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My thoughts on abortion. I am pro-Choice and I always have been. In my life I have described myself as an Atheist, Apostate, and Agnostic. I have been a Christian, and a death-bed Christian. I am currently a card carrying member of the Unitarian-Universalist Church and a generic Christian.

Modern debate over abortion has been framed by its proponents. Pro-Life means to them that Human life is sacred, and they are working to keep beating hearts alive. Pro-Choice means that we believe that women have control over their own bodies. They have the right to make reproductive decisions for themselves, without governmental and/or legislative interference.

I would like to add another dimension to this debate. My belief is that religious pluralism should also be a consideration. Prior to the 1971 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, two-thirds of the states had criminal abortion statutes, while one-third provided various forms of legal status. After that decision, women were free to choose during the first trimester, and then the State's interest in legislation became more compelling. This is the procedural framework in 2017.

The religious right argues that human life is sacred, and that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. Written broadly this would mean that abortion is either illegal during the first trimester, because it is a form of murder, or at least states would be free to pass laws proscribing, restricting and/or criminalizing one's right to obtain or to provide abortion services. The problem is that our privacy right to choose to have an abortion, during the first trimester has acquired "lawful presence" in America.¹

The main problem with the Religious Right's Pro-Life position, is that this directly burdens the free exercise of my religious beliefs. As a Christian-Unitarian Universalist, we believe that women were made in the image of god, blessed with the tree of knowledge, and they have the sovereign right to decide how to lead their own lives, including when to have children, and how to make their own reproductive decisions. In addition, we, as a group, fear governmental interference, which burdens our civil rights, and thusly leave our Constitutional and human rights, up to the whims of a popular majority. In short, my religion sanctions abortion, as a part of our respect for the decision-making powers, of that class of human beings, who are most directly affected by their own health care decisions. One might reasonably argue that similar decisions have been reached by the vast majority of persons of Jewish and Protestant faiths.²

The Constitutional *status quo* protects religious pluralism. The Religious Right remains

¹ *Texas v. United States*, (United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, 809 F.3d 134, 166 [No. 15-40238](#).

² *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 160-1 (Supreme Court of United States, [No. 70-18](#), December 13, 1971).

free to practice the tenets of their faith. They may label those who seek abortion services as: mortal, venial and/or cardinal sinners. They may ex-communicate their own members, and they remain free to threaten non-believers with both fire and brimstone.³ While at the same time, Universalists–Unitarians, Jews, Protestants, Pagans, Atheists, Secular-Humanists and non-believers of all creeds, may choose to have safe medical procedures, which are sanctioned by their own religious beliefs and consciences.

It should be asked, what gives the Religious Right the power to dictate whether or not my wife can choose to have an abortion, or at the very least, to subject our own privacy and free exercise rights, to the whims of a popular majority?⁴ Longstanding Constitutional law respects religious toleration and pluralism.⁵ Everyone is free to interpret the *Bible* and/or to decide for themselves. Each are also allowed to forcefully discuss their views, to lobby their own constituents, and within reason control the actions of their own disciples. By contrast, overturning that landmark precedent opens the door to one religious sect imposing their views upon other *People of the Book* and non-Believers. The bottom line is that the Religious Right is asserting the right to make abortion illegal, because they define it as a sin, within their own house of worship. What gives them the right to enshrine their Biblical interpretations in the halls of Congress, provide government’s stamp of approval (and imprimatur), and to criminalize actions, which their sects define as sins. Is this any better than burning witches at stakes, or making other religions pay an unbeliever’s tax.¹

Are the members of the Religious Right not their brother’s keepers? What parts of the Golden Rule do they not understand?⁶ Should my Right to freely exercise my own religious beliefs be subject to one sect’s interpretation of the Bible? In this matter, I am even willing to meet them halfway: why not outlaw abortion for members of the Religious Right? Why not carve out exceptions to Texas laws, which allow Jews, Protestants, Unitarian-Universalists and non-believers to seek out safe medical abortions?

³ In addition, they might be able to brand each other with a Scarlet “A,” label them as heretics, and threaten them with eternal damnation.

⁴ The Act doesn’t just apply to protect popular religious beliefs: it does perhaps its most important work in protecting unpopular religious beliefs, vindicating this nation’s long-held aspiration to serve as a refuge of religious tolerance. *Hobby Lobby Stores v. Sebelius*, 723 F.3d 1114, 1152-3 (United States Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, Justice Neil Gorsuch concurring, June 27, 2013).

⁵ [P]olitical division along religious lines was one of the principal evils against which the First Amendment was intended to protect. The potential divisiveness of such conflict is a threat to the normal political process. *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602, 622-3 (Supreme Court of United States, March 3, 1971).

⁶ What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others. Confucius, *The Confucian Analects*, 470 B.C. We should behave to our friends as we would wish our friends to behave to us. Aristotle, 320 B.C. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. *Holy Bible*, Matthew.

The bottom line is that the Constitutional *status quo* respects religious toleration and pluralism. However, overturning *Roe v. Wade* means that the free exercise of my religious beliefs are subject to the whims of a popular majority.

If you have any questions, please call or write. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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End Notes.

ⁱ The Muslims during the Crusades passed the hated “unbelievers tax.” But historically this was far less punitive than Christian Crusaders, Mongols, Vikings, and the Huns, who put villages to the sword, meaning they murdered men, women and children in towns they captured. In fact, Donald Trump wants to label ISIS as “Radical Islamic Terrorists;” should not Christians and Supreme Court Judges be required to denounce “Fundamentalist Christian Terrorists,” who murder abortion doctors in their pews, and arguably misguided individuals like Dylan Roof.

In point of fact the 9/11 terrorists drank alcohol, ate pork and smoked cigarettes before their attack. Likewise, ISIS does not follow Imams, erect Prayer Towers, nor do they issue Fatwas. They do not establish Sharia law. Most terrorists are common criminals, not Islamic warriors, adherents, or even People of the Book.