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Anatomy of an Election: The Making of the President

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making Schrader better known to us and rescuing his work from the obscurity in which it had too long been hidden.

For those interested in the theology of the Church and the history of theology, this volume will more than recommend itself. The presentation of the work, by Herder, meets in every way this distinguished firm's standard of publishing excellence. We can only second the hopes which have been expressed that Msgr. Schauf will find, in the midst of his other concerns, the leisure and the means to bring to successful completion the publication of the two other volumes which will give us the rest of Schrader's treatise. Meanwhile, we renew our thanks to the learned Monsignor for the painstaking effort which has gone into the editing of this impressive book, surely an *opus omni dignum laude*.

C. G. ARÉVALO

ANATOMY OF AN ELECTION

THE MAKING OF THE PRESIDENT, 1960. By Theodore H. White. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961. ix, 400 pp.

It is said that politics is one of the most difficult things to forecast. For the actions of men cannot be measured in exact, mathematical terms. Nowhere is this belief better proven than in this account of the American presidential election of 1960 by Theodore H. White. In reporting the events, however, and in analyzing the factors that shaped the outcome of the 1960 election, the author has in fact produced a contemporary historical narrative.

Armed with a massive array of facts, and evincing a keen insight into the causes behind these facts, Theodore White traces (as only a veteran journalist can) the course of the 1960 presidential election, from its earlier pre-convention stirrings to the complicated processes of the nominations, from its shakier beginnings to the much publicized television debates and the final sounds of political battle.

The pre-convention maneuvers are a silent study in contrast, both as to the various avenues to the presidential nominations and the varied personalities of the candidates. Just what was the achievement of John F. Kennedy, and what was its significance? In White's words,

He and his men had planned . . . a campaign that seemed utterly preposterous—to take the youngest Democratic candidate to offer himself in this century, of the minority Catholic faith, a man burdened by wealth and controversial family, relying on lieutenants scarcely more than boys, and make him President.

That they succeeded is in itself an interesting study in the art of politics.

As early as 1958 and 1959, the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination had begun to move, some quickly, some slowly and hesitantly. Hubert Humphrey and John Kennedy sought it the hard way—the route of the primary elections. The Stuart Symington campaign aimed its spearhead at the power brokers who controlled the convention delegates. The Lyndon Johnson strategy illustrated yet another avenue—the power system—resting on his control of Congress, on the accumulated mass of “political debts and uncashed obligations” that must now be paid. Amidst the spotlight of Democratic speculation emerged still another potent figure, Adlai Stevenson, reluctant then and still a hesitant candidate when the showdown loomed upon him.

On the Republican scene, the field of battle was less complicated but just as full of sound. After numerous dissensions over the party platform, an agreement was reached to some extent between Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon, now Republican candidate for the Presidency.

Four questions span the entirety of this book. First: what effect did Kennedy's religion have on the election? Second: how important and effective were the television debates? Third: what were the differences in the personalities of Kennedy and Nixon? Fourth: how great a role did organization play in the presidential tourney?

The question of religion where a Catholic is concerned must inevitably enter the scene. During the primary elections, Kennedy temporarily solved part of the problem by urging voters to practice tolerance rather than bigotry. But the statistical facts must speak for themselves in answering this question. Keeping in mind that the final Kennedy constituency totaled 34 million votes, it is to be noted that “the number of Protestants who voted for him materially outweighed the number of Catholics and Jews combined.” The IBM data computers estimated this at 46 per cent of all American Protestants, or 22,500,000 votes, while the Gallup pollsters calculated a more modest estimate of 38 per cent, or 18,600,000.

The significance of the television debates cannot be played down. This was the first time that two presidential aspirants had ever faced so vast an audience. Each of the four debates averaged an audience of from 65 to 70 million viewers. The first television debate reversed the opinions of many concerning Kennedy, who now appeared to be on equal footing with Nixon, and no longer the immature, young and inexperienced Senator from Massachusetts with the sandy mass of hair. Nixon was to recover in subsequent debates, but never fully, for the

impression had been made and the die cast. Mr. White's analysis of Nixon's efforts show keen insight:

Mr. Nixon was debating with Mr. Kennedy as if a board of judges were scoring points; he rebutted and refuted, as he went, the inconsistencies or errors of his opponent. Nixon was addressing himself to Kennedy—but Kennedy was addressing himself to the audience that was the nation.

Nixon was acting like a college debater, more concerned with his opponent, consequently failing (before the largest audience in the history of politics) to offer a vision of the future that the Republican party might offer the American people.

Mr. White's observations on the personalities of the two candidates demonstrate the role that personal background and the timeliness of personal decisions can play in shifting the course of an election. No candidate can win an election by sheer mathematical calculations. There are many circumstances to be dealt with, and it is how the candidate meets these circumstances and deploys them in his favor that can make or unmake a Presidential aspirant. As far as platform themes were concerned, the Kennedy themes of "America cannot stand still; her prestige falls in the world; this is a time of burden and sacrifice; we must move" did not vary too greatly from Nixon's themes of "Peace without Surrender" and "I want a life, as my Dad used to tell me when we were growing up, that is better for my children than I've had myself." Nixon was at his best when speaking before small-town people (for among them he found an echo of himself). Furthermore, "Nixon hated to speak from a prepared text, preferred spontaneous *ad-lib* delivery; nor could he ever summon passion as he spoke, or draw a natural laugh, or bring a choke in the throat, as Kennedy could at his best." Kennedy's attitude towards the press was amiable and encouraging, while Nixon and his staff considered the brotherhood of the press as a hostile conspiracy. Where circumstances and timeliness of decision counted heavily, Kennedy scored just as heavily in his quick decision in the Martin Luther King case, which turned part of the tide in his direction, while Nixon's lack of decision (or reluctance to render one) lost him a substantial part of the Negro vote.

One cannot discuss the 1960 elections without saying a word about the importance of organization. And where organization counted, Kennedy had the edge over Nixon. Kennedy's staff drew deeply from the ranks of young American political talent on the national scale, and (on the local scale) it wisely utilized the great number of volunteer groups that it had amassed with sound planning and judgment.

One additional observation of Theodore White on the late entry of President Eisenhower in Nixon's campaign only serves to introduce many more possibilities. After everything is over and done with, the

temptation is often to consider the many "if's" that could have taken place. But they remain mere possibilities and are set aside to occupy the dark shelves of political history.

Theodore White's lucid, interesting and evidently well-witnessed and well-documented narrative may best be summed up in his one statement: ". . . along the road, over the past year and to this point, he [Kennedy] had somehow stirred every nerve end of the American political system, and that system would never be the same."

JORGE M. JUCO