Opinion
News



An Amazon rainforest advocate is seen wearing a gas mask in Rio de Janeiro Aug. 25. (CNS/Reuters/Sergio Moraes)



by Michael Sean Winters

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In The New York Times, Stephanie Saul does a deep dive into the education — and transformation — of Sen. Elizabeth Warren from a default Republican with pro-industry views (she even attended Law and Economics events) to the firebrand progressive we know now. The key was her study of bankruptcy law and the people it affected. Congratulations to Saul for a great article.

Also in the Times, a report on the Business Roundtable's new "Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation." The text reads like it was drafted by Cardinal Peter Turkson's office at the Vatican, but let's see if these CEOs can find ways to implement their vision. The definancialization of the economy, that is, making companies less attentive to short-term stock prices, will be much harder than the financialization was.

In The Washington Post, E.J. Dionne looks at how President Donald Trump is weaponizing the psychological baggage of white evangelicals, and why he is so successful at it. It only works because these evangelicals spend more time with Paul's epistles and the Hebrew Scriptures than with the Gospels, and read them in an ahistorical manner. The fact that Trump's appeal works with some Catholics should serve as a warning about the degree to which Protestant spirituality and theology have affected the Catholic faith in this country.

Relatedly, from NBC News, a new poll shows that 70% of the American electorate is still angry at political and economic elites. The numbers are nearly identical today to what they were before the 2016 election. If you want to know why Warren is gaining traction and is actually the only person who could beat Trump, there it is. Only members of the elite think a Joe Biden campaign run on the promise of returning to normal will actually work.

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About the pending collision between Warren and Biden, Politico's Marc Caputo and Alex Thompson look at their different styles and messages. They interview Howard Dean, who was the outside, progressive firebrand in 2004. Then they write this:

> But Dean flamed out against John Kerry 15 years ago, reflecting the penchant of primary voters to nominate the safe choice to challenge the president of the opposition party running for reelection. And Dean, who is neutral in the race, acknowledged that Biden could benefit from similar circumstances in this cycle.

See what they fail to mention? Kerry lost the general election. Safe candidates lose. Bold candidates win.

From AP, Mayor Pete Buttigieg repeatedly turns to Scripture in his town halls. Buttigieg is doing something remarkable here: So many of the culture-war fights focus on LGBT issues, and the only gay candidate for the presidency is the one quoting Scripture. It harkens back to then-state Sen. Barack Obama's keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention: "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like the federal agents poking around in our libraries in the red states."

At La Croix, Jesuit Fr. Michael Kelly looks at the meltdown of a type of Catholic culture in Australia. His points about the superficiality of pre-conciliar Catholicism Down Under rings true about the American experience as well, and explain why the conservative effort to roll back Vatican II, or to confine it to narrow paths, was doomed to fail.

While the Amazon burns, threatening the whole planet, former priest Thomas Williams tweets about "scare-mongering."

C'mon, Tom, even Pope Benedict XVI warned about climate change. At least I am glad to see that Williams' name has been removed from the list of research fellows at the University of Notre Dame's Center for Ethics and Culture.

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

Editor's note: *Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest. Sign up and we'll let you know when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.*