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Theology, Therapy, Twitter, and the Scandal of the Gospel

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Tuesday, June 14, 2011

There is no shortage of perplexing realities in our world today, but counted among them must be the fact that many rather well informed people seem to be shocked that Christians believe the doctrines of Christianity.

Over the weekend, Rep. Anthony Weiner announced that he will request a leave of absence from the House of Representatives in order to seek professional treatment in the aftermath of his sexting scandal on Twitter. In the words of his spokeswoman, Risa Heller, the congressman left last Saturday “to seek professional treatment to focus on becoming a better husband and healthier person.”



She continued: “In light of that, he will request a short leave of absence from the House of Representatives so that he can get evaluated and map out a course of treatment to make himself well.”

That is a course now familiar to us all. As a matter of fact, it is now almost a reflex that

people caught in moral trouble (especially related to sex) announce that they are seeking “treatment” for the problem.

On the one hand, this just points to the fact that the “Triumph of the Therapeutic” heralded by sociologist Philip Rieff in 1966 is now so ingrained in our culture that therapy appears to be the answer to every problem, including a moral crisis.

Sadly, many Christians have accepted this worldview as their own, believing that their own deepest problems are therapeutic rather than theological in nature. To our shame, many books written by and for evangelical Christians reflect the therapeutic impulse, rather than the appropriate biblical and spiritual concerns.

In response to Rep. Weiner’s statement, I posted the following message on Twitter:

“Dear Congressman Weiner: There is no effective ‘treatment’ for sin. Only atonement, found only in Jesus Christ.”

As far as I know, Rep. Weiner is not among my “followers” on Twitter. I did not assume that he was reading my posting. My message was mostly directed at my fellow Christians as a reminder of this very concern — that the American impulse is to seek treatment when our real need is for redemption.

This is a basic and central Christian belief. The Bible reveals that our need is not to find a way to make ourselves well — which we can never do — but to realize that we are sinners in need of a Savior. The Christian Gospel is the message of redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation that is found in him and in him alone.

The very essence of biblical Christianity is the knowledge that the real human problem is sin — not sickness — and that the only rescue is that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

In response to my tweet, Cathy Lynn Grossman of *USA Today* posted a series of tweets of her own, including this:

“Top @Baptist voice chides @Jewish @Weiner to choose Christ. Shades of Brit Hume telling @TigerWoods to quit @Buddhism.”

Later, in response to a complaint on Twitter that she had “slammed” me by twisting my words, she responded: “It’s Mohler slamming Jews here.”

In a separate article, she wrote this:

“This reads as an evangelism tactic, riding in on the Weiner headlines but aimed at people like Jews such as Weiner, Buddhists like Woods, and many others, such as Weiner’s Muslim wife, who hold different ideas about salvation, different approaches to atonement.”

Seriously? It is rather shocking to find the religion and spirituality writer for *USA Today* surprised that a Christian believes what orthodox Christianity has consistently taught — that every single human being is a sinner in need of the redemption that is found only in Christ.

I never mentioned Judaism. Rep. Weiner’s problem has to do with the fact that he is a sinner, like every other human being, regardless of religious faith or affiliation. Christians — at least those who hold to biblical and orthodox Christianity — believe that salvation is found through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him alone.

Later, Cathy Lynn Grossman posted this in response to criticism:

“What @Mohler said was atonement ‘only’ through Christ. Non-Christians disagree, also have routes to restoring righteousness.”

The exchange on Twitter is another sign of how politically incorrect biblical Christianity is becoming in our times. Christians do understand that non-Christians disagree with the Gospel. We also understand that other religions claim “routes to restoring righteousness.” But biblical Christians cannot accept that these “routes” lead to redemption, and the only righteousness that saves — the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer, who is justified by faith in Christ alone.

That is the Gospel as declared in the historic Christian creeds and held, at least by historic claim, by almost all Christian churches and denominations. It is a non-negotiable of the Christian faith, deeply rooted in the teaching of Christ that he is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and that no one comes to the Father, “but by Me.” [John 14:6]

Non-Christians who have an understanding of Christianity may well find this claim offensive, but they should not find it shocking — even on Twitter.

You can follow me on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler

You can follow Cathy Lynn Grossman on Twitter at www.twitter.com/faith_reason

See also:

Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Baptist to Jewish Weiner: Christ is the Only 'Treatment,'" *USA Today*, Sunday, June 12, 2011.

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