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The Los Angeles Times Takes Sides — But at Least Gets the Connection Right

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The editors of *The Los Angeles Times* have evidently decided to opine on matters of theology, offering their insights into the issues of gender and sexuality in recent church debates.

In “[Battling Over Bishops](#),” published in today’s edition of the paper, the editors celebrate the election of Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori as the new Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Fair enough. The paper has the right to publish its opinions on any subject. But the arguments put forth by the editors deserve a close look.

Consider these two paragraphs:

In the religious as in the secular world, opponents of women’s rights and opponents of gay rights are often the same people. In many ways the ecclesiastical earthquake of three years ago is a replay of the controversy that followed the Episcopal Church’s decision a generation ago to ordain women as priests. Then as now, conservative Episcopalians said that a more inclusive ministry was scripturally unsound. What both controversies have in common is not only a fixation on sex and gender but also the challenge of deciding what religious practices can and should change with the times. How literally should Christians take language in Scripture forbidding a woman to “to usurp authority over the man,” or declaring that it’s an abomination for a man to “lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman,” or saying that a church leader should be “the husband of one wife”? Are such proscriptions spiritual wheat or cultural chaff; an accurate echo of the divine voice or a reflection of merely human customs that can evolve?

Following the paper’s logic, the opponents of the ordination of women and homosexuals are linked by a common thread — a refusal to see the biblical instructions as “a reflection of merely human customs that can evolve.” Or, as the paper more pointedly argues, conservatives stand in the way of progress because they refuse to discard the “cultural chaff” found in the Bible, along with the “spiritual wheat.”

The editors of *The Los Angeles Times* deserve credit for acknowledging what so many others deny — that the issues of women serving as pastors and unrepentant homosexuals serving as pastors are inescapably linked. A common hermeneutical thread binds these two questions together. The hermeneutical jump necessary to justify women pastors (or women bishops, etc.) is merely a precursor to the jump required to support homosexual pastors (or homosexual bishops, etc.).

The paper’s editors place themselves on the wrong side as they editorialize on these issues, but at least they understand the link that binds them together. That’s more than I can say for some theologians.

