Opinion
News



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September 12, 2019
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At Commonweal, Matt Sitman has an elegant, smart and concise reflection on this summer's national conservatism conference. The money quote:

> But it is especially disconcerting that nationalism is being defended on the basis of religious faith. Christians know that we have one king, Jesus, and that all earthly rulers will one day cast down their crowns at his feet. The question "Who is my neighbor?" can never be answered simply by appealing to borders drawn by men. The national conservatism conference, then, was a reminder of the struggles that Christians and all people of good will face in the years ahead. The questions posed by mass migration are difficult, but the answer can never be nationalism.

Splendid.

At First Things, Francis Maier, longtime amanuensis to Archbishop Charles Chaput, accuses yours truly of perpetrating bullshit. He lumps me with Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro, editor of La Civilta Cattolica, and professor Massimo Faggioli, professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, and I can only say that, as

Pope Francis said, it is a great honor, and brings deep satisfaction, to be attacked by American conservative ideologues and also to be mentioned alongside two such fine churchmen and scholars.

Worst Democratic idea of 2019? Thinking that President Donald Trump's self-dealing is a route to impeachment. Politico has the story. People do not care about Trump's self-dealing, which he will excuse by saying, "This is what all those politicians and pointy-heads don't understand, it is how the world works." This does not touch their experience at all. The much, much stronger issue to focus on is the fact that Trump is diverting money from the military to pay for his border wall.

Also at Politico, a story about boring ads being produced by campaigns. Note to candidates: Do not hire a party campaign consult to do your media. Hire someone who has worked in TV or movies, someone who will make an ad that is not another dull and forgettable one. For example, this new ad for Valeria Plame, who is running for Congress in New Mexico, will not likely be forgotten anytime soon. Back in 2004, MTV had a presidential debate and part of the contest was to submit an ad aimed at young people. Our campaign — I was working for Gen. Wesley Clark — entered the race late and we did not have an ad person yet. I mentioned that I had a friend who had made some movies and was a fan of Clark's. He had never made an ad in his life. We called him, he produced the ad, and we won the MTV contest handily. If only the rest of the debate — and the primaries — had been so easy.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren has undoubtedly run the best campaign this year, with few unforced errors. Alas, she made one this week, endorsing Marie Newman in her Democratic primary challenge to seven-term Rep. Dan Lipinski, who is the most vocal pro-life Democrat in Congress. The abortion rights lobby wants to defeat Lipinski as part of their larger goal of exiling pro-life Democrats. A healthy organization looks for converts not heretics. And, why did Warren need to get involved anyway? Does she know better than the good people of Illinois' 3rd Congressional District?

The good news is that, if Stan Greenberg writing in The New York Times is correct, Trump is destroying the Republican Party and the Democrats are poised not only to win, but to win in what he calls a "transformative election." I think Greenberg leans in to his own argument a bit, but the numbers clearly indicate the degree to which Trump's anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric have backfired badly with more

Americans saying immigrants make America better and fewer echoing Trump's nativist tropes. That said, noting the item above about Lipinski, the Democrats need to remember that many millions of Americans are with them on economic policy but not on social policy.

John Bercow's resignation speech included a remarkable defense of Parliament, and the role of parliamentarians as representatives, not delegates, charged with exercising their conscience on behalf of the nation. Every national legislative body should be blessed with someone of such good sense and good judgment, to say nothing of his even temperament in the speaker's chair.

Best tweet of the week: Watching a documentary about lions and hyenas, and roping Thomas Hobbes into the picture.

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

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