

Biblical Authority

The Buck-it Brigade: The Challenge

The key problem saturating scandals dealing with the church stems from disregarding the counsel of Holy Scripture. This discussion is necessary for the church if it is to deal effectively with current scandals, and to minimize future scandals. If we continue to Buck (dodge) the Buck (responsibility to make a decision), the church will continue to be plagued by the Buck (the sexual abuser), and the church bureaucrats will continue losing the Buck (the coin of the realm).

It is popular today to selectively disregard Holy Scripture when it interferes with our desire to call evil “good”.^{1 2 3}

The prime examples cited to discredit the Bible are passages in the Bible that condone slavery.⁴ Even John Wesley called slavery the scandal of religion.⁵ This is particularly important because the Bible was used by Southerners to justify existence of American slavery. The argument is made that we know slavery to be evil, yet the Bible permits it because of the culture in which the Bible was written. Culture has changed, and therefore what is right and what is wrong has changed. The argument asserts that portions of the Holy Scripture written in a cultural context that is different from today can be disregarded. Further, it is asserted that the Bible was not written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but is merely the recordings of man, and man did not properly report God’s Will with respect to slavery. Since the public assessment of slavery has changed, we determine that the Bible got that wrong, and therefore the Bible also got wrong the declaration that homosexual acts are evil. We get to pick and choose what to keep and what to discard. We only need to convince enough other people in our church to change the portions of the Bible the church is willing to accept and reject.

Pretend you are Jezebel. Apply this argument to justify burning little babies alive in the heated arms of the statue of the false god Chemosh or Molech. It was merely the culture of the time, so it must have been okay, right? Therefore, Leviticus 18:21 must no longer be valid? This is cultural relativism. It is tolerance.

Since cannibalism is not specifically prohibited in the Bible, then we are permitted to indulge? European, Middle East (including Jews during the fall of Jerusalem⁶), African, North American Indians, South American Indians, South Sea Islanders, and New Zealand tribes have had cultures that permitted this.⁷ Just because an evil is not explicitly denounced in Holy Scripture does not mean God approves. God has given us enough direction and examples to be able to discern what is good and what is evil, even in our new era of

¹ Isaiah 5:20

² 2 Timothy 4:3

³ Matthew 13:15

⁴ A. Ted Mollegen, “On How to Use (and Not to Use) the Bible in Understanding God’s Will, and On God’s Will Today” (28 September 1990). <http://www.hometown.aol.com/tmollegen/coxmod.htm>

⁵ John Wesley, “To a Friend”, Letter 899 (26 February 1791), in *The Complete Works of John Wesley, Volume 13: Letters, Writings*, in Master Christian Library, Version 5 (1997).

⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Paragraph 4, Chapter 3, Book 6 . in *The Complete Works of Josephus*, William Whiston (translator) (1737). The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

⁷ Paula Brown, “Cannibalism”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan Publishing Company (1987).

biotechnology. When God does specifically denounce an act as evil, we are obligated to pay attention.

In only one case has God permitted an evil to continue, and only that because of the hardness of our heart: divorce. Even Moses had dismissed his wife, though his father-in-law, Jethro/Reuel, priest of Midian, returned Moses' wife (Zipporah) and son (Gershom) to him after the Exodus.^{8 9} We are not told about the circumstances of the divorce. Jethro and Moses continued to have mutual respect, and Moses took Jethro's advice about delegating responsibility. On even the issue of divorce, though, God has made his will clear. He hates it,^{10 11} and we are not permitted to have leaders who are divorced.^{12 13 14}

The argument is given that the church made the Bible, not God, and therefore the church is at liberty to change or disregard the Bible. The authority of today's translations is attacked on the basis of the history of publication and translation.

At issue is the authority of the Bible as God's Word as a reliable standard for instruction in faith, and prescribing and judging practice of faith in public and private life.

⁸ Exodus 18:2

⁹ Exodus 2:18-22

¹⁰ Malachi 2:16

¹¹ Matthew 19:8

¹² 1 Timothy 3:2

¹³ 1 Timothy 3:12

¹⁴ Titus 1:6