

# Ray L. Winstead Position Statement on Homosexuality and the Church

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## **Summary of my conclusion and position**

My position on the current issue of homosexuality within the Christian church is that being a heterosexual or a homosexual is totally irrelevant as to whether a person is, or can be, a Christian or not. I believe that equating Christianity to automatically being anti-gay shows a complete misunderstanding of the Biblical message taught by Jesus Christ - as well as a complete misunderstanding of the original intent of original Biblical truth. Based on the life and teachings of Jesus, I believe my position is consistent with what Jesus would think and say to us specifically about this issue. Furthermore, it is totally unimportant to me what the current secular culture says about this issue. My conclusion is based on what I believe the Bible really means as was originally written and understood - and from the perspective of what I believe Jesus would say about this issue. Our damning homosexuals for an inherent biological trait and calling it a sin is just not at all consistent with the teachings of Jesus. This is especially true within the context that so-called Biblical evidence for all homosexuality being a sin is suspect with in-depth studies in exegesis and hermeneutics of those passages.

The Bible does not deal with homosexual behavior between two committed, loving, same-sex adults at all! For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Paul was not at all referring to homosexuality when he used the terms “malakoi” and “arsenokoitai.” He was referring to male prostitution and to heterosexual males who sexually abused younger males.” (See HERE - <https://c-ucc.org/open-and-affirming-part-2-the-misuse-of-paul-1-corinthians-6-9-10-and-the-heterosexual-agenda/>)

The first time the word "homosexual" was used in any translation of the Bible was in 1946 (RSV). (Check it out for yourself!) Exploring the real meaning behind the original Bible passages from the perspective of mistranslations, exegesis, and hermeneutics, unfortunately, shows a complete misunderstanding today of what many sincere Christians believe. I encourage you to do your own homework on this issue for yourself. I want to know the whole truth - not just the simplified, possibly misleading, reading on the surface in any translation.

For almost all of my life, this is an issue I have never even thought about much at all. However, within the last several years the topic has been more in the open, and I thought it was time for me as a Christian to think about it seriously - especially now, since more churches are splitting over this topic. The more I learned, the more my current views have developed - that being a heterosexual or not is totally irrelevant to being a Christian or not.

My own perspective is that I see homosexuals as being treated unfairly by many Christians. Jesus said that the requirements to be a Christian are to love God and to love your neighbor. I believe that all other statements within the Bible are to be interpreted within this context, i.e., all other statements are secondary to these requirements of love. In particular, my conclusions that I am addressing now deal with committed, loving, same-sex couples - within the context that all other moral behaviors still apply to the couple, just as for a heterosexual couple.

### **Key essentials of being a Christian**

I believe that many people have sadly misinterpreted the basic truths Jesus was trying to teach us. In particular,

I believe EVERYTHING in the Bible is meant to be interpreted within the context, and from the overriding perspective, of what Jesus said about Love:

Mark 12:28-31: "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this:" "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." "The second is this:" "Love your neighbor as yourself." "There is no commandment greater than these." (NIV)

Romans 13:8-10: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and *whatever other commandment there may be*, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (NIV)

And *among* Christians Paul wrote: Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

RLW: That is, my interpretation is that neither group membership, position, sex/gender, nor any other perceived, worldly difference is important with respect to being a Christian, since all Christians are equal in Christ Jesus. Within the overriding context of the love of Jesus, the choosing of particular biblical passages to "show" otherwise must be either mistranslated or misunderstood today from its original meaning or context of the time.

I believe that God is interested in our souls and how we love our neighbors - not our gender.

### **"Think and let think"**

Furthermore, I also agree with John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, when he said to believe in the essentials — but to also "Think and let think" when it comes to disagreements on controversial biblical interpretations of secondary issues. I interpret this to mean that the church should accommodate other Christians with divergent views on secondary issues, rather than splitting a church

on these secondary issues. I believe we should be looking for common ground and uniting, rather than emphasizing our differences and elevating secondary issues to the status of being an essential belief to be a Christian.

I want to be a member of a church that believes in what John Wesley said: “Think and let think” regarding those secondary issues that are not essentials (essentials being, e.g., Love God, Love your neighbor, Jesus IS God). The reason I would not want to be a member of a particular congregation would be when the pastor and congregation do not believe and do not implement that principle – but then create an atmosphere that moves an issue to be an essential belief to be a Christian when it should not be there. Of course, there is no perfect church or denomination today, in spite of what some may think. Since the pastor and congregation that believe “Think and let think” relative to secondary issues are so hard to find these days, the next option would be to at least be in a church that agrees with the secondary issue, too. The alternative is to not be a member of any church – a worse situation.

In particular, I think that elevating the restrictive idea that a person must not be gay (a homosexual) in order to qualify to be a Christian is NOT consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Such an idea is being advocated by, for example, the new Global Methodist Church denomination as it splits away from the United Methodist Church. Adding this requirement to the essentials of being a Christian is not beneficial to the Kingdom of God and only weakens the global Christian church. (For an additional comment about this split, see \* Footnote at the end.)

### **Being a homosexual is not a sin**

Just as I believe that being a heterosexual is not a choice, I believe that being a homosexual is not a choice. **I believe that being a homosexual is not a sin**, since it is not a conscious decision, but it is an inherent genetic characteristic, e.g., through controlling hormones and brain functions, the same as a person having no control on inherent height. The bottom line is that no conscious decision is involved, i.e., not a “chosen lifestyle,” and therefore no culpability, criticism, or condemnation is warranted or reasonable from any perspective - religious, socially, legally, or otherwise. **Based on the life and teachings of Jesus, I believe my position is consistent with what Jesus would think and say to us specifically about this issue.** (I believe a person’s stance on this issue should be based on the vast majority of cases – rather than being based on outliers and the minority of cases.)

Welcoming a Christian homosexual into the church should mean a total acceptance of that person into the church as a Christian – rather than restricting the role that a homosexual person may have within the church. For example, denying a gay person a leadership position within the church, e.g., becoming a pastor or other church leader, is not being welcoming at all – but analogous to the racial prejudice of allowing the person to be on the bus but requiring the person to sit in the back of the bus. My perception is that those people saying that they do “welcome” gay people into the church is said only within the context that they believe that gay people have “chosen” that “lifestyle of sin” – and then “welcome” them into the church only to offer the opportunity to gay people to repent from and reject their “chosen” sin of being gay.

### **The Bible is the authoritative Word of God (*sola scriptura*)**

I see the Bible as being the authoritative Word of God (*sola scriptura*). I also believe that many people, regardless of their prayerful sincerity, have grossly misinterpreted what God is trying to tell us through the Bible. I believe that mistranslations and misinterpretations are two reasons for the

misunderstanding of what I believe Jesus is trying to tell us about being a Christian. The translation errors and disagreements on how to translate the original scriptures into another language add to the conflict - as demonstrated by the many different versions of the Holy Bible. The version of the Bible that an individual reads will influence a person's beliefs. From my reading about this topic, besides the historical contexts of the statements in the Bible, different translations of the original written word further complicate an understanding of what was really meant and understood to mean at the time. I believe that many sincere Christians have grossly misinterpreted what was meant at the time. (See exegesis and hermeneutics.)

I agree with James V. Brownson in his book *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* when he says "Whatever specific behaviors and relationships the Bible is condemning in the "seven passages" cannot be used to condemn committed same-sex unions today. These ancient texts are speaking against pagan practices, against pederasty and abuse, and against violations of commonly embraced standards of decency and "normality" that were part of the ancient world. As such, they cannot speak directly to committed, mutual, and loving same-sex unions in the contemporary church. The Bible is thus essentially silent when it comes to addressing the ethics of such unions, at least when we consider the seven passages that might be construed as having anything specific to say on same-sex sexual behavior at all. Robin Scroggs summarizes this entire line of argument when he says, 'Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate ... not because the Bible is not authoritative, but simply because it does not address the issues involved.'"

### **David Palmer's book and an Old Testament example:**

I also agree with David Palmer in his book *God's Word on Human Sexuality: It's not what many think!* as he agrees with the basic points of Brownson and Scroggs and gives some details supporting the conclusions.

I am always in discernment mode, and I think it is worthwhile to explore exegesis and hermeneutics seriously for personal benefit of understanding, as well as for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. Church is supposed to be much more than just a Social Club! Aren't we supposed to investigate, prayerfully analyze, and then act on our beliefs? How deep is our discernment? So, how do you respond to what David Palmer says in his book that gives good, plausible arguments in such things as context and inaccurate translations of biblical passages that deal with homosexuality - that, according to Palmer, we are incorrectly interpreting, regardless of our prayerful sincerity? Prohibitions were given for a number of behaviors to better ensure that Jews stayed separate from their pagan neighbors. Laws were given, such as food prohibitions, not for health reasons as is commonly believed, but to prohibit the Jewish population from being tainted by interacting with the pagans. Just for one important example, the reason homosexual behavior is mentioned is within the context of pagan farmers trying to stimulate greater fertility for their crops through the ritual of homosexual behavior with male Baal prostitutes. (It is difficult for us today to comprehend such beliefs, but that was a part of the pagan culture at the time.) Jews were prohibited from participating in this pagan ritual - not because homosexuality itself was a sin - but because the interactions with pagans were prohibited.

David Palmer writes:

"There was a particular Hebrew word used to describe any action that could pull a person away from the right worship of God - the word *toevah*. Activities were prohibited for the Israelites in order to help them to stay separate from pagan influence. This term is critical for our understanding of the Leviticus

verses about homosexuality; because *toevah* is the key term in the two laws about the practice of homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is *toevah*." Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed *toevah*.""

So, along the lines of Palmer's thoughts:

The Hebrew word "toevah" (or to'evah) has been translated in today's Bibles to mean "an abomination" or "abhorrent." Many of you will recognize those English words, especially these days, as being used in biblical passages as evidence that homosexuality is a sin.

However, in contrast to how the word "toevah" is interpreted in isolated passages in the Bible by many today, a reasonable, more correct interpretation as to what was originally meant and how the word is actually used throughout the Bible - is "something permitted to one group - but forbidden to another group." Context is also extremely important!

The key point is that all of the prohibitions in the Bible fell within the context and conditions of the Hebrews, i.e., the Jews, i.e., the Israelites, as they were prohibited from interacting with non-Jews. A Jew interacting with a non-Jew was "toevah" and not to be done in any way.

The Hebrew word *toevah* is used extensively in the Bible regarding food prohibitions, idolatrous practices, magic and ethical violations.

The main point was to keep the Jewish population "pure." For example, a Jew marrying a person not a Jew was a severe "toevah" (Deuteronomy 7:3): "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods" (Deuteronomy 7:4).

Besides the extreme of a prohibited marriage, many, many other rules were instituted to control and prohibit interactions with non-Jews. Just a few examples:

Do not eat with any non-Jew; it is *toevah*.

Do not eat any forbidden food; it is "toevah," since that is a part of the heathen culture. (Leviticus 11:3)

For example: Do not eat pork; it is "toevah," since that is what the heathens do. (Deuteronomy 14:8) (Pork was not excluded from the Jew because of health reasons - knowing how to cook it in a healthy way had been known for a long time - but prohibited because it was a part of the culture of the surrounding non-Jews.)

For example: Do not eat shellfish or shrimp; it is "toevah," since that is what the heathens do.

Do not make clothes that combine different materials; it is "toevah," since that is a part of the heathen culture. (Leviticus 19:19)

(For example, combining wool and cotton - as the heathens did - is prohibited.)

Do not be dishonest in business; it is "toevah," since that is a part of the heathen culture. (Deuteronomy 25:16 calls dishonest business practices "toevah.")

Palmer continues: "How should one translate this term into English?"

"This has been highly problematic for translators, because *toevah* is a technical term that has no good English equivalent. Traditionally it has been translated into English as "detestable thing," "abhorrent thing," or "abomination" - translations which are misleading at best.



When American Christians assume that the Bible “means what it says” they are generally reading an English translation in their favorite version. When they read the word “abomination” in Leviticus, they quite naturally conclude that the Bible is declaring homosexual practice to be something dreadful, vile, and wretched. But this is not what the Bible is saying at all. The problem is that people have assumed a literal understanding of what is actually an inaccurate and misleading translation.

The word *toevah* appears more than one hundred times in the Old Testament. Its most common use is as a cultic term – describing some sort of pagan religious practice, which the Israelites were to avoid in order to steer clear of paganism. The term thus makes perfect sense in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, where the description of “a man lying with a male as with a woman” would connote the pagan practice of male temple prostitution. With this understanding, it is clear that the Leviticus verses are not a blanket condemnation of “the practice of homosexuality.” They were specifically designed to keep the people of Israel separate from the practices of paganism.

Strident action to protect against paganism appeared necessary. Leviticus prescribed death for “a man lying with a male” precisely because the practice of male temple prostitution was seen as a mortal threat to Israelite faith, requiring severe countermeasures.

From all this, it is plain that these Leviticus verses are not talking about loving committed relationships between LGBTQ persons such as people think about today. The concern of these verses is with circumstances that were completely different from the present-day context.”

According to Palmer, it is also quite clear that there are many passages that can only be rightly understood in light of their context. According to Palmer, to read everything in the Bible in a simplistic, literal fashion would be to seriously distort God’s Word.

Note the consistency of the meaning of *toevah* as to prohibiting interactions with the non-Jews.

An additional, important piece of evidence of the meaning of the word *toevah* is to note that the word *toevah* was also used in the same way in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION. For example, in Genesis 43:32, the Egyptians don’t eat with the Hebrews because it is a *toevah* FOR THE EGYPTIANS.

Interpreting these prohibited activities as mortal sins themselves is a big stretch for the interpretation of the original intent of the word "toevah" as "something permitted to one group - but forbidden to another group."

I think it is worthwhile to pursue a true discernment process to explore God's word the best way we can. These are just a few examples. Check it out for yourself, and you will find many more. Check out more information about this topic for yourself! The interpretation of the Bible by many people today is seriously in error as to what was originally meant! Context makes a huge difference!

My personal conclusion through my study of these issues using the approaches of exegesis and hermeneutics is that a loving relationship between two people of the same sex is Not a sin.

For further investigation, just for example, check out the website “*Gay Christian 101 - World-class biblical resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender Christians.*”

<https://www.gaychristian101.com/>

**Westar Institute and New Testament examples:**

Westar Institute Link:

<https://www.westarinstitute.org/editorials/what-the-new-testament-says-about-homosexuality>

"Even if 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 and 1 Timothy 1:8–11 do refer to homosexuality, what they likely have in mind is not homosexuality per se but rather one particular form of homosexuality that was regarded as especially exploitative and degrading.

Some scholars have suggested that *malakoi* designates attractive young men, or boys, whose sexual services were either purchased or coerced by older men, and that *arsenokoitai* designates these older men who thus “used” or exploited the younger men. According to this interpretation, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* do refer to male homosexuality, but the objection is not necessarily to male homosexual activity per se, but rather to the prostitution, coercion, and/or exploitation that typically accompanied one particular type of male homosexuality. And this, too, is consistent with (Dale B.) Martin’s conclusion that *arsenokoitai* refers more specifically to exploitation than it does to sex. Furthermore, if this is the case, then we simply have no way of knowing what the New Testament writers might have said about a non-exploitive, non-coercive, loving, committed, monogamous homosexual relationship. We cannot know because New Testament writers are not talking about that kind of homosexual relationship. In the final analysis, we cannot be certain that these passages refer to homosexuality at all.

"Conclusion: The New Testament really does not provide any direct guidance for understanding and making judgments about homosexuality in the modern world.

To the extent that it does talk about homosexuality, the New Testament appears to be talking about only certain types of homosexuality, and it speaks on the basis of assumptions about homosexuality that are now regarded as highly dubious. Perhaps, then, we could paraphrase what the New Testament says about homosexuality as follows: *If* homosexuality is exploitive, then it is wrong; *if* homosexuality is rooted in idolatry, then it is wrong; *if* homosexuality represents a denial of one’s own true nature, then it is wrong; *if* homosexuality is an expression of insatiable lust, then it is wrong. But we could say exactly the same thing about heterosexuality, couldn’t we?"

### **Major or "clobber" passages from internet sources:**

Of the 20 or so Bible passages that have been interpreted as involving homosexual behavior, the seven listed below are mentioned most often. They are commonly referred to as "clobber" passages, because they are used by many social and religious conservatives to condemn homosexual behavior. The remainder are minor passages and [are described elsewhere](#).

The following very brief descriptions are necessarily over-simplified. They do not cover the full range of conservative/progressive beliefs. However, you may well find the beliefs that you have been taught in one of these columns:

Location	Typical interpretation by religious conservatives	Typical interpretation by religious progressives & secularists
<a href="#">Genesis 19</a>	Condemns all same-sex sexual behavior, whether by two men, two women, within a loving committed relationship or a "one-night stand."	Condemns anal raping of strangers for the purpose of humiliation.
<a href="#">Leviticus 18:22</a>	Condemns all same-sex sexual behavior.	Condemns gay ritual sex in a Pagan temple, and/or males having sex in a woman's bed and/or men sexually molesting boys.
<a href="#">Leviticus 20:13</a>	Condemns all same-sex sexual behavior.	Condemns gay ritual sex in a Pagan temple, and/or males having sex in a woman's bed and/or men sexually molesting boys.
<a href="#">Romans 1:26-27</a>	Condemns all homosexual behavior as unnatural.	Describes a group of heterosexuals who, against their basic nature, engage in same-sex behavior during ritual orgies.
<a href="#">1 Corinthians 6:9-10</a>	Sexually active homosexuals will go to <a href="#">Hell, not Heaven</a> , at death. Once truly <a href="#">saved</a> , homosexuals will become heterosexuals.	Male child molesters and the children they molest will go to Hell, not Heaven, at death.
<a href="#">1 Timothy 1:9-10</a>	Condemns all same-sex sexual behavior.	Refers to child molesters and the children they molest.
<a href="#">Jude 1:7</a>	Sexually active homosexuals will go to <a href="#">Hell, not Heaven</a> , at death.	Humans who have sex with other species -- angels in this case -- will go to <a href="#">Hell, not Heaven</a> , at death.

#### Four Things You Didn't Know About God and Same-Sex Marriage.

Christians who oppose same-sex marriage say it goes against the biblical conception of marriage and sexuality, but they're wrong. [RLW: Still within the context of the Bible being the authoritative Word of God (*sola scriptura*)!]

Conservative religious opponents claim that same-sex marriage violates the biblical definition of marriage. They are wrong, and here's why.

**1. There are few biblical verses that address homosexuality at all, and most of those are not directed at homosexuality per se.** Opponents of same-sex marriage routinely cite [seven verses in the Christian Bible](#) as condemning homosexuality and calling it a sin. But when taken in context, these lessons speak not against homosexuality itself, but rather against rape, child molestation, bestiality, and other practices that hurt others and compromise a person's relationship with God.

**2. Jesus never said one word against homosexuality.** In all of his teachings, Jesus uplifted actions and attitudes of justice, love, humility, mercy, and compassion. He condemned violence, oppression, cold-heartedness, and social injustice. Never once did Jesus refer to what we call homosexuality as a sin.



3. **The Bible never mentions or condemns the concept we call same-sex marriage.** Although opponents of same-sex marriage claim that lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender unions violate biblical principles, no verses in the Bible explicitly address gay marriage or committed same-sex relationships.

4. **Those who claim a “biblical definition of marriage” as a model for today ignore various marital arrangements in the Bible that would be illegal or condemned today.** The Bible is filled with stories of polygamy and husbands taking concubines. In accordance with the culture and laws of the past, women were often treated like property that could be traded or sold into marriage. Today we understand that these examples of marriage reflect the cultural practices of the time rather than a spiritual model for today.

### **The Bare Assertion Fallacy**

As a Christian, I believe many people in the church today are making a similar mistake with their interpretation of the Bible relative to committed, loving, same-sex couples as the church made 400 years ago relative to the position of the sun within our solar system. Below is the history - and now the analogy - relative to how the church approached the different interpretations in the past. The following is not original with me - and was originally written relative to a different topic years ago - but I think it makes the point that the church and sincere Christians have made mistaken biblical interpretations in the past. Prayerfully, we are committed to do the best we can. It is important to note in the story below that BOTH sides believed the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God (*sola scriptura*); however, the world finally realized that their previous interpretation was incorrect. I believe Christians in the future will come to the same revelation about committed, loving, same-sex relationships as not being sinful - but consistent with the essential teachings of Jesus.

“The Bare Assertion Fallacy”

or

“The Sun Revolves Around the Earth ...and that's all there is to it.”

(Not original with me and the source is no longer available)

The bare assertion fallacy is, to put it simply, a fallacy of reasoning in which the user gives no reasons at all for his position other than the fact that he says so. It is the treasured fallacy of every parent who has ever told his child, "You want to know why you're not going? I'll tell you why: Because I said so." This reasoning is spotted by almost everyone as illogical, but it remains powerful because it relies on a power difference between the two arguers. Imagine a child using the same strategy on his parent: "Now you listen to me: you'll buy me that go-kart right now...BECAUSE I'M THE KID AND YOU'LL DO AS I SAY." Bold, to be sure, but laughable. So, status is the key. Now here's a question: who has the greatest status in the universe? No, not Michael Jordan. The answer I'm seeking is GOD. Surely a God who calls Himself "I am that I am" is one who has ultimate status. (Modern response: "You da God.")

So, when God says, "That's the way it is simply because I said so," there isn't a whole lot a God-fearing world can do except say, "Okay."

And that was the basic scene back in 1600 when a scientist named Galileo was advancing his theories that the earth revolved around the sun. He was not the originator of these theories: Copernicus had been advancing them for several years and some thinkers a millennium prior had speculated as much. But Galileo was the man who put his theories into an argument against the church of his day. And the

Catholic church, still stinging from Luther's revolt, was in no mind to have further erosion come from the fledgling scientific community.

The church's position was as follows:

The Bible was the inerrant word of God.

It contained verses which showed that the earth was anchored while the sun moved.

It was also the general consensus that the earth was the center of God's plan.

Therefore, the sun couldn't revolve around the earth.

And the natural response is: Why not?

To which the answer would have to be: Because God said so.

To which a serious arguer would've followed up with: show me the money (verses).

To which a papal commission would've said: "Try these on for size."

Ecclesiastes 1:4 and 5: One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where it ariseth.

Psalms 92: "He has made the world firm, not to be moved."

Psalms 103: "You fixed the earth upon its foundation, not to be moved forever."

And how about in Joshua 10:12: "Then spake Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon."

To which any God-fearing person would've likely responded, "Touche."

But not Galileo. He had a new telescope he had invented, and he had seen proof, lots of proof. And he was bound and determined to overthrow this logical fallacy. Some historians say he went out of his way to pick a fight with the church over this issue.

Well, it came to a head first in 1616. Pope Paul V had a group of experts consider the basic tenets of this "Copernican doctrine" and determined it was "foolish and absurd philosophically and formally heretical inasmuch as it expressly contradicts the doctrine of Holy Scripture in many passages."

In other words, God said so. Forget science. Forget evidence. It went against what God said directly in the scriptures. End of argument.

Galileo was publicly chastised by the church and warned "to abstain altogether from teaching or defending this opinion and doctrine, and even from discussing it."

Well, Galileo was not one for bare assertions. Actually, there are two layers of bare assertions here: one from God, the other from the church. The one from God Galileo had no trouble dealing with. He too

believed in the inerrancy of the scriptures. The problem, he asserted, was with the way the church interpreted the Bible. Their idea of inerrancy was absolute literalness. He was quick to point out many figurative passages in the Bible which even they accepted as figurative. He also reminded them that the Bible needed to be understood in its historical context. (RLW: See exegesis and hermeneutics.)

No, Galileo wasn't refuting God's fallacy for he saw none there; he was refuting the fallacy of the church being able to state categorically something as true based on their interpretation, something which was obviously (to him, anyway) not true.

So, Galileo pressed on, arguing his case. In 1633 with a new pope (Urban) at the helm, Galileo's taunts could be tolerated no longer. The church inquisitioned him again and this time censured him. He was finally condemned by the Holy Office as "vehemently suspected of heresy" and forced to live out his life (which was diminishing rapidly) in a kind of house arrest. It wasn't really all that bad; he continued writing and lived in modest comfort. But the church had the last word, the party of superior status got its way.

Many people mark this as the beginning of the strife between science and religion, between reason and faith. But that isn't altogether fair. Before we all jump on the bandwagon (another kind of fallacy) and start cursing the church too loudly, we should keep in mind that many others of Galileo's day, including Luther and much of academia, also disagreed with his views.

But there is a difference. These others didn't have the power to put an end to the argument and thus they weren't able to make use of one of the grandest of logical fallacies, the Bare Assertion.

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**\* Further footnote from above relative to the Global Methodist Church splitting away from the United Methodist Church:**

I hear and read harsh criticisms, anecdotes, and conjectures about the direction of the United Methodist Church from the proponents of the Global Methodist Church dealing with the essential beliefs of Christianity.

The official United Methodist Church website responds to this critical talk in this way:

*"Is The UMC really...*

**3. About to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?**

No. All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, more specifically in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These cannot be altered without a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths aggregate approval of all annual conferences of The United Methodist Church worldwide. There is no basis to conclude such majorities can be achieved to alter the Articles and Confession for any reason."

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-1>

RLW: Yes, the UMC has officially stated an anti-gay policy for a long time; however, I remained in the UMC as long as the pastor and congregation also acknowledged that policy as a secondary thought and

also let it live as a “Think and let think” issue. Now those people who support disaffiliation and joining the GMC have elevated this issue to an essential Christian belief – and that is the main point I cannot condone.

## **Final letter to my local pastor**

October 17, 2022. Letter to pastor after the UMC congregation voted (87%) to disaffiliate from the UMC:

Pastor Bill,

Thank you for being our pastor for the last five and a half years, and we wish you well in the new chapter beginning for you and the congregation at Grace Church.

We are well aware and fully understand that the recent vote on disaffiliation was not a final, definitive decision and that there are more steps and votes necessary for the disaffiliation process to be completed. However, the recent vote does clearly indicate the position of the congregation - and we already know your position. Now that you and the congregation have decided to go in a direction we cannot follow in good conscience, we will be leaving Grace Church soon. We may visit, but we will not be regular attenders anymore.

Note that copies of this note are also being sent to a few others, since, for practical reasons, some other people need to know about our leaving. For example, Dawn will no longer be a part of the choir, and Ray will no longer be a part of the orchestra. (This coming Sunday, October 23rd, Dawn will meet her obligation to be a Sunday School teacher for the preschoolers, and Ray plans to play in the orchestra on that date - but we will leave after attending that Sunday.)

We know that you have done your own discernment about the issues facing the church, and I think you know that we have also done ours as sincerely as possible. We have many other thoughts about all of this, but our conclusion is that neither joining the Global Methodist Church nor going independent is the best option.

We are heartsick that the situation has come to this point, but our souls are at peace.

Again, we wish you the best,

Ray and Dawn Winstead