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Tricky Dick and JFK

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Richard Nixon had some redeeming qualities: he opened the door to China, built détente with the Soviet Union, and created the Environmental Protection among other accomplishments. But to politically aware Catholics, he also had the saving grace of never playing the "religion card" against John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election.

Or so we thought.

In his recently released *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (Oxford, 2009) author Shaun A. Casey uncovers much about the secret effort engineered, by among others, the Nixon campaign, the Rev. Billy Graham, Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (they've since dropped the "Protestants and Other" from their moniker), and the National Association of Evangelicals to use Kennedy's faith against him. The tactics were smarmy, bigoted, slickly implemented, well-funded, and ultimately unsuccessful.

NCR's review is forthcoming, but I can say without hesitation that anyone who thinks they know the real story of that election really does not until they read what Casey has to report. It is gripping stuff.

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