

The following is a response to a British evangelical biblical scholar who disliked my article “Obama’s Coming War on Historic Christianity over Homosexual Practice and Abortion.” This scholar’s email comments were passed along to me with a request for a response. I responded; this scholar responded; and then, with this letter, I offered a rejoinder. Readers should be able to pick up the thread of the conversation easily.

Nov. 24, 2008

Professor _____

Dear _____,

Regarding your Nov. 19 email attachment:

1. Thanks for correcting the point that your remark about my article being “unpleasantly vituperative and less than honest” was a reference to my “[War](#)” article rather than my “[Sermon on the Mount](#)” article. My “misunderstanding” arose from the fact that the remarks forwarded to me mentioned *only* the “Sermon” article, both at the beginning and at the end of a short paragraph, with no explicit mention of the “War” article (the reference to my quotation to p. 222 [223] could just as easily have been a reference to the “Sermon” article, since that article too quotes p. 222).

2. Your chief complaint is that I twice use the word “only” to describe the basis for Obama’s opposition to “gay marriage” as political expediency:

This “unwillingness” was, at any rate, based only on political expediency, not moral conviction, for he gave as his reason for not advocating for “gay marriage” only this: “In the absence of any meaningful consensus, the heightened focus on marriage [is] a distraction from other attainable measures to prevent discrimination against gays and lesbians” (p. 222).

You point to the fact that in his book Obama vaguely alludes to his “religious traditions” and then chastise me for making what you call in your letter to me “a serious misrepresentation of what Obama actually says.” In reality, you have noted only a pedantic technicality; there is no “*serious* misrepresentation” since it is clear from a critical reading of the substance of his remarks in the book, understood in the context of his public statements before and after his book was written, that his “religious traditions” do not, in fact, prevent him from supporting “gay marriage.” It is only a matter of political expediency and opportunism for him (yes, there’s that word “only” again). What I object to in your characterization is your failure to read critically and reasonably. The only change that I would make in retrospect is to say: “This ‘unwillingness’ was, at any rate, based on political expediency, not moral conviction, for the only *material and true* objection that he gave as his reason for not advocating for ‘gay marriage,’ apart from a throwaway vague reference to ‘religious traditions’ that he does nothing with and indeed contradicts) was this....”

Here is why I say that Obama’s oblique and undeveloped reference to “religious traditions”—note that Obama never makes a moral argument here—was a throwaway remark designed for gullible readers who might not vote for a candidate who came out directly for “gay marriage”:

- a. **Obama’s remark about political expediency is inconsistent with a moral objection based on “religious traditions”;** namely his comment that a lesbian woman “had heard me argue that, *in the absence of any meaningful consensus*, the heightened focus on marriage was *a distraction from other, attainable measures* to prevent discrimination against gays and lesbians” (my emphases). If Obama were opposed to “gay marriage” on the grounds that his religious tradition told him that such a union was immoral (note my statement: “based on political expediency, not moral conviction”), then the political-expediency argument above would be irrelevant. For example, he wouldn’t argue that “in the absence of any meaningful consensus, a focus on marriage for persons who are in a faithful polyamorous bond or in a faithful union with a close blood relation would be a distraction from other, attainable measures to prevent discrimination against persons who are in committed sexual relationships with more than one other person or with a close blood relation,” would he? Hopefully he wouldn’t make such an argument because a person who made such an argument about adult-consensual, committed polyamory and incest could have no *moral* objections to such sexual unions. The language of “meaningful consensus” and “attainable measures” is antithetical to moral argumentation. Indeed, such language works only on the assumption that there is no moral obstacle to calling the sexual union in question a marriage.

- b. **Obama’s analogy with miscegenation is inconsistent with a moral objection based on “religious traditions.”** You will doubtless remember Obama’s remarks before the “Human Rights Campaign” comparing a prohibition of same-sex marriage to a prohibition of blacks marrying whites in the miscegenation laws of the American South in the 1960s (video [here](#)). These remarks occurred in the identical context of his political-expediency observation:

Well, look, you know, when my parents got married in 1960, ‘61, it would have been illegal for them to be married in a number of states in the South. So obviously this is something that I understand intimately. It is something that I care about. But I will also say this: **If I were advising the civil rights movement back in 1961 about its approach to civil rights, I would have probably said that it is less important that we focus on an anti-miscegenation law than we focus on a voting rights law and a non-discrimination employment law and all the legal rights that are conferred by the state. Now it is not for me to suggest that you shouldn’t be troubled by these issues. I understand that and am sympathetic to it.** But my job as President is going to be to make sure that the legal rights that have consequences on a day-to-day basis for loving same-sex couples all across the country that those rights are recognized and enforced by my White House and by my Justice Department. (my boldface)

Anyone who makes a comparison between restricting marriage to a man and a woman on the one hand and restricting marriage to people of the same race on the other could not have a *moral* or *religious* objection to same-sex marriage. Indeed, his only moral objection would be to the continued opposition to homosexual marriage. The analogy is offensive to anyone who regards a male-female prerequisite as a morally grounded matter. For everyone knows that miscegenation laws are immoral laws. What would be your reaction if Obama compared monogamy laws or anti-incest laws (even between adults) to miscegenation laws? Would you conclude that Obama had any significant moral or religious reservations to polygamy or incest? Surely you would not. Rather, you would get the distinct impression that Obama's *only* objection to faithful polyamorous or incestuous marriage was one based on political expediency: First get them their full 'civil' rights; then everything else will follow.

- c. **Obama's reference to the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) as an "[abhorrent law](#)" whose sole purpose was to "demonize people for political advantage," as well as his categorical rejection of any *state* law that would ban the use of the word "marriage" for homosexual unions, are inconsistent with a moral objection based on "religious traditions."** [DOMA](#) does only two things. First, it defines "marriage" in actions by the federal government as "only a legal union between one man and one woman." Second, it states that "no State ... shall be required to give effect to any ... proceeding of any other State ... respecting a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage." Note that DOMA does not prohibit the federal government or any state even from enacting civil-union same-sex partnerships that share all the rights and benefits of marriage. It only prevents same-sex unions from being defined as marriage at a federal level or "gay marriage" laws of one state from being foisted upon all other states. It is impossible (1) to call "abhorrent" a law that prevents only a national "gay marriage" law but not "gay" civil unions with all the benefits of marriage and then (2) still retain some moral or religious objection to "gay marriage." No reasonable or intelligent person can hold both views simultaneously. Again, if Obama had called "abhorrent" laws restricting the word "marriage" to two persons and to persons that are not close blood relations, you could not reasonably conclude that he retained moral or religious objections to faithful polyamorous or incestuous unions.

Moreover, if Obama had wanted to preserve the exclusive use of the word "marriage" for a union between a man and a woman, why did he strongly oppose California's Proposition 8, which merely stated that "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" and did not forbid the granting of any marriage right or privilege to homosexual civil unions? California already grants the full benefits of marriage to homosexual civil unions and withholds only the use of the word "marriage" for such unions. And why did he state that he opposed all such amendments to state constitutions? If he had any moral basis for wanting to maintain the distinction in the use of the mere word "marriage" then he would have supported such measures since maintaining such a

nominal distinction against arbitrary court encroachment is the only purpose of such measures. Instead, [Obama made clear](#) that he supported extending “fully equal rights and benefits to same-sex couples under both state and federal law.” “And that is why I oppose the divisive and *discriminatory* efforts to amend the California Constitution, and similar efforts to amend the U.S. Constitution or those of other states.” If Obama believes that efforts to restrict the word “marriage” to a heterosexual union are “discriminatory,” even when done on the state level, then he can have no moral objections to “gay marriage.”

- d. **Obama’s vigorous insistence that homosexual unions receive *all* the “legal rights and privileges” of marriage, including federally mandated domestic partnership benefits across the country and full adoption rights** (with no distinction whatsoever between heterosexual married couples and homosexual unions, not even in preference) **is inconsistent with a moral objection based on “religious traditions”** (see the recent Obama-Biden “Plan to Strengthen Civil Rights” for “gays,” lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons [here](#); also the quote given at the end of [c] above; and his remark before the “[Human Rights Campaign](#)”: “I ... will continue to support a civil union that provides *all the benefits* that are available for a legally sanctioned marriage”). How can Obama have strong religious or moral objections to calling homosexual unions “marriages” if he is absolutely insistent on passing federal laws that will erase any legal distinction between marriage and a same-sex “civil union” (other than the mere name) and even prosecute as discriminatory any employer or agency that seeks to make such a distinction? The Massachusetts Supreme Court in 2003 quite rightly noted that it would be unreasonable and discriminatory to grant homosexual unions every benefit of marriage but the name; and then the Court rejected civil union equivalents and demanded homosexual marriage. I do not believe that Obama is stupid.
- e. It is in light of the four considerations above that one must understand the following remarks in his book as a signal to readers that he has every intent of promoting “gay marriage” when he has the political muscle to do so without hurting his own political future:

And I was reminded that it is my obligation, not only as an elected official in a pluralistic society but also as **a Christian, to remain open to the possibility that my unwillingness to support gay marriage is misguided,** just as I cannot claim infallibility in my support of abortion rights. I must admit that **I may have been infected with society’s prejudices and predilections and attributed them to God; that Jesus’ call to love one another might demand a different conclusion.** (my boldface)

Obama has indicated that distinctions between heterosexual marriages and homosexual unions are “discriminatory.” He has compared man-woman marriage laws to racist miscegenation laws. He has opposed every effort on the state or federal level at preserving the nominal use of marriage for man-woman unions as “abhorrent,” “discriminatory,” and “divisive.” One doesn’t have to be a very

critical or astute reader to come to the conclusion that Obama already in his book, to say nothing of now, regarded the restriction of marriage to a man and a woman as “infected with society’s prejudices and predilections.” I repeat: It was *only* political expediency that prevented him from coming out and saying, “I am for gay marriage.” He wanted to get elected and no one in this country could have been elected as President who stated his firm support for foisting “gay marriage” on the whole country.

So you have called my reading of Obama’s so-called rejection of “gay marriage” a “serious misrepresentation” of Obama’s position and, indeed, an “unpleasantly vituperative and less than honest” reading. I find these remarks to be not only uncharitable but also unreasonable and gullible in the extreme. Should you continue to maintain the view, after the abundance of evidence that I have put forward above, that my view of Obama’s position on “gay marriage” constitutes a “serious misrepresentation” and is both “unpleasantly vituperative,” and “less than honest,” I shall have no recourse but to regard your own views as “less than honest.” Whatever lack of understanding you had previously on the matter, you now know more than enough about Obama’s position to arrive at the only obvious conclusion; namely, that Obama’s so-called opposition to “gay marriage” was one based *only* on political expediency and not on any serious moral or religious objections. Obama is an extremist when it comes to homosexualist legislation.

3. Your third point is an attempt to make a distinction between saying that Obama believes that the Sermon on the Mount provides “support for homosexual sex” (my position) and saying (abstractly) that Obama was merely asserting the greater importance generally of the Sermon on the Mount over Romans 1 without implying support for homosexual sex (your position). Your position continues to make no sense to me.

Obama in context used the Sermon on the Mount as a basis for mandating federal and state law providing all the rights and benefits of marriage to homosexual “civil unions,” short only of the actual name. He was not merely asserting in some general sense, as you claim, that “if we are seeking to locate the centre of gravity of Christian attitude and behaviour in a single New Testament passage, we would turn to the Sermon on the Mount rather than Romans 1.” He was making the specific connection with affirming the morality of homosexual unions. Likewise, had Obama argued, as regards state-sanctioned polyamorous civil unions, that the Sermon on the Mount is “more defining of Christianity” than Jesus’ “obscure” discussion of marital “twoness” in Mark 10 (par. Matthew 19), it would be obvious that Obama was finding *support for polyamorous sex* in the Sermon on the Mount. Similarly, if Obama had argued, as regards state-sanctioned civil unions for adult siblings or for adult children and their parents, that the Sermon on the Mount is “more defining of Christianity” than Paul’s “obscure” discussion of incest in 1 Cor 5, it would be obvious that Obama was finding *support for adult-incestuous sex* in the Sermon on the Mount. How this point is debatable for you is beyond my fathoming.

You seemed to have missed my point that, since there is absolutely nothing in the Sermon on the Mount that even remotely suggests affirmation of homosexual practice (or incest,

or polyamory), an appeal to the Sermon on the Mount as “more defining of Christianity” than “an obscure line in Romans” about homosexual practice (or an ‘obscure’ line in Mark 10 // Matt 5 about monogamy or in 1 Cor 5 about incest) is entirely misplaced. The very fact that Obama set up a *contrast* between the Sermon on the Mount and Romans 1:24-27 on the issue of the morality of homosexual unions underscores that he finds something in the Sermon on the Mount that allows him to push for state and federal affirmation of such unions. As he says in his book, don’t be surprised if he, Obama, should wake up one day and come to the conclusion that “Jesus’ call to love one another” ‘compels’ him to express public support for “gay marriage”—which, in effect, he has already done anyway by comparing opposition to “gay marriage” to miscegenation laws.

Let it be noted, too, that certainly his statements and actions in the past year are entirely at odds with the claim in his book that “American society can choose to carve out a special place for the union of a man and a woman as the unit of child rearing most common to every culture.” For Obama has strongly opposed every effort—indeed as early as five years ago—by the people to put in state constitutions, federal law, or the federal constitution the view that marriage is defined as the union of one man and one woman. If it is true that “American society *can* choose to carve out a special place for the union of a man and a woman,” it is equally true that Obama has vigorously opposed every and any attempt of this sort as “abhorrent,” “discriminatory,” and “divisive.”

Contrary to what you suggest in your closing paragraph, Obama is not “torn” about any matters concerning the affirmation of homosexual practice at the state and federal level. He is quite insistent on imposing the maximum affirmation of homosexual unions in law and punishing with civil penalties any who resist that objective. So when I pray with regard to Obama—you exhort me to pray for him—I don’t pray with the false and deluded mindset that Obama is still sorting his views out on the issue of state affirmation of homosexual unions and state prosecution of those who would thwart such affirmation. I rather pray about him with the mindset that the early church undoubtedly prayed about Paul the Pharisee. Sure, Obama considers himself Christian but as regards his views on homosexual practice and abortion his views are intolerantly against Christians in the public sector who support the scriptural view of things. [As he has said](#), “My job as President is going to be to make sure that the legal rights that have consequences on a day-to-day basis for loving same-sex couples all across the country that those rights are recognized and enforced by my White House and by my Justice Department.” This includes prosecuting employers that don’t extend “domestic partner benefits” to homosexual employees with a same-sex sexual partner; prosecuting adoption agencies and their employees if they give preference to placing children in stable homes with a mother and father; withholding federal funds in student loans and research grants to Christian colleges and seminaries that do not permit homosexual practice on the part of faculty, staff, and/or students; and making it discriminatory for teachers in the public schools to question the affirmation of homosexual unions.

Blessings to you in your future deliberations,

Rob

Postscript (1/16/09)

Not surprisingly the following has just surfaced confirming everything that I say above:

Obama Once Supported Same-Sex Marriage

Politico.com

Ben Smith

January 13, 2009

A document has emerged suggesting that Obama had taken more public, liberal stands in the past than had been revealed in the digging of reporters and opposition researchers over two years of campaigning, the latest of several pointing to a rightward shift as he moved into national politics.

In a 1996 questionnaire filled out for a Chicago gay and lesbian newspaper, then called Outlines, Obama came out clearly in favor of same-sex marriage, which he has opposed on the public record throughout his short career in national politics.

"I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages," Obama wrote in the typed, signed, statement.

There was no use of "civil unions," and "no compromise whatsoever," the [Windy City Times story](#) today notes.

On another questionnaire the same year, Obama said he would support a resolution in support of same-sex marriage.

The editor of the Windy City Times, a successor of Outlines, Tracy Baim, said she hadn't deliberately held onto the news until after Obama's election. Baim, who had been the editor of Outlines at the time, said that just before the election, she ran across the old Outline story saying Obama backed same-sex marriage, but only dug his forgotten questionnaire out of an old box this week, having assumed that she'd lost it.

Obama now says he opposes same-sex marriage, though he backs giving gays and lesbians a parallel package of marriage-like rights, and opposes a federal ban on same-sex marriage.