Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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If the U.S. bishops want to lance the boil that is the EWTN/Register/CNA conglomerate, they will need to do more than sack Raymond Arroyo. His show may epitomize the opposition to Pope Francis and the proposal of a sectarian Catholicism, but he is not alone. The National Catholic Register just ran an interview with Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, in which he praises the confused essay published under Pope Emeritus Benedict's name. Strickland, you will recall, was the first bishop to praise Archbishop Carlo Viganò's testimony last August: Only hours after it was published, Strickland had a letter being read in all the parishes in his diocese. Now he gets an interview with no tough questions whatsoever.

In the latest column in the "Go, Rebuild My House" series of essays published by Sacred Heart University, Daniel Rober takes on the appeal to "Judeo-Christian" tradition by reminding us that the church is not Western Civilization and Western Civilization is not the church. This, more than anything else, will be the fault line in theology in the coming decades. Really well done.

A bit of good news: Stephen Moore, the Fox News blowhard who pretends he knows something about economics, has withdrawn his name from consideration for

nomination to the Federal Reserve. Racially offensive and misogynist comments Moore made helped bring his nomination to an end, but the real reason to stop him was that he seemed not to understand how critical independence is to the Fed, and my St. Bernard has a more sophisticated understanding of the economy than he does. The Washington Post has the story.

At The New York Times, Roger Cohen identifies Joe Biden's key flaw as a prospective opponent to Donald Trump: He may have been born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and he may genuinely care about the white, working-class Midwesterners whose fortunes have soured due to globalization, but Biden is way too much an epitomization of the "Party of Davos" to be credible in launching the most important criticism of Trump — he has betrayed the working class voters who put him in office.

Also at the Times, Paul Krugman on why, in very different ways, both Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders are ill-equipped to deal with the polarized political climate we face or, at least, they are falsely peddling a claim to be able to confront that polarization in ways that have heretofore escaped others. The last thing our democracy needs is someone who promises what they can't deliver, and the last thing the Democrats need is someone who thinks you can win the election by running as the anti-Trump.

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Relatedly, at the Financial Times, the billionaires are getting nervous, and they should be nervous. Gross inequality can only last for so long. In past times, the divine right of kings was invoked to justify huge disparities of power and wealth, and today it is neo-liberalism. As soon as the proverbial man in the street recognizes that the theory is bunk, out come the pitchforks.

In the Washington Post, an excellent look at how some candidates need to learn about the subcultures of the voters they need, especially in the African-American community. If you have spent time in that community, you know that black Americans have learned how to read social cues because they had to, and it gives them a leg up in divining sincerity and distinguishing fakery. And in the South and many rural parts of the country, if you are coming to visit, Southerners, white and black, are cooking for you, and you had better thank them for it.

From the Onion, the finest commentary so far on the scams to get rich, stupid kids into college. Splendid.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

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