

Did Rachel Held Evans Capitulate to Culture?

In her recent article on CNN's Belief Blog, popular writer **Rachel Held Evans** explains, "There's a misconception among many faithful folks that religious convictions, by their very nature, are set in stone," further noting, "People who change their minds are called flip-floppers or backsliders, accused of capitulating to culture and 'conforming to the world.'"

Evans, who states that she "grew up in a religious environment that vilified LGBT people," still identifies as an evangelical Christian but has had a change of heart in her viewpoint on homosexuality, just as she had a change of heart on "the age of the Earth, the reality of climate change, the value of women in church leadership, [and] the equal failings of both the Republican and Democratic platforms to embody the teachings of Jesus."

And so, when Exodus International announced it was closing its doors and when the Supreme Court made its momentous, pro-gay activist decisions, she "celebrated" along with her many LGBT friends.

Should we applaud her for being open and willing to change? Should we acknowledge the spiritual progress she is making, outgrowing her earlier bigotry? Or is some of her spiritual growth dangerously mingled with capitulation to the spirit of the age?

The title of her article is "Not All Religious Convictions Are Written in Stone," but Evans leaves us wondering if *any* religious convictions are written in stone.

After all, which seems more intolerant and offensive: to claim the earth is only 6,000 years old or to claim Jesus is the

only way to the Father and that Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism are wrong? Which seems more close-minded: to believe women are not called to be pastors or to believe the moral codes of a 2,000- to 3,000-year-old book produced in the Middle East are still binding on us today?

In recent months, both Rob Bell and Jim Wallis have indicated that, because society is changing its view on **same-sex “marriage,”** we need to change our views too, an approach that I branded spiritual suicide, since God’s Word clearly hasn’t changed on the subject.

Why, then, shouldn’t this “religious conviction” be written in stone? Because one of our family members comes out as gay? Because some of the kindest people we know are gay? Because there are people with same-sex attraction who desire to be deeply committed Christians? Do we rewrite Scripture because of this?

By all means, wherever relevant, we need to repent of our lack of compassion toward LGBT people, for sometimes demonizing them (as if most gay men are pedophiles and most gay women are raging, anti-God feminists), for often assuming that homosexual desires are simply chosen and easily cast off, and for being so concerned with being “biblical” that we forget to be Christlike—or even human.

Despite my many differences with Rachel Held Evans, I would stand side by side with her in some of her critiques of the sins of the evangelical church against LGBT people, and I too have led believers in public repentance for our shortcomings here.

And I don’t doubt that she has done much soul-searching because of her relationships with LGBT friends, and I commend her for doing that, just as each of us should search our souls in this regard.

At the same time, it is clear to me that Evans has no

scriptural merit for her stand and that, whatever her motivations or reasoning (God knows; to date, I have been unsuccessful in my attempts to open a dialogue with her to discuss things further), she has, in fact, capitulated to the culture and conformed to the world rather than to the will and heart and Word of God.

Evans points to illustrious leaders like Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther and C.S. Lewis as examples of those who “experienced changes of heart,” but these examples are utterly misleading, since each of these men changed from rejection of the truth of Jesus, moving away from their prior religious beliefs or atheism or hedonism to an embrace of biblical orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that Evans is rapidly leaving behind.

She writes of Peter, “an observant Jew, [who] had been wrestling with the idea of including Gentiles in the church,” correctly noting that his views were radically changed by divine intervention. Accordingly, Evans states, “We can learn a lot from Peter—not only from his inclusiveness [take note of her use of that word!], but also from his willingness to change his mind.”

To be sure, almost of us who are honest with our faith will have some adjustments in our thinking over the years, since none of us have perfect understanding of all points.

But to ask again: Are there no fundamentals? Are there no non-negotiables? Are there no absolute moral standards?

Evans writes, “Like Peter, God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”

But does she really mean that? She would not call an unrepentant rapist impure or unclean? She would not call an unrepentant pedophile impure or unclean? She would not call an unrepentant Muslim terrorist impure or unclean? (The list is almost endless.)

And note that what God showed Peter had nothing to do with sanctioning a forbidden behavior (like homosexual practice) or redefining the fundamental nature of male-female relationships (as same-sex “marriage” does).

It had to do with Peter recognizing that ethnicity was no barrier to becoming part of the family of God, which is a far cry from celebrating two men “marrying” or applauding the closing down of a ministry that in years past offered compassionate help to many gay strugglers, help for which they are grateful to this day.

Evans now realizes, “I should not think so highly of myself as to assume I’ve got this faith thing all figured out.”

Wisdom, then, would tell her to put aside her limited reasoning and bow down before an unchangeable God who has revealed Himself clearly and decisively on the matter of homosexual practice. If she would only turn back to the Spirit and the Word here, she could do so much good for so many people.

Let’s pray that she will.

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