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Bacon and Sex: What Bible Christians believe about homosexuality

by the Rev. Canon. John Heidt, D. Phil (Oxon) • July 2005

Is there any real difference between a man having bacon for breakfast and having sex with another man the night before – or a woman with another woman? The ancient Jews thought not. Both broke the law of God and incurred His wrath, even to the point of death.

But today Christians eat bacon with impunity. Why then not accept homosexuality as well? What can possibly be the difference between the two?

It all depends on why God condemned them both in the first place. He did so because the ancient Jews were His special people, and He wanted them to defeat their enemies and perpetuate the Jewish race. They alone were able to stand up and fight when everyone else was dropping over from food poisoning by eating contaminated pork, bacteria-ridden milk and other food cooked in germ-infested pots and pans. And in Egypt they kept reproducing themselves until it scared the very daylights out of Pharaoh. By obeying God's laws they remained His people and continued to multiply.

Then a cataclysmic change occurred, as earth-shattering as the resurrection itself. Instead of simply protecting themselves and their national identity as one nation among many, the Jews now became the whole human race. Or rather, every human being suddenly had the opportunity of becoming fully human by becoming a Jew. Everyone who was baptized became part and parcel of the Body of Jesus, both the perfect Jew and perfect humanity. In Jesus God did not simply become an individual man; He became Man, He became all of us, as we say every Sunday in the Creed.

This is so revolutionary that to this day not everyone understands it. Some think that after the resurrection God abandoned the Jews and, in their place, made everyone who put their faith in Jesus Christ His chosen people, be they Jew or Gentile. The old laws are no longer relevant, they say, and that is why the first house of bishops meeting in Jerusalem were able to decree that gentiles do not have to eat kosher, and why a new house of bishops has every right to declare that we no longer have to confine sex to the opposite sex.

But this completely misses the point. In Jesus Christ, far from abandoning the Jews, God fulfilled all His promises to them. With the baptism of the gentiles the law not only remains in force; it is further developed in ways appropriate to the whole human race. He does not come, He says, to abolish the law but to fulfill the purpose of the law.

When Jesus finishes His earthly work, that purpose is fulfilled; He says on the cross that it is completed or finished. Now, because former alien nations can become part of the Jewish nation through baptism, the old dietary laws, designed to help the Jews withstand the onslaught of those other nations, have served their purpose and are no longer needed. In a similar sort of way, Christian priests no longer need to obey the old ceremonial laws. They no longer have to worry about how many bells or pomegranates are on their vestments because now they merely represent the only true priest, Jesus Christ, who being both priest and victim had his vestments torn off Him at the altar of the cross.

But just like all the rest of us, Christian priests are still human, and they still need ceremonial laws; we all still need the rubrics of our prayer books. And we still need laws to protect our health. Though we no longer need laws against eating bacon for breakfast, we find it necessary to have laws against smoking in the public places where our bacon is eaten.

Every part of the Jewish Law affecting our humanity still stands precisely because it was fulfilled in the humanity of Jesus, and now, because of our incorporation into the Jewish race, applies to us all – laws against such things as envy and lying about others, against adultery and stealing, and against homosexuality. These are wrong because they deface the image of God in which we were made. Stealing and lying are not wrong because it pays to be honest – it often doesn't; they are wrong because God is honest and we are meant to be like Him. Adultery is wrong because God is faithful; envy is wrong because God is generous, and so on.

And why is it wrong to have sex with someone of the same sex – how does that deface the image of God in us? Is it simply because the primary purpose of sexual relations is the procreation of children just as the purpose of food is good health? Not necessarily, some will point out, for it is possible, especially in our society, to enjoy sex for its own sake divorced from its primary purpose, just as it is possible to enjoy the taste of good food that doesn't have any nutritional value. No, in some way homosexual behavior must go against the very nature of God.

Bible Christians believe in the kind of God who loves differences. He is what the professors of the History of Religion call a *Coincidentia Oppositorum* – a unity of opposites, and His creation reflects this infinite variety of opposites within Himself. No two snowflakes are the same; no two human beings are alike. Yet they are united in one universe and in a single humanity. And at the highest point of earthly creation, men and women, with all their sexual differences, are united by permanent sexual relations – a union by which marriage becomes an effective sign or sacrament of the divine unity of opposites which we are meant to share and spread throughout the world.

The Bible writers are quite clear about all this. God created us male and female. A man is to leave his parents and become attached, not to another man, but to his wife, that they may become one flesh. For St. Paul the marriage of a man and women is the sign of the union between Christ and His Church and for the author of Revelation it as a symbol of the Lamb's heavenly marriage at the end of time. Nowhere in scripture is there any suggestion that sex between people of the same sex is a sign of anything other than the falling away of human beings from the image and likeness of God.

Here we differ dramatically from our modern world, and our choice is clear. We believe in a God of unity; the world today believes in a god of uniformity. We believe in a God who delights in raising up mountains and tossing new stars into the sky. The world believes in a god who is desperately trying to smooth himself out. Spiritually and socially we believe in a heterosexual world; today's world believes in a homosexual one.

Then what about the Christian homosexual? How are others supposed to treat him or her? First of all, we must stop putting labels on people. We must fight against the modern habit of typecasting people as gay or straight, homosexual or heterosexual, but treat everyone as real or potential brothers and sisters in Christ. And we must encourage the so-called homosexual to do the same for himself or herself. We must stop evaluating and defining ourselves in terms of our emotional or sexual inclinations.*

For whatever reason, a Christian man or woman who is unable, or does not feel called, to enter the married state as the Bible and the church understand it, must attempt to develop an inward discipline of chastity which most heterosexual people never even consider, and do their best to withstand the external social pressure of conforming to the life style of the homosexual community. This is not an easy calling, but there is no substitute, and today, as in past ages, those who have responded faithfully to that call have often been the great heroes of the Faith. In their pilgrimage they need all the sympathy, encouragement and support that the church can muster, while reminding them that their particular troubles and temptations may differ in kind but not in power from the troubles and temptations of married men and women.

Though Bible Christians believe that sex between people of the same sex is always sinful,

it is only one of many associated sins. St. Paul lists several – not only envy and murder, but greed and malice, rudeness and arrogance, rebellion against parents, lack of honor, love, and pity. Let him then who is without sin cast the first stone. But for the rest of us, let us embrace everyone, no matter what the sin, with genuine compassion, neither singling out the homosexual nor excusing any sinful behavior on his part or on our own, remembering that true Christian charity consists in forgiving the sin, not in calling it a virtue or a matter of indifference.

* Until the atheist psychologist Havelock Ellis in 1911 invented the term “homosexual” as a noun, people did not know that they were homosexual but only that they might or might not have homosexual desires or become involved in homosexual behavior. But now just about everyone, from the cradle through at least puberty, is encouraged or even coerced into examining every emotion and passion, every affection and relationship to determine whether these are signs of being a heterosexual or homosexual.