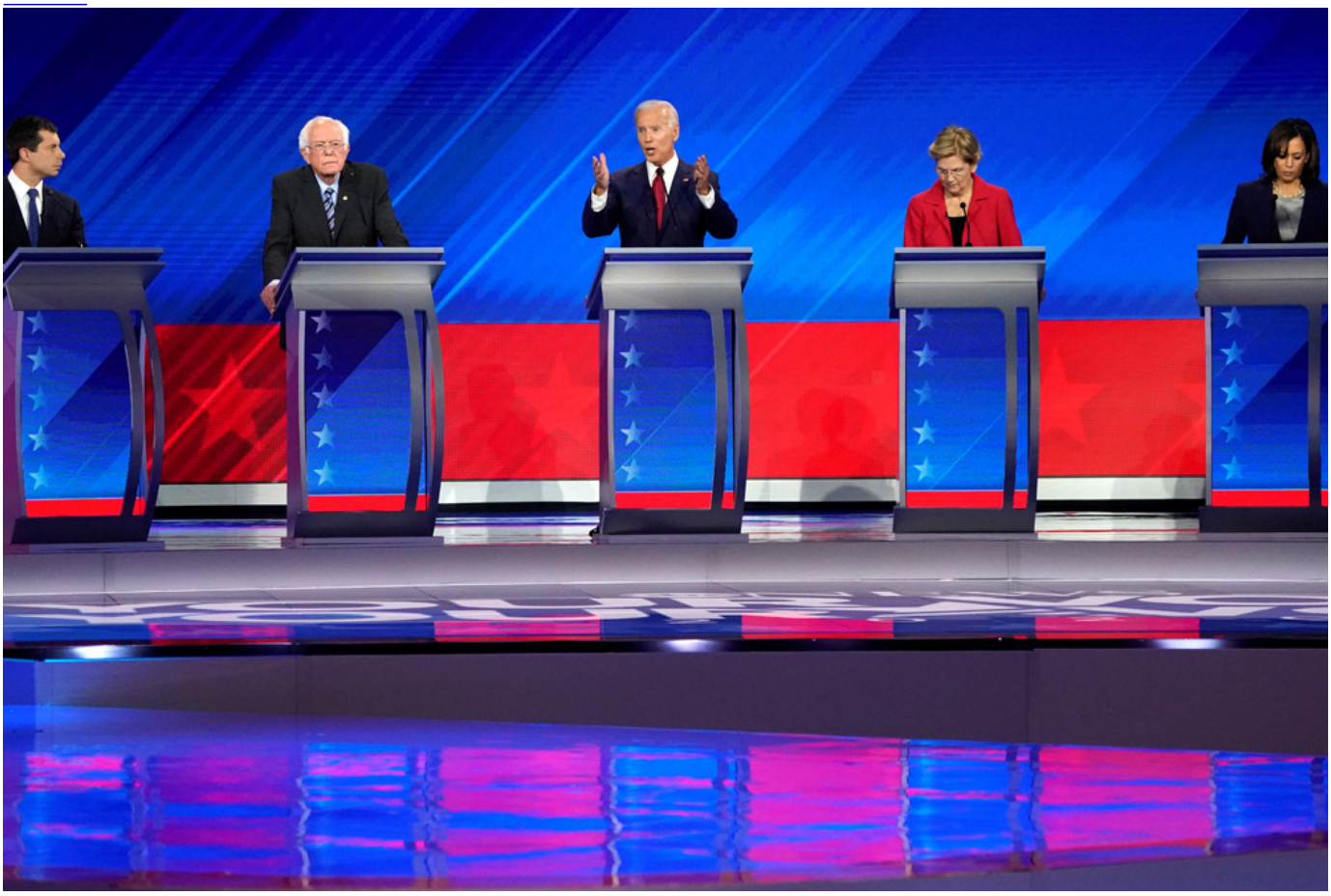
Opinion

News



Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden speaks during the 2020 Democratic presidential debate Sept. 12 in Houston. Other candidates pictured are Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, and Sens. Bernie Sanders, D-Vt., Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Kamala Harris, D-Calif. (CNS/Mike Blake, Reuters)



by Michael Sean Winters

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @michaelswinters

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

October 8, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

All polls have margins of error that we tend to forget when there are many candidates and they are all bunched together. What matters most are the trend lines. And, in Democratic Party politics, there are few more important trend lines than those that track the voting preference of black women. Which is why this report from Politico, about Sen. Elizabeth Warren's numbers shooting up among black women is one of the most important developments in recent weeks.

Not for the first, or last, time, E.J. Dionne in The Washington Post checkmates the conventional wisdom of the pundit class, in this case pointing out that President Donald Trump's base is not nearly as large as he thinks it is. More on this tomorrow.

This is rich. In The New York Post, Tim Busch, founder of the Napa Institute, argues that it is liberal Catholics, especially Germans, who are promoting schism within the church. I would like to point out that the essay is not what you would call theologically sophisticated. Nor does he qualify as a Vaticanista, not with fuzzy attributions like this: "A theologian appointed by Pope Francis to a Vatican commission ..." Yeesh.

In The New York Times, John Gehring argues that Pope Francis is fearless, and that his papacy is characterized by the same characteristic he urged on James Allison, namely "deep interior freedom." It is good to see the Times publishing Gehring, whose grasp of the estuary where religion and politics intersect is more perspicacious than most.

Fearless must be the adjective of the week. At Bloomberg, Noah Smith argues that Democrats need to be as fearless. The money quote: "Thus, candidates need more than plans. They need an attitude of pragmatism and flexibility that will allow them to change direction in response to political obstacles and economic missteps. Fortunately, they have an excellent historical example to look to — President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal."

I am not much of a fan of armchair psychology, especially when it is applied to politicians. Nonetheless, I thought this article at Outline seems to hit the nail on the head: Sen. Kamala Harris and Mayor Pete Buttigieg, in their studied moderation, seem like they are still rebelling against their Marxist parents. And this year, both in the primaries and in order to defeat Trump, these centrist children do not seem a neat fit for the moment.

At Religion News Service, a report on a court ruling in Iowa: InterVarsity, the evangelical campus organization, can require its leaders to be Christian. Shame on the ACLU for thinking otherwise. How did that otherwise venerable organization become so hostile to religious folk?

One of my favorite downtime activities is to start a Google or YouTube search and simply see where it takes you. That is how I came across this recording from the dedicatory recital of the completed Lively-Fulcher organ at St. Matthew's Cathedral, in which Nathan Laube plays a transcription of Wagner's "Overture to Tannhauser." I have played that organ many times in the past, and before it was completed. The diapason chorus is as rich as chocolate cake, and the flutes ethereal. Laube brings out the full range of the instrument's sounds and timbres. Bravo.

[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 to receive free newsletters and we'll notify you when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.

Advertisement