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December 10, 2018: The Democrats' God Problem

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Title: The Democrats' God Problem

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12/10/2018—Michael Tomasky pointed out the problem in the New York Review in *The Midterms: So Close, So Far Apart*: Democrats cannot win back the Senate in 2020, and maybe cannot win the Presidency, unless they do better than 25% in rural counties. They have to come closer to 40%. (They aren't going to win them.) Essentially, this is why Beto O'Rourke lost Texas and Sherrod Brown won Ohio. Sure there are lots of differences between the two, but the math is hard to contest. It is hard to win a mildly red State unless you do OK at least in rural areas. Tomasky calls for "a program for rural America." But I'm not sure much is necessary. Democratic policies are not actually unpopular in rural America. The problem is twofold: cultural and legal. The main thing the Republicans push in areas like these is the courts. And what is that supposed to do? Abortion and religious liberty. There is no point in telling a political Party to reduce its support for its core constituency. Abortion is untouchable. The Party could be more open to pro-life Democrats, but the policy cannot change. That leaves religious liberty. But there are actually two things going on here. One is a sense that Democrats hate religion, which is still very popular in rural areas—at least you can't actually be against God and do well among voters. The other is the actual caselaw of religious exemptions. I don't know how far Democrats can go on religious exemptions. Same-sex marriage is another core Democratic Party position. I believe religious exemptions are no threat to same-sex marriage, but Democratic Party voters may disagree. But how many votes do Democrats lose in rural areas because of the perception—increasingly a correct one—that the Party is hostile to religion itself? There is no reason to lose those votes: "Paris vaut une messe," as Henry IV said when he converted to Catholicism—Paris is worth a mass. You want to win 40% of the rural vote? Learn a religious language you can actually speak. There is natural religion. There are many meanings of God. Jesus is a great figure. Stop talking about reason and superstition. Cure the cultural problem and the political/legal one will follow.