

How Hillary Clinton's Faith Has Changed

Editor's note: A version of this article first appeared in Crisis Magazine.

When many conservatives first learned back in 2007 that I had the temerity to write a book on the faith of Hillary Clinton, especially after books on the faiths of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, they looked at me with a mix of amazement and annoyance. *Why would you do that?*

My response, however, often surprised them. Yes, I told them that Hillary was, largely, a fairly standard Religious Left Protestant, though with a striking stridency on abortion far to the left of most of the Religious Left. But I always grabbed their attention with two particularly interesting things I stressed in the book: For one, Hillary Clinton supported natural, traditional, biblical marriage, with her faith a primary reason. Second, I noted that Hillary was a solid defender of religious freedom.

Those points are especially apt right now, albeit in a negative way. In the time since that book was published, Clinton has completely ditched her defense of marriage, becoming gung ho not only for same-sex "marriage" but much of the "LGBTQ" agenda, which has become a major thrust of her presidential campaign. Moreover, her abortion extremism has only gotten worse—and that's really saying something. Hillary Clinton has plainly become a "pro-choice" fanatic. Her support of abortion and—conversely—vilification of pro-lifers, is way over the top. She has flown off the hinges. In the process, her onetime championing of religious freedom has been devoured by her devotion to the rabid pro-choice cause.

Here, in this essay, I'd like to address these issues, which I

believe are the most revealing faith-related matters for Mrs. Clinton as she makes her bid for the White House.

Clinton Abandons Traditional Marriage

First, the marriage issue: As a lifelong member of the mainline United Methodist Church, Mrs. Clinton once fancied herself a traditionalist. "I am an old-fashioned Methodist," she told *Newsweek* back in 1994. That included her traditional position on marriage. She backed her husband signing the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996.

That position remained consistent, though she received unrelenting pushback from the "gay" community in New York when she ran for the U.S. Senate seat there.

"Marriage has historic, religious and moral content that goes back to the beginning of time, and I think a marriage is as a marriage has always been, between a man and a woman," said Clinton in White Plains, New York, on the 2000 campaign trail.

In June 2003, she reaffirmed her position on New York's WNYC: "You know, marriage has a meaning that I ... I think should be kept as it historically has been, but I see no reason whatsoever why people in committed relationships can't have, you know, many of the same rights and the same, you know, respect for their unions that they are seeking. ... I also think that we can realize the same results for many committed couples by urging that states and localities adopt civil union and domestic partnership laws."

Her position remained clear, even as she was stating it with rising unease. Still, on the 2008 presidential campaign trail, Clinton, like Barack Obama, defended Christian marriage, advocating civil unions and leaving the legality of marriage to the states.

This all dramatically changed on March 18, 2013, when the Human Rights Campaign joined Hillary in posting an exclusive

video where she came out for same-sex “marriage.” “LGBT Americans are our colleagues, our teachers, our soldiers, our friends, our loved ones, and they are full and equal citizens and deserve the rights of citizenship,” said Mrs. Clinton. “That includes gay marriage.”

Clinton came out about a year after Barack Obama did in his interview with Robin Roberts at the White House before the 2012 presidential election. Was Mrs. Clinton likewise positioning for a presidential election down the road? Either way, there it was: Hillary Clinton had endorsed gay “marriage.”

For the lifelong “old-fashioned Methodist,” this was a major change.

Clinton’s Pro-Choice Obsession

An even more shocking change has been Clinton’s jettisoning her advocacy of religious freedom in deference to her “pro-choice” extremism.

That extremism was evident long before she entered elected office. It was evident to a little nun from Calcutta named Mother Teresa, who frequently reached out to the first lady in the 1990s, apparently sensing a major future role for this woman. A dramatic occasion occurred in February 1994, with Mother Teresa’s unforgettable National Prayer Breakfast speech, where she poignantly condemned abortion. “I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion,” said the nun, “because Jesus said, ‘If you receive a little child, you receive Me.’ So every abortion is the denial of receiving Jesus, the neglect of receiving Jesus.”

When the speech was over, the persistent nun sought out Mrs. Clinton. “She wanted to talk to me,” Hillary said later. “Mother Teresa was unerringly direct. She disagreed with my views on a woman’s right to choose and told me so.”

With love and charity, Mother Teresa never stopped trying to befriend Mrs. Clinton and working to soften her shell on unborn life. Unfortunately, this was one hardened heart the nun could not change.

In the years ahead, that heart darkened, with Clinton always finding excuses to fail to protect unborn children, including her unwillingness to ban partial-birth abortion. "Of course it's a horrible procedure," she said in October 2000. "No one would argue with that. But if your life is at stake, if your health is at stake, if the potential for having any more children is at stake, this must be a woman's choice."

That mantra, "this must be a woman's choice," has been her flag. I could give example after example. One case came Jan. 22, 2004, when she delivered the keynote at NARAL's annual *Roe v. Wade* dinner. She characterized pro-lifers in hysterical imagery, as plotters scheming to overthrow America's greatest "right." This was merely step one, said Senator Clinton, in an insidious conspiracy to remove "all" rights of privacy: "Their first objective is to overturn *Roe*. To do that, they are willing to throw out all rights of privacy. Many of us say, 'How can they so casually toss out the right of privacy to get at *Roe*? Don't they believe in privacy?' The answer is no, they do not."

This kind of anger at pro-lifers seems ingrained in Mrs. Clinton's DNA.

Speaking in May 2015, she slammed Congress for passing a bill to protect babies from late-term abortions, calling it a "direct challenge to ... a woman's constitutional right to privacy." Her campaign issued a statement insisting that the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act "follows a dangerous trend we are witnessing across the country." What is that dangerous trend? "In just the first three months of 2015, more than 300 bills have been introduced in state legislatures—on top of the nearly 30 measures introduced in Congress—that

restrict access to abortion.”

Throughout the remainder of 2015, Mrs. Clinton fiercely defended Planned Parenthood amid the Center for Medical Progress’s video-sting revealing the organization’s “medical” personnel discussing the “harvesting” of baby parts. “I don’t have all the facts, but Planned Parenthood has apologized for the insensitivity of the employee who was taped,” protested Mrs. Clinton of the Chianti-sipping woman nonchalantly discussing crushed baby organs while nibbling her Caesar’s salad. “But for more than a century, Planned Parenthood has provided essential services for women.” Fittingly, to Mrs. Clinton, the bad guys were the video-makers. “I think it is unfortunate that Planned Parenthood had been the object of such a concerted attack for so many years,” she complained, “and it’s really an attack against women’s rights to choose.”

Clinton, whose spokeswoman said that the Democratic presidential frontrunner had not actually seen the videos, nevertheless insisted that Planned Parenthood does “really good work” and that she remains “proud to stand with Planned Parenthood.”

There’s no doubt about the sincerity of that statement. The organization reportedly gives her more money (by far) than any other Democrat. In 2009, Hillary was proudly awarded Planned Parenthood’s self-described “highest honor,” its coveted Sanger Award, named for the master matron of “race improvement.”

And then came this biggie for the 2016 election: Earlier this year, in what was quickly embraced by Hillary Clinton as the highest praise, Planned Parenthood enthusiastically endorsed Clinton as president. Clinton now boasts the first-ever endorsement of a candidate in a presidential primary in the nearly 100-year checkered existence of Planned Parenthood.

Cecile Richards, Planned Parenthood’s director, captured the

imperative of endorsing Clinton: "Everything Planned Parenthood has believed in and fought for over the past 100 years is on the ballot." It sure is. That's why the organization is ready for Hillary. In a statement, a doting Clinton reciprocated, blushing that she is "honored" by the endorsement. "As your president, I will always have your back!" Clinton vowed to the nation's leading abortion mill.

Whether defending the organization's taxpayer funding or literal business of mass production of baby parts, Hillary has their back.

Hillary and Cecile Richards are sisters-in-arms. Hillary paid back Richards by recognizing her as an honored, highlighted guest at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. No two women in that convention hall had the respect of the Democratic Party faithful quite like Hillary and Cecile.

Surrendering Religious Liberty

Again, numerous examples of Hillary Clinton's pro-choice obsession could be shared here. It is a very long and very ugly history. The connection between this obsession over abortion and her abandonment of religious liberty becomes clear with her reaction to the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision.

One of the most-reviled foes on Clinton's "anti-choice" enemy's list is Hobby Lobby, an object of ongoing excoriation for her since the Supreme Court ruling last year. Speaking in Aspen, Colorado in June 2014, she said this of the Hobby Lobby decision: "I disagree with the reasoning as well as the conclusion. ... It's the first time that our court has said that a closely held corporation has the rights of a person when it comes to religious freedom, which means the corporation's ... employers can impose their religious beliefs on their employees, and, of course, denying women the right to contraceptives as part of a health care plan is exactly that."

An ominous Mrs. Clinton added: "I find it deeply disturbing that we are going in that direction."

Yes, there is something deeply disturbing there, but it isn't Hobby Lobby. In truth, the "imposing" happening there is against Hobby Lobby, where the government is trying to force Hobby Lobby's owners to fund something that violates their religious beliefs. The company is not denying women their "right to contraceptives." That right remains fully open. Hobby Lobby simply does not want to be compelled to pay for the stuff. Women can buy it themselves for less than \$10 per month at Target, or head to the local Planned Parenthood clinic, where they hand it out like candy.

Even then, Hillary Clinton's statement was even more disturbing. The reality is that Hobby Lobby provides a plan that gives female employees contraceptives. In fact, the plan covered 16 of 20 FDA-approved contraceptives. Hobby Lobby is run by pro-life Protestants who objected not to all contraceptives but only the kind that cause an abortion, i.e., abortifacients.

Nonetheless, Mrs. Clinton, who should know this, given her infatuation with these "women's issues" and being a presidential front-runner (as well as a lawyer), has proceeded with her bad facts and demagoguery of the issue. "It's very troubling that a sales clerk at Hobby Lobby who needs contraception, which is pretty expensive, is not going to get that service through her employer's health care plan because her employer doesn't think she should be using contraception."

Worse, in these same remarks in Aspen, Clinton seemed to link this allegedly misogynistic behavior by Hobby Lobby with the Middle Eastern misogyny she observed as secretary of state: "Part of the reason I was so adamant about including women and girls in our foreign policy, not as a luxury but as a central issue, is because they're often the canaries in the mine. You watch women and girls being deprived of their rights, some of

them never have them, some of them lose them. Among those rights is control over their bodies, control over their own health care, control over the size of their families. It is a disturbing trend that you see in a lot of societies that are very unstable, anti-democratic and frankly prone to extremism. Where women and women's bodies are used as the defining and unifying issue to bring together people—*men*—to get them to behave in ways that are disadvantageous to women but which prop up them because of their religion, their sect, their tribe, whatever.” In the next sentence, she went right at Hobby Lobby: “So to introduce this element into our society ... it's very troubling that a sales clerk at Hobby Lobby who needs contraception, which is pretty expensive, is not going to get that service through her employer's health care plan because her employer doesn't think she should be using contraception.”

Of course, this is outrageous. How can anyone at Clinton's level advance such a comparison? The answer is because of her crusade for the widest availability of abortion—even when religious freedom is at stake.

As for religious freedom, in 2005 Senator Clinton actually co-sponsored (with Rick Santorum, no less) the Workplace Religious Freedom Act. Likewise, her husband was a proponent of religious freedom. Bill Clinton supported the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (passed 97-3 by the Senate) and the 1997 Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace.

But when religious rights meet “abortion rights,” Mrs. Clinton has little sympathy. To borrow from Nancy Pelosi, that is “sacred ground.”

Indeed, as readers here know, the Supreme Court, in its majority decision in favor of Hobby Lobby (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties*), ruled that the Obama administration's HHS mandate, as applied to “closely held

corporations,” was a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act signed into law by President Bill Clinton, and supported by Hillary.

Alas, one eye-opening moment where today’s Hillary Clinton brought all of these issues together under one roof were her remarks in April 2015 at the annual Women in the World Summit. There, she argued that “far too many women are still denied access to reproductive health care and safe childbirth,” and, in a shocking statement, insisted that “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed” to give women full access to “reproductive health care and safe childbirth.”

This naturally led to another dig at the likes of Hobby Lobby: “There are those who offer themselves as leaders ... who see nothing wrong with denying women equal pay, who offer themselves as leaders who would de-fund the country’s leading provider of family planning [i.e., Planned Parenthood] and want to let health insurance companies once again charge women just because of our gender.”

More than that, the new “LGBT” Hillary proffered: “We move forward when gay and transgendered women are embraced as our colleagues and friends, not fired from good jobs because of who they love or who they are. We move forward when women who came to this country in search of a better life can earn a path to citizenship.”

Now there’s the Hillary Clinton of the 21st century, all in one.

In sum, once upon a time, Hillary Clinton and her campaign molders tried to frame her as a centrist, as was successfully done in helping her husband win the presidency. Her faith was central to that effort. Not anymore.

An “old-fashioned Methodist”? That Hillary Clinton is long gone, crushed under the wheels of a newfound love for the

“LGBTQ” banner and an unrestrained ardor for abortion that tramples religious freedom.{eoa}

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