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USA

Trump, Biden and Divine Intervention

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A couple of weeks ago. Biden said, “Only the 'Lord Almighty' could convince me to quit.” Well, apparently, He did, for Joe Biden has quit the presidential race and endorsed his vice president, Kamala Harris for president. Harris—or some other candidate—will have to be chosen at the Democratic Party Convention to be held from August 19-22. If the Democrats choose someone other than Harris, it could cost them support from women and Black voters. And, if Harris, they must also choose a vice-presidential running mate, preferably a white man from a swing state, like North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, or Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly.

Biden stepping down is not the only providential event of the last couple of weeks. At the Republican National Convention, the party's candidate Donald Trump was hailed not only as the party's nominee for president, but as a man chosen by God. Many of the 50,000 in attendance, many of them Evangelical Christians, talked of the “divine intervention” that had saved Trump from assassination only a couple of days before, saved him, their Messiah, to lead their Christian nation to salvation from diabolical Democrats.

At the same time, the photo of Trump, surrounded by Secret Service agents, blood streaming from his wounded ear, raising his fist and mouthing, “Fight! Fight!” with the American flag flying behind him—a tableau now available on posters and t-shirts and all-over the media—suggests he is the invincible strongman his followers always believed him to be. Now wearing the halo of divinity, he is on the march to become an American Caesar.

The strongman was a central theme of the Convention, with Hulk Hogan, the huge theatrical wrestling star ripping off a shirt on stage to reveal beneath it another reading “Trump/Vance.” Trump was not introduced, as tradition would have it by his wife, but by Dana White, CEO of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the mixed martial arts promotion company. The music for Trump's introduction was Kid Rock's vulgar, violent, rap metal song “American Bad Ass,” and where the audience usually shouts, “Hey, hey, hey,” he led them in “Trump, Trump, Trump.” He ended the song, “Ladies and gentlemen, get ready for the most patriotic, bad ass on earth, President Donald J. Trump,” The whole thing was about testosterone, masculinity, and power.

Trump also announced his running mate, J.D. Vance. He might have chosen Nikki Haley, the woman who won a significant portion of votes in the Republican primary, in order to appeal to women, or picked South Carolina Senator Tim Scott to garner more Black vote, or he might have selected Florida Senator Marco Rubio to appeal to Hispanics, but he chose Vance, freshman senator from Ohio, hoping to appeal to white working class voters in that state. Vance is the author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, a book (later a movie) about his hardscrabble upbringing raised by a drug addict mother and a series of step-fathers in poverty-stricken Appalachia. After high school he joined the Marines, graduated with honors from Ohio State University, studied at Yale, moved to Silicon Valley where he became a venture capitalist and returned to Ohio to become a far-right politician.

Trump talked in his acceptance speech about unifying the country, about being president for all Americans. But the sweetness and light lasted a half hour of his 90-minute speech and he soon reverted to his usual bombastic and bizarre speechifying. Trump told the crowd, alluding to the bullet that chipped his ear, “I stand before you in this arena only by the grace of almighty God.” Was that the same God who got Biden to step down? I'm not sure.

Biden's withdrawal and the likelihood of Harris' campaign has already begun to breathe a little life into the Democratic Party base and that could make all the difference in the election. Perhaps Trump's march to victory can be stopped, and forgive me, being an American, for saying, God willing.

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