

May 2006

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O Church, Where Art Thou?

...the political arena is an arena in which one will struggles against another, in which one belief contests another.
--Stephen V. Monsma, "American Politics" (1969)

Last week, Federal Way School Board members voted unanimously to add the term "sexual orientation" to a district policy that reportedly bans certain forms of discrimination. District officials deny that the move was a result of pressure from gay and lesbian organizations insisting it was adopted to make district policy consistent with our new state law.

It seems "a" parent complained after learning that a female was poised to sing a love song to another female student in a Decatur High School production of the musical "Rent." The controversial score portrays a lesbian relationship. To his credit, the school choir director took a look at the number during a dress rehearsal and agreed it was inappropriate for a high school setting. To their shame, school board members weren't so sure, deciding they just might overrule the choir director in the future.

Chuck Christensen, the district's director of human resources, confirmed that change is coming to Federal Way schools, noting the new nondiscrimination language could give school leaders more latitude in similar situations than they "may have thought was allowed or acceptable."¹

Indeed, change is coming as a result of the Washington's new "sexual orientation" law. Unfortunately, that change could involve much more than lesbian lovers in a school musical. Five hundred miles south of the Columbia River, leading Golden State lawmakers are busy lining up support for a sweeping overhaul of public school curriculum that will more strictly conform to their own version of a "sexual orientation bill of rights."

Yesterday, California's senate education committee approved SB 1437, a bill that would require schools to teach history lessons on "the contributions of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States of America."² A legal analysis of the measure suggests that even cheerleading and sports activities would come under fire as well as "prom king and queen" because it shows bias based on gender and sexual orientation. The bill could also potentially require gender-neutral bathrooms in schools and the removal of references to "husband" and "wife" or "mom and dad" from school textbooks.

When Mr. Christensen says adding "sexual orientation" to nondiscrimination policies could give school officials much more latitude, he should be taken seriously. But are parents listening? Are church leaders listening?

According to recent media reports, citizen efforts to overturn the recently passed state "sexual orientation" law appear to be faltering, bringing into question the passion of the Church in the matter. During the first 43 days of the campaign, only 8,718 registered voters signed *Referendum 65*—less than one signature for every two petition forms in circulation. Resistance at the church door is not a problem organizers of R-65 had anticipated.

No doubt many well-meaning religious leaders are maintaining a low profile to avoid the criticisms (or worse) that accompany “political” involvement. Ask any pastor, priest or prophet who has spoken out on any social vice. But at what cost is our silence purchased?

As Moses prepares Israel to cross the Jordan River to take possession of their inheritance, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad come to him asking if their tribes can stay behind to occupy land already conquered. Angered, Moses responds:

Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them? Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. For when they went up to the Valley of Eschol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them. (Num 32:6-9)

After tribal leaders assure Moses that they will leave their livestock and their families behind and accompany their brothers to war, Moses relents and agrees to give them (and the half tribe of Manasseh) the lands of Gilead, east of the Jordan River. But he warns...*if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out (v. 23).* The two and a half tribes reply, *We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan. (v.32)*

Although some think Moses may have drawn conclusions before hearing the full proposal of the clansmen, he had good cause, having experienced their half-hearted involvement before. Obviously, he aches with disappointment as he says to the people...*the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. (Deut 4:21-22)*

Some historians suggest that Reuben and Gad made an unwise choice because the area was exposed to enemy attack. They did not have the protection of the Jordan River and were the first to be conquered in later years and carried off into captivity.³

Many generations removed, Jesus comes to the people living in the region of the Gadarenes—the prodigy of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. Unclean animals are kept—perhaps providing income for some local Jews. Although witness to his incredible power and grace, they have no inclination to place their trust in Jesus. They are frankly discomfited by his presence and urge him to leave.⁴

At the moment, many of us are engaged in a worthwhile work—tending our flocks in our own pastures. But do we discourage the hearts of our brethren when we fail to confront wickedness that threatens our communities, our schools, even that which is at our door? Will our youth observe and adopt our passive ways? Will they too some day be reluctant to fight or perhaps die, even for a worthwhile possession?

Less than a month remains to collect signatures of 112,440 registered voters in order to qualify Referendum 65 for the November ballot. Too soon to expect answers to such probing questions.

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

¹ *The News Tribune*; Student speaks out after song cut from show, Steve Maynard, 4/27/2006, www.thenewstribune.com

² *Capitol Resource Institute*, [Expansive Homosexual Indoctrination in Public Schools](http://www.capitolresource.org), 4/29/2006, www.capitolresource.org

³ MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1979, pg. 196

⁴ Mark 5:1-17