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The Inescapable Issue of Biblical Authority

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The Bible condemns homosexuality in every form. This message is not hidden, complicated, or nuanced. The Old Testament texts detail the sin of Sodom and the prohibitions against homosexual activity. The New Testament is equally clear, and offers a more expansive explanation. In Romans 1:18-28, the Apostle Paul explains that both male and female homosexuality are evidence of the extreme evil of human sin. Homosexual acts—and homosexual passions—are “degrading” and “unnatural,” and those who perform such “indecent” acts are “receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” Of course, Paul instructs us that all are sinners, but homosexuality leads his catalogue of human sinfulness. No ambiguity here.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul warns that persons who give themselves to such sins will not inherit the kingdom of God, making specific mention of both passive and active partners in a homosexual act. The Apostle's candor is bracing, and we should be thankful for his clarity.

Of course, homosexual activists and liberal theologians have been hard at work undermining the authority of these texts [and all other texts dealing with limitations on sexual behavior]. We should look carefully at their maneuvers, for they reveal the most tragic nature of their rebellion—a rebellion against the Creator and His Word.

Bishop-Elect Gene Robinson, basking in the media attention directed at him as the church's first gay bishop, dismissed the Bible as essentially irrelevant: “Just simply to say that it [homosexuality] goes against tradition and the teaching of Scripture does not necessarily make it wrong.” Oh, no? Just what must be added to the Bible's teaching in order to make it wrong? The bishop-elect explained that Christians “worship a living God and that living God leads us into truth.” But according to Robinson's logic, God would lead us away from His own Word.

The case for legitimizing homosexuality rests on the assumption that morality is constantly changing and that we have now “matured” into a new era of sexual license and liberation. The biblical writers are hopelessly outdated and repressed.

Retired Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong went so far as to accuse the Apostle Paul of being a repressed homosexual. Poor chap, if he only had Spong for a pastor, he would learn not to repress anything.

The advocates of homosexuality have only two plays in their playbook when it comes to the Bible. They must either deny that the Bible has any authority in this debate, or they must present some kind of ridiculous interpretation of the biblical text that comes down to claiming that the text doesn't mean what it means. Most of the gay theorists use both plays in their arguments—and sometimes both at once.

In a fascinating [and tragic] interview broadcast on the BBC World Service [listen to program], the Bishop of Hereford, John Oliver, acknowledged that the Bible is very clear about its “explicit condemnation” of homosexual

behavior. But, referring to the Leviticus text, Bishop John explained that the Jewish people “were under tremendous pressure” to make themselves distinct from their pagan neighbors. No bother to us, for Bishop John does not believe that “we need to take this seriously as a text which guides us today.”

What about the Apostle Paul in Romans? Here the bishop argues that Paul is only concerned about “frivolous homosexual acts by persons who are basically heterosexual.”

How clever! The Apostle just wants heterosexuals to be heterosexual.

Gay theorists argue that Paul, along with the other biblical writers, simply knew nothing about a homosexual orientation, and simply assumed that God wants all persons to restrict sexual activity to heterosexual marriage.

Of course, Paul assumed that God restricts all genital activity to the holy context of heterosexual marriage. That is the plain, unambiguous, and transparent teaching of Scripture. The modern idea of a “sexual orientation” is just a fig leaf constructed by sinners to cover for their sin. It is reinforced by the therapeutic regime and now taken for granted by the secular culture.

By this twisted logic, Paul would warn that it would be sin for homosexuals to commit heterosexual acts, just as it is sin for heterosexuals to commit homosexual acts. The perversity of this argument is plain. The tragic fact is that this argument has taken hold of the liberal elites in mainline Protestantism. In Anglicanism, this problem starts at the top.

Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, has written of what he calls “the body’s grace.” Sounding more than a little panentheistic, the archbishop argues that we should listen to the body’s desires as we struggle to find human meaning. [Preach that to your local “True Love Waits” rally.] Arguments against homosexuality based on the Bible, limiting sexual behavior to procreative heterosexuality, “must rely either on an abstract fundamentalist deployment of a number of very ambiguous texts, or on a problematic and non-scriptural theory about natural complementarity, applied narrowly and crudely to physical differentiation without regard to psychological structures.” Disgusted yet?

What the archbishop means is this: We just have to get over taking the Bible seriously when it comes to sex. The biblical authors are mired in outdated understandings of sex and hopelessly repressed. The church must move on to a brave new future of sexual liberation. Homosexuals are to be liberated today; someone else will be liberated tomorrow. Just claim your sexual preference as an “orientation” and claim that God made you this way. Remember, as Bishop-elect Robinson argues, just because the Bible says it’s wrong doesn’t make it wrong. And, even when it looks like the Bible says that homosexuality is wrong, it really means the opposite. The church has simply misunderstood the Bible for 2,000 years.

Of course, if the Bible is really the Word of God, the entire argument for normalizing homosexuality collapses. The ultimate author of Scripture is God Himself. The Holy Spirit inspired every word of the Bible, and every word is fully inspired. If the Bible is not God’s Word, then the church is indeed sexually repressed and intolerant. On the other hand, if the Bible is the Word of God, homosexual activists have given themselves to a sin which leads to eternal death.

Christians take careful note: A church or denomination that compromises the Word of God and denies biblical authority will eventually lose all theological sanity. A church that elects a Bishop John Oliver will eventually elect a Bishop Gene Robinson. And Archbishop Rowan Williams, committed to “the body’s grace” rather than the clear teaching of Scripture, is in no position to lead his church back to sanity.

