

"Queer-Baiting..." Reconsidered

In February of 1973 *The Alternative* featured two essays in its "PERSPECTIVES" forum on homosexuality and the significance of the family. Each was independently written. David Brudnoy in "Queer-Baiting for Faith, Fun, and Profit" presented the case against age-old social and legal proscription of homosexuality. Gary North in "The Perseverance of the Family" outlined the importance of the family in western tradition, and mentioned toleration of homosexuality as an attendant danger to familial ties.

Over the following months we noticed an unusually impassioned response to Brudnoy's side of PERSPECTIVES—some readers reacting favorably, some unfavorably. Due to such interest, we have decided to publish in this issue two reasonably erudite refutations of Brudnoy's essay, one written by John Randolph, the other by E.T. Veal. It should be noted that the writer of the first article is an associate to a public official. He writes under the name "John Randolph" to avoid confusing his views with those of his employer.

These two replies are followed in turn by an answer from David Brudnoy himself.

John Randolph:

"Say It Ain't So, Dave"

I have a friend who is an alcoholic. He has one of the best minds I have encountered; he is charming, kindhearted, and the best of company. Indeed, drink seems to bring out the best in him, the sort of stream-of-consciousness, slap-on-the-back good fellowship which is perhaps most appealing to those of us to whom it doesn't come naturally. He is one of the most dangerous people I know.

He is one of those who sings the praises of booze, who will defend it on every aesthetic and intellectual ground. And he paints such an attractive picture that if I had a fourteen-year-old son, I would do what I could to prevent him from ever meeting my witty, wonderful friend the drunk.

Because I *know* he's wrong. Because I have seen what alcohol does to people. Within their own closed system, the arguments for alcohol addiction are irrefutable: the true Bacchist believer would rather have full life than long life, would rather die from a distant cirrhosis than a nine-to-five nervous breakdown. If his addiction makes it difficult for him to function well in society, there is something wrong with society. All a matter of aesthetics. Yet somehow, I *know* my position on this is more important, more obviously right than my preference for blue over yellow.

It is in this light that one must approach David Brudnoy's article against "Queer-Baiting." Here is one of the most lucid, creative writers we have seen—and one of ours—writing a piece that starts off as a hasty prospectus for Special Seminar 101a, Gaiety and its Oppressors in Medieval Spain; that winds up as an exhortation to the "American homosexual revolution" to observe the correct strategy and tactics; that is, alas, deadily dull throughout.

The trouble with the history lesson is that Brudnoy lacks perspective. Cheek-by-jowl with sweeping truisms ("The European Middle Ages were in many ways far less grim than the designation 'Dark Ages' would have us believe..."),

(continued on page 14)

E. T. Veal:

"Let's Be Reasonable"

In his zeal to dispel prejudices against homosexuality, David Brudnoy has adopted an unfortunate tactic. Where he might have applied reason to a highly emotional subject by demonstrating, if he could, the irrationality of antihomosexual attitudes, he has chosen instead to instill new prejudices by hurling abuse at opponents of his own position. Like those liberals who fancy that the way to end racial prejudice is to create guilt feelings in whites, Professor Brudnoy seems to think that the mistreatment of sexual deviates will end as soon as enough of *The Alternative's* "particular readership of largely younger people" comes to associate critics of homosexuality with witch hunters, anti-Semites, the Inquisition, Joe McCarthy, the Communist Party, "unresolved sexual cravings," the God of the Old Testament, and Queen Victoria.

Almost entirely avoided is the first question that needs to be asked about any human practice, sexual or otherwise—can this practice or conduct or custom be morally justified? Until the practice has been judged, it is fatuous to judge the practitioners.

Western society has, as Professor Brudnoy laments, judged the morality of homosexual practices. As far back as we have evidence, that judgement has been unfavorable to homosexuality, although the treatment meted out to homosexual individuals has varied widely. Where the principle of *quidquid nefas, prohibeat lex* has prevailed, the life of the homosexual has often been harassed and desperate; in more libertarian climes, the law may be less harsh, though public opinion can be as coercive as legal sanctions; and even in the most "open" and "tolerant" societies, a known homosexual is likely to be about as popular and sought-after as a known cardsharp or a known alcoholic.

Professor Brudnoy has every right to oppose his judgment of the moral question to western society's. The *consensus omnium gentium* is hardly infallible, and it may well be wrong about sexual

(continued on page 14)

David Brudnoy:

In Response

It is a testament to the continued antihomosexuality abroad in the land, that these letters by "John Randolph" and E.T. Veal are granted such a largish chunk of space in this magazine, in response to my article last February discussing the historical treatment of homosexuals and calling for an enlightened view. That I accept the editor's invitation to respond to their rejoinders does not indicate that either this magazine or the conservative movement in general is about to seriously reconsider their accustomed attitude. I note here, at the start, my continued allegiance to the conservative movement, especially to its libertarian strand, while asserting, once more, that the "conservative" attitude toward the matter at hand is, and will likely remain for some time yet, unconscionable. Let us speed, then, to the letters by Messrs. "Randolph" and Veal.

"Randolph" begins anecdotally, the better to let fly with the *ad hominem*. Note the implied syllogism: Since "Randolph's" friend the alcoholic is charming, and since he might charm "Randolph's" hypothetical teen-age son and lead him down the primrose path; therefore, by all means, the alcoholic friend must be kept from the company of the teen-ager. Analogy: Since Brudnoy is "lucid, creative" (etc.), and since there are young people reading Brudnoy's "Queer-Baiting..." piece; therefore, "Randolph" must rush to the rescue lest Brudnoy corrupt the young. It is, I fear, a failed attempt to be witty ("Randolph," that is, essays the wit) and neatly sets the whole argument off on a most unpleasant footing.

I am not surprised that "Randolph" never "thought much about homosexuality" until "Gay Liberationists and their admirers [of whom, incidentally, I am not one, except insofar as I share their desire for equality for homosexuals under the law and civilized attitudes among the citizenry] started calling it to my attention." I needn't mention the Negro civil rights movement, need I?

(continued on page 17)

RANDOLPH
(continued from page 13)

he will treat us to statistics on homosexuals burned, scourged, or sent to the galleys by various kings and queens. He compares homosexuality with heresy in such a way as to imply that the two phenomena were about equally important to the antecedent cultures of modern civilization. That's a little like saying that the second-greatest problem in America today is bigotry against Filipinos.

The theoretical portion of Brudnoy's article suffers from the same myopia: his thesis is that we repress homosexuality because we suffer from a gnawing, pervasive fear of it. Frankly, I never thought much about homosexuality one way or another until Gay Liberationists and their admirers started calling it to my attention. Looking back to my childhood, I can recall a much more vivid fear of being carried off by Martians than of becoming a queer. The only time I seriously considered the possibility was when I read somewhere, a couple of years ago, that it is normal to experience a homosexual "phase" in childhood, and that adult homosexuality may occur when one somehow skips this earlier stage. Not having enjoyed a "normal" childhood in this respect, I worried for a week or so about someday succumbing to this glandular tyranny, until distracted by more imminent concerns.

My principal quarrel with Brudnoy's article is not that he requires libertarian conservatives to endorse the legalization of homosexual relationships between consenting adults. This is an area where the state has no business proscribing, regulating, licensing, or subsidizing. But I endorse, perhaps more heartily than Mr. Brudnoy, his afterthought to the effect that this is a "peripheral" issue. It is neither a cardinal precept of conservative philosophy, nor an issue which I would care to highlight in efforts to recruit new blood into the movement. Although as a libertarian I do accept the theoretical wisdom of legalizing homosexual acts, as a practical matter I think we should divert our resources to it only after we have succeeded in de-controlling gold, guns, grass, and gambling; and shortly before the crusade to auction off the highways.

I utterly reject, however, the notion that because we defend a man's right to do as he pleases, we have any obligation to conceal our disapproval of his actions. Yet this is what Brudnoy is angling for: "not only equality under law, but in attitudes as well." He rejects the idea that homosexuality is a mental or physiological disorder, and ridicules those who take this position, carting out the old saw about Salem witch-hunters.

Those who endorse a libertarian theory of government must be prepared to answer some very tough questions about the feasibility of applying free-market policies to real, dynamic societies. The most telling argument I have encountered against libertarian polity is frequently raised by traditionalists: While there may indeed be a "free market of ideas" those qualities which make

an idea popular are not necessarily the qualities inherent in truthful, beautiful, or even useful ideas. For example: were it not for the influence of church and family, few of us would believe in Hell. It's a pretty unappealing idea, and unfettered by it we could all live more liberated lives. On a free market of ideas, the concept of Hell would be sold short. But the existence or nonexistence of Hell (or of a communist conspiracy, or of the atom) has nothing to do with how many people believe in it. Nor does pure reason yield the answers: I cannot prove that Tahiti is more beautiful than Jersey City, or Bach more talented than the Monkees; but these are things I know.



Nor can I prove the superiority of the lifestyle I espouse over the one Brudnoy seems to endorse. Family life, the interrelation of love and sex and childbearing, the joyful mysteries of masculinity and femininity—these seem so natural and beautiful to me that I can't believe they are the result of mere social conditioning. I know no conclusive rebuttal to those who maintain that homosexuality is "natural" because it seems to come naturally to them: but I view homosexual tendencies in the same light as the urge to murder: something which recurs in men on occasion, for reasons unknown, which they ought to repress in themselves. Government is the proper instrument for the repression of murder, because a murderer directly deprives his victim of a fundamental right. Government ought not to prevent homosexual acts by force, insofar as they do not violate the rights which government is bound to protect. But insofar as I construe homosexuality in those around me as detracting from my enjoyment of life, it is my right to discourage homosexuality by every means, save only force, at my disposal.

Whether I choose to exercise my right to harass homosexuals depends largely on whether I feel they are threatening my own way of life. The closet queens, or the quaint inhabitants of the Fire Island colony, don't bother me, because they do not seek to proselytize. Only when they enter into my orbit, when they threaten the tendency of my society to cohere, will I retaliate.

Gay Liberation is justification; it is proselytization. I do not believe that men are perfect, and I have no doubt that there are those who can learn the art of digging out and exploiting the

perversities which are latent in human nature. No doubt we will soon witness the advent of Bestial Lib, whose leaders will demand their own exotic lounges at Columbia, whose spokesmen will proclaim that you can have a "natural" relationship with a billygoat, whose armbands will declare them "Funny and Proud." I won't be able to prove them wrong, but the first time one of them writes an article in *The Alternative* demanding an end to our condescending attitude toward Funny People, I will cancel my subscription.

As for Brudnoy's picture of a "viable, cohesive society" in which homosexuals with "honest, non-aggressive pride" live side-by-side with their straight brethren, I am skeptical. Just as red-blooded boys were trying to persuade young ladies of the wisdom of Sexual Freedom long before it was formalized into a Movement, so the Gay and Proud set, even if they could shed their obnoxious political affectations, would continue to solicit for new memberships. And people like me would continue to be disgusted.

Like my friend the crusading alcoholic, Brudnoy makes an internally consistent case; and since he's one of the quickest, sharpest people I've met, I would probably enjoy a long, friendly theoretical argument with him. But the moment he tries to convince a son or a dear friend of mine of the Pride that goes with being Gay—the moment he threatens the cohesion of the world that matters to me—I shall be forced to conclude that, while I deplore the methods the Inquisitors used to purge the homosexuals who threatened their way of life, at least their hearts were in the right place. □

VEAL
(continued from page 13)

deviation. Perhaps a close examination of this subject would show that the condemnation of homosexuality is inconsistent with more basic moral premises, and that prejudices based on sexual preferences are no more rational than prejudices based on skin color.

I say, *perhaps* a close examination would come to such conclusions. Unfortunately, Professor Brudnoy conducts no examination at all. Let us consider as examples two areas where he approaches the arguments against homosexuality and both times skirts them.

(1) "The Roman Catholic Church until the late Middle Ages opposed homosexuality not only (or even primarily) because it was abnormal or unnatural, but also because it satisfied carnal lust and yielded bodily pleasure." Whereupon follows a torrent of misinformation about medieval Christian views of sex, finished off (after a digression on the ancient Greeks and Romans) with Professor Brudnoy's "guess" that "Judeo-Christian sex-suppression may result from unresolved sexual cravings."

As a grab bag of historical errors, this little excursus is marvelous. As argument—well, it *isn't* argument. Of the three reasons suggested for medieval