

CAPE COD TIMES

Same-Sex Unions and Religion

3.9.01

Homosexuality was a nonissue for Jesus

I see life differently from the Rev. Willis Elliott as expressed in his March 5 column, "Sexual behavior, religion, and the law."

I am no biblical scholar, theologian or lawyer. I do, however, strive to be a faithful Christian, and I find that in biblical accounts, Jesus, the inspiration of my faith, said precisely nothing about homosexuality. I thus assume that this was a nonissue for him.

In contrast, Jesus said lots about love and justice. These are the underlying themes of this debate. I believe these should be the areas on which we who strive to be his followers should focus our attention.

When all the hungry people in the world are well fed, when all the thirsty of the world have clean, fresh water to drink, when all the naked are clothed, all the sick cared for, all the strangers housed, and all the imprisoned visited with compassion - then, and only then, can we justify spending any time and energy on debating biblical, theological, or legal questions of sexual orientation.

When all the world's legal systems decry discrimination, when all men and women experience these systems as healing balms rather than chafing irons, when kindness and humility accompany justice as equal partners in the

doctrine and practice of every faith - then, and only then, can we justify spending any time and energy on debating biblical, theological, or legal questions of sexual orientation.

I invite and encourage brothers and sisters of all faiths to light our candles together for love and justice. The darkness around us is deep.

STEVE BROWN
Craigville

Writer's homophobia is anything but sweet

In his March 5 column abhorring the civil union of gay couples, the Rev. Willis Elliott deplores the use of the term "homophobes" to describe persons who take positions, such as his, in regard to homosexuality.

The term, he explains, "means homo-fearers and homo-haters." I resent the insult, he complains, intending us to know that he does not appreciate being categorized as a homophobe.

This self-described nonhomophobe tells us that it is just "plain fact" that "to the Bible, homosexuality is abhorrent."

It seems a special word must be coined to characterize the Rev. Elliott. Since he is a man of the Bible, and since he associates abhorrence of homosexuality with the Bible, "homoabhorrent" would seem apt.

Apparently it has temporarily eluded Rev. Elliott that "abhor" and "hate" are synonyms.

As the lesbian writer Gertrude Stein wrote in 1913, a "rose is a rose is a rose." And as Shakespeare tells us in "Romeo and Juliet," "What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

The Rev. Elliott's position is quite clear, and there is nothing sweet about it.

ROBERT LAUER SCHUMAN
Centerville

Religions tolerate evils, why not love?

In his March 5 argument against same-sex unions, the Rev. Willis Elliott refers to the loss of energy of public revulsion against social taboos.

Rape, incest, spousal abuse and child-adult sex are reprehensible, whether committed by heterosexuals or homosexuals. Yet some Christian denominations and other religions have turned a blind eye to incest and spousal abuse, and have sanctified child-adult sex by marrying adult males to female children.

Given the horrors that abound in the world around us, two adults who love each other, and wish to make a lifetime commitment, are surely blessed by a loving God.

MARIAN PRESSLER
North Truro

Humans seek evidence to support their views

As the responses I've gotten to my March 5 column have supported my position, and all the letters in the Times March 9 oppose it. Interesting. Steve Brown is correct that "Jesus said precisely nothing about homosexuality." Nor did he about slavery. So can we conclude that for him slavery was "a nonissue?"

Robert Schuman is correct that "abhor" and "hate" are synonyms. Indeed. But the insult in "homophobia" is in the implication that "homophobes" hate/abhor not just homosexual behavior but also homosexuals themselves. As I said, "homo-fearers and homo-haters." Jesus rules out hate. My letter as submitted to the Times read, "I neither fear nor hate homosexuals."

Marian Pressler is correct in implying that there is insufficient public revulsion against "the horrors that abound in the world." But she is incorrect in stating that "some Christian denominations . . . have sanctified child-adult sex by marrying adult males to female children."

Einstein was correct. Human beings, including scientists, have a viewpoint, and then look for evidence to support it. Open, civil, public discussion can improve our seeing and our society.

WILLIS ELLIOTT
Craigville

* Thinksheet #3048
** I.e., pro or contra,
as an issue.

Is the Bible's deity "a loving God"?

If you read the title of this Thinksheet, & p1, you know that I'm concerned about the last three words in the last letter in the box against me. **Observations:**

1 Of the three letters, the middle one concerns itself only with trying to make the label "homophobe" stick on me. The first uses Jesus against me, & preaches (twice) "love and justice." The third uses God against me & is worthy of this Thinksheet page in response.

2 "A loving God" has been the deity of liberal religion in America for almost two centuries, so it's not surprising to find it among phrases of the common life of the nation even among many without formal practice of any religion. In contrast, it is surprising that "Amazing Grace," with its evangelical message, is now also in the language of our common life.

But the two locutions have this in common, that each is governed by a word whose content is at the mercy of the user/hearer. What is "love"? Tell me about it. What is "grace"? Tell me about it. Both are technical terms of the Christian language but have other meanings in other contexts. When the other meanings are read back into Christian thought, the thought is no longer Christian even though "love" & "grace" are imbedded in Christian discourse.

Note these instances of the two words in their fundamental Christian meanings in Christian contexts:

Titus 2.11: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us...to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,...[who] gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds."

1 John 4.10: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ...God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believed the love that God has for us."

3 MP (writer of the third letter) moves circularly from affectional love to a putatively affectionate deity, who "blesses" the affectional love. Her letter rules out "child-adult sex" as "reprehensible" presumably even when an expression of affectional love (as it can be, as can be what she approves, viz. "two [same-sex] adults who love each other"). In mythology, "Eros" is the name of the god of affectional love; for that worship, love is God (which in 1952 Ashley Montagu argued against my biblical preachment that "God [the Holy One] is love" (as is said two verses before 1 John 4.10 [§2, above])).

"Love is God": affectional, erotic love determines the content of "God," as in MP. "God is love": the holy, righteous, just, self-sacrificing God of the Bible determines the content of "love" in the Christian language. Not to the pagan god Eros, but to this biblical God, homosexual behavior is "abhorrent" (as my March 5 column said, & the second letter quotes).

4 In our romantic-permissive-degenerate culture, the moral content of life & even of deity has weakened. Last week, the first Spaniard to win an Oscar said "I don't believe in God. He tells you how to live, then punishes you if you don't live that way. (Then, snidely,) with apologies to holy mother Church." Eros is welcome to the party, Yahweh-Jesus-Trinity is shut out. MP is partly correct: Homosexual unions "are surely blessed by a loving God" whose name is Eros.

5 My column said erotic (sexual-affectional) behavior should be **forbidden** between adults & children, **permitted** between same-sex partners, & **promoted** within (by definition, heterosexual) "marriage." Law, I say, should ratify these three common convictions of our society (what is sometimes called "the decent opinion of mankind").

6 This page is aimed against the **designer deity** whose function is yes-saying to the general erotic arrangements of our common life in America. Against this deity, whose proper name is Eros, I put the God of the Bible. The other god, the god of liberal Protestantism, is (as H. Rich. Niebuhr famously put it) "a God without wrath [who] brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." "Make love," said the '60s. That translates into "Worship Eros." Please notice the substitution.