

**From:** H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 14, 2013 3:12 PM  
**To:** 'Russorv@state.gov'  
**Subject:** Fw: Read this when you have time... Wendell Berry on same sex marriage:

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**From:** Burns Strider [mailto:[burnsstrider@clintonemail.com](mailto:burnsstrider@clintonemail.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 14, 2013 02:21 PM Eastern Standard Time  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Read this when you have time... Wendell Berry on same sex marriage:

B6

I sent to Jon and gang for the President...

[www.abpnews.com/culture/social-issues/item/8130-wendell-berry-expounds-on-gay-marriage#.UPRVzxBxF4o.twitter](http://www.abpnews.com/culture/social-issues/item/8130-wendell-berry-expounds-on-gay-marriage#.UPRVzxBxF4o.twitter)

Christian opponents to same-sex marriage want the government to treat homosexuals as a special category of persons subject to discrimination, similar to the way that African-Americans and women were categorized in the past, cultural and economic critic Wendell Berry told Baptist ministers in Kentucky Jan. 11.

Berry, a prolific author of books, poems and essays who won the National Humanities Medal in 2010 and was 2012 Jefferson lecturer for the National Endowment for the Humanities, offered "a sort of general declaration" on the subject of gay marriage at a "Following the Call of the Church in Times Like These" conference at Georgetown College. Berry said he chose to comment publicly to elaborate on what little he has said about the topic in the past.

"I must say that it's a little wonderful to me that in 40-odd years of taking stands on controversial issues, and at great length sometimes, the two times that I think I've stirred up the most passionate opposition has been with a tiny little essay on computers (his 1987 essay "Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer" published in *Harper's* led some to accuse him of being anti-technology) and half a dozen or a dozen sentences on gay marriage," Berry said.

Berry said he could recall only twice before when he commented publicly on the issue, in a single paragraph in a collection of essays published in 2005 and in an interview with the *National Review* in 2012.

"My argument, much abbreviated both times, was the sexual practices of consenting adults ought not to be subjected to the government's approval or disapproval, and that domestic partnerships in which people who live together and devote their lives to one another ought to receive the spousal rights, protections and privileges the government allows to heterosexual couples," Berry said.

Berry said liberals and conservatives have invented "a politics of sexuality" that establishes marriage as a "right" to be granted or withheld by whichever side prevails. He said both viewpoints contravene principles of democracy that rights are self-evident and inalienable and not determined and granted or withheld by the government.

"Christians of a certain disposition have found several ways to categorize homosexuals as different as themselves, who are in the category of heterosexual and therefore normal and therefore good," Berry said. What is unclear, he said, is why they single out homosexuality as a perversion.

"The Bible, as I pointed out to the writers of *National Review*, has a lot more to say against fornication and adultery than against homosexuality," he said. "If one accepts the 24th and 104th Psalms as scriptural norms, then surface mining and other forms of earth destruction are perversions. If we take the Gospels seriously, how

can we not see industrial warfare -- with its inevitable massacre of innocents -- as a most shocking perversion? By the standard of all scriptures, neglect of the poor, of widows and orphans, of the sick, the homeless, the insane, is an abominable perversion."

"Jesus talked of hating your neighbor as tantamount to hating God, and yet some Christians hate their neighbors by policy and are busy hunting biblical justifications for doing so," he said. "Are they not perverts in the fullest and fairest sense of that term? And yet none of these offenses -- not all of them together -- has made as much political/religious noise as homosexual marriage."

Another argument used, Berry said, is that homosexuality is "unnatural."

"If it can be argued that homosexual marriage is not reproductive and is therefore unnatural and should be forbidden on that account, must we not argue that childless marriages are unnatural and should be annulled?" he asked.

"One may find the sexual practices of homosexuals to be unattractive or displeasing and therefore unnatural, but anything that can be done in that line by homosexuals can be done and is done by heterosexuals," Berry continued. "Do we need a legal remedy for this? Would conservative Christians like a small government bureau to inspect, approve and certify their sexual behavior? Would they like a colorful tattoo verifying government approval on the rumps of lawfully copulating parties? We have the technology, after all, to monitor everybody's sexual behavior, but so far as I can see so eager an interest in other people's private intimacy is either prurient or totalitarian or both."

"The oddest of the strategies to condemn and isolate homosexuals is to propose that homosexual marriage is opposed to and a threat to heterosexual marriage, as if the marriage market is about to be cornered and monopolized by homosexuals," Berry said. "If this is not industrial capitalist paranoia, it at least follows the pattern of industrial capitalist competitiveness. We must destroy the competition. If somebody else wants what you've got, from money to marriage, you must not hesitate to use the government -- small of course -- to keep them from getting it."

Berry said "so-called traditional marriage" is "for sure suffering a statistical failure, but this is not the result of a homosexual plot."

"Heterosexual marriage does not need defending," Berry said. "It only needs to be practiced, which is pretty hard to do just now."

"But the difficulty is not assigned to any group of scapegoats," he said. "It is rooted mainly in the values and priorities of our industrial capitalist system in which every one of us is complicit."

"If I were one of a homosexual couple -- the same as I am one of a heterosexual couple -- I would place my faith and hope in the mercy of Christ, not in the judgment of Christians," Berry said. "When I consider the hostility of political churches to homosexuality and homosexual marriage, I do so remembering the history of Christian war, torture, terror, slavery and annihilation against Jews, Muslims, black Africans, American Indians and others. And more of the same by Catholics against Protestants, Protestants against Catholics, Catholics against Catholics, Protestants against Protestants, as if by law requiring the love of God to be balanced by hatred of some neighbor for the sin of being unlike some divinely preferred us. If we are a Christian nation -- as some say we are, using the adjective with conventional looseness -- then this Christian blood thirst continues wherever we find an officially identifiable evil, and to the immense enrichment of our Christian industries of war."

"Condemnation by category is the lowest form of hatred, for it is cold-hearted and abstract, lacking even the courage of a personal hatred," Berry said. "Categorical condemnation is the hatred of the mob. It makes cowards brave. And there is nothing more fearful than a religious mob, a mob overflowing with righteousness -- as at the crucifixion and before and since. This can happen only after we have made a categorical refusal to kindness: to heretics, foreigners, enemies or any other group different from ourselves."

“Perhaps the most dangerous temptation to Christianity is to get itself officialized in some version by a government, following pretty exactly the pattern the chief priest and his crowd at the trial of Jesus,” Berry said. “For want of a Pilate of their own, some Christians would accept a Constantine or whomever might be the current incarnation of Caesar.”

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