

AlbertMohler.com

Gov. Dean's New Theology of Homosexuality

Just days after repackaging his personality to identify as a Christian candidate, Howard Dean has offered a tortured theological argument that is likely to impress no one—especially those who take Christianity seriously. This most secular of candidates—at least until the last two weeks—has now decided that his faith influenced his decision as Vermont's governor to sign the nation's first "civil union" legislation. As he told the Washington Post, "My view of Christianity ... is that the hallmark of being a Christian is to reach out to people who have been left behind. So I think there was a religious aspect to my decision to support civil unions."

Monday, January 12, 2004

Just days after repackaging his personality to identify as a Christian candidate, Howard Dean has offered a tortured theological argument that is likely to impress no one—especially those who take Christianity seriously. This most secular of candidates—at least until the last two weeks—has now decided that his faith influenced his decision as Vermont's governor to sign the nation's first "civil union" legislation. As he told the Washington Post, "My view of Christianity ... is that the hallmark of being a Christian is to reach out to people who have been left behind. So I think there was a religious aspect to my decision to support civil unions."

Dean declined to explain how his faith informs his political decisions during a Democratic candidate forum last Tuesday. Previously, he has said that his religion "doesn't inform my public policy." He told George Stephanopoulos of ABC News that his faith has "nothing" to do with his political career. Now, his tune has changed—but not very smoothly. Dr. Dean told reporters last Wednesday that he isn't really sure how his faith influences his political beliefs and decisions. "I don't go through an inventory like that when making public policy decisions," he said.

More remarkable still were Dean's remarks on homosexuality and Christianity. "The overwhelming evidence is that there is very significant, substantial genetic component to [homosexuality]," he argued. "From a religious point of view, if God had thought homosexuality is a sin, he would not have created gay people." Did you get that? Dean argues that God created homosexuals as homosexuals—He created gay people. How does Dean know that?

His argument is based in a determination that homosexuality is genetically based. The problem with this is, first of all, that no such determination exists. The most notorious "study" that supposedly proved a genetic link to homosexuality was conducted by Dean Hamer, a homosexual activist. This is hardly a settled finding of science, and it remains a controversial topic among both scientists and homosexual activists.

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, a physician and research scientist, argues that identifying a biological or genetic link to homosexuality [or any other behavioral state] is "well beyond our present research capacity." As Dr. Satinover concludes: "it is premature, and will almost certainly prove to be incorrect, to state that homosexuality is genetic."

Dr. Satinover's point is well taken, and he clarifies the state of the scientific debate with great clarity. But let's assume for a moment that a genetic link to homosexual behavior—or at least a homosexual propensity—is found. What then? Would we then be forced to accept Dr. Dean's argument? Not hardly.

First, we should stipulate that the Christian understanding of the effects of sin would most certainly explain the corruption of the human genetic code. Sin brought death, and that surely caused changes in the human genetic pattern. From Adam's sin onward, death has been a part of our genetic program. Aging brings effects that would never had been experienced in Eden. Could some genetic flaw—spread throughout a small minority of human beings—explain something about homosexuality? Not likely, but perhaps. If so, this would be perfectly consistent with the Christian view of fallen humanity.

Second, we must insist that the finding of a genetic link, should it ever be broadly accepted among scientists, would imply absolutely nothing about the moral status of homosexual behavior. God's verdict on homosexuality is determined in the Bible—not in any laboratory. There is no honest question about the biblical verdict on homosexuality. In both testaments, in multiple passages and in detailed arguments, the Bible declares all homosexual behavior to be inherently sinful—period. No finding in the field of genetics—or any other realm of human endeavor—can change that. Furthermore, we are informed that some scientists claim to have discovered [or presupposed] a genetic basis for alcoholism and other behavioral states. That does not mean that such behaviors are thus removed from moral sanction. Not by a long shot. A genetic predisposition to cancer or other illnesses does not mean that we just have to accept cancer as an inevitability and live with it. Any rational response to such a diagnosis would be careful evaluation, lifestyle changes, and treatment when necessary.

The Bible remains the issue. Even the Washington Post understands that Dean's views on homosexuality do not square with the Scriptures. Dean claims that homosexuality is not sinful, but reporter Jim VandeHei explains that Dean "is a member of the Congregationalist Church, which preaches a liberal brand of Christianity." Theological liberals, he relates, "look at the Bible less literally and argue that the Gospels never quote Jesus talking specifically about homosexuality." VandeHei is absolutely correct; Dr. Dean's liberalism explains why he is not concerned with the Bible's clear condemnation of homosexuality.

Howard Dean wants desperately to be taken seriously as a candidate. He has connected with a large component of the Democratic Party, and he may well be the front-runner for that party's presidential nomination. He also wants to transform the public view of himself into that of a thoughtful Christian. Yet, his words continue to trip him up on the campaign trail, and his background to date just doesn't match his newfound claim to faith.

His claims on his record don't even seem to match the facts. In his campaign manifesto, *Winning Back America*, Dean claims to have provided bold leadership for the adoption of civil union legislation in Vermont. In 1999, three gay couples in Vermont sued the state for marriage licenses. The Vermont Supreme Court ruled that the state was denying homosexual couples the rights granted heterosexuals. According to Dean, "An hour and a half after the decision came down from the supreme court, I said that we were going to support domestic partner legislation."

Reflecting on the controversy, Dean commented: "One of the most important roles of a governor is to provide leadership, and I believe this was my biggest contribution to civil unions. I didn't have to do a lot of lobbying—there were a few people I spoke to who were wavering. But when the legislature saw that I was going to support the bill, it strengthened the will of those lawmakers who knew they would support it, too."

Summarizing his beliefs and leadership on the issue, Dean claimed, "I believe that all people are created equal, certainly in the eyes of God. Therefore, they should be equal in the eyes of the law. That's why I knew I had to work for civil unions. I never viewed the bill as a gay rights issue. I signed it out of a commitment to human rights, and because every single American has the same right to equality and justice under the law that I have." That sounds like a resounding record of brave leadership for a liberal governor, right? Others remember it differently.

In "Running on Instinct," a major article in the January 12 edition of *The New Yorker*, author Mark Singer uncovered a very different story. Just after the Vermont court handed down its decision, Gov. Dean refused to even discuss the issue with the press. "Then, with the ball in the legislature's hands, he said—referring expressly to same-sex marriage, even though civil unions are a different species—'Like everyone else, I'm uncomfortable with it, too.' When the time came for Dean to sign the bill, it was walked from the House clerk's office to his office, where, behind a closed door, he unceremoniously did so. This infuriated the press and the left, but they eventually got over it." Not exactly a profile in courage.

Dean knows that the vast majority of Americans will be scared away from a candidate who comes out clearly for homosexual marriage. So, with the other major Democratic candidates, he tries to run under cover by supporting civil unions while claiming to oppose gay marriage. Now, he claims to offer a theological argument for homosexuality itself.

As last week ended, Dr. Dean was telling reporters that he would have to watch his words more carefully. Here's hoping that America's voters are watching his words as well.

Content Copyright © 2002-2010, R. Albert Mohler, Jr.