

The mutilation of the Christian perspective on gay rights

By Kurt Nelson

The past few years have been crucial in the liberation of homosexuals from fearing public expression of their sexual preferences. Many changes have evolved as a result of gays' overt declaration of their homosexuality. The American Psychiatric Association has dropped homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, corporations have vowed not to discriminate in hiring practices on the basis of sexual preference, and most recently questions of civil liberties and civil rights have surfaced in courts and legislatures.

One result is that the Christian perspective on homosexuality has been mutilated, to say the least.

And, of course, Anita Bryant has become more renowned for her religious fervor in battling against such rights and liberties than she ever was remembered for promoting orange juice.

In what ways did Bryant go wrong? Most notably in the

confusion of civil rights and civil liberties with her own personal moral convictions. A recent editorial in the *Boston Globe* noted, "She belongs to a tradition emphasizing strict separation of church and state, but is calling upon the state to enforce, by law, certain teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition." Never have we in the West looked to the state to be our moral and spiritual guide. American culture has always maintained that the best law is the least law.

With this distinction in mind, let us take a new look at the Biblical stance on homosexuality, not as an edict to be lobbied into the legal system, but as God's perfect design for a people He created and loves. Based on the historical Christian view of the Bible as a revelation from God, the practice of homosexual acts is wrong.

However, it is important to note that scripture doesn't distinguish it from premarital sex, adultery, idolatry, stealing, coveting, or fraud. (1 Cor 6:9-10) The practice of homosexuality is not a "super sin." It is no greater than any other expression of rebellion from God.

Pete Uhlenberg of the UNC department of sociology confirmed this in saying, "the homosexual act is not any different from a heterosexual act outside of marriage from a Christian perspective." They are both forbidden.

Then why the big deal about homosexuality? It's on equal ground with many other expressions of freedom from God's law, which have found common expression in our culture. Much of it may not be people's intense reaction to sin, rather their

more from personal offense than from Biblical example. This personal prejudice is borne out in the existence of the prevalent myth that eroticism is more important to the homosexual than the heterosexual. It is not.

Just the same, homosexuality is forbidden in the Bible, and therefore not to be encouraged by the Christian. A question quickly arises, "Can the Christian love a homosexual and yet hate his actions?" To this question Uhlenberg answered, "Yes, of course. No one likes every single

referred to seven times in scripture. Significantly, the word "gospel" (i.e. the "good message" of salvation realized through Jesus Christ) appears over one hundred times.

The real concern of God is not over the sexual preference of the homosexual, but a concern for the deep-seated spiritual condition that proceeds it. Homosexuality is wrong and its practice forbidden in the Bible. But the far louder cry of the New Testament Christianity is echoed in the words of the psalmist when he says, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

The message of God to all mankind is a declaration that we must turn from ourselves to Him to find hope and forgiveness and purpose. So let us not point the finger at the homosexual, but honestly examine our own hearts, and our own decision of what to do with the historical man, Jesus Christ.

Kurt Nelson is a UNC graduate who will attend the Medical College of Georgia in the fall.

Perspective

reaction to the change it forces upon our cultural sex roles. Max Stackhouse, professor of Christian Social Ethics at Andover Newton Theological School says, "The intensity of reactions to homosexuals probably reveals a deep sexual ambivalence about our masculinity and femininity once popular cultural images are challenged." We may be reacting

action of another person or likes every aspect of their personality but we may still love them in a committed way."

The message Jesus brought was not an expose of every sin of his contemporaries, but of redemption and reconciliation to men who know they have abandoned a relationship with their Creator, the Living God. Homosexuality is only

'Gay rights are civil rights are human rights'

To the Editor:

To update and support Bernadine Ward's article about Anita Bryant and gays, I would like to add a few facts which may interest those who are undecided on the issue. Gay rights are civil rights are human rights. Although gays are supposed to have the same constitutional rights as everyone else (i.e. life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), Anita Bryant and people like her are seeking to

legislate their prejudices to deny lesbians and gay men their most basic freedoms in this country.

Gay people are not necessarily seeking the American public's approval or disapproval of their homosexuality; what we are asking for is the right to choose how and if we worship, if we want to marry and who, where we live, and if we may keep the jobs we have in our chosen fields.

Fortunately, many prestigious

associations and groups have taken the time to investigate the facts about gays and to consider the possible implications of their actions. Not all churches agree with Ms. Bryant's "religious" position. The National Council of Churches, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the National Federation of Priests' Councils, the Lutheran Church of America, the Unitarian-Universalist Association, and the Society of Friends (Quakers) have all passed gay rights laws and have welcomed gays into their congregations.

Many doctors and psychologists have also reevaluated their earlier diagnoses and no longer believe that homosexuality is a disease to be cured. The American Psychiatric Association has removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders and now strongly supports gay rights legislation as well.

Perhaps the most controversial thrust of Ms. Bryant's campaign centers on her claim that all homosexuals are child molesters, especially if they teach. The

National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the United Federation of Teachers, and the American Association of University Professors do not view homosexuality as a danger to the children, and again, have passed pro-gay resolutions. In addition to this, in the 39 U.S. communities where gay teachers do have job protection, neither parents nor students have ever lodged a single complaint (of the sexually-related or "propaganda" sort) against a gay teacher. Child molesting is not a gay crime: of the reported child molestings in several large eastern cities, 96-98% of the attacks were by heterosexual men against female children. If Anita Bryant wishes to save our children, she should campaign against all child molesters and abusers; if she did so, she would find strong support in the gay community, especially from the thousands of gays who are themselves parents.

As the second largest minority (10%) in America, lesbians and gay men are entitled to protection against discrimination, as are other

minorities.

To reinforce the prejudices and discrimination against gays could lead to a backlash which would deny every minority its rights.

S. Johnston
Media Board, NC Gay Union
Chapel Hill

Thanks

To the editor:

I am glad to see that you reprinted the article "Anita Bryant—From Orange Juice to Chasing Gays," by Bernadine Ward in a more coherent form. This is the first time in a year that you have printed an article about gays without such massive typesetting errors so as to render the article unintelligible. Also the name in the last article is Bruce Voeller of the National Gay Task Force not Bruce Vaelley. Thank you.

Jerry L. Pierce, Jr.
Vice-President, CGA

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A controversial topic

The issue of gay rights is controversial and complex. Discussions of the subject invariably involve a tangle of emotions, morals, and religious convictions. Rational discussions of the matter, on the other hand, are pitifully rare.

During the relaxed atmosphere of summer school, the *Tar Heel* often has to literally scrounge for letters to the editor and to write its editorial heart out to elicit any type of spirited response from its readers.

With last week's column concerning Anita Bryant's crusade against gay rights, however, we received a number of letters and responses which we feel strongly merit your examination.

Whatever one's stance concerning the issue of gay rights, he should not close his mind to the facts surrounding the topic and the views of others. Whether he supports Anita Bryant and others like her, or whether he opposes her, whether he is heterosexual or gay, whether he is liberal or conservative, a closed mind can be his greatest enemy.

