

Bill O'Reilly and Piers Morgan Seek to Reinvent Christian Morality

What do Bill O'Reilly and Piers Morgan have in common? They have their own shows on cable TV, they are professing Catholics, and they recently made statements that, in effect, seek to redefine **Christian** moral standards (this was in response to the comments of Duck Dynasty's Phil Robertson).

On his December 20th broadcast, Morgan opined that certain parts of the Bible are "utterly ridiculous" and "offensive." He added: "I can still understand people say, well, you know, it's my religious belief that homosexuality is a sin. I think it's a load of absolute fooey in the modern age, to be so bigoted, but if that's what people want to do, that's fine."

He then said to me (as a member of the discussion panel):

I'm a Christian. I'm a Catholic. And I can look at the Bible and say parts of it are obviously utterly ridiculous. There is a part of the Bible that says, if you as a woman are not a virgin on your wedding night, you should be stoned to death. Clearly, that is not what Mr. Robertson is espousing today because he would know that is ridiculous. There are lots of offensive things in the Bible. But let me ask you this sir, as a Christian man, can you point to a single public utterance by Jesus Christ—the Christ in **Christianity**—about gay people or about a gay lifestyle? Can you name one single thing, derogatory or otherwise?

This, of course, was easy to respond to, and I actually gave him three relevant passages where Jesus made clear that: 1) He didn't come to abolish God's Law but rather to fulfill it, which included taking the moral and sexual standards to a higher level (see Matthew 5:17-48); 2) all sexual acts outside

of marriage (which, quite obviously, meant male-female unions only) defiled people and made them unclean from the inside out (Matthew 15:15-20); and 3) marriage as God intended it from the beginning was the union of one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:1-16). There's not much wiggle room there!

I also pointed out that a first century Jewish teacher wouldn't need to speak against homosexual practice, since it was universally rejected at that time among religious Jews.

The obvious questions for Piers Morgan are: Since you reject the authority of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Catholic Church, what do you mean when you say that you're a Catholic Christian? And how do you determine what parts of the Bible are relevant for us today? By what standard or method of interpretation do you come to those conclusions?

Interestingly, Bill O'Reilly, a far more conservative Catholic than Morgan, had this to say about Robertson's remarks on his December 20th show:

"Talking Points" believes Mr. Robertson has a constitutional right to define his religious beliefs but is misguided by targeting specific groups of people for damnation. If you adhere to the Christian philosophy you know that Jesus was quite clear, all judgments about the consequences of sin are to be made by God and God alone. We're all sinners, and because of that the Gospel of Luke 6:37, mandates – mandates that Christian human beings refrain from judging others. Again, that is God's prerogative.

. . . HAVING WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT JESUS, I KNOW THIS MUCH: he was adamantly against bad behavior that injures other people but he would not condemn a woman in his presence who was an adulteress.

And time and time the Nazarene persuaded folks that his way of living was worthy because it was so compassionate.

Homosexual Americans should not be demonized just like devout Christians should not be demonized and people who have strong beliefs should understand the big picture. Portraying gay Americans as sinners gives license to harm them. It's insulting and demeaning.

To be sure, O'Reilly did a far better job of honoring the Scriptures and pointing to wonderful truths about the teaching and example of Jesus. And without a doubt, he rightly emphasized that Jesus is an equal opportunity Savior – we are all sinners in need of his mercy and he offers forgiveness equally to all. Kudos to Bill for pointing to Christ's compassion.

But Jesus did not only leave final judgment to God. He also made very clear the kinds of things that God would judge.

And so, rather than “targeting specific groups of people for damnation” he grouped all of us together in the condemned column because of the universality of our sin, coming into the world to offer us salvation. (See John 3:16-21; for the record, Jesus also called us to make judgments, as long as they were not hypocritical or superficial: see Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24. Paul also called us to judge the behavior of others who claimed to be followers of Jesus; see 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

And while Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman to be stoned to death, he also ordered her not to repeat her actions (John 8:11: “Go and sin no more”). And, in his most famous sermon, he stated that a man who looked at another woman lustfully had committed adultery in his heart and was worthy of the judgment of hell (Matthew 5:27-30).

That's why Jesus died on the cross: to give all of us a way of salvation.

O'Reilly also overstates his case when he says that, “Portraying gay Americans as sinners gives license to harm

them.”

Not so. The New Testament categorically and consistently speaks against homosexual practice, along with many other sins, but that doesn’t give anyone a license to harm the sinner. In fact, the New Testament constantly calls for compassionate love to be expressed to all.

So, the same Scriptures that speak against homosexual practice (and other sins) speak even more emphatically against doing harm to others. Why not preach both parts of the message: the sinfulness of homosexual practice (and other forbidden practices) and our calling to do no harm to our neighbor?

As many have noted, one of the most offensive things that Phil Robertson said – putting aside the coarseness of some of his language – was his statement that “neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God,” but in saying this, he was simply quoting the words of Paul (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Does O’Reilly then reject the moral standards put forth by Paul as well as use the teachings of Jesus selectively?

It’s one thing to question whether **Phil Robertson** should be the new face of evangelical Christianity in America (in my book he should not, with all respect to him for holding his ground on these sexual-moral issues).

It’s another thing to rewrite the Bible and reinvent Christian morality in an attempt to make it more palatable to the world. That’s exactly what Piers Morgan and (to a lesser extent) Bill O’Reilly have done.

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