

## Palin and Biden: Do Their Religious Beliefs Matter?

Vice presidential candidates Joe Biden and Sarah Palin will debate this week. What would you ask them about their religious beliefs and why?

Here is *why* I would ask them about their religious beliefs:

1.....Taking "religious beliefs" to mean what gives a human life its deepest meaning, value, and purpose, I want to hear how they put into words *what governs their lives*. One of them will be only a heartbeat away from governing my life, America's life, even - to a greater extent than any other governor in the world - the world's life. / "Governor" is a transliteration of the Greek word meaning "pilot": government is the art of piloting the ship of state. And our next president must steer through the most troubled waters since the Civil War.

2.....To vote intelligently, the citizenry needs to know not only the candidates' religious beliefs (instead of only their religious affiliations) but also to what extent, and how, those beliefs *connect* with their personal ethics and political behavior. How securely is the pilot wheel connected to the rudder? (When that connection was broken, the battleship Bismarck was easily sunk.)

3.....Finally, I would ask them about their religious beliefs because we voters must judge the *quality and worth* of those beliefs in light of the president's role as servant of all the people, steering by the map of our laws and the star of what Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature."

Now, "what would I ask them about *their religious beliefs*?"

1.....The deepest value of some Americans is sports. Some others are obsessed with maximizing shareholder values over ever shorter time-spans. What is the *deepest value* in your life?

2.....In light of your personal religious commitment, what - at this seemingly rudderless time in America's history - do you judge to be most wrong with *us*, the American people?

3.....In the same light, what do you judge to be most wrong, right now, with the American *economy*?

4.....In the same light, what do you judge to be most wrong, right now, with the federal *government*?

5.....How does your faith *give dignity* to humanity, *support* the family as the primary institution for the transmission of virtues (such as integrity, piety, compassion, concern for the welfare of others, justice, personal responsibility, and stewardship), *promote* education for private and public (civil and economic) life, and *encourage* individual initiative?

6.....Do you agree with the Bible that we are entitled to full human rights the moment we take in *our first breath of air*?

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | OCTOBER 5, 2008; 12:05 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:



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Science certainly has defined and agreed when "life" begins.....and ends. Many, many Senate hearings confirmed this agreement among scientists within the field.

It is, put simply, within minutes of the process of cell division.

Cell division begins shortly after conception, and continues unabated until what we refer to as "death".

"life" has been scientifically defined for some time.

The point where many differ is whether that "life" is human-looking enough to call "human life".

To me.....life is life and for "us" to say that life without breath isn't really "life" is like saying ice isn't water because it doesn't flow.

Once again, thanks for letting me comment.

POSTED BY: DANNYR | OCTOBER 13, 2008 2:19 PM  
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Dr. Elliot wrote: "

4

(To Homesower) Yes, abortion is "an awful choice." But so is continuing an unwanted pregnancy."

So true, but my point was that if it was merely a fetus and not a living human being it would not be an "awful choice" just a choice. The "awful" part speaks to our conscience screaming for attention.

Not only does this go to the vital issue of whether it is a living person, it addresses the issue of whether it is a sin. Last I checked carrying an unwanted pregnancy was not a sin. As a minister of the gospel you should recognize that any choice between sin and "non-sin" should be answered by choosing not to sin.

Of course this is forgivable. Jesus' blood covers this sin, but that doesn't mean we should choose to sin. We may be forgiven, but it will carry a price. As my pastor says "Sin will take farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and make you pay a price you cannot pay".

POSTED BY: HOMESOWER | OCTOBER 7, 2008 5:13 PM  
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As for claiming that human rights in America must come through religion, ...that's really dangerous territory, if one too often indulged by people who take comfort in notions of 'A Christian nation.'

This is not a country Christians gave us, so much as one made safe for Christianity, (and me, theoretically) because \*unalienable human rights are the basis,\* ...not a 'gift of religion' to be given or taken away or interpreted as a religious functionary or panderer pleases.

It may be said they are \*endowed by whatever Creator,\* (without defining the term with a name) ...but it says this was done \*unalienably,\* ...they cannot be taken away. Not by a religious authority, not by \*anyone\* however holy.

This is the \*basis,\* ...all our laws \*follow\* from this assertion: not an inconvenient side effect or something to be recontextualized.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | OCTOBER 7, 2008 2:59 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"1.....Taking "religious beliefs" to mean what gives a human life its deepest meaning, value, and purpose, I want to hear how they put into words what governs their lives."

Actually, I think this is the \*last\* thing I want to hear from a political candidate about religion.

People can give the 'acceptable' answer and claim their lives are governed by the most wholesome and agreeable thing ever, and still advocate policies that in effect contravene good governance, or even the very 'values' they claim to represent.

When we make \*that\* a concern, people cast doubt on who 'governs' candidates with established records and positions, in fact \*substitute\* whatever idea of these things they can scaremonger over, for what they say and have done....

While giving a complete \*pass\* on what the religion in politics concerns are \*really\* about.

Namely. Ideology.

Call greed and oppression 'Godly,' then people use the name of your savior to cover up incompetence, corruption, and even ill-will.

Call social awareness and realistic and educated efforts to seek the good \*ungodly,\* and well, what actually 'governs' someone's personal life becomes a question of who panders the most.

What one might say about something so personal and unverifiable has nothing to do with the business of government. People misrepresent what they believe, and what that means, all the time, usually by sloganeering and just saying 'God' and 'Jesus' a lot.

Frankly, I think it sets 'believers' up as crying, 'Lie to me!'

While being most suspicious of those who may well have the deepest of personal faiths, ...or not, but refuse to indulge in such... detachment, really, between creed and action.

Or even competence.

You, Reverend, should know better than trying to judge what's in people's hearts, never mind try to make policy by it.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | OCTOBER 7, 2008 2:45 PM  
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TO GLADRUNNER

1

From my responses to you, you could easily make your own list of rights.

2

Listing rights reverses the Biblical order, which is God's nature & work > our responsibilities > our rights. We are "conceived" in God's mind, in physical wombs, then in social wombs (families, communities, where in relationships we become fully human).

3

The American mind is an interweave of Bible (which begins with God) and Enlightenment (which begins with us). Beginning with us, it's proper to list "human rights." I agree with the U.N. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which (by Eleanor Roosevelt's heart and hand) interweaves Biblical insights.

4

(To Homesower) Yes, abortion is "an awful choice." But so is continuing an unwanted pregnancy.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | OCTOBER 7, 2008 1:27 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Mr. Elliot, thank you for responding and your patience.  
"Answer, nowhere: no listing, "

If I were to ask a learned priest what miracles Jesus performed in his earthly life, he could rattle off a list even though no such biblical list exists either.

Perhaps my question wasn't phrased academically precise enough. I simply want to know what 'full human rights' are in the bible. I ask that you present them in list form so I, a mere simple commoner might understand.

As for your second point, that I may not have understood your original main point, I disagree. I do not question 'first breath' and abortion as you have presented it, at all.

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POSTED BY: GLADERUNNER | OCTOBER 6, 2008 11:28 AM  
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Dr. Elliot,

I greatly appreciate your responding to comments.

I do take exception to your belief that our human rights begins with the drawing of breath. You explain it very clearly, but I am wondering what you do with the text "while I was in the womb you knew me?" I would suggest that our human rights would begin with God's knowing us.

That said, I also accept that we cannot, biblically or scientifically, state with certainty where life begins. I propose that we accept this limitation of knowledge but err on the side of life. That is, since we cannot know if the fetus is yet a human in God's eye we had best leave it alone. Conversely, since we cannot state definitively that it is human, punishment for having an abortion should never equal the punishment for murder, but only severe enough to discourage the potential killing of human life.

I will add one more reason why I think that abortion is a sin (if not necessarily murder). Even liberal supporters of abortion, including women, refer to it as an awful choice and claim it is never an easy choice. Why should this be if its just a collection of cells? I propose that the reason it is such a difficult thing is that our inner conscience recognizes that a crime is in progress.

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POSTED BY: HOMESOWER | OCTOBER 5, 2008 10:20 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TO GLADRUNNER

Thank you for persisting with your question, which you first expressed as "where in the bible" are "full human rights" "listed"?

1

Answer, nowhere: no listing, as one should expect in a text on morality on ethics or political science. The Bible centers not on one's rights/responsibilities but on the Great Story (Metanarrative) of God from creation (beginning with the Singularity, the Big Bang) to the consummation (the End of the world or cosmos or universe). By various literary genres, chiefly stories, the Bible bespeaks personal and societal virtues/vices promoting/threatening human life. / A personal example, freedom (Galatians 5:1); a societal example, separation of church and state (Matthew 22:15-22).

2

You said you got my main point, but I'm not sure. If you did, why did you not see the right involved in a fetus' not becoming a full human being (Hebrew "nephesh," in Genesis 2:7) before taking the first breath of air? The Biblical basis of abortion ethics is that a pregnant is a "nephesh" (a fully human being) and the conceptus/embryo/fetus inside her is not; so the full human being has "the right to choose." (Jewish authorities have this point of view, but variously limit the choosing on the case-by-case basis.) / The Bible's only abortion story is of an accident (Ex.21:22-23): the guilty must pay a fine for a property violation (the aborted having been the parents' property); if the woman were injured or killed, the case would have been not civil but criminal. The Bible cannot rightly be used to support the notion that abortion is murder. / Since the Bible is FREEDOM-oriented, the burden of proof is on those who would deny freedom. Ditto for America in contrast to the old Europe, source of our founding immigrants.

3

Another implicit right in what I wrote to you is the right to be free from interference with your personal & familial

practice of the "fellowship with God" for which God created you. Your God-given "dignity" grounds your freedom of worship, which appears in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (& in the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for which the Bible was the basic source).

4

The Bible's commandments are LOVE-oriented. Because we are created for fellowship with God, the first of the Ten Commandments is "You shall love the Lord your God." (Dante, in beginning his classic "The Divine Comedy," speaks of "the Love that moves the worlds.") Jesus says (Matthew 22:37-40; also in Mark & Luke) that all the commandments "hang" (as on a peg) on loving God and "your neighbor as you love yourself." Again, what rights are implicit of obeying the commandment to love our neighbor and ourself? The principles, values, & virtues are not difficult to spell out (and, as I said, are [cumulatively] detailed, though not listed, in the Bible). / The priority of love appears, past the classical virtues (justice, wisdom, courage, temperance), as the apex of the Christian virtues (faith, hope, love ["and the greatest of these is love" – First Corinthians 13:13]).

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | OCTOBER 5, 2008 5:37 PM  
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Mr. Elliott:

God made Adam. He did not give birth to him. As such, there was no time in the womb for Adam to undergo, and your point seems meaningless.. Of course, this is taking one of the two creation stories extremely literally, and as such, they contradict each other and neither remains credible.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

Jeremiah 1:5

As such, Adam was conceived by the Lord and lived before he was placed on earth.

Do you believe humans are not alive until they take their first physical breath?

I'm a little confused.

POSTED BY: BMORRIS244 | OCTOBER 5, 2008 3:14 PM  
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"By chopping off my sentence's last ten words, you were able to ask a question irrelevant to my point"

I agree, that's because I got your main point and don't need to have it further explained. It's the first part I don't understand.

"As for human rights, the Bible has much to say in detail about them, all of them derived from the dignity of being created for fellowship with God"

You say the bible has much to say in detail about human rights. I simply wish to know what you are referring to. Without knowing what these human rights are, it is difficult to make sense of the full sentence.

POSTED BY: GLADERUNNER | OCTOBER 3, 2008 3:55 PM  
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TO GLADRUNNER:

By chopping off my sentence's last ten words, you were able to ask a question irrelevant to my point, which is that full human life (in the current media phrase, "full human rights") begins --according to the Bible--when one takes one's first breath of air. / In Genesis 2:7, God as Potter shapes clay into a what was to become a human being, then blows into its nostrils "the breath of life," it expels the air, and "Adam" takes his first breath to become "a living person." Many other such scriptures use the Hebrew word "ruach," which means "spirit" as well as "breath." For example, Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Gospel of John

20:22). / As for human rights, the Bible has much to say in detail about them, all of them derived from the dignity of being created for fellowship with God (made "in his image," Genesis 1:26-27).

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | OCTOBER 1, 2008 11:06 PM  
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"Do you agree with the Bible that we are entitled to full human rights"  
With all due respect, what are these 'full human rights' and where in the bible are they listed?

POSTED BY: GLADERUNNER | OCTOBER 1, 2008 4:00 PM  
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