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# Heresy Precedes Homosexuality

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The mere fact that the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson is the Episcopal Church's first openly homosexual bishop ensures that he will be a media celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic. To a great extent, he has become a symbol to both conservatives and liberals in contemporary Christianity.

To conservatives, Bishop Robinson represents a near-total theological meltdown. An entire universe of the theological principles and doctrines of orthodox Christianity must be jettisoned or redefined before an openly homosexual bishop becomes imaginable. In order for this to happen, the tradition of the church must be sidelined and the authority of Scripture must be undermined.

For liberals, Bishop Robinson is a sign of hope. The liberal wing of institutional Christianity represents a call for theological revolution in order, they would argue, to liberate Christianity from repressive doctrines and an oppressive tradition. The election of Gene Robinson as the Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire is, in their sense, the shape of things to come.

The Anglican Communion — the worldwide communion of Anglican churches — may be torn apart by the election and consecration of Bishop Robinson. Thus, there is significant interest in the Bishop within the British press. While recently in London, Bishop Robinson attracted widespread media attention by claiming that, without its homosexual priests, the Church of England would collapse.

Here is how *The Times* [London] reported the story:

*The openly gay bishop whose ordination sparked the crisis in the Anglican Communion has claimed the Church of England would be close to shutting down if it was forced to manage without its gay clergy.*

*The Bishop of New Hampshire in the US, the Right Rev Gene Robinson, who is divorced and lives openly in partnership with a gay man, said he found it "mystifying" that the mother church of the Anglican Communion was unable to be honest about the number of gay clergy in its ranks.*

More:

*He said many of the English church's clergy lived openly in their rectories with gay partners, with the full knowledge of their bishops. But he criticised the stance of bishops who threaten the clergy with enmity should their relationships become public.*

*Speaking in an interview in London, Bishop Gene said: "I have met so many gay partnered clergy here and it is so troubling to hear them tell me that their bishop comes to their house for dinner, knows fully about their relationship, is wonderfully supportive but has also said if this ever becomes public then I'm your worst enemy.*

Ruth Gledhill of *The Times* published the entire interview, conducted by Andrew Collier, on her [blog](#). In the interview, Bishop Robinson observed that the Episcopal Church has been ordaining openly homosexual priests for years, but that controversy emerged over his election as bishop. As the Bishop rightly observed, it makes no logical sense to allow the one and forbid the other. Both conservatives and liberals should agree on that point.

Here are Bishop Robinson's words:

*That's right. It's very interesting. As I look back on this – and perhaps it has something to do with the theology of the episcopate – ECUSA has been ordaining gay priests for many, many years. Not every bishop will do that but many do. I will and have. Many make a requirement that the person be celibate, but many do not make such a requirement. It's interesting that the wider Anglican Communion has either not known that or has not chosen to make an issue of it before now. I understand that a bishop is understood to be ordained for the whole church, although that's true for the priesthood as well. One is a priest of the church and provided they are a priest of good standing, they can exercise their ministry anywhere in the world. It's just a surprise to me that this issue did not become an issue until a gay and lesbian person became elected bishop. If it's wrong for one (bishop and priest) it ought to be wrong for both. Bishops have a certain importance, but it's just an importance that the church has given them. It's not an innate importance. So it either ought to be wrong for all orders of ministry, or for none.*

The Bible clearly disqualifies an unrepentant homosexual from the Christian ministry. Why would a church allow the ordination of homosexual priests and then balk at homosexual bishops? Forces for biblical orthodoxy within the Anglican Communion must recognize that a decision to allow openly homosexual priests is, in effect, a decision to allow homosexual bishops. [The Church of England faces this reality on the question of female bishops already. The decision to ordain women as priests means the inevitability of women as bishops.]

All this is interesting enough, but one section of the interview that escaped media attention deserves a closer look. In this section, Bishop Robinson explains that he was attracted to the Anglican tradition because of its spirit of enquiry:

*'Yes. I go off to college, which quite coincidentally happened to be owned by the southern dioceses of the Episcopal Church and met an assistant chaplain there. When I raised my questions again, instead of telling me that I shouldn't be asking, instead he congratulated me on asking all the right questions and said he didn't have all the answers, but I was welcome to come in and let's look for those answers together. I remember being struck at how undefensive he was about his religion – that Anglicanism seemed to be big enough and broad enough to allow and even encourage those kinds of questions. It had its own answers, but it existed to help me come to my own answers. I remember thinking 'gosh, that seems to me to be the way religion ought to be'. So I was very encouraged by that. One day when I was ranting and raving about how much of the Nicene Creed I didn't believe, he said 'well, when you're in church, just say the parts of the creed you do agree with. Be silent for the others. We're not asking you do so something against your integrity'. And again I thought whew, that's what one would hope for from a religion – honesty and integrity. And I guess that's a theme that has carried throughout my life in Ministry – that God wants us to be honest and full of integrity.*

This is indeed a fascinating and revealing recollection. As a young man, Gene Robinson ranted and raved to an assistant chaplain of his Episcopal college about "how much of the Nicene Creed I didn't believe." The chaplain's response is classic liberalism — just say what you believe and stay silent for the rest.

The Nicene Creed, we should remember, is one of the touchstones of Christian orthodoxy — a creed that defines the full deity of Christ and affirms a summary of biblical teachings concerning the Christ:

*We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen*

This is the creed about which Bishop Robinson, as a young college student, ranted and raved. This is the creed in

which he found so much he did not believe. This is the very essence of Christian doctrine. Without these truths, there is no Christianity.

So, long before we ask the question of why a church would elect an openly homosexual bishop, we must ask why it would ordain a candidate for the ministry who, at the very least, openly doubted the very basis of the church's faith?

The election of an openly homosexual bishop does not emerge out of the blue. It can be traced to a succession of events and decisions made by this church. The toleration of heresy precedes the toleration of homosexuality. Bishop Robinson helpfully reminds us of this important fact.

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function pictureGalleryPopup(pubUrl,articleId) {  
var newWin = window.open(pubUrl+'template/2.0-0/element/pictureGalleryPopup.jsp?  
id='+articleId+'&&offset=0&&sectionName=Faith','mywindow','menubar=0,resizable=0,width=615,height=655');  
}
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