

Sentimentality or Scripture?

Dr. John Lefsrud

After many years of campaigning by the homosexual community and bitter fighting within the American Psychiatric Association (APA), in 1973 the APA voted by a 60/40 vote to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) which defined it as a sexual deviation under the category Personality Disorders. Four years later (1977), a survey of 10,000 APA members revealed that 69% believed that homosexuality usually represented a pathological adaptation. Although the decision was scientifically untenable, it was enough to enable the launching of a hugely successful campaign to delude the public into believing that same-sex orientation is simply a variant of normal.

Today the campaign that started over 30 years ago has a new front—the Church. The issue is no longer the removal of the term “homosexuality” from a diagnostic manual, but rather its removal as a sin from the Bible.

It seems amazing that so few in the Church have studied this problem and yet have firm emotional convictions, based more on sentiment than fact. With our relative Biblical illiteracy, not all church members perceive that condoning homosexual behavior amounts to a rebellion against the authority of Scripture and centuries of Christian traditional values.

Having spent almost fifty years in the medical profession of psychiatry, specializing in family psychotherapy, I feel compelled to address our church family dysfunction and dispel some of this misinformation extant in society:

1. Homosexual orientation is a preventable disorder; a state of arrested psychosexual development with a variety of causes. It often embodies learned preference. What is learned can be unlearned.
2. There is no scientific data to support a biologic or genetic basis for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual (GLBT) disorders. No one is born homosexual. One proof of this comes from research done with identical twins. Having the same DNA, one would expect that if one was gay, the other would be also. The findings come out about 50:50.
3. No one chooses to have same-sex attractions. The person may not know why until further growth in maturity or therapy makes the cause or causes obvious. The required steps for healing are then evident.
4. Sexual orientation simply refers to the gender one is attracted to or sexually tempted by. It is not inherently sinful. Orientation needs to be clearly differentiated from activity. We all can, and must, choose how we will act in response to our temptations.
5. Same-sex temptation is like heterosexual temptation.
6. No one has to continue to live with unwelcome same-sex attractions. Multiple verifiable studies and the testimonies of ex-gays affirm this. Reparative therapies are not necessarily easy. Twelve step (AA type) programs are helpful.
7. Reputable studies place the numbers of homosexuals in our society at one to three percent.
8. Dr. Robert Spitzer, a major architect of the 1973 decision, now seems to be recanting. He has published, in the “Archives of Sexual Behavior”, October 2003, an article from his personal research on 200 participants reporting a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation through therapy. More and more (especially Christian) reparative groups are reporting large numbers of “changeovers”. According to some gay propaganda, this is a phenomenon which is not possible.

The advancement by Lutherans Concerned of the notion that homosexual orientation is a normal variant or a gift from God that is to be celebrated contradicts Scripture and psychiatric evidence. At its worst, it is an insult to our God who created us as complementary female and male.

Peter Kreeft, in *Back to Virtue* states, “society today reduces all virtues to one—being ‘nice’”. Sadly, we demonstrate denial and dysfunctional family “niceness”— while the issues are not nice! For example, Lutheran pastor, Amy Schiffrin has been castigated for writing eloquently and explicitly about male homoerotic activity. “One man’s penis is thrust into another man’s anus. That which is capable of bearing life is inserted into a place of decay and death.”

The last 50 years of the sexual revolution have seen the deterioration of Christian morality to the point wherein artificial contraception, abortion, divorce, premarital sexual intercourse and adultery, as well as homosexual behaviours, are commonly tolerated. It seems that the only persons that are not tolerated are those who do not tolerate everything.

A tragic outcome, as the Church has caved in to societal pressures, has been the erosion of the family. APA statesman, Abram Kardiner, prophesized “Those who reinforce the disintegrative elements in our society will get no thanks from future generations.” He saw the family becoming the ultimate victim.

We are all sinners who need to repent and receive forgiveness. All are welcome in the Church. A relatively new organization, Communities of Grace, started by two Lutheran pastors, offers fellowship and healing opportunities for those suffering from unwelcome same-sex attractions. I have hope that we can move beyond our current “family” dysfunction through prayer, repentance, the study of Scripture and compassion for each other, relying on the Spirit for strength.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Munich, in a now famous article (1994) states: “For a church that allows itself to be pressured into regarding homosexual activity as no longer a departure from Biblical norm, and to recognize homosexual partnerships as a form of personal relationship equivalent to marriage, would no longer stand on the foundation of the Scriptures but rather in opposition to its unanimous witness. A church that takes such a step has thereby ceased to be an evangelical church in the tradition of the Lutheran Reformation.”

(quoted in the Summer 2001 Lutheran Forum)

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Further Reading

Christian Sexuality: Normative and Pastoral Principles. Edited by Russel E Saltzman. Minneapolis: Kirk House, 2003

Edited by the editor of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (ALPB) *Forum Letter*. A compilation of papers given at the Kansas City ALPB Conference October 2002.

Cohen, Richard. *Coming Out Straight: Understanding and Healing Homosexuality*. Winchester, Virginia: Oakhill Press, 2000

Comiskey, Andrew J. *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness: How Jesus Heals the Homosexual*. Lake Mary, Florida: Creation House, 1989

With a forward by Leanne Payne

Faris, Donald L. *The Homosexual Challenge: A Christian Response to an Age of Sexual Politics*. Markham, Ontario: Faith Today Publications, 1993

Previously published under the title *The Trojan Horse*, the author was previously Minister of Education in Saskatchewan and minister at North Lonsdale United Church in North Vancouver, BC.

Gagnon, Robert A.J. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

A scholarly and definitive work - exhaustively researched, brilliantly and compassionately presented, and clinically astute.

Gagnon, Robert A.J. and Dan O. Via. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2003.

Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992.

America's foremost sage writes an incredibly important book for our time. He writes, "When you are edging closer and closer to the abyss, the most progressive direction is backwards."

Marriage and Homosexuality. Langley, British Columbia: Focus on the Family Canada, 2003

A booklet with an excellent bibliography and interesting references.

Menninger, Karl. *Whatever Became of Sin?*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973

Presbyterian elder and famous psychiatrist Karl Menninger. First of many printings in 1973

Payne, Leanne. *The Broken Image: Restoring Personal Wholeness Through Healing Prayer*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996

Payne, Leanne. *Crisis in Masculinity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995

Earlier books by pioneer Leanne Payne are relevant and important.

Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996.

Reprinted many times, balanced, comprehensive, eloquent and accurate.

Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight and Narrow*. Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1995.

Evangelical and empathetic, well researched.

Stott, John. *Same-sex Partnerships?: A Christian Perspective.?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Revell, 1998

A small, yet amazingly comprehensive, warm, yet firm exposition by this beloved Anglican pastor and senior statesman.

Strommen, Merton P. *The Church and Homosexuality: Searching for a Middle Ground*. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2001

Well known Lutheran psychologist and researcher is respectful, compassionate and insightful.

van den Aardweg, Gerard. *Homosexuality and Hope*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1985.

A psychologist talks about treatment and change with an introduction by Paul Vitz.