

Religion and Presidential Elections: From Accusations of Atheism to Proclamations of the Born-Again

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How does religion function in the political realm? Does it divide or unite, trivialize or universalize? Every aspect of the role of religion in politics is up for considerable debate. But when it comes to American presidential elections, this debate falls into two surprisingly distinct categories. The first asserts that religion and politics have always been intertwined in this arena. The opposing view asserts that religion has only recently emerged as an important factor within the previous decade, a time frame which most commonly parallels the election of born-again evangelical George W. Bush. While neither of these approaches is correct, neither is entirely incorrect. In this paper, I will argue for a more nuanced understanding of religion and presidential elections. Although religion has indeed always been intertwined in presidential elections to a certain extent, at a crucial juncture in political history the relationship was dramatically altered. This occasion was the election of America's first born-again evangelical, Jimmy Carter, in 1976 and his subsequent defeat by Ronald Reagan in 1980. The lull between the two campaign years represents an all-important transitional period in which religion morphed from an occasionally powerful factor to a necessary tool in presidential elections. Carter's success in 1976 was the first time a candidate's personal conversion narrative propelled him to the White House. Reagan's success represented another milestone, the formulation of a conscious religious strategy that would be necessarily refined and utilized by all successful candidates to follow.

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For this reason, the recent election of Barack Obama, while certainly historical in many respects, was predictable within this context. Despite the religious upheavals of the campaign — the Jeremiah Wright scandal, the rise of the evangelical left, Sarah Palin’s Pentecostal past — Obama’s success followed a distinct pattern established in 1980 by Reagan: in each presidential election, the candidate who has been the most comfortable discussing their religion, their personal belief or disbelief in supernatural forces acting with influence over human affairs, has been the victor. In this paper, I will outline the role that religion has played over the past two centuries of American presidential elections, focusing on its function as an occasional factor leading up to the 1976 election, the manner in which it was altered at this point, and the way in which it has been employed as a successful strategy by presidential candidates ever since.

It is impossible to deny that religion and politics have been performing a delicate dance in American government since its inception. George Washington, while not particularly devout, recognized the value and expectation of religion in the public and political sphere.¹ The nation’s first president, in his 1789 inaugural address, declared that “it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe” (Domke and Coe 6). In this manner, Washington established a legacy of tension between private belief (or in his case, lack of belief) and public expectation for the presidency that would continue to factor into campaign politics for centuries to come.²

It was during the nation’s first contested presidential election that religion began to rear its head in presidential politics. The United States of this period was a fundamentally Christian nation and, as Washington had conceded in his inaugural address, the public expectation was for a leader guided by the precepts of Christian religion, namely God, Christ, and the Bible.³ During the 1800 election, an issue that merited considerable attention was the supposed atheism of Thomas Jefferson, a claim that gained a substantial foothold in the arena of public opinion. Attacks on Jefferson’s religious values were spearheaded by the Federalist Party, which hoped to raise concerns about the candidate’s presumed secularist ideals. Federalists cited

Jefferson's *Statute of Religious Freedom*, which repealed Virginia's colonial era state support for the Episcopalian Church, as proof of his anti-religious leanings and his 1780 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he questioned several of the Bible's claims, as evidence of his doubt of the literal nature and value of scripture (Larson 168). Throwing his significant public influence behind the attacks was the nation's foremost evangelical minister, Timothy Dwight, who cited obscure Biblical prophecies to draw parallels between the recent defeat of Roman Catholicism in France by the dual forces of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and the rising forces of the anti-Christ in America, as manifested in secularism and Thomas Jefferson. When circulated with other "evidence" of Jefferson's atheism — his rare attendance of church services, his willingness to work and entertain on Sundays, his failure to invoke Biblical authority or acknowledge Christ in the Declaration of Independence — the attacks became nearly impossible to combat (Larson 169).

It may have been for this very reason that Thomas Jefferson refused to address the claims, saying only that, "It has been so impossible to contradict all their lies that I have determined to contradict none: for while I should be engaged with one, they would publish twenty new ones" (Larson 173). His Democratic-Republican Party, however, did not embrace their leader's passive stance and launched an aggressive counter-strategy to woo smaller denominations — Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers in particular — who were less widely established and generally did not receive state support. They argued that Jefferson's stance on religious liberty was more favorable to their cause than Adams' historical support of an established state church in Massachusetts. Ultimately, as history will tell, the Federalist attacks backfired. Though Adams, somewhat ironically, was no more of a religious man than Jefferson, his failure to defend his opponent left him vulnerable to the Democratic-Republican countercharges.

While one may conclude that religion in the 1800 election was employed as a conscious strategy, it is important to note the crucial differences that separate this early election from the modern ones of past decades. First, and most importantly, the more publicly religious candidate was not the victor. Indeed, Jefferson's strongest statement on the subject — "say nothing of my religion. It is known to my God

and myself alone” — denied the right of the public to inquire into such matters. Secondly, the war of religious values was not fought by the candidates themselves, but by their proxies: the Federalist and Republican Parties, influential newspapers, and characters such as Timothy Dwight. Finally, the 1800 election lacked a significant element of the modern presidential election, a personal conversion story. For these reasons, religion was a factor in America’s first contested election, but not a conscious tool of the candidates themselves.

For much of the following century, while continuing to factor into the dynamics of presidential elections, religion failed to again emerge in such a dominant role. It was in the 1896 election, widely considered to be one of the most dramatic in American history, that the pattern was broken in several significant ways. William Jennings Bryan, a Fundamentalist, was the first non-mainstream Protestant to run for President. Using the powerful rhetorical skills he had acquired from the “anxious bench” at revivals throughout the Midwest, he also became the first candidate to formulate a conscious religious strategy, nearly a century before it would become a staple of campaign politics. Bryan, running against a mainstream Protestant opponent in William McKinley, brought an evangelical style to his campaign, often referring to his political errand as “holy” (Wills 1991: 67). His tendency to treat politics as a moral crusade strongly appealed to pietists nationwide who had previously regarded the Democratic Party as the enemy.⁴ As Paul Lopatto states, “Many pietists, who usually felt much more at home in the Republican party, now found the Democratic nominee to be more in tune with their basic religious values than his largely secularist opponent”(11). Pietists clearly perceived Bryan as being one of their own.

The primary issue of the 1896 campaign was the gold standard, an economic policy upheld by McKinley and challenged by the free silver policies Bryan supported. Declaring a crusade against the “devil” gold standard, Bryan melded populist sentiment with powerful religious rhetoric in his famous proclamation: “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor your crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon your cross of gold” (Wills 1991: 68). Bryan did not limit himself to condemning economic policy alone, as Lopatto elaborates:

Superficially, Bryan's speeches covered a multitude of topics — silver and gold, money and prices, banking, coercion, education, and the unrivaled beauty of the local countryside. At a deeper level, the level at which his audience listened, his speeches were all the same, his words were all about good and evil, the righteous and the wicked, the common people and their oppressors, salvation and damnation. (11)

Representing a nascent fundamentalist movement, Bryan embraced his religious identity, adapting it to the political scene and employing it to express populist sentiment. In this formulation of a clear religious strategy, he was nearly a century ahead of his time.

Unfortunately for him, Bryan also represented an anomaly in a pattern of mainstream Protestantism that America was not yet willing to set aside. The significance of this fact must not be overlooked in Bryan's defeat, for it would be more than a half-century before another anomaly, John F. Kennedy, would succeed in overcoming the pattern.

It was more than thirty years before either party dared to break again from the mold. It was 1928 and Albert Smith, the first Roman Catholic to gain a major party's nomination, faced Herbert Hoover. Throughout his campaign, Smith was forced to cope with considerable anti-Catholic sentiment and prevailing stereotypes, including most commonly the accusation that he was an Irish Catholic drunkard. More important, however, were the fears of many Protestants that Smith would be under the command of the Pope in Rome. Ultimately, Smith's Catholicism, and the religious identification it represented to both Protestants and Catholics, solidified the voting patterns of many Americans in an unfavorable manner for the candidate. As Lopatto concludes, "the basic tendency of Protestants to vote Republican and Catholics to vote Democratic was intensified" (11-12).

In the following decades, religious affiliations continued to shift and religion continued to factor into presidential politics. In the 1930's, Franklin Delano Roosevelt cobbled together his New Deal Democratic Coalition, an alliance composed of northern Catholics, Jewish "ethnics," black Protestants, and Southern white Protestants, especially evangelicals. His opposition, the competing Republican coalition, was composed almost exclusively of mainline Protestant churches (Green

23). By 1956, this alliance had shifted, as Adlai Stevenson performed very poorly among the former stalwarts of the New Deal coalition, Catholics and conservative Protestants. Dwight Eisenhower thus became the first twentieth-century Republican to come to power with notable support from both populist evangelicals and elite fundamentalists (Sharlet 197). Also notable was the presence of a young Billy Graham, who worked briefly for the Eisenhower campaign, adding a religious tone to his speeches and reportedly telling the famous general, “Frankly, I don’t think the American people would be happy with a president who didn’t belong to any church or even attend one.” To which Eisenhower promised, “As soon as the election is over, I’ll join a church” (Sharlet 196). It was thus no coincidence that shortly after the incumbent maintained his office, he attended the first National Prayer Breakfast, a tradition that continues to this day, where he declared with some unease: “All free government is founded in a deeply felt religious faith” (Sharlet 197). With this act an important expectation had been acknowledged and a standard had been set: no longer would secularism, professed or not, be safe in the White House.

In the 1960 election, John F. Kennedy tread a path similar to that of Al Smith’s, though his success in navigating it, and breaking the pattern of mainstream Protestantism, is often considered a testament to the growing religious tolerance of the nation. During the primaries, many Democratic Party leaders voiced fears about Kennedy’s Catholicism, recognizing that the party’s base, despite Eisenhower’s victory in the previous election, continued to rest on Catholics *and* conservative Protestants (Lopatto 58). To allay these fears, Kennedy undertook concerted efforts to convince voters that he would not answer to the Pope. In his most famous effort to do so, he appeared before a panel of Southern Baptist preachers and declared without hesitation, “I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute: where no Catholic prelate would tell the President — should he be Catholic — how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote” (Domke 6). Kennedy managed to persuade enough voters of his loyalty. Not surprisingly, he received overwhelming support from Catholics. More importantly, however, was the nearly equal division of the conservative Protestant vote between him and Nixon (Lopatto 54). The split represented a

significant move away from the Democrats, revealing that while his Kennedy's Catholicism may have played a diminished role, it still constituted a notable factor.

Throughout the 1960's, as fundamentalism quietly grew in America's backyard, a trend developed in which voters became grouped decreasingly along denominational lines and increasingly within the bounds of devotional style. Thus voters who attended services at least once a week were more likely to vote together, as were those attended less frequently. The beginning phases of this polarization could be observed in the 1964 election, in which Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater, and continued through the 1968 election, in which Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey (Lopatto 61). The result of this restructuring was that "people who are more devout — regardless of denomination — are more likely to favor the GOP" (Campbell 1). A number of developments in the following decade supported the growing trend, emphasized by the emergence of the Religious Right from political quietude to political activism. As William Crotty describes:

...a number of social groups began to rethink their partisan attachments. Most notably, southern whites abandoned the Democratic Party in very high numbers and became reliable members of the Republican base. Intertwined with this move, there was a dramatic increase in support for Republicans from religiously observant Protestants, especially evangelical, owing to the cultural upheavals of the Vietnam era and controversial Supreme Court decisions on issues such as school prayer, birth control, and abortion rights. (23)

In 1972, despite the absence of a personal conversion narrative, Richard Nixon won the overwhelming majority of conservative Protestants, completing the shift and, seemingly, firmly entrenching the evangelical masses of America in the corner of the Republican Party (Lopatto 56)

In 1976, however, Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford in a close race in which many evangelicals returned to the Democratic ticket, seemingly reversing the trend. While his election would prove to be an anomaly, a break in the pattern that preceded and followed his

presidency, it also represented a divide. The nature of his religious approach in regaining the evangelical vote, though decidedly fortuitous, was unintentional or at least unformulated. Regardless of the passivity of Carter's campaign in framing a strategy, the ability of religion to galvanize voters, shifting them dramatically across party lines, was an undeniable fact that future campaigns were forced to acknowledge.

Carter, unlike the majority of candidates in the previous decades' elections, was open and candid about his personal religious beliefs (Hoover 5). A devout churchgoer, he had previously done missionary work, and his sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, was a well-known evangelist (Popkin 161). Describing himself as a born-again Christian who had personally experienced salvation, he depicted religion as an important part of his daily life. Despite this strong religious identity, Carter did not provide many details to attest to his beliefs, instead relying on his general religious background to reassure voters that he was morally and ethically qualified to be president.⁵ In the years following his victory, many commentaries have observed that Carter was supported by a "significant movement among evangelical Protestants" (Domke 16). While this interpretation is hardly misguided, it is important to recognize that Carter made few concerted efforts to appeal to evangelicals, and that few forces yet existed, both inside and outside of the political campaign machine, to consciously guide their votes. Though Carter's policies were not distinctly religious in nature, he presented himself as a religious man, an approach that simultaneously appealed to religious individuals, particularly evangelicals, and to the general public, who sought a man of honesty and virtue after the Watergate scandal.

The most powerful aspect of Carter's religious appeal was his personal conversion narrative, a unique element in Presidential elections up to this point. Testifying to both the singularity and power of his story, the national media proclaimed "the year of the evangelical." NBC news anchor John Chancellor reassured Americans, "We've checked this out. Being born-again is not a bizarre, mountaintop experience. It's something common to millions of Americans — particularly if you're Baptist (Winston 450).

The same approach to religion that worked for Carter in 1976 worked against him in 1980. Uninvited as it may have been, the

evangelical vote was accompanied by significant expectations. As his term wore on, discontent with Carter's presidency grew, particularly with his strict adherence to the separation of church and state. On the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* in January 1980, Carter held a meeting with evangelical leaders; they left unimpressed and, "a relationship that already had been strained was irretrievably broken" (Domke 16). As the campaign for reelection approached, "evangelicals vented on Carter all the rage and disappointment of a supposed betrayal. They felt the secular menace had grown under his stewardship" (Wills 1991: 120). Jerry Falwell publicly stated that he felt he had been deceived by Carter and, preceding the 1980 campaign, he founded the Moral Majority, adopting the mantra: "Get them saved, baptized, and registered." Prior to the Republican Convention, with Reagan preparing to select a running mate, Falwell declared: "If evangelicals are excited about the platform, which they are, and about both candidates, I'd say three of four million votes will be available to Mr. Reagan that have never been available to anyone" (Domke 17).

Into this highly charged political and religious atmosphere stepped Ronald Reagan. Recognizing how Carter's election had revealed the power of religion, he employed a conscious strategy to harness it for his benefit. Fusing strong religious undertones to his larger campaign of conservative values, he appealed to the disgruntled evangelicals whom Carter's presidency had failed and whom Falwell had galvanized into political activism. In his nomination speech on July 17th at the Republican convention, Reagan declared his intentions in what David Domke describes as a moment of "grand political theater." Appearing to deviate from his scripted speech, Reagan paused to ask:

Can we doubt that only a Divine Providence placed this land, this island of freedom, here as a refuge for all those people in the world who yearn to breathe freely: Jews and Christians enduring persecution behind the iron curtain, the boat people of South Asia, of Cuba and Haiti, the victims of drought and famine in Africa, the freedom fighters of Afghanistan and our own countrymen held in savage captivity?

He continued: "I've been a little afraid to suggest what I'm going to

suggest. I'm more afraid not to. Can we begin our crusade joined together in a moment of silent prayer?" He concluded, "God Bless America" (Domke 3). The speech was specifically tailored to appeal to both the crucial Christian conservative voting bloc and the broader American public. Domke understands the speech as a turning point: "It was a moment when religion and partisan politics were brought together through mass media as never before. It was a moment when conservatives became a political force in the United States. It was, simply put, a moment when new religious politics was born" (3).

Reagan's convention speech kicked off a campaign that operated with a clear religious undertone, repeatedly relating its goals to that of a "crusade." In a number of ways, Reagan appealed to traditional evangelical values: he encouraged private Christian schools and stated that there were "great flaws" in the theory of evolution, and that it might be wise for schools to teach "creationism" as well (Popkin 229). Also significant was his ease in speaking "the language of God and country, of finding the answer to all life's problems in the Bible" (Wills 1991: 120). His campaign repeatedly emphasized the defense of so-called "Old Values," which "did not really take people back to the past, but made a dizzy rush towards the future less disorienting" (Wills 1991: 35). Reagan's depiction of these conservative values, cemented upon a religious foundation, appealed broadly to evangelical Christians frightened by recent movements toward secularism. This religious strategy, consciously created and enacted, undoubtedly aided his landslide victories in 1980 and 1984.

From this point forward, a new and telling pattern emerged in the presidential election: the candidate who displayed the most comfort with and discussed with the most ease their personal religious beliefs won the election. As Jimmy Carter had won in 1976 on the presumed virtues of his conversion story, so Reagan with a more aggressive religious strategy defeated him in the following election year. In the elections to follow, the candidate that most aptly recognized the value and necessity of a personal religious strategy — George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama — would emerge the victor.

George H. W. Bush recognized quite early on the necessity of depicting a religious demeanor. Throughout Reagan's second term,

while serving as vice president, he attended gatherings of right-wing religious conservatives and courted the support of evangelical leaders, including Jerry Falwell and Jim and Tammy Bakker (Wills 1991: 79).⁶ To shore up his credentials, Bush explicitly declared that “Jesus Christ is my personal savior” and appointed his son, George W. Bush, as leader of a special effort within his campaign to secure the evangelical vote.

In a manner similar to Reagan, Bush fused classic themes of law and order and patriotism with strong religious undertones, but unlike his predecessor he utilized a conscious religious strategy to attack and undermine the liberal appeal of his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis. In *Under God*, an examination of the 1988 campaign, Garry Wills concludes that, despite the fact that he summarily resumed ties to the Greek Orthodox Church, Dukakis was the “first truly secular candidate...someone entirely free *from* religion.” For this reason, his campaign was ill-prepared to combat the religious strategy of his opposition; as Wills states, “God was not in their computer” (Wills 1991: 40). Most notably, Bush exploited Dukakis’ limited connections to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as evidence of a secularist vendetta.⁷ For a candidate with already tenuous religious credentials, Bush’s subtle attacks, which simultaneously called into question his patriotism and religiosity, helped to signal the death knell of his hopes for the presidency. Dukakis’ failure to recognize the importance of forming a religious strategy of his own left him defenseless against Bush’s strategy and the corresponding charges of secularism. Bush won convincingly.

As the 1992 election approached, Bill Clinton recognized the failures of previous Democrats in publicly appealing to religious Americans. First, Clinton selected Al Gore as his running mate, creating the first all-Southern Baptist ticket in election history, a move which captured the attention of the traditionally conservative religious community. The Democratic Convention, which followed shortly after this choice, set a distinctly religious tone and included speakers such as Jesse Jackson and Mario Cuomo. In his acceptance speech, Clinton declared his campaign a “New Covenant” in a speech that also quoted scripture, invoked God on several occasions, and spoke of the importance of religious faith. Domke asserts: “Clinton had well-

learned what may be the most important lesson in contemporary American politics: to compete successfully, politicians need not always walk the religious walk, but they had better be able to talk the religious talk” (6). Shortly after the convention, Clinton chose to make faith the focus of a prominent speech at Notre Dame; every aspect of the affair, only slightly short of orchestrated, was aimed at conveying to religious voters, particularly Catholics, the message “I’m one of you” (Domke 71-72). The success of the event, particularly as proclaimed by the national media, was crucial in legitimating Clinton to religious believers of all denominations. The positive effect of this refined religious strategy undoubtedly played a significant role in his convincing defeat of the incumbent Bush.

The successful 2000 and 2004 campaigns of George W. Bush may reflect the culmination of the conscious religious strategy in presidential campaigns. Bush, never hesitant to expound upon the role faith plays in his personal life, won a close and controversial election in 2000 against Al Gore. His chief strategist, Karl Rove, recognized in this near-defeat a widespread failure of Republicans, particularly the evangelical demographic, to vote. Throughout the remainder of his first term, considerable efforts were made to cement this voting bloc and guarantee their activism in the bid for reelection. In addition to his employing his personal conversion story, Bush utilized an unprecedented amount of religious rhetoric and assumed strong stances on divisive religious issues, including abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research. His opponent, John Kerry, was never at ease with his religious views and failed to establish a strong religious identity or consistent strategy. As a result, Bush was re-elected with the support of evangelicals and traditionalists from Protestant and Catholic communities.

We can now understand why Barack Obama’s election, though historic in many respects, was predictable in light of the pattern described here. Long before he declared his candidacy, Obama was celebrated as a rare Democrat who could discuss both his personal beliefs and the larger role of religion in politics with ease. Despite the scandal surrounding his church, his story of conversion undoubtedly rang true with many religious voters.⁹ John McCain, however, faced difficulties throughout his campaign discussing his faith and garnering

the necessary support of the conservative Christian community.¹⁰ It was never unclear which candidate possessed the stronger religious identity and, for this very reason, it was not surprising who gave the victory speech on election night.

Notes

¹ Wills 2007: 167-169. Although George Washington is generally perceived as being more religious than the other founding fathers, particularly Jefferson, Wills makes clear that this is not the case. Though Washington was particularly attuned to the importance of symbolism, there are no marks of religion at his Mount Vernon estate. He also never invoked the name of Jesus or of Christ in prayer and often used terms for God that were common to Deism.

² Given the immediate marriage of religion and politics, it is not surprising that rapidly following the ratification of the Constitution and the subsequent formation of the first party system, certain denominations became strongly affiliated with particular parties: the Episcopal and Congregationalist churches with the conservative Federalist and Whigs, the more left-leaning Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches with the Jeffersonians. For more information on the topic see Lopatto 1-3.

³ Larson describes turn-of-the-century America as fundamentally Christian but with considerable diversity and a rapidly evolving religious establishment. The result was a general sentiment that “in order to act right, people needed precepts of religion backed by the promise of Heaven and the threat of Hell” (165-67)

⁴ Lopatto 7. The strategy of the Republicans and McKinley, contrarily, was to expand the party’s social base by downplaying divisive cultural issues, such as religion, and repeatedly emphasizing the need for all to return to economic prosperity.

⁵ Campbell 2. Even early in the campaign, the effect of his views were noticeable; as they became better known, his support began to divide noticeably along religious lines. In the California and Ohio primaries, Protestants who attended church at least once a week gave Carter twice as high a proportion of their votes as voters who did not.

⁶ The Bakker’s were owners and operators of Heritage U.S.A., the

religio-patriotic theme park then in its prime.

⁷ Wills 1991: 80-82. In 1988, the ACLU was involved in a legal battle to have the words “under God” removed from the Pledge of Allegiance. Among the evangelical community, the ACLU was considered a high-ranking enemy, battling for strict separation of church and state on many fronts. Bush employed Dukakis’ slim connections to the ACLU — he had previously supported motions in the state of Massachusetts to protect teachers from being compelled to recite the pledge — to accuse him of being a “card-carrying member.”

⁸ The date of September 11th was chosen for Clinton’s speech because, as Bush was scheduled to speak to the Christian Coalition that same day, Clinton aimed to draw attention to his own unique brand of religious politics. The campaign selected Notre Dame, the nation’s most renowned Catholic university, as the site of the speech because Clinton hoped to create a “mirror image” of what John F. Kennedy had famously done in 1960: instead of a Catholic speaking about his faith before Southern Baptists, a Southern Baptist would be speaking about his faith before Catholics. The symbolism of the event was key: “aligning himself with the mythic Kennedy could only help Clinton” (Domke 71-72).

⁹ Obama’s religious identity and strategy in the 2008 campaign received extensive media coverage; several good articles on the topic are *Time’s* “Obama’s Play for the Faithful” (12 June 2008), “The Dems Finally Get Religion” (14 Feb. 2008), “The Dems Delicate Dance on Faith” (15 Apr. 2008), and the *New York Times’* “Redemption Politics” (6 June 2008).

¹⁰ McCain’s difficulties in wooing conservative Christians similarly received considerable coverage, particularly from the *New York Times*: “Pressure on McCain to Reconcile with Conservatives” (7 Feb. 2008), “McCain’s Agents of Intolerance” (24 May 2008), “McCain Extends Outreach, Evangelicals Still Wary” (9 June 2008), and “McCain Gets Praise, Not Backing, From the Grahams” (30 June 2008).

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