

Responding to Obama: Reactions to the Philadelphia speech on race

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Richard Lischer, professor of preaching, Duke Divinity School: “It’s been 40 years since we have heard redemptive language in the political arena. Like Martin Luther King Jr., Obama did not flinch from addressing the lingering pain and anger of racism in America. Like King, Obama understands how questions of race are bound up with religion. It’s no accident that the current controversy arose in a congregation.”

Steve Monsma, senior research fellow, Calvin College: “Barack Obama gave full and proper weight to the dark evil of slavery and racism with which this country has never fully come to terms. And yet I still came away troubled by the depth of hatred evidenced by Reverend Wright. As an evangelical Christian who believes in the reality of both God’s blessings and his damnation, to call upon God to damn any person or nation is a fearsome thing to do.”

Leo P. Ribuffo, history professor, George Washington University: “Not only is Obama’s candor remarkable but so too his matter-of-fact acceptance of human flaws and frailties. He does not require Americans to deny their less-than-admirable gut feelings and profess love for one another. Appeals of that sort, he seems to sense, are utopian, despite their sentimental charm. Rather, he urges Americans to come together in practical solidarity to work on common problems.”

-Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

Kent Millard, pastor of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Indianapolis: “Senator Richard Lugar . . . is [a] member of our congregation, and I would hope that he would never be held accountable for everything I have said in the last 15 years. Why is there any assumption that a person in church is expected to agree with everything a pastor says?”

-New York Times