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The Bible as Hate Speech? Gays Win Big in Canada

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All that is about to change, and some Americans are about ready to dig a moral moat along the border. Our basically peaceful northern neighbor has experienced a huge personality change, and not for the better. Liberal Canada is turning itself into radical Sweden.

On Tuesday, the Canadian House of Commons defeated a motion defining marriage “as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.” The margin of victory was small, but the bill failed just the same, and the media quickly claimed the vote as an endorsement of homosexual marriage. [see The Washington Post]

A provincial appeals court in Ontario legalized gay marriage this past summer, ruling that denying homosexual couples the right to marry violated “the dignity of same-sex relationships.” Hundreds of homosexual couples quickly took advantage of the ruling, and Prime Minister Jean Chretien chose not to appeal the court's ruling. The bill proposed by the Canadian Alliance party was the only hope of reversing the decision and prohibiting gay marriage. The bill's demise means that homosexual marriage will almost surely be legalized throughout the nation.

Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, Archbishop of Montreal, condemned Parliament's action: “If marriage simply become a union of two persons who love each other, must we then permit marriage between a brother and a sister? Between a father and his daughter? Between a mother and her son?”

Conservative Protestants also sounded the alarm. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada released a statement expressing disappointment in the vote and promising a vigorous debate on the issue in coming months. It may be too late.

Janey Epp Buckingham, the group's director of law and public policy claimed that “millions of Canadians oppose the redefinition of marriage, and president Bruce Clemenger asserted that the marriage issue is really not about rights at all, but about legal definition and public policy. “If marriage is reduced to merely a contract between two people, its distinctiveness will be lost and it will be hard for the government to refuse including other types of relationships.”

Tuesday's action in Parliament was bad enough, but the very next day the House of Commons moved to include homosexuals under hate crime provisions. Bill C-250 was sponsored by homosexual MP Svend Robinson, who told the media that his bill would “recognize that just as we say it's wrong to promote hatred or violence directed against racial or religious or ethnic minorities, so too, should we say it's just as wrong to promote that hatred or violence directed at gay or lesbian people.” [see Toronto Globe and Mail]

Others see the bill very differently—as an attempt to silence Christians by criminalizing anyone who quotes the Bible's passages against homosexuality. Brian Rushfeldt of the Canada Family Action Coalition explains that Canadians opposed to homosexual marriage “are already being accused of ‘hate’ speech by homosexual activists.... When C-250 is passed

into law later this fall, the activists will begin to insist on prosecution to silence their critics with criminal sanctions.” The bill now moves to the Senate and must eventually receive royal assent to become law. Both sides now expect the bill to become law by the end of the year.

Celebrating his legislative victory, MP Robinson declared, “I feel proud to be a Canadian.” He has every reason to cheer, for the gay and lesbian agenda took unprecedented strides forward in the past week. He appears to be on the winning side.

All this may take their American neighbors by surprise. Many Americans are unaware of the fact that Canada’s public life is radically secular when compared to the United States. Canada is pioneering a post-Christian culture, with liberal sexual mores and a hostility to Christian conviction.

In 1997, a Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission board of inquiry fined a Christian businessman \$4,500 for running an advertisement in The Star Phoenix newspaper that simply listed four biblical passages that condemn homosexual behavior [Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:26 and 1 Corinthians 6:9]. The ad did not even provide the actual text of the verses. Two stickmen holding hands were pictured in the advertisement, with the international negative symbol [a red circle bisected by a slash] over the figures. The board ruled that the symbols, when combined with the biblical citations, “would expose or tend to expose homosexuals to hatred or ridicule.” According to this Canadian agency, the Bible is now hate speech.

Canada’s Christians have plenty of reason to worry. Sweden has moved to make all anti-homosexual speech a criminal offense, including sermons or Bible readings that condemn homosexual behavior. Pastors can be fined and cited for unacceptable sermons. Canada’s legal system is moving quickly in the same direction—and with the same arguments.

The whole idea of hate speech has a dubious basis in the law. Hate crime laws set certain groups apart as deserving of special protections. Christians do not defend physical violence against anyone—homosexuals included—and call for the full prosecution of any who would resort to violence or assault. But to label certain forms of assault hate crimes assumes that the motivation to harm one person is more criminal than the motivation to harm another.

When hate crimes are extended to speech, the government sets itself up as a judge of what language or speech is legal or illegal. The logic of the legislation is clear—no criticism of homosexuality is allowable, whatever its form or basis. This would cover not only epithets thrown at homosexuals, but sermons in Christian pulpits against homosexual behavior.

The move to silence the pulpit represents the ultimate aim of homosexual activists. In the end, the biblical condemnation of homosexual behavior is the great obstacle to the normalization of homosexuality and all other sexual “lifestyles.” So long as a significant portion of the population claims allegiance to the Bible, gay activists face an insurmountable obstacle to the full acceptance of their sexuality.

If the pulpits can be silenced, and if the Bible can be set aside as a dangerous, hate-filled text, the path to full acceptance and normalization is wide open. Preaching and teaching against homosexuality simply cannot be allowed. Many fear that the Canadian legislation would make biblical preaching a crime.

Americans will watch our northern neighbor with increasing wariness and concern. Homosexual activists here would like to see similar legislation passed in the United States. In the meantime, Canadian Christians had better wake up. The Word of God is about to be labeled as hate speech—and telling the truth is about to become a crime.

