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<http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/06/gay_marriage_a_confrontation_of_conflicting_values.html>

**Gay Marriage, a Confrontation of Conflicting Values**

*New Hampshire became the sixth state to let gay couples wed. The new law was approved after revisions exempted members of the clergy from having to perform same-sex weddings and religious groups and their employees from having to participate in such ceremonies. Polls say regular churchgoers are more likely to support gay marriage with these 'religious liberty reassurances.' / Is this a good solution to the divisive issue of gay marriage?*

"The issue of gay marriage" is complex, signaling a number of*questions*. Here they are as I see them, together with my*answers*.

1.....The number of gay couples living together in America is in excess of 770,000. Should they, as a demographic, be accorded some positive legal recognition? That depends on the social effects of their togetherness. Criminal gangs should be accorded legal recognition, but negative. Gay bars should be accorded legal recognition, but without implication of social approval. But while gay coupling is a less stable social institution than straight (male/female) coupling, the laws should give to this institution such recognition as is commensurate with its *positive contribution*to society's stability and prosperity.

2.....What should the laws call same-sex coupling as a legal entity? California called them "domestic partnerships." Then, in 2000, Vermont was first to call them "civil unions," which pleased me. On a PBS panel, I had represented "civil unions" against two Vermont lawyers who advocated for the word "marriage." The legislature voted the compromise, which granted same-sex coupling "the same benefits and protections" as marriage while protecting the word "marriage" from an anti-historical dilution. But on 1 September 09, same-sex "marriage" will become possible in Vermont, as it became in my state, Massachusetts, in 2004 - the first state whose legislature authorized same-sex "marriage" (with the backing of my own denomination, the United Church of Christ, which in its general synod the next year expanded "marriage" on the equal-rights basis: "equal marriage rights for all people regardless of gender"). / But I opposed my state and my church. My answer to the second question is still the compromise, *"civil unions."*

3.....Does the state have an interest in providing the father/mother/child family *a special status*? Yes, as this socio-unit is foundational to all societies and governments.

4.....Does the state need a term to designate the male/female relationship which is foundational to the father/mother/child family? Yes, and virtually everywhere and always it has had just such a term: *"marriage."*

5.....Does the "church" (religious institution) need a term to designate the male/female relationship which is foundational to the father/mother/child family? Yes, and virtually always and everywhere it has had just such a term:*"marriage."*

6.....The gay movement has not been satisfied with the achievement of equal legal rights; it presses on toward status equivalence,*"equal dignity."* Should gay unions/marriages be accorded equal dignity? The question's first word should be changed to "Can," and the bio-social answer, should be No. Homosexuality is, in my view, natural and normal but not normative; it is, in light of the human potential, a tragedy of biosocio-underdevelopment. A homosexual citizen should be equal before the law, and free of any indignity imposed by law, crime, or unkindness. But while a homosexual union should have, legally, "the same benefits and protections" as a marriage, it should not expect to have a societal dignity equal to that of a marriage - though all human beings are entitled to equal respect.

7.....Should gay unions have *adoption rights*? Absolutely. For children, adoption by a gay or lesbian union is liberation from an orphanage or the streets. And evidence is that such adoption does not influence children's eventual sexual preference.

8.....Should "churches" provide *a ceremony recognizing committed homosexual unions*? Yes, but with no legal pressure to do so.

9.....While the Bible is against religious homosexuality (that is, sex as religious activity with designated male or female prostitutes), and entertainment homosexuality, it presents God as favoring *responsible, loving, stable and society-stabilizing intimate relationships.*

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  JUNE 10, 2009; 11:18 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:                       
PREVIOUS:**[**RESPECTING FREEDOM OF -- AND FROM -- RELIGION**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/brad_hirschfield/2009/06/nh_gay_marriage_law_respects_freedom_of_and_freedom_from_religion.html)**| NEXT:**[**EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/susan_k_smith/2009/06/leave_gay_marriage_alone.html)

**Comments**

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Still don't beleive, here some more

Elizabeth asked him, "Master, why has woman been made unequal with man?" Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Elizabeth, when I say that in the beginning the Eloheim created mortals male and female; they were one body, perfectly united and absolutely equal. Through the Fall came disparity, and under the Fall there must always be division and disharmony and inequity. Only when you are redeemed from the Fall will male and female cease to exist, for you will become a perfect whole, accomplishing a single work. Only then will the purposes of the Parents be accomplished in the renewal of the physical realm. It is for this reason that I make the female male, and the male female, so that you may be in the physical realm as the Parents are in the heavenly realm."

Notice the scripture tells you that homosexuals, were made as state female male and male female. We are here on assignment, so that we can be a reminder in the physical realm who it is with our parents in the spiritual realm that the Eloheime exist within.

This acknowledgment that God made us, is also in Mathew 19 versus 10-12 for the holy rollers who skimmed over the specific instructions provided by Jesus who states...All men can not receive this saying save those to which it is given....read independently and seek light. When men and women are unable to respond to the opposite sex physically, sexually then they are rendered impotent, cut off castrated from woman. This is a direct acknowledgment that Jesus provided to us that we are not a choice as we already understand, science has long proven and in the face of God's truth many whose eyes should now be open, will fail to see as prophesied.

If you need to be right go ahead and do so, prove me wrong, we hold a spirit within us in our case we hold both spirits male and female as it was in the beginning. Just as he made us reflections of the array of colors that is contained in his skin pigmentation.

**POSTED BY: DRRICHARDWILSON | JUNE 20, 2009 10:03 AM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

I would encourage Christians that are against homosexual marriage to circumcise their hearts. I am writing and reporting the tip of the ice berg information that is scientifically accurate, scripturally supported and medically accurate just so that I am able to convey the level of sin the "Christian" commits against the spiritual realm when they fail to follow the instructions as assigned by Jesus in Mathew 19, "suffer the children to come unto me and forbid them not".

Also, Consider these sayings of Jesus: In the beginning, you were organized as one body, but when you became two, the illusion of separateness entered the physical plane. Now you are many, and this illusion abounds. Listen to what I'm saying! You must become a solitary person before me, if you want to dwell on the new planets and the new earth which I will create. Those who are enlightened will understand what I'm saying." Again confirming that God and the Eloheim are one body both female and male. If you recall in Genesis he made man from clay, and the scripture reads let "Us" not I, make man in "Our" own image. He determined that Adam needed a companion and took woman, female out of Adam represented by a rib. Adam being made in God;s own image was comprised of one body that comprised both male and female.

**POSTED BY: DRRICHARDWILSON | JUNE 20, 2009 9:50 AM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"I think that gay couples seem to be more stable than straight couples."

DanielintheLionsDen

Sometimes, Daniel, you just \*gotta\* be.

Ever watch 'Cops' and what the straights think they're entitled to get away with?
Gods.

They think the presence of one and only one penis makes for a wholesome environment.

Forget about it. Ain't what this is about.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 15, 2009 9:44 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

I think that gay couples seem to be more stable than straight couples.

**POSTED BY: DANIELINTHELIONSDEN | JUNE 15, 2009 7:56 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Gays will be married in RCC churchess by priests long before the Johanna Justin-Jinich's of this world stop being gunned down in the campus bookstores by crazed antisemitic gunmen.

May her memory be a blessing to those who knew her.

**POSTED BY: FARNAZ1MANSOURI1 | JUNE 14, 2009 7:40 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Reverend,

300,000 of your fellow Americans, all gay men, died in the AIDS in the 1980s and 90s, thanks to an utter lack of social support, from childhood to adulthood, for their sexuality.

I can think of no better reason to encourage the permanence and commitment that all people, gay and straight, want in their lives.

The term must be "marriage."

**POSTED BY: TOMHENNING | JUNE 11, 2009 6:29 AM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Rev. Elliott writes, "Gay coupling is a less stable social institution than straight (male/female) coupling." This is not true. In fact, the opposite may be the case. A 1997 study found that in Denmark, which has had civil unions for same-sex couples since 1989, the divorce rate for gay male couples is 14%, the divorce rate for lesbian couples is 23%, and the divorce rate for heterosexual couples is 46%. (Source: Marian Jones, "Lessons from a Gay Marriage," Psychology Today May/June 1997)

I'm curious about where the "estimate" that gay unions are only 20-30% stable comes from. Is this "estimate" based on evidence, or is this a number someone just made up? Is this number supposed to represent the stability of gay relationships, or is it about the stability of gay marriages? I have to wonder whether apples are being compared with oranges. Relationships that aren't legally recognized are less stable than relationships that are. That's true for straights as well as gays. We don't have meaningful statistics on the stability of gay marriages in the U.S. since gay marriage and gay civil unions have been around for a very short time here and in very few states.

**POSTED BY: EQUALRIGHTS | JUNE 10, 2009 6:02 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

yeah Captain Ahab, the Reverand really hit a respectful tone calling gays tragedies of biosocio-underdevelopment.

**POSTED BY: EFS5R | JUNE 10, 2009 5:32 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Reverend Elliot:

Extremely well said, with dignity, truth and respect for everyone.

**POSTED BY: CAPTN\_AHAB | JUNE 10, 2009 5:21 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"But while gay coupling is a less stable social institution than straight (male/female) coupling,"

And how do you back that up? I've been in my marriage for more than 20 years, and know many other couples in the same boat. Conversely, I know many, many heterosexual couples who have divorced, many of them several times.

**POSTED BY: BEARGULCH | JUNE 10, 2009 4:37 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

It's time for marriage equality and fairness in America.

This summer I will be officiating at many marriages of loving couples who are coming to CT to wed because they can't wed in their own states.

Last Saturday I officiated for 2 men from NY who have been together for almost 45 years, and later in the day I officated for 2 young women from DC who came to CT to wed.

Kudos to CT, New England and Iowa. It's time America!

Cheers, Joe Mustich, Justice of the Peace, Washington CT USA

[**http://justicesofthepeace.blogspot.com**](http://justicesofthepeace.blogspot.com/)

**POSTED BY: CORNETMUSTICH | JUNE 10, 2009 4:25 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

I mean, Reverend, let's make my position plain again, after all that, ...I'm less concerned than the anti-gay side is whether or not my marriage is considered a legal marriage, or a federal Civil union or whatever separate but equal term, if it \*is\* equal, and if they \*exist\* before trying to say, 'Oh, it's you wanting to call your marriage marriage that sours the whole deal.'

When that's not what the laws presented or in question are about: people say 'definition of marriage' while passing laws that mean you can't even make a private contract with your own lawyer containing rights 'similar' to marriage.

We have a right to call our marriages marriages, yes. The courts have to rule on precedent that 'separate but equal' isn't equal.

Popular support is there for civil unions which are supposed to be the same in all but name. That's what people think is the circumstance behind 'separate but equal,' anyway.

Don't blame gay couples for 'selfishly' wanting full equality, in all our 'tragic underdevelopedness,' before we even \*have\* the civil unions... Cause we \*don't.\*

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 4:11 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"2
I said that "values" as well as "rights" "conflict in a free and pluralistic society." Your response? Only rights. But your limitation has to do with government, not "society."

The government \*is\* there to guarantee our equal rights and liberties so we can \*all\* have our values. These \*are\* our values, Reverend. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Of the people, not of the churches. If you want to use government to make one religion's 'values' 'more equal' than others, you're talking about \*oppression.\*

Society, well, 'society' is alternately claimed by some preachers, and then rebuked as being 'against' the preachers' 'values' whenever it's convenient. ...Usually when their 'values' candidates mess up or prove unpopular or wrong.

Again, this is why our government is there \*to\* guarantee our rights and liberties, not enforce your desires to remove 'dignity' from others.

Sometimes you've just gotta buck society, or negotiate a way within it. Outside much of it, if you must. I know this well. I'm not worried about 'society' becoming less-gay-friendly (more about the extreme elements becoming more dangerous and hateful and deceptive and irresponsible in politics.)

'Values' are what we bring \*to\* a Republic of Liberty and Justice for \*all,\* not something that Republic is supposed to impose.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 3:55 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

..."laws should give to this institution such recognition as is commensurate with its positive contribution to society's stability and prosperity."

How do you determine a couple's positive contribution to society's stability and prosperity? Children I take it? Shouldn't we then offer marriage only to the couples with children (gay or straight) and civil unions to all other couples (gay or straight)? There are far more straight married couples without children in this country than there are gay couples. Doesn't seem fair they should be receiving the same social recognition when they aren't 'contributing' as much as couples with children.

**POSTED BY: EFS5R | JUNE 10, 2009 3:46 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

" Do you not agree that government should give special attention to ALL parents? / But I did say that the father/mother/child family is "fundamental to all societies and governments" - to which your response was, "No all." Which not, please?"

The Celtic, for one, in which \*fosterage\* and related \*tanaistry\* was considered the basis for social order: inheritance wasn't passed down the line of primogeniture and all that, it was passed to a sister's son.

You say this: "In it's proper concern for children, government gives special rights to "parents" - fundamentally, father/mother parents. But since the focus is on the children, the parents may be other than the bio-parents."

You insist that the heterosexual nuclear family is 'fundamentally' deserving of special rights, then admit that it doesn't have to be the 'bio-parents?'

What you're saying is circular: you think heterosexuals are better because you think they're better.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 3:44 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

As for 'equal dignity,' well, in the eyes of the government, yes, we are all to be treated with equal dignity, ...it's not the government's job to 'dignifying' you calling a class of people 'a tragic biosocial underdevelopment' (Can we say, 'Objectively-disordered?)

Equal dignity would be another thing you take for granted. Being able to enter into a free and equal civil contract, celebrate it before the Gods you and your dear one see fit, and not have every 'Christian' bureaucrat or credit clerk more able to pass judgment on the respective contents of your undies and the quality of your love and commitment than \*you\* are accorded.

You can still think you're special, but, no, you don't have a right to use the government to deny people basic dignities.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 3:38 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Second post TO PAGANPLACE:
1
In it's proper concern for children, government gives special rights to "parents" - fundamentally, father/mother parents. But since the focus is on the children, the parents may be other than the bio-parents. Do you not agree that government should give special attention to ALL parents? / But I did say that the father/mother/child family is "fundamental to all societies and governments" - to which your response was, "No all." Which not, please?
2
I said that "values" as well as "rights" "conflict in a free and pluralistic society." Your response? Only rights. But your limitation has to do with government, not "society."
3
You accuse me of thinking that straight people are "much better." I can't even imagine my saying that sexual preference (which is something a human being discovers, does not choose) in itself has moral content: again I must say, better/worse is a matter of character, not anything one discovers about oneself.
4
The Bible says nothing about gay/lesbian couples who live loving, responsible, faithful lives that are good news to fellow human beings & the good earth; indeed, such couples are directly or indirectly responsive to the Bible's teaching that "God is love." Of course the Bible is against temple prostitution & gay sex as play only.
5
You say, "Christianity" claims that "there's something inherently unholy about sex." Not true about the Bible & the earliest Christianity, but some pagan
celibate notions crept into some later Christianity.

**POSTED BY: ELLIOTTWL | JUNE 10, 2009 3:36 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Well, Reverend, I don't know if they'd laugh at this from you:

"6.....The gay movement has not been satisfied with the achievement of equal legal rights;"

How would you know, if you don't even admit we don't \*have\* equal rights?

" it presses on toward status equivalence, "equal dignity." Should gay unions/marriages be accorded equal dignity? The question's first word should be changed to "Can," and the bio-social answer, should be No. Homosexuality is, in my view, natural and normal but not normative; it is, in light of the human potential, a tragedy of biosocio-underdevelopment."

--i.e. You find gays 'inferior' in all that 'pretty' talk and want 'special status' for heterosexuals. Since that special status is already the norm, that means denying us equality.
QED.

If you want to talk 'separate but equal' \*after\* we have federal civil unions, that's one thing. Go to it.

What you say and try to justify is another.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 3:22 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"At present, straight marriages in America are only 50% stable (in the sense of lasting). Some estimates for gay unions are as low as 20-30%"

I suppose, Reverend, it depends on whose 'estimates' are and what they mean by 'union.'

I'm glad you favor civil unions: but the portability of civil marriage with the full faith and credit of the United States government provides the kind of portability you take for granted, and can avoid such families having to be parted just because of some lack of health benefits or property rights.

The image of gay people tends to be of wealthy elites, but actually, the poorer you are, the more vulnerable you are to such discriminations. Especially since these are tough times, where the corporations are constantly downsizing and moving people around, keeping us all from developing real community roots as a result.

Families and partnerships just starting out often don't have a whole lot of options on where they can all live and work and have health care, \*and\* civil rights...

People using the government to stress gay families cause they don't like us being involved with their 'definition' won't make things more stable.

Frankly, the same-sex couples wanting to get married \*now\* have been together, effectively married sometimes as much as fourty years. I've been with my partner for something like seven, already. And that's with several interstate moves, a period of practically-necessitated separation, me being barely able to work, and little to no support from either of our families.

A lot of gay couples have a lot of things you take for granted stacked against them \*by\* a homophobic wing of religious, \*and\* all the marginalization imposed and incited and promulgated by it.

Divorce and broken homes are statistically \*most\* common in conservative Evangelical families, and least common in areas that are more friendly to gay marriage and gay people.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 3:16 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

TO PAGANPLACE:

You & I have had much back-&-forth, & I thought you knew this "preacher" better.
1
That I consider "gay people" to be "unworthy...to be parents" is the reverse of the truth. I've long held that worthiness to be "parents" is a matter of character, not sexual preference.
2
You say, "None of you have even bothered to 'meet' a gay couple." When a dean of a graduate school on Manhattan, I met many gay couples & had a number of them in my classes. They were members of Manhattan's Metropolitan Community Church & were studying to be pastors.
3
You say, "None of you preachers have even bothered to 'look' at who you're demeaning." How many of my gay and lesbian students would laugh at you! Or scowl at your ignorance of me.

**POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JUNE 10, 2009 3:05 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

TO THINKTANKER:
At present, straight marriages in America are only 50% stable (in the sense of lasting). Some estimates for gay unions are as low as 20-30%. I hope the legalizing of gay unions, which I've long favored, will increase their stability.

**POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JUNE 10, 2009 2:51 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"But while gay coupling is a less stable social institution than straight (male/female) coupling"

--Am I misreading this? If not, this is a completely invented fact. Marriage is meant to stabilize. Straight couples have successfully destabilized the institution for the last 60 years. I suspect the gays (the people who had to combat adversity and face numerous challenges in order to arrive at the cusp of marriage) will teach the straights a lesson -- given the chance, that is.

**POSTED BY: THINKTANKER | JUNE 10, 2009 1:43 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Same-sex marriage, Reverend, if you want to talk terms, though, is actually... Marriage. The marriage part's a lot more similar than anyone on one side cares to contemplate or admit. It's the 'same sex' part everyone has problems with, ...and it's clear from what you preachers say.

You go on and on about what 'homosexuality' is in your minds, about how unworthy you think gay people are to be parents, if applicable, (apparently figuring that it's better for children to have no one but one mommy rather than two, cause that's the choice: people aren't going to suddenly 'turn straight' cause you want to make life hard for us. Even drive us apart through economic pressures or legal action, or verbally abuse our kids with graphic imagery about what you imagine 'gays do'...

It's not about 'Marriage,' with you guys, Reverend. It's about who's in it, and you should all have enough self-reflection to realize it.

None of you have even bothered to \*meet\* a gay couple. See how actually un-titillatingly ordinary our married life \*is,\* apart of course from the extra harships we presently live under in most places. The ignorance is glaring.

None of you preachers have even bothered to \*look\* at who you're demeaning.

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 1:40 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

"3.....Does the state have an interest in providing the father/mother/child family a special status? Yes, as this socio-unit is foundational to all societies and governments."

Not all.

And, wait a minute, I thought it was \*gay people\* everyone's always claiming want 'special rights?'

People's 'values' don't \*have\* any essential conflict in a free and pluralistic society.

There's only a conflict when one party thinks their \*rights\* extend to denying equal treatment to others.

You can fulminate all you want about how much better you think straight people are, , but in the United States of America, you don't get to rule over others because you believe you can spin your religion to arrogate to yourself authority over other people beyond the founding principles of American law.

"9.....While the Bible is against religious homosexuality (that is, sex as religious activity with designated male or female prostitutes)"

Frankly, it's no surprise your religion is 'against' all other religions, according to many. That's why we have \*religious liberty\* And \*guarantees of equality under the law.\*

", and entertainment homosexuality,"

So you'll go right out and deny yourselves even the right to civil heterosexual marriage on the grounds that some heterosexuals use sex for 'entertainment.'

You love to bring up the ancient hierodules as if it says something about gay people... Or Pagans, in general.

Christianity's the ones who actually \*made sex itself profane\* ..not part of something holy... seen as something that can heal and be an act of worship. ...It's Christianity that claimed there's something inherently unholy about sex, ...but, of course, kept the 'entertainment prostitution.'

**POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JUNE 10, 2009 1:32 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

The comments to this entry are closed.