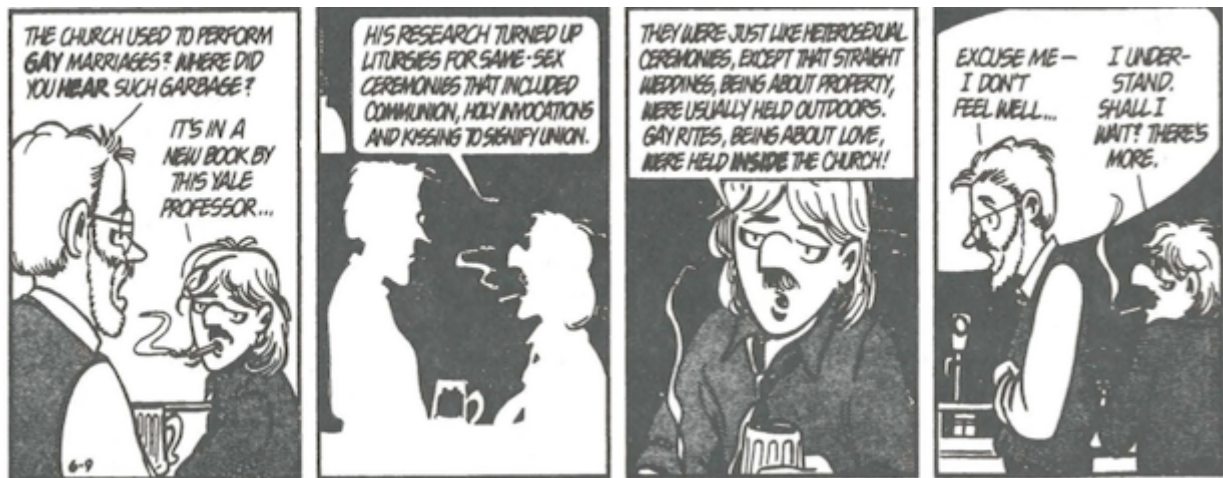


# Comic Strip Hypes a Bad History Book



The nationally syndicated “Doonesbury” cartoon strip, with a series of strips in early June, has brought national attention to a badly flawed “history” book by a Yale professor who is dying of AIDS.

The book, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, purports to show that medieval Christians blessed homosexual unions. Author John Boswell bases his outrageous claims on rituals used by the Byzantine rite church to bless two people of the same sex. He infers, without basis, that the ceremonies were in fact homosexual marriages. Church scholars have acknowledged the existence of the rituals but note that these ceremonies were intended to publicly reconcile feuding men or women, not join them in matrimony.

Despite research which included visits to the Vatican library, Boswell was unable to find any evidence for similar rituals in the Roman rite, but that does not prevent him from using smoke and mirrors to infer their existence and to place his preposterous interpretation on the intent of these non-existent rituals.

*Newsweek* religion editor Kenneth L. Woodward described the

openly gay Boswell as “a devout – if conflicted – Roman Catholic convert.” In an interview with Woodward, federal Judge John T. Noonan, a widely respected historian, characterized Boswell’s book as “a curious attempt to create for himself a past in a church whose Scriptures and teachings never accepted the relationships he defends.”

The book is certain to generate much more publicity and attention than it deserves. The media, ever watchful for anything that might put the Church in an unfavorable light, are sure to prominently feature favorable reviews. The advanced illness of the AIDS-stricken author will at least spare us from an endless round of fawning appearances on “news” and talk shows.