

Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, John F. Kennedy

Narrator: From Houston's Rice Hotel, Senator John Kennedy is about to address a special meeting of the Greater Houston Ministerial Association to which he has been invited. During this telecast, Senator Kennedy will participate in an informal question-and-answer period. The telecast of this meeting is sponsored by the Kennedy-Johnson Texas Campaign Committee, and is being seen throughout Texas on a special 22-station network. The audience you are seeing is composed of clergymen of the Houston area who have been invited by the association. Reverend Herbert Meza will introduce the Democratic Presidential candidate. The meeting is about to be called to order by the president, Reverend George Reck.

George Reck: May I call this special meeting of the Association of Ministers of Greater Houston to order. Let us stand for prayer. God, be merciful unto us and bless us and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon Earth, thy saving help among all nations. God shall bless us and all the ends of the Earth shall praise him. With these words of the psalmist, we stand before thee oh God, as our only sovereign Lord. Forgive us good lord and show us thy mercy. Let thy grace rest upon our nation. And do not take thy gospel light from us. Incline our ears to thee and to thy will, and show us always the truth that makes and keeps men free. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

We are very happy that so many of you ministers are present at this meeting. The treasurer of our association, [Name], has wondered to me if some of you would not like to pay your dues for this time, this year which begins with September. I am sure that he will be in the lobby after this session, ready to shake your hand. We are very happy to see so many of you ministers present, and we want this to be a true meeting of the Association. Under the policy of your executive committee this year, we wish to have as guests, for regular and special meetings, as many personalities of note and reputation as possible. The purpose is of course is to provide not only a good program, but to give knowledge and enlightenment to the spiritual leaders of our community. Thus a similar invitation was extended by the Association to Mr. Nixon. Please understand that this is not a political rally. This is a meeting of the association of ministers. And we rely upon your sense for good order, proper respect to the nominee to the highest office of our land, and good Christian behavior, generally. Our little mouse has grown into a lion of significance. This has not been our original intention, but things happen these ways. Nevertheless, may the atmosphere be informal here: an informal gathering of [inaudible]. And may this such atmosphere be maintained. May I speak a welcome to all of you. I am [inaudible] the Reverend Herbert Meza, Vice President of the Association, and our program chair.

Herbert Meza: The program this evening does not constitute an endorsement of either the speaker or the party which he represents. The program has been motivated by the religious issues in this campaign. Issues that are not modern. There are some who insist that nothing has changed within the Roman Catholic Church, and there are others who insist that nothing should change. The problem is not to deny the religious issue or to brand as intolerant those who raise it. The problem is to place it in proper perspective and to determine where the candidate stands in relationship to that perspective. The extremists on both sides have tended to dominate the debate. Contrary to common propaganda, the South is not a hotbed of religious or racial intolerance. There are many honest minds that are raising honest questions. Many Catholics differ with us on many questions that are relevant to the welfare of our country. The fact that the Senator is with us tonight, is to concede that a religious issue does exist. It is because there are many serious minds decently raising questions that we have invited the speaker of the evening, and it is for that same reason that we have allowed this meeting to be broadcast. To that end, I should like to introduce at this time the Senator from Massachusetts, and the Democratic candidate for the President of the United States, Senator John F. Kennedy.
[applause]

John F. Kennedy: Reverend Meza, Reverend Reck, I'm grateful for your generous invitation to speak my views.

While the so-called religious issue is necessarily and properly the chief topic here tonight, I want to emphasize from the outset that we have far more critical issues to face in the 1960 election; the spread of Communist influence, until it now festers 90 miles off the coast of Florida--the humiliating treatment of our President and Vice

President by those who no longer respect our power--the hungry children I saw in West Virginia, the old people who cannot pay their doctor bills, the families forced to give up their farms--an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space.

These are the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues--for war and hunger and ignorance and despair know no religious barriers.

But because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected President, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured--perhaps deliberately, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again--not what kind of church I believe in, for that should be important only to me--but what kind of America I believe in.

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--where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference--and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish--where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source--where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials--and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

For while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew--or a Quaker--or a Unitarian--or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute of religious freedom. Today I may be the victim--but tomorrow it may be you--until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end--where all men and all churches are treated as equal--where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice--where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind--and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood.

That is the kind of America in which I believe. And it represents the kind of Presidency in which I believe--a great office that must neither be humbled by making it the instrument of any one religious group nor tarnished by arbitrarily withholding its occupancy from the members of any one religious group. I believe in a President whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation or imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office.

I would not look with favor upon a President working to subvert the first amendment's guarantees of religious liberty. Nor would our system of checks and balances permit him to do so--and neither do I look with favor upon those who would work to subvert Article VI of the Constitution by requiring a religious test--even by indirection--for it. If they disagree with that safeguard they should be out openly working to repeal it.

I want a Chief Executive whose public acts are responsible to all groups and obligated to none--who can attend any ceremony, service or dinner his office may appropriately require of him--and whose fulfillment of his Presidential oath is not limited or conditioned by any religious oath, ritual or obligation.

This is the kind of America I believe in--and this is the kind I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested then that we may have a "divided loyalty," that we did "not believe in

liberty," or that we belonged to a disloyal group that threatened the "freedoms for which our forefathers died."

And in fact this is the kind of America for which our forefathers died--when they fled here to escape religious test oaths that denied office to members of less favored churches--when they fought for the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom--and when they fought at the shrine I visited today, the Alamo. For side by side with Bowie and Crockett died McCafferty and Bailey and Carey--but no one knows whether they were Catholic or not. For there was no religious test at the Alamo.

I ask you tonight to follow in that tradition--to judge me on the basis of my record of 14 years in Congress--on my declared stands against an Ambassador to the Vatican, against unconstitutional aid to parochial schools, and against any boycott of the public schools (which I have attended myself)--instead of judging me on the basis of these pamphlets and publications we all have seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other centuries, and always omitting, of course, the statement of the American Bishops in 1948 which strongly endorsed church-state separation, and which more nearly reflects the views of almost every American Catholic.

I do not consider these other quotations binding upon my public acts--why should you? But let me say, with respect to other countries, that I am wholly opposed to the state being used by any religious group, Catholic or Protestant, to compel, prohibit, or persecute the free exercise of any other religion. And I hope that you and I condemn with equal fervor those nations which deny their Presidency to Protestants and those which deny it to Catholics. And rather than cite the misdeeds of those who differ, I would cite the record of the Catholic Church in such nations as Ireland and France--and the independence of such statesmen as Adenauer and De Gaulle.

But let me stress again that these are my views--for contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters--and the church does not speak for me.

Whatever issue may come before me as President--on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject--I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates. And no power or threat of punishment could cause me to decide otherwise.

But if the time should ever come--and I do not concede any conflict to be even remotely possible--when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office; and I hope any conscientious public servant would do the same.

But I do not intend to apologize for these views to my critics of either Catholic or Protestant faith--nor do I intend to disavow either my views or my church in order to win this election.

If I should lose on the real issues, I shall return to my seat in the Senate, satisfied that I had tried my best and was fairly judged. But if this election is decided on the basis that 40 million Americans lost their chance of being President on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser, in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people.

But if, on the other hand, I should win the election, then I shall devote every effort of mind and spirit to fulfilling the oath of the Presidency--practically identical, I might add, to the oath I have taken for 14 years in the Congress. For without reservation, I can "solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution . . . so help me God.

Mr. Meza: Due to the press of time we should begin immediately with the question and answer period. You know the ground rules; are there any questions?

Question: Senator Kennedy, I'm Glenn Norman, Pastor of Second Baptist Church in Corpus Christi. I think I speak for many that do not in any sense discount or in any sense doubt your loyalty and your love to this nation, or your position, that's in accord with our position, in regard to the separation of church and state. But could I bring it down to where we stand right here tonight, as two men of just nearly equal in age, just standing facing each other. If this meeting tonight were being held in the sanctuary of my church -- it's the policy in my city, that has many very fine Catholics in it, but it's the policy of Catholic leadership to forbid them to attend a Catholic -- a Protestant service -- If we tonight were in the sanctuary of my church, just right as we are, would you and could you attend, as you have here?

Senator Kennedy: Well, yes, I could. I can attend any -- as I said in my statement -- I would attend any service in the interest -- that had any connection with my public office, or, in the case of a private ceremony, weddings, funerals and so on, of course I would participate and have participated. I think the only question would be whether I could participate as a participant, a believer in your faith, and maintain my membership in my church. That, it seems to me, comes within the private beliefs that a Catholic might have. But as far as whether I could attend this sort of a function in your church, whether I as Senator or President could attend a function in your service connected with my position of office, then I could attend and would attend.

Question: Closely allied to it was the position in regard to the Chapel of the Chaplains that was dedicated and which I believe you once had accepted the invitation to attend, and then the press said, I believe, that Cardinal Dougherty brought pressure and you refused and did not attend.

Senator Kennedy: I will be delighted to explain. That seems to be a matter of great interest. I was invited in 1947, after my election to the Congress, by Dr. Poling to attend a -- a dinner to raise funds for an interfaith chapel in honor of the four chaplains who went down on the Dorchester. This was 14 years ago. I was delighted to accept, because I thought it was a useful and worthwhile cause. A few days before I was due to accept, I learned through my administrative assistant, who had friends in Philadelphia -- two things. First, that I was listed -- and this is in Dr. Poling's book in which he describes the incident -- as the spokesman for the Catholic faith at the dinner. Charles Taft, Senator Taft's brother, was to be the spokesman for the Protestant faith. Senator Lehman was to be the spokesman for the Jewish faith. The second thing I learned was that the chapel, instead of being located as I thought it was as an interfaith chapel, was located in the basement of another church. It was not in that sense an interfaith chapel, and for the 14 years since that chapel was built there has never been a service of my church because of the physical location. I, therefore, informed Dr. Poling that while I would be glad to come as a citizen, in fact, many Catholics did go to the dinner, I did not feel that I had very good credentials to attend as the spokesman for the Catholic faith at that dinner to raise funds when the whole Catholic church group in Philadelphia were not participating and because the chapel has never been blessed or consecrated. Now I want to make it clear that my grounds for not going were private. I had no credentials to speak for the Catholic faith at a dinner for a chapel which has never -- in which no Catholic service has ever been held. So that -- and to this day, unfortunately, no service has been held at the present time. But I think if I may separate that, if this were a public matter, I told Dr. Poling I'd be glad to go as an individual; but I could not go as a spokesman on that occasion.

Question: Senator Kennedy, Canon Rutenbahr of Christ Church, here in Houston. I have read this platform and the planks in it with great interest, especially in the realms of freedom, and I note that in the educational section the right of education for each person is guaranteed or offered for a guarantee. It also says that there shall be equal opportunity for employment. In another section it says there shall be equal rights to housing and recreation. All of these speak, I think, in a wonderful sense to the freedom which we want to keep here in America. Yet, on the other hand, there is in another place in the platform, I these words: "We will repeal the authorization for right-to-work laws." Now, it seems to me that in this aspect here, and I feel that these are much more important than any religious issue -- here you are abolishing an open shop; you are taking away the freedom of the individual worker, whether he wants to work and wants to belong to this union or not. Now, isn't this sort of double talk? You're guaranteeing freedom on one hand and yet you're going to take it away on the other?

Senator Kennedy: No, I don't agree with that.

Question: I think there's a dichotomy here in the platform ... --

Senator Kennedy: Well that provision has been in the platform since 1948, and I am sure there is a difference of opinion between us on that matter, and between many Democrats on that matter. But I think that it's a decision which goes to the economic and political views. I don't think it involves a constitutional guarantee of freedom. In other words, under the provisions of the Taft-Hartley law, a State was permitted to prohibit a union shop. But it was not permitted to guarantee a closed shop. Now, my own judgment is that uniformity in interstate commerce is valuable, and, therefore, I hold with the view that it's better to have uniform laws and not a law which is in interstate commerce, and these are all -- this is not intrastate but interstate commerce -- which permits one condition in one State and another in another. This is not a new provision. It's been in for the last three platforms.

Question: Max Dalcke, president of Gulf Coast Bible College, and pastor of First Church of God here in Houston, and I am a member, Mr. Meza, of the Houston Association of Ministers. Mr. Kennedy, you very clearly stated your position tonight in regard to the propagation of the gospel by all religious groups in other countries. I appreciated that much because we Protestants are a missionary people. However, the question I have to ask is this: If you are elected President, will you use your influence to get the Roman Catholic countries of South America and Spain to stop persecuting Protestant missionaries and to give equal rights to Protestants to propagate their faith as the United States gives to the Roman Catholics or any other group?

Senator Kennedy: I would use my influence as President of the United States to permit, to encourage the development of freedom all over the world. One of the rights which I consider to be important is the right of free speech, the right of assembly, the right of free religious practice, and I would hope that the United States and the President would stand for those rights all around the globe without regard to geography or religion or political traditions.

Question: Senator Kennedy, this is E. H. Westmoreland, pastor of the South Main Baptist Church, here in Houston. I have received today a copy of a resolution passed by the Baptist Pastors Conference of St. Louis, and they're going to confront you with this tomorrow night. I would like you to answer to the Houston crowd before you get to St. Louis. This is the resolution:

With deep sincerity and in Christian grace, we plead with Senator John F. Kennedy, as the person presently concerned in this matter, to appeal to Cardinal Cushing, Mr. Kennedy's own hierarchical superior in Boston, to present to the Vatican Mr. Kennedy's sincere statement relative to the separation of Church and State in the United States and religious freedom as represented in the Constitution of the United States, in order that the Vatican may officially authorize such a belief for all Roman Catholics in the United States.

Senator Kennedy: May I just say that as I do not accept the right of any, as I said, ecclesiastical official, to tell me what I shall do in the sphere of my public responsibility as an elected official, I do not propose also to ask Cardinal Cushing to ask the Vatican to take some action. I do not propose to interfere with their free right to do exactly what they want. There is no doubt in my mind that the viewpoints that I have expressed -- there is no doubt in my mind that the viewpoint that I have expressed tonight publicly represents the opinion of the overwhelming majority of American Catholics, and I think that what my view I have no doubt is known to Catholics around the world. I am just hopeful that by my stating it quite precisely, and I believe I state it in the tradition of the American Catholics, way back all the way to Bishop John Carroll, I feel that -- I hope this will clarify it without my having to take the rather circuitous route. This is the position I take with the American Catholic Church in the United States with which I am associated.

Question: We appreciate your forthright statement. May I say we have great admiration for you. But until we know this is the position of your church, because there will be many Catholics who will be appointed if you are elected President, we would like to know that they, too, are free to make such statements as you've been so courageous to make.

Senator Kennedy: Well let me say that anyone that I would appoint to any office as a Senator or as a President, would, I hope, hold the same view of the necessity of their living up to not only the letter of the Constitution but the spirit. If I may say so, I am a Catholic. I've stated my view very clearly. I don't find any difficulty in stating that view. In my judgment, it is the view of American Catholics from one end of the country to the other. Because as long as I can state it in a way which is, I hope, is satisfactory to you, why do you possibly doubt that I represent a viewpoint which is hostile to the Catholic Church in the United States. I believe I'm stating the viewpoint that Catholics in this country hold toward the happy relationship which exists between Church and State.

Question: Let me ask you then, sir: Do you state it with the approval of the Vatican?

Senator Kennedy: I don't have to have approval in that sense. I've not submitted -- I have not submitted my statement before I read it to the Vatican. I did not submit it to Cardinal Cushing. But my judgment is that Cardinal Cushing, which is the Cardinal from the diocese of which I am a member, would approve of this statement, in the same way that he approved of the 1948 statement of the Bishop. In my judgment, and I am not a student of theology, I am stating what I believe to be the position of my personal position and also the position of the great majority of Catholics across the United States. I hope that other countries may some day enjoy the same happy relationship of a separation between Church and State, whether they are in Catholic countries or non-Catholic countries. It seems to me that I am the one that is running for the office of the Presidency and not Cardinal Cushing and not anyone else.

Westmoreland: We would like very much for the Cardinal to make the same statement.

Question: *Senator Kennedy, I am K. O. White, pastor of Houston's Downtown First Baptist Church and former pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Let me return for a moment to the matter of the Chaplain's Chapel because there will be some questions raised, I am sure, and we would like to have just a little further statement from you.* Today I had a telephone conversation with Dr. Poling and received this telegram from him. I'm sure you would like to clear this matter up. Let me read briefly from his telegram:

The 'Memorandum on Religion as an Election Issue' prepared by Senator Kennedy's associates has a section on the Poling incident. This section contains serious factual errors. I believe the Senator will wish to correct the errors or that he would wish to withdraw that section. The original draft of the program on the interfaith dinner held in the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, on December 15, 1947, identified Mr. Kennedy, then Congressman from Massachusetts, as Honorable John F. Kennedy, Congressman from Massachusetts. Mr. Kennedy was never invited as an official representative of a religious organization nor indeed as the spokesman for the Catholic faith. No speaker on that occasion, Catholic, Jew, or Protestant, was identified by his faith. When two days before the dinner occasion Mr. Kennedy cancelled his engagement, he expressed his regret and grief and stated that since his Eminence, the Cardinal, requested him not to come, he as a loyal son of the church had no other alternative. Therefore, it was necessary to destroy this first program and to reprint it.

Senator Kennedy: Now I will state again that the words I used are a quotation from the -- from the Reverend Poling's book, "Spokesman for the Catholic Faith," a book which was produced about a year ago which first discussed this incident. Secondly, my memory of the incident is quite clear. In fact, it's as good as Rev. Poling's because when the matter was first discussed Reverend Poling stated that the incident took place in 1950, and it's only in the last two months that it has come forward that the incident took place in 1947. Thirdly, I never discussed the matter with Cardinal Dougherty in my life. I've never spoken to the Cardinal. I first learned of it through Mr. Reardon, who was my administrative assistant, who knew a Mr. Doyle who worked for the National Catholic Welfare Conference, who stated that there was a good deal of concern among many of the church people in Philadelphia, because of the location of the chapel and because no service would ever be held in it because it was located in the basement of another church. It was an entirely different situation than the one that I had confronted when I first happily accepted it. Now there were three speakers. Kennedy was one of them; Taft was the second; Senator Lehman was the third. I don't think I've misstated that one was supposed to speak for the Catholic faith, as a spokesman in Mr. Poling's words, one for the Protestant faith, and one and one for the Jewish faith. Now all I can I can say to you, sir, is this chapel -- I was glad to accept the invitation. I did not clear the

invitation with anyone. It was only when I was informed that I was speaking, and I was invited obviously as a serviceman because I came from a prominent Catholic family, that I was informed that I was there really in a sense without any credentials. The chapel, as I have said, has never had a Catholic service. It is not an interfaith chapel. And therefore, for me to participate as a spokesman in that sense for the Catholic faith I think would have given an erroneous impression. Now, I've been there 14 years. This took place in 1947. I had been in politics probably two months and was relatively inexperienced. I should have inquired before getting into the incident. Is this the best that can be done after 14 years? Is this the only incident that can be shown? And this was a private dinner. This was not a public dinner. This was a private dinner. This did not involve my responsibilities as a public official. My judgment was bad only in accepting it without having all the facts, which I wouldn't have done at a later date. But I do want to say that I've been there for 14 years. I have voted on hundreds of matters, probably thousands of matters, which involve all kinds of public questions, some of which border on the relationship between Church and State. And quite obviously that record must be reasonably good or we wouldn't keep hearing about the Poling incident. In addition, I don't mean to be disrespectful to the Reverend Poling. I have high regard for his son. I have high regard for Dr. Poling. I don't like to be in a debate with him about it. But I must say, even looking back, I think it was imprudent of me to accept it without more information, but I don't really feel that it demonstrates unfitness to hold public office.

Question: The reason for our concern is the fact that your church has stated that it has the privilege and the right and the responsibility to direct its members in various areas of life, including the political realm. We believe that history and observation indicate that it has done so. And we raise the question because we would like to know, if you are elected President and your church elects to use that privilege and obligation, what your response will be under those circumstances.

Senator Kennedy: If my church attempted to influence me in a way which was improper or which affected adversely my responsibilities as a public servant, sworn to uphold the Constitution, then I would reply to them that this was an improper action on their part, that it was one to which I could not subscribe, that I was opposed to it, and that it would be an unfortunate breach of -- an interference, with the American political system. I'm confident that there would be no such interference. We've had two Chief Justices of the Supreme Court who were Catholics. We've had three Prime Ministers of Canada in this century. I've already mentioned Mr. De Gaulle and Mr. Adenauer. My judgment is that an American who is a Catholic, who is as sensitive as a Catholic must be who seeks this high office, has exposed to the pressures which whirl around us, that he will be extremely diligent in his protection of the constitutional separation.

White: We would be most happy to have such a statement from the Vatican.

Mr. Meza: Because of the brief -- briefness of the time, let's cut out the applause.

Question: Senator Kenney: B. E. Howard, minister of the Church of Christ. First of all I should like to quote some authoritative quotations from Catholic sources and then propose a question. "So that a false statement knowingly made to one who has not a right to the truth will not be a lie" (Catholic Encyclopedia, volume 10, page 696). Quoting: "However, we are also under an obligation to keep secrets faithfully and sometimes the easiest way of fulfilling that duty is to say what is false or tell a lie" (Catholic Encyclopedia, volume 10, page 195). "When mental reservation is permissible, it is lawful to corroborate one's utterances by an oath if there be an adequate cause" (Article on perjury, Catholic Encyclopedia, volume 11, page 696). "The truth we proclaim under oath is relative and not absolute" (Explanation of Catholic Morals, page 130). Just recently from the Vatican in Rome this news release was given from the official Vatican newspaper -- and I am quoting that of May 19, 1960, Tuesday -- stated that the Roman Catholic hierarchy had the right and duty to intervene in the political field to guide its flock. The newspaper rejected what is termed (quoting) "the absurd split of conscience between the believer and the citizen." However, *Observatore Romano* made it clear that its stern pronouncement was valid for Roman Catholic laymen everywhere. It deplored the great confusion of ideas that is spreading especially between Catholic doctrine and social and political activities and between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the lay faithful in the civil field. Pope John XXIII recently gave this statement according to the *St. Louis Review*, dated December 12th, 1958 (quoting):

"Catholics may unite their strength toward the common aid and the Catholic hierarchy have the right and duty of guiding them" --

From the floor: (objection...due to time)

Question: Question, sir: Do you subscribe to the doctrine of mental reservation which I have quoted from the Catholic authorities? Do you submit to the authority of the present Pope which I have quoted from in these quotations?

Senator Kennedy: Well, let me say in the first place I've not read the Catholic Encyclopedia and I don't know all the quotation which you're giving me. I don't agree with the statement. I find no difficulty in saying so. But I do think probably I could get a -- make a better comment if I had the entire quotation before me. But in any case I have not read it before. If the quotation is meant to imply that when you take an oath you don't mean it or that it's proper for you to make oaths and then break them, that it is proper for you to lie, if that is what this states, and I don't know whether that is what it states unless I read it all in context, then, of course, I would not agree with it. Secondly, on the question of the *Observatore Romano* article, once again I don't have that in full. I read the statement of last December which was directed to a situation in Sicily where some of the Catholics were active in the Communist Party. But I'm not familiar with the one of May 1960 that you mentioned. In any case the *Observatore Romano* has no standing, as far as binding me. Thirdly, this quotation of Pope John of 1958, I didn't catch all of that, and if you'll read that again I will tell you whether that -- I feel whether I support that or not.

Question: Pope John XXIII only recently stated according to the *St. Louis Review*, date of December 12th, 1958 (quoting), "Catholics must unite their strength toward the common aid and the Catholic hierarchy has the right and duty of guiding them." Do you subscribe to that?

Senator Kennedy: Well, now, what I -- I couldn't describe -- guiding them in what area? If you're talking about in the area of faith and morals, in the constructions of the church, I would think any Baptist minister or Congregational minister has the right and duty to try to guide his flock. If you mean that by that statement that the Pope or anyone else could bind me in the fulfillment, by a statement, in the fulfillment of my public duties, I say no. If that statement is intended to mean, and it's very difficult to comment on a sentence taken out of an article which I have not read, but if that is intended to imply that the hierarchy has some obligation or has an obligation to attempt to guide the members of the Catholic Church, then that may be proper. But it all depends on the previous language of what you mean by "guide." If you mean direct or instruct on matters dealing with the organization of the faith, the details of the faith, then, of course, they have that obligation. If you mean that by that -- under that he could guide me or anyone could guide or direct me in fulfilling my public duty, then I do not agree.

Comment: Thank you, sir. Then you do not agree with the Pope in that statement?

Senator Kennedy: You see, that is why I was -- wanted to be careful, because that statement, it seems to me, is taken out of context that you just made to me. I could not tell you what the Pope meant unless I had the entire article. I would be glad to state to you that no one can direct me in the fulfillment of my duties as a public official under the United States Constitution. That I am directed to do to the people of the United States, sworn to do, to an oath to God. Now that is my flat statement. I would not want to go into details on a sentence that you read to me which I may not understand completely.

Comment: I understand you didn't explain anything.

Mr. Meza: Gentlemen we have time -- we have time for one more question, if it can be handled briefly.

Question: Senator Kennedy, I'm Robert McLaren, from Westminster Presbyterian Church, here in Houston. You have been quite clear, and I think laudably so, on this matter of the separation of Church and State, and you have answered very graciously the many questions that have come up around it. There is one question, however, which

seems to me quite relevant. And this relates to your statement that if you found by some remote possibility a real conflict between your oath of office as President, that you would resign that office if it were in real conflict with your church.

Senator Kennedy: No, I said with my conscience.

Question: With your conscience. In the syllabus of errors of Pope Leo IX, which the Catholic Encyclopedia states is still binding, although it's from a different century, is still binding upon all Catholics, there are three very specific things which are denounced, including the separation of State and Church, the freedom of religions other than Catholic to propagate themselves, and the freedom of conscience. Do you still feel, these being binding upon you, that you hold your oath of office above your allegiance to the Pope on these issues?

Senator Kennedy: Well, let's go through the issues because I don't think there's a conflict on these three issues. The first issue, as I understand it, was on the relationship between the Catholics and the state and other faiths. Was that the --

McLaren: No, the separation of Church and State, he explicitly considers in error.

Senator Kennedy: I support that, and in my judgment the American Bishops statement of 1948 clearly supported it. That, in my judgment, is the view held by Catholics in this country. They support the constitutional separation of Church and State and they are not in error in that regard.

McLaren: The second was the right of religions other than Roman Catholic to propagate themselves.

Senator Kennedy: I think that they should be permitted to propagate themselves, any faith, without any limitation by the power of the State, or encouragement by the power of the State. What's the third one?

McLaren: The third was the freedom of conscience in matters of religion, and this also in point 46, I believe it is, extends to the freedom of the mind in the realms of science. This is part --

Senator Kennedy: Yes, well, I believe in freedom of conscience. Let me just -- I guess our time is coming to an end, but I believe in it. Let me say, finally, that I am delighted to come here today. I don't want anyone to think because they interrogate me on this very important question, that I regard that as unfair questions or unreasonable or somebody who is concerned about the matter is prejudiced or bigoted. I think this fight for religious freedom is basic in the establishment of the American system, and therefore any candidate for the office, I think, should submit himself to the questions of any reasonable man.

My only objection would be -- my only limit to that would be that if somebody said regardless of Senator Kennedy's position, regardless of how much evidence he's given that what he says he means, I still wouldn't vote for him because he is a member of that church. I would consider that unreasonable. What I consider to be reasonable, and an exercise of free will and free choice, is to ask the candidate to state his views as broadly as possible, investigate his record to see what whether he states he believes and then to make an independent rational judgment, as to whether he could be entrusted with this highly important position. So I want you to know that I'm grateful to you for inviting me tonight. I'm sure that I have made no converts to my church. But I do hope - I do hope that at least my view, which I believe to be the view of my fellow Catholics, who hold office, I hope that it may be of some value in at least assisting you to make a careful judgment. Thank you.