



kort's korner

God is Not Homophobic

©1995 by Rev. J. Alton Cressman. Originally published in the Port Huron, Michigan Times Herald as a "Guest Opinion" column

SOME WEEKS AGO YOU PUBLISHED A STORY about the local Gay Pride group. As a pastor and counselor of more than 40 years in Port Huron, I have followed with interest Talk-Back and letters, which have since appeared, on your editorial page.

Some were positive and supportive, some negative and judgmental. A number of the anti-gay replies used the Bible to try to make a point. These arguments are usually based on three main passages. I feel we have an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding.

The Genesis 19 passage about Sodom refers to gang rape, but says nothing about homosexuality. As other references to Sodom in the Bible indicate, the sin of Sodom was inhospitality (Luke 10:10). There is no word in the original Hebrew Old Testament text for homosexuality. Another passage often used is from the book of Leviticus, which spells out laws for the nomadic tribe of Levi thousands of years ago. If we follow those rules, we are forbidden to eat bacon, shrimp or cheeseburgers, or to wash and wear shirts or plant a garden with more than one kind of seed.

The third text commonly quoted is from Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 1. Here Paul is warning the first century Christians against the contamination of idolatrous pagan temple worship, which included both male and female prostitution, common in Greek and Roman cultures. Nowhere in any of these passages is there reference to same-gender love as experienced today. There is no word for homosexuality in New Testament Greek. Paul had no more understanding of homosexuality as we know it today than that the world is round.

To take Biblical references out of context and use them as proof is easy. It was done years ago to prove the right for Christians to own slaves, to persecute Jews and to keep women in inferior positions. In the backwoods of the Kentucky hills, mountain preachers us rattlesnakes to prove their faith (see

Mark 16:18). In recent years, the state of Kentucky had to pass a law forbidding this practice. There are test in the Epistles, which forbid a woman from speaking in church, cutting her hair or wearing gold. Except for some cult groups, we do not take this literally today. Jesus said nothing about homosexuality, but he said a lot about divorce.

Studies have shown that one to 10% of the population is born homosexual, as some of us are born left-handed. It is not a choice. It is time for us to take a look at the main message of the Bible, which in the words of Jesus was: "By this shall everyone know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." "Judge not that you be not judged." The final message of the Old Testament from Micah 6:8 is "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Since the early 1950s I have known outstanding persons in the community who because they were gay were fired from jobs in the industry, business and the professions. Some were unwelcome in churches, a few of them pastors and priests. Worst of all, I have known young people contemplating suicide after being turned out by their families and having nowhere to turn for

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support. This is 1995. Let's not have any more graceless condemnation of minority groups in our community. It is a matter of civil rights. The local Pride Group has my support. Think of the ironic statement made by Sgt. Len Matlovich a few years ago when he said, "I can receive a medal for killing a man in Vietnam, and get kicked out of the Air Force for loving one."

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