

## 6.3 Stephen Mansfield (2008) & (2011 Revised and Updated) *The Faith of Barack Obama*.

### Detailed Review

#### This Resource's Key Interpretations and Insights Related to the Purposes of This Website

(Please note: It's unusual for me to review both the 2008 and 2011 editions of this book. A significant change of focus in the later edition made this desirable.)

(1) Mansfield's 2008 book provides the only book-length account of Barack Obama's journey toward becoming a Christian and **how his faith, shaped by the African-American Christian social justice tradition, informs his politics.** Mansfield argues that **Obama was deliberately reclaiming "the religious voice of the American political left."** In the revised and updated 2011 edition, he adds helpful information about how a little known group of evangelical "spiritual advisors" has influenced Obama's faith since he took office in 2009. However, I disagree with **Mansfield's evaluation of likely changes in Obama's political policies due to the personal spiritual growth nurtured by those advisors.**

(2) Mansfield is what I would describe as a theologically conservative evangelical Christian who is center-right politically, except for the issues of abortion and gay marriage. Because I'm center-left in my faith and politics, I find myself disagreeing with **Mansfield's negative evaluation of postmodern liberal Christianity, even though I agree with many of his political views about what most needs to be healed in our nation.**

(3) Precisely because Mansfield is an evangelical Christian, **his argument that Obama is a real (though not traditional) Christian should carry weight with fellow evangelicals, so many of whom have accepted the far-right disinformation repeated incessantly by Obama-haters claiming he is really a Muslim or a radical black liberation Christian who hates whites.**

(1) (See above for content preview of this section.)

(Note: since most of you who buy this book probably will have the paperback edition, in this section I list page reference to the hardback 2008 edition first in beige followed by 2011 paperback page references in orange. Where you only see one number in beige, it means this part or quote was omitted from the later paperback edition.)

#### The original 2008 edition

(Another quick note: one thing that makes the two editions of this book significantly different from one another is that the fifth chapter of the original [title in green, right] is totally replaced in the paperback with new content under a new title--see below, p. 6)

At the end of his Introduction Mansfield states **his intention to deal with his subject "kindly and generously" (xxiii/xxvii)**, that subject being Barack Obama's religious faith and the hopeful political change in the country at that important turning point for religion and politics that he represented. I think he succeeded admirably, especially since he admits this gentle temperament does not come naturally to him.

In the Acknowledgments at the end of the book, Mansfield says his Southern grandmother first advised him **"never to speak of religion or politics in polite company."** However, since he has done little else during his life as an author, he says he has tried to live up to her second urging: **to deal with others in "a gentler manner"--with "graciousness and consideration"--which she knew would not be easy for her brash, military brat grandson. (145/159)** (I, too, have received

#### Chapters

- Introduction
- 1. To Walk Between Worlds
- 2. My House, Too
- 3. Faith Fit for the Age
- 4. The Altars of State
- 5. **Four Faces of Faith**
- 6. A Time to Heal

both kinds of counsel throughout my life, especially since starting this website. I hope I'm doing as well as Mansfield with the second-best advice, given we both consider the first to be unhealthy for our nation.)

As a center-left Christian, **I admit to being pleasantly surprised that this evangelical Christian biographer could keep his own conservative faith, quite different from Obama's (and mine), mostly in the background.** This allowed him to tell his account of Obama's faith journey with not only **the least amount of bias possible** but also **genuine appreciation and sympathy**. I was suspicious at first, because so much has been said about Obama by evangelicals to trash him. In a July '08 interview with Sara Shereen Bakhshian of Religion News Service, Mansfield said he was neither for or against Obama; he wanted to write a book that was "objective." (For my take on the possibility of this, see my page 11, below.)

Mansfield is fair to, and appreciative of, persons of more liberal Christian faith

To set the scene for the book, in his first pages of the **Introduction** Mansfield describes the signal event that launched Obama's national political career--his keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention, July 2004. For Mansfield, there was a single sentence in that speech that "signaled a defining theme" of Obama's life: "**We worship an awesome God in the Blue States.**" After that sentence, Obama

#### Quote

"We, too, (the American political Left) have faith...we also love God. We, too, have spiritual passion, and we believe that our vision for America arises from a vital faith as well. No longer will we be painted as the nonbelievers. No longer will we yield the spiritual high ground. The Religious Right has nothing on us anymore." (xv/xix)

immediately launched into rhetorical flourishes (see quote, left) that caused Mansfield to claim **he was making "a conscious attempt to reclaim the religious voice of the American political Left."** **This is one of the overarching themes of Mansfield's interpretation of Obama's faith in 2008.** (xiv-xv/xviii-xix)

Where had this powerful new voice on the political/religious scene come from? He didn't grow up in any religious community. It wasn't until he found a spiritual home at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago during his young adult community organizing days that he

personally discovered the religious faith that would ground his politics and make his 2004 speech possible. (xv-xvi/xix-xx) Mansfield's passage (see quote, right) is an excellent description of how belonging to this church was profoundly transformational for Obama.

It's important to keep in mind that Mansfield was writing during the 2008 presidential primaries. For him, it was the ideal time in our country's history for the religiously left Obama to come along. Three historic shifts were taking

place. The Religious Right was in serious disarray. The Republican Party was losing its hold on its previously high percentages of evangelical voters. And a new generation of young voters were more postmodern than traditionalist in their religious faith, making them tend toward the values of the Democratic Party. (xvii-ix/xxi-xxiv) Obama capitalized on these trends by writing two best-selling books (unusual for politicians), the first in the form of a heroic journey of spiritual seeking as well as an intimate sharing of his exotic background.

#### Quote

"(Obama) began to find healing for his loneliness and answers for his incomplete worldview. He experienced for the first time both connection to God and affirmation as a son of Africa. **He would also be exposed to a passionate Afrocentric theology and a Christian mandate for social action that permanently shaped his politics.** Through Trinity he found the mystical country for which his soul had longed." (xvi/xx-xxi) (my emphasis)

Mansfield had already written several other biographies about important historical figures. What drew him to the particular persons he chose for his books was **his belief that "if a man's faith is sincere, it is the most important thing about him, and it is impossible to understand who he is and how he will lead without first understanding the religious vision that informs his life."** (xxiii/xxvii) (my emphasis) For Mansfield in 2008, the specific way this applied to Obama was that he is a politician who is "**unapologetically Christian and unapologetically liberal, and (believes) that faith ought to inform his politics and that of the nation as a whole.**" (xxii)

What intrigues Mansfield as a biographer?

**Chapter 1**, Mansfield points out that Obama, if elected, would be the first president not raised as a Christian, describing in some detail the influence of his mother and her parents (all non-religious) as well as his absent Kenyan father (a secular former Muslim) and his Indonesian stepfather (whose faith was a blend of nominal Islam and native superstition). Obama's childhood years in Indonesia would become **fodder for all**

kinds of far-out theories that he is really a Muslim. (See my third section, below.) Actually, Mansfield says, these years had been “a religious swirl.” He first attended a Catholic school and then a public school where he learned about Islam. He occasionally attended a mosque with his stepfather at the same time his mother was teaching him “her atheistic optimism.”

Obama wasn't personally impacted by organized religion as an adult until he was a young man working as a community developer in Chicago, where most of his organizing was done in coordination with African American churches. It was then that he really began to see the limits of his mother's worldview and described her as “a lonely witness of secular humanism, a soldier for the New Deal, Peace Corps, position-paper liberalism.” (14-15/15-16) His telling of what he was feeling at the time in Chicago in relation to his mother's worldview is crucial for our understanding the religious conversion experience that has grounded his life ever since (see quote, below).

### Quote

“I had no community or shared traditions in which to ground my most deeply held beliefs...I came to realize that without a vessel for my beliefs, without an unequivocal commitment to a particular community of faith, I would be consigned at some level to always remain apart, free in the way that my mother was free, but also alone in the same ways she was ultimately alone.” (24/27)

His conversion experience happened one Sunday morning as he listened to a sermon by Jeremiah Wright, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, entitled “The Audacity of Hope” (later to become the title of Obama's second book). Mansfield says “a laser of hope” penetrated his soul and he found himself in tears. It took months for the experience to really sink in, and the decision to join this particular community of faith was, as Obama later described it, “a choice and not an epiphany; the

questions I had did not magically disappear. But kneeling beneath that cross on the South Side of Chicago, I felt God's spirit beckoning me. I submitted myself to His will and dedicated myself to discovering His truth.” (26-27/30)

**Chapter 2** is entirely devoted to helping readers sympathetically understand the full reality of Trinity United Church of Christ (and its controversial pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright) as well as **the nature and history of the black social justice theology** that grounds it. This information is essential for everyone who wants to understand Obama's particular kind of Christian faith, but it's especially crucial for those who question Obama's faith based only on that tiny video clip from one of Wright's sermons played over and over again on TV in 2008 when he shouts “God damns America!” (More on this below, in my third section.)

Mansfield's **Chapter 3** goes into some detail describing Obama's turning to faith as “one fit for his age,” namely a “postmodern” understanding shared by many of his (and younger) generations. (51/52) **This is another overarching theme of Mansfield's interpretations of Obama.** (I agree with the fact of this “fit,” but not Mansfield's interpretation of it.) (More on this in my second section, below.)

Obama's postmodern understanding of Christianity is “a fit for this age”

Mansfield notes that Obama sometimes described his new faith in traditional terms--having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, believing in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and following a faithful path of being cleansed of sin in order to have eternal life. He had responded to a traditional altar call (given every Sunday at Trinity). (50/54) However, Mansfield also describes the many non-traditional aspects of Obama's faith, which causes most evangelicals to question his “born again” status as white evangelicals understand it (see my second section, below).

**Chapter 4** deals with the surprising development that soon after Obama became a Christian, he had to deal with public criticisms that he was not a “real” Christian. Mansfield begins by describing a vicious attack on a candidate's faith. Since this is the middle of his book on Obama who had been and still was being so attacked, readers were meant to assume Obama was the politician in the story. In fact, it is revealed to be Abraham Lincoln. (81/89) This is a very disarming way of showing those who are now criticizing Obama (most likely admirers of Lincoln) they should take a second, harder look at the basis of their charges, lest they, too someday be seen as grossly misinformed.

The first big attack on Obama's faith came during his 2004 U.S. Senate race. His opponent, Alan Keyes, summed up all the scurrilous things he said about Obama by saying that Christ wouldn't vote for him. Obama deflected the criticism and easily won the election, but he was not pleased with how he had handled it. He had replied with the typically liberal response that we live in a society with many religious faiths and we can't impose our own on anybody. (82-86/89-95)

Christ wouldn't vote for Obama

By 2006, when Obama spoke at an event sponsored by the progressive evangelical organization Sojourners, he had worked out his position on religion and politics. Mansfield spends a good part of the end of this chapter explaining why [this so-called "Call to Renewal" speech was one of Obama's best and most important, the foundation for his position on religion and politics.](#) Mansfield thinks, as do I, that this speech is potentially a game changer for the entire field. (87/95)

Mansfield calls the speech “[a surprising break from the secular legacy of the political Left.](#)” In it, Obama says that [secularists are wrong when they try to impose the rule that religious people leave their religion in their private spaces before they enter the public square.](#) Yet he also made the point that in a democracy religious people need to translate their concerns into universal values, amenable to reason and, thus, publicly debatable. (87-90/95-98) I agree with Mansfield about the importance of this speech (quote, right). [I will be reviewing this speech myself in some detail soon; I have some questions about some of Obama's positions.](#)

Mansfield spends several pages on angry conservative Christians reactions to the speech. [They saw Obama's position as merely "civil religion" in which there was no longer any place for the commands of God in political debate. Some called it the "American Church of Pluralism"--all religions were welcome, but they had to "bow the knee to an official cult of reason."](#) (92-3/102)

Indeed, Obama had declared that he was a follower of “[our civil religion](#)” as well as his personal Christian faith. (93/103) [For conservatives, civil religion is a form of idolatry that they saw as a natural development from his theological liberalism--when "religion is drained of its traditional meaning, it admits of any meaning."](#) (95/105) (See my [disagreement with these critics in section two, below.](#)) Evangelicals especially objected to Obama's convoluted abortion stance--he supported choice while also struggling with what his faith would have him do. (95-98/105-07)

#### Quote

“With its tone of moderation, its welcome of faith into the public square, and yet its insistence that people of faith conduct themselves in the public debate according to democratic values, it became what Obama had intended: [a call to reform, a redefinition of religion's role in American political life.](#)” (90/99)

**Obama now a liberal Christian who embraces a faith-based liberal political vision**

I agree with Mansfield that this was Obama's 2006 “[religious declaration of intent.](#)” From then on **there would be no hiding behind the separation of church and state** (as in his Senate race). **He was now “a liberal Christian, embracing a faith-based liberal political vision, and he planned to take both into his nation's corridors of power.”** (99/109) (my emphasis)

**Chapter 5** further illumines Obama's faith by contrasting it with that of George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton and John McCain, all of whom have very

different understandings of the relationship between faith and politics. (Unfortunately, this entire chapter was cut from the 2011 edition and another substituted for it. That's partially understandable, given the new context for the paperback edition is the 2012 election four years later. However, it contains some information that makes it relevant beyond the 2008 campaign. Mansfield believes that Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain and George W. Bush [represent the four dominant religious streams in politics at that time.](#) (103) I'll give you a few snippets, but I commend the whole chapter to you.)

He starts with McCain, who is representative of his Silent Generation in a number of ways. One way, not determined when Mansfield's book was published, is that with McCain's failure, no member of his generation is likely to become President. As described in his autobiographical *Faith of My Fathers*, McCain learned from his father that you shouldn't talk about your religion. Rather religion is about shaping your character--[people should see your religion in your life and, even more, one should never use religion for political gain.](#) His Episcopal Church membership also played a part in his quiet reserve about his faith. Mansfield says this is also true of George H. W. Bush, another Episcopalian. (103-110)

**Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain and George W. Bush represent the four dominant religious streams in politics at that time.**

Hillary Clinton is of the next generation of Baby Boomers and presents quite a contrast. [She learned early the Methodist emphasis on the synthesis of deep faith and social concern that has shaped her entire life. Her primary mentor urged her to be more expressive of her faith in her politics.](#) At first she could only do this awkwardly, but by the time of her election to the U.S. Senate, she was quite at ease doing so. She spoke many times of the presence of the Holy Spirit, quoted scripture and referred to her prayers. Even though Obama's Millennial Generation often harshly criticizes Boomers for their self-absorption and failure to reform the nation because [their dreams are too utopian,](#) Mansfield says Hillary represents [another form of American political spirituality that discovered in Jesus' ethics a mandate for the welfare state.](#) (110-119) (I'm actually closest to Clinton's form of faith.)



George W. Bush is the third face of American religion and politics for Mansfield. He's a Boomer also, but on the other side of the ideological spectrum religiously and politically from Hillary Clinton. Even though Mansfield believes he took our nation in directions most Americans want to correct, he also says [his openness about his beliefs helped make it more acceptable in a political context](#). He had a typical evangelical conversion in his adult years which helped him end a long addiction to alcohol. He, like Hillary, became a Methodist (which shows how diverse my own denomination is). Mansfield says that [for Obama, Bush is the prime example of all that's wrong the Religious Right--he used faith to divide the country in order to gain political power and then totally misused it. Bush's compassionate conservatism turned out to be a deception; Obama and the Religious Left would empower a truly compassionate politics for the healing of the nation](#). Mansfield, while not agreeing with this whole package, believes Obama is already what the nation was rapidly becoming. (119-126)

Mansfield's concluding [Chapter 6](#) is devoted to explaining why he thinks [Obama was providing the nation with a chance to heal some deep wounds at that opportune moment in 2008](#). This is another of the overarching themes of [Mansfield's interpretations of Obama](#). He especially highlights the racial divide and how a younger generation of black leaders, including Obama, was dealing with it without the rage and bitterness of many of their elders. Whether he was elected or not, Mansfield felt that [Obama had transformed the political landscape, and was providing hope that the new faith-inspired agenda he represented could help heal some of our nation's deepest wounds](#).

Mansfield begins with high praise for healers (quote, right). He devotes a page to those he lifts up as examples: Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gerald Ford, Mahatma Gandhi, George Washington, Desmond Tutu, William Wilberforce, Benazir Bhutto and Golda Meir. (130-31/144-45) Then, he quotes a passage from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* that speaks metaphorically of times in life when fate provides an opportunity which must be quickly accepted or is lost forever. Mansfield sees America in 2008 as just such a place and time ripe for historic transformation. While he doesn't see this transformation being brought about by politics, it's politics that is propelling it onto the national stage. (131-32/145-46)

#### Quote

"It is the healers who are best remembered, those who teach us to live beyond the limitations of our lesser selves. The healers are greathearts and lovers--souls who show us the path to the world we've hoped for, who teach us that we can make our high-flying rhetoric into living, earthly reality." (129/143)

The start and conclusion of this chapter [reveal more of Mansfield's own values and hopes than anywhere else in his book. To me, it clearly shows the idealism of his own kind of faith and politics. He yearns for dramatic national healing and sees Obama as the symbolic presence of new trends that could bring it about](#). Specifically, [religion has seldom been more prominent across the board in a presidential election](#). And Mansfield believes Obama brings several things to the national spotlight: [the "challenges of the biracial person. The cause of the poor. The rise of a new generation. The restoration of religion to the political Left. The manner, power, and moral case of the black church in America."](#) (133) Mansfield devotes eight pages to one example--how the Jeremiah Wright controversy in Obama's campaign has provided the nation with an opportunity heal its tragic racial divides. (More on this in my third section, below.)

Next, Mansfield describes [how the Democrat Party](#), whose leaders had recently given it a public face of non-religious secularism, [was publicly acknowledging how many Democrats were deeply religious](#). (141-43) And while Mansfield agreed that Democrat presidents like Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter were certainly "religiously fluent," he differentiates Obama from them. The former both seem to place "a wall of separation between faith and practice," while Obama's faith infuses his public policy. More specifically, Mansfield says, ["Obama roots his political Liberalism in a theological worldview, and he will call others to do the same](#), much to the challenge of what has come before: the secular Left, the truncated faith of traditional politics, certainly, the now-fading Religious Right." (143/157)

**The Democrat Party finally publicly acknowledged that many Democrats are deeply religious**

In his last paragraph of the book, [Mansfield affirms Obama for being willing to work with those of all faiths to heal the nation](#). And whether or not he wins the primary and the presidency in 2008, he would continue to be an important figure in the historic transformation Mansfield hoped for. The last sentences of the book, [which were unfortunately cut from the 2011 edition](#), point to what I see as [Mansfield's highlighting many of the moral/political issues that characterize the new evangelical center-right in the U.S.](#) (see quote, below) [Young evangelicals have broadened their Christian social](#)

justice concerns to include the environment, gross levels of inequality and, especially, poverty. **However, most center-right evangelicals, including Mansfield, are still strongly pro-life and anti-gay marriage (which in my scale is not centrist but fully Right.)** (See my review of 4.2 Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center*.)

**For me, Mansfield's first edition is basically a fair and sympathetic account of Obama's faith journey up to the 2008 presidential campaign.**

### The revised and updated paperback 2011 Edition

I will be pointing out a few of the most significant changes in this later edition, which I believe amount to a **fundamentally different orientation than the original text**. Page references to this edition are in orange.

One thing to note immediately which makes the two editions of this book significantly different from one another is that the fifth chapter of the original is totally replaced in the paperback with new content and a new title (in green, right).

In this edition the content of the Introduction to the 2008 edition is framed with a new beginning and ending. Starting with the national poll taken in August 2010 which **revealed just how many Americans still questioned whether Obama (now President for almost two years) is a Christian**. Only one-third believed he is (down from almost a full half of the public in 2009). And nearly one-fifth believed he is a Muslim (up from 11 percent in 2009). (xiii)

Obama's advisors were surprised. This president had revealed his personal faith as much as any other in history. Yet they knew that he was up against **something unprecedented--a perception that he was not who he said he was, that he was somehow "other," out of the mainstream of religious life**. People had selectively chosen many things about Obama that seemed to confirm their views. Sometimes they made them up out of thin air, like when Mike Huckabee implied Obama had attended a radical Muslim madrasa school as a child in Indonesia. Mansfield bluntly criticizes the bigoted nature of such views, which for many had roots in an unspoken racism: **"Obama was of dark skin, from a darker family background and may well have been from the dark side spiritually. Any slur could be made to stick."** (xii-xiv)

**Something unprecedented--  
Obama seen as somehow  
"OTHER"**

Mansfield says that some of Obama's actions in office were also part of what drove the mistrust of many religious critics, **because from their conservative faith stance they couldn't see a Christian taking the positions he did on abortion, the Defense of Marriage Act and the Palestinians**. For them, Obama "never seemed to grow his policies organically from the soil of faith," like Reagan or Bush. Mansfield ends these new pages of the Introduction with the claim that all the likely Republican opponents in 2012 would be forcing questions onto Obama of what he believed and why. (xvi)

At this point Mansfield transitions to his original opening eight pages of the 2008 edition (left intact), where he had chosen the famous speech in the 2004 Democratic Convention that launched Obama's seemingly bright future on the national political stage to be the opening frame of that edition. Now the President was **facing a whole new set of challenges related to the unrelenting questioning of his integrity and even his identity**.

### Quote

"Perhaps we have come to a moment when a common devotion to God may fuel a national resolve to break cycles of poverty, challenge strongholds of racism, reinforce ethical conduct among the powerful and the powerless, deliberate on the morality of war before it is declared, and end the moral scourges of our time. If this is so, then part of the impact of Barack Obama in our generation may be for just such a purpose: to help wed faith to a political vision that leads to meaningful change in or time." (144)

### Chapters

Introduction

1. To Walk Between Worlds
2. My House, Too
3. Faith Fit for the Age
4. The Altars of State
5. **A New Band of Brothers**
6. A Time to Heal

This turned out not to be a correct prediction when Romney, who didn't want his Mormon faith highlighted, won the Republican nomination.

A few changes were made to the last few pages of the Introduction, which point to **the important shift in Mansfield's interpretation of Obama's faith from his stance three years earlier.** First, he pointed to the new historical context--the disastrous recession, continuing wars and the fact that **political battles were now being "conducted like blood feuds to the finish, reminiscent of the gladiatorial games of old."** Many were questioning Obama's ability to achieve the idealistic hope and change he had promised. (xxv-xxvi)

Then, Mansfield signaled **a new focus of this edition.** The dark clouds over Obama were obscuring **"the transformation taking place in Obama's life,"** one that would lead to surprises for both his opponents and supporters. **There had been a deepening of Obama's spiritual life since his election, due largely to a whole new set of spiritual advisors. This was leading him fundamentally beyond the influence of his twenty years at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago** that Mansfield had highlighted in the 2008 edition. Consequently, Mansfield substituted a completely new Chapter 5--"A New Band of Brothers"--for the chapter in the older edition, which dealt with how Obama differed from the other major political figures of mid-2008.

Mansfield left the four chapters of text in between the revised Introduction and the new Chapter 5--the core of the 2008 book--almost exactly the same. In them Mansfield had argued that Obama was the champion and symbol of the shift to the Left theologically and politically in the U.S before the 2008 election. One slight addition in Chapter 3 in the new edition signaled he now believed there were significant changes in Obama's faith. He had used the phrase "Obama's Christianity" when he claimed that Obama shared the same kind of faith as was held by most mainline Protestants (most of whom he took to be liberals); that phrase was now changed to "Obama's early version of Christianity." (58 and 63)

In his new Chapter 5, Mansfield describes in some detail the little-known story of the influence of a small group of evangelical spiritual advisors on President Obama. The most influential was Joshua DuBois, an intelligent, faithful African-American Pentecostal who headed Obama's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. (I met him in '08 when he was in Denver mobilizing religious leaders, especially evangelicals, for Obama.) He had earned an M.A. from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and had started law school at Georgetown University when he was attracted by Obama's campaign for the U.S. Senate. (119-22)

Dubois organized spiritual support for Obama during the 2008 campaign, especially during Obama's time of grieving the death of his grandmother. As the new administration began, Obama gave him permission to pull together a small group of pastors to be his ongoing support group. It ended up including Joel Hunter, T. D. Jakes and Kirbyjon Caldwell, all nationally known evangelical pastors, plus Otis T. Moss and Jim Wallis, who Obama had previously known. (See link, right, for an article about these advisors in *The New York Times* in 2009. Note: in his Acknowledgments, Mansfield thanks Jim Wallis [for some reason not included in the spiritual advisors he mentions in this Chapter] for helping him understand Obama's commitment to social justice.) While there were face-to-face meetings and daily devotionals prepared for Obama by these advisors (two samples are included in the book), the primary contacts were conference calls. Mansfield says Obama really opened up in some personal depth during these contacts, and his advisors felt he was growing greatly in the personal dimensions of his faith. Mansfield emphasized that all this sacred work was done "behind closed doors," because Obama didn't want it advertised to the public. (123-25)

[Advisors link](#)

The same is true of Obama's choice of where to worship. Mansfield explains why he didn't choose any of the churches he explored in Washington D.C., but chose instead to attend services at the small Evergreen Chapel at Camp David when he and the family are there. One reason why is that Obama really likes the preaching of Carey Cash, the Navy Chaplain there. For Mansfield, this symbolizes Obama's spiritual shift, because Cash preaches themes similar to Southern Baptist pulpits rather than the black liberal theology he had heard from Jeremiah Wright. (130-35)

**Obama's choice to worship at Camp David not widely known**

Maxwell interviewed Joel Hunter for this edition of the book in 2011 and gives him the most space in this chapter. Hunter is the pastor of the 12,000 member, almost all-white Northland church in Florida. He wrote an article in the *New York Times* commenting favorably on Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech on race. While he had no expertise on race issues, his faith called him to participate in the racial reconciliation Obama was lifting up in that speech. Obama dropped Hunter a note saying they should get together someday, and eventually he was invited to give the benediction at the Democratic National Convention in Denver. This caused him to pause, because he was strongly pro-choice and anti-gay marriage.

Hunter made national news in 2006 when he was offered the presidency of the Christian Coalition. However, he became disillusioned by that group's decision not to expand its policies to issues like poverty and the environment, and he objected to what he saw as their obvious pandering to the Republican leadership. Mansfield says Hunter decided not to

accept the position and “to speak the political implications of Scripture to whoever was willing to hear.” His decision to do so as one of Obama’s spiritual advisors resulted in many charges that he was a turncoat to the evangelical cause and had “gone liberal.” (111-14)

Later in 2010, the tables were turned on Hunter as pastor to Obama when he got the news that his five-year-old granddaughter Ava had a brain tumor. The very next day Hunter got a call of concern from the president. Hunter was struck by the fact that this was the first call he received. A few months later when Ava died, Obama called again with support, quoting bits of scripture and offering assurance of God’s grace. He ended the call by saying, “I am with you in this. You are not alone.” Mansfield points out that **Obama’s critics who question the depth of his Christianity or accuse him of secretly being a Muslim** will no doubt be very surprised to hear this story. How could the man they have so negatively constructed be quoting the Bible and Christian tradition? And, Mansfield says **even his supporters will probably be very surprised to hear that the Columbia and Harvard scholar, “trained in emotional detachment by his humanist mother,”** was pastorally evoking his faith so passionately. (114-18)

**Obama becomes the pastor to one of his spiritual advisors**

Even though Hunter had been surprised by the contacts, he was not surprised by Obama’s ability to witness to his faith. He had seen it steadily growing for some time.

### Quote

“Trinity United Church of Christ gave Barack Obama two things: the born again experience and a social vision. But he did not gain much theological training through those years. **He has now during his first years in office, been exposed to more spiritual depth and biblical theology than he had in all his prior years.**” (119) (my emphasis)

Hunter spelled this out for Mansfield in the interview (quote, left). Hunter is **confident from his close connections with Obama that he is a “born again” Christian. He also recognizes that the core value that provides the foundation of Obama’s politics is his concern for the poor.** He said, “The president always shows a predisposition toward those who cannot help themselves--a respect, a value for basic human dignity, for those who are marginalized.” (129-30)

At this point, Mansfield turns in a different direction, toward one of the primary criticisms of Obama by evangelical Christians. It’s **the doubt about whether Obama is a serious Christian, regardless of what he or others say, because of his political actions, most especially his actions on the issues of abortion and gay marriage.** (For most older evangelicals, even those who moved to a center-right position of the issues of poverty and the environment [like Hunter and Mansfield himself] **one cannot be a “serious Christian” if one takes a liberal position on abortion and gay marriage. For them, a faithful reading of the Bible requires the conservative stance on these hot button issues.**) (129-30, 135)

Actually, Mansfield says that this criticism comes from “the confused majority of Americans.” However, I think it’s basically a position held by evangelical Christians.

In order to flesh out criticisms of Obama’s actions, Mansfield provides two examples--Jerome Corsi and David Barton. Corsi wrote the book which provided the basis for the infamous “Swiftboat” attack on John Kerry in 2004 and the bestseller *The Obama Nation* that set the tone for the similar far-fetched attacks from the far-right on Obama’s birth, religion and political affiliations (see my third section, below, for Mansfield’s critiques of these views).

Barton, on the other hand, doesn’t question that Obama is a Christian, he just says **Obama’s faith isn’t biblical Christianity.** It’s the theology of “the first supposedly Christian denomination to ordain gays” (my emphasis) and abortion on demand--the United Church of Christ, the denomination where Obama has his membership. (136-40)

Barton’s criticism of Obama prepares the way for how Mansfield closes this new chapter. Mansfield says, **“The challenge for Obama, if indeed there is a new spiritual dynamic working in his life, will be to bridge between his new-found faith and politics.”** (140) **Here is a major changed focus in his 2011 edition.** For Mansfield, this new emphasis is concentrated on the hot button social issues of abortion and gay marriage (see quote, below).



## Quote

“What is the connection between Obama’s love of Scripture and his view of abortion, for example? How does he make a biblical case for refusing to support the biblical view of marriage: How does he understand same-sex marriage from a foundation of faith?...Then (when these questions are answered in the 2012 campaign) we shall see if the new Barack Obama indeed emerges. Will it be the religiously passionate Barack Obama, the man who ministered to his hurting friend in an hour of crisis; or will it be the cool, practiced politico who takes the stage.” (141-42)

Until the closing pages, Chapter 6 in the new edition is the same as the earlier one (with a few small changes); here Mansfield has deleted five pages and substituted three new ones (with the exception of a few sentences in the next to last paragraph). The way I look at it, these continuities and changes represent **Mansfield’s intention to shift his continuing high hopes for Obama’s influence on American faith and politics from the theologically liberal Obama in the 2008 edition to the more recently changed theological conservative Obama he sees in 2011.**

It’s interesting that Mansfield added a new angle to his interpretation of Obama in 2011--he pictures Obama as **a centrist mediator between the more extreme Left and Right**. He sees a decades-long polarization between a Religious Left that sees government as partially responsible for the common good and a Religious Right that is suspicious of this emphasis. He claims the former tries “to keep moral judgments about homosexuality and abortion” out of the public square, while the latter is “determined to man the barricades of biblical morality in the land.” He says in the past Obama was the champion of the former, while George W. Bush championed the latter. The former makes “compassion” the measure of good government (**I would say it’s rather equality of opportunity**), while the latter makes “individual freedom” that measure. The former grounds its position in the Old Testament prophets commitment to “social justice” (**I would add Jesus and Paul in the New Testament as fully as central**), while the latter “would prefer ‘if a man won’t work he shouldn’t eat’ and ‘proclaim liberty throughout all the land’” (**these seem to me to be rather shallow for supposed biblical mandates for conservative positions**). (155-56)

Mansfield points out that a new American generation is tired of this polarization and questions the premises on both sides. He asks if poverty is only a function of “bad character” or does it also arise from “oppression and injustice and greed.” He also asks if there is any sanction for abortion in the Bible and mentions passages that justify the Pro-Life position--the unborn leaping for joy in the womb and being filled with the Holy Spirit (**these also seem to be a stretch for finding a biblical mandate supporting the present-day push for anti-abortion laws**). (156)

Mansfield holds that Obama stands at the center of the polarized positions, because he has undergone a spiritual deepening in the Bible and tradition since his more “radical” days of championing the Religious Left. **Mansfield hopes that he will bridge the religious divide “by extolling the fully orbed social vision of Scripture that both movements fail to fully appreciate.”** (156-57)

Since I bought this 2011 revised edition shortly after it was published, I have disagreed with Mansfield’s expectation that Obama’s spiritual growth in his personal faith (seemingly more conservatively evangelical, according to some of his spiritual advisors) would translate into a change in his political policies, especially on abortion and gay marriage. My doubts were confirmed in 2012 when Obama announced his personal stance in favor of gay marriage. [Click here for a link to an article in \*The Washington Post\* about Joel Hunter’s disappointment about this.](#)

For my take on Mansfield’s full interpretation of Obama’s kind of faith in his 2008 edition, see the end of my Section 2, on page 11, below.)

I also see Obama as standing against the extremes of religious Right and Left. However, since I’m center-left in my faith stance, I view his centrism as grounded in a quite different “fully orbed social vision” of the Bible than does Mansfield. (See my take at the end of my second section, below.)

Still, even with my reservations about some of the main thrusts of the 2011 edition, I believe Mansfield provides important information in it about the behind-the-scenes spiritual support Obama has been receiving since his election.

(2) Mansfield is what I would describe as a theologically conservative evangelical Christian who is center-right politically, except for the issues of abortion and gay marriage. Because I'm center-left in my faith and politics, I find myself disagreeing with **Mansfield's negative evaluation of postmodern liberal Christianity, even though I agree with many of his political views about what needs to be healed in our nation.**

(Note: the passage references in this section and the next come from the original 2008 edition, most of which were also included in the later edition.)

Mansfield devotes his Chapter 3, "Faith Fit for the Age," to his interpretation of the kind of Christianity to which Obama committed himself. Obama's faith is best seen as precisely the kind that was sweeping younger generations in the U.S. at the time. That faith is "not so much to join a tradition as to find belonging among a people; not so much to accept a body of doctrine as to find welcome for what they already believe; not so much to surrender their lives but to enhance who they already are." (50-1/54) (My view is that this characterization basically applies only to those of younger generations and others who call themselves "spiritual but not religious.")

According to Mansfield, Obama certainly spoke of his faith in traditional evangelical terms, as described above. However, it's best understood as the faith of **the "new postmodern generation that picks and chooses its own truth from tradition faith, much as a man customizes his meal at a buffet."** (my emphasis) Mansfield supports this point by quoting phrases from Obama's *Audacity of Hope* (right). (However, from a center-left faith perspective, these phrases point to aspects of the deep, two-centuries-old liberal Christian tradition held by sizable numbers of Americans, including myself.) Mansfield does recognize this when he says that this view of faith is shared by most mainline Protestant denominations, which includes Obama's denomination, the United Church of Christ. (Still, we liberals object to evangelicals' common criticism of mainline Christianity for "picking and choosing" from the Bible rather than accepting it as a whole. Liberals find this unfair and disingenuous, since the very nature of the Bible and its interpretation makes "picking and choosing" unavoidable even for evangelicals.)

#### Quote

"Obama says that he was seeking a 'vessel' for his values, a 'community or shared traditions in which to ground my most deeply held beliefs.' Rather than yield his mind without reserve to Scripture and its revelation of God, Obama was relieved that a "religious commitment did not require me to suspend critical thinking." Rather than 'renounce the world and its ways'...he was pleased that his faith would not require 'a retreat from the world that I now and loved.'" (52-3/57)

#### Quote

"Asked by a reporter how he can so warmly embrace non-Christian faiths when Jesus Christ said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me,' Obama insisted that this is only a 'particular verse' and that its meaning depends on how the few words are interpreted. Similarly, in his support of civil unions for homosexuals, he is not 'willing to accept a reading of the Bible that considers an obscure line in Romans to be more defining of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount.'" (57/62)

Mansfield is also concerned that this view of Christianity is not exclusivist. For Obama, "Christianity is but one religious tree rooted in the common ethical soil of all human experience." (55/60) Another quote (left) is helpful for understanding **Mansfield's own commitment to Christian exclusivism and a view of the Bible that grounds proof-texting, which ends any open discussion of hot button issues.**

It's important to note, however, that I think Mansfield correctly identifies **the view of scripture in black, activist, politically liberal Christianity (like Trinity) as one that "rooted individual faith in an obligation to change the world. It was in this sense that Obama found theological sanction for his political**

**liberalism."** (61/66) (my emphasis) The most important thing about Obama's twenty years at Trinity was that **he came to believe that "faith ought to influence governance, that religion has a legitimate role in the marketplace of political ideas" and he is bringing "a new brand of faith-based politics" to the public square.** This was a significant break from **the traditional secularism of the political Left (67/75-76)** that in 2008 Mansfield hoped Obama could further.

I find **Mansfield a center-right evangelical on many social issues other than abortion and gay marriage** (a growing segment, I'm happy to say, of the evangelical community, especially the young adult generations). **This is a stance that has a lot of common ground with center-left people of faith.** He lists some of these issues--poverty, racism, preemptive war and rampant immorality--in a powerful conclusion to the 2008 edition (which unfortunately was deleted in 2011--[see quote at the top of page 6, above](#)). These issues were still very much part of his 2011 edition, even though his hope that Obama would change his political policies on abortion and gay marriage did take center stage.

### My Take

#### On Mansfield's Goal of Creating an "Objective Account" of Obama's Faith

Mansfield, like many evangelical Christians, sees the term "postmodern" as totally negative, primarily because it is viewed as relativistic with respect to truth and moral values. While there are certainly many forms of postmodernism that are basically relativistic, there are also many philosophical and theological forms that are not. For those who hold them, those forms are essentially positive developments helping us move beyond the limitations of the 400-year-old "modern" Western world. (For more on this, see pages 1.2, 1.3, 5.1, 5.2 and the more detailed 6.2 on the website.)

I've stated in this review that I respect Mansfield's account of Obama's faith. It is a quite unbiased, fair and appreciative account **from his point of view** (as I hope my account of his book has been **from my point of view**). In postmodern stances there is no such thing as an "objective" point of view from which to judge truth and value. Another way of saying this is that nobody sees from a God's eye point of view. And, I must stress, this does not mean that every view is as good as any other--relativism. That's why it's vital for everyone to own and share her/his point of view as best we are aware of it. We are always necessarily witnessing to our positions, not proving them.

So, let me witness to you that since I'm coming from a postmodern center-left faith stance, I have a fundamentally different view of the Bible than does Mansfield, who I believe is coming from a modern, conservative evangelical stance. For example, this means that on the particular hot button issues of abortion and gay marriage, I don't believe the Bible provides definite, normative views on modern issues of abortion and gay marriage. Neither does it provide direct support for the 18th century ideas of either political freedom or the relation of religion and politics in the American Constitution, as Mansfield seems to believe.

I don't share the view that there is such a thing as "**the** fully orbed social vision of Scripture" (my emphasis) (see the Mansfield quote, page 9, above). For me and other postmodern liberals, there can be no unitary, eternal social vision in the Bible that can be simply applied as God's will across historical time and geographical space. Even among evangelicals, I believe, one necessarily has to pick and choose from often quite divergent positions in the Bible as foundations for one's stance. The question is, On what basis does one choose? **While I don't believe I can prove this to Mansfield, I can witness to it and give reasons why I think it is a better position (as I also need to listen respectfully to his counter reasons). That's how genuine growth in understanding happens** (see page 6.2 Kloppenberg on the website for his excellent explanation of why and how this is Obama's governing strategy, grounded in certain particular parts of American political tradition and not others).

(3) Precisely because Mansfield is an evangelical Christian, **his argument that Obama is a real (though not traditional) Christian should carry weight with fellow evangelicals, so many of whom have accepted the far-right disinformation repeated incessantly by Obama-haters claiming he is really a Muslim or a radical black liberation Christian who hates whites.**

Mansfield says the question about whether Obama is a Muslim raises its head again and again because of his childhood years in Indonesia. If he was ever a Muslim, his conversion to Christianity later in life would make him an apostate

(*murtadd*) in the eyes of Muslims. Many critics have used these arguments to make their charges that Obama is not a Christian or that he once was a Muslim and still has sympathetic connections with it as his first religion.

Mansfield undercuts these claims with some simple facts about Islam. He says Obama undoubtedly said the words “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet,” when he worshipped occasionally in a Mosque with his step-father. However, as Mansfield explains, while neither the Koran nor the *Hadith* speak to the issue, consensus of Muslim teaching is that in order for those words to make one a Muslim, one must attain puberty. That was not the case with Obama. (16-18/18-21) This controversy should have been put to rest long ago.

With respect to charges that Obama is a radical black liberation Christian because he attended Trinity UCC church in Chicago for twenty years, let me start by repeating what I said on page 3 above:

Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to helping readers sympathetically understand the full reality of Trinity United Church of Christ (and its controversial pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright) as well as the nature and history of the **black social justice theology** that grounds it. [This information is essential for everyone who wants to understand Obama’s particular kind of Christian faith](#), but it’s especially crucial for those who question Obama’s faith based only on that tiny video clip from one of Wright’s sermons played over and over again on TV in 2008 when he shouts “God damns America!”

In the Acknowledgments, Mansfield thanks Trinity UCC for “hosting (him) so graciously over an Easter weekend.” In his text I assume he is describing his own experiences, thoughts and feelings related to this visit. (I have to assume, because he uses the third person “a visitor.”) It is a detailed, nearly 20-page account, (30-48) including what he learned about Trinity’s beloved former pastor, Jeremiah Wright.

Here are a few details to give you the flavor: (30-36/32-38)

- Worshippers in some cases walking long distances with a yearning for their spiritual home
- Being greeted by older men and women with warm, loving hospitality
- A feeling that this is not just church; it’s a religious experience of historic proportions for those attending (2,700 seats of the contemporary sanctuary filled at this service--a membership of nearly 10,000--a budget of nearly \$10 million, supporting more than 70 ministries of all kinds)
- A picture over the information desk of a black Jesus with his arms around a joyful black family
- All kinds of attire, all are welcome--a congregation of all levels of society from the downtrodden to black, upwardly mobile professionals
- Sponsors a large outreach to gay and lesbian singles (this is controversial among most African-American Christians)
- Worship begins with lively congregational singing before the several-hundred member, African colors robed choir takes over
- The new lead pastor, Otis Moss III preaches--Yale educated--sermon has an impact on the congregation “that is at once educational, inspiring, and of unsparing challenge--few sermons as good will be preached anywhere in America on this Sunday morning” (remember Mansfield pastored evangelical churches for many years)--a white visitor not used to the black style of biblical stories shifting at any moment into today’s racial and political parallels

In the last section I described some significant differences between Mansfield and liberals like myself. In this section I have nothing but admiration for him. He was willing to place himself in an unfamiliar situation among people of a very different kind of Christian faith--a liberal, black church--and be open to learn and have a new understanding of and appreciation for them on their own terms.

I’m dealing with his Easter morning experience in some detail, because it and the accompanying research he did can really help white Americans--from all parts of religious and political spectrums--to see more clearly the unique nature of African American churches. Even when they’re conservative theologically, they are often liberal politically due to their commitment to social justice for all.

Mansfield says that the spirit of a man not present was hovering over worship--Jeremiah Wright, senior pastor for thirty-six years until recently. He grew the congregation from 87 in 1972 to the largest UCC church in the nation. Unlike the short clip of a radical, angry preacher saying “God damns America” on YouTube played over and over again in attempts to discredit his spiritual son, Barack Obama, he was loved by his congregation for his holistic caring, faithful ministry. (36-7/38-40)

Who is Jeremiah Wright really?

Wright was born in 1941, a Baptist preacher’s kid, who dropped out of college to join the



U.S. Marines. He returned to college in 1967 and received a B.A. at Howard University in Washington D.C. He went through a period of disillusionment with the black church and growing hatred of whites as he participated in the Civil Rights movement. But a mentor from his earlier college days, Dr. Samuel Proctor, a professor at Virginia Union was always calling him to a higher commitment to... (right).

#### Quote

“...the carpenter from Capernaum who knew oppression, who knew hatred and who knew colonialism, but who also knew (personally) a God who was greater than any government and who promised a peace more powerful than any peace the ‘world’ could ever give.” (39/41)

With Proctor’s support, Wright regained his call to ministry and in preparation earned a masters from Chicago Divinity School and later a doctorate from United Theological Seminary. He was influenced by the black power movements and the liberation theology of James Cone in the late ‘60s. Mansfield says that most traditional black and white Christians view this theology as an unholy mixing of Christianity and Marxism that stirs up black bigotry against whites. Wright was powerfully influenced by the liberation motifs of these views, but did not end up with any hatred of whites. He did teach the people of his congregation to see U.S. history as mostly on the side of oppression both internally and in its foreign policy. (39/42)

Mansfield notes that **there is no middle ground of public opinion about Wright—he is demonized and praised** and the truth is that he is a mixture of many contradictory things: “He could be generous and small, ennobling and crushing, glorious and dark...And **all of this, the angry and the kind, the holy and the harsh, would come to bear on the life of Barack Obama.**” (46-7/49-51) In Chapter 3, Mansfield indicates that Obama must have heard some anti-American sentiments during his time at Trinity, even though Obama says he never heard such radical views as the ones that found their way onto YouTube and threatening to derail his run for the presidency. Obama took a public stand against them saying, “I vehemently disagree and strongly condemn the statements” and was “pained and angered by them.” (65-67)

Mansfield raises the issue of Wright again in his final chapter, where he uses it as his one extended example of how Obama’s rise to national prominence could be an opening for significant healing for the nation. (133-40/147-56) Unfortunately, most Americans had just heard a few snippets of Wright’s sermons, which caused them to think he was a madman. But Mansfield says he is not crazy. And **he warns that not looking deeper and seeing that half his charges about America are true is to miss the chance to heal the “grievous, festering wound” of race in America.** Just one grievous example is that from 1932 to 1972 in Macon County, Alabama, our government misused blacks for deceptive medical experiments on syphilis in which dozens died. A class-action law suit awarded the survivors \$9 million dollars in 1973, and President Bill Clinton apologized some twenty-four years later for the government action.

Mansfield says that **a society of citizens striving to be a great society should be able to hear and be willing to act on justifiable moral charges from Wright and others.** He notes a few other examples: (1) the poverty rate in the U.S. was exactly the same when he was writing as it was when Martin Luther King launched his Poor People’s Campaign of 1968, (2) the continued suffering of Native Americans and (3) the legacy of discrimination against African Americans, which while less overt, still is much too prevalent.

What really gets many folks angry about Wright, according to Mansfield, is that he makes his charges from a Christian pulpit. He says this reveals a significant misunderstanding of African American Christianity. From the time of slavery, Sunday morning worship was about the only time blacks could have their own community. Prophetic witness to social injustice and hope for a time of liberation developed in ways that would later lead naturally to leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. **MLK understood the relationship between church and state in a way that was formative for Wright and Obama** (quote below).

#### Quote

“The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority... if the church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo, and recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in terms of justice and peace, it will enkindle the imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men, imbuing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, justice, and peace.” (139/153)

Mansfield points to how Obama described the difference between Wright's generation of African Americans and his own. Wright's lived through times of humiliation, fear and violence, which understandably made its members hurt and angry at a deep level that would come out in public. Obama described his younger generation of blacks as those committed to "embracing the burdens of our past without becoming the victims of our past" and so able to recognize the many gains in racial justice while not being blind to how much work still needed to be done.

Mansfield concludes his second chapter by returning to his Easter morning experience upon leaving worship. (47-8/51-2) He tells the story of little black girl telling her mother proudly how she had learned in Sunday School that several people in the Bible stories were probably black. The mother told her daughter she was proud of her for learning those things. The girl said, "I know, Momma. I can't wait to tell 'em at school. I bet they don't know it." Then, Mansfield ends with this quote (right).

#### Quote

"The visitor, having heard, begins to understand. And though he is white and of another theological stream, he looks back at Trinity United Church of Christ and sees it for a moment through different eyes, and as though for the first

Kudos to  
Mansfield!

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(Click on this link for a 10-minute YouTube video of a 2008 Mansfield bookstore talk on this book. Note: the audio isn't synced to the video, so you may want to just listen to it.)

[Link](#)

[Link](#)

(Click on this link for a 4-minute YouTube video of Mansfield talking about why he revised the book, intending it to appear before the 2012 election.)

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(Click on this link for a 3-minute YouTube video of Mansfield's new 2012 book, *The Mormonizing of America* published before Romney won the Republican nomination. I include it here, because I will not be reviewing it prior to the November election.)

[Link](#)

[Clay Evans](#)

(Click this link for an Op-Ed by Clay Evans in *The Daily Camera* of Boulder Colorado concerning whether Mormons are Christians and that it shouldn't matter in the 2012 election.)