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“FLORIDA PREACHERS AND THE  
ELECTION OF 1928”

by M. EDWARD HUGHES

**I**N the presidential election of 1928, a Roman Catholic, Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York, was the first of his religion to represent a major political party as its candidate for president. When Smith, the Democratic nominee, was defeated in this election, the importance of religion to his defeat frequently obscured the other issue which also created widespread opposition to his presidential aspirations. This issue, which many of the opponents of Smith cited as central to their opposition, was prohibition. Governor Smith proposed modifying existing prohibition laws to allow the sale of beer and wine. It was this position, which he frequently stated in the campaign, that led many Protestant clergymen to reject his candidacy. In Florida, as with much of the South, this created a political revolt against the traditional one-party Democratic politics. Little attention has been focused on the public declarations of Smith's opponents, but when their position is reviewed, it reveals the determination of the clergy to continue existing prohibition laws.

In this election the Protestant clergy of Florida entered politics with a vigor not seen since the secession controversy of 1861. The preachers joined with the state's nearly dormant Republican party and the minority of disaffected Democrats to lead Florida's rejection of Al Smith. The clerics constantly cited Smith's intention to modify the dry laws as the cause of their opposition.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Smith was also a Roman Catholic certainly affected this opposition, but the Protestant clergy throughout the 1920s demanded the preservation of prohibition, and in this election demonstrated their deep attachment to its preservation by leading the opposition to Smith, the Democratic presidential nominee.

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1. Alfred E. Smith, "Acceptance Address," *Campaign Addresses of Governor Alfred E. Smith, Democratic Candidate for President 1928* (New York, 1928), 14.

In Florida prohibition was the issue that generated most of the clerical opposition to Smith's nomination and candidacy. Throughout the state local Baptist associations resolved that they would defend their political and religious views against any candidate who sought to modify national and state prohibition laws. Much of their political program was reflected in the Jacksonville Baptist Association's resolution that they would "support no man, regardless of party affiliation, who in any way connives with, or encourages, the damnable liquor traffic."<sup>2</sup> The Jacksonville Baptists were joined by the Indian River Missionary Baptist Association, Seminole Baptist Association, Peace River Baptist Association, Alachua Baptist Association, and the Florida Baptist Association in issuing similar resolutions at their 1928 annual meetings.<sup>3</sup> Florida Baptists followed the lead of their national organization, the Southern Baptist Convention, which resolved in May 1928, that in addition to being against mob violence and lynching, they "solemnly pledge that we will support for the office of President, or any office, only such men as stand for our present order of prohibition."<sup>4</sup>

The annual Florida conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South resolved in 1926 and 1927 that prohibition was a moral reform worthy of the support of all voters and Methodists should "guard the doors of Congress and the State Legislature against anyone who would destroy our constitution . . . especially the eighteenth amendment."<sup>5</sup> In 1928 the Methodists expanded this admonition to state that they would refuse "now and forever to support a tammanyized, ring-ruled, saloon-elected candidate for the Presidency of the United States."<sup>6</sup> The *Methodist Quarterly Review* concluded editorially that, "aside from the political and personal wetness of the Demo-

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2. *Jacksonville Baptist Association Fiftieth Annual Session, 1928*, 22.

3. *Indian River Missionary Baptist Association, 1928*, 31-32; *Fifteenth Annual Session Seminole Baptist Association, 1928*, 22; *Fifty-Third Session of Peace River Baptist Association, 1928*, 24-25; *Alachua Baptist Association, 1928*, 26; *Proceedings of the Eighty-Sixth Annual Session of the Florida Baptist Association, 1928*, 34.

4. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1928* (Chattanooga, 1928) 87-88.

5. *Journal of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926* (St. Petersburg, 1926), 56; *Journal of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1927* (Jacksonville, 1927), 65.

6. *Journal of the Florida Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1928* (Tampa, 1928), 41.

cratic nominee, there would have been a comparatively small disturbance on the surface of the solid South."<sup>7</sup>

Florida Presbyterians were reluctant to enter the campaign debate of 1928 as their by-laws specifically forbade political activity in their churches.<sup>8</sup> This was a consequence of the division of the Presbyterians during the secession crisis in 1861.<sup>9</sup> The Presbyterian Church of the United States was the southern branch and represented 17,185 Floridians; the northern Presbyterian Church of the United States of America represented 4,140 Floridians.<sup>10</sup> The formal disclaimer of political involvement did not prevent some Presbyterian periodicals from extolling the "fruits of temperance and prohibition to urge every citizen to vote at the coming presidential election and to vote intelligently."<sup>11</sup> Other Presbyterian editors insisted that preachers should be "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."<sup>12</sup> In Florida both the northern and the southern Presbyterian churches refrained from endorsing the prohibition laws at their annual meetings, although the southern Presbyterians in their 1926 General Assembly did endorse the Eighteenth Amendment.<sup>13</sup> Few Florida Presbyterian clergymen joined the Reverend J. Blanton Belk, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando, in publicly denouncing Smith's candidacy as "one of the tendencies to legalize vice." For the Reverend Mr. Belk, a vote for Smith was evidence of moral weakness, and he recommended that all citizens who "hate whiskey" reject his candidacy.<sup>14</sup>

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7. "Roman Catholicism and Intolerance," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 77 (July 1928), 645.
  8. Ernest Trite Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3 vols. (Richmond, 1973), III, 231-37.
  9. *Ibid.*, 234-37; Cooper C. Kirk, "A History of the Southern Presbyterian Church in Florida: 1821-1891" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1966), 210-15.
  10. James R. Bullock, *Heritage and Hope: A Story of Presbyterians in Florida* (Orlando, 1987), 86.
  11. Louisville (Kentucky) *Christian Observer*, July 11, 1928.
  12. Richmond *The Presbyterian of the South*, August 1, 1928.
  13. *Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Synod of Florida Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1928*; *Synod of Florida of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, November 13-14, 1928*, Miami; *A Digest of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1861-1944* (Richmond, 1945), 153.
  14. *Minutes of Suwannee Presbytery, November 13-15, 1928* (Jacksonville, 1928); *The Presbytery of Florida, 1928* (Panama City, 1928); *Minutes of St. Johns Presbytery, April 17, 1928* (Lakeland, 1928).

The conservative Baptists, Methodists, and a few Presbyterians were joined by the Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, and Universalists in demanding the defense of the existing prohibition laws. The Disciples of Christ closed its Miami convention in 1928 with an admonition to its 6,159 Florida members to address "the high claims of Christian duty in the . . . present hour in American politics."<sup>15</sup> The Congregationalists claimed to be pioneers in the struggle for prohibition, and "when, therefore, the candidate of the Democratic party declares against Prohibition . . . he automatically sets our people against him."<sup>16</sup> The Florida Universalists, under the leadership of Dr. Stanard Dow Butler of the United Liberal Church of St. Petersburg, at their annual state convention endorsed prohibition and demanded more strenuous law enforcement.<sup>17</sup>

The Protestant Episcopal Church in Florida refrained from entering the political arena in 1928, and it joined with its national organization in "supporting neither candidate for the presidency."<sup>18</sup> The Roman Catholic Church in Florida joined the Episcopalians in avoiding the prohibition debate, although its clergy and 39,379 members were enthusiastic about Smiths candidacy.<sup>19</sup>

The Florida delegates to the Democratic nominating convention at Houston, Texas, had been elected on a pledge to oppose the nomination of any candidate who proposed modification of the national prohibition laws.<sup>20</sup> At the convention when a Smith organizer, Norman E. Mack, distributed a prepared statement

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15. St. Louis (Missouri) *The Christian Evangelist* (national weekly of the Disciples of Christ) 65 (November 1, 1928), 1415.
  16. Boston *The Congregationalist* 113 (October 18, 1928), 485.
  17. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 4, 1928.
  18. *Journal of the Eighty-Fifth Annual Council of the Diocese of Florida, A.D. Nineteen Hundred Twenty-Eight* (Jacksonville, 1928). There is no mention of prohibition or the presidential campaign by the Florida Episcopalians. New York City *The Churchman* 138 (September 22, 1928), 4; *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 1928* (New York, 1929), 104.
  19. Winter Park *The Palm Branch* (official organ of the Bishop of South Florida), October, November, December 1928 (there is no mention of prohibition or the presidential campaign); *Religious Bodies*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1929), II, 1259; Jane Quinn, *The Story of a Nun: Jeanie Gordon Brown* (St. Augustine, 1978); 283-84.
  20. *Chipley Banner*, June 21, 1928; Edgar W. Waybright, "A Southern Democrat Speaks," *The Kourier Magazine* 4 (August 1928), 35 (Waybright was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention).

noting that the governor was opposed to prohibition, Florida delegates C. H. Taylor and Wallace Tervin of Tampa vowed they would vote against him "until hell froze over."<sup>21</sup> Dr. H. A. Sala, a delegate from Miami, urged all the Florida delegates to oppose Smith: "the people of Florida told us to do it and let's do it."<sup>22</sup> When Smith was nominated on the first ballot, the Florida delegation refused to switch its twelve votes from Senator Walter George of Georgia.<sup>23</sup> Fred P. Cone, a delegate from Lake City and later governor of Florida, impressed his anti-Smith constituency by refusing to serve on the traditional convention committee to notify Smith of his nomination.<sup>24</sup>

United States Senator Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, a Methodist and a dry, who had been the Senate minority leader since 1923, was Smith's choice for vice president. As this was the first time in sixty-four years a Southerner had received the Democratic party's nomination, Robinson's selection was seen as an effort to placate both the prohibitionists and the South. Despite this overture, Florida's delegates were so hostile to the Smith nomination they refused to join in the parade of endorsement for Robinson.<sup>25</sup>

In his telegram of acceptance to the Democratic national convention, Smith enunciated his position calling for modification of the existing prohibition laws. He restated his view that the present enforcement procedures were inadequate, and he felt that it would be necessary to liberalize and modify the national prohibition program. Smith called for a state rights solution with Congress broadening the scientific definition of alcoholic beverages, and permitting those states wishing to legalize light wines and beer, to do so, because "the present definition is admittedly inaccurate and unscientific."<sup>26</sup>

Smith chose as his campaign manager and chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee a leader of the Association against the Prohibition Amendment, John J. Raskob.<sup>27</sup> The fact

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21. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 15, 1928.

22. *Fort Myers Tropical News*, June 26, 1928.

23. *Tallahassee Daily News*, July 7, 1928.

24. Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "Florida and the Presidential Election of 1928," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 26 (October 1947), 175.

25. Samuel S. Talbert, "Treatment of the Presidential Campaign of 1928 by the Florida Press" (masters thesis, University of Florida, 1947), 62.

26. Smith, *Campaign Addresses*, 14.

27. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 2, 1928.

that Raskob was also a Roman Catholic and a registered Republican alienated many Florida Democrats. Raskob said that he accepted leadership of the Democratic Executive Committee as "an opportunity of performing some constructive service by helping relieve the country of the damnable affliction of prohibition," and asserted that the Republican party "has now become simply the prohibition party of the United States."<sup>28</sup> The editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, a paper which had championed the effort to make Pinellas County dry, predicted that if Raskob was right, "the Republican party would carry so many states on November 6, it might as well be considered unanimous."<sup>29</sup> Smith seemed not to be concerned about the objections of the prohibitionists, and in nine of his twenty major campaign addresses he continued to advocate liberalizing the prohibition laws. He referred to the Anti-Saloon League as advocates of "prejudiced and bigoted ideas."<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to Smith, the Republican presidential nominee, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, endorsed prohibition in his acceptance speech.<sup>31</sup> Hoover announced that he did "not favor repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment," and hailed prohibition as "a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose."<sup>32</sup> Hoover had felt in the early 1920s that the prohibition laws were a bad idea, but by 1928 he had come to believe that better enforcement should be tried before modifying the existing legislation.<sup>33</sup> Hoover took the position of the dries that the great economic and social advances in the United States since World War I were a consequence of the beneficial effects of prohibition.<sup>34</sup> Hoover had not planned to

28. *New York Times*, June 22, 1928; *DeLand Daily News*, October 10, 1928.

29. *St. Petersburg Times*, October 23, 1928.

30. Smith, *Campaign Addresses*, 247. (The speeches where Smith proposed changing the prohibition laws were at Albany, August 22; Milwaukee; September 29; Nashville, October 12; Chicago, October 19; Philadelphia, October 27; Baltimore, October 29; Newark, October 31; Brooklyn, November 2; and New York City, November 3. The comment about the Anti-Saloon League was made at Baltimore.)

31. *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Nineteenth Republican National Convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, June 12, 13, 14, and 15, 1928* (New York, 1928), 139; Herbert Hoover, *A New Day: The Campaign Speeches of Herbert Hoover, 1928* (Stanford, CA, 1928), 29.

32. Hoover, *A New Day*, 29.

33. Herbert Hoover, *Memoirs*, 3 vols. (Stanford, CA, 1951-1952), II, 200-01.

34. Hoover, *A New Day*, 70; *New York Times*, February 24, 1928; Ernest H. Cherrington (ed.), *The Anti-Saloon Leap Yearbook 1928* (Westerville, Ohio, 1928), 12-18.

make prohibition a major issue in the campaign, but when Smith spoke out forcefully for change, Hoover sought to become the champion of the status quo by stating that he did not favor any modification of the prohibition laws.<sup>35</sup>

Largely as a consequence of Smith's program to modify the prohibition laws, Protestant ministers were instrumental in the creation of organizations committed to his defeat. The disaffected Democrats in 1928 became known as dry Democrats, Anti-Smith Democrats, and Hoovercrats. Shortly after the convention in Houston, dry-Democrats, led by a number of religious leaders, called a meeting at Asheville, North Carolina, to organize opposition to Smith's candidacy. Methodist Bishop James B. Cannon, Jr., of Virginia, and Arthur J. Barton, chairman of the Southern Baptist Commission on Social Service, led the Asheville convention in the endorsement of the Democratic platform and the rejection of the presidential nominee. The disaffected Democrats and Protestant ministers gave four reasons for opposing Smith. They cited his repudiation of the Democratic platform on prohibition, his record as a wet, his selection of Raskob as chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and his longtime relationship to Tammany Hall.<sup>36</sup>

The majority of the Protestant preachers in Florida, following the nomination of Smith and the convening of the Asheville convention, entered actively into national and state politics. P. L. Johnston, editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*, announced that he was against Smith because "of his position on prohibition."<sup>37</sup> Johnston's position reflected the thinking of both the southern and northern Baptist press, including Smith's home state of New York.<sup>38</sup>

The *Florida Baptist Witness* after editorially announcing for Hoover, was criticized by a few of its readers, but most of the comments received reflected the views of the periodical.<sup>39</sup> The

35. Hoover, *A New Day*, 201; *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, August 13, 1928.

36. *New York Times*, June 30, 1928; James B. Cannon, Jr., *Bishop Cannon's Own Story; Life As I Have Seen It* (Durham, 1955), 420-23.

37. Jacksonville *Florida Baptist Witness*, July 19, 1928.

38. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1928. Some of the Baptist newspapers opposing Smith include: *The Baptist-The Official Newspaper of the Northern Baptist Convention* (New York), *The Baptist Messenger* (Louisiana), *The Word and the Way* (Kansas), *Baptist Messenger* (Oklahoma), *Western Recorder* (Kentucky), *Religious Herald* (Virginia), *Alabama Baptist, Baptist and Reflector* (Tennessee), *Baptist Courier* (South Carolina), *Baptist Recorder* (Mississippi), *Christian Index* (Georgia), *Baptist Advocate* (Arkansas), and *The Watchman Examiner* (New York).

39. Jacksonville *Florida Baptist Witness*, October 11, 1928.



Reverend G. J. Rosseau of the First Baptist Church of Pensacola regarded his own defense of prohibition as part of the ancient "struggle between sin and righteousness," and he asserted that "Rum and Rome" were "Democracy's greatest and deadliest enemies."<sup>40</sup> Other Baptist ministers also attacked Smith's Catholicism, but nearly all religious critics of Smith included the defense of prohibition as central to their objection. Most Baptist ministers reflected the views of the Reverend S. A. Renicks of Lake Alfred, the Reverend Dr. Porter M. Bailey of the First Baptist Church of Lakeland, the Reverend Ed Butler of the Euclid Baptist Church of Jacksonville, and the Reverend Charles G. Dilworth of the Northwood Baptist Church of West Palm Beach who rejected Smith solely on the basis of his position on prohibition.<sup>41</sup> With such broad based support for his anti-Smith position, editor Johnston of the *Florida Baptist Witness* declared that he did not know of any Baptist minister in the state who thought his political involvement wrong.<sup>42</sup>

In the edition preceding the election, the *Florida Baptist Witness* ran an article with the two-page headline, "Beat Smith, the Wet Catholic Tammany Bolter, and Save Southern Democracy."<sup>43</sup> This was the most radical of the Baptist press articles and displayed a picture of a white female secretary taking dictation from a black civil service official in New York. The objection to Smith's views on prohibition was central to the article, but nothing was missed as Smith was attacked as a Catholic, as a member of Tammany Hall, and as being shaky on the race issue.<sup>44</sup> The 882 white southern Baptist churches in Florida, and the overwhelming majority of their 117,418 members, followed the lead of the *Witness* and opened their church doors and pulpits to spokesmen for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Smith Democrats and Hoovercrats.<sup>45</sup> They were joined by the 98,000 black Baptists and the Colored National Baptist Convention who also renounced Smith's plan to modify the prohibition laws.<sup>46</sup>

40. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1928.

41. *Ibid.*, August 30, September 6, 20, 1928.

42. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1928.

43. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1928.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Religious Bodies*, II, 963; *St. Petersburg Times*, October 27, 1928, November 3, 1928.

46. *Religious Bodies*, II, 963-65; *Jacksonville Florida Baptist Witness*, October 18, 1928; *Richmond Presbyterian of the South*, September 26, 1928.

After Smith was nominated, spokesmen for Florida's southern Methodists declared, "It is not a question of politics or religious intolerance, but a question of wet or dry, sobriety or intemperance, plenty or poverty, decency or degradation, right or wrong, heaven or hell," as they campaigned for Hoover.<sup>47</sup> The twenty-nine Methodist churches of the Ocala district passed resolutions against voting for any wet candidate for president.<sup>48</sup> They were joined by the northern Methodist churches of the St. Johns River Conference who asserted, "we declare ourselves in the most effective possible manner as unalterably opposed to any wet candidate."<sup>49</sup> As the Anti-Saloon League received much of its support from the Methodist churches, northern and southern, it was not unusual for the Methodist clergy to assist in the effort to defend the prohibition laws.<sup>50</sup> Both the northern and southern Methodists formally demanded "voluntary total abstinence from all intoxicants as the obligation of the citizen and the complete legal prohibition of the traffic in alcoholic drinks as the duty of civil government."<sup>51</sup>

In St. Petersburg the First Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church opened its doors every Sunday evening the month before election day for speeches on prohibition topics such as "Is the Eighteenth Amendment Worth Saving?"<sup>52</sup> Mrs. Ida B. Wise, vice-president of the national Woman's Christian Temperance Union, spoke to the St. Petersburg Methodists, as did Palm Beach Mayor Barclay H. Warburton, Republican United States senatorial candidate.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Reverend Isaac C. Jenkins and the Reverend J. Edgar Wilson, former editors of the southern Methodist periodical, *Florida Christian Advocate*, openly

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47. *Milton Gazette*, October 16, 1928; Talbert, "Treatment of the Presidential Campaign of 1928 by the Florida Press." 31.

48. *Clearwater Sun*, July 17, 1928.

49. *Official Minutes of the St. John's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Jacksonville, 1928* (Jacksonville, 1928), 58.

50. Nashville (Tennessee) *Christian Advocate* (Southern Methodist) 89 (September 14, 1928), 1168; New York City *Zion's Herald* (Northern Methodist) 106 (October 24, 1928), 1359; Westerville (Ohio) *The American Issue* (Anti-Saloon League) 35 (November 10, 1928), 1.

51. *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1928* (New York, 1928) 72; *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1930* (Nashville, 1930), 254.

52. *St. Petersburg Times*, October 8, 21, November 5, 1928.

53. *Ibid.*, October 19, November 3, 1928.

campaigned with the Anti-Smith Club of Lakeland for the election of Herbert Hoover.<sup>54</sup>

The organized opposition to Smith was enlarged by the active participation in the election of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League of America. The WCTU at its annual national convention in Minneapolis in 1927, pledged "relentless warfare" to elect dry politicians to public office.<sup>55</sup> In Florida, Mrs. Minnie E. Neal, president of the Florida WCTU, joined the anti-Smith forces and stated, "we claim to be better Democrats than Governor Smith."<sup>56</sup>

The WCTU was joined in the political arena by the Anti-Saloon League which also moved to prevent any wet candidate being elected. The League announced that "no quarter will be asked from or given to nullification candidates in the 1928 Presidential campaign."<sup>57</sup> N. C. Bryan, president of the Anti-Saloon League of Florida, and Don C. McMullen, legal counsel for the Florida League, joined Howard Hyde Russell, founder and associate general superintendent of the League, in sending a letter to Florida congressmen urging them to join their effort to preserve the prohibition laws.<sup>58</sup> They were joined on the church-speaking circuit defending prohibition against the Smith program by C. W. Croke, superintendent of the Florida Anti-Saloon League.<sup>59</sup> The League and the WCTU also brought Methodist Bishop James Cannon, Jr., noted for his fiery oratory, to Jacksonville, August 4, 1928, with the goal of organizing anti-Smith clubs in every voting precinct in the state.<sup>60</sup> The day before his arrival in Florida, Bishop Cannon issued a statement calling for the convening of conferences in all southern states to organize campaigns to defeat Governor Smith. In Jacksonville, Bishop Cannon spoke to over 300 members and support-

54. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 25, 1928.

55. *New York Times*, September 1, 1927.

56. *Pensacola Journal*, October 31, 1928.

57. Cherrington, *The Anti-Saloon League Yearbook, 1928*, 10-12.

58. Howard Hyde Russell to Robert Alexis "Lex" Green, October 26, 1928, Robert Alexis Green Papers, Box 2, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as Green Papers).

59. *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, August 25, 1928; C. W. Croke to Park Trammell, October 18, 1928, Park Trammell Papers, Box 9, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter cited as Trammell Papers).

60. Doherty, "Florida and the Presidential Election of 1928," 175.

ers of the WCTU and Anti-Saloon League, exhorting them to lead the fight against Smith and his anti-prohibition program.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the efforts of the preachers, the Democratic party in Florida did not openly abandon its presidential candidate. The dry-Democrats were led by a vocal minority in the party. Former state senator and speaker of the state House of Representatives Edgar W. (Ned) Waybright of Jacksonville served on the executive committee of the Bryan Democratic League which endorsed Hoover for president.<sup>62</sup> Waybright and his group cited prohibition, Tammany, white supremacy, and immigration restriction as their reasons for abandoning Al Smith.<sup>63</sup> He stumped the state calling for an electoral revolt against Smith and his "graft ridden, liquor laden, corrupt forces."<sup>64</sup>

Gilchrist B. Stockton also of Jacksonville, a veteran of the 1924 and 1928 Democratic conventions, joined Waybright in touring Florida calling for the election of all Democrats except Al Smith.<sup>65</sup> W. H. Brokaw, who served as chairman of the Orlando Democratic Executive Committee until his repudiation of Smith and the organization of the Anti-Smith Democratic Club of Orange County, was also instrumental in the Hoovercrats' campaign.<sup>66</sup> Brokaw, Stockton, and Waybright argued that Smith's efforts to modify strict prohibition and his association with Tammany Hall were their reasons for opposing him. They denied that his religion was motivating their campaign.<sup>67</sup>

The best known anti-Catholic politician in Florida was former Governor Sidney J. Catts who had been elected on the Prohibition ticket in 1916, after being denied the nomination of the Democratic party.<sup>68</sup> Catts, who had been defeated when he ran again in the 1928 Democratic gubernatorial primary, was also opposed to Smith, and he appealed for support to disaffected Democrats traditionally opposed to Florida's Democratic

61. Jacksonville *Florida Baptist Witness*, August 16, 1928.

62. *Miami Herald*, October 19, 1928.

63. Waybright, "A Southern Democrat Speaks," 35; *Gainesville Evening News*, October 16, 1928.

64. *Gainesville Evening News*, October 16, 1928.

65. *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, October 7, 1928; *Miami Herald*, October 26, 1928.

66. W. H. Brokaw to Trammell, October 24, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 9.

67. *Ibid.*, Gilchrist B. Stockton to Trammell, October 20, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 5.

68. J. Wayne Flynt, *Cracker Messiah: Governor Sidney J. Catts of Florida* (Baton Rouge, 1977), 70-91. J. Wayne Flynt, *Duncan Upshaw Fletcher: Dixie's Reluctant Progressive* (Tallahassee, 1971), 143-44.

party organization. Catts announced that he would choose to "have my arm cut off above the elbow before I would cast my vote for Al Smith."<sup>69</sup>

Fred Butler, secretary for the Republican State Committee, recognizing the struggle in the Democratic party, stated that the Republican strategy in Florida was to let these "Anti-Democrats" shake "the Democrats loose from the Democratic-Tammany ticket."<sup>70</sup>

Florida's elected politicians, holding statewide and national offices, were all Democrats. As Smith's candidacy aroused the normally quiescent clergy and disaffected Democrats, the Democratic leadership struggled to maintain party unity. The regular Democrats were led by United States Senator Duncan U. Fletcher who opened the Smith election drive on September 19, 1928, with an address at the Orlando municipal auditorium. Fletcher endorsed Smith as a "thorough-going Democrat" and predicted that his efforts to modify prohibition would be "doomed to utter failure" in the Congress.<sup>71</sup> Fletcher sought to maintain party solidarity and reminded Florida's United Confederate Veterans that the Republican party represented those who had "waved the bloody shirt" and who had "denounced the southern people as rebels and traitors."<sup>72</sup>

Fletcher was joined by William H. Ellis, chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court, in defending Smith.<sup>73</sup> Justice Ellis argued that Smith as president would enforce the prohibition laws and would discontinue the Republicans' "pretended enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment."<sup>74</sup> In his many public appearances Justice Ellis defended Smith's prohibition position as he sought to portray the views of Smith and Hoover as similar on the wet issue.<sup>75</sup> For Ellis the preservation of party loyalty was the paramount issue to be decided at the polls, and he was joined in this effort by the great majority of Florida's elected officials,

69. Crestview *Okaloosa News-Journal*, July 6, 1928, Peter O. Knight Scrapbook, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

70. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 27, 1928.

71. Flynt, *Duncan Upshaw Fletcher*, 143-44; *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, September 20, 1928.

72. *Miami Herald*, October 11, 1928.

73. *DeLand Daily News*, October 16, 1928; *Pensacola Journal*, October 18, 1928.

74. *Miami Herald*, October 11, 1928.

75. Melvin Edward Hughes, Jr., "The 1928 Presidential Election in Florida" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1976), 138-39.

former politicians, and members of the legal profession.<sup>76</sup> Fletcher, who was not up for election in 1928, was joined by Governor John W. Martin and former Governor Cary Hardee in his endorsement of Smith for president, but Florida's junior United States Senator, Park Trammell, standing for reelection that year, declined to join Fletcher in campaigning for Smith.<sup>77</sup> In fact, Trammell refused to campaign either for himself or for Smith, and when faithful Democrats beseeched him to come to Florida and stop the "Republican invasion," he declined.<sup>78</sup> Early in the campaign Trammell stated that he would not criticize the dry-Democrats, and as the fight against Smith intensified, he refused to come to Florida, stating that "illness for the last three weeks" prevented his election activities.<sup>79</sup>

Both James B. Hodges, chairman of the Democratic State Campaign Committee, and C. Jay Hardee, state chairman and Democratic finance director for the national campaign, sought to get Trammell to join the state speaking campaign in behalf of Smith.<sup>80</sup> Trammell declined these and many other invitations to campaign for Smith, claiming the press of business before his speech in Lakeland on October 12 and illness thereafter.<sup>81</sup>

Trammell received letters from both W. H. Brokaw and Gil-Christ Stockton, leaders of the Hoovercrats, after his Lakeland speech, stating that they "regretted" that Trammell had "felt

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76. *Ibid.*, Appendix B, 220-21.

77. *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, November 3, 1928.

78. H. W. Burwell (speakers committee, Dade Democratic Club) to Trammell, October 13, 1928; George Whitfield McRory (secretary, State Democratic Executive Committee) to Trammell, October 11, 15, 1928; Watt Lawler (Lee County Democratic Executive Committee) to Trammell, October 12, 1928; Harry C. Duncan (chairman, Lake County Democratic Executive Committee) to Trammell, October 18, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 5, "Invitations to Speak File"; Stephen Kerber, "Park Trammell of Florida, A Political Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1979), 292-93.

79. Trammell to Judge Jno. W. Dodge, October 30, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 5.

80. James B. Hodges to Trammell, October 19, 1928; C. Jay Hardee to Trammell, August 21, 1928; Trammell to Hodges, October 31, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 5.

81. Trammell to F. A. McDonald, October 16, 1928; John W. Gideons to Trammell, October 16, 1928; Trammell to Hardee, November 2, 1928; Trammell to Stanton Walker, October 31, 1928; Trammell to Joe Butler, October 19, 1928; Trammell to L. D. Reagin, October 19, 1928; Trammell to E. S. Vining, November 19, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 5.

called upon to endorse Governor Smith even mildly.<sup>82</sup> When Trammell did answer the dry-Democrats he assured them of his "own position in favor of prohibition" and stated that he believed "in the right of every Democrat to vote as his conscience dictated to him."<sup>83</sup>

Doyle Carlton, the Democratic nominee for governor in 1928, also refused to campaign for Smith. For several months after the Democratic convention he remained silent about national politics, and when he did respond to the demand that he endorse the national ticket, he merely stated that he was a loyal Democrat but "not a dictator and shall not assume to command the voters of Florida."<sup>84</sup> Late in the campaign Carlton did endorse the Democratic party platform but was careful to add that "from some of the announced views of the Presidential candidate, I vigorously dissent."<sup>85</sup>

Congressman Robert Alexis "Lex" Green of the Second Congressional District also carefully avoided endorsing Smith by name. Green described the dilemma of Democrats like himself up for election in 1928: "Hoover-Democrats on one side and the so-called Smith-Stalworths [sic], who in the most part are my former and future primary enemies, are trying to pull me to pieces."<sup>86</sup> Green refused to campaign for Smith, although he did make a radio address on WRUF Gainesville, October 31, endorsing the Democratic party and its platform without mentioning Smith by name.<sup>87</sup> Green had refused to attend the Democratic convention and after the crushing defeat of Smith stated, "I told you so."<sup>88</sup>

82. Stockton to Trammell, October 10, 20, 1928; Brokaw to Trammell, October 24, 1928; Trammell to Brokaw, November 19, 1928, Trammell Papers, Boxes 5 and 9.

83. Trammell to A. B. Newton (chairman, Anti-Smith Democratic Club of Winter Garden), October 16, 1928; Trammell to Dr. C. W. Crook, October 16, 1928; Trammell to W. H. Baker, October 19, 1928, Trammell Papers, Box 9.

84. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, September 6, 1928.

85. Madison, *Enterprise Recorder*, September 24, 1928; *DeLand Daily News*, September 7 1928; *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, November 1, 1928.

86. Millard E. Tydings to Green, August 8, 1928; G. B. Smithson to Green, August 27, 1928; W. R. Donovan to Green, July 19, 1928; J. A. Ward to Green, August 25, 1928, Green Papers, Box 2.

87. Herbert Felkel to Hodges, April 14, 1933, James B. Hodges Papers, Box 106, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

88. Green to Thomas H. Harris (personal secretary to Green), November 13, 1928, Green Papers, Box 2.

Herbert Jackson Drane, congressman of the First Congressional District, also declined to join the speaking campaign for Smith but did tacitly support him.<sup>89</sup> He later stated that he had defended prohibition throughout because “my vote in Congress belongs to the people of Florida.”<sup>90</sup>

Ruth Bryan Owen, a first-time Democratic nominee from the Fourth District and daughter of William Jennings Bryan, also equivocated in her support of Al Smith. She joined Green, Drane, Trammell, and Carlton in pledging support for the Democratic platform without naming Smith and emphasized that her two loyalties were to the Democratic party and to Florida.<sup>91</sup>

The only other Floridian elected to national office to endorse the Smith candidacy and to join the campaign efforts in his behalf was Congressman Thomas Alva Yon of the Third Congressional District. Yon accepted the chairmanship of the Leon County Democratic National Victory Committee and went on a speaking tour of West Florida in an effort to preserve party loyalty.<sup>92</sup> Yon’s strategy was to defend the Democratic party. On the matter of prohibition he declared, “those who wanted prohibition had it under the present plan and those who did not want it were getting along all right.”<sup>93</sup>

A determination to preserve the prohibition laws motivated the Protestant preachers to lead their congregants into the politics of 1928; when Al Smith sought to modify those laws, they openly campaigned to defeat him. The actual motivation for the political activity of the Protestant clergy was viewed by many observers as evidence of a deep hostility to Roman Catholics.<sup>94</sup>

89. E. D. Lambricht (editor, *Tampa Morning Tribune*) to Herbert J. Drane, December 30, 1932, Herbert Jackson Drane Papers, William R. Perkins Library, Manuscript Division, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

90. Herbert Jackson Drane, “A Biography of Herbert J. Drane,” 55-57, Herbert Jackson Drane Papers, University of South Florida, Tampa.

91. *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, October 20, 1928; Herbert Felkel to Hodges, April 14, 1933, Hodges Papers, Box 106.

92. Crawfordville *Wakulla County News*, September 27, 1928. This paper was one of several in the Yon clippings (most of which were not identified), Thomas Alva Yon Clippings, Ledger 40, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Alfred E. Smith, *Up to Now: An Autobiography* (New York, 1929), 61, 410-16; William G. Carleton, “The Popish Plot of 1928,” *Forum* 112 (September 1949), 141-47. Edmund A. Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928* (New York, 1956), 157, 163; John A. Ryan, “A Catholic View



A survey of the documents of the Protestant churches and the statements and actions of the preachers show that it was the desire to preserve the prohibition laws that was most important to the majority of the Protestant community. The election results reflect their determination to preserve national prohibition in 1928. For the Florida Democratic party, loyalty was the paramount issue of 1928, and the Protestant clergy in its enthusiasm for prohibition shocked the Democratic leadership by helping to defeat its presidential candidate for the first time in fifty-two years.<sup>95</sup> For the first time since Reconstruction, the tradition of the solid South had been broken.

In the decade of the 1920s prohibition allowed religious views to become intertwined with politics. Protestant preachers who believed in total abstinence from alcohol found themselves defending their vision of progressive politics against a Democratic presidential candidate who wanted prohibition laws that more nearly reflected his idea of a temperate society. When the preachers entered politics in 1928, they tied their religious convictions to secular politics. These militant clerics insisted that it was only their defense of their cherished Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that motivated their opposition to Al Smith.

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of the Election," *Current History* 29 (December 1928), 377-81; Alan Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill, 1979), 52.

95. *Official Vote--State of Florida, General Election, 1928 Tabulated by Counties*, Marianna, 1928, n.p. (the final vote in Florida was Hoover, 144,168, and Smith, 101,764).