



Americans Lack Faith in Obama's Faith

Increasingly, Americans might say the following about Barack Obama: "He's definitely a man who has faith.... In what, I have no idea."

There's good reason to wonder. Despite Obama's claims of piety, his words and deeds speak otherwise. For example, during a trip to Indonesia, Obama told an audience that America's motto was "E pluribus unum" ("From many, one" in Latin) when, in reality, "In God we trust" was made our official national motto by an act of Congress in 1956. And while this could be chalked up to ignorance, something else the president did cannot be. While rendering the Declaration of Independence line "they [all men] are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," he omitted the word "Creator" — on *three different occasions*. Add to this the fact that a 2010 poll showed that one in five Americans believes Obama is a Muslim (he's actually a de facto atheist), and it's clear that, whether or not Obama was right in saying "we're no longer just a Christian nation," many citizens believe that we certainly no longer have just a Christian president.



Well aware of this perception, the White House is taking measures to develop some religious street cred. While Obama has seldom attended church during his tenure, he has made an effort to do so more in recent times. And as religion reporter David Gibson [wrote](#), "Politico's Carol E. Lee [also tracked](#) Obama's recent religious rhetoric and says that he has used the phrase 'Christian faith' more in the past three months than he has over the past year."

Yet political posturing doesn't interest me as much as the fact that many observers don't think a politician's faith matters. If you read the responses under the Gibson article, for instance, you'll see comments such as, "It's not our place to read people's hearts," "It's none of our business" and "Faith is a private matter." Nothing, however, could be further from the Truth. Let's examine the issue.

What if I told you that a politician's ideology was a "personal matter" and thus not suitable evidence for the court of public opinion? You might say, "Duke, that's ridiculous; we can't know if a person would make a good leader if we don't know his ideology. It's not at all the same thing." Well, not so fast. What causes ideologies to be qualitatively different from one another? On what basis do we judge them? Isn't it because they espouse different conceptions of virtue (or "values," to use a secular term)? After all,



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what makes Nazism or communism destructive isn't the label but the negative values prescribed by it. If Nazism espoused the values of, let's say, libertarianism, most of us would find it appealing or at least palatable.

Okay, but consider that as with ideology, different religions also espouse different values. If this weren't the case, they wouldn't be "different religions" but, except for window dressing, the same ones with, oddly, different names. Thus, depending on the given values set, a religion can be better or worse, positive or negative, good or evil — just as with ideology.

Now, this makes some uncomfortable, as they have fallen victim to religious-equivalency doctrine, the idea that the moral thing is to view all faiths as morally equal. But this isn't a rational position. After all, since different religions do espouse different values, they cannot all be morally equal unless all values are. And to say that all values are equal is to espouse moral relativism.

It is also to lose the debate.

Because if relativism rules, then a politician's ideology can't matter, either. Nor can conflating religion and politics, being religiously chauvinistic, starting "religious" wars or being intolerant. For who is to judge? Don't impose your values on me, modern man. Practice what you preach.

Of course, most who say that a person's faith doesn't matter don't consider the aforementioned implications of their position. The fact remains, however, that relativism is a package deal. If you really believe it, then, sure, there's no reason to trouble over any religion in particular, as atheists often point out. But then there is also no reason to trouble over religion in general, as atheists often do. There is also no reason to take issue with Nazi, communist, "racist" or "sexist" values or any of the other values the supposedly value-neutral set tries so hard to devalue. A true relativist would just have to look evil straight in the eye and — in deference to a belief stating evil cannot exist — say, "Yeah, dude, whatever works for you." It's the one thing that may actually be harder than living up to Christianity: living down to relativism.

And what we say about the "personal matter" shtick, we can say about all the popular modern diversionary statements. If we cannot "judge someone's heart" — and the phrase is to be taken to mean judging his beliefs — then we cannot do it with respect to ideology, either. Of course, we're not judging someone's heart but his head. What is in there? What does he really believe? How can we know?

To illustrate that you all agree with me (whether you realize it or not), I'll make this real by applying it to a different situation. Let's say you were looking to hire a babysitter and found out that an applicant was a Satanist, an adherent of a faith prescribing human sacrifice (not unusual in man's history) or one preaching the legitimacy of adult-child sexual relationships (also not unheard of). Would you hire the person? Would you say, "Ah, heck, a person's faith is a private matter and it's not for me to judge hearts?" Obviously, the applicant may have a nice smile and say all the right things, but, since man is known to at least occasionally engage in deception, I'm sure you'd consider such an association a disqualifying factor.

Of course, some will roll their eyes here and complain that my examples are extreme, but that's how you put theories to the test. And I'll give you one more example to try on for size: Let's say the babysitting applicant had been a member of an anti-American, black power church (as Obama was). Again, would you hire him?

Whatever the example, though, the difference will be one only of degree, not of *kind*. Sure, the difference between, let's say, Presbyterianism and Catholicism is not as great as the difference between



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either of them and the faith of the blood-lusting, medieval Aztecs who worshiped Quetzalcoatl, but the difference is still one of values. Thus, it matters.

Now, a wise person would take into consideration all factors when judging a prospective babysitter because whom we choose to watch our child is pretty important. But isn't our choice of leaders — the politicians who craft policy affecting all our children (e.g., saddling them with trillions in debt) — pretty important, too? They deserve at least as much scrutiny as a babysitter.

To use a modern, catchall term, a person's "worldview" lies at the heart of who he is — and his politics will be an expression of it. And it is especially significant with politicians. Since they will market themselves deceptively, we must look beneath the surface to discover whether the image reflects the reality. As with a food purchase, we must look beyond the nice label and read the ingredients, which means considering not just their stated positions but their history of votes and pronouncements, their personal lives and, yes, their faith. Remember, when you don't do this, you end up with buyer's remorse, as millions of Americans are now experiencing with Barack Obama.

As for the politician himself, if he can't handle such scrutiny, perhaps public office is not for him.



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