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As a Matter of Faith, Biden Says Life Begins at Conception

By [KATE PHILLIPS](#)

WASHINGTON — Senator [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#), the Democratic nominee for vice president, departed Sunday from party doctrine on abortion rights, declaring that as a Catholic, he believes life begins at conception. But the Delaware senator added that he would not impose his personal views on others, and had indeed voted against curtailing abortion rights and against criminalizing abortion.

While Mr. Biden's views may not be new to Democrats in his circle, his comments, in an interview on "Meet the Press" on [NBC](#), came at a time when his party is confronted with a new face: Gov. [Sarah Palin](#), the Republican vice-presidential nominee, whose anti-abortion stance and decision to give birth just five months ago to a baby with Down syndrome have revved up the conservative base of her party.

In the interview Sunday, Mr. Biden tried to walk the line between the staunch abortion-rights advocates in his party and his own religious beliefs. While he said he did not often talk about his faith, he said of those who disagree with him: "They believe in their faith and they believe in human life, and they have differing views as to when life — I'm prepared as a matter of faith to accept that life begins at the moment of conception."

Senator [Barack Obama](#), the Democratic presidential nominee, was also questioned about his views, on the ABC News program "This Week." Last month, in an interview with the Rev. [Rick Warren](#) at the Saddleback Church in California, Mr. Obama skirted a question about when life begins, saying that determining such a thing was "above my pay grade." On ABC on Sunday, Mr. Obama characterized his response then as a little "too flip," adding, "All I meant to communicate was that I don't presume to be able to answer these kinds of theological questions.

"What I do know is that abortion is a moral issue," Mr. Obama continued, "that it's one that families struggle with all the time, and that in wrestling with those issues, I don't think that the government criminalizing the choices that families make is the best answer for reducing abortions. I think the better answer — and this was reflected in the Democratic platform — is to figure out, how do we make sure that young mothers, or women who have a pregnancy that's unexpected or difficult, have the kind of support they need to make a whole range of choices, including adoption and keeping the child."

At the Democratic convention in Denver, the party's platform was indeed expanded to embrace anti-abortion views.

As for Ms. Palin's views on policy matters, the campaign of the Republican presidential nominee, Senator [John McCain](#), said she would grant her first nationally televised interview to ABC News. Details are still to be determined.

Mr. Obama and Mr. McCain are expected to be in New York this week, attending the Sept. 11 memorial observances on Thursday. Mr. Obama will also meet Thursday with former President [Bill Clinton](#), aides said. The meeting was initiated by Mr. Clinton, who had been critical of Mr. Obama and his campaign during the primary battle with Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#).

John M. Broder and Katharine Q. Seelye contributed reporting.

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