

“Sex Without Bodies” by Andy Crouch, *Christianity Today*, July/August 2013; “Christianity and Homosexuality” by Tim Keller, *Redeemer Report*, October 2013.

The executive editor at *CT* thinks: “There is really only one conviction that can hold [the LGBT] coalition of disparate human experiences together [and it’s] the irrelevance of bodies – specifically, the irrelevance of biological sexual differentiation in how we use our bodies.” *To the contrary*: It’s the *relevance* of “biological sexual differentiation” that accounts for the LGBT coalition. It’s the *anti-LGBT* coalition that peddles “irrelevance of bodies” – pushing mixed-orientation marriages or lifelong celibacy, thus *refusing* to recognize that “matter matters”, to use Crouch’s play on words.

Fixated on genitalia, he ignores the *major* sex organ, the *brain* – poetically, the *heart*. So, he misses the *complexity* of interpersonal neurobiology *intrinsic* to sexual attraction. He dismisses what partners *perceive* in one another: a *fascinating otherness* from one’s sense of self. For *rape*, any body will do. In a *loving* marriage, it’s *this embodied person* who’s cherished – what William Penn felt when an ocean separated him from his wife and he longed for his “beloved, [for] more thy inward than thy outward excellencies which yet were many.” *Body parts* change over time. Yet *embodied love* can grow ever deeper. But on *same-sex* love, antigay scolds get hung up with Tinker Toys.

With no biblical warrant, but reminiscent of ancient Greek myth, Crouch thinks that *heterosexual* sex “reunite[s] two broken halves”. Then he *misquotes* Gal 3:28, positing that Paul wrote: “there is *neither* male *nor* female”. But Paul shifted construction here: In Christ, there’s *no* “male and female” – a term Paul lifted from Gen 1:27. The “male and female” duo is as *theologically* irrelevant as is race and culture. And, “biblical” marriage was without dating, fathers arranged the marriages, wives were property, there was polygamy, concubinage, the levirate mandate and divorce was at a husband’s whim.

Crouch asks: “Can we hold [his antigay] position and love our LGBTQIA neighbors?” Well, we *love others* when we treat *them*, as *we* want to be treated. In *listening* to them, as *we* want to be heard, we learn that *they* want only what *we* want – a marriage that matters. But *CT* rationalizes around the Golden Rule on *same-sex* marriage as it did on *interracial* marriage in the 1950s and what it called a “mob”, i.e., Martin Luther King’s 1963 rally at the Lincoln Memorial. Less than a century before that, the Old South’s R. L. Dabney (hailed by Old Princeton’s A. A. Hodge as “the best teacher of theology in the United States if not in the world”) wrote in his “traditionalist” *defense of slavery*: “The whole reasoning of the Abolitionists proceeds on the absurd idea, that any caprice or vain desire we might entertain towards our fellowman, if we were in his place, and he in ours, must be the rule of our conduct towards him, whether the desire would be in itself right or not. ... Whether that treatment should include emancipation, depends on ... whether the desire which we, if slaves, should very naturally feel, to be emancipated, is a righteous desire or not.” Dabney was no *mere* child of his time for evangelical abolitionists like Newton, the Wesleys, Wilberforce, *et al.*, preceded him in an entire Empire of slavery.

Jesus’ fury fell on all who pushed the vulnerable away from him. Today, many of his disciples push marginalized and sinned-against LGBT youth away from him in droves.

Keller, founding pastor of Manhattan’s Redeemer (Presbyterian Church in America), observes: “If you are a Christian in New York

City, it is nearly impossible to talk about your faith without [homosexuality] being raised.” He notes that, “right now the cultural moment requires that we be prepared to address this issue whenever we are publicly identified as Christians.” Indeed it does, for Christians have been so loudly *antigay*. But, for a Christian who happens to be same-sex attracted, it’s no *mere cultural moment!* It’s *personal* and *lasts a lifetime!* For such, it’s not “nearly impossible to talk about your faith without this subject being raised”, it’s *totally impossible* to *live* your faith, let alone *talk* about it, without this subject being *felt in the depths of your being, day in, day out, night after night!* It’s *felt* as no heterosexual feels sexuality, for one’s homosexuality is so stigmatized by fellow Christians.

Keller begins a review series of Christian books on homosexuality by endorsing two by Sam Allberry and Wesley Hill. Allberry warns that Christians dare not “agree to differ” on this topic for, he insists, “homosexuality is a gospel issue ... the gospel itself is at stake.” But Keller rightly notes that homosexuality is “not central to the gospel message at the heart of Christianity [and admits, it’s] not mentioned all that often.” Still, he reads *today’s gay* issues *into* the Bible, while fellow *Reformed scholars* whom he otherwise holds in high regard, argue that such an antigay reading is *anachronistic* and *cruel*.

For *perspective*, most delegates at the 1973 founding of the PCA were from a Deep South generation that had opposed *racial integration* and *interracial marriage* as being *biblically* “rebellious”. Now they don’t. Now, “rebellious” is the word the PCA applies to all homosexuality. In 1867, Dabney ended his 356-page defense of slavery with these words: “Let the arrogant and successful wrongdoers [the “infidel” abolitionists] flout our defence [*sic*] with disdain: we will meet with it again, when it will be heard; in the day of their calamity, in the pages of impartial history, and in the Day of Judgment.”

Historian Mark Noll says slavery *proponents* had prooftexts but abolitionists didn’t. Keller has prooftexts; the other side has themes of *agape* as abolitionists did. Says Keller: “The Bible begins with a wedding between a man and a woman [*the only two people!*] and ends with one [Christ and His *Bride of men and women*]” – or, as John Newton called Christ, “my Husband”. But historically, Reformed theology does *not* see marriage as “an anticipation of our eschatological union with God.” (Amy Plantinga Pauw)

Keller sees “the beginning of something crucial ... a particular pathway” in the two gay celibates’ books. Now, celibacy is *right* for all who think it *wrong* to be partnered. But Luther warned that *forced* celibacy without *the gift* is a curse. Keller’s zeal here is like that once held for the “ex-gay” fix – before *that* “pathway” proved a *dead-end* in more tragic ways than one. These celibate authors’ unmet needs are apparent, but happily married heterosexuals wish them well: “‘Be warmed and filled!’ *without giving them the things needed for the body*”. James chides: “What good is that?” (2:16)

