

What's Wrong With Polygamy

✘ For the first time ever we are about to have a Mormon nominated for president by a major political party. By a strange coincidence, we also are beginning to see a flurry of posts on liberal blogs telling us what a bizarre and deplorable religion Mormonism is. Mormons don't smoke, or drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages, and they oppose sex before marriage and marital infidelity. What a bunch of boobs!

On one liberal blog a woman who formerly belonged to the Mormon Church complained bitterly because church officials have persisted in their attempts to bring her back into the fold. No matter how many times she tells them to buzz off (I am using a phrase suitable for use in the presence of Mormons), they keep buzzing back.

I happen to have witnessed this phenomenon first-hand. It is true that the Mormons don't like to take no for an answer when a lapsed member of their church insists on staying lapsed. They do make return visits to the lapsed person's home, unbidden. Furthermore, they are extremely intimidating in their methods. They send out pairs of decrepit, white-haired old men to make their case. These guys arrive on foot, gasping for breath, and if the lapsed Mormon chose he could blow them over even if he has weak, wasted lungs from breaking the Mormon rule against smoking.

Imagine how bitterly the female blogger would complain if she were garroted, or burned at the stake, or stretched on the rack, or buried up to her neck in sand and stoned. Lapsed Mormons really have it rather easy by comparison.

I thought that after the election of John F. Kennedy, our first Roman Catholic president, religious attacks had become passé in presidential campaigns. Despite the fears of many, JFK did not bring the Pope over to run the executive branch,

although I will concede that we don't know what his plans might have been for a second term.

By 2000, when an Orthodox Jew ran for vice president on the Democratic ticket, there was scarcely a murmur. I almost never heard people speculating that Joe Lieberman planned blood sacrifices of Russian children to help him bake matzoh for Passover. But again, I have to concede that we will never know for sure, because Joe (and running mate Al Gore) lost.

But with Romney in the field, religion is back as a political issue.

Some liberals are trying to tar Romney with the specter of polygamy, even though polygamy was outlawed by his church in 1890, and the last polygamous marriage ended nearly sixty years ago with the death of one of the wives. The Democratic governor of Montana, for example, recently made a fuss because the parents of Romney's late father, George, fled to Mexico more than a century ago in protest against U.S. anti-polygamy laws. They did this even though they themselves were in a monogamous marriage. It was strictly on principle. Those wacky Mormons!

I am here to tell you that I don't care whether Romney himself is a polygamist, although it appears that he is not. If he were, the Democrats would be ungallantly besmirching more than just the one wife, Ann.

But really, what is wrong with polygamy? Does it strike you as any stranger than gay marriage? And let me interject here that gay marriage is absolutely the most wonderful idea ever conceived by mankind, and gays are, and should be, treated as sacred cows.

Polygamy can be an excellent idea under the right circumstances. Suppose you marry a woman who is a hot babe, but she can't cook. Why shouldn't you be allowed to also marry a dull, homely woman who cooks like a master chef? I don't

see this as selfish on the man's part. Quite the contrary. How else would the second woman find a husband? If she were only entitled to a monogamous marriage, she would be pretty much limited to blind gourmets.

I do see some practical problems. In a community-property state, for example, how would one divide the assets if any of the wives decided to bow out? (I am limiting the discussion to marriages involving multiple wives, because even in the heyday of polygamy marriages involving multiple husbands were extremely rare.) In a community-property state, divorcing couples are supposed to split the legally eligible assets evenly, but in a marriage with, say, two wives, it seems unfair to let the departing wife walk off with half the assets. It's a problem, but probably not insuperable.

Legalizing polygamy would simply institutionalize relationships that already exist off the books, just as has been the case with gay marriages. Come on, tell me that you have never heard of threesomes that are living together indefinitely. Why shouldn't such relationships be sanctified by the law? So please, liberals, drop the religious bigotry. Let's see some of that famous tolerance for aberrant behavior that characterizes so many of your flock. You can learn to live with polygamy, in case a Romney presidency brings it back.

Mitt Romney and the Mormon Question(s)

✘ Gallup announced Monday that 22 percent of Americans would not vote a Mormon into the presidency, even if he were nominated by their own party. This is a figure that has not

just remained steady since 1967, but on the whole has risen five points.

Broken down by affiliation, 18 percent of Republicans, 19 percent of Independents, and 27 percent of America's most open minded and tolerant political party, the Democrats, say they couldn't be persuaded to take the plunge. Though Gallup notes lesser educated people are more likely to reject a Mormon nominee, there "are no significant differences on this question by gender, age, region of the country, or religious preference." What does this mean for Mitt Romney, who is not only the Republican front-runner, but also a Mormon?

Call it a hunch, but it feels like those Republicans are opposed for religious reasons, and those Democrats are opposed because they fundamentally distrust and dislike all religions. (Except Islam, of course, which the Left adores and respects to the utmost, because tolerating Islam is a hell of a lot easier than being stabbed to death in the street.) Problem is, you can't always tell the difference between a Catholic objection and an atheistic one – they both tend to believe their way is the One Way.

For example, this caller to the John Gibson show: "The Mormons and the whole magic underwear thing is what has me tilted out... They believe they wear a special garment that they believe are magical, and if Romney believes that, if he believes in magic undergarments, I don't want him" to be president. You call it: annoying Catholic or annoying atheist?

Gibson did eventually ask the caller, "Do you know how silly this gets once you open this door?" but at the root of it, just about every religion becomes silly once it's broken down and honestly examined. Whether Romney is a strictly observant Mormon or a Jack Mormon (i.e., the LDS equivalent of a "cafeteria Catholic") is less critical to his campaign than how to address attacks on his religion.

And make no mistake: The strongest points against him are RomneyCare and Mormonism. The Left will be hesitant to attack RomneyCare because that would mean, ipso facto, attacking ObamaCare. So you'll have what we had throughout the 2008 nominating process, mainly fits of disbelief, perfectly encapsulated for the purposes of this column by Lawrence O'Donnell, MSNBC host and professional oh-dear.

"This man stood there and said to you, 'This is the faith of my fathers,'" O'Donnell said on The McLaughlin Group in late 2007. "The faith of his father is a racist faith. As of 1978 it was an officially racist faith, and for political convenience in 1978 it switched, and it said 'Okay, black people can be in this church.' He believes, if he believes the faith of his fathers, that black people are black because in Heaven they turned away from God, in this demented, Scientology-like notion of what was going on in Heaven before the creation of the Earth... When he was 30 years old and he firmly believed in the faith of his father, that black people are inferior, when did he change his mind? Did the religion have to tell him to change his mind?"

These charges will stick because they're spectacular, saying nothing of those few on the Right who will argue Mormonism is a cult. So what seems more likely, that Romney will deftly maneuver around them or that he will stumble badly and, in doing so, clear a path for Governor Perry?