A Rhetorical Analysis of John F. Kennedy’s Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors

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I. Introduction

Fourteen years ago Americans were witness to the rapid political growth of a young, good-looking Bostonian who was then proposing to run for the office of President of the United States. To do so, he had to win the Democratic nomination over influential party candidates such as: Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Stuart Symington, and Adlai Stevenson. The man—John Fitzgerald Kennedy—did succeed in winning not only the Democratic nomination, but also the Presidential office itself and went on to become one of the most noted political personalities in American history.

Kennedy's victory, however, was not an easy one. From the offset, his 1960 Presidential political campaign promised to be a true test of determination and political skill. He had to prove to the Democratic party and to the nation through the Presidential primaries that he could win the people's vote. At that time his public image consisted of many factors: he was young, wealthy, good-looking, politically inexperienced, a war hero, and he was a Roman Catholic. Although some of these traits could serve as political assets, others were definite political liabilities. Probably his most significant handicap was his Roman Catholic religion. As the second Catholic in history to become a serious contender for the
Presidency, his main goal was to demonstrate to the influential Democratic party leaders that he could attract public support despite his religion. He needed this vote of confidence to show that unlike Al Smith in 1928, he could win and that they would be smart to nominate him. Only through a direct confrontation with the voting public—through the primary route—could he demonstrate this support to the Democratic party leaders.

Not having any serious opposition in the New Hampshire primary, Kennedy’s first exposure to the religious issue was during the Wisconsin primary. The press and politicians were quick to note that the 32 percent Catholic population in Wisconsin (considerably above the national average of 23 percent) would work to his advantage. Also, in Wisconsin, it was legal for party regulars to switch-over and vote for the other party during the primaries. Hence, many analysts were predicting that in the primary, most Catholic Republicans would vote for Kennedy rather than for their uncontested candidate Richard Nixon. These were the predictions, and they seemed to prove true. According to two of Kennedy’s closest political associates, Kenneth P. O’Donnell and David F. Powers:

Kennedy won in Wisconsin with more popular votes than any candidate in the history of the state’s primary carrying six of the ten Congressional districts and
getting two-thirds of the delegate votes. . . . but it was not good enough for the experts, because Kennedy failed to carry the three so-called Protestant districts in the western part of the state and lost to Humphrey in the Second District, around Madison, where we had expected to win. Kennedy's big popular vote was belittled because it came from strongly Catholic districts.5

In effect, Kennedy's Wisconsin victory had placed him in a precarious position. He had defeated Humphrey but not soundly enough to erase the doubts concerning his vote-getting ability. More importantly, his exposure in Wisconsin had awakened the religious issue and all of the bigotry that accompanied it.

It was in this way, then, that the 1960 West Virginia primary became the primary of the total campaign. West Virginia, 95 per cent Protestant and only 5 per cent Catholic, became Kennedy's "make or break" state.6 He had to prove that his religion was not an issue, that he could win in spite of it. Kennedy, therefore, sought for some way to identify with and to make his religion acceptable to the people of West Virginia and the nation.

Although he had often denounced the religious issue as irrelevant to the real issues of the campaign to both politicians and the press, Kennedy's views had not been fully exposed to the voting public. His opportunity came, however, on April 21, 1960, when in the midst of the crucial West Virginia
primary, Kennedy addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors specifically on the subject of his religion. This speech represented the first full exposition of his views on church and state. He confronted the editors knowing full well that not only would his success affect directly the West Virginia primary, but also would affect his future treatment by the press and ultimately by the voting public.

This speech, then, given by one of America's greatest political figures at a time that was extremely critical for his immediate success and his future career is the subject of this analysis. The primary purpose of this analysis is to examine and to evaluate the major rhetorical strategies used by Kennedy in his attempt to minimize the stigma surrounding his religion. In view of the situation and Kennedy's particular rhetorical problems, this analysis will focus on what Kennedy was trying to do, the persuasive methods he used to do it, and the probable effects of his rhetoric.

The critical framework for the analysis of this speech utilizes the Burkeian concepts of "identification" and "strategy." To Kenneth Burke, identification was the route to persuasion and meant that things or people, different in other ways, may have one common factor in which they are consubstantial or substantially the same. Burke considers things to be consubstantial if they are united or identified in common interests, concepts, or attitudes. Emphasizing this point, Burke said,
"You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his." Identification, however, is not synonymous with the idea of being identical or exactly the same with one's audience. Burke makes this distinction clear.

A is not identical with his colleague, "B." But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. In being identified with B, A is substantially one with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus in motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another.

This distinction between identification and being identical must be understood before either concept can be used effectively in analysis.

The concept of "identification," therefore, deals with the speaker's deliberate attempt to shape his proposals according to the attitude and needs of his audience and his counter-proposals according to their dislikes.

The speaker operates within a given frame of reference, among men affiliated with relatively harmonious groups.
The politician speaks to his constituents, the general-hero to his countrymen, the Red Cross worker to his community. . . . Identification is primarily a matter of invention: selection of topics and selection of developmental factors for proof, clarification, or appreciation.9

In other words, the speaker provides his audience with the appropriate "signs" of identity within the speech. He achieves this, according to Burke, through rhetorical strategies. Rather than classifying an appeal as either emotional, ethical, or logical, it is analyzed as a kind of strategy. The critic is primarily interested in how the appeal functions as an advantage-seeking action rather than to what degree it is logical, ethical, or emotional in its effects.

Traditionally, rhetorical critics have tried to discern the logical and emotional components of rhetoric, a task which often led to the placing of artificial boundaries between modes of appeal. The strategy, therefore, may be thought of as the speaker's method by which he hopes to modify a particular situation, a plan of attack, or a way of solving a rhetorical problem.10 This approach then is useful because it is a realistic yet flexible method of analyzing what the speaker had to do and the persuasive methods he used to do it.

For organizational purposes, this thesis is divided into four parts: Part I. Introduction—dealing with justification
of the study, purpose and scope, methodology, and availability of material. Part II. Establishment of the Scene—reconstruction of the historical-political setting—the relevant events leading up to the West Virginia primary, Kennedy’s major rhetorical problems, his specific purposes in the address, and an analysis of his audience(s). Part III. Examination of the Rhetoric—a critical examination of Kennedy’s persuasive strategies to effect identification with his listeners. Part IV. Conclusion—reviewing immediate results and evaluating the probable effects—the success or failure—of the rhetoric.

The basic problem in analyzing Kennedy’s speech is that very little critical material dealing directly with this particular address has been published. However, the speech did take place during the West Virginia primary and a great deal of material has been published concerning it and the previous Wisconsin primary. Therefore, it is possible to establish a sound rhetorical background and a basis for evaluation for the speech through the available material.

Biographical information on Kennedy is abundant; however, to reconstruct the historical/political scene accurately, the critic must know the particular bias of the sources he is using. For this analysis, the following sources were useful because of the amount of information they presented and because of the varying viewpoints they possessed. Kenneth P. O’Connell
and David F. Powers, co-authors of *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*, are extremely pro-Kennedy and offered many valuable insights concerning the "behind the scene" campaign of Kennedy and his associates. Probably the most anti-Kennedy viewpoint is presented by Victor Lasky, who is rather sympathetic to Hubert Humphrey, in his book *J. F. K.: The Man or the Myth*. Most of the other sources tend to be pro-Kennedy; although, Theodore White's *The Making of the President 1960*, James MacGregor Burns' *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*, and Theodore C. Sorensen's *Kennedy* presented fairly objective viewpoints of the campaign and of Kennedy himself. As to the people of West Virginia and the primary itself, newspaper editor Harry Ernst offers good insight in his *The Primary That Made A President: West Virginia 1960*.

In writing this analysis, as many sources as possible were utilized. The previously mentioned works, however, contain a great deal of information and used in conjunction with each other present a fairly clear picture of the political scene in 1960.

The remainder of this analysis of Kennedy's address to the newspaper editors will attempt to explore the validity of O'Donnell's and Powers' judgments of Kennedy's 1960 political campaign, as they stated:

Kennedy won the Democratic Presidential nomination in West Virginia, rather than at the national convention
in Los Angeles two months later, so you could say that Hubert H. Humphrey nominated Jack by running against him in that primary and giving him that opportunity to lick the religious issue in a showdown test that certainly must be a monument in American political history.
II. Establishment of the Scene

Chapter I attempted to justify the significance of Kennedy's address to the newspaper editors, especially the significance of the religious issue and the timing of the speech during Kennedy's most crucial political test, the West Virginia primary. In order to discover and analyze his rhetoric, it is first necessary to reconstruct the historical/political scene and to examine his major rhetorical problems. Only through such an analysis can the critic establish or discover his specific purposes for the speech.

To fully understand the political situation, a review of the primary immediately preceding West Virginia, the Wisconsin primary, must be given. The Wisconsin primary was important both to Kennedy and to Humphrey because it was the first confrontation of two serious Presidential contenders. Both needed public support to overcome the Democratic political machinery at the convention, and so both devoted a great deal of effort and money into their campaigns in Wisconsin.1

The Wisconsin primary was significant to Kennedy's campaign because of the undue attention it focused on the religious issue. Because it reported primarily the religious aspects of the Kennedy image, the press was largely responsible for this attention: pictures of Kennedy greeting a group of nuns,
student audiences asking questions relating to religion rather than to foreign or domestic policies, Kennedy's answers to questions concerning his personal priorities, the religion of Kennedy's supporters, and the classification of voters in Wisconsin as Democrats, Republicans, or Catholics. 2 Kennedy himself commented on one Wisconsin newspaper that mentioned the word Catholic twenty times in only fifteen paragraphs. 3 According to Theodore Sorensen, the press credited over half of Humphrey's support to Kennedy's religion:

It [the religious issue] lay heavily on the minds of all of Kennedy's listeners. It cropped up in every poll and press interview. It gave rise to anti-Kennedy sermons in all kinds of pulpits. Even the Humphrey campaign song was sung to the tune of "Give Me That Old Time Religion." 4

Clearly, Kennedy had to overcome the impact of the religious issue by winning strongly enough in Wisconsin's Protestant districts to discredit the assumed Catholic vote.

However, religious bigotry was running rampant, especially in memory of the 1928 campaign of Al Smith. At that time, the campaign assumed the form of a debate between Catholics and Protestants. In 1928, the public was simply not ready for a rational and open discussion of religion, as they feared Catholic domination by the Pope. 5 Apparently, this fear and suspicion had not been erased during the interim.
In 1956, Kennedy needed to dispel this fear when he spoke to the Democratic Convention for the Vice-Presidential nomination. He stated:

Besides, I can't act as a private individual does; my responsibility is to my constituents and to the Constitution. So if it came to a conflict between the two, and not just a personal moral issue, I am bound to act for the interests of many.  

However, Kennedy's statement apparently had little effect on the Democratic Convention and had no lasting effect on the voting public who were just beginning to be awakened to the religious issue in 1960.

When the campaigning closed in Wisconsin, the press was predicting success for Kennedy, but as to the amount of success he would have, no one was certain. As the voting results came in, political analysts could not be certain whether or not Kennedy's success in certain districts was because they were industrial and further away from Humphrey's home state of Minnesota or because they were predominantly Catholic. The evidence became quite obvious, however, after all the results were finalized. Theodore White noted:

He had lost all four predominantly Protestant districts and had carried the unclassified one (the Seventh) only by a hair. His popular margin had come entirely from four heavily Catholic areas—the Sixth, Eighth, Fourth, and Fifth.
The results seemed to demonstrate to everyone that Kennedy had won simply because he was a Catholic. In addition, because Wisconsin allowed Republicans to cross-over and vote Democratic in the primaries, many political leaders and Humphrey himself seemed to feel that these Catholic Republicans had been the difference between a victory and a loss for Kennedy.9

After the Wisconsin primary, many political analysts and journalists expressed opinions concerning its effect on the approaching Democratic convention in August. After evaluating the results of the primary, journalist Walter Lippmann announced that: "There is no doubt that the religious issue was central and decisive."10 Lippmann was therefore advocating that the Democratic party solve their dilemma concerning the religious issue by nominating Kennedy for the Vice-Presidency, rather than for the Presidency. In this way, he felt, the Democratic party could avoid the question of bigotry and could also avoid the risk of defeat by nominating a Catholic candidate for President.11

Although attractive to some political leaders, the suggestion was not at all appealing to Kennedy. Well aware of the defeat he had suffered in the Wisconsin primary and its implications for the nomination, Kennedy had to decide whether or not to risk entering the West Virginia primary against Humphrey. There were many reasons against running in the primary:
1.) Kennedy was running the same day in the Nebraska primary.
2.) He was running in the same areas that month in Maryland.
3.) There was no historical importance attached to the West Virginia primary. 4.) The people of West Virginia were not typical of the nation as a whole. 5.) At the Democratic Convention, the primary outcome is not binding on the West Virginia delegation, which is small anyway. 6.) Johnson and Symington, two unannounced candidates for the Presidency, had strong political ties in West Virginia—Kennedy did not. 12 Despite these reasons, Kennedy also realized that Humphrey would be appealing to the people of West Virginia because of his long association with FDR, the liberal welfare program, and the labor unions—associations which most West Virginians could identify with and understand. 13

Apart from these reasons, Kennedy also realized the political impact of a victory in West Virginia. A victory there, with only a 5 per cent Catholic population, could demonstrate his political strength to influential party leaders. 14

Kennedy established his political machinery in West Virginia as far back as 1958, and the Lou Harris polls in December of 1960 predicted success—Kennedy held a 70-30 margin over Humphrey. 15

The problem arose after the Wisconsin primary when the Kennedy Headquarters found the margin changed to a 40-60 split in favor of Humphrey. 16 Why had the change occurred? The answer was simple. As his West Virginia advisors told Kennedy,
"No one in West Virginia knew you were a Catholic in December. Now they know." 17

Therefore, in addition to the original political problems he faced in poverty-stricken West Virginia, he also had to face the fears and suspicions surrounding his religion recently awakened by the press, by national television, and especially by the previous Wisconsin primary. Since the men and women from West Virginia were beginning to learn the identity and religion of the major candidates, the tide had turned against Kennedy. 18 The total frustration Kennedy faced was expressed by his aides, O'Donnell and Powers, when they stated:

Overnight our whole situation in West Virginia had changed and all of the careful and hopeful planning for a successful campaign in this Southern border state, which would bring Kennedy into the Los Angeles convention as the leading contender, was on the brink of going down the drain. 19

In view of all of these factors, Kennedy advisors were strongly hoping that Humphrey would decide to withdraw from the primary, so that Kennedy could avoid the potential risk to his political career. 20

Humphrey, of course, did not withdraw from the primary. There were, however, several different factors influencing this decision. It was assumed by many political leaders that because of the Wisconsin primary, Humphrey could no longer be
considered a serious contender for the candidacy. O'Donnell and Powers, along with many others, pointed out that Humphrey's failure to carry his neighboring state reflected his lack of support from the general public. Therefore, Humphrey had nothing to gain in West Virginia, and by getting involved in the religious issue, he might only succeed in destroying himself and Kennedy politically. Yet, Humphrey had won a moral victory in Wisconsin, and the more warnings he got about West Virginia, the more determined he became. At the same time, he was beginning to get support and money from Stevenson-backers who wanted to see Kennedy knocked out of the running for the nomination. With this support and his own determination, Humphrey declared cheerfully that he would enter the West Virginia primary, much to the dismay of the Kennedy advisors.

Playing with such a stacked deck, who but Kennedy would not have given up the West Virginia primary in lieu of a more neutral one? With his Wisconsin victory credited to his religion, with Humphrey's image more acceptable to West Virginians, with political leaders giving support to Humphrey in the attempt to stop Kennedy, and with his religion threatening to destroy his public appeal, the situation looked grim. Yet, if he defeated Humphrey and if that victory reflected the strong support of Protestant West Virginia, it could mean his first significant step toward his major goal—the Presidential nomination. Aside from this, the knowledge that unannounced contenders for the nomination
were silently slipping money and support to Humphrey for the purpose of defeating him caused his pride to stir and made him more determined to put up a good fight.25

Apart from these rhetorical problems, Kennedy had additional obstacles. In West Virginia, unlike many other parts of the country, these problems were numerous. First, Kennedy was comparatively young. No one that young had ever been elected as President, and no one within the past fifty years had even been nominated by the Democrats.26 In addition, his age was a handicap in West Virginia because of his lack of actual political experience, especially in comparison to the seasoned politician Humphrey. Kennedy did not have the support of organized labor, especially the United Mine Workers. With some labor leaders already working for him, Humphrey definitely held the edge with union support.27

Kennedy's background also threatened to be a problem. His intelligence, wealth, and New England background could serve to alienate him from the impoverished people of West Virginia. According to Sorensen, the Democratic Convention had not nominated a New Englander for quite some time.28 They would need a great deal of proof that it would be worth it to place their faith in one now.

Finally, his major rhetorical problem was his religion. As Sorensen pointed out, "No member of that faith had ever been elected President, nor after 1928, even been seriously considered."29 The religious problem affected his image throughout
the United States, but it was particularly important in West Virginia. As a Democratic leader of Madison, West Virginia stated: "Protestants have nothing against Kennedy. They think he is intelligent... But they are going to vote against him. It's like they like women, but they won't vote for them for public office." The publisher of the Coal Valley News attempted to explain such a reaction. He claimed that West Virginians will vote against Kennedy because "they are simply concerned about the domination of the Catholic church." In conjunction with this, Kennedy had to do something to stop the press's insistence upon making the religious issue the major issue in the campaign.

Because the religious problem was his most significant handicap in West Virginia, Kennedy seemed to have only two alternatives—he could continue to skirt the issue, or he could attack it openly and directly by disclosing arguments against it. According to Sorensen, Kennedy's advisors were divided on the issue:

His West Virginia advisors said that West Virginia was afraid of Catholics; the fear must be erased, the matter tackled frontally. Lou Harris, with his poll reports in hand, concurred. But most of the Kennedy Washington Staff disagreed—raise no religious issue in public, they said, religion is too explosive.

After considering all the advice, Kennedy decided that the
most effective way of solving his problems would be to confront them openly. Specifically, he had to convince his listeners of his independence of ecclesiastical pressures and remove their fears concerning his religion. 33

At the time, the Kennedy leadership did not realize that by forcing the religious issue into the open was what Kennedy needed to prove his national appeal. 34 His primary goal, then, was to win enough electoral votes before August to insure the nomination. For him, that was more difficult than the actual election in November. 35

Keeping his purposes and rhetorical problems in mind, it is necessary to examine the nature of his audience. An analysis of his audience must include not only his immediate listeners, but all the different audiences he was appealing to: the newspaper editors, the people of West Virginia, the Democratic political leaders, and the national voting public in general.

Following his decision to confront the religious issue openly in West Virginia, Kennedy had to find the most strategic time and situation for disclosing his views. The opportunity he needed arose with his speech to the newspaper editors. If he were successful in his attempt to reduce the importance of the religious issue with the press, he could hope for public opinion to be shaped by the opinion of the press. Therefore, with this speech, Kennedy was expressing his views not only to the newspaper editors, but also to the general voting public,
the Democratic party leaders, and the people of West Virginia. To be sure, all were vital if he were to win the nomination and ultimately the Presidency.

Throughout the nation there seemed to be a general misgiving over the possibility of a Catholic president and historians had not forgotten the unsuccessful attempt of Al Smith in 1928. Journalist, John B. Sheerin ominously predicted that, "The situation may change in the next few months but as of this moment, I would say that the American people are unwilling to vote for a Catholic president. . . . the awful truth is that in this democracy where political immaturity is tragic, the majority of voters are not emotionally and psychologically mature enough to conquer bias and cast a ballot for a Catholic."36

To Kennedy, this possibility was disastrous because he needed public support to push him successfully through the primaries, to win the nomination, and to defeat Richard Nixon. Their support was vital at every stage of his campaign.

A few weeks before the presidential nominating convention of 1956, a Gallup poll was taken of almost 2,000 voters asking the following question: "If your party nominated a generally well qualified man for President this year, and he happened to be a Catholic, would you vote for him?"37 The poll produced these results: 72% yes, 22% no, 5% don't know, and 1% no response. For Kennedy, this meant defeat because he would automatically lose one-fourth of his own party's vote just
because he was a Catholic.\textsuperscript{38} Part of Kennedy's initial campaign strategy was based on the idea that if he won public support before they knew his religion, then they would be less likely to be affected by it.\textsuperscript{39}

Ultimately, however, the religious issue had to be faced, as Kennedy discovered. At this point, it was necessary to understand why the public feared a Catholic president. According to James G. Burns, the public did not object to Catholicism in general. What they did object to was the imposition on Catholics and non-Catholics alike of Catholic standards, through legislation and economic and political pressure, on education, censorship, marriage and divorce, on medical practices of contraception, legal abortion, and in other matters. And they objected to Catholic-backed laws that would pierce the wall separating church and state, laws that provided, for example, for governmental aid to church schools.\textsuperscript{40}

Recognizing these objections, Kennedy's goal had to be to prove to the public how strongly he believed in the separation of church and state and how, if elected, he felt his initial responsibility would be to his elected office.

Kennedy also had to be concerned about the opinion of influential Democratic party leaders for two main reasons. First, Democratic leaders, mindful of the defeat in 1928, demanded some kind of a guarantee that Kennedy's religion was
not going to be a detriment to his campaign before he could be even considered at the August convention in Los Angeles. This meant that unless he were able to win strong public support in the primaries, influential party leaders would not be convinced that he could overcome his religious handicap in the general election. Secondly, Kennedy was concerned because high-ranking Catholic office-holders were extremely hesitant about showing him any kind of support.

Their states are only about one-quarter to one-third Catholic, and they fear that a Catholic in the White House, coming on top of a Catholic Governor and Catholics in many lesser offices, might strain the tolerance of the Protestant majority and provoke a reaction that would injure their own political futures. Major Catholic office-holders also often have local problems which they fear would be aggravated if the Democrats nominate a Catholic for the Presidency. Unless he could convince them that the public was ready to support a Catholic president without risking their own offices, Kennedy could not count on their active support.

Still another facet of Kennedy's audience had to be dealt with—the press. Without the support of the press, Kennedy's attempts at shaping the opinions of the general public would be futile. Even before he made his decision to confront the religious issue, the press was responsible for much negative
public opinion by their continual concentration on that issue above all others. The press has been credited with manufacturing the religious issue into "... the central political question of the campaign. The hate merchants and the prejudiced of both faiths were to flourish in this reporting." During the Wisconsin primary, especially, Kennedy found that the press focused on the religious aspects of the campaign rather than the political ones and credited his victory there to his Catholicism.

This same type of coverage was attempted again in West Virginia where "... most journalists overlooked the political forces at work and over-emphasized the Protestant heritage of West Virginians, which they confused with the intensity of their religious convictions." Once Kennedy brought the issue out into the open, before the press and the people, the only issue left would seem to be one of tolerance versus intolerance. The issue would then be left up to the people of West Virginia to prove their tolerance by voting for Kennedy.

How tolerant were the people of West Virginia? What kind of an audience was Kennedy facing in this all-important primary? Before the primary, a little, old lady from Sutton, West Virginia commented, "We've never had a Catholic president and I hope we never do. Our people built this country. If they had wanted a Catholic to be president, they would have said so in the Constitution." If these feelings were indicative of the state as a whole, it was truly a miracle that Kennedy was
successful there. However, journalists and political leaders may have over-emphasized the religious tendencies of that state. Actual figures show that two out of every three West Virginians were not affiliated with any church. Of the total population, only 28 per cent were true Protestants, in comparison to 5 per cent Catholics and less than 1 per cent Jews. According to a West Virginian labor leader, “A great majority of our people are categorized as Protestants, but a goodly number of them have no religious convictions at all. They also tend to separate their religion from business and politics. It's strictly a Sunday-type religion.” What this meant in terms of Kennedy's campaign was that -- yes, they were Protestant, but their convictions were not so strong that they could not be changed. The problem was that they could be swayed easily in either direction. Kennedy had to see that it was in the direction favorable to him.

The people of West Virginia were not the typical Americans by any means. Economically, they were near the bottom. As a state almost totally dependent on the coal mining industry for its income, West Virginia was fast becoming poverty-stricken as the employment rate in the coal mines dropped rapidly. By 1960, at least 20 of West Virginia’s 55 counties claimed that 15 per cent of their residents were receiving federal government aid. In some counties the percentage ranged from 25-50 per cent. The economic situation is important rhetorically because of the effect it had on the people. Any candidate
promising employment and prosperity was strongly considered over his opponents. West Virginians, themselves, fought over available jobs because any job looked better than none at all. Describing the state of political affairs in West Virginia, Theodore White said:

Politics in West Virginia is not only part-time jobs but full-time gossip, and it gets more intense as one descends the levels from statehouse to county courthouse, where the local bosses are established, barons of little realms, forming and breaking alliances. Politics in West Virginia involves money . . . can be violent . . . And politics in West Virginia is complicated. 49

This, then, was the political climate into which Kennedy was entering. With statewide poverty and sordid politics, the primary would be rough for any candidate, but especially for Kennedy with his wealthy, New England background and his Catholic religion.

Yet, there was still another side of the personality of the West Virginians. Unlike the usual stereotypes of the lower socio-economic classes, these people were attractive, well-mannered, and extremely proud of the number of residents who had volunteered for the military, boasting of their numerous war heroes. 50

So, Kennedy needed to identify with the West Virginia people and to make his religion acceptable to them, to the
press, to the Democratic party leaders, and to the nation as a whole. His first attempt was with his speech to the newspaper editors. With his problems in mind and the historical scene set, it is now possible to begin an analysis of the rhetoric itself.
III. Examination of the Rhetoric

In his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 21, 1960, Kennedy's main purpose was to present a full exposition of his religious views in relation to his position as an elected official. In other words, his major objective was to discredit the religious issue in the Presidential campaign and to identify himself more closely with the voting public—especially the West Virginia people. To be successful in his attempt, Kennedy first had to identify himself with his immediate audience—the newspaper editors.

To create a positive persuasive atmosphere, Kennedy tried to achieve identification with his audience through what appeared to be three major rhetorical strategies: a strategy of direct and open attack, a strategy of clarification, and a strategy of fair play. In this way, he hoped to achieve his specific purposes and overcome his rhetorical problems. Kennedy's first strategy seemed to be one of direct and open attack. The strategy seemed to function through three main appeals—direct disclosure, his audience's sense of responsibility, and an appeal to reason.

Early in his speech, Kennedy directed his attack to his unfair treatment by the press. He pointed out their omission of important political issues in their attempt to focus on
irrelevant matters. He said, "I spoke in Wisconsin, for example, on farm legislation, foreign policy, defense, civil rights, and several dozen other issues. But I rarely found them reported in the press—except when they were occasionalliy sandwiched in between descriptions of my hand-shaking, my theme-song, family, haircut and, inevitably, my religion." ¹

He expanded the idea of the press' misguided attention by clearly stating his willingness to discuss any issues with them, which they in turn ignored. He continued, "At almost every stop in Wisconsin I invited questions and the questions came—on price supports, labor unions, disengagement, taxes and inflation. But these sessions were rarely reported in the press except when one topic was discussed: religion." ²

Kennedy seemed to be identifying with his national audience and especially the people of Wisconsin by displaying his distaste for such political manipulation by the press of himself and of the general public. In this way, the major portion of his audience—the voting public, political leaders, and the people of West Virginia—would hopefully be able to see that he was a sincere and courageous candidate battling against the press for their rights as well as his own. At the same time, not wishing to alienate himself from the press in his attack, Kennedy tried to explain his objections to the press. He said, "I think the voters of Wisconsin objected to being categorized simply as either Catholics or Protestants
in analyzing their political choices. I think they objected to being accosted by reporters outside of political meetings and asked one question only—their religion—not their occupation or education or philosophy or income—only their religion."\(^3\) Kennedy was, in effect, pointing out to the editors that their coverage of the primary was unfair because it had violated the rights of the people of Wisconsin. Therefore, the editors, through association with the voters, hopefully would identify with his crusade against future attacks of that nature.

Kennedy concluded the attack against the press by describing how the press had unfairly categorized the voters. He stated:

One article, in a news magazine for example, supposedly summing the primary up in advance mentioned the word Catholic twenty times in fifteen paragraphs—not mentioning even once dairy farms, disarmament, labor legislation or any other issue. And on the Sunday before the primary, The Milwaukee Journal featured a map of the state, listing county by county, the relative strength of three types of voters—Democrats, Republicans, and Catholics.\(^4\)

By disclosing what he deemed unfair treatment by the press of himself as a political candidate and of the voting public, Kennedy was openly attacking the press and consequently their
emphasis on the religious issue. Yet, he was making the attack more palatable for his immediate audience—the newspaper editors—by directly identifying with the public and the people of Wisconsin in their distaste for manipulation and categorization by the press and the political parties. Consequently, if they associated themselves with the general public, the editors would thereby change their direction of coverage and concentrate on other issues in the West Virginia primary. The end result, therefore, could allow him to identify with the West Virginians by erasing the importance of his religion—his major image problem there.

However, if he did not succeed in arousing guilt feelings within the consciences of the editors over his unfair treatment, Kennedy also appealed to their sense of responsibility. Reminding them of their roles as reporters, he said, "The members of the press should report the facts as they find them. But they should beware, it seems to me, of either magnifying this issue or oversimplifying it." By implying rather than stating directly that the press had failed in meeting their responsibilities to the public, he left the editors ground to redeem themselves gracefully. At the same time, the reminder of their responsibilities strengthened his direct identification with the press by showing them his appreciation of their position. Kennedy pointed out the gravity of the press' responsibility when he said,
"Now we are in West Virginia. As reported to today's Washington Post, the great bulk of West Virginians paid little attention to my religion—until they read repeatedly in the nation's press that this was the decisive issue in West Virginia. There are many serious problems in the state—problems big enough to dominate any campaign—but religion is not one of them." Kennedy's appeal to their sense of responsibility projected the image of a man sympathetic to the position of the press, yet one concerned for the real issues facing the American people. With that kind of image, the general public and especially the West Virginians would be more likely to identify with him and supportive of his principles during the primary and even the election itself.

Finally, he attacked the press openly by appealing to their sense of reason. Facing them directly, he stated, "But regardless of the political outcome, this issue is here to be faced. It is my job to face it frankly and fully. And it is your job to face it fairly, in perspective and in proportion." He was explaining to them the need to lay their complaints on the table and to be as open with him as he was being with them. He also tried to explain to them why the analysis of the Wisconsin primary had been inconclusive. He said:

I carried some areas with large proportions of voters who are Catholics—and I lost some. I carried some
areas where Protestants predominate—and I lost some.
It is true that I ran well in cities—and large numbers
of Catholics live in cities. But so do union members
and older voters and veterans and chess fans and bass-
wood lovers. To say my support in the cities is due
only to the religion of the voters is incapable of
proof.8

By bringing out alternative ways of analyzing the primary
results, he hoped the editors were reasonable enough to see
the fallacies in their judgments.

However, if the editors could not accept faults stated
indirectly, Kennedy directly pointed out the fallacies in
many popular conceptions. He demonstrated the absurdity
present with the use of inclusive results, identifying with
their distaste for manipulation of the facts. He stated:

Only this week, I received a very careful analysis of
the Wisconsin results. It conclusively shows two
significant patterns of block voting: I ran strongest
in those areas where the average temperature in January
was 20 degrees or higher, and poorest in those areas
where it was 14 degrees or lower—and that I ran well
in the beech tree and basswood counties and not so well
among the hemlock and pine. It has been suggested,
that to offset my apparent political handicaps I may have
to pick a running-mate from Maine or preferably, Alaska.9
By openly exhibiting the fallacies in their judgments, he seemed to be trying to remove the image of an impersonal, calculating candidate—identifying with the editor’s belief in reporting the facts. At the same time, if they accepted his reasoning, he would be able to discredit the popular conception that he had won in Wisconsin because of the Catholic vote there. This could in turn effect his national audience and the West Virginians by removing the religious issue.

He concluded his appeal to their reason by explaining the fallacy in the common belief that religion was only an issue for the office of the Presidency. He asked them, Is there any justification for applying special religious tests to one office only: the Presidency? Little or no attention was paid to my religion when I took oath as Senator in 1953— as a Congressman in 1947— or as a naval officer in 1941. Members of my faith abound in public office at every level except the White House. What is there about the Presidency that justifies this constant emphasis upon a candidate’s religion and that of his supporters? 10

Hopefully, with this line of argument the editors could see the discrepancy between the ideals of American democracy and the so-called religious issue and could identify with the "underdog" image Kennedy was creating.
If this argument failed, however, Kennedy presented another line of reasoning, attempting to disclaim the existence of the Catholic vote. In direct answer to the question of placating the Catholic vote with a Vice-Presidential nomination, Kennedy stated:

I find that suggestion highly distasteful. It assumes the worst about a country which prides itself on being more tolerant and better educated than it was in 1928. It assumes that Catholics are a pawn on the political chess-board, moved hither and yon, and somehow "bought off" by the party putting in the second spot a Catholic whom the party barred from the top for reasons of religion. And it forgets, finally, that such a performance would have an effect on our image abroad as well as our self-respect here at home. 11

This line of reasoning worked to identify with his audience's belief in religious tolerance and their concern for the national image. It presents Kennedy as a highly ethical person, works to remove the negative connotations of a politician, and places him on an identifiable level with the general public. It also worked to identify with the concern of West Virginians that they would receive the same treatment as Wisconsin by the press. If accepted, this appeal could function not only to discredit the religious issue, but also to force political leaders to reject the compromising position of a Vice-Presidential
nomination. Kennedy's primary goal was the number one position, not the second. That goal could not succeed if people began to label him as Vice-President material.

The strategy of direct and open attack functioned through its appeals for identification to discredity the judgment of the press and religious bigots who had emphasized the importance of the religious issue and also to dismiss the compromise of the Vice-Presidential nomination. But Kennedy had another purpose he had to accomplish. He needed to promote understanding and sympathy for his position as a Catholic running for the Presidency, in order to dispel the fears and suspicions of the voting public. He did this through his second strategy -- the strategy of clarification.

Kennedy's first goal with the strategy of clarification was to promote understanding between himself and his audience. Aware of the bias against him, he first tried to clarify his responses to legitimate issues in the campaign. He explained that the question of federal assistance to parochial schools "... is a very legitimate issue actually before the Congress. I am opposed to it. I believe it is clearly unconstitutional. I voted against it on the Senate floor this year, when offered by Senator Morse. But interestingly enough, I was the only announced candidate in the Senate who did so. Nevertheless I have not yet charged my opponents with taking orders from Rome." Kennedy was trying to make them understand that he
was concerned about the separation of church and state and implied that this concern was possibly stronger with him than with some of the other Protestant candidates who were not required to defend themselves. By showing his concern for the real issues and pointing out his specific stand on separation of church and state, he was working to identify with all segments of his audience by lessening their religious suspicions.

Kennedy next tried to alleviate their fears by promoting an understanding of the likelihood of a religious confrontation in the office of the Presidency. He explained:

The prospects of any President ever receiving for his signature a bill providing foreign aid funds for birth control are very remote indeed. It is hardly the major issue some have suggested. Nevertheless I have made it clear that I would neither veto nor sign such a bill on any basis except what I considered to be the public interest, without regard to my private religious views. I have said the same about bills dealing with censorship, divorce, our relations with Spain or any other subject. The appeal functioned to promote understanding of the remote nature of any major religious conflict and the understanding of how strongly he felt that his first responsibility was to his elected office.
Finally, Kennedy felt it was necessary that the public understand the real issues of the campaign. He stated, "There is only one legitimate question underlying all of the rest: Would you, as President of the United States, be responsive in any way to ecclesiastical pressures or obligations of any kind that might in any fashion influence or interfere with your conduct of that office in the national interest? I have answered that question many times. My answer was—and is—'NO!' Once that question is answered, there is no legitimate issue of my religion..." If his audience bought his reasoning, Kennedy would have succeeded in helping them understand the one legitimate aspect of the religious issue.

This appeal promoting understanding between himself and his audience functioned to give Kennedy modes of direct identification with all segments of his audience. Kennedy's audience could identify with the importance he placed on unbiased judgments concerning political issues. By presenting himself as an underdog because of his religion, one concerned about the real problems of Americans, he clarified the reasons why they should support him as a presidential candidate. The success of this appeal would therefore affect his support by the public for his nomination.

Kennedy found, however, that beyond their need for understanding, his audience had to accept—not close their eyes to—his position as a Catholic running for the Presidency. There—
fore, another aspect of his clarification strategy was to
defend his position to them. He first needed to eradicate
the misconception of his campaigning for the Catholic vote.
He stated:

Even if such a vote exists—which I doubt—I want to
make one thing clear again: I want no votes solely
on account of my religion. Any voter, Catholic or other-
wise, who feels another candidate would be a superior
President should support that candidate. I do not
want any vote cast for me for such illogical and irrelevant reasons. Neither do I want anyone to support my
candidacy merely to prove that this nation is not
bigoted—and that a Catholic can be elected President.
I have never suggested that those opposed to me are
thereby anti-Catholic. 15

To strengthen this argument through his audience's identifi-
cation with religious freedom, he explained his right as an
American citizen to consider his religion a private, not
public, affair. He said: "The Presidency is not, after all,
the British crown, serving a dual capacity in both church
and state. The President is not elected to be protector of
the faith—or guardian of the public morals. His attendance
at church on Sunday should be his business alone, not a
showcase for the nation." 16 He seemed to feel the need to
make clear to the public that he had no desire to impose
his religious beliefs upon them, thereby deserving the same respect from them. This appeal would seem to identify directly with their distaste for religious bigotry and could serve to make his religious stand more acceptable.

Next he wanted to strengthen his position by clearly renouncing the title of "the Catholic candidate for President." He stated firmly, "I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I do not speak for the Catholic church on issues of public policy—and no one in that church speaks for me." 17 By taking such a firmly negative stand on the issue, he was risking alienation of influential members of the Catholic church. However, this was small compared to the gravity of the issue in terms of the rest of the nation.

To further separate himself from his religion, he stated clearly that he was not responsible to the Catholic church and neither was the Catholic church responsible to him. He emphasized, "So I hope we can see the beginning of the end of references to me as 'the Catholic candidate' for President. Do not expect me to explain or defend every act or statement of every Pope or priest, in this country or some other, in this century or the last—and that includes the Mayor of Dublin." 18 He wanted to make certain that he was not going to be required to justify his every action in theological terms.

He utilized the Constitution and our founding fathers to further his audience's identification with the principle of
religious freedom. He defended his position saying, "I believe that the founding fathers meant it when they provided in Article VI of the Constitution that there should be no religious test for public office--a provision that brought not one dissenting vote, only the comment of Roger Sherman that it was surely unnecessary--"the prevailing liberality being a sufficient security against such tests." He was identifying with his audience's desire for individual liberties and human rights, defending his position with their sense of patriotic duty. He further developed their sense of patriotism when he stated, "We must all--candidates, press, and voters alike--dedicate ourselves to these principles--for they are the key to a free society." This final defense was based on their individual responsibilities to the nation. For the audience of 1960, remembering vividly the reign of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the late '50s during his "communist-hunts," this reminder could carry special significance. The editors, as well as the rest of the nation, could identify with the patriotic ideals of a free society--necessarily free of all forms of bias and prejudice.

Through his appeal to his audience's understanding and his defense of his own position--his strategy of clarification, Kennedy sought to alleviate the fears and suspicions surrounding his religion with the American public. But Kennedy had still one other purpose to fulfill. He felt the need to
justify his pleas not only to the editors, but with West Virginia and the national voting public. He had to prove they owed it to him to give him fair consideration. Seemingly, he achieved this through his third and final strategy—the strategy of fair play.

With his final strategy of fair play, Kennedy attempted to supply his audience with what they needed to justify placing their confidence in him. He utilized five different appeals: anti-hypocrisy, fair treatment, legal implication, reason, and anti-religious bigotry. If he succeeded, then his audience would accept his Catholicism and, more importantly, accept him as a viable contender for the Presidency.

His first appeal within the strategy of fair play was an attempt to point out the hypocrisy in his audience's attitudes. He implied this by asking his audience,

Are we going to admit to the world that a Jew can be chosen Foreign Minister of France, a Moslem can serve in the Israeli Parliament—but a Catholic cannot be President of the United States? Are we to tell Chancellor Adenauer, for example, that we want him risking his all on our front lines; but that—if he were an American—we would never entrust him with our Presidency—nor would we accept our distinguished guest, General de Gaulle? Are we to admit to the world—worse still, are we to admit to ourselves—that one third of our population is
forever barred from the White House? But Kennedy did not stop with the implication of hypocrisy. He went on to apply it directly to those wanting him to settle for the Vice-Presidential nomination. He stated, "So I am not impressed by those pleas that I settle for the Vice Presidency in order to avert a religious spectacle. Surely those who believe it dangerous to elect a Catholic as President will not want him to serve as Vice President, a heartbeat away from the office." The sarcasm in Kennedy's rhetoric was evident.

With the appeal against hypocrisy, Kennedy was direct with his audience, almost brutally so. But he did not wish to repel his audience with any bitterness. Therefore, he softened his harshness and strengthened his appeal to identification with his audience by stating his confidence in the values of the American people. He said, "I believe the American people are more concerned with a man's views and abilities than with the church to which he belongs." He further expressed his confidence and thereby his identification with the American public by stating his belief that Americans would act according to their most valued principles. He declared, "I believe that the American people mean to adhere to those principles today." By reinforcing confidence in his audience's integrity, Kennedy could effect identification with his audience while also promoting resistance against hypocrisy.
A second appeal worked to admonish the unfair treatment Kennedy had been receiving. Attempting to point out the limits of fair play, Kennedy said that "An Ambassador to the Vatican could conceivably become a real issue again. I am opposed to it, and said so long ago. But even though it was last proposed by a Baptist President, I know of no other candidate who has been even asked about this matter." He seemed to be asking his audience if it was fair for him to endure this merely because of his religion. He later rejected the unfair treatment in dealing directly with the blame for airing the religious issue. He stated: "Nor is there any real issue in the sense that any candidate is exploiting his religious affiliation. No one's candidacy, by itself, raises a religious issue. And I believe it is inaccurate to state that my candidacy created the issue." He seemed to be telling them that he saw no need for such treatment and would easily label those responsible as being unfair.

Yet, Kennedy carefully avoided placing blame in any one direction. Instead, he relieved the editors of blame for creating the religious issue and identified himself with their integrity. Acknowledging their proper roles, he said, "I know the press did not create this religious issue. My religious affiliation is a fact—religious intolerance is a fact. And the proper role of the press is to report all facts that are a matter of public interest." By being magnanimous with
the editors, he seemed to emphasize further his own unfair treatment. Thus, identifying with Kennedy's integrity, the press would feel justified in granting Kennedy's wishes. He strengthened the image of a man with integrity by expressing his confidence in the editors. He said, "I am confident that the press and other media of this country will recognize their responsibilities in this area—to refute falsehood, to inform the ignorant, and to concentrate on the issues, the real issues, in this hour of the nation's peril."28 By freeing the editors from blame, by expressing his confidence in their integrity, and by recognizing them as the nation's defense against corruption, Kennedy was able to avoid any polarization with the editors and to identify common goals with them toward fair treatment for each other.

Another appeal worked to identify directly with the editors and with conscientious political leaders. He pointed out the proper perspective for the issue of religion by quoting the Supreme Court. He said that as public officials, "we are neither Jew nor gentile, neither Catholic nor agnostic. We owe equal attachment to the Constitution and are equally bound by our obligation, whether we derive our citizenship from the earliest or latest immigrants to these shores . . . religion is outside the sphere of political government."29 With this brief appeal, Kennedy seemed to be using the Supreme Court to justify a policy of fair play. Indeed, it appeared to identify with his
audience's respect for established rules and regulations, imploring them to follow "the right way."

In continuing with the third strategy, an appeal to reason seems to play a prominent part. This time the appeal functioned to identify with the audience through the concept of fair play. He seemed to project the image of a reasonable man when he admitted that "... there are, I think, legitimate questions of public policy—of concern to religious groups which no one should feel bigoted about raising, and to which I do not object to answering. But I do object to being the only candidate required to answer those questions."30 He brings the identification elements into clearer focus by asking his audience to be reasonable in their fears about the Presidency. He stated, "On the other hand, we are in no danger of a one-man Constitutional upheaval. The President, however intent he may be on subverting our institutions, cannot ignore the Congress—or the voters—or the Courts. And our highest court, incidentally, has a long history of Catholic justices, none of whom, as far as I know, was ever challenged on the fairness of his rulings on sensitive church-state issues."31 He then concluded his appeal to their reason by pointing out the variety of motives Catholics might have for supporting him, other than his religion. He said, "Of those Catholics who voted for me, how many did so on grounds of my religion—how many because they resented the attacks on my record—how many because they were union
members—how many for other reasons? I do not know. And the facts are that no one knows."\textsuperscript{32}

Through this appeal, Kennedy was first able to identify with his audience on intelligent and reasonable grounds. He enhanced that identification by explaining the absurdity of a one-man overthrow of the government and of assigning motives to the voting behavior of Catholics. If this appeal worked, it meant that his audience had accepted the picture he had painted of the need for fair play and would probably modify their behavior toward him.

The final appeal used in the strategy of fair play is against religious bigotry. He hinted at the existence of such bigotry in the United States by pointing to the differences expected from him, but not the other—Protestant—contenders. For example, he said, "These are legitimate inquiries about real questions which the next President may conceivably have to face. But these inquiries ought to be directed equally to all candidates.\textsuperscript{33} He identified himself with the public's distaste for all forms of religious prejudice—as conscientious Americans—by describing how it related to them. He explained that "voters are more than Catholics, Protestants, or Jews. They make up their minds for many diverse reasons, good and bad. To submit the candidates to a religious test is unfair—to apply it to the voters themselves is divisive, degrading, and wholly unwarranted."\textsuperscript{34} He showed them how religious
bigotry affects not only Catholics, but all faiths... not only politicians, but the entire American public. Not wishing to identify with the concept of religious bigotry, his audience therefore would probably go out of their way to avoid it, by voting for Kennedy. In effect, his rhetoric functioned to change the direction of attack of those opposed to him on religious grounds only by trying to label them as bigots, placing them on the defensive.35

Kennedy's final tactic against religious bigotry was to acknowledge and to signify the need for knowing its extent in the United States. He concluded by saying that, if there is bigotry in the country, then so be it—there is bigotry. If that bigotry is too great to permit the fair consideration of a Catholic who has made clear his complete independence and his complete dedication to separation of church and state, then we ought to know it.36

Kennedy's final plea served to reinforce the image of a candidate ready to bring the issue out in the open, to discuss it honestly and openly with his audience. Rhetorically it functioned to identify once again with his listeners through their belief in an individual's right to fair play.

Kennedy's rhetoric invited his immediate audience—the newspaper editors—to challenge him with the bias they had been printing against him. Even if they had missed his
suggestions throughout the speech for comments, he made it clear when he concluded by calling on them directly for questions. As Sorensen saw it, "... there were no questions. The Senator was disappointed. Many of the editors in attendance, he told me, had printed stories—and would continue to print stories—about Vatican claims on all Catholics, about Catholic voting blocs and about their use by Kennedy as a candidate. He had answered all those questions and more. He wanted to answer them directly to the editors." Nonetheless, the editors ignored his invitation, and Kennedy was probably left wondering about the effect of his rhetoric.

After carefully examining the text of Kennedy's rhetoric, he appeared to utilize three distinct rhetorical strategies to achieve identification, either directly or indirectly, with all segments of his audience. It is now possible to begin, like Kennedy and his associates, an evaluation of the success of that rhetoric.
IV. Conclusion

No analysis of a speaker's rhetoric is complete without some evaluation of his success. Indeed, what is the end-result of analyzing a speaker's purposes and methods of achieving those purposes, if the analyst makes no attempt to draw conclusions concerning his rhetorical effectiveness? Chapter Four attempts to evaluate Kennedy's success on two levels: first—by examining the immediate responses to his rhetoric and second—by evaluating the probable effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies to produce identification with his audience.

What were the immediate effects of Kennedy's rhetoric? Although he entered the West Virginia primary originally facing what appeared to be insurmountable odds, the Massachusetts senator won an incredible 61% of the vote, carrying all but seven of West Virginia's 55 counties. The press was quick to recognize this as a huge victory for Kennedy. Lawrence Fuchs, in an article to Catholic World, concluded: "In five-per-cent-Catholic West Virginia, which Al Smith lost in 1928, and where chronic depression was supposed to give Hubert Humphrey's special appeal an extra boost, Kennedy trounced the Minnesotan. Clearly, we are dealing with an extraordinary vote-getter."
The results of the primary brought about varying, yet mostly optimistic, opinions as to the accomplishments of Kennedy's victory. The May 14th issue of Business Week outlined the following results:

1. Kennedy had become the favorite to win the Democratic Presidential nomination at the Los Angeles convention.
2. Kennedy had eliminated Humphrey from the active list of contenders for the nomination.
3. Adlai Stevenson had seen his chances of heading the Democratic ticket strongly diminished.

This outlook, indeed, seemed promising for Kennedy. The West Virginia primary had been such a success for him that at its conclusion, Kennedy himself "... joyfully but mistakenly concluded that the religious issue had been 'buried here in the state of West Virginia.'" Kennedy was only partially right. The religious issue was not yet dead; however, it ceased to be important until after the Democratic convention. Then he had difficulty with Catholic leaders who resented his almost anti-church stand. Roman Catholic Monsignor James F. Newcomb said he "... was particularly critical of Kennedy's ASNE speech and said the Senator had needlessly stated he would not permit higher authorities of his church to exert pressure on him if elected President. 'All he had to say was... If I'm elected President, I'll abide by the Constitution absolutely and act according to my conscience.'"
Therefore, the immediate effects of Kennedy’s rhetoric seemed to demonstrate tremendous success. His victory in West Virginia "... presented the impressive proof which party leaders could not ignore. After the West Virginia primary, hesitant leaders in such key states as Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania became convinced that Kennedy was their man. They gave him the votes he needed to win the nomination on the first ballot."\(^6\) *Time* magazine recognized Kennedy’s success, saying that "it was a triumph that confounded the experts. The West Virginia primary cleared the political air. It swept the religious issue aside at least until after the Democratic Convention, and it removed any doubt about Kennedy’s ability as a vote-getter."\(^7\)

Regarding Kennedy’s use of persuasive principles, it seems evident that his strategic decision to bring the religious issue out in the forefront, to discuss it openly and honestly with his audience, was rhetorically sound. By boldly attacking the issue, he was not only the source of his audience’s anxiety, but also the agent for its resolution. He identified himself both with the problem and with the audience’s need to air the question. His appeals to fair play and to reason not only functioned to identify with the newspaper editors, but also with his national audience and the people of West Virginia. According to *Business Week*, "Most analyses of the vote concluded that West Virginians were, in effect, almost shamed into voting for Kennedy, rather than have themselves held up to the nation
and the world as bigoted."

Kennedy's attack brought the issue out in front of the public's eyes, emphasizing the religious bigotry and demanding that it cease. Then, by appealing to his audience's sense of fair play, by utilizing common values and ideals of the American people, and by displaying distaste for all forms of religious prejudice, Kennedy was able to project the image of a sincere and courageous candidate, concerned with the basic principles of individual liberty and human rights—principles valued by all segments of the American public.

It seems then that Kennedy, through his three strategies, had indeed found effective rhetorical vehicles for achieving identification with his audience. He reused these same basic ideas, even the wording and phrasing, again in the televised comment to the West Virginians the night before the primary, to the Houston Ministerial Association after he had received the nomination, and in countless press interviews prior to the election. Kennedy had found the effective formula for overcoming his religious handicap in West Virginia and used it fully from then on. To his immediate audience of newspaper editors, Kennedy's appeals to fair play and his insistence on responsible and fair reporting must have had some success. For as the campaign wore on, very little of the Wisconsin style reporting was in evidence. And in West Virginia, Charleston newspaper editor, Harry Ernst, concluded: West Virginia was, indeed, the primary that made a president.
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