

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

“In the Nick of Time”

Occasional Essays
and Other Stuff
for Christian
Students

Presented by the
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Central Baptist
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Seminary of
Minneapolis

American Christianity needs leaders. American Christianity needs *Christian* leaders. Christian leaders explain the Scriptures, bringing them to bear upon life's urgent questions. Christian leaders exemplify the life of faith, finding their ultimate satisfaction in God alone. They unite intellectual discipline with ordinate affection, turning their entire being toward the love of God. These essays are dedicated to the task of inviting today's Christian students to become tomorrow's Christian leaders.

—Kevin T. Bauder

“...Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

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Are These Rights?

A Response to the Homosexual Agenda

The “Gay Rights” bulldozer is in high gear. Texas’ anti-sodomy law has been declared unconstitutional. The Protestant Episcopal Church (which has ordained homosexual priests for years) has approved an openly homosexual bishop. Homosexuals can marry each other in Canada, and some U. S. states are moving closer to recognizing a homosexual “right to marry.” The Massachusetts Supreme Court threw out a law allowing civil unions but not marriages between homosexuals, opening the door to legalized homosexual marriage in that state.

Evangelicals should agree that homosexuality is a sin. But they do not. Indeed, some evangelicals on the Left are among the more vigorous proponents of “Gay Rights.” Having accepted the feminist premise (based on the “neither male nor female” clause in Gal. 3:23) that gender distinctions have been obliterated in Christ, these Left Evangelicals conclude that gender should not be a factor in deciding which marriages can be allowed. Scriptures that appear to condemn homosexuality are dismissed with the explanation that they prohibit only ritual, predatory, or exploitive homosexual acts, and not committed, caring homosexual relationships.

These Scriptures (Lev. 20, for example) are the same ones, however, that define biblical standards against incest and bestiality. Even the Evangelical Left is not yet prepared to defend

committed, caring sexual relationships with near relatives or household pets. If these taboos still stand, then so does the prohibition against homosexuality.

The simple truth is that Galatians 3 does not teach the obliteration of gender distinctions in Christ. What it does teach is that racial purity, social standing, and gender make no difference in the way that we approach Christ. All of us become children of God in exactly the same way: by faith or not at all. Males and females do not have separate plans of salvation or paths to spiritual maturity.

Romans 1:26-27 is very clear about the moral status of homosexual activity. Homosexuality is a judgment upon the human race, the result of God “giving them up” or “turning them over” to “vile affections” or “degrading passions.” The activity stems from passion and lust. It degrades all those who participate in it. According to the apostle, this activity is “against nature,” not in the sense that it is never practiced by other species, but in the sense that it violates God’s purpose in creating sex and therefore works against the very nature of human sexuality. This passage offers no hint that committed, caring homosexual relationships are any less lustful, degrading, or unnatural than rapacious ones.

It is worth remarking, however, that homosexuality does not represent the nadir of wickedness. Romans 1:28-32 offers a list of sins that result from a divine “giving up” or “turning over” that is even more extreme than the one that results in homosexuality. The sins that flow from that final giving up may be taken to represent the basest possible deeds. This list, however, includes such activities as greed, envy, deceit, and disobedience to parents. While homosexuality may be a uniquely *shameful* sin, others are worse—and we seem to have much more tolerance for the worse sins.

But what about the rights of homosexuals? Should they be denied basic human protections and decent treatment? Certainly not! All humans enjoy the rights of life, liberty, and property. These rights may be abridged only by due process under just laws (as when the state imprisons criminals), but they must not be infringed by private individuals. A person who assaults a homosexual, for example, commits a crime and should be prosecuted without regard to the victim’s sexuality.

These are not the rights, however, for which militant homosexuals and their friends are campaigning. When they talk about “rights,” what they mean is the right not to be denied a job or an apartment because of their sexual practices. Most recently, they mean the right to marry one another.

But these are not rights of the same kind. Arguably, they are not rights at all. One does not have an absolute right to work any job that one wishes, or to live wherever one wishes, or to marry whomever one wishes. That is why employers and landlords and bachelors and debutantes are permitted to discriminate in most of their choices.

Not long ago I saw a catalog from a company that sells military medals. Its advertising stated that every one of its employees was a military veteran. In other words, that company refused to hire non-veterans. This constitutes discrimination against non-veterans, yet no one seems upset. Why? Because we recognize that employers have a right to decide the proper qualifications of the persons whom they will employ. This is one aspect of a larger right, a right

known as “freedom of association.” Each of us possesses the right under normal circumstances to choose the persons with whom we will associate.

This is equally true of landlords. Landlords regularly discriminate against pet owners. They regularly discriminate against smokers. All of this is quite permissible. Even though an employer or a landlord may choose silly grounds for discrimination, it would be unjust to coerce her or him to accept an objectionable association.

Freedom of association is a fundamental human right. Our laws do recognize limits to the right, however. Landlords and employers are not legally permitted to discriminate on the basis of certain narrow criteria (though bachelors and debutantes may still apply whatever standards they wish). Legally, they are not permitted to discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, and usually religion or marital status. In other words, some categories have been protected from discrimination. These categories have been selected in order to provide certain classes with protections that reach beyond the normally recognized rights of life, liberty, and property.

When homosexuals talk about “Gay Rights,” they are not talking about life, liberty, and property. What they want is special protection as a class. They want their prerogative to hold a particular job or to live in a particular home to trump everyone else’s right to free association. In other words, they insist that practicing homosexuality is more like being Black or Catholic (against whom employers may not normally discriminate) than it is like being a non-veteran or a smoker (against whom employers can and do).

Not to put too fine a point on it, the “Gay Rights” bulldozer is not about basic human rights, it is about special protections. Why should such special protections be granted? Even the “Gay Rights” advocates have a difficult time finding a reason, which is why they do everything they can to keep this question from being asked.

What, then, should be the Christian’s attitude toward homosexuals? First, we must label their practices as sinful, even when such labeling is unpopular or even illegal. Second, we must resist all efforts to grant homosexuals special protections, including the legal solemnization of homosexual marriage. Third, we must respect the genuine rights of all human beings, including homosexuals. Fourth, we must remind ourselves that homosexuality is not the worst sin, and we should temper our moral judgment of homosexuals with the realization that we have done worse (even if not more degrading) things. Fifth, we must remember that the homosexual is a person for whom Jesus died, and who is included in the gospel commission. Finally, we should realize that Christ can and will break the bondage of homosexual sin, offering hope and genuine freedom to the homosexual who will trust Him and live by faith. ✘

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

Hymn

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

THE spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied Sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The Moon takes up the wondrous tale;
And nightly to the listening Earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing as they shine,
The Hand that made us is divine.' ✕

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