One Nation under God
A Study on Religion and Politics in United States

Paper within Political Science
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Sammanfattning

Den här uppsatsen behandlar ämnet kring amerikansk politik och hur den påverkas av religion och religiösa ledare. Här inkluderas religiösa högern som har ett stort fäste, främst i det Republikanska partiet, men även politiken i allmänhet. En historisk bakgrund ges som introduktionskapitel till detta ämne, och syftar på vidare läsning.

Tre frågeställningar ställs som Hur påverkar religion politiken i USA och till hur stor del? Har den Religiösa högern lyckats påverka politiken och i så fall på vilket sätt? Och även Har politikerna använt religiös övertygelse som argument?

Vidare har de två senaste presidentvalen 2004 och 2008 studerats och även dess presidentkandidater, för att understryka hypotesen om att religion påverkar politiken i USA.

Republikanen John McCain och Demokraternas Barack Obamas kopplingar till religion har lagts fram och politiska uttalanden har analyserats analyseras. Även kandidaternas debatter har analyserats, för att understryka influenserna från deras religiösa trosuppfattning.

I slutsummeringen ställs fakta fram som visar på att religionen har en stor påverkan på politiken och den är ständigt med på ett hörn. Politikerna använder sig även utav religiös retorik och argumentation.
Bachleor Thesis within Political Science

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Abstract

This essay deals with the subject on American politics and how it is affected by religion and religious leaders/organizations. The Religious right is also included as the movement has a strong attachment to the Republican party, but also the political sphere in general. A historical review is given as an introduction to this subject, and aims towards further reading. Three questions are asked; How does the religion affect the politics in Us and to which extent, Has the Religious right been able to affect politics and it that case how? And: Has the politicians used religious beliefs as arguments? Further on the two latest election in 2004 and 2008 are studied and its presidential candidates, to strengthen the hypothesis that religion is affecting the politics in United States.

The Republican candidate John McCain and the Democrat Barack Obama connections to religion is upheld in this essay, and their political statements and debates are analyzed, to emphasize the influences from their religious faith.

In the conclusion, facts are presented that actually shows that the religion has to an extend impact on politics and its performance. As the politicians are using religious rhetoric’s to strengthen their argumentations and speeches.
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1 Introduction

The US elections and politics has for a long time been connected and influenced by religion. This may affect policy making but also in turn religion, both in negative or positive ways depending on the viewer. Both politicians and citizens have an acceptance towards this development, and it has become a part of the society and public sphere especially in the politic arena. Both religious leaders and politicians have discussed and listened to each other. During the latest years with former president, George W Bush, this topic has once again popped up as a hot subject.

President Bush, who was a religious president, has the latest years faced skepticism concerning how he’s handled and decided the political solutions. The latest presidential election in fall 2008, was interesting both concerning the oldest candidate ever Republican candidate John McCain and the first African-American candidate. At the end Democrats Barack Obama, won with 53 percent compared to McCains 46 percent of the votes (Election Center President Results, 2008)

I find it interesting to do this research now because of the election 2008 and wish to look closely upon the connection between politics and religion in USA, because I believe it has to a great extend a part in the political outcome and also in the everyday practice of politics.

This essay will primarily focus on the different aspects on politicians and historical background and how religion has taken place in the American politics and the political agenda. I will also tie together all the chapters and aspects given in this essay to religious issues, and what they have contributed to the American politics and elections. Such as political leaders, media and other organizations. I will give an introductionary part to the previous historical aspects, but I will mainly focus on the latest two election and its candidates. The factual questions/issues will also be included because of the important connections to religious aspects such as abortion and same-sex marriage.

The Religious right in US has played an important role in the politics during these last years, and they have also affected the Republican party a lot. They have also been one of the largest supporters to the party, this is why its important to include the organization in this thesis.
1.1 Purpose and questions

The main purpose of this essay is to show how religion is affecting, is connected and can be out played in the American politics, and also to analyze how different politicians, elections and organizations are using religion as a tool in US politics. It also seeks to show how important religion is in the politics overall and especially in the two latest elections. I will mostly concentrate on recent years, on Barack Obama, John McCain, George W Bush, the Religious right (the Christian right), and also the two latest elections -04 and -08.

Questions:
- How does the religion affect the politics in US, and to which extend?
- Has the Religious right been able to affect politics, and in that case how?
- Has the politicians used religious beliefs as arguments?

1.2 Disposition

In the beginning of this essay a purpose is given and questions are asked. In the method part I will explain and describe the research methods I have used in this thesis, which also includes source criticism and limitations.

So, firstly in chapter 2, the historical review is given as an introduction to this subject, which shows upon that there is a need for this kind of study. In this chapter, Separation of “Church and State”, and The First Amendment are presented, to give an historical ground and introduction.

In chapter 3, the Religious right and its Beginning is presented to answer the question on how the Religious right has entered into politics and succeed to affect it, on the different Factual Issues. In this chapter the Recent Christian right and George W Bush are presented.

In chapter 4, the Presidential election in early 21 century is given and also both of the Presidential elections of 2004 and 2008. This is given to present the recent development on how religion has been expressed in the politics in US. The candidates Barack Obama, John McCain and Sarah Palin are presented and their connections to religion, to confirm the assumptions that religious expressions are common in American politics.

In chapter 5, A Review and Analysis of the statements during election 2008, is presented and also the speeches made by the candidates during the election, to give the exact words and thoughts made by the candidates on this theme. And their beliefs are also presented on separation on Church and State, abortion, and gay marriage. In chapter 6 and 7, I have stated the Conclusions and Discussion on this essay.
1.3 Method and Material

In this essay I have used a qualitative method. Which gives the researcher an opportunity to go deep and behind the surface and look specifically at the underlying causes of the problem. The qualitative method is serving to see the problem as a whole and to seek common patterns.

Qualitative method is common among social and political scientists, but also to all scientists who relate their thesis and research to earlier studies (Esaiasson, 2005, p. 233). It also requires reading, translation and analyze of other earlier studies. A qualitative method is used to give a deeper knowledge in a specific environment. This helps to see how aspects have develop over time. Document analysis, observations and interviews are all part of the qualitative method.

I have mainly focused on to give a review of the historical aspect concerning politics and religion connecting. But also to state the outlines on how it is expressed in the everyday politics.

In the beginning when writing this essay, Internet gave me access to search for material. It helped me to a great extend what material was or wasn’t useful for me. Throughout Internet I got access to published book, articles and also videos posted online. Since the election 2008 during this time of writing was still ongoing and later ended, I couldn’t find much relevant published literature. So articles and online videos was to my greatest help.

The material used in this thesis, when given the history review has been earlier published books. This gives the reader and myself an introduction to the subject and a historical background. Further on the articles online from various newspapers and homepages are used. This kind of sources gives update information and aspects. The homepages of the candidates has also given the accurate information on the candidates own viewpoint on this subject.

The videos I have watched online I have carefully listen to and refered to what the candidates have said in the interviews, speeches and debates that are relevant to conclude how much religion is affecting their political issues and policy making.
1.4 Source criticism

Our today’s information society requires higher demands on the journalists, scientists and citizens when it comes to critically value the information flow. Today the access to information is easy and everyone can simply get a lot of information. This development leads to an increased variety when creating information, but also an increased risk to unreal or untrue information spreading (Esaiasson, 2005, p. 303).

This is why information criticism is important. And it includes an ability to value the truth and evaluate the trustworthiness in both historical and updated statements. According to Peter Esaiasson, *Metodpraktikan* there are four classical source criticism rules to evaluate the trustworthiness:

- Validity
- Independence
- Concurrency
- Tendency

Looking at my own sources, Internet, articles, online newspapers, online published videos and published books, validity varies among them.

When using Internet, there is always a greater risk for unreal and untrue materials. And sometimes it is hard to distinguish the true from the untrue.

In the articles I have used, I’ve taken them all from newspapers online because they give me the most serious impression since the articles are also published and printed in newspapers. On the other hand, many of the newspapers and journalists are not independent from political views. This maybe the main problem when using such materials.

The published videos posted on Internet pages like www.youtube.com are even more hard to tell if they are untrue, but since the candidates themselves are speaking, the trustability to use the videos as a resource increase. The homepages of the candidates has given me exactly the standpoints of their views on religion and politics and their campaign issues.

These homepages and videos posted on www.youtube.com has been mostly my primary sources, while published books and news articles are the secondary sources used in this essay.

1.5 Limitations

It is necessary to consider the amount time spent on writing this thesis. Because the lack of time and information this essay in not to deep or wide.

I have focused on to give an introduction and insight to this massive subject, which probably has no start or ending that I can put forward here. There are also more aspects to this subject on religion and politics mixing that I don’t have time or access to include. One of the important aspects that are not included, is the financial aid given and spend on the candidates from various religious groups such as churches and religious private persons.
2 Historical Review

This chapter seeks to retell the historical conditions on how the religion in Americas politics has arised, from the beginning of the 19th century. But also to give an introduction to todays separation of the Church and State, and its framework. This chapter is connected to the first question on How the Religion has affected politics in US?

The religious aspects have often reflected the politics in United States, over the past hundred years. The politics have split United States more often along cultural than economic lines.

Considering the American history over the years with the Civil war, WW1 and WW2, the religious issues and moral principles have developed from peoples religious views. And this aspect is not new. “ America is” Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1830s “still the place in the world where the Christian religion has most preserved genuine power over souls; and nothing shows better how useful and natural to man it is in our day, since the country in which it exercises the greatest empire is at the same time most enlightened and most free”. Tocqueville noted that both Protestants and Catholics carefully refrained from taking a direct part in politics (Dionne, 2004, p. 46). He also argued that the religion had a huge indirect effect on politics and government, because they shaped the minds of individual voters and religion had a stable hold on people because it did not tie itself to the fortunes of transitory politicians.

Tocqueville arrived to United States before the catholic voters developed a strong identification with the Democratic party in US. But for the next 130 years, Protestant – Catholic sectarian rivalry was often played out in politics.

And many protestants believed in the nineteenth century, that catholics loyalty to church decreased their loyalty to the country and they also feared that a high contribution by the pope contained the device order (Ibid, p. 47).

In the 1960 the Democrats nominated their second catholic (1st was Governor Al Smith in 1928), John F Kennedy, and he won by a narrow margin, by the 78 percent of Catholics voted for Kennedy and the 63 percent of white Protestants voted for Richard Nixon (Ibid, p. 49).

And the religion took a large part in politics, and increased in importance. As also in the civil rights movements, was to a great extend a part of religious movement. Its greatest leader Martin Luther King, and the strategy of nonviolent protest was formed by the deep leaders religious beliefs and views. The black population in US were both then and now more religious than the average white American. And the religious beliefs were also a basis for the movement opposing the Vietnam war (Ibid, p. 50).

But later on the religious profile of America changed, because of the increase in the number of Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants, even as the mainline protestant churches have lost thousands of members while the catholic members has expanded (and mainly because of the Latin American immigrants). And there has also been an increase of the citizens who identify themselves as atheists or secularist and not attending any church activities.
The role of the Religious right was firstly noted by Ronald Reagan in a speech at the Republican Nation Convention in 1894. And by the 1990’s it was clear that religion was the demographic factor that divided the US party politics. The faithfully church attenders were mostly Republicans except the black church. Mormons and Evangelical Protestants were more Republicans then Democrats. Looking at the 2000 election, the 62 percent of voters who attended church every week voted for George W Bush, while 62 percent of the voters who never attended church voted for Al Gore (Dionne, 2004 p 166).

The religiosity in the US politics has been more associated with the Republican party then with Democrats for a various number of election cycles. And to be clear most American citizens are defining them self’s as religious if the term is broad enough. Citizens with a high level of religious commitments or conservative religious views identify with the Republican party (Ibid, p. 116).

Voters highly religious are strongly associated with political conservative views about issues concerning abortion, gay rights and sexual education, while the secularized citizens has a more accepting view.

For example, in a poll conducted in October 2003 for the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 80 percent of people who expressed a high religious commitment oppose gay marriage, compared to 57 percent who express an average religious commitment and 39 percent who express a low religious commitment. Fifty-eight percent of white Evangelicals favor stricter laws against abortion, compared to only 37 percent of white Catholics, 25 percent of white mainline Protestants, and 18 percent of seculars. According to Democracy Corps, positive feelings toward prolife groups measure 70 percent among white devout Evangelicals, 56 percent among voters who attend religious services every week,(Ibid, p. 117).

The growing division between the Republican party and the Democratic party, was forced by the rights organizational efforts, as in the 1970s the religious conservative groups had been systematically working to dominate the sphere with a widely broad network of Evangelical church networks. And such groups focused on the family issues.

The rights organizations also pushed on this development furthermore; the attitudes of the citizens are represented by the four general points of view as presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Separation between Church and State</th>
<th>Role of political bodies in politics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Separationalists</td>
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<td>Social activist</td>
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<td>Accommodationists</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>Interventionists</td>
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(Reichley, 2002, p. 3).
The idealistic groups above has been drawn to these different view at different times. These conflicting positions lead to important issues of the American democracy, and also raises the question of what the role of the religion should be in public life. And this also gives an reason to expose how these different ideological views are expressed in politics.

2.1 Separation of Church and State

The structure of separation of “Church and State” has been formed out in US Constitution’s Bill of Rights in the first article. And has encouraged the idea of separation between the Church and State that should be a fundamental principle of the American government and society (Samons, 2004, p.175). But the author of this book, Loren Samons means that neither the idea nor the phrase appears in the Constitution, but that many citizens in United States believes that it does or should. The modern Americans justify this action at the state and local level, by using the attempt to banish the religious behavior, like prayer from schools, and the words like “under God”. But in reality many states kept on maintaining the established churches and religious qualifications. The Constitution’s First Amendment did on the other hand not limit the cities or state power to patronize religion or encourage a particular religious standard. But it instead limited the Congress’s ability to interfere with these kind of questions at the national, state or local level.

2.2 The First Amendment

The Bill of Rights
Amendment I

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” (United States Constitution, 2008).

The First Amendment was created to forbid the official preference of one religion over others, and also affirms ones right to argue that his or hers religious belief would serve well as an article of universal public morality. It also fulfills a universal human desire for order or peace or justice, and further on the values most of the human beings agree upon even if not being religious.

And the Constitution should guarantee your rights even if they do not practice the same religion, and should not convince you to adapt theirs as public law whenever the opportunity is presented. And Dionne E.J who wrote the book “One Election Under God?” at page 14, argues that it is presented from time to time, and that the religious values will not be accepted as a part of the public morality, unless they are shared by the community at large.
3 The Religious Right

This coming chapter on Religious right, is expected to answer the second question, If the Religious right has succeeded to affect politics? The beginning and the present situation of Religious right is presented to give and explanation on what is not a recent phenomena.

Because the Christian right is a social movement, that has intentions to include and mobilize the Evangelical Protestants and the other Orthodox Christians into conservative political action, and many Christian right leaders objects the term “Christian right” which they believe explains a narrow movement. As others prefer the term “ Religious right” which can include all the “ people of faith “ such as conservative Jews and also Muslims. This essay will most include the Christian right!

This chapter is focused on to give a background and introduction to the Christian right and how it is outplayed in politics, such as presenting its Factual Issues and their connection to George W Bush.

There are more or less different groups of Religious right movements. Ralph Reed, formed the Christian Coalition but prefers the term Christian Conservative, but many conservative Christians on the other hand opposed the Christian Coalition and such organizations. But there are also other Christian religious leaders who insist on that it is truly a “ pro- family” movement. (Wilcox, 2006, p. 6)

3.1 Religious Right in Politics

The Christian right are active in a number of policy arenas and has pursued a variation of tactics to influence different kinds of governmental units. And has also succeeded to influence the selection of political elites, by working to help candidates win a party nomination and then by helping them defeat their general election opponent.

The movement has chosen a strong strategy to work with the republican party instead of attempting to influence both of the parties, both Republicans and Democrats. The organization has also sought to influence government leaders, including the officials who on the other hand are supporters of the movement (Wilcox, 2006, p, 87).

The Christian right is influential in state Republican parties in parts of the South and the Midwest, bur far less in the Northeast. The Christian right has also a great success in states, when transition from democratic to republican majorities. But the organization can also oppose the politician that they don’t feel are inside their frames, as in Colorado in 2004 where they actually campaigned against a moderate Republican candidate for the House of Representatives, the Republican representative Ramey Johnson lost her place to the Democratic challenger by only 41 voters votes, thanks to Christian right members and voters opposed against her (ibid, p, 90).

This movements of Christian right organizations plays an important role in the process of presidential selection, because the movement controls the state party committees in many states. And this is because some states select the nominees through caucuses or conventions, and because the movement has generous financial resources to support a candidate.
3.2 The Beginning of Religious Right

Like all social movements the Christian right is an wide organization with leaders, activists, and members which seeks to attract support and grow stronger. Their aim in the beginning was to form a group of individuals who traditionally avoided politics because they saw it as dirty, corrupt business, and by convincing people that political involvement was a God-given responsibility (Wilcox, 2006 p. 7).

And as always the movements leaders are ambitious to expand, so as for example the Jerry Falwell spoke to attract the Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Mormons, and Fundamentalists, the Christian Coalition and its Ralph Reed spoke mainly to Protestants, African-Americans, and Jews. Their efforts was to ban gay marriage.

The organizations of the Christian right are national groups, such as Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America and also local organization. The activist in these groups are those who volunteer their time and money to work for these groups, and its members are those who have joined the organization but do not actively participate. These activists have a strong impact on the organizations activity, because they are the ones distribute the voter guides in example churched across United States. These information guides on the other hand can have influenced people to actually join the Christian right (Ibid, p. 7).

The Christian right has no single agenda – but rather a coalition of overlapping agendas, and some Christian rights activists focuses on only the abortion question, as others may only focusing on the homosexual issue such as gay marriage. Other movement groups are just focusing at reducing the sexual material in televisions, movies and popular music, as other groups seeks to increase the role of religion in public life: such as prayer in public schools.

The large focus on the family began as a attempt to strength the traditional family, and the organizations stood apart from the political arena until 1983. Then they got politically involved by helping the Family Research Council, which is an educational organization in Washington, that promotes the socially conservative public policy.

The institutionalization of the Christian right involves the training leaders and members, to create skills in rules and norms of political action.

In the 2004 election the organization Focus on the Family distributed information to churches and pastors of how they could politically mobilize their members. The material that was send out included information on the “political lingo” and “resource arsenal” that explained how they could have maximum patriotic impact while working within the of the political system (Wilcox 2006, p. 8).

The Christian right activists joined the Republican party in the -80s as the moral majority mobilized for Ronald Regan, and the Christian rights activist got even more active in politics in 1988, when Robertson run for presidential nomination. But later on the next decade many of these activists disappeared from the political arena, but many of them remained active until or came back in the 2004 presidential election. And by this time the Christian right was without a doubt identifiable with the Republican party at both national and state level.
3.3 The Recently Christian Right

At the 1980s the Christian right had slowed down its activities in the political agenda and almost seemed to backed down. But even as the large national organization was gone, the movement activists planned to mobilize ones again. And its goal was to have activists in every district in US by the millennium, and to also influence and to some extend control the Republican candidate selection process.

The most active organization in the early 1990s was the Christian Coalition, and as mentioned above its director Ralph Reed strived a new movement and appealed directly for conservative Catholics, Jews, and African Americans to join the coalition (Wilcox, 2006, p. 47). The coalition made an effort to built up its state and country chapters around political activist, and not preachers, so they could attract members from other religious groups. The Coalition held training sessions and distributed materials on how to make religious groups work well together.

Over the year in the political arena, Christian right activists and members had developed the skills to make political arguments in the “rights” language of liberalism, and to carefully chose their arguments. So lately instead of arguing that United States is a Christian nation and therefore the public schools should begin with a Christian prayer, the activist now argue that Christian children have the right to exercise their religious beliefs freely in prayer sessions. And also the issues as abortion is now argued and formed as protecting the rights of the unborn, and being pro-life.

Today, the organizations like Moral Majority and The Christian right has a wide policy agenda that includes health care reforms, taxes, and crime, but the most important issues are abortion, education, family issues and sexuality.

And these days the Christian right activists are far more effective than those in the 1980s, and they have also become more pragmatic then before. (Ibid, 2006, p, 49).

3.4 Religious Right and its Factual Issues

Same-sex marriage

In year 2003 the Massachusetts state supreme court ruled that the states construction required that same-sex marriage should be allowed. This issue came as no surprise to the Christian rights activists, who had been working against this issue since it first was brought up in Hawaii in the early 1990s. The organization have for the past twenty-five years opposed the homosexual rights and had this issue as a central part of their political agenda, because they believe that homosexual behavior and sexuality is sinful (Wilcox, 2006, p, 147).

The same-sex marriage issue became central focus for the Christian right in the 2004 election, this issue also created new energy to the activists who where strongly against. The organization promoted local groups and church leaders to enter the electoral arena for the first time (Ibid, p. 51).
**Abortion**

Almost all Christian rights activists believe more or less that abortion is murder, and they seek to ban all or most of the abortions. The exception is the few incidents when life of the mother is threatened. (But there are also those who would not allow abortion at all, and mean that God should make the ultimate decision). For the truly committed Religious right activists abortions is an action of murder, and the abortion providers should be treated as murders. But still this issue is diffused and not even among the religious right members the issue is united. The public is divided, and even among regular church – attending Catholics and white Evangelicals, there is no a majority who would ban all abortions (Wilcox, 2006 p. 143).

The Republican party included a pro-life attitude in its 1980 presidential platform, and has kept it in all elections since. In some elections this has hurt the party. In other elections it has probably helped them, and especially when the republicans succeeded to frame elections around the partial birth abortion instead of whether abortions should be generally legal.

**Education**

One of the most important questions concerning the education system is to remove the anti-Christian values, and to still be able to include the conservative Christian values in their children’s education. And many of the Religious right members argue that many schools promote a secular humanism, which principles are to place humans at the centum of the universe with no room for God (ibid, p. 145). They also focus on the school psychologists, who they believe are brainwashing the pupils away from their Christian values, because the absence of prayer and religious content in school and classes.

Even thou all this struggles to keep the Christian values included in school, many parents feel that they must educate their children at home or in religious schools. One of the issue that Religious right members seeks to teach is creationism instead of evolution, and to exclude the sexual education, and further on to teach the bible as literature.
3.5 The Religious Right and George W Bush

The strongly religious president George W Bush carefully supported the Christian right leaders during the 1990s, after first working to help organize and coordinate evangelical supporters for this father's re-election campaign in 1992. But George W Bush avoided the extreme rhetoric on issues such as abortion, and gay right - instead he spoke openly about this faith, his regular Bible study and how prayer strengthened him.

The Christian right leaders worked for W. Bush in the primaries, to help him win the important victories in South Carolina. And during the general election, the movement worked for his campaign, but the collapse of the Christian Coalition left the movement and the campaign without the possibilities to share out any large quantity of voter guides (Wilcox, 2006, p.51). George W Bush refers often to his faith in television interviews, and even in candidate debates. He has spoken time after time of his faith as a source of strength and comfort (Wilcox, 2006, p, 20).

This chapter has answered the second question: Has the Religious right succeeded to affect politics. And its also relevant when talking about religion and politics mixing, because Religious right organizations are most eager to affect politics in US and to interact in the public sphere. And given that they have political agendas, concerning the factual issues, they are already a organization with political elements. That's why Religious right is an important section of this essay and also important in topics concerning this subject.

Coming chapter is shifting towards the presidential elections, and later on their candidates, and it will aslo connect Religious right development in todays current politics and the presidential elections in recent years. This is important especially viewing George W Bush and the Republican party.
4 Presidential Election in the Early 21 Century

During the recent years religious aspects in the political arena has become a returning concept as mentioned before, and has been active to then disappear, to now play an increasingly important role in the nations election. Especially the presidential election. Nowadays the Democrats and the Republicans are no longer divided along old lines, which are defined weather they are catholic or protestant. Now they are instead divided by religious devotional approach, which means the way of being religious (Campbell, 2004, p. 1).

During the latest president elections the arguments have been influenced by religious views and values. The correlation between religion and politics is the common concepts that deals with the concepts of values – personal, social and collective. And how these connect in today’s politics is important to examine. (Reichley, 2002, p 10).

One of the way to presenting them together is to put the concepts in a context, where they are used and outplayed in the political arena, and here chosen the presidential elections. And in this sections the division, and the religious gap between voters is studies, to show upon that some voters and politicians actually followed through, the Religious rights movement.

4.1 Presidential Election 2004

President George W Bush talks far more about religion then other politicians, and even so when he won the 2004 president election against the Democratic candidate John Kerry. This chapter aims to give an explanation of how religion is outplayed in the presidential election of 2004, and to here below compare John Kerry and George W Bush. Also the Religious gap across the country is presented, including the idealists views on different issues on religion and politics (given in tables).

John Kerry’s most important group was the black protestants which represented 13.2 percent of this total vote. And the non-Christians voters added another 5.8 percent, and the non-religious minorities brought to more than 25 percent of the Kerry votes. Another important source of the Democratic votes was the seculars, at 11.6 percent. The voters among the protestants and jews clearly helped Kerry, but in the end he would have been better off with higher voting participants among the black protestants, Latino Catholics, seculars and the unaffiliated believers (Campbell, 2007 p. 27).

Candidate Kerry’s coalition was not outplayed as much in religious terms as Bush coalition, but like him, Kerry needed broader support to have and success in the election. So another extra votes he gained was from the centrist categories, which provided Kerry with 20 percent of this votes, and from the traditionalist who constituted more than 10 percent of his votes. The democrats succeeded also in another group in 2004, - the modernist Catholics, the group where Kerry himself belongs to. (ibid, p. 31).

And even though the Democratic party support among ethnic and religious minorities, the party lost some of the faithful latino Catholics, jews and black protestants, but the black protestants in general voted less in 2004, then in 2000.
In the 2004 election campaign, journalist discovered a “religion gap” among the voters, which was based on the worship attendance. And this came to play a part of the election campaigns arguments and result.

One of the important questions during the election was abortion. And the democratic delegates were strongly pro-choice, with the 75 percent and none of them agreed on that abortion should be banned. Among the Republicans the pro-life attitude were strongly stable with the 67.6 percent agreeing on the restrictions on abortion (ibid, p, 47).

There was also an difference among the voters in the republican party, where the weekly attenders were stricter in their views on the pro-life arguments, then others less active in religious activities.

The other groups for pro-life, pro-marriage and pro-family were quite active in the 2004 election. Many studies shows that compared to the most elections in the past, the gay-marriage and abortion policy had a stronger impact. And the question on the economy and war was not as lift up as one could imagine. The results of these studies, shows that gay-marriage and abortion had almost the same effect on their vote as the issues of social security reform, the environment, the education policy and the minimum wage increase (ibid, p, 66).

The conclusions made about the result of the votes, was partly by an impact of the anti-gay marriage initiatives in eleven states, and the division between “red” and “blue” states in America. And 22 percent of the voters believes that the candidates selected moral values are the most important ones when voting.

But overall the gay-marriage and abortion had a large impact and was important question, they did not have the same strong impact as the war and terrorism issues.

4.2 The Religious Gap

During the election in 2004, 40 percent of the Americans admitted that they regularly attend religious services, which means that the religious voters constitute almost half of the nations voters. And among the white population some 75 percent supported George W Bush and represented by far the largest portion of his electoral coalition. (Phillips, 2007, p, 193).

And more as the election campaign got started, analyst got more and more aware about the new gap that had existed- not the gender gap, but instead the “religion gap” that now was much bigger and more powerful. And the religion gap had certainly became the most important player in American voting pattern.

The states in America divided into red republican states and blue democratic states. In the red states 75 percent of the voters were protestant, 23 percent were catholic and 1 percent was jewish, while those in the blue states were 37 percent protestants, 33 percent catholics and 4 percent jewish. The red states, 64 percent of the voters were married while in the blue states the amount was 56 percent. And further on the in the blue states 20 percent were single as opposed to 10 percent in the red states (Ibid, p. 194).
Below here I will present some figures, that are given by Kevin Phillips in his book, *American Theocracy*, page 195, on how the voters believed about:

Table 1:

*Should a political leader rely on religion, when making policy decisions?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National sample</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2:

*Which worries you more? Politicians inattentive to religion or politicians too close to religion and its leaders?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inattentive %</th>
<th>too close%</th>
<th>depends/unsure%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National sample</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3:

-Should religious leaders try to influence politicians position on the issues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No%</th>
<th>Yes%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White conservative evangelicals</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White churchgoing evangelicals</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White evangelicals</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National sample</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evangelical Protestants</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seculars</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4:

Overall:

-Do you think religious leaders should try to influence government decisions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United states</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadians</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australians</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These questions and answers given by Kevin Phillips in his book, American Theocracy, page 195, shows that there is a difference between the conservatives and liberals on how political leaders should or should not rely on religion when making political decisions, and also that it differs among these two idealist groups on how religious leaders should try to influence politicians positions on factual issues.

It also provides that facts the American voters are in the top when it comes to the question of religious leaders should try to influence government decisions, compared to other secularized countries as Canadians, British and the French. And these figures shows that the subject on religion in American politics are interesting to study from this point of view.
5  Presidential Election 2008

The coming chapter presents the two candidates of the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama and John McCain, and gives an outline on their connections and thoughts on religion, to help answering the third and last question stated in this essay. On how politicians are using religious beliefs as arguments in the political sphere?

Viewing the latest election held on the November 4th, 2008 where Barack Obama won against John McCain, was one of the most attention-grabbing elections in a long time. And thanks to many aspects — black candidate, oldest candidate, woman as vice-president, and then Hilary Clinton, the former first lady. And this election was something out of the usual, where current president George W Bush had really done badly as president and people were more than happy to exchange him. And that maybe the Republican candidates John McCains largest barrier to overcome- and which he mentioned several times- that he is not Bush, and that he runs his own politics and not just an ongoing on the president’s policies.

Nothing seems to be as it use to. This was an election of change. Never before had one elections got such large broadcast and international notice as this, and not only in US did the citizens cheer when Barack Obama won- but in Europe and Africa too. And never before had so many first-time voter, been so active and stood in line for long hours to vote on their candidate. One can also combining this election with the religious aspects, that has formed and took place during these times. Both Obama and McCain and his vice-president Sarah Palin were extremely religious, and were not afraid or backed down to include religious arguments in their political views. Media as always was very hungry to exploit everything about the candidates and their personal life, and these revelings got huge impact on the campaings and was discussed largely.

5.1  Barack Obama

- My fate shapes my values, but applying those values to policymaking must be done with principles that are accessible to all people, religious or not. Even so, those who enter the public square are not required to leave their beliefs at the door,

Barack Obama for US Today 060710
(United States Senate, 2008)

The Hawaii born Obama grew up with his mother, after his father left back for Kenya. He graduated at Harvard university in 1991, where he also was the first Africa-American president at the university, and then went back to Chicago to practice as civil rights lawyer and teach constitution law. After the devotion to his work, Obama became Illinois State Senate where he served for eight years. As senate he focused on the globalization challenges, and the Veterans Committee, and the terrorist threat, posed by weapon of mass destruction
(Meet the Candidates, Barack Obama, 2008).
Other of his political view was the health care issue, where he plans to cover every American with health insurance, which constitutes a whole 45 million citizens. And concerning the latest war in Iraq, Obama has a different judgment then the current president George W Bush. He mean that the fighting in Iraq should be drawn back and so should also the troops. But there would still be some troops left to protect the US embassy and the diplomats. And if in case the Al Qaeda attempts to built a base within Iraq, Obama plans to keep the troops in Iraq or elsewhere in the region (War in Iraq Barack Obama, 2008).

To connect Barack Obama on the current topic and religion and politics, he has been quite active and willing to openly talk about his fate and relationship to God. And among the Democratic candidates, this is usually rare and not that common as among the Republican candidates. Compared to his opponent McCain, he has had much lower profile, but still the arguments has been aimed towards the religious aspects.

Obama delivered on June 28, 2006 a controversial speech on religion and politics to the Christian progressive organization, Call to Renewal. At this time spoke about the existed “gap” in party affiliation among the white Americans, and the gap was not between men and women, nor among the red and blue states, but instead between those who attend church and those who didn’t.

And he also believed that a discussion and a serious debate should take place in the modern, pluralistic American society, but firstly he means that we must be aware of and understand that Americans are a religious people. 90 percent of all believe in God, 70 percent belong to an organized religion, and 38 percent call them self’s committed Christians, and significantly more people in America believes in angels then in evolution (Barack Obama’s Controversial ’06 Speech on Religion and Politics, 2006)

And all this because people feel that something is missing, and they have a need for a greater belonging so they turn to religion for comfort. Obama also mentions that he was not brought up in a very religious household, but found his faith after college, and when he begun working in Chicago as a community organizator for a group of Christian churches. And later on he join the Trinity United Church of Christ on 95th street in the south side of Chicago, where he meet reverent Wright, who became a close friend of his, and also his mentor.

In this speech Obama also mentions that his bible tells him that if we train a child in the way he should go, then he will not turn from it, -“ So I think faith and guidance can help forty a young women’s sense of self, a young man’s sense of responsibility and a sense of reverence that all young people should have for the act of sexual intimacy”.

Barack Obama also asks how they can built a partnerships between regular and secular people of will? And he means that it is going to take more work, and a lot more work than the American citizens have done so far. The tensions have to decrease and it needed on both sides to accept some ground rules so they can act together in cooperation. He further means that conservative leaders need to understand the critical role that the separation of church and state has played an important role for the democracy but also improved the robustness of their religious practice.
Obamas also repeatedly mentions that it was not the atheists or the civil libertines who were the most effective activist to introduce First amendment. And that was the Evangelicals who were most concerned with not mixing government with religion, because they did not want a state-sponsored religion interacting in their ability to practice their faith. Therefore he welcomes this idea of the separation of State and Church, because he expresses that
- “What ever we once were, we are no longer just a Christian nation; we are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, a Buddhist nation, a Hindu nation and a nation of nonbelievers (Barack Obama’s Controversial ‘06 Speech on Religion and Politics, 2006).

Barack Obama on Religion in Democracy

Further on Obama means that we have no choice in our pluralistic society when it comes to compromise on these kind of issues mentioned above. Because politics depends on Americans citizens and politicians to persuade and include each other based on a common reality. And it would be a disaster and a dangerous thing to base policy making on religious commitments. He gives and example of this:

- We all know the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice his only son, and without argument, he takes Isaac to the mountaintop, binds him to an altar, and raises his knife, prepared to act as God has commanded.

Of course, in the end God sends an angel to intercede at the very last minute, and Abraham passes God’s test of devotion.

Obama uses this religious argument to legitimate why he believes that separation of religious view and state are a pretty reasonable thing to do. And he claims that it is fair to say that if any of us saw Abraham on a roof of a building raising his knife, we would call the police and expect the Department of Children and Family Services to take Isaac from Abraham, because it would be common law or basic reason.
Barack Obama believes in the citizens, religious or not, and has faith in both sides to cooperate with one and other now and in the future (Barack Obama’s Controversial ‘06 Speech on Religion and Politics, 2006).

Barack Obama’s Church attending and belonging

After winning the presidential election in 2008 and before moving to White house, people has already begun to be speculated on which church the new president and his family are attending.
The former President Jimmy Carter belonged to a Baptist church in Washington and thought Sunday school in Virginia. The Clintons attended a church a mile far from the White House, where their daughter Chelsea belonged to a youth group. And both Bush presidents were members at the St. John’s Episcopal Church, also nearby the White House.
The Obama selection will perhaps get more publicity, given the attention during the election on his faith and relationship to his former pastor Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Obama left the Trinity United Church in Chicago last spring, when controversial comments were made by Rev. Wright. (In wake of Rev. Wright, Obama Seeks New Church, 2008)

Former pastor Rev. Wright has lately become a hero among the strongly black religious citizens. And those was the ones applauding when the reverend turn out to be “unashamedly black and unapologetically Christian”. He also defined the concepts like “God damn America” because of its treatments of blacks, and also that United States brought the 9/11 terrorist attacks on themselves. These racist attacks on United States, made Barack Obama leave the church and explaining that Wright is not speaking for him nor his beliefs on the American society. And this happenings spread allover in the news over one night, and had huge negative impacts on his election campaign.

In the article written by Russell Goldman for abnews.com the Nov 24th, there are many speculations on which church Obama and his family are attending in the future, and many of the thought goes to if he is picking a traditionalist black church or not. Reverends and African-Americans will try to influence him on that church is the most suitable for the new first black president (In wake of Rev. Wright, Obama Seeks New Church, 2008).

5.1.1 So who voted for Obama?

The Chicago senator Obama won the election, with help from the enormous support among young people, first-time voters and African-Americans.

Among the first-time voters 70 percent voted for Obama, contra 28 percent for John McCain (Who Voted For Obama, 2008).

Meanwhile McCain maintained his supporters among the older voters and evangelical. And according to this article written by Steve Chifferes for BBCnews.com, Obama also won the African-American voters by 95 percent, and McCain with only 4 percent.

5.2 John McCain

John McCain was first elected to the US House of Representatives in Arizona in 1982, and lead the fighting for reforming Washington, and eliminating the wasteful government spending, and to also focused on to strengthen the United States armed forces. Later on when he got elected to the Senate, he strongly required that the Congress should put an end to the loopholes for special interests. And he also wished to fix the broken systems in Washington, that wasted the tax payers money. So when he got reelected in November 2004, he did it with impressingly strong majority of 77 percent of the votes.

McCain attended the United States Naval Academy, where his father and grandfather had been Navy admirals, he also served the country in the Vietnam war. His latest assignment in the Navy was to serve as the naval contact to the US senate, and he also retired from the Navy in 1981.
He on the other hand has a different view concerning the health issues. Where he wished to bring the costs under control, to save the medicaid, and to protect the private health benefits for retirees, and also to allowed the US companies to effectively compete around the world (John McCain About, 2008).

And concerning the war in Iraq McCain believes that a greater military is necessary if the United States wants to achieve a long-term success in Iraq, and so more troops are necessary to provide the security for local institutions and economies. And further on it is, according to McCain, up to United States to destroy Al Qaeda, and to train the Iraqi army.

According to CNN’s Peter Hamby who wrote an article online the 18th of August 2008, about McCain’s finding his way in faith, he stated that McCain is more o less careful to discuss his beliefs openly. In last December McCain attended an town hall meeting in the upstate South Carolina, where he talked about his commitment to serve, winning the war in Iraq fighting governmental spending- before the letting the small town audience ask questions. A man in the back raised his hand and asked “I was wondering if you have accepted Jesus Christ s your Lord and savior”?

John McCain responded: “I’m a man of faith, and I have deep religious beliefs and values. I had experiences in my life where I had to rely on God not to get through another day or another hour , but every minute”. The audience questioner, was not satisfied with the answer and asked the candidate once again, If he had let Christ into his life?

McCain answered this time: “I also believe that talking to much about one`s faith and religion, in my view, is something between me and God”. After this the crowd applauded.

Further on Peter Hamby writes that the journalists and campaign staff rarely hear McCain use religious language freely, and if this arises in discussions, he usually seems eager to move on to in the discussion.

He even mean that that issues like abortion and gay-marriage, which should be home-runs for McCain at town hall meetings, but goes by unmentioned unless a voter brings them up (Is McCain Finding His Way on Faith, 2008).

In another article from CNN written by Dana Bash April 14th 2008, she also means that McCain is more private about prayer then his rivals. She writes that the two democratic candidates Obama and Clinton has frequently weave religion into their speeches, but McCain has been more careful about doing so.

And both Obama and Clinton got personal, when they putted politics aside to discuss their faith at the Faith in Public Life’s Compassion Forum at Messiah Collage outside Pennsylvania. While John McCain declined the invasion to the forum.

She also means that the Evangelical community has largely supported Republican presiden- tial candidates, but however this year evangelical leaders have a split over McCain.

Republican candidates usually rely on the support from evangelical base, but some are hesi- tant towards McCain.

As an evangelical voter said at New Convenant Fellowship Church in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: “Honsetly I haven’t gotten a good feel for him. I’ve been to his Web site a few times and I haven’t gotten a good feeling about where he stands when it comes to oth- er issues that aren’t mainstream issues that Christians look at “.
But this can also depend on McCains age, he is 71 years old, and from a older generation, one that is more private about prayer. He has also said that “I’m unashamed and unembarrassed about my deep faith in God, but I do not obviously try to impose my views on others”,
He has also caused further gap with the conservatives, when he opposed President Bush’s tax cuts, and also when he co-sponsored the campaign finance reform law, that now bears his name and supporting a controversial White house-backed plan to offer a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

5.3 Sarah Palin

Even John McCains candidate for vice president, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin has been openly discussed her faith and religious beliefs. And by the time when the duo lost, Palin spoke of that if she ever came back in running for a presidential position God would show her the way (Gud ska visa Vägen, 2008).
And if God wants her to run for president in 2012, then He will give her a sign. Sarah Palin also announces that her faith is very important in her everyday living, and she always puts her life in God’s hands.
Sarah Palin has also been a large and influenced politician concerning the abortion, and she has been strictly pro-life. And therefore she got a very strong support among the conservatives in the recent election. During the election campaing, Palin became a grandmother, when her unmarried daughter got pregnant, and this situation set many speculations on how religious Sarah Palin really was, and many of her opponents used this situation in negative terms and so did the media (In Palin’s Life and Politics; Goal to Follow God’s Will, 2008).
Religion is clearly an important aspect of her life since shortly after becoming governor in 2006, e-mailed her former pastor, Paul E. Riley because she needed spiritual advice in how to do her new job, and even she also asked for biblical example of people who were great leaders.
To summarize this chapter focusing on the candidates and involvement by religious behaviour, one can clearly see that religious beliefs are expressed oftenly. Both Barack Obama, John McCain and also his vice candidate Sarah Palin has a strong faith in Christ. The chapter has given an introduction to the candidates on how religious they are and their connection to religion, next chapter is giving a Review and Analysis of the statements given during the election. And the chapter is also helping to answer the last question concerning How the candidates are using religious beliefs as arguments?
6 Review and Analysis of the statements during election 2008

-What has been said by the candidates?

During the election many speeches and debates has taken place at different TV-channels, studios and Town halls. Here below I will present some of the videos and speeches done by the candidates themselves during the election, on issues concerning abortion, beginning of a live, and gay-marriage. These interviews are sometimes long and there has been much more said then I can include here, but I have focused on what is important for this essay, and relevant.

John McCain: “We have to help these young women, who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy, we have to help them with compaction and with courage, and also let them know that if they don’t want the child, they brought into life we have to help them with adoption”. John McCain also claims that he has three adoptive children himself and that he’s position is consisting and his voting record on pro-life, and he contains to maintain that position and voting record.

“We need to change the culture of America, to understand the importance of the rights of the unborn, and I will continue hold that view and position”. (John McCain on Abortion in his own Words, 2008)

In a meeting with pastor Rick Warren, John McCain further on speaks about abortion and the definition of a marriage, the Pastor asks John McCain: “At what point is a baby entailed of the human rights? And McCain answers: “At the time of conception”. “I have a 25 record pro-life record, in the Congress, in the Senate and as a president of the united states I will be a pro-life president, and this presidency will have pro-life policies. That’s my commitment. That’s my commitment to you.

Further on the pastor asks McCain to define marriage:

“It’s a union between man and women, between one man and one women. And that is my definition of a marriage. (John McCain on Abortion and Definition of Marriage,2008).

Pastor Rick Warren had also interview and had a meeting with senator Barack Obama, and asked him what it means to trust in Christ and what it means to him on a daily basis? And Obama answered: “ I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and that I have redeem through Him, and that is a source of strength and sustenance on a daily basis. And I know that I don’t walk alone. (Obama and McCain discusses Religion and Supreme Court, 2008).

Senator John McCain also attended and interview and open discussion lead by the actor Woppie Goldberg at The View, where McCain expressed his thoughts about the church and state. Goldberg asked him If he believed in the separation church and state, and he answered: “ Sure I do”. Later on she asked then if he didn’t wish for his vice president to share his thoughts on that view and he answered:

“Woppi, I read the statements of our grounding fathers, Abraham Lincoln, and we should pray for that God should be on our side, and for us to be on Gods side. I true the Christian values, where the foundation of our nation, in God we trust, and a clearly belief that God has a plan for the world, and if we should do what we can, as good lives as we can, and trust in God, and that He will guide this nation and the world to a better existence”.

23
Further on he speaks more on the issue with leading the country and he says: “I pray every day, for guidance and to do the right thing, and when it comes to temptations, and to do what is in the best interests in the country”. (The View: John McCain, Church and State and Being A POW, 2008).

McCain speaks more on religion on www.beliefnet.com, and says: “Everything is legitimate and the number one issue is that people should do a selection of the president of United States is: Will this person carry on in the Judeo-Christian tradition that has made this nation one of the greatest experiments in mankind, and I just have to say that since this nation was founded on primarily Christian principles, and I prefer someone I know has a solid founding in my faith, but that doesn’t mean that I’m sure that someone who is Muslim would not make a good president.

Well I just feel that my faith is probably a better spiritual guidance, and that doesn’t mean that we would rule out under any circumstances some one of a different faith, I just feel that it is an important part of our qualifications to lead” (John McCain: A Muslim in the White House, 2008).

Barack Obama also speaks on the Christianity in United States and the separation of Church and State: “Whatever we once were, we are no longer a Christian nation, at least not just, we are also a Jewish Nation, a Muslim Nation, Hindu Nation and a Buddhist Nation and a Nation of non-believers”. (Obama Breaks Down Why We Need Separation of Church & State, 2008). And in the same speech he also speaks that if we now were a Christian nation, who’s Christianity would we oppose?

He, like John McCain has gotten the question if he personally beliefs that life begins at conception, and if not, when does it begin? And Barack Obama answered: “This is something that I have not come to a firm resolution on, I think that is very hard to know what that means, when life begins, is it when a cell separates? So I don’t presume to know the answer to that question, but what I know is that it is something powerful with potential life and that it has a moral weight to it that we take into consideration, when we have these debates” (Barack Obama on Abortion/Life, 2008).

Barack Obama speaks on the CBN News on gay marriages and says that :‘’On the issue on gay-marriage, my belief is that as a public official, my role, is to make sure that everybody is treated fairly and everybody has equal rights. And I know that sometimes in this debate, when we talk about wealth we don’t mind giving gay, lesbians, equal right but not special rights. Well the fact is that right now many gay couples for example can’t visit each other at the hospital.

And when I sit down and think how would Jesus feel about somebody not being able to visit somebody they love when they are sick? I conclude that, that is something that is important, and certainly as a public official it is important for me to make sure that those basic rights and basic equalities and again on these issues I think we could disagree respectfully, disagree without being agreeable but we have to remained us selves of all the things that we agree on which is that children should be cared for, that we should be promoting the safety in United States, that we want to give economic opportunities to all people and my hope is that I understand that there are going to be some people who can’t vote for me because a couple of these positions, I just want them to know that, these are issues I don’t take likely and I respect their position” (CBN News Interviews Obama (5)- On Gay Marrige, Abortion, 2008).
7 Conclusions

This thesis purpose was to set forward the connection between religion and political decisions, and has throughout the method and analysis tried to confirm that thought. My arguments have been that politicians and elections are bounded by religious beliefs and also the religious leaders.

The question asked in chapter 1.1 on How does the religion affect politics in Us, and to which extent? I’ve tried to answer the question throughout this thesis, by presenting the historical review on how religious thoughts have been outplayed in the last decade. I have also given an introductionary part to this subject, when I included the concept of separation of State and Church and also The First Amendment. Also by given the Religious right concept and how they have been affecting the Republican party- successfully, and how both them and the republicans actually gains from these connections. I have also tried to answer this question by presenting the last two elections and how religion has been involved, and also presented the candidates/ presidents John McCain, Sarah Palin, George W Bush, Barack Obama to give an updated view as possible.

In all the chapters I have tried to connected the religious aspects and how they have been outplayed in the politics. But there are also other aspects that I have not included, because I believe that they were not relevant. My analysis of the candidates and their speeches has helped to strengthen my thesis that religion is a strong quartetone, and has to an extent played a part in the American politics.

Further on my question on if the Religious Right has been able to affect politics, and in that case how? And as seen the Religious right has for a long time been a part of the Republican party voters. McCain is a good example on how the Republican party needs the Christian right supporters. Because when he was candidate and didn’t speak as much about his religious faith (when it was not required), he lost the Religious rights votes, and this shows that there is a connection between the Religious right and the Republican party. They have also affected the party’s standpoint on different factual issues, such as same-sex marriage, and abortion, where they have fought for a very long time against both.

Ive also tried to go deeper on this issue and explained the different ways that the eq Religious right has affected the Republican party over a time of period, and my results are that they have a strong holding among the party. But the party is also depending on the Religious rights votes. So for them both there is a win-win situation.
On my last question on *Has the politicians used religious beliefs as arguments?* I have answered this question throughout chapters 5 and 6. I focused on the religious aspects among many other things that has been said. Both candidates have been referring to their personal beliefs when so needed. Barack Obama has drawn metaphors to Abraham and Isaac. And he has spoken on his devotion to God, but also the difference in everyday politics and one’s religious beliefs.

John McCain has on the other hand not spoken about religious beliefs when there was no need to, and this may also cost him the fundamental Religious rights votes. But when needed he has shown his devotion to Christianity, when he said he wished for a president to have the religious views as him, as the great founders that created United States and its Christian values.

Also different pastors has been on the agenda during this election, as references or actors in the politicians agendas. As seen Obama's old revenant Wright, has been on the agenda and was so radical that Obama had to break through from him in public. Governor and vice president candidate Sarah Palin has also been advocating with her former pastor, when she became governor of Alaska, and she needed spiritual advice in how to do her job, and asked for biblical example of people who were great leaders. These connections are also shown in the public sphere and expressed throughout media, and in some cases by the candidates themselves.
8 Discussion and Reflection

Writing this thesis has giving me a good insight in the American politics, throughout the work I have read, listened and viewed many debates and newspapers on the election. This has both been interesting from both personal point of view and an educational point of view.

But reflecting on my hypothesis in this thesis, that religion affects politics I can almost by sure definitions accept my hypothesis. Many of the chapters that I have presented in this essay are connected to God and/ or religious beliefs. This development differs a lot from the politics we are used to in Sweden, where there are no room for religious aspects in politics. It’s almost banned.

So why do these candidates refer so much to the religious aspects is hard to say. Can it be to increase the credibility and strengthen their political arguments or are they doing so because they belive that the voters are expecting religious views? There can be many aspect and answers to this question. I further on believe that it’s easy to hide behind God in US politics. Politicians standpoints and views can easily be upheld by Biblical arguments, and they can also deny other standpoints and claim that it’s against the Bible, and these kind of arguments are valid and legitimate.

I also believe that Media plays a important role to this subject, because they are the link and publishing the important arguments and words up on the agenda. What media captures, the citizens listen to. Not many do follow the long hours debates, and then it’s up to media to snap up the most important, which can to often be radical arguments among many others. The media can give a skew portrait of the candidates or give an expected representation that feeds the citizens expectations. I further believe that mixing religion and politics to this extend can affect a country in negative ways, and also give negative outputs. The democratic politicians and parties should have as a major goal to include same political agenda thinking, and not to built politics parties on homogenous people, such as Christians, muslims, white or black.

Further on when writing about this subject on religion interfering with politics, there are a lot more to be studied, then I have had the possibilities to do. Due to the time limit and access of material. Subject related to this essay may be, to study more on how the campaigns are financed, and to see if the churches or and religious leaders are giving generous financial aid to the candidates and their campaigns? To see how the connections, between religious leaders and politicians, that are not on the agenda nor the public sphere.
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