

Letters Against...

Upholding God's boundaries

Sir, I do hope your contributor, Benny Hazlehurst (March 4), read and inwardly digested the timely words of the Rev Dr Nigel Scotland (letters) and realises the lid is now well and truly off of Pandora's box. It was for very good reasons that, in the written Word, God set rules and boundaries for sexual activity and therefore all Christians (especially clergy) have the responsibility and duty to uphold God's revealed will and guidance. It is wholly right that there should be pastoral, compassionate outreach to people of homosexual orientation, but it is surely a false compassion that encourages such practices that are contrary, not only to God's revealed will, but questionable in the area of bodily health? In regard to biblical sexual sin perhaps meditation of St John's Gospel 8:1-11 (particularly v11) is useful?

Alan T Minchin,

Stratford upon Avon

God's purposes?

Sir, Benny Hazlehurst calls us to "frame our theology of marriage around God's purposes" (March 4). But Jesus' list of sins included "sexual immorality" (Mark 7:21) which, for a first century Jew, included homosexuality. The reasons are, as Paul explained, that it is against God's purpose in creation (Romans 1:20-27), in law (1 Timothy 1:8-11) and salvation (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). If we are to flourish, we cannot call right what God has said is wrong.

The Rev JJ Fraiss

Bexhill, East Sussex

Moral Law

Sir, Benny Hazlehurst's plea for homosexual marriage (March 4) reminds me of the man of 1 Corinthians 5. He too was pushing the boundaries and had taken his stepmother as wife. So he might say: where's the problem, we're not related, free to marry, in love and intend to be monogamous and faithful. After all surely what is not forbidden is allowed!

Paul seems to disagree but why? Do the Mosaic prohibitions continue in Christ? Even if the civil and ceremonial Mosaic Law had ceased to have force at Calvary, the Moral Law continues. For adultery to

have meaning we have to accept Moses' republication of the revealed institution of Marriage that had come down to us from even earlier times. Without this, adultery and fornication, sins against God's institution of marriage, cease to have meaning and Paul has no authority to condemn this man.

I am also reminded of the audacity of Herod who feared not to take his brother Philip's wife, the prophetic condemnation of his sin by John and the tragic consequences that followed. Benny may beguile some, but he should weigh carefully the prophetic warning of our Prayer Book: "be ye well assured, that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow are not joined together by God; neither is their Matrimony lawful."

Principally this is directed against heterosexual unions, which is why we need to be careful when dealing with divorce and remarriage. Irrespective of what God legislated before the Fall, Moses allowed divorce and remarriage after the Fall because of the consequential hardness of men's hearts. Since this accommodation comes from God, and since Christ came to establish the morality of the Mosaic law, then homosexual marriage is out while divorce and remarriage can be lawful even if Christ's Creation ideal is otherwise.

We are in an ideological struggle with this Going Against Yahweh (GAY) sexuality as part of revolutionary unbelief's pagan legacy. Much of its force came from Engel's speculative views on the origin of the family and his perverse analysis that led to the attack on the family in the Communist Manifesto. This fed into Socialist and Labour circles which used Leninist Partinost or PC demonising of opponents to establish their distorted morality and values. In the final phase this is being given the full force of law but "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees" says Isaiah (10:1).

To allow non-sexual civil partnerships of family members would give relief from inheritance tax so only the Pro-GAY partnerships promoting an alternative lifestyle were allowed. But again it must be remembered that in its origins inheritance tax is part of this Socialist legacy and was an unprincipled covetous attack on family business, wealth and independence to make us all reliant on the all-providing dictatorial state.

Rather than driving forward the pro-GAY antifamily agenda and promoting further confusion our Church leaders and the government would do well to uphold the Christian religion and its civil consequences.

Alan Bartley,

Greenford, Middlesex

Clear teaching

Sir, I read with interest the article, 'Towards a theology of Gay Marriage?' (March 4) I was intrigued at the use of Holy Scripture to justify the position of the author. Genesis 2:24 is clear, 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they

shall be one flesh.' This portion of God's word is so clear as to need no explanation. In addition we find that the relationship between Christ and his church is compared to that of a husband and wife. The Bible also shows us that both effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind are amongst the unrighteous that shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

John Smart,
Edinburgh

Letters of Support...

Refreshing

Sir, How refreshing to read such a well thought-out approach to an issue which seems to have caused moral outrage amongst some members of the Church of England (Towards a theology of gay marriage, March 4).

I find it difficult to comprehend the rigidity of thinking which regards the desire of two gay people to publicly express, before God, a lifelong commitment to each other as anything other than a cause for celebration. Civil partnerships were a step in the right direction, in recognising that faithful commitment has as much of a place in gay relationships as with heterosexual couples. However, it still seemed to leave gay people being shortchanged. For those who saw marriage as an important social institution, and for Christians, an institution which is a gift from God, it just wasn't an option that was available to them. Gay Christians could declare their commitment publicly, but not, heaven forbid, before God.

As a gay Christian myself, in a lifelong relationship, I embrace the opportunity, that now seems possible, to honour Jesus' teaching about two people entering into a unique, complete, faithful partnership; legally recognised and blessed by God. Thank God.

Liz Jones
Via e-mail

No hiding

Sir, As an evangelical Ordinand in my final year at Cranmer Hall, I read the article (March 4) by Accepting Evangelicals with interest.

It was well written and helped me to see this area of ethical understanding in a new light, along with other areas that we commonly

accept or assume as evangelicals, are 'right' and 'biblical'. One thing that theological training has taught me during my time here, is not to see things just at face value and to unpack my previous assumptions and prejudices. I have learnt much from hearing from the views and experiences of others, such as www.acceptingevangelicals.org/ I hope your readers will also find time to study this topic of 'Gay marriage' by talking to its supporters rather than just hiding behind barricades of 'The Bible says..' and by analysing the deeper issues raised by the article - of love, relationship and respect for humanity in all its God-given diversity.

David Austin,
Cranmer Hall, Durham

Measured

Sir, I was delighted to read Benny Hazlehurst's article on the subject of same-sex marriage. It was interesting, measured and refreshingly different. Brilliant! Can we have some more like that, please?

Carole Smith
Camberley, Surrey

Intolerance

Sir, I have a lot of sympathy for the views of Benny Hazlehurst.

For too long, I feel, the Church has been intolerant of the emotional needs of homosexual people. Over the years I have read several tragic stories of homosexuals being evicted or ostracised by their Church. I have read of people being made to feel so ashamed of their sexuality and sexual practices that they have been driven to suicide.

We are called to preach the Gospel to all men, but there is a danger that the Church will be seen as a hostile environment by homosexuals, whether they are Christian

or not. Too many homosexuals in our fallen world are not hearing the message of the Gospel and they are put off the Church because it is seen as irrelevant, intolerant and unsympathetic to their sexual orientation and other personal circumstances. Moreover, in our more liberal and enlightened secular culture, the Church's stance may be seen as absurd by many heterosexuals. This may keep many other people away from our Churches.

Whatever interpretation one places on passages of scripture relating to homosexual practices, I feel that the Church needs to emphasise key messages of boundless and unconditional love, of the freedom, fullness of life and lack of condemnation to be found in Christ, and of peace, goodwill to all men. We should reach out, as our Lord did, to all those on the margins of our society, to the unloved, and to sinners and try to show his love. Most of us yearn for the right person to make us complete. This longing is as strong in homosexuals as anyone else. I think it is time for the Church to applaud, respect and honour the love and commitment that two same-sex people have for one another and to bless that love and commitment. In so doing, we would not be ignoring scripture but recognising that all human love is a deep and God-given gift.

Dr John Pike

Bristol

Inclusive message

Sir, The article "towards a theology of gay marriage" shows that, despite continuing tensions between those who are taught the faith through the filter and limitations of human understanding and those who have caught the faith in their hearts by the grace of the spirit, the inclusive love of the Christ who deemed every single soul worthy of his acceptance of Calvary can still cut through our flawed nature.

Just as we now wonder that there was a time when slavery was justified on the basis of scripture, so will a day arrive when evolved Christians will wonder that scripture was once used to condemn and demonise others on the basis of aspects of innate identity such as gender or sexuality?

The Rev David Gray,

Via e-mail

An earlier 'recreational' error?

Sir, I find the arguments employed by those correspondents upset at the apologetic piece about theology of gay marriage very hard to comprehend. May I ask the Rev JJ Frai, how he can be so clear-cut, when his own evangelical constituency are totally confused as to the meaning of heterosexual marriage? Whilst at the same time proclaiming the perspicuity and clarity of Scripture, evangelicals cannot even agree as to whether the Lord Jesus Christ made marriage indissoluble or permitted divorce and re-marriage. This division is so deep that even the Reform Covenant is carefully drafted to side step this issue and keep both parties on board. It seems to me that they haven't got the integrity to confess to the practising homosexual community whom they condemn, that in fact they have deep disagreements as to what the Bible says about marriage and what constitutes the serious sin of adultery.

However what is most sad is that evangelicals like Mr Frai have no understanding of the Biblical and long-held teaching that sex must always be open to the possibility of the transmission of God's gift of life. How many evangelicals realise that before the 1930 Lambeth Conference, all Christians taught that contraception was a grave sin and sexual perversion, and that it was condemned unequivocally in Scripture? Only the Roman Catholic Church (in the face of massive internal dissent) has remained faithful to this position.

Indeed it was this "new theology" of making procreation within marriage an optional extra which opened the door for homosexuality as the sexual revolution exploded in the 1960s. It is "logical" that if sexuality is essentially recreational, with procreation as an optional extra that the door would open for making homosexual practice a "valid" sexuality. If, some conservative evangelicals like Mr Frai think they are in the front line of defending Christian marriage, they should take stock as to their own theology. Motes and beams come to mind.

Robert Ian Williams,

Bangor