144

<http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html>

**Sex and religious beliefs**

*1....Do your religious beliefs exalt or stigmatize sex (or both)? 2.... Is religion a useful tool for helping young people navigate the treacherous world of sex, love and relationships? 3.... Does religion present an alternative view of sex and sexual relationships to the culture at large? 4.... Should it?*

My religious beliefs as a Christian center in God, who had me in mind when 13.7 billion years ago, with a Big Bang, he began to create the universe (or universes). I mean (1) reality is**personal**all the way up, down, and sideways, and (2) I am (and every other human being is) in the drama. Impersonal elements in the drama are props. The Dramatist was the personal consciousness before the drama of physical, biological, intellectual, and spiritual evolution, and we human beings are the most complex and successful consciousnesses to come on stage.

Biologically, we have become *too successful* for our own good and the good of the biosphere. Unlike the seasonal sex of our fellow-animals, ours is around the clock and throughout the calendar. That, and the fact that our sex-drive is high, account for both our species' survival and the increasing excess of our birthrate over our death rate. In the food-chain, we are still being eaten as well as eating; but the range of organisms eating us has been greatly reduced, indeed to organisms invisible with the naked eye; and medicine has greatly reduced the killing success of those micro-organisms as well as of degeneracies.

Conclusion: For our own good, the good of the biosphere, and the glory of the Dramatist, we need to *reduce baby-production*. This is possible by reducing sex (that is, sexual intercourse) and increasing both contraception (mechanically and chemically) and abortion (where pregnancy is unwanted but has occurred from failure to use contraception or from failure of contraception).

My religious beliefs include inherent dignity of human beings as *personal*, made "in the image of God"; but they do not "the sanctity of human life." The latter I consider not only the most blasphemous idolatry, but a superstition economically unbearable at both ends of human life.

As for reducing sexual intercourse, good luck (as they say). But seriously, social sanctions can stigmatize specific behaviors (as, for example, smoking has become increasingly shameful in the U.S.). *Tight* sex has been culturally "out" since the '60s, but *loose* sex is too "in" and needs stigmatization (for example: in the U.S., 70% of inner-city babies are born bastards).

**Comments** on the questions (which I have numbered, above):

1....My religious beliefs exalt and stigmatize sex. / Exalt TIGHT (that is, mutually faithful and exclusive) sex as a gift of God for companionship, joy, reproduction, fully human maturation (including self-transcendence), and social contribution. (Six biblical quotations tempt me to cite them here, but for space's sake I refuse.) / Stigmatize LOOSE sex, which is all sex not meeting the "tight" criteria. (Exception: Not all tight sex intends reproduction.) Not just religion but society is at stake. Loose sex dooms marriages and the family, and doomed families sicken society.

2.....*Good*religion is useful (helping the navigation), bad religion is worse than useless. When in '68 I was asked to teach a course at Esalen Institute, I ran into hedonism, a sex-worshiping*bad* religion. When monks captured the papacy and forced celibacy on all Roman Catholic clergy, that church was afflicted with sex-denigrating *bad* religion (from which it has not yet recovered, though it is suffering greatly).

3...."Religion" (historic religions) ritualizes the common ventures of life (birth, marriage, death), giving them *sacred*meaning, form, and purpose. This is "an alternative view of sex and sexual relations to the culture at large," for the present American culture at large is formed by the *secular*(religion absent) public schools. (In the history of American public education, God moved from the center to the circumference, then disappeared.)

4....Yes, it should. Indeed, in light of American history and the traditional American mind, "the [abnormal] alternative" is the secular mentality. America's founders were unanimous that *democracy* is impossible without personal morality, which is (they said, I believe rightly) *impossible without the support and sanctions of religion*.

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  APRIL 21, 2010; 12:08 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:  [Send E-mail](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/emailalink?sent=no&link=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html&title=Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs)   [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html&t=Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs)   [Twitter](http://twitter.com/home?status=Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20-%20http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html)   [Digg](http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html&title=Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs)   [Yahoo Buzz](http://buzz.yahoo.com/buzz?publisherurn=washington_po284&guid=washington_po284:http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html)   [Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/post?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html;&title=Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20-%20On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog;)   [StumbleUpon](http://www.stumbleupon.com/submit?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html)   [Technorati](http://technorati.com/search/http:/onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2010/04/sex_and_religious_beliefs.html)    
PREVIOUS:**[**GOD'S COVENANT OFFERS THE MODEL FOR HOW TO LOVE**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/janet_edwards/2010/04/gods_covenant_offers_the_model_for_how_to_love.html)**| NEXT:**[**LOVE THE BODY, HEAL THE SPIRIT**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/susan_brooks_thistlethwaite/2010/04/love_the_body_heal_the_spirit.html)

**Comments**

**Please report offensive comments below.**

Yeah, Lepi. Frankly, being raised by two people who resent their children and claim the resentment is a 'sacrifice for them' (thus children are raised thinking they are to blame for the misery of a bad marriage, and their own feelings of being at fault, ...or else someone else must be to blame,) may be the root cause of so much irrationality about sex, marriage, and religion as to blame for 'everything' in our current society:

When people run for office on 'Family values' ...they're more likely to have broken homes, themselves, and seem to be trying to force everyone in the world to live by those 'rules,' ...even if, if not \*because\* they need \*someone\* to 'do it right.'

Or to punish (or 'save') someone for what was said to \*be\* 'Ultimately right' ...and their fault, for not working.

One always wonders, when someone says, "We're 'defending 'The Family.'" What family? From whom? And what? Me? You? Someone not being 'obedient' to... Who? 'God?' Or... Someone else?

When people say something about 'The family,' ....what is the sentiment? All pain, negativity, punishment, ...transference of blame, most especially onto anyone who's \*not\* 'suffering for the children' ...and saying that growing up \*resented\* is the 'only will of God.'

I say, nonsense.

Maybe things are simpler and more direct than they are made to appear: a good family isn't about its size or configuration, ...it's about being a family. Honestly, and lovingly, and responsibly.

**POSTED BY: APAGANPLACE | APRIL 26, 2010 1:57 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20APaganplace%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204840901&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4840901%26blog_id=618)

Rev: "But realistically, there's no way to prevent a bastard's suffering from parental deprivation."

I call BS. My daughter will be the first to tell you that had I married her dad, it would have been a disaster of epic proportions. I found out I was pregnant with her a few weeks after ending our relationship. Marrying someone you don't want to marry (or staying married to someone you don't want to be married to) just because you have a child together is not in anyone's best interst, including the child's.   
Wrwe there finaicial shortages when my daughter was growing up? Yes. And those would have been worse had I married her dad, who had a bad habit of quitting jobs without having replacements for them lined up. But she knew that we both loved her, that she was wanted, and that she would never be hungry, naked, or homeless as long as either of us was alive. That's the important part of raising well-adjusted kids. Everything else, including number and marital status of parents, is negotiable.

**POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | APRIL 22, 2010 11:23 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20lepidopteryx%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839793&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839793%26blog_id=618)

RESPONSE TO ASHLEYBONE's 4.21.10 10.29a  
1  
I admire the speed of your repentance: only 18 minutes after sinning! It's worthy of the highest level of biblical behavior, and...  
2  
...it is evidence of the worthwhileness (not, as you say, the "worthless"ness)of this OnFaith forum. How good to be free to publish anonymously precisely how you feel! When you read what you've written, it's a mirror of your inner face. And when you saw your inner face, you did something good about it - indeed, the best thing you could have done. And, in the process, you unwittingly proved that good character need not directly depend on religion.

RESPONSE TO ASHLEYBONE's 4.21.10 10.29a  
1  
In your first sentence, you mean "without" rather than "with."  
2  
Your second sentence is false. You claim to know something impossible for you to know, viz. that I lied. Of course you could rationally have said that in your opinion I was in error. But when I saw the word "lie," I knew I was reading something irrational.  
3  
Ben.Franklin well spelled out, in his virtue/vice lists, the American character, with its religious foundation. It's not clear that enough of that character remains to sustain our democracy.  
4  
My father was not a bastard but was called one because his parents were divorced. I was not recommending that bastard children should be stigmatized, but rather that bastard-making be stigmatized (rather than, as it has been in our inner-cities, normalized). But realistically, there's no way to prevent a bastard's suffering from parental deprivation.

**POSTED BY: ELLIOTTWL | APRIL 22, 2010 8:50 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20elliottwl%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839632&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839632%26blog_id=618)

"America's founders were unanimous that democracy is impossible without personal morality, which is (they said, I believe rightly) impossible without the support and sanctions of religion."  
The last part of this statement - that personal morality is impossible with the support and sanctions of religion - is an utter lie. If you're going to make such a statement, I think you have some obligation to provide evidence to support it, and there is no such evidence. People of religion, whether they are members of their hierarchy or just followers, are just as likely to rape, murder, steal, molest, beat their kids, and so on as anyone else.

Ashley, what's wrong? The above is true.

Beleive in the possibility of a creator if you want, but it is well known fact that there really isnt correalation bewtween atheism and destruction. That said, I simply cannot be tricked into sexual guilt based on religions.

**POSTED BY: JIMJAZZ2010 | APRIL 21, 2010 7:06 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20jimjazz2010%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839496&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839496%26blog_id=618)

Further evidence that strong religious belief is evidence of the human mind struggling to make sense of altered brain chemistry.

The anthrocentric insistence is seriously old school.

**POSTED BY: THEBOBBOB | APRIL 21, 2010 7:03 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20thebobbob%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839495&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839495%26blog_id=618)

I would like to apologize for the harshness of my previous comment. I am angry, but that kind of rudeness is exactly the reason that this forum is so worthless, and I'm sorry for having contributed to that.

**POSTED BY: ASHLEYBONE | APRIL 21, 2010 10:29 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20ashleybone%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839401&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839401%26blog_id=618)

"America's founders were unanimous that democracy is impossible without personal morality, which is (they said, I believe rightly) impossible without the support and sanctions of religion."

The last part of this statement - that personal morality is impossible with the support and sanctions of religion - is an utter lie. If you're going to make such a statement, I think you have some obligation to provide evidence to support it, and there is no such evidence. People of religion, whether they are members of their hierarchy or just followers, are just as likely to rape, murder, steal, molest, beat their kids, and so on as anyone else.

I'd also like to address the part of your post that I found personally offensive. My wonderful, atheist, giving, wildly emotional, utterly logical, ambitious but carefree wife is a "bastard". For that, she was ruthlessly teased as a child and looked down upon by adults in her community. So you can stuff your stigmatization straight up your god-fearing rectum. Over the years I've visited this benighted forum, I've always considered your posts to be mostly inane. This is the first time I've fantasized about punching your smug face.

**POSTED BY: ASHLEYBONE | APRIL 21, 2010 10:11 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20ashleybone%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839391&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839391%26blog_id=618)

As the proud mother of a so-called "bastard," I take issue with your contention that my decision not to marry her father, despite the fact that he wanted to get married, has somehow harmed society. My daughter was an honor student, a volunteer in various community projects almost from the time she could walk, a Girl Scout, and an active member of our UU church's youth program. She is now 20, she and her fiance have their own place, both have jobs, she is enrolled in college with a 4.0 GPA, and her goal is to become a veterinarian. How does ANY of that harm society?

**POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | APRIL 21, 2010 9:18 AM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20lepidopteryx%20%20|%20%20Sex%20and%20religious%20beliefs%20%20|%20%204839376&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4839376%26blog_id=618)

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