



Hubert H. Humphrey: The Politics of Joy

Charles L. Garrettson III

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Calls for greater morality in government and among politicians are a fixture of American political culture. Although there is no lack of opinion on what political morality means and how it might be achieved, few commentators have considered these questions in practical terms. In this major contemporary analysis of the life and work of Hubert H. Humphrey, Charles L. Garrettson examines Humphrey's career to provide an explanatory approach to the application of religious or moral principles to political practice. He does so without reducing this theme to sentiment or cynicism.

Humphrey's life and career constituted a striking and often conflicted amalgam of personal idealism and political realism. His ideals came literally from Main Street, America and on them he rode straight to Washington, D.C. to fulfill an exalted and selfless dream of public service. His years there, however, coincided with one of the most significant, tumultuous, and challenging times in American history: the 1960s—a time not noted for its emphasis on Main Street values. Garrettson perceives a profound irony at the center of Humphrey's life; the very source of strength that brought him his greatest triumph and joy—his role in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and thus the vice presidency—also brought him his greatest failure and grief—the presidential campaign of 1968 and his vulnerability on the issue of the Vietnam War.

Combining biography, history, and theoretical analysis, *Hubert H. Humphrey and the Politics of Joy* is built around essential defining questions: is morality principally a matter of belief or action; or is it instead a consistent, though admittedly tenuous, balancing of both. In testing Humphrey's life and career against these questions, Garrettson provides a necessary exercise in social science and a profound reflection on what it means to be moral in the political world.

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