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## Michelle Bachmann & the Tea Party

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Chris Cillizza, the very bright political reporter at the Washington Post, looks at Michelle Bachmann's explicit efforts to become the, make that THE, Tea Party candidate of choice. And, he compares that effort to the 2008 effort of Gov. Mike Huckabee to become THE candidate of the religious right. But, as Mark Silk points out, there is more than a little overlap between the Tea Party and the religious right. And, I would add that while Huckabee built his lightly financed campaign on the social network of home schoolers, in Bachmann, those home schoolers see not only a champion as they did with Huckabee, but one of their own. After all, most of the parents who actually do the home schooling are women. It will be very curious to see how this plays out, not least because a late entry of Sarah Palin into the race could split the religious right, paving the way for a Romney sweep. But, as it stands, Bachmann seems to be taking all of the oxygen out of the room and in a head-to-head race with Romney, I would not bet against her.

Of course, it also remains to be seen how the libertarian instincts of the Tea Party will find ideological space within the Christian conservative movement. There is, at root, a deep schizophobia within the right, akin to that which has afflicted the Democrats who advocate for a robust moral approach to governance, except when the issue is abortion, when they, too, become libertarians. But, religion by definition, is about being tied to, and bound by, a revelation and a tradition and a creed and it fits badly with an ideology that celebrates individualism to the nth degree.

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