

291 Sin by definition

I was quite shocked^[290] when I read the web article by Cornelius Harding:

issues of human sexuality are a salvation issue, and so that without repentance those who engage in same-sex sexual relationships will be damned rather than saved.

...

For Orthodox Anglicans to fail to continue with the apostolic teaching of the Church is an act of hatred which allows those who identify as LGB to be condemned to damnation.

It sounds a bit harsh, but in a way, I think he's right: if something you are doing is clearly against what the Bible teaches, and you persist and persist... well, what hope is there for your immortal soul?!

And he would also say that gay sex is such a direct challenge to God's creation ordinance, of man and woman and procreation, that it makes the sin worse.

OK, let's apply some cold clear logic here, and let's think of a different sexual sin: Fornication (OED): 'sexual intercourse between people not married to each other'. And I don't need to look up Bible verses: sex outside marriage is clearly against apostolic teaching. So what about my friends Matt and Jenny? They aren't married, but they are living together; will they too be damned rather than saved, for fornication?

Purely by definition, they are sinning, so are they not sinning? By one definition, they are sinning; by others they may not be. Who is right? Well, it depends on what you mean by 'marriage'. If you define marriage as a loving, committed relationship, then they are not sinning...

...and, no, I'm not taking the line that if a gay couple are loving and committed they are therefore not sinning. Rather, I'm trying to challenge the whole basis of the discussion.

What we're doing is looking at individual actions and trying to define if they are 'sins' or not. But isn't that *exactly* what Jesus got so cross about: 'Is it lawful to heal this man on the Sabbath?' The Pharisees were genuinely trying to help, giving clear definitions of sin.

I think that Jesus' (therefore God's) main concern is about motives and relationships. What is 'right' and what is 'sin' can't be determined by setting up a series of definitions. We feel safer if we have clear rules so we can check if and we're sinning or not, but is that really how a relationship with God works? Obey the rules and you'll be 'saved'?

So, do my friends Adam and Brian, Clare and Diane face eternal damnation for their actions. They and I (and a growing proportion of Christians) believe that, given what we now know about sexuality, the creation statement, 'it's not good for man/us/humans to be alone', is best fulfilled by seeking loving, committed, covenant relationships.

We might be mistaken, but we believe that our motives are right and good, and we trust God for our eternal salvation.