

Palin: A Narrow Evangelical President?

Republican VP nominee Sarah Palin recently suggested that a gas pipeline is "God's will" and the Iraq war is "a task that is from God." Are you concerned about these or any other candidate's religious views?

1.....Every religion is attractive (or it couldn't continue to exist) and repulsive (or it wouldn't be human). When a religion comes to public notice in the person of a prominent politician, its friends note the politician's embodiment of its attractiveness and its enemies remark any evidence of its repulsiveness. And the more public a politician's religion, the wider the partisans' split, which the media exploit.

2.....The attractiveness of Christianity always has been its joy in God and its effective caring for the needy, including the use of persuasive power to better the inner and outer conditions of human life. Its repulsiveness emerges with the abuse of power when access to power tips the balance of influence from persuasion to coercion - an abuse which is human, not Christian.

3.....What makes Sarah Palin such a threat (to us Democrats) is her living and speaking from Christianity's attractive side. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Of course one might counter that her bouncy disposition is genetic, or even that her sunny public performance is deliberate (against gloom and doom, as during the Great Depression we often sang "Keep the sunny side up"). Next week's Newsweek, in a balanced article, offers some cautions from her opponents: "shallow, opportunistic, even corrupt herself"; "vindictive and petty"; "ruthless"; "a typical politician who rewards her friends and punishes her enemies." There was some of this - especially her nasty remark about community organizers - in her acceptance speech (though she did not write it, and ad-libbed only the lipstick remark).

4.....To be fair, the press should distinguish what Sarah says (literally) in "church" and what she says in "state," as an elected servant of all the people. The Alaskans are too level-headed to have elected as governor a religious fanatic: enemies who so portray her God-centeredness are off the mark. But I, as a liberal evangelical, am disturbed by the ease with which she speaks of God's will in relation to public affairs - domestic (the pipeline) and foreign (the Iraq war). Lincoln, too, believed in the sovereignty of "the Almighty," but he refused to use the divine sanction in support even of the cause that was consuming him. "The Almighty has his own purposes," and we should be at pains humbly to search out and pursue them, avoiding the tempting but blasphemous identification of God's purposes with our own.

5.....To me, what's even more disturbing than her God's-will sanction in public affairs is her use of it in private morality. Like her senior partner, John McCain, she excludes from the category of human rights a pregnant woman's *right to choose abortion*. And she is so radical about it as to believe that becoming a mother is God's will for a raped child - for me, a blasphemous notion akin to nature-worship, not Biblical religion.

6.....Historians will debate how it came about that of the four whose parties in 2008 chose them as firsts and seconds in the White House, three were evangelicals in a time when anti-religious secularism had become more aggressive. As a liberal evangelical, Obama would want balance in the U.S. Supreme Court. If the other two evangelicals win, I fear for the future of the Court and of freedom in America.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | SEPTEMBER 9, 2008; 5:48 PM ET [SAVE & SHARE:](#)        

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Ender:"Abstinence only Sex Ed has only resulted in higher rates of teenage pregnancy. Ms. Palin should look to her own home for evidence of that"

I'm sorry, but do we actually know that Palin's daughter was unaware of birth control options? Was her daughter unaware that intercourse can likely lead to pregnancy? We really just don't know that. Whether public schools teach abstinence only, or the full spectrum is irrelevant to the Palin discussion unless we know that the ONLY sex education/knowledge/awareness Bristol had was from a public school 'abstinence - only' class.

POSTED BY: POSSUM | SEPTEMBER 12, 2008 12:24 PM
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BTW Willis, anyone that would legally prohibit very early term abortions for lesser reasons, but doesn't make a stand against oral contraceptives, is being hypocritical. 50% of the Pills effectiveness is creating an environment where a FERTILIZED OVUM cannot attach to the uterine wall.

To deny first trimester abortions to any rape or incest victim is almost as atrocious whether or not the victim is a child.

If a first trimester fetus has a right to exist that superceeds the mothers mental well being, or ability to care for a child(since our 'compassionate conservative' society doesn't want to), then Bonobo apes, Orangutangs and other primates killed in research or sport should have equal protection. Members of both species have exhibited IQs greater than a human toddler.

That said, I would love to see the number of abortions performed reduced worldwide. Sex Education including access to contraception and safe sex practices have drastically reduced abortions rates in northern Europe. Abstinence only Sex Ed has only resulted in higher rates of teenage pregnancy. Ms. Palin should look to her own home for evidence of that.

POSTED BY: ENDER | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 3:40 PM
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Palin also made a public statement that the war in Iraq is about OIL. I mostly disagree because the war against Iraq was about the oil commodity market flow being in dollars and not Euros, which if why we will probably attack Iran soon.

So duggie, if your god or any god sets humans at war over distribution of wealth and power, then I would be forced to choose the other side, whatever that may be.

Fortunately, or not, humans are quite capable of that level of evil on their own.

But when they do it in the name of a god and use that to motivate the masses, they add an extra level of evil, and make all of the Cults of Abraham nothing but barbaric Semetic Superstitious lies created by men to control men.

POSTED BY: ENDER | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 12:38 PM
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God's will I would think would be to heal everyone. Back in the time Jesus saw that the wealthy were keeping all the protein for themselves and the poor and indentured servitude got only bread, a diet of which leads to severe malnutrition, biochemical malfunction and disease, so he was teaching them how to fish and make nets that they could get needed to eat protein and actually lift themselves from poverty. Therefore his will would be "The End of Disease" which you can read the steps and insight here.

There is no cure for disease, but there is a solution, the end of disease
http://intelegen.com/there_is_no_cure_for_disease.htm

You can also read the Fish Story Here

Sirius The FBI Agent and The Fish Company

http://iamblogging.net/Urgo/archives/2004/10/sirius_the_fbi.html

Obviously the people in positions of power are not doing God's will because we would be implementing Universal Health not Universal Disease Care.

POSTED BY: RICHARD THOMAS | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 11:53 AM

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I have analyzed God's energy system design. Gas pipe lines are not his design.

He suspended a nuclear reactor overhead which distributes energy equally for free, all over the planet, effortless to use.

As I brought to our attention before:

In looking at the energy systems in the human body, and there isn't centralized production of energy, there is decentralized production of energy. Each cell has it's own energy production as should each house on the planet. We do need storage just like the ATP molecule in the body.

It's too bad that some don't have me by their side to duel against the fictions. I have this really cool sword ~Excalibur~.

GM is burdened by disease care costs it runs into the tens of billions. This is not good for America. It is time to implement Universal Health, not Universal Disease Care.

I also know about their internal accounting practices, and hence the need for transparency.

POSTED BY: RICHARD THOMAS | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 11:13 AM

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I don't think you've parsed Palin's comment correctly. What Palin said (to a bunch of Christian students, NOT in the context of promoting her policies politically) was to asked for prayer that the humans plans for the war be those of God's intention.

She, like almost all Christians believes that God's hand is in every detail of life.

POSTED BY: PDUGGIE | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 10:48 AM

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Thanks for providing me with a new possibility of Christian thought.

My previous experience with the fire and brimstone Christianity of my youth, and the modern uncharitable and warmongering Calvinism of the current Conservative supporters of George Bush, have radicalized me to be convinced that Christianity has become a greater source of evil than good.

Were that more Christians understood that logic, science, and charity cannot be antithetical to the message of the early Christians who were more willing to die for their religion than kill others, and for whom Charity was more important than proclamations of Righteousness.

POSTED BY: ENDER | SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 9:42 AM

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RESPONSE TO FR. LARRY GEARHART:

1

Your belief that "a human being is ensouled at conception" is radical, at odds with your own church's historical

nuancing of ensoulment. McCain would love you for it, but St. Augustine would not.

2

You say, "Without a human soul, there is no such thing as free moral agency." As a Biblical scholar & former professor of Hebrew & Greek, I see the Greek (Platonic) idea of "soul" (1) as foreign to the primary layer of our spiritual heritage, the Hebrew, & (2) as enriching our heritage. God knew what he was doing in choosing Hebrew & Greek, two very different language-minds, for his literary revelation. / In Hebrew, the word "lev" covers everything invisible about a human being (as the word "basar" - usually translated "flesh" - covers everything visible). In English, we have so many words translating "lev": mind, will, spirit, soul, consciousness, psyche, imagination, etc. But "soul" as a transcendent entity added to "body" (whenever, in the development process) is a notion foreign to the Hebrew mind, which sees a human being as a creational unity looking toward "resurrection" rather than the (Greek) "immortality of the soul." Your denial of "free moral agency" in absence of your idea of "soul" is an unbiblical dogma I must reject.

3

You speak of "the transcendent nature of the human person," implicitly associating this doctrine with your "soul" (& "immortality of the soul") dogma, & claim the whole as biblical. But Adam & Eve were ejected from Eden because of God's fear that they would become immortal (by eating from the tree of life): only God has essential immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), but he gives eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

4

In describing my pro-choice position, I offered the case of a raped pregnant CHILD. In attacking, you left out "child." I consider "blasphemous" the notion that God willed the raped child's pregnancy. If God is viewed as willing everything that happens in nature, the God/nature distinction disappears, along with the distinction between God-worship & nature-worship. I am "vehement" against blasphemy, & "intemperate" at the thought of persuading (or forcing!) a raped child to give birth rather than to have an abortion. Such persuasion or coercion I view as both Bible-abuse & child-abuse.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 8:39 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Fr. Larry Gearhart, you said:

"Of course, it's also possible that there is nothing in human nature that is transcendent, and free will is an illusion. In that case, all of us are merely following our internal programming and there is no such thing as moral responsibility. All of politics is simply the collective playing out of the internal programming of individual automata."

The word, transcendent, in the sense that you use it, is not meaningful. Of course, human beings are special; that is self-evident; by way of own human nature and intelligence, we know of the world, and in this knowing, we realize ourselves to be special among all that exists. Is that what you mean by transcendent? Whether there is a soul or not, human beings are still special. If you only acknowledge this on the condition that a soul must exist, then that is a peculiarity of your paradigm, not shared by everyone.

To be honest, and you almost seem to be, no one knows what we are, nor what is the true nature of this world in which we exist. To state you own ideas, and then to show as proof, that otherwise, we are all "automata" is not a proof, and in fact, not particularly meaningful, in any way.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 6:34 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Fr. Gerhart

"it's also possible that there is nothing in human nature that is transcendent, and free will is an illusion. "

A couple of problems with your logic stream. You allow for the possibility that there is nothing in human nature that is transcendent, which is fine, but then you add as if it were directly linked 'and free will is an illusion'. Free will is merely choosing to do one thing or another without regard to a higher authority. We do it all the time. No god or plan for humanity is needed for an individual to choose one thing or another without a higher authority's guidance. Free will implies individual choice. If there is no god, then all that is left is free will.

"In that case, all of us are merely following our internal programming and . . ."

This implies a creator or master plan. We are born with an 'operating system' if you will, similar to lower animals, instinct, food, water, breathing, etc. are not unique to humans at all.. the only thing that separates humans apart really are some self-awareness concepts which we use to learn and think new things, it makes us aware of our own immortality for example. But all the basic stuff, including many highly evolved socialization concepts (also found in pack animal behavior, apes, schools of fish) that have proven successful in our ancestors. Everything else is learn as you go.

"there is no such thing as moral responsibility. All of politics is simply the collective playing out of the internal programming of individual automata"

There is no such thing as a single universal moral code. If there were, churches would be out of business, or at least there wouldn't be so many of them. We are born with no moral code whatsoever. We learn, based on crude instinct and interaction with parents, siblings, communities, etc. the 'moral code' in play in our various environments, all of which have evolved, not always to the same point. We have societal and cultural codes that we grow up with, experiment with and often establish as 'laws'.

" The question of when "ensoulment" happens is enormously important in making moral judgments about the evil of abortion"

So what does a secular people and government do about this when they have, as you say 'no moral code'? (meaning, they don't share yours)

Well, maybe they could debate it, take it to a vote, or perhaps choose for themselves whether or not abortion is 'evil' (another religious concept) You know, like people with free will are able to do.

The religious communities themselves don't agree on your definition of 'ensoulment' how do you expect an entire nation to do so?

POSTED BY: POSSUM | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 6:21 PM

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To address some of the questions raised about my comments:

1) There are both philosophical and theological reasons for regarding human beings as special, or, in more technical terms, transcendent. Genesis 1:26, for example, declares that God made humanity in his own image and likeness. Among other things, this means that human beings have intellect and free will. The experience of having free will, while clearly a subjective one that is certainly not easily verifiable through scientific measurement (and may, in fact, be impossible to measure due to quantum uncertainty), nevertheless, the subjective feeling of moral freedom is evidence of its existence.

2) Free will, or free moral agency, is not simply a matter of freedom from external coercion. It involves having something inherent in human nature which is not subject to mathematical determinism, in the same sense that everything else in nature is. Every causal interaction in nature, with the possible exception of human free will, is subject to physical laws which can be characterized by some form of stochastic differential equation. If all human activity can be so characterized, free will is an illusion.

3) I call this additional element in human nature a "soul." The question of when "ensoulment" happens is enormously important in making moral judgments about the evil of abortion, although there are other critically important considerations, as well.

4) Of course, it's also possible that there is nothing in human nature that is transcendent, and free will is an illusion. In that case, all of us are merely following our internal programming and there is no such thing as moral responsibility. All of politics is simply the collective playing out of the internal programming of individual automata.

5) There are, of course, other ways of seeing this dichotomy. I would challenge others to provide scientific justification for their views.

POSTED BY: FR. LARRY GEARHART | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 5:41 PM

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Fr. Larry Gearhart:

You said:

"I happen to believe that a human being is ensouled at the moment of conception, and I can see no other way to explain the transcendent nature of the human person (although I will be more than happy to discuss the details with anyone who does not have the same view)."

But what does it mean "to be ensouled?"

And what does it mean, "the transcendent nature of the human person?"

And because you "can see no other way," how does that prove anything?

You said,

"Without a human soul, there is no such thing as human free moral agency."

But the question is not whether there is a soul or not; the question is, what does it mean to be "ensouled" at conception?

But even if the question were about the existence of the soul, what has that got to do with human free moral agency? How does one follow th other?

And since you brought all this up, what do you mean by free moral agency? That is not clear at all, but a very specific and esoteric component of your paradigm, which everybody does not regard as you do.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 4:31 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"What I find much more troubling, however, is the seemingly unbridgeable chasm of understanding and appreciation between radical pro-choice advocates, such as yourself and Senator Obama, and radical pro-life advocates, such as myself."

I can't imagine anyone claiming Mr. Obama, or Dr. Elliot as radicals. Pro-choice and Pro-life are not radical issues, but a traditional and long standing conflict. I also don't think evangelicals, Pentecostals, or even the traditional religious right can be labelled as radical. But religious extremism is radical and I defy you to show that Mr. Obama is any sort of religious extremist. A person who declares a pipeline is G-d's will, however, is hardly on the front lines of moderation.

POSTED BY: SPARROW | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 12:58 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

So many people have short memories. Creationism cannot be taught in public schools. This would violate the first amendment. The Supreme Court has ruled several times on this subject. Case closed. As a Christian, I believe in Evolution because God continues to create, each and every day.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 11:16 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

FR Larry G.: "I happen to believe that a human being is ensouled at the moment of conception"

That is a religious concept rolled into a personal opinion.

"I can see no other way to explain the transcendent nature of the human person "

'Transcendent nature' is also a purely religious concept.

"Without a human soul, there is no such thing as human free moral agency"

Two religious concepts.

As these are religious concepts only, not scientific or legal, they are not universally accepted as fact or even necessarily as common belief. Among the many, many religions and denominations, these very concepts vary, since they are all a matter of mere faith or belief.

"I was also alarmed at its evident vehemence and intemperance"

And you share that intemperance. Your belief system regarding ensoulment and knowledge of god's will is no more likely right or wrong than Mr. Elliot's since they are based on personal understanding and opinion of these things. You would agree that God answers and instructs all that call upon him with questions and sometimes due to human frailty those instructions and answers are misinterpreted. The question becomes only 'Which one of us got it wrong?' Is your confidence in your understanding of God's will greater or less than Mr. Elliot's?

POSTED BY: POSSUM | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 11:12 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I have my own religion. It's not very organized and doesn't make a dime. I'm not living high on the hog and complaining all the time. The good Lord provides and all we can do is work and try to help who we can while we can. The rest is all people can make of it. I don't sleep much. Working in my sleep it seems. It's a lonesome thing on a narrow path. Then you die and rest for good.

POSTED BY: 66 | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 11:03 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Governor Palin's remarks about this or that being the will of God reflect her background as a Pentecostal. In that context, it's difficult to determine whether her convictions are fanatical or not. Further information would be required.

CNN has commented on the fanatical claims of her former pastor, Rev. Tim McGraw, and they were, indeed, pretty scary. Palin's decision to leave that church stood her in good stead. Her reported preference for Creationism does not seem to have played a major part in her political positions, beyond preferring that creationism be allowed into the classroom (presumably leaving the issue to local control), without mandating it at the state or federal level.

As everyone knows, Senator Obama's past association with Rev. Jeremiah Wright is at least as scary, and Rev. Wright continues to exploit that connection for the benefit of his own ambitions. Senator Obama's decision to leave Wright's church speaks well of him, and no one can claim, based on this background, that Obama is a Black Power supremacist, any more than they can claim that Palin believes she is an agent of God preparing for Armageddon.

These backgrounds are, from my perspective, equally troubling. They introduce a significant additional element of risk in the choice for President and Vice President this year.

What I find much more troubling, however, is the seemingly unbridgeable chasm of understanding and appreciation between radical pro-choice advocates, such as yourself and Senator Obama, and radical pro-life advocates, such as myself. In particular, I was not only offended by your remark that the claim that the right to exist of a child conceived in rape is "a blasphemous notion akin to nature-worship, not Biblical religion." I was also alarmed at its evident vehemence and intemperance.

I happen to believe that a human being is ensouled at the moment of conception, and I can see no other way to explain the transcendent nature of the human person (although I will be more than happy to discuss the details with anyone who does not have the same view). Without a human soul, there is no such thing as human free moral agency. The transcendent nature of the human person is so well attested to in the bible it should need no defense in conversation with a Baptist Minister, even one who is pro-choice.

POSTED BY: FR. LARRY GEARHART | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 10:55 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I mostly agree with Priest Elliott, except for his parroting of the notion that mean-spirited radical secularists are on the march against the religionists. That's no more truthful than the GOP parroting the notion that Gov. Palin is unfairly attacked by the press.

We live in a country that is 85% Christian, and despite the Constitution's clause barring religious tests for office, one still has to pass a religious test by the electorate to hold office. That is to say, as long as one proclaims to subscribe to a religion- any religion- one is fit to hold office. Those who do not profess belief in the supernatural are not considered fit to hold public office in the USA. So it is rather absurd to say that in a country of hundreds of millions of religionists, the religionists are persecuted by a tiny minority of "secular humanists."

POSTED BY: STUART | SEPTEMBER 10, 2008 10:06 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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