

CHAPTER 3

“YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS!”

*A fanatic is a man that does what he thinks
th' Lord wud do if He knew th' facts iv th'
case.*

—Finley Peter Dunne, Mr. Dooley

In 1996, while he was still teaching law, Barack

Obama was elected to the Illinois Senate. During most of his seven years in the state capital of Springfield, the Republicans were in the majority, and as was his custom at the University of Chicago, Obama was conspicuous by his absence.

“He hardly showed up at all,” said Laura Anderson, who at the time served as deputy chief of staff to the Republican leader of the Senate. “He didn’t even show up for picture day, and he didn’t go to committee. He had no interest in the process, or in learning the process of being a good senator. He had no interest in government itself. He just wanted to stand on the Senate floor and give speeches.”

Obama did, however, have an interest in opposing a law that would have banned late-term partial birth abortions, a gruesome procedure that was once condemned by the late

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New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan as “too close to infanticide.” All across the state of Illinois, people were riveted by the controversial debate. The *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a cartoon showing God reaching down from heaven to a baby in front of Obama, who is holding a sign that reads “Live Birth Abortions” and yelling at God, “You keep out of this!”

Courtesy of *Chicago Sun-Times* / Jack Higgins

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An Illinois nurse named Jill Stanek testified before the Health and Human Services Committee that she had discovered that babies were being aborted alive and allowed to die in soiled utility rooms. One baby was accidentally thrown into the trash. Though Obama never showed up at the committee hearings, he voted against the bill—not once, but twice.

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When, after a decade in the political wilderness, Illinois Democrats gained a majority in the legislature, Obama became chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee. As chairman, he prevented the “Live Baby Bill” from getting a committee hearing, guaranteeing that the legislation would die, much as the late-term babies were dying in the state’s hospitals.

THE AMATEUR

CHAPTER 4

“YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER WHEN POLITICIANS MAKE PROMISES”

Almost by definition, charismatic leaders are unpredictable, for they are bound by neither tradition nor rules; they are not answerable to other human beings.

—Eileen Barker, New Religious Movements