

HOMOSEXUALITY AND FAITH

Notes From A Biblical Perspective

(C. Gianotti, Fall 1994)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Why is this an important issue?

1. Homosexual activity is happening in many churches, even among leadership.
2. There is unrelenting pressure on the church to change. Revisionist have basically said, “The church has evolved in rejecting slavery, racism and sexism, and now it is time to stop its most deeply entrenched bigotry - homophobia.”
3. Our high view of the authority of Scripture is threatened by efforts at revising the church’s position on homosexuality.
4. Our society treats as a fundamental element of personal *identity* that which the Bible treats as an isolated *act* to be condemned.

B. Definitions:

1. Webster defines homosexuality: “The manifestation of sexual desire toward a member of one’s own sex, erotic activity with a member of one’s own sex.”
2. One writer asserts: “Homosexuality is an erotic preference for partners of the same sex, expressed in fantasy or action. This preference is learned, not inborn. There is not a shred of good evidence to support the notion that homosexuality is genetic, hormonal, or in any way constitutional.”¹
3. Other terms:
 - a. Homosexual lifestyle – pertains to a life embracing in practice homosexual behavior
 - b. Practicing homosexual – this refers to an individual you lives out their homosexual urges.
 - c. Homosexual orientation – this refers to someone with homosexual desires, who may or may not act out his or her desires
 - d. Gay – a contemporary term referring to people (usually males) who act out their homosexual desires.
 - e. Lesbian – a homosexual woman.
 - f. Homophobic – An aversion to gay or homosexual people or their lifestyle or culture, often used in a pejorative way against those who believe the homosexual lifestyle is wrong.

C. Growing acceptance

1. Twenty years ago, few churches ministered on the subject. There was

a huge stigma associated with it, and it wasn’t even proper to mention the subject from the pulpit.

2. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a denomination of and for practicing homosexuals, started from scratch in 1968 and by 1981 had 150 congregations in eight countries, with some 28,000 members.²
3. One writer states: “I’ve concluded that, right now, for many who’ve tried it, bisexuality offers a satisfying—and often loving—way of life.” (Cosmopolitan magazine)³
4. The usual claim that 10% of the population is homosexual is greatly exaggerated. This is based on the 1948 research by Alfred Kinsey which was flawed in its non-random selection of individuals for the study. Recent research gives a number more in the range of 1-3% of the population being homosexuals.

D. Issues

Does the Bible condemn homosexuality in principle? Should the church accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle? Should practicing homosexuals be allowed to minister? What about non-practicing homosexuals?

II. SCRIPTURE

A. Introduction

1. In support of homosexual activity
 - a. One bible college academic asserts: “I don’t believe for a second there are any prohibitions against homosexuality in the Bible.” Biblical passages dealing with homosexuality are talking about sexual activities banned in that culture that “don’t fit at all in modern times.”⁴
 - b. One theologian “... dismisses biblical data as culture bound and related to idolatry and promiscuity. Homosexual love when exercised in a responsible way can contribute to our becoming and remaining more truly human. He encourages long-term relationships between homosexuals, asking that these be hallowed by services of ‘blessing’ rather than by matrimony, since the latter has historically been connected with the procreative family.”⁵
2. Against
 - a. Isaiah 5:20, 24 “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ...therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and as the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”

- b. Most Christians are unprepared for “Revisionism” rejection of all major biblical texts as either irrelevant or misunderstood.
- c. We agree with Staton Jones when he says: “There are only two ways one can neutralize the biblical witness against homosexual behavior: by gross misinterpretation or by moving away from a high view of Scripture.”⁶
- d. Thomas Aquinas indicates that, while fornication, and rape are serious offenses because these injure the sexual partner, homosexual practices “are always an injury done to the Creator, whether or not any offence is at the same time committed against one’s neighbor.” He reasons that homosexuality violates God creative intent for human behavior and destroys the beauty of His work.⁷
- e. God makes it abundantly clear that heterosexuality is His plan.

B. Genesis (1-3)

- 1. Adam and Eve were divinely created to be in partnership, to multiply and replenish the earth. (cf. Hebrews 13:4). The fundamental stage is set with for which there are no exceptions. One man, one woman. Monogamous, heterosexual.
- 2. The fall, introduced in Genesis 3, presented the fundamental problem with mankind. But, liberal thinkers tend to deny the reality or the true impact of the fall. The ruination of man and woman came and it affects us today, deceiving and manipulating our thinking. Modern man denies this and therefore is blind to his own self-deceit. Nowhere is this more keenly seen than in those who defend gay-lifestyle as being in harmony with God’s word.

C. Genesis 19:4-5

- 1. For homosexuality
 - a. This passage is seen by some as irrelevant for today, because it is essentially a story of attempted gang rape. The fact of homosexuality is incidental to the story.
 - b. If we use this passage as a model to follow that indicates homosexuality should be condemned, then we would also have to say that giving your daughter out for rape is a commendable way to deal with intended assault on your house guests (note Lot’s offer of his daughters in the context). Hardly does the latter apply, neither does the former.
 - c. Some feel the term “to know” (KJV, Hebrew: yd’) means to gain an acquaintance. The word means “heterosexual intercourse” in every place in scripture when used in a sexual sense. Therefore, advocates of homosexuality assert, here it could not refer to homosexuality. Hence the non-sexual meaning of familiarity. The sin of the Sodomites, they say, was that they broke the rules of hospitality.

2. Against Homosexuality

- a. If the sin of the Sodomites was a breach of hospitality, then I would suggest that God’s destruction of the city was a gross over-reaction, an overkill.
- b. Clearly, the practice of homosexuality was at least partial responsibility for the harsh judgment. This sexual sin was an indication of the serious degradation of Sodom.
- c. Judges 19:22ff records a similar story of the men of a city wanting “to know” (Hebrew: yd’) a visitor (male). The man hosting the visitor offers his virgin daughter and the concubine of the visitor to the men of the city. Clearly, homosexual activity is what the men originally wanted.
- d. Ezekiel 16:49-50 indicates the sin of the Sodomites—they were “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them.” Homosexuality can easily be seen as the outward manifestation of the depths to which their selfishness went.
- e. Caution: We need to be careful about using this story as the basis for rejecting homosexuality. If the men of the city in each case wanted sex with the daughters to start with, we would not conclude that all heterosexual activity is evil. Therefore, it would be also difficult to conclude based on this passage alone that homosexuality, per se, was wrong.

D. Leviticus 18:22-24, 20:13 (cf. Deut 23:18)

- 1. For homosexuality
 - a. Some argue that the prohibition against homosexuality in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are a part of Jewish cultural taboos and do not express the mind of God. They continue that God released the early church from following Levitical laws.
 - b. Passages like these according to some, are irrelevant because they do not address today’s homosexual lifestyle. These passages occur in context of God’s condemnation of the fertility cults of the nations in and around Canaan. What God was against, it is argued, was homosexual prostitution in pagan temples. These passages don’t address loving, committed, monogamous, homosexual relationships among those whose orientation is homosexual.
- 2. Against homosexuality
 - a. The God who inspired the New Testament is the same God who wrote the Old Testament. Jesus Himself frequently quoted from Old Testament. The Apostle Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16 “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*”

- b. Homosexuality is spoken of in the same context as bestiality, adultery and child sacrifice! Certainly, when the law of the Spirit replaced the old letter of the law, Christians were not “released” to commit these things. The moral law still stands.
- c. Nowhere in Scripture is homosexuality ever spoken of as being good. The concepts of faithfulness and monogamy are terms that have biblical meaning only in the context of heterosexual marriage. If homosexuality was a legitimate, God-given means for relational fulfillment and solution to the deep longings and loneliness of heart, then the Scripture would be monstrously cruel by not giving specific sanction for it. In fact, every time homosexuality is mentioned in scriptures it is condemned! This is all the more striking in light of archaeological studies which confirm that the ancient world knew of homosexual desire and practice, even if the concept of a psychological orientation was not present.⁸
- d. Indeed, much of the context of Leviticus 20 deals with behavior in everyday life. It is clear that homosexuality is not part of that which is normative by God’s standard.

E. Romans 1:26-27

- 1. For homosexuality
 - a. This is seen by some as a condemnation solely of heterosexual people who engage in homosexual acts.
 - b. To the heterosexual person, sex with one’s own gender is “unnatural”. But, homosexuality is quite “natural” to the person with a homosexual “orientation.”
- 2. Against homosexuality
 - a. “Against nature” does not mean against a person’s “orientation”. But, it means against God’s intention for nature as exhibited in the “complementary function of male and female sexual organs”.
 - b. It is completely unwarranted to limit this passage to heterosexuals who commit homosexual acts. If homosexuality is good for those with homosexual orientation, then why would it be wrong for those with heterosexual orientation?
 - c. What people did in this passage (21-23)
 - (1) *Did not glorify God or give thanks to God*
Result: thinking futile and hearts were darkened.
 - (2) *Became fools (claiming to be wise)*
How: idolatry
 - d. What God did in response
 - (1) *Gave them over to sexual degradation & idolatry (24-25)*
 - (2) *Gave them over to homosexuality (“shameful lusts”) (26-27)*
 - (3) *depraved mind (28-32)*
 - e. Imagery: God throughout the scriptures pictures His people as His

“wife”, “bride”. When the people He creates embrace idolatry, it is the ultimate slap in God’s face. Those who should worship Him, worship His creation. In the spiritual sense this is complete spiritual degradation. It is fitting that God would give them over to sexual degradation. Homosexuality is a complete reversal or rejection of God’s created order of male and female. And this male/female relationship is to mirror God’s relationship with His creation, His people as “wife” or “bride”. Hence, the heterosexual symbolism is perverted into homosexuality. And this destroys the image of the relationship of God with His creation.

- f. “When people violate this order by worshipping creatures, the punishment they receive is a further violation of the created order: they have intercourse with members of the same sex.”

F. I Corinthians 6:9-11 (cf. I Tim 1:9-10)

- 1. For homosexuality
 - a. The Greek words translated as referring to homosexual practices are said to be unclear and probably describe and forbid only the sexual relationship of an adolescent boy and older adult man.
- 2. Against homosexuality
 - a. Lexicons are in general agreement that the meanings of the words in question refer to homosexual practices.
 - b. Advocates of homosexuality are grasping at straws to assert that the words are “unclear”. Nothing could be clearer than this passage depicting God’s mind on the subject of homosexuality.
 - c. Homosexual acts are clearly condemned in these passages.
 - d. God made sexual union for a purpose—to weld two people together (1 Cor 6:16). This is more than just having sex—it is rather a union of two individuals in a great drama or model of Christ and the church.

G. Biblical Tenor

- 1. For homosexuality: Some suggest the only element of the Bible or of the Christian tradition that is binding upon all people is the general call to manifest in any relationship the kinds of loving characteristics that are described as being important in marriage - sacrificial love, honesty and so forth. Gay relationships, it is argued, can do this as well as straight.
- 2. Against homosexuality: Sacrificial love and honesty can never be used to trump or override the revealed word of God. God’s word declares homosexuality to be a violation of His created order.

III. Counseling

A. Homosexuality may involve:

1. Behavior
 - a. Children sometimes “experiment” with gay sex at an early age.
 - b. The vast majority of people never move beyond this experimentation stage.
 - c. Children may be subject to same sex at an early age by an adult or family member.
2. Identity
 - a. Sometimes homosexual behavior can lead to homosexual identity.
 - b. Personality can grow to be based on this self-image.
 - c. Not all homosexual individuals may be involved in the homosexual “sub-culture.” But, seeing oneself as a homosexual can be destructive.
3. Lifestyle
 - a. At this level an individual seeks support from other homosexuals. The person may become involved in the “gay subculture.”

B. Is homosexuality a choice?

1. Many propound that homosexuality is genetically determined, that people are born that way. But this write knows of no convincing scientific evidence that has been put forward in support of this. Any reports indicating a relationship between genetics and sexual orientation are purely speculative and such reports are riddled with words such as “possibly”, “may”, “suggests”. No clear link has ever been established.
2. Yet, the urge is so strong that often, men and woman feel that they haven’t chosen homosexuality. One author says, “The homosexual is not merely a victim of circumstance. His own personal choices have a lot to do with the process of becoming ‘gay’. However, the interplay between shaping factors and personal choices is so complex and so different for each individual that only God has the knowledge and love necessary to unravel and reverse the process.”
3. Romans 6:16 teaches us that we do not just find or discover ourselves; rather, we build a moral and personal momentum by the choices we make.⁹

C. Perspective

1. We are dealing with more than specific sinful behavior. We must deal with the entire person and how they see themselves.
2. Those with homosexual desires may have profound hurts and issues that are unresolved.
3. There are diverse reasons why people get involved in homosexuality (subject of great debate) i.e. family background, early experiences.

D. How should Christians react

1. Love the sinner, but hate the sin. Exhibit the love and compassion of Jesus Christ Himself. We must hate the sin, but love the sinner (John 3:16). Jesus said , in effect, to the woman taken in adultery, “I love you” and then commanded her to change.
2. Fearlessly proclaim the truth that Jesus Christ proclaimed and embodied.
3. Communicate hope
4. Refuse condemnation
5. Ask forgiveness for prejudicial or vindictive attitudes
6. Seek God daily in your own life
7. Be realistic
8. Commit your loved one or acquaintance to God (prayer)
9. Know that healing will come
“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:11

E. The blood of Christ can cleanse even this sin (I Jn 1:7)

IV. RESOURCES

- A. New Direction for Life Ministries of Canada, P.O. Box 1078, Station F, Toronto, Ont, M4Y 2T7 (416) 921-6557.
- B. Exodus International, P.O. Box 2121, San Rafael, CA, 94912
- C. Spatula Ministries, P.O. Box 44, La Habra, CA 90631.
- D. Regeneration Books, P.O. Box 9830, Baltimore, MD 21284 (301) 661-0284.
- E. Focus on the Family, Box 9800, Vancouver, BC V6B 4G3 (Focus, among other things, produces the newsletter “Citizen” which focuses on current political issues of concern for Christians in Canada.

ENDNOTES

1. *New Beginnings* circulated paper.
2. *Christianity Today*, Feb 6, 1991, p. 36.
3. Quoted by Dr. James Dobson, *Focus on the Family*, March 1991, p. 7.
4. Fired King’s College instructor quoted in *Faith Today*, May/June, 1992, p.68.
5. W. Norman Pittenger, *Time for Consent*, p. 11, 43, 48, 105.
6. *Christianity Today*, “The Loving Opposition”, by Stanton L. Jones, July 19, 1993, p. 20
7. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, p. 117.
8. *Ibid.* Jones, p. 20.
9. *Ibid.* Jones, p. 24.