

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Religious reasons against Initiative 26

Letter to the Editor:

First off, let me say that my letter expresses only my views and not those of anyone else connected with Public Policy Leadership or the University of Mississippi.

Religious defense of Initiative 26 is familiar. Scripture suggests that people have been “known in the womb” and sometimes even earlier. The religious reasons to disagree with Initiative 26 are rarely discussed, however. Here are three:

1. Religiously speaking, persons have “souls.” “Soul” derives from “psuche,” one sense of which is “breath.” The “breath of life” can only start after birth. “Psuche” also means “mind,” which requires a brain. Plus, “Soul” translates from “anima,” which refers to “movement.” Movement ceases in death. Thus, people might think that when movement starts for a child, he or she has a soul. St. Thomas of Aquinas held this view and was one of the most brilliant and revered Christian philosophers. He would therefore clearly disagree with Initiative 26. So, conception is too early on all three views about when a person begins, i.e. upon acquiring a soul.

2. Famed Christian author C.S. Lewis offers some insight also. In his clever book, “The Screwtape Letters,” Lewis presents two demons writing each other letters about how to capture people’s souls, including Christians’. The book creatively suggests how to be a good person and a good Christian by imagining the techniques of demons, in order to avoid their tactics. In a passage relevant to the start of life, Lewis claims that human beings’ lives start at birth. The explanation could be tied to the value of Baptism in the Christian faith. Human beings are fallen, according to Scripture, and must be cleansed through Baptism. Christians who lose a child in childbirth or through miscarriages sometimes worry that the child will go to hell because he or she was never baptized. Lewis reassures them, saying “It is obvious that to (God) human birth is important chiefly as the qualification of human death.” In order to die and thus to be subject to God’s judgment, says Lewis, a person must have been born.

3. Faith is valuable to God because people choose it freely. Laws which impose religious outlooks inhibit religious freedom, not only to choose otherwise than Scripture dictates, but also to choose the religious path sincerely. For, what I am compelled to do is not really something I can be praised for doing. This is the reason why many people of strong faith think that the American government is better for religious people than religious governments like the Taliban.