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Edmund Burke: Call Your Office

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 20, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

There is nothing unremarkable about finding the following sentiments on the op-ed page of the Wall Street Journal [1] regarding the relationship of the United States with the United Kingdom: ?The U.S.-U.K. relationship is simple: It's strong because it delivers for both of us. The alliance is not sustained by our historical ties or blind loyalty. This is a partnership of choice that serves our national interests.? This is the kind of cost-benefit analysis to which the good folks at the Journal reduce all human interactions. But, what is remarkable ? quite remarkable ? is that these words were penned by British Prime Minister David Cameron, the newly installed PM and leader of the Conservative Party.

The founder of British conservatism, Edmund Burke, wrote passionately about how relationships are never built merely on an alignment of interests, that deep historical associations are the stuff of any relationship worth the name, and that governments that ignore history and run against the currents of history are doomed to violence or failure. Burke, certainly, might suggest that the fact of a common language explains more about the ties between the U.S. and the UK than any shared interests. The greatest Conservative PM of the last century, Winston Churchill, wrote a four volume ?History of the English Speaking Peoples? that showed how the ?special relationship? between the U.S. and UK had to do with more than a common enemy in two World Wars.

Perhaps, at this moment in history, an alliance of interests is enough for Britain?s Conservatives. But, me thinks Mr. Burke and Mr. Churchill should call their office.

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