

## Is the Bible Intolerant? Sexist? Oppressive?

The day before Amy Orr-Ewing's wedding she was asked to take a "viva voce," an oral quiz before the theology faculty at Oxford. They challenged her to defend what she had written on her final exams.

"The astounding prejudice demonstrated here by highly intelligent people draws our attention to the skepticism with which the Bible is treated by many people in all walks of life," Orr-Ewing writes. "A conviction that the Bible must be wrong, held by those at the highest level of academic excellence, seems, in turn, to have been embraced at a popular level by many people who have barely glanced at the Bible but who feel sure that it is not to be trusted."

Orr-Ewing says that her viva became the first of many occasions when she was challenged to defend the credibility of the Bible and the Christian faith. Since then, as the overseer of the apologetics training program for the Zacharias Trust in Europe, she has had countless real-world experiences much like her viva voce. In *Is the Bible Intolerant?* Orr-Ewing takes her ten most frequently asked questions about the Bible, and offers some answers.

### Excerpts

#### **Has the Bible been changed in transmission?**

*"Some people have an image in their minds of many generations of scribes reproducing the biblical manuscripts for distribution, and each generation adding its own changes, so that what we have now bears little resemblance to the original and cannot be trusted.*

*"However, the reality is that the textual variants that do exist are mostly single letters or grammatical differences. Our modern translations are extremely forthcoming at mentioning these minor differences; they are not hidden away but clearly noted and referenced in the margins and footnotes on each page."* (page 58)

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## *Is the Bible Intolerant ?, continued*

### **Isn't the Bible sexist?**

*“Throughout the Bible there are numerous positive images of women and stories which involve women. In the Old Testament women share the image of God at creation. At the end of time at the second coming of Jesus, the church is represented as the bride of Christ. From beginning to end, the Bible includes the feminine as an integral part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. While it is true that the Bible was written over a long period of time in specific cultures, and some of these contexts did not give equal social advantages to women, it would not be true to say that the message of the Bible is sexist or discriminatory against women.” (page 86)*

### **What about all the wars?**

*“I would like to begin by exploring the question of whether war can ever be a good thing, because underlying this question are certain assumptions that require careful examination. Would it be a demonstration of goodness to show no opposition to evil? Can we approve of a government that stands by and offers no resistance to criminals, be they burglars, rapists, murderers or child-abusers? Both the Old and New Testaments present a portrait of a God who judges evil. One of the means of God's judgment in the Old Testament is war. It is interesting to note that God's chosen people Israel are not always the ones who bring about God's will on the battlefield. In fact, they are often on the receiving end of his judgment, finding themselves massacred and enslaved just as, at other times, they are militarily victorious over other powers.” (pages 99-100)*

### **Isn't the Bible out of date on sex? For example, what about homosexuality?**

*“And so we see that although both the Old and New Testaments were given in eras which found homosexual activity culturally and morally acceptable, the texts are countercultural and call for a moral standard among believers different from that of the world around. While recognizing that what the Bible says about homosexual practice may seem controversial and unpopular, it is important to remember that it would also have seemed so at the time it was written. So although the Bible may seem 'out of date,' the culture in which it was written was not so dissimilar from our own.” (pages 117-18)*