

THE EVANGELICAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Religious Freedom: The Bottom Line of the Bill 10 Debate **Michael Wagner, February 18th, 2017**



One of the last legislative acts of Alberta's Progressive Conservative government was to pass Bill 10 in March 2015. It is now known as *An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children* but many people still refer to it as Bill 10 out of convenience. The purpose of this law is to allow students to create organizations that promote a safe learning environment, and in particular, to allow

students to create gay-straight alliances (GSAs) or queer-straight alliances (QSAs) in schools regardless of the schools' philosophy or culture. By law, no school can refuse one of these clubs.

This creates a problem. Historically, Christianity has always opposed same-sex sexual activity and many private schools have been founded to

provide explicitly Christian education to their students. Transmitting a Christian perspective in every subject area, within a Christian environment, is the central purpose of these schools. Therefore, forcing these schools to support clubs that promote a vision of sexuality directly at odds with Christianity undermines the fundamental reason for the schools' existence.

So-called “progressives” are delighted that the coercive power of the state can now be deployed to compel conservative Christian institutions to violate their theological *raison d'être*. At the time of writing, only one Christian leader, Pastor Brian Coldwell, chairman of the Independent Baptist Christian Education Society (IBCES), has publicly declared that he will defy the law.

Bill 10 Book

However, other Christian voices have appeared in support of Pastor Coldwell's stand. Salient among these is Carman Bradley, a Business Management Consultant based in Calgary. Bradley has produced a 150-page e-book that is freely available at:

<http://www.bill10courtchallenge.org/>.

This book, *Bill 10 Court Challenge: Setting Legal Boundaries to the Homosexist (LGBTTIQQ2S...) Agenda in Alberta Schools*, provides a comprehensive Christian analysis of the various issues involved and explains how Bill 10 violates constitutionally-guaranteed religious freedoms. Every concerned Albertan should avail himself or herself of this valuable resource.

Bradley uses the term “homosexist” to describe the perspective of the LGBTTIQQ2S movement. He writes: “Homosexism is a relatively new cosmology (worldview) that asserts there is no ‘meant’ relationship between anatomical sex (genitalia), sexuality and gender. The meanings attached to male and female are seen as social constructs, which can be ‘deconstructed’” (p. 136). That is, the homosexists reject the perspective of biological science that there is a natural purpose to male and female sexual organs. To them, there is nothing more normal or natural about sex between a male and a female than there is about sex between two males or two females.

It is the homosexist view that underlies Bill 10 and the policies that flow from it. This is very significant. For as Bradley points out, “Christian beliefs are not compatible or reconcilable with homosexuality. To the extent that Bill 10 and all associated guidance succeeds, the Christian worldview will be undermined, and children deceived and put at risk of either being blocked from or led away from the faith” (p. 45).

Name-calling

One of the most powerful components of the educational establishment in this province is the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA). The ATA is fully in support of homosexuality in the schools. It produces material to help and encourage teachers to promote the homosexist perspective. These ATA publications do not demonstrate any respect for teachers, parents, or students who are not on board the homosexist bandwagon. With reference to one such publication Bradley writes, “The whole tenor of the ATA publication *GSAs and QSAs in Alberta Schools: A Guide for*

Teachers and the intent of Bill 10 is to bully those who disagree with the LGBTTIQQ2S agenda. Those people who side-step conflict in beliefs and collisions of rights by stereotyping and name-calling all opposition as homophobic are blind to their own bullying tactics” (p. 92).

Such name-calling seems to be endemic to progressives and homosexists. People who embrace traditional Christian morality are commonly called “haters,” “bigots,” “homophobes,” and so on. But as Bradley points out, “Respectfully holding to the Christian worldview particularly on moral and sexuality matters is not a hate crime, not bullying, and not homophobia” (p. 86).

Bill 10 compels all schools, including Christian schools, to accept GSAs and QSAs if requested by one or more students. But the goal of those clubs is to normalize non-traditional sexual morality that is considered by Christianity to be sinful. Therefore, “empowering a club that is intent on raising awareness and making social change towards the goal of social banality in sexual practices is a club intent on undermining Christian values and beliefs” (p. 115).

Religious Freedom

Christian schools should not be forced to host clubs that undermine their very purpose. Bradley writes, “A pillar of Christian belief is that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life; there is no other. Christians simply cannot celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of the homosexual lifestyle. To be forced to do so is an intolerable breach of freedom of religion” (p. 116).

This is the fundamental point. The conflict over GSAs and QSAs is not ultimately about bullying. Nobody supports bullying. Opposition to bullying is being used to achieve much larger political goals. Bradley clarifies the central issue this way:

“There are Albertans who profoundly believe, as a matter of faith and of conscience, that homosexual acts are immoral. They believe that homosexuality is an indication of a disorder from God’s intent for the sexes. They believe that teaching kids to celebrate a disordered identity or that homosexual acts are equal and as dignified as heterosexual intercourse is morally wrong. In a country that respects freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, these Albertans are entitled, legally and morally, to their beliefs” (p. 137).

That is the bottom line. There is a fundamental antithesis between the homosexual view and the traditional Christian view. A matter such as Bill 10 is a zero-sum game. The homosexuals make their gains at the expense of the Christians. Only by suppressing historic religious freedoms can the progressives achieve their political goal of the compulsory acceptance and celebration of homosexuality.

Again, no one is in favour of bullying. There is no “pro-bullying” lobby. That is not the issue here. Bradley sums up the real issue well: “Bullying at all times is wrong. Opposition to the LGBTTIQQ2S movement or disagreement with homosexuality is not bullying; it is a constitutional right” (p. 141).

Conclusion

In North America, progressives are working to overturn hard-won religious freedoms. Those freedoms will be lost if Christians fail to defend them strongly. Carman Bradley's e-book is a fantastic resource for equipping Christians to defend their freedoms in Alberta right now.

Please take this opportunity to visit his website and access this material:

<http://www.bill10courtchallenge.org/>.

