

Bush Campaign Adviser Quits as Sexual Misconduct Case Is Recalled

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Deal W. Hudson, the publisher of the conservative Roman Catholic journal *Crisis* and the architect of a Republican effort to court Catholic voters, says he is resigning as an adviser to the Bush campaign because of a Catholic newspaper's investigation into accusations of sexual misconduct involving a female student at a college where he once taught. "No one regrets my past mistakes more than I do," Mr. Hudson wrote in a column posted yesterday on the online edition of *National Review* announcing his resignation. "At the time, I dealt with this in an upright manner, and the matter was satisfactorily resolved long ago," he wrote, without specifying the accusations. Mr. Hudson, 54, said he had been happily married to his current wife for 17 years. Called for comment, he declined. Mr. Hudson did not name the publication. Others who said they had been contacted by a newspaper doing an investigation said it was *The National Catholic Reporter*. Thomas Roberts, editor of *The National Catholic Review*, said Mr. Hudson had taught at Fordham University, a Jesuit school in New York where Mr. Hudson taught from 1989 to 1995, a university spokeswoman confirmed that the episode had led to Mr. Hudson's resignation. The spokeswoman, Elizabeth Schmalz, said: "Fordham followed its policy rigorously in this matter and initiated an investigation upon receipt of the student complaint. The professor later surrendered his tenure at Fordham." A person involved with the university's investigation said that a freshman in one of Mr. Hudson's classes reported to the university that, after she had become drunk at a bar, Mr. Hudson made sexual advances toward her. After a period of weeks, she charged him with sexual harassment. The accusations were made near the end of a school year, and Mr. Hudson left academia. Mr. Hudson, a former Southern Baptist who converted to Catholicism at the age of 34, has been an influential adviser to President Bush and a close friend of the White House political strategist Karl Rove since the 1990s. Mr. Hudson first caught Mr. Rove's attention by publishing a study in *Crisis* in 1998 arguing that Republican candidates could make inroads among traditionally Democratic-leaning Catholic voters by focusing on regular churchgoers, a strategy that dovetailed with Mr. Bush's emphasis on "compassionate conservatism." Mr. Hudson signed on as an adviser to Mr. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign. For the last four years, he has been a prominent participant in a weekly conference call held by the Republican National Committee each Thursday with influential Catholic supporters. William Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, said Mr. Hudson had played an almost indispensable role reaching out to Catholics for the White House. "He had become the point man," he said. "If you wanted to get something to the top inner circles of the White House from a Catholic perspective, you could contact Deal Hudson and it was delivered." Mr. Donohue said that Mr. Hudson's resignation would hurt the Bush campaign's efforts with Catholic voters. "He was the ultimate networker," Mr. Donohue said. "I think it will be hurt because of the ties that Deal had." The Republican National Committee did not comment, and Terry Holt, the Bush campaign's spokesman, did not return calls yesterday. Friends of Mr. Hudson said that over the last four years he had become particularly close to Mr. Rove. In an interview with *The Austin American-Statesman* after the last presidential election, Mr. Hudson said of Mr. Rove, "I have to be careful what I say because I might make him sound like he is God or something." He added, "He has just been so great." The fight for the roughly

64 million Catholic voters is intense. Mr. Bush, a Methodist, is running against a Roman Catholic, Senator John Kerry, and church doctrine has at times become part of the campaign. Roman Catholic officials have criticized politicians who favor abortion rights, as Mr. Kerry does. At the same time, the pope and other Catholic officials

inst the invasion of Iraq. In his column on the Web site of National Review, Mr. Hudson portrayed himself as a target of politically motivated "personal attacks" because of his steadfast support for Mr. Bush. He said a reporter for what he called "a liberal Catholic publication" had begun inquiring into his personal life, including questions about the annulments of his previous marriages, before his conversion, as well as questions about the incident with his student. In his column, Mr. Hudson said that in his book, "An American Conversion," he had discussed his "past mistakes" and "the role they played in my conversion through the grace and the forgiveness I have found in the Catholic Church." At one point in the book, published last year, Mr. Hudson wrote about the cooling of passion in a long marriage. "I experienced, the hard way, that passion does subside, and I was foolish not to realize that the love that follows is better," he wrote. "No doubt this led to unfortunate and dest

rt," he added. "I am blessed that I have not gotten what I deserve." He concluded the book by recalling a romantic episode that took place a year before his conversion: "I was jolted by the sudden departure of someone I loved but who I had not treated well. The hurt was compounded by my sense of failure. I spent many months hoping to win her back but without any progress. I was to blame and I knew it." He wrote that in despair, he prayed to the Virgin Mary at his local parish, the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "My prayers brought me both relief from my loss," he wrote, "and a sense of forgiveness for my failure."