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Nicholas Kristof Strikes Again, This Time on 'God and Sex'

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Tuesday, October 26, 2004

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Just last year, Kristof decided to write a column in which he argued that evangelical Christians are proof positive that America is deeply anti-intellectual. "The faith in the Virgin Birth reflects the way American Christianity is becoming less intellectual and more mystical over time," he asserted. Kristof was knocked off of his secularist rocker by research data showing that the vast majority of American Christians believe in the virgin birth, "despite the lack of scientific or historical evidence."

Kristof is becoming the gold-standard symbol of the cultural elite and media arrogance. Even as he once chided his fellow journalists for their "sneering tone about conservative Christianity itself," Kristof can't stop sneering himself. Now, in his column entitled "God and Sex," he takes his critique to a new level.

Without doubt, Kristof knows that his opening question will be an attention getter. By suggesting that "God made homosexuals who fall deeply, achingly in love with each other," he stacks the deck for his rhetorical game. When he asks of God, "Did he goof?", he sets himself up for a condescending dismissal of the Christian church's historic understanding of scripture.

Furthermore, all this was prompted by Kristof's outrage that measures opposing gay marriage are on the ballots in eleven states. As he notes, "All may pass; Oregon is the only state where the outcome seems uncertain." Just as in previous articles Kristof has shared his frustrated incredulity over the fact that a majority of Americans believe in the truth of the virgin birth and reject the theory of evolution, he now wants to rescue conservative, Bible-believing Christians from what he condescendingly sees as an unsophisticated interpretation of the Bible.

Of course, Kristof now poses as an expert in these arguments. As he asserts in his article, "Over the last couple of months, I've been researching the question of how the Bible regards homosexuality." So Kristof has put himself through a self-directed crash course in the Bible and sexuality. Unfortunately, he needed a better teacher.

Why would Kristof care about the Bible in the first place? "I think it's presumptuous of conservatives to assume that God is on their side," he avers. "But since Americans are twice as likely to believe in the Devil as in evolution, I also think it's stupid of liberals to forfeit the religious field." Be warned, Kristof is not about to "forfeit the religious field." To the contrary, he now intends to correct what he sees as two thousand years of the church's misunderstanding.

Just who has Nicholas Kristof been reading? The first "scholar" he mentions is Daniel Helminiak, a professor at the University of West Georgia and author of *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*. Helminiak, as Kristof notes, argues that the Bible does not really condemn homosexuality at all. Even Kristof thinks this is going a bit too far. "I don't really buy that," he commented. But, as Kristof's column reveals, he has bought more of Helminiak's argument than he

acknowledges.

The homosexual movement has collected an entire corps of “scholars” ready to turn the Bible on its head and argue that the clear scriptural condemnation of homosexuality is just one big unfortunate misunderstanding. Among these pro-homosexual theologians and professors, Helminiak stands on the radical left—and that’s really saying something.

Helminiak argues that if we read the Bible “as it was meant when it was written,” we will understand that “the Bible says almost nothing about homosexuality.” In other words, when the Bible talks about homosexuality, it really isn’t talking about what we now know as homosexuality at all. In order to make such a ludicrous argument, Helminiak must take the Bible apart, arguing that, for example, the clear condemnations of homosexual acts found in the book of Leviticus point only to the fact that Israel was not to participate in various Canaanite religious practices involving same-sex acts. The issue is merely “uncleanness” not immorality, he argues.

Of course, this approach gets rather difficult when one actually looks at the Biblical text. When Helminiak deals with the sin of Sodom for example [Genesis 19:1-11], he argues that the sin of Sodom was inhospitality. He does acknowledge that the sin of Sodom is complicated by homosexual rape, but he argues, “what is at stake here is male-male rape, not merely male-male sex.”

Kristof picks right up on Helminiak’s argument, asserting: “It’s true that the story of Sodom is treated by both modern scholars and by ancient Ezekiel as about hospitality, rather than by homosexuality.” Yet Ezekiel indites Sodom for its sins, both for inhospitality and for committing “abominations” in the sight of God. Of course, the conclusive proof that God punished Sodom for sexual perversion is found in Jude 7, where we are told that Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain were destroyed “since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh.” It’s hard to square the Helminiak-Kristof argument with that clear statement.

Helminiak betrays his real agenda when he shifts from his corrupted and contorted theology to social policy. “Despite it all,” he argues, “the important point is to recognize the difference between real wrong and mere taboo. Though it is not always easy to know the difference, we must not be hardheaded and treat as an ethical issue what is simply a matter of convention. Rather, with openness, intelligence, reasoned judgment, and good will we must continually work together to form a just, high minded and noble society.”

In other words, when all is said and done, a changing social consciousness demands a new interpretation of scripture—whether or not it has anything to do with what the text actually means and has always meant.

Even as he says that he doesn’t “really buy” Helminiak’s argument, Kristof borrows Helminiak’s claim that the Old Testament “can be read as describing gay affairs between David and Jonathan.” Helminiak’s discussion of these passages is particularly perverse, turning the poetic imagery of the Bible into an erotic burlesque. Even so, in perverting the text in this way, Helminiak demonstrates the extent to which the modern homosexual movement has corrupted and perverted our understanding of friendship among men. Given the way Helminiak and his clan read the Bible, when football players exchange slaps on the behind in the midst of a game, they are really playing some kind of homosexual script that is about sex rather than sports. The fact that this is nonsense puts no brakes on the ludicrous arguments Kristof is willing to accept.

When he argues that theologians now accept “that the Bible is big enough to encompass gay relationships and tolerance” he does so entirely on the basis of arguments and proposals made by homosexual advocates in the last several years. He is undeterred and unrestrained by the fact that the Christian church has never understood these texts as he explains them and has always understood them to say precisely the opposite of what he wants them to say.

This is arrogance of an almost breathtaking nature. Turning aside twenty centuries of Christian interpretation, Kristof will celebrate as “scholars” those who do the bidding of the homosexual movement and undermine the authority of scripture.

Eventually, Kristof must deal with the apostle Paul. He does this in two ways, using the arguments common to Helminiak and others to suggest that the apostle Paul either knew nothing about sexual orientation or isn’t actually addressing homosexual acts at all. This requires interpretive calisthenics of the most exaggerated sort. For example, Kristof confronts a passage like Romans 1:18-32, where Paul explicitly points to both male and female homosexuality as evidence of the utter sinfulness of humanity. The apostle minces no words, specifically addressing both homosexual acts

and homosexual passion.

This doesn't set Kristof back at all, and he even boxes himself into a corner by arguing that "the Bible has no unequivocal condemnation of lesbian sex." As an authority for this point he cites Bernadette Brooten, author of *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. Brooten, professor of Christian studies at Brandeis University, actually argues the opposite of what Kristof implies. Whereas Kristof asserts that Paul may not have been referring to lesbian sex acts at all, Brooten argues that the Pauline letters are evidence of the ancient world's condemnation of female same-sex acts and desire. Brooten leads "The Feminist Sexual Ethics Project" at Brandeis, and she envisions "an ethic of sexuality rooted in freedom, mutuality, consent, responsibility, and female (as well as male) pleasure."

In the end, even Kristof must concede that Paul must have been condemning homosexuality. But, he asks, "Do we really want to make Paul our lawgiver?"

Nicholas Kristof's latest column is further evidence—as if we needed further evidence—that the secular left knows full well that the most powerful opposition to its pro-homosexual ambitions is the Christian church and its allegiance to the Bible. Even as he begrudgingly concedes that "the traditionalists seem to be basically correct that the Old Testament does condemn at least male anal sex," he quickly adds, "Jesus never said a word about gays." He rejects Paul, turns other Biblical passages on their heads, and makes a general mockery out of the serious interpretation of scripture.

Kristof's ambition is, we must assume, to change public opinion on this issue and to influence conservative Christians to accept the pro-homosexual arguments for the normalization of same-sex acts, same-sex desire, and same-sex marriage. Not likely. America's Christians, however confused they may be on any number of issues, know enough to realize that it is Kristof, not God, who goofed.

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