the vulnerability of religious freedom before a powerful political agent prompted a conditioned, emotional response. If readers were concerned by the tales of priests and nuns in their habits and garbs, the prospect of a Catholic agent at the pinnacle of American power must have been exponentially more urgent and alarming.

CONTENTION #4: KENNEDY THREATENS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Criswell observed finally that the danger of Catholic dominance in the United States was a long-term problem, neither specific to John F. Kennedy nor limited to the 1960 race. Instead, the creeping specter of political religion was a monster that grew by degree and therefore must be given no quarter, lest the free nation find itself on a slippery slope toward tyranny. "The Roman Church wins most of its victories with the weapon of time," Criswell wrote. "If Kennedy wins, with strong emphasis on separation of church and state, then the door is open for another Roman Catholic later who gives the Pope his Ambassador, the church schools his state support, and finally, recognition of one church above all others in America. Then religious liberty has also died in America as it has died in Spain, as it has died in Colombia, as it has died wherever the Roman Catholic Hierarchy has the ableness and power to shut it down and destroy it in death."⁵⁰ To counter this threat, American voters had no choice but to take a stand on behalf of the age-old Protestant contention, the shared conception of religious faith as "a personal, individual, voluntary and spiritual relationship between a man and his Creator and Saviour," with "no room whatsoever for coercion, or the use of physical force," and "free," with "absolute liberty to believe or

not to believe, to worship or not to worship, to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to God, even as that soul, and that soul alone shall dictate.”⁵¹

With this final contention, the pamphlet ended on an inspiring, empowering, perfectly respectable note, having lauded freedom and disclaimed bigotry, before an imagined audience of unified, faithful, unapologetically *Protestant* voters. In fusing their religious and political obligations together in the form of *religious freedom*, Criswell drew upon the two motivational appeals most central to American Protestant citizens and channeled the resultant energy toward his preferred electoral outcome. Though the result could not be foreseen with certainty, he and his collaborators could be proud of their rhetorical effort. They had cleanly distilled the case against Kennedy and made it public at the opportune moment.

CONCLUSION

In *Dallas 1963*, Minutaglio and Davis mistakenly identify Criswell’s pamphlet as his sermon.⁵² It is an easy mistake to make, especially because the pamphlet invites the confusion.⁵³ But W. A. Criswell never actually delivered a sermon called “Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy.” By his own reckoning, he never even delivered a sermon called “George Truett and Religious Liberty.” On the morning of July 3, 1960, he gave a “political address” that, for about 30 minutes, honored the memory of one man and, for about 15 more, impugned the integrity of another. It was a historically notable but rhetorically mediocre effort. Later, when it resurfaced as a carefully revised eight-page booklet, the text was born again. By September, nearly 200,000 copies were in circulation around the United States, largely fueling Protestant anxiety about Kennedy’s Catholicism.⁵⁴ It survives today as a digital file in a Baylor University archive—where it is mistakenly identified as a Criswell sermon.⁵⁵

For religious historians and rhetorical scholars, a side-by-side reading of the speech and the pamphlet offers certain rewards. It is interesting to note the points of congruence and change, the various ways that an anti-Catholic rant was transformed, by way of measured religious freedom rhetoric, into a restrained and prudent expression of respectable concern. Had the text of Criswell’s address been printed without revision, or the audio broadcast nationwide, the effect on audiences may well have been the opposite of that intended. But because Criswell had framed his attack as a defense of a core

American value, he—or his editors—was able to polish the argument into a broad public appeal with coalition-building potential. Rhetorically, it was a tremendous improvement. Politically, it was very nearly a success.⁵⁶

It remains unclear what role, specifically, W. A. Criswell played in the composition and distribution of the famous pamphlet. His church did supply it, Minutaglio and Davis note, in violation of federal election laws. When federal investigators pressed him to reveal the source of his funding, Criswell claimed it was driven by small donations from his congregants, but he was not believed. H. L. Hunt could not be reached for questioning, as he had disappeared to a secret location unknown even to his wife.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, their collaboration continued to spread in ever-changing forms. The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum has multiple versions of the pamphlet on file, including some that were reprinted as columns in a variety of periodicals.⁵⁸ When Kennedy rose to address the ministers in Houston, these were undoubtedly on his mind.

One day later, on September 13, Dr. Daniel A. Poling told the *New York Times* that, to his mind, the religious issue had finally been put to rest. Calling the speech “magnificent” and “courageous,” Poling said that he was “in favor of dropping the subject as of today.”⁵⁹ Perhaps wearied by the protracted rhetorical triangulation surrounding the religious issue—and by his own central role in it—Poling was clearly ready to move on. And yet, he seemed not quite able to upset the awkward balance that he had consistently maintained over the preceding ten months. Asked twice if he believed Kennedy able to resist pressure from his church, Poling refused to answer. Instead, he stated that the religious question would remain relevant, “especially when a church takes an authoritarian stand on matters that are political as well as religious.”⁶⁰ Then, in the October issue of the *Herald*, Poling authored a conciliatory editorial declaring that both candidates “are Christian in faith” and “have a generous regard for the religious beliefs of their fellow Americans.” He added, “the election should not turn here [on the question of religion], but on those imperative matters, national and international, that threaten the very existence of American freedom, the peace and security of all mankind.” And though his backing of Richard Nixon was by then widely acknowledged, Poling closed the piece by pledging his “loyalty and support” to whoever won the race.⁶¹ He repeated these sentiments in a message to the congregation of Marble Collegiate on

November 6, shortly after officially endorsing Nixon on purely secular grounds.⁶² In this, he was typical of his contemporaries.

Looking back on Kennedy's election and subsequent assassination, W. A. Criswell would remember the Catholic president in much milder terms, retroactively softening his own resistance. In his authorized biography of Criswell, Billy Keith acknowledges the pastor's "controversial" reputation while omitting the details of the various controversies—the 1960 presidential race included.⁶³ Likewise, in his autobiography, Criswell mentions his anti-Kennedy efforts only in passing and only to downplay their significance. "We had never elected a Catholic president," he wrote. "We had no guarantees that a committed Catholic in that office would fully protect the nation's most cherished freedoms: freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of the press."⁶⁴ But neither had a Catholic president ever faced a committed Protestant opposition, and nor did they offer such guarantees.

In the years that followed, Criswell's commitment to religious freedom began to wane as the prospects of an ascendant Christian Right began to wax. In May of 1964, he delivered a sermon titled "The Birth of Religious Freedom," celebrating "soul liberty" as a distinctly Baptist legacy dating back to Roger Williams. But by 1984, following a successful "Reagan Revolution" in which he had participated, Criswell appeared far more comfortable with church-state union. That fall, he told an interviewer from CBS News that separation of church and state was little more than a "figment of some infidel's imagination."⁶⁵ Much like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and other members of that newly influential religious-political class, Criswell found that his deepest principles remained adaptable to circumstance. In the years to come, their rhetorical styling would assume forms more polished still, embodied in the articulate speech and fastidious side parts of James Dobson, Ralph Reed, and Tony Perkins, among others. Launching from the right but casting toward the center, these figures fashioned a Christian conservatism with broad political appeal, guiding a fundamentalist impulse into a focus group setting.⁶⁶ Liberal values, including but not limited to religious freedom, were their stock-in-trade. Though they eventually made their peace with Catholicism, they have found no such accommodation with Islam, among other rivals.⁶⁷ We have argued here that this conservative movement, in both past and present forms, constitutes a particular strain of respectability politics.

The conservative Protestants of the 1960 campaign retain a well-deserved reputation for combativeness. Yet any accurate assessment of their political significance must note differences in degree, if not necessarily in kind. There was a spectrum of rhetorical actors at work in those days, ranging from blowhards and bigots on one end to acquiescing moderates on the other. Somewhere in between fell those calculating kingmakers who found solidarity with the extremists even as they claimed to stand in the respectable middle. For them, the means of persuasion demanded that they harness anti-Catholic sentiment in the unassailable language of American values, religious freedom foremost among them. Though their candidate lost in the end, their strategy can hardly be blamed. Indeed, it has provided the rhetorical blueprint for conservative Protestant political engagement ever since.⁶⁸

NOTES

1. Bill Minutaglio and Steven L. Davis, *Dallas 1963* (New York: Hachette Books, 2013). In 1960, Hunt was reputed to be the wealthiest man in the world.
2. Minutaglio and Davis, *Dallas 1963*, 49–54.
3. The one notable exception is found in James E. Towns, *The Social Conscience of W. A. Criswell* (Dallas, TX: Crescendo, 1977).
4. See, for instance, Eric C. Miller, “Fighting for Freedom: Liberal Argumentation in Culture War Rhetoric,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 37 (2014): 102–25.
5. Having flared in 1928 in response to the nomination of Al Smith, anti-Catholicism was later nourished by the work of such writers as Paul Blanshard, who identified a Catholic threat to American liberty in his 1949 book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, which received a second edition in 1958. In 1960, such arguments were ubiquitous. See, for instance, the eight folders of artifacts on file at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Religious Literature: Anti-Catholic Material, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKCAMP1960-1017-001.aspx>.
6. For the definitive accounts of the campaign, see Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961); and Shaun Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President—Kennedy versus Nixon 1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
7. For one such exception, see Beryl F. McClerren, “Southern Baptists and the Religious Issue during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960,” *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 104–112.

8. See Harold Barrett, "John F. Kennedy before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association," *Central States Speech Journal* 15 (1964): 259–66; David Henry, "Senator John F. Kennedy Encounters the Religious Question: 'I Am Not the Catholic Candidate for President,'" in *Oratorical Encounters: Selected Studies and Sources of Twentieth Century Political Accusations and Apologies*, ed. Halford Ross Ryan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), 153–73; Barbara Warnick, "Argument Schemes and the Construction of Social Reality: John F. Kennedy's Address to the Houston Ministerial Association," *Communication Quarterly* 44 (1996): 183–96; and Michael J. Hostetler, "Gov. Al Smith Confronts the Catholic Question: The Rhetorical Legacy of the 1928 Campaign," *Communication Quarterly* 46 (1998): 12–24.
9. Henry, "Senator John F. Kennedy Encounters the Religious Question," 154.
10. James Reston, "Can the Religious Issue Be Controlled?" *New York Times*, April 10, 1960, E10.
11. Cabell Phillips, "The Catholic Issue," *New York Times*, September 4, 1960, 127.
12. Leo Egan, "Religion: U.S. Campaign," *New York Times*, October 30, 1960, E4.
13. Egan, "Religion: U.S. Campaign," E4.
14. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 185.
15. See E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001); Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Fredrick C. Harris, *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Decline of Black Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015).
16. Edward H. Miller, *Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 4.
17. Perhaps the most obvious challenge to our application of this term to this demographic concerns the reality that such respectable African Americans as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and John Lewis had to comport themselves even more honorably and intelligently than the audiences they attempted to reach, while no such expectation was imposed upon white men like W. A. Criswell. We do not deny this. We simply observe that conservative white men like Criswell strove to comport themselves more honorably and intelligently than their Right-wing fellow travelers and to do so conspicuously before a centrist audience.

18. See Daniel A. Poling, *Mine Eyes Have Seen* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 256–61; and “A Sanctuary of Brotherhood,” *Christian Herald*, December 1959, 56–59.
19. Among other prominent religious leaders, Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam cited the story as grounds for concern about Kennedy’s candidacy, even though he knew the senator and had received personal assurances from him. See John Wicklein, “Oxnam Questions Kennedy Freedom,” *New York Times*, January 4, 1960, 33.
20. “Kennedy Disputes Interfaith Story,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1959, 37.
21. William G. Weart, “Dispute Clouded Chapel at Start,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1960, 51.
22. Weart, “Dispute Clouded Chapel at Start,” 51.
23. Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake and Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, “A Protestant View of a Catholic for President,” *Look*, May 10, 1960, 31–32.
24. E. S. James, *Baptist Standard*, February 17, 1960, 1.
25. “Protestant Groups’ Statements,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1960, 25.
26. “Peale to Head Protestant Forum on Religious Issue in Campaign,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1960, 49.
27. “Protestant Groups’ Statements,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1960, 25.
28. “The Campaign: The Power of Negative Thinking,” *Time*, September 19, 1960, 21
29. Criswell’s most controversial statements had concerned race. In 1956, he gave a fiery speech to the South Carolina Baptist evangelism conference and, one day later, the South Carolina legislature, in which he denounced integration in forceful terms. In later years he would downplay and renounce the speech. See Curtis W. Freeman, “Never Had I Been So Blind”: W. A. Criswell’s ‘Change’ on Racial Segregation,” *Journal of Southern Religion* 10 (2007): 1–12.
30. See Miller, *Nut Country*.
31. W. A. Criswell, “George Truett and Religious Liberty,” address to the First Baptist Church of Dallas, July 3, 1960, <https://www.wacriswell.com/sermons/1960/george-truett-and-religious-liberty>. The Criswell Sermon Library provides both the transcript and the audio of the speech. The pamphlet version, Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy, is available in the digital collection at Baylor University. See note 55 for a complete citation.
32. Criswell, “George Truett and Religious Liberty.”
33. Criswell, “George Truett and Religious Liberty.”
34. Criswell, “George Truett and Religious Liberty.”
35. Criswell, “George Truett and Religious Liberty.”
36. Criswell’s invocation of a singular, unified Protestant audience validates our claim that religious freedom facilitated a de facto alliance between figures from across the

fractured landscape of American Protestantism. Criswell, at least, believed in its unifying potential.

37. Readers may observe that much of Criswell's case draws upon widespread anxiety not just about Catholic subversion but about Communist infiltration. See, for instance, J. B. Matthews, "Reds and Our Churches," *American Mercury*, July 1953, 3–14.
38. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 3.
39. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 3.
40. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 3.
41. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 4.
42. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 4.
43. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 4.
44. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 4. It is a testament to the quality of the composition that the pamphlet spells "Colombia" correctly.
45. So common were such claims, in fact, that Kennedy addressed them directly in his Los Angeles acceptance address. "It is not relevant, I want to stress, what some other political or religious leader may have said on this subject. It is not relevant what abuses may have existed in other countries or in other times." See "The New Frontier: Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Nomination, Democratic National Convention, July 15, 1960." Quoted in Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President*, 151.
46. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 4.
47. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 5.
48. This is a point on which the distinction between speech and printed text is especially important. Though the specific wording is similar in both, Criswell delivered the lines with a soaring indignation that gets lost in transcription—to the benefit of his written appeal.
49. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 6. Here, too, Criswell had delivered these lines with a climactic intensity that vanishes on the page, making his appeal seem more measured than it was.
50. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 7–8.
51. Criswell, "Religious Freedom," 8.
52. See Minutaglio and Davis, *Dallas* 1963, 42.
53. Others have made this mistake as well. See, for instance, Jim Towns, *The Legacy of W. A. Criswell* (Nacogdoches, TX: Stephen F. Austin State University Press, 2017), 77–82; and Neil J. Young, "'A Saga of Sacrilege': Evangelicals Respond to the Second Vatican Council," in *American Evangelicals and the 1960s*, ed. Axel Schäfer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 261.
54. Minutaglio and Davis, *Dallas* 1963, 49.

55. *Religious Freedom, the Church, the State, and Senator Kennedy*, Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cs-vert/id/7637>.
56. The 1960 election is famous for being among the closest races in American history, decided by 112,881 votes out of 69 million cast. See Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President*, 199.
57. Minutaglio and Davis, *Dallas* 1963, 53.
58. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Religious Literature: Dr. W. A. Criswell, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKCAMP1960-1019-007.aspx>.
59. Charles Grutzner, "Poling Praises Kennedy's Stand on the Religion Issue," *New York Times*, September 14, 1960, 34.
60. Grutzner, "Poling Praises Kennedy's Stand," 34.
61. "Issue of Religion Barred by Poling," *New York Times*, October 17, 1960, 22.
62. George Dugan, "Politics Avoided in Sermons Here," *New York Times*, November 7, 1960, 25.
63. It might be more accurate to call Keith's book a *hagiography*, as the author himself admits: "As a biographer who admires W. A. Criswell very much, I was fearful as I stood in the presence of his enigmatic and elusive genius. There was the immediate temptation to present only his virtues and that sentiment clouded my research for weeks. Then I redirected the light of investigation upon him and interpreted him as he is, the man God uses, how and why. Often it was difficult to distinguish between the pertinent research and impertinent curiosity, so captivated was I by the man." See Billy Keith, *W. A. Criswell: The Authorized Biography* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1973), 12-13.
64. W. A. Criswell, *Standing on the Promises: The Autobiography of W. A. Criswell* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1990), 204-5.
65. "CBS Evening News for 1984-09-06," Vanderbilt Television News Archive, <https://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/programs/299614>.
66. This argument is supported by much of Jonathan J. Edwards's analysis of fundamentalist politics. See Edwards, *Superchurch: The Rhetoric and Politics of American Fundamentalism* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015).
67. See Eric C. Miller, ed., *The Rhetoric of Religious Freedom in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017).
68. The argument that mainstream conservative Christian advocates tend privately to sympathize with and publicly to disavow extremist voices is made persuasively in Rebecca Barrett-Fox, *God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

