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Responding to Pro-Gay Theology

by Joe Dallas

http://www.leaderu.com/stonewall/issues/theo.html

Joe Dallas, founder of Genesis Counseling, is the author of three books on homosexuality: *Desires in Conflict*, *Unforgiven Sins*, and *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*. A former gay rights activist and staff member of a Metropolitan Community Church, he has worked with hundreds of men and women struggling with homosexuality and related problems. Mr. Dallas is available for conferences and seminars, and can be reached at Genesis Counseling, 1774 N. Glassell, Orange, CA 92865, Phone 714-502-1463.

This three-part series will address the pro-gay theology by dividing its arguments--or tenets--into three categories: social justice arguments, general religious arguments, and scriptural arguments. A brief description of these arguments will be provided, followed by a response/rebuttal to each.

Social Justice Arguments
General Religious Arguments
Scriptural Arguments

(Expanded Table of Contents)

Major denominations ordaining homosexuals, priests and clergy presiding over same-sex weddings, sanctuaries invaded by boisterous gay activists, debates over homosexuality ripping congregations apart-who would have guessed we would ever reach such a point in church history?

A vigorous debate between Christians and homosexuals shouldn't be surprising in and of itself. If author and commentator Dr. Dennis Praeger is right when he says the Judeo-Christian ethic is responsible for the Western World's disapproval of homosexuality,[1] then conflicts between

the Church and the gay rights movement are not only understandable, they are inevitable. (While acceptance of homosexuality in ancient cultures is well documented,[2] the past 2000 years of Western thought have, by and large, rejected it,[3] and the influence of both Old and New Testaments can be credited for that.)[4]

What is surprising, though, is the current trend in which these ethics are not only being challenged, but rewritten as well, most notably in the form of the pro-gay theology.

The pro-gay theology is much like the broader gay rights philosophy, in that it seeks legitimization (not just tolerance) of homosexuality. Gay spokesmen have made no secret of this as being their goal in secular culture; activist Jeff Levi put it plainly to the National Press Club during the 1987 Gay Rights March on Washington:

We are no longer seeking just a right to privacy and a protection from wrong. We also have a right-as heterosexual Americans already have-to see government and society affirm our lives. Until our relationships are recognized in the law-in tax laws and government programs to affirm our relationships, then we will not have achieved equality in American society.[5]

But pro-gay theology takes it a step further by redefining homosexuality as being God-ordained and morally permissible:

"I have learned to accept and even celebrate my sexual orientation as another of God's good gifts."
-gay author Mel White[6]

When God is reputed to sanction what He has already clearly forbidden, then a religious travesty is being played out, and boldly. Confronting it is necessary because it (the pro-gay theology) asks us to confirm professing Christians in their sin, when we are Biblically commanded to do just the opposite. As Christ's ambassadors on earth, we unfaithfully represent Him if a professing believer's ongoing sin has no effect on our relationship with that believer...which is, in essence, what Paul told the Thessalonians:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. (2 Thes 3:6, 14- 15)

Likewise, when Paul heard of a Corinthian church member's incestuous

relationship with his stepmother, he ordered the man be excommunicated (1 Cor 5:1-5), then explained the principle of confrontation and, if necessary, expulsion from the community of believers:

Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast. (1 Cor 5:6-7)

A healthy body purges itself of impurities; the Body of Christ cannot afford to do less. Error, like leaven, has a toxic effect.

The pro-gay theology is a strong delusion-a seductive accommodation tailor-made to suit the Christian who struggles against homosexual temptations and is considering a compromise. Some who call themselves gay Christians may be truly deceived into accepting it; others might be in simple rebellion. What compels them to believe a lie we cannot say. What we *can* say is that they are wrong...dead wrong.

But even as we say so, the caution of a proper spirit is in order. When we answer the pro-gay theology, we do so as sinners approaching other sinners, nothing more. Rev. Andrew Aquino of the Columbus Baptist Association expressed it perfectly during a recent interview:

My message to the homosexual is: We love you. Come and struggle with us against sin. Don't give in to it.[7]

The Pro-Gay Theology in Brief

Exactly *what* do the "gay Christians" believe, and *how* did they come to believe it? The first question is more easily answered than the second. Explaining *what* a group believes is not hard. Explaining *how* they have come to believe it is another matter.

We cannot read minds or motives. That, I am sure, is one reason Jesus warned against judging (Mt 7:1). We *can* be certain the teachings themselves are false; *why* people have accepted them is something we cannot prove one way or another. Yet the Bible offers clues, and testimonies from members of the gay Christian movement are also enlightening, in helping to understand *what* the gay Christian movement believes, and what *personal* and *spiritual* factors may have influenced their beliefs.

The pro-gay theology is the cornerstone of the "gay Christian" movement (which is comprised of whole denominations, like the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, as well as gay caucuses within mainline denominations) just as the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds

are the foundation of most Protestant's beliefs.[8] The movement is diverse; some of its spokespersons-Episcopal Priest Robert Williams and Bishop John Shelby Spong, for instance -promote flamboyant and blatantly heretical ideas. But most groups within the gay Christian movement ostensibly subscribe to traditional theology. (The Statement of Faith of the Metropolitan Community Churches, for example, is based on the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.)[9]

Although the pro-gay theology claims a conservative theological base, it includes additions and revisions to basic, traditional ethics. First, homosexuality is seen as being God ordained. As such, it's viewed as being on par with heterosexuality. Gay author Mel White points out, quite accurately, that "if you don't see that premise (that God created homosexuality) then gay marriage looks ridiculous, if not insane."[10]

But to be seen as created by God, the traditional understanding of homosexuality needs to be discredited. This is done four basic ways within the "gay Christian" movement. First, prejudice against homosexuals is blamed for the understanding most Christians have of the Biblical references to it. The founder of the Metropolitan Community Churches, Rev. Troy Perry, asserts this is his writings:

To condemn homosexuals, many denominations have intentionally misread and misinterpreted their Bibles to please their own personal preferences.[11]

So, according to Perry and others, not only are most Christians wrong about homosexuality, but many or most are *intentionally* wrong-deliberately reading their prejudice against gays into the Bible.

White goes even further, stating that major leaders in the Christian community-Jerry Falwell, James Kennedy and Pat Robertson-take public stands against the gay rights movement for the sake of raising funds and increasing their visibility.[12]

Casting doubt on the motives of conservative leaders, and numerous denominations, makes it easier to discount their Bible-based objections to homosexuality. No wonder this tactic is so common in the "gay Christian" movement. Others within the movement contend the scriptures we understand to condemn homosexuality have actually been mistranslated. According to this view, the Bible should be taken literally *in its original language;* the problem with most Christians, they say, is that they don't know Biblical Greek and Hebrew well enough to realize our modern translations on homosexuality are all wrong.

Another claim pro-gay theorists make is that the Bible verses (Lev 18:22

and 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-10) which seem to prohibit homosexuality have actually been yanked out of context from their original meaning, or that they only applied to the culture existing at the time they were written. (Professor Robin Scroogs of Union Theological Seminary, for example, claims, "Biblical judgments about homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate."[13])

These arguments do not sit well with most serious Christians. The scriptures mentioned earlier are so clear and specific they defy interpretation of any sort. "Thou shalt not lie with a man as with a woman" requires no more interpretation than "Thou shalt not kill." It is intellectually dishonest to say conservatives "interpret" such verses out of prejudice against homosexuals. Those same "prejudiced" conservatives (Falwell, Kennedy, Robertson et al) also take scriptures against heterosexual sins quite literally. If they only prohibit homosexuality out of their own prejudice, why on earth do they, as heterosexuals, also condemn heterosexual sins? The argument makes no sense.

Neither does the "mistranslation" argument. We can allow some discrepancy in minor areas of translation, but, on something as important as sexual ethics, are we really to believe the Bible translators we rely on got it wrong five different times, in two different testaments? And *only* on the scriptures regarding homosexuality? (Pro-gay apologists seem to have no problem with the other scriptures condemning sins like adultery and child abuse.)

Equally poor is the "out-of-context" argument. The fact is, in Leviticus, Romans, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, homosexuality is mentioned *in the context of sexual and immoral behavior!* The context is quite clear-a variety of behaviors are prohibited; homosexuality-along with adultery, fornication and idolatry-is one of them.

The "cultural" argument fares no better. In some cases, a scripture may seem culturally bound (injunctions against long hair on men, or women speaking to their husbands during church.) But again-five times? Five different scriptures, from both testaments, addressed to highly different cultures (from the Hebrew to the Roman) are obviously not culturally bound. The cultures they address are just too different.

All of which leaves conservatives highly skeptical of the "gay Christian" movement's claim to respect Biblical authority. It takes mental gymnastics to accept these inadequate arguments; those not having a stake in accepting them are unlikely to do so. But those having a personal interest the pro-gay theology are another matter. Twist the Scriptures hard enough and you can make them appear to say anything you please. Author Paul

Morris raises this very issue when he warns:

But if I were a Christian homosexual, I think this one question would disturb me most: Am I trying to interpret Scripture in the light of my proclivity; or should I interpret my proclivity in the light of Scripture?[14]

An unfortunate pattern of doing the former can be seen in the "gay Christian" movement's testimonials. Rev. Troy Perry writes about having already decided homosexuality was acceptable, *then* searching the Bible to equip himself to answer conservatives.[15] Mel White alludes, in his book, to some earlier studies of the destruction of Sodom[16] but his turning point seems to have come not from a careful, prayerful study of scripture, but from a psychologist who encouraged him to accept his homosexuality and find a lover![17] And gospel musician Marsha Stevens (composer of the beloved song "For Those Tears I Died" and now openly lesbian) gives a lengthy account of her acceptance of homosexuality without once explaining how she reached the point of believing homosexuality was scripturally acceptable. (The closest she comes is in telling how she prayed one night for confirmation that lesbianism was okay; the next morning someone gave her a pin saying "Born Again Lesbian.")[18] Considering the background and theological training of the above-mentioned believers in pro-gay theology, their acceptance of it is astounding.

Or maybe it is not. Paul predicts an abandonment of truth for the sake of personal fulfillment:

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

Self over truth, man over God-can a Christian be so deceived? Evidently- Paul referred to the Galatian church as having been "bewitched" (Gal 3:1), and Jesus warned that a prominent sign of the days before His coming would be an increase in deception (Mt 24:14). To confront the pro-gay theology, then, is to confront a deceptive element of our time- the tendency to subjugate objective truth to subjective experience.

That is one reason confrontation is not enough to change a heart. Being knowledgeable enough to dismantle all the "gay Christian" movement's claims will not be enough to persuade a homosexual to repent. The heart, having been hardened through deception or rebellion or both, has to be softened. And that is the work of God alone. Ours is to simply speak the truth, trusting Him to quicken it to our hearers.

To that end, this three-part series will address the pro-gay theology by dividing its arguments-or tenants-into three categories: social justice arguments, general religious arguments, and scriptural arguments. A brief description of these arguments will be provided, followed by a response/rebuttal to each.

Social Justice Arguments

Social justice arguments are effective because they sound so good. They demand an end to homophobia and insensitivity; who wants to say they are against such goals? But just as the question "When did you stop beating your wife, Mr. Jones?" assumes (without proof) that Mr. Jones *has* been beating his wife, so the pro-gay social justice arguments assume (without proof) that gays are victims, and that the conservative church is largely responsible for their victimhood.

These arguments are most effective in secular discussions (talk shows, interviews, university debates) where listeners are unlikely to judge them by Biblical standards. Instead of discerning which side is theologically correct, non-Christian audiences tend to side with whoever seems "nicest." Usually, that means the gay spokesman asking for anti- discrimination laws or support clubs for gay teenagers. The person against these things-usually a conservative Christian-does not seem "nice," no matter how nice he or she may truly be.

That is not to say pro-gay social justice arguments are unwinnable; answered properly and politely, un-Biblical ideas can be challenged in the secular arena. Paul proved that with the citizens at Mars Hill (Acts 17:22). But the challenger needs to be aware that often, because of his position, he will be seen as the bad guy. And that is all the more reason to speak with an equal measure of clarity and politeness.

Social Justice Argument #1: "Homosexuality Is Inborn."

ARGUMENT #1-A: Simon LeVay And the Hypothalamus

In 1991 Dr. LeVay, a neuro-scientist at the Salk Institute of La Jolla, California, examined the brains of 41 cadavers: 19 allegedly homosexual men, 16 allegedly heterosexual men, and 6 allegedly heterosexual women. His study focused on a group of neurons in the hypothalamus structure called the interstitial nuclei of the anterior hypothalamus, or the INAH3.

He reported this region of the brain to be larger in heterosexual men than in homosexuals; likewise, he found it to be larger in heterosexual men

than in the women he studied. For that reason, he postulated homosexuality to be inborn, the result of size variations in the INAH3, and his findings were published in *Science* in August of 1991.[19] This is the study most often quoted when people insist homosexuality has been "proven" to be inborn.

Response: This argument is *exaggerated* and *misleading* for six reasons:

First, LeVay did not prove homosexuality to be inborn; his results were not uniformly consistent. On the surface it appears *all* of LeVay's homosexual subjects had smaller INAH3's than his heterosexual ones; in fact, three of the homosexual subjects actually had *larger* INAH3's than the heterosexuals. Additionally, three of the heterosexual subjects had *smaller* INAH3's than the average homosexual subject. Thus, six of LeVay's 35 male subjects (17% of his total study group) contradicted his own theory.[20]

Second, LeVay did not necessarily measure the INAH3 properly. The area LeVay was measuring is quite small-smaller than snowflakes, according to scientists interviewed when his study was released. His peers in the neuroscientific community cannot agree on whether the INAH3 should be measured by its size/volume or by its number of neurons.[21]

Third, it's unclear whether brain structure affects behavior or behavior affects brain structure. Dr. Kenneth Klivington, also of SALK Institute, points out that neurons can change in response to experience. "You could postulate," he says, "that brain change occurs throughout life, as a consequence of experience."[22] In other words, even if there is a significant difference between the brain structures of heterosexual and homosexual men, it is unclear whether the brain structure caused their homosexuality, or if their homosexuality affected their brain structure.

In fact, one year after LeVay's study was released, Dr. Lewis Baxter of UCLA obtained evidence that behavioral therapy can produce changes in brain circuitry, reinforcing the idea that behavior can and does affect brain structure.[23] Therefore, even if differences *do* exist between the INAH3's of homosexual and heterosexual men, it is possible that the diminished size of the homosexual's is caused by his behavior, rather than his behavior being caused by the INAH3's size.

Fourth, LeVay was not certain which of his subjects were homosexual and which were heterosexual. Dr. LeVay admits this represents a "distinct shortcoming" in his study. Having only case histories on his subjects to go by (which were by no means guaranteed to provide accurate information about the patient's sexual orientation), he could only assume that, if a

patient's records did *not* indicate he was gay, he must have been heterosexual.

Yet 6 of the 16 reportedly heterosexual men studied had died of AIDS, increasing the chances their sexual histories may have been incompletely recorded.[24] If it is uncertain which of LeVay's subjects were heterosexual and which were homosexual, how useful can his conclusions about "differences" between them really be?

Fifth, LeVay did not approach the subject objectively. Dr. LeVay, who is openly homosexual, told *Newsweek* that, after the death of his lover, he was determined to find a genetic cause for homosexuality or he would abandon science altogether. Furthermore, he admitted, he hoped to educate society about homosexuality, affecting legal and religious attitudes towards it.[25] None of which diminishes his credentials as a neuroscientist. But his research can hardly be said to have been unbiased.

Sixth, the scientific community did not by any means unanimously accept Dr. LeVay's study. Comments from other scientists in response to LeVay's work are noteworthy. Dr. Richard Nakamura of the National Institute of Mental Health says it will take a "larger effort to be convinced there is a link between this structure and homosexuality."[26] Dr. Anne-Fausto Sterling of Brown University is less gentle in her response:

My freshman biology students know enough to sink this study.[27]

Dr. Rochelle Klinger, at Psychiatrist at Medical College of Virginia, doubts we will "ever find a single cause of homosexuality."[28] And *Scientific American* sums up the reason many professionals approach the INAH3 theory with caution:

LeVay's study has yet to be fully replicated by another researcher.[29]

ARGUMENT #1-B: Twins

In 1991, psychologist Michael Bailey of Northwestern University (a gay rights advocate) and psychiatrist Richard Pillard of Boston University School of Medicine (who is openly homosexual) compared sets of identical male twins to fraternal twins (whose genetic ties are less close). In each set, at least one twin was homosexual.

They found that, among the identical twins, 52% were both homosexual, as opposed to the fraternal twins, among whom only 22% shared a homosexual orientation.[30]

Pillard and Bailey suggested the higher incidence of shared homosexuality

among identical twins meant homosexuality was genetic in origin.

Response: The argument is *misleading* and *exaggerated* for four reasons:

First, Pillard and Bailey's findings actually indicate that something besides genes must account for homosexuality. If 48% of identical twins, who are closely linked genetically, do NOT share the same sexual orientation, then genetics alone CANNOT account for homosexuality. Bailey admitted as much by stating, "There must be something in the environment to yield the discordant twins."[31]

Second, all of the twins Pillard and Bailey studied were raised in the same household. If the sets of twins in which both brothers were homosexual were raised in *separate* homes, it might be easier to believe genes played a role in their sexual development. But since they were all raised in the same households, it's impossible to know what effect environment played, and what effect, if any, genes played.

Dr. Fausto-Sterling summarized the problem: "In order for such a study to be at all meaningful, you'd have to look at twins raised apart."[32]

Third, Drs. Pillard and Bailey, like Dr. LeVay, did not approach their subject objectively. Their personal feelings about homosexuality, like Dr. LeVay's, certainly do not disqualify them from doing good research on the subject. But they must be, at the very least, considered. Pillard said, in fact: "A genetic component in sexual orientation says, 'This is not a fault,'" and both he and Bailey stated they hoped their work would "disprove homophobic claims."[33]

Fourth, a later study on twins yielded results different from Pillard and Bailey's. In March of 1992, the British Journal of Psychiatry published a report on homosexuals who are twins (both fraternal and identical) and found that only 20% of the homosexual twins had a gay co- twin, leading the researchers to conclude that "genetic factors are insufficient explanation of the development of sexual orientation."[34] Not only, then, has Pillard and Bailey's work not been replicated; when a similar study was conducted, it had completely different results.

ARGUMENT #1-C: Genes

In 1993, Dr. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute studied 40 pairs of non-identical gay brothers and claimed that 33 of the pairs had inherited the same X-linked genetic markers, thus indicating a genetic cause for homosexuality.[35]

Response #1: The argument is *misleading* and *exaggerated* for two reasons:

First, like LeVays' study, Hamer's results have yet to be replicated. Again, it should be noted a lack of replication does NOT mean a study is invalid; it only means the study's conclusions have not been confirmed by further research.

Second, a later, similar study actually contradicted Hamer's conclusions. George Ebers of the University of Western Ontario examined 52 pairs of gay brothers, and found "no evidence for a linkage of homosexuality to markers on the X-chromosome or elsewhere."[36]

Ebers also, with an associate, studied 400 families with one or more homosexual male, and found "no evidence for the X-linked, mother-to-son transmission posited by Hamer."[37] Again, like Pillard and Bailey's earlier work, a later study similar to Hamer's yielded clearly different results.

Response #2: This argument, like those based on LeVay, Pillard, and Bailey's work, is *illogical* in that it assumes *inborn* means *normal* or *morally acceptable* . That assumption is faulty, for three reasons:

First, "inborn" and "normal" are not necessarily the same. Even if homosexuality is someday proven to be inborn, *inborn* does not necessarily mean *normal*. Any number of defects or handicaps, for example, may be inborn, but we'd hardly call them normal for that reason alone. Why should we be compelled to call homosexuality normal, just because it may be inborn?

Second, inborn tendencies towards certain behaviors (like homosexuality) do not make those behaviors moral. Studies in the past fifteen years indicate a variety of behaviors may have their roots in genetics or biology. In 1983 the former Director of the National Council on Alcoholism reported on a number of chemical events that can produce alcoholism;[38] in 1991, the City of Hope Medical Center found a certain gene present in 77% of their alcoholic patients.[39] Obesity and violent behavior are now thought to be genetically influenced,[40] and even infidelity, according to research reported in *Time*, may be in our genes![41]

Surely we're not going to say that obesity, violence, alcoholism and adultery are legitimate because they were inherited. So it is with homosexuality. Whether inborn or acquired, it is still, like all sexual contact apart from marriage, immoral. And immoral behavior cannot be legitimized by a quick baptism in the gene pool.

Third, we are a fallen race, born in sin. Scripture teaches we inherited a corrupt sin nature affecting us physically and spiritually (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). We were born spiritually dead (Jn 3:5-6) and physically imperfect (1 Cor 15:1-54). We cannot assume, then, that because something is inborn, it is also God ordained. There are mental, psychological, physical and sexual aspects of our beings that God never intended us to have. "Inborn," in short, does not mean "divinely sanctioned."

Response #3: Professional opinion is by no means unanimously convinced of the "Homosexuality is Inborn" Argument.

Some researchers, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, actually say the "born gay" theories are "unfounded and politically dangerous."[42] Dr. William Byne of Columbia University calls the "inborn" evidence "inconclusive" and compares it to "trying to add up a hundred zeroes so you can get 1."[43] Dr. Fausto-Sterling says the studies, and ensuing debate, are not even about biology but about politics,[44] and Professor John D'Emilio of the University of North Carolina, while willing to consider the possibility of inborn homosexuality, says there's "too much else we haven't explored."[45]

Social Justice Argument #2:
"Homosexuality Cannot Be Changed."

"Sexual orientation simply cannot be changed," a gay psychiatrist says confidently,[46] warning "there may be severe emotional and social consequences in the attempt to change from homosexuality to heterosexuality."[47] This argument draws heavily from the social sciences, as it must; the Bible supports no such claim. Indeed, St. Paul makes the opposite remark, clearly stating homosexuals *can* change, when he asserts:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders... will inherit the kingdom of God. 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 Cor 6: 9-11; emphasis added)

Still, the "I-tried-to-change-but-I-couldn't" argument is quite popular among homosexuals who have accepted their orientation and insist others do the same.

Response #1: The "unchangeable" argument is *misleading*. While many mental health authorities believe homosexuality is

unchangeable, many others believe it *can* be changed.

In 1970, the Kinsey Institute reported that 84% of the homosexuals they studied had shifted their sexual orientation at least once; 32% of them reported a second shift, and 13% reported *five changes*, during their lifetime, in their sexual orientation![48]

The Director of the New York Center for Psychoanalytic Training, no doubt aware such changes occur, remarked on the "misinformation spread by certain circles that homosexuality is untreatable," saying it did "incalculable harm to thousands."[49]

Dr. Irvine Bieber concluded (after treating over a hundred homosexuals) that "a heterosexual shift is a possibility for all homosexuals who are strongly motivated to change."[50]

Sex researchers Masters and Johnson (hardly a pair of standard-bearers for the traditional view!) said the "homosexuality cannot be changed" concept was "certainly open to question."[51] Drs. Wood and Dietrich, writing about the effectiveness of treatment for homosexuality, confirmed "all studies which have attempted conversions from homosexuality to heterosexuality have had significant success."[52] And the New Report of the Kinsey Institute explains people do not "necessarily maintain the same sexual orientation throughout their lives," then explained that "programs helping homosexuals change report varying degrees of success."[53]

But no one says it better than Stanton Jones, Chair of Psychology at Wheaton College:

Anyone who says there is no hope (for change) is either ignorant or a liar. Every secular study of change has shown some success rate, and persons who testify to substantial healings by God are legion.[54]

Response #2: This argument is *illogical* in that it assumes if a condition is *unchangeable* it is therefore *desirable*.

For the sake of argument, suppose it *could* be proven that homosexuality, as a condition, is unchangeable-that no amount of prayer, counseling or efforts of any sort could make a homosexual become attracted to the opposite sex. What then? Should that change our view of homosexual behavior as being sinful? Hardly. There's no contingency in any scriptural reference to any kind of sin, in the Old or New Testament, saying: "Thou shalt not do thus and so!" ("Unless, of course, you tried hard to change, went for prayer and counseling, and found you just could not stop wanting to do thus and so. If that's the case, then thus and so is no longer a sin. It's

an inborn, immutable gift and you can indulge it!")

The Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh, whatever it may have been, was unchangeable; despite his prayers for deliverance, God allowed it to remain. But it certainly was not desirable (2 Cor 12:7-9). Other conditions-alcoholism, for example, or various addictions-are widely believed to be unchangeable, and have to be coped with daily. That hardly makes them desirable, natural or God-ordained.

Social Justice Argument #3:
"10% of the Population Is Gay. Could So Many People Be Wrong?"

This argument has been so roundly disproved, in secular, clinical and theological sources worldwide, that it may be unnecessary to mention it. But on the chance that the reader may need to confront it in future discussions, we will briefly review what is commonly called the "10% Myth" and how to respond to it.

In 1948, sex researcher Alfred Kinsey published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which listed his findings after taking the sexual histories of 5,300 American men. The findings, especially on homosexuality, shocked American sensibilities: 37% of the subjects admitted at least one homosexual experience since their adolescence,[55] and 10% claimed to have been homosexual for at least three years.[56]

Word was out-ten percent of the male population was homosexual! Knowing there is power in numbers, pro-gay theorists and spokesmen repeated the statistic relentlessly until it became a given: one out of every ten males was gay; therefore, homosexuality was much more common than anyone had previously thought. The concept was extremely useful to activists when, decades later, they would ask how anyone could believe ten percent of the population was abnormal, immoral or just plain wrong.

Response #1: The argument is *exaggerated*; Kinsey did NOT claim 10% of the male population was homosexual.

Kinsey's wording was plain-10% of the males surveyed claimed to have been homosexual for at least three years. They had not necessarily been homosexual all their lives, nor would they necessarily be homosexual in the future. Future studies by the Kinsey Institute, in fact, would confirm that sexual orientation is not necessarily fixed, and may change throughout a person's lifespan. The 1990 *Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex* states:

Some people have consistent homosexual orientation for a long period of time, then fall in love with a person of the opposite sex; other individuals who have had only opposite-sex partners later fall in love with someone of

the same sex.[57]

Response #2: The "10%" is misleading for two reasons:

First, Kinsey's data was not taken from a population accurately representing American men. Dr. Judith Reisman, in her book *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People* has soundly discredited Kinsey's conclusions and methods. One of her important findings was that 25% of the men he surveyed were prisoners, many of whom were sex offenders.[58] Naturally, a higher incidence of homosexuality would be found among prisoners, especially sex offenders, many of whom may have been in prison for homosexual behavior. (In the 1940s that was quite possible; today, thankfully, people are not incarcerated for homosexuality.)

Second, subsequent studies have disproved the 10% claim. *USA Today* reported on April 15, 1993, a new survey of 3,321 American men indicating 2.3% of them had engaged in homosexual behavior within the previous ten years; only 1.1% reported being exclusively homosexual.

This was only the latest in a series of studies proving Kinsey wrong. In 1989, a U.S. survey estimated no more than 6% of adults had any same-sex contacts and only 1% were exclusively homosexual; a similar survey in France found 4% of men and 3% of women had ever engaged in homosexual contacts, while only 1.4% of the men and 0.4% of the women had done so within the past five years. The article concluded, not surprisingly, that the 10% statistic proposed by Kinsey was "dying under the weight of new studies."

A candid remark by a lesbian activist explains how the 10% figure stayed in the public's awareness for so long:

The thing about the 'one in ten'-I think people probably always did know that it was inflated. But it was a nice number that you could point to, that you could say 'one in ten,' and it's a really good way to get people to visualize that we're here.[59]

If what she's saying is true, gay spokesmen were willing to repeat something they knew to be false, for the sake of furthering their cause. With that in mind, one wonders what other "facts" on homosexuality ("gays are born gay," "gays cannot change") will someday be disproved as well-exposed as propaganda that people "always knew was inflated," but promoted anyway because the end justified the means.

We can accept some parts of these pro-gay arguments. We can allow, for example, the *possibility* of genetics someday being found to play a role in

the development of homosexuality. We can agree that, in many cases, the homosexual condition-sexual attractions to the same sex rather than the opposite one-begins very early in life. And while it's common knowledge that ten percent of the population is not, nor ever has been, gay, we'll admit there are probably far more homosexuals in the population than we're aware of. Their claim of not having asked for their orientation is, in most cases, true; we ought to feel genuine compassion for people struggling with, or mistreated for, something they never chose. Stanton Jones of Wheaton College puts it well:

If you cannot empathize with a homosexual person because of fear of, or revulsion to, them, then you are failing our Lord.[60]

But where we must part company with promoters of the pro-gay theology is in the conclusions they've drawn. We cannot rewrite scripture, as they have, to accommodate a sin simply because it has been shown to be inborn, unchangeable or common. On this point, we might well borrow a quote from, of all people, the liberal playwright Lillian Hellman:

I cannot and will not cut my conscience to suit this year's fashions.

General Religious Arguments

A recent poll showed 66% (two thirds) of Americans no longer believe there is such a thing as "absolute truth." More disturbing, though, was the fact that 53% of those not believing in absolute truth identified themselves as born again Christians; 75% of whom were mainline Protestants.[61]

If "absolute truth" no longer exists, even in the minds of half the "born-again" population, it logically follows that doctrine, and the Bible itself, is given less credence. Pollster George Gallup Jr. noticed this in *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90's*. "While religion is highly popular in America," he states, "it is to a large extent superficial. There is a knowledge gap between American's stated faith and the lack of the most basic knowledge about that faith."[62]

In short, self-identified Christians in the 90s are Biblically ignorant. Doctrine has become less important than good feelings; indeed, a *USA Today* survey found that, of the 56% of Americans who attend church, 45% did so because "it's good for you," 26% went for peace of mind. Specific doctrines, the pollster noted, seemed unimportant.[63]

If the notions of "truth" and "doctrine" are becoming unimportant to Christians, can the idea of "sin" hope to survive? Probably not; 25% of Christians polled in 1993 believed sin to be "an outdated concept."[64]

"The awareness of sin used to be our shadow," Cornelius Plantinga writes in *Christianity Today*. "Christians hated sin, feared it, flew from it. But now the shadow has faded. Nowadays, the accusation you have sinned is often said with a grin."[65]

But the gospel truth is never so accommodating. John the Baptist was ferocious with the Pharisees (Mt 3:7-8), Jesus trounced Peter when he tried to interfere with the His mission, (Mt 16:22-23) and Paul was willing to publicly rebuke hypocrisy, even when committed by a respected disciple (Gal 2:11-14). To be sure, there is a place for gentleness. But never at the expense of truth.

Yet today the gap between truth and modern practice has been large enough to allow any number of false (albeit "nice") ideas to enter the church, creating a mentality that says, "Let's all get along without conflict, shall we?" Author J. Stephen Lang attempts to explain this phenomenon:

Love is understandable-warm and fuzzy. Doctrine, on the other hand, sounds cold, difficult and demanding.[66]

A desire for "warm and fuzzy" without a commitment to truth makes the general religious arguments of the pro-gay theology all the more palatable. Unlike the social justice arguments, these arguments are more "religious"; that is, they appeal to general religious themes of harmony and goodwill, while bypassing issues of the fallen nature, sin and obedience. To the Biblically ignorant they can pass for truth; in the light of scripture, though, they have no leg on which to stand.

Since they are more religious in tone than social arguments, these arguments can be answered almost exclusively in Biblical terms. Remembering that members of the gay Christian movement say they believe in Biblical authority, these arguments are best answered with a call to return to the objective truth of the Bible, in lieu of the subjective winds of human experience and understanding.

Religious Argument #1:
"Jesus Said Nothing About Homosexuality."

This argument is a favorite at gay parades. Invariably, when the "gay Christian" movement is represented, someone in their group will hold up a sign saying, "WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY: _____." The idea, of course, is that if Jesus did not specifically forbid a behavior, then the behavior must not have been important to Him. Stretching the point further, this argument assumes if Jesus was not manifestly concerned about something, we should not be,

either.

Troy Perry (as most gay Christian leaders do) makes much of this argument based on silence:

As for the question, 'What did Jesus say about homosexuality?", the answer is simple. Jesus said nothing. Not one thing. Nothing! Jesus was more interested in love.[67]

So, according to the argument of silence, if Jesus did not talk about it, neither should we.

Response: The argument is misleading and illogical for four reasons:

First, the argument assumes the gospels are more authoritative than the rest of the books in the Bible. The idea of a subject being unimportant just because it was not mentioned by Jesus is foreign to the gospel writers themselves. At no point did Matthew, Mark, Luke or John say their books should be elevated above the Torah or, for that matter, any writings yet to come. In other words, the gospels-and the teachings they contain-are not more important than the rest of the Bible. *All* scripture is given by inspiration of God. The same spirit inspiring the authors of the Gospels also inspired the men who wrote the rest of the Bible.

Second, the argument assumes the gospels are more comprehensive than they really are. Not only are the gospels no more authoritative than the rest of scripture, they are not comprehensive either. That is, they do not provide all we need to know by way of doctrine and practical instruction.

Some of the Bible's most important teaching, in fact, does not appear in the gospels. The doctrine of man's old and new nature (outlined by Paul in Romans 6); the future of Israel and the mystery of the Gentiles (hinted at by Christ but explained more fully in Romans 9-11); the explanation and management of the spiritual gifts (detailed in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14); the Priesthood of Christ (illustrated in Hebrews)-all of these appear after the accounts of Christ's life, death and resurrection. (And we have not even mentioned the entire Old Testament.) Would anyone say none of these doctrines are important because they were not mentioned by Jesus?

Or, put another way, are we really to believe that Jesus did not care about wife beating or incest, just because He said nothing about them? Are not the prohibitions against incest in Leviticus and 1 Corinthians, as well as Paul's admonition to husbands to love their wives, enough to instruct us in these matters without being mentioned in the gospels? There are any number of evil behaviors that Christ did not mention by name; surely we don't condone them for that reason alone! Likewise, Jesus' silence on

homosexuality in no way negates the very specific prohibitions against it which appear elsewhere, in both Old and New Testaments.

Third, this argument is inaccurate, in that it presumes to know all of what Jesus said. The gospels do not profess to be a complete account of Jesus' life or teachings. Whole sections of His early years are omitted; much of what He did and said remains unknown.

Luke wrote his gospel so Theophilus would "know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed" (Lk 1:4). John's motives are broader: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, ye might have life through His name" (Jn 20:31). But none of these authors suggested they were recording all of Christ's words. John, in fact, said that would have been an impossibility:

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. (Jn 21:25)

If that is the case, how can we be certain He said nothing about homosexuality? No one can say. But we know there are other equally important subjects left undiscussed in the gospels, but mentioned in detail in other books of the Bible. Homosexuality, while absent from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, is conspicuously present in both testaments and, just as conspicuously, it is forbidden.

Fourth, this argument assumes, because Jesus said nothing specific about homosexuality, that He said nothing about heterosexuality as a standard. Jesus referred in the most specific of terms to God's created intent for human sexuality:

But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Mk 10:6-9)

In this passage, Jesus had been presented with a hypothetical question: Is divorce lawful? Instead of giving a simple yes or no, He referred to Genesis and, more specifically, to *created intent* as the standard by which to judge sexual matters. By repeating the Genesis account, He emphasizes four elements of the created intent for marriage and sexual relating: *independence* was one-a man was to leave his own home to establish his own family with his wife; a "*one flesh*" sexual union was another; and, of course, *monogam*y. But the first element of created intent Jesus stressed was the complimentary factor: it was to be a union of *male* and *female*,

man and *wife*.

Homosexuality may not have been mentioned by Jesus-many other sexual variations were not, either. But He could not have spelled out the standard for sexual expression more clearly: male to female, joined as God intended them to be. He cannot be assumed to have approved of anything less.

Religious Argument #2:
"I'm a Born-Again Believer *and* I'm Gay. How Can That Be, If Homosexuality Is Wrong?"

This argument is most often promoted by a declaration: *I'm gay and Christian, which is living proof you can be both!* Mel White, upon his installation as pastor of America's largest gay congregation, made a similar affirmation:

Now, thank God, after thirty years of struggle, I can say at last who I really am. I am gay. I am proud. And God loves me without reservation.[68]

The message, then, is that if a person is truly born again and homosexual, the two must be compatible.

Response: The argument is illogical in that it assumes if one is a Christian, and if one is loved by God, then what one does must be all right in God's sight.

We can assume Dr. White's assertions are true: he is gay, he says he is proud (and no one is in a position to say otherwise) and God loves him. But does God's love for him, or Dr. White's pride in being gay, justify homosexuality itself?

Hardly. And while it is beyond the scope of this article to enter into the debate over eternal security ("once saved, always saved"), let us remember that Christians do not automatically become non-Christian just because they are sinning. The fact they are sinning- even if they do not realize it- does not automatically nullify their salvation.

But neither does their salvation legitimize their sin. A Christian may, indeed, be openly homosexual; that is no proof homosexuality and Christianity are compatible. In fact, a Christian may be openly sinning; that is no proof sin and Christianity are compatible, either.

Ananias and Sapphira, a husband and wife mentioned in Acts Chapter 5, were evidently believers. Yet their sin of hypocrisy (pretending to give more money to the church than they actually did) cost them their lives.

They were Christians, and they were in serious error. Their error did not mean they were not Christian; their Christianity did not legitimize their error.

The Apostle Peter was, on one occasion at least, afraid to be seen associating with Gentiles, for fear of reprisals from Jews who felt Jews and Gentiles should never mix. So when Jewish people were not around, he was willing to eat with Gentile friends; when Jews were present, he avoided Gentiles (Gal 2:11-13). His hypocrisy in the face of prejudice was wrong, yet no one doubts he was a Christian. Yet that in no way justified his hypocrisy.

In other words, being a Christian is no indication, in and of itself, that your life is pleasing to God. And any honest believer knows that. It is a waste of time to argue intangibles, such as whether or not a 'gay Christian' is *truly* born again, or "saved." We may argue that if he continues in sin, he risks hardening his heart toward God, or reaping corruption, since God is not mocked. But we cannot see inside his soul to determine how hardened or deceived he may be.

No matter how proud, confident or loved by God a person is, he can be walking in darkness without knowing it. That is exactly why we have an objective standard by which to judge our actions. "Take heed unto thyself," Paul told Timothy, "and unto the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16).

Saying "I'm Christian and gay" proves nothing. The question shouldn't be *Can a person be homosexual and still belong to God?* But rather, *Is homosexuality right or wrong according to the Bible?*

Religious Argument #3:
"I Attend a Gay Church Where the Gifts of the Spirit and the Presence of God Are Manifest. How Can That Be, If Homosexuality Is Wrong?"

When the late Rev. Sylvia Pennington, a defender of the pro-gay theology, attended her first gay church, she still believed homosexuality was wrong. But something happened to change her mind:

I became aware of the Holy Spirit's presence hovering around, about and within me. They [gay Christians] were sensing the same Spirit that I sensed and loving God back as I was. They were actually worshiping God. And God was there-undeniably there![69]

The argument, then, is that if God's presence and gifts are manifest in a

gay church, it is evidence that God accepts and blesses homosexuality.

Response: The argument is misleading in that it assumes God's gifts or presence are an indication of His approval.

By Rev. Pennington's description of a gay church, we can assume one of three things: either God's presence was not there at all, and what she felt was just emotion; or what she (and the others present) felt was a demonic counterfeit; or, in fact, God's presence *was* there.

I find it useless to argue over whether or not the presence of God can actually be found in gay churches. Instead, it is best to ask, "So what?" Even if God *is* present in gay churches and if His gifts *are* manifest there, does that prove He condones homosexuality?

Not at all. God's presence, wonderful as it is, and His gifts, valuable as they are, are given freely. They are neither a reward for, nor evidence of, righteousness. (I am not arguing that God IS present in gay churches; I'm only saying that, like the "I'm gay and Christian" argument, it is best to stick to the bottom line issue: *Is homosexuality right or wrong?*)

To illustrate this, look at the Corinthian church. No one could doubt they were genuine believers; Paul opens his letter to them addressing them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:2). Further, the gifts of the Spirit-teaching, preaching, prophetic words and so forth-were manifest there; Paul spent all of Chapters 12 and 14 teaching them how to manage these gifts. So God's presence, and His gifts, were clearly a part of the Corinthian church's life.

And the Corinthian church was a mess. They were, by Paul's own account, carnal and full of divisions (1 Cor 3:3-4), incest was openly committed among them (5:1-5), they were hauling each other to court over lawsuits (6:1-3), and getting drunk at the communion table (11:21). Yet God's presence was at Corinth. Because He approved of their behavior? Of course not. But His gifts and calling, as Paul said in Romans 11:29, are without repentance. He would not remove them, even when the church they operated in was in serious error.

Modern examples abound. By now we have all heard of evangelists or preachers whose ministries thrived even when, unfortunately, they were involved in sexual immorality. For years, in some cases, God's presence and blessing was on their work, even as they continued their secret sin. Yet none of us would assume God approved of their behavior.

What, then, *can* we assume? Two things: first, if God has given someone a gift of the Spirit, that gift may continue to operate even if the person is

willfully sinning. Second, the gift, or God's presence, is a sign of grace, not approval. It cannot be said that, because the gifts are operating in a church, the church's activities are legitimate. Legitimacy is determined by scripture, not spiritual dynamics.

Religious Argument #4:
"My Lover and I Are in a Monogamous Relationship, and We Truly Love Each Other. That Can't Be Wrong!"

As the gay rights and gay Christian movements have evolved, more emphasis has been put on the quality of homosexual relationships. Initially, gay apologists argued for sexual freedom; today, they argue for legitimacy. As this is being written, in fact, the nation is holding its breath to see how the Hawaii Supreme Court will rule on the legality of gay marriages.

"God is ecstatic that I'm so happy in a relationship with a woman," a lesbian member of the Metropolitan Community Church gushed on a recent news program.[70] A stable relationship, then, is seen as evidence of God's blessing. And if true love is involved, so the argument goes, it must be right.

Response: The argument is misleading in that it assumes love sanctifies a relationship.

It is hard these days to say love is not the final standard for right and wrong. Love is *nice*, after all; in our culture, it has been nearly deified as something so intense and beautiful, it justifies almost anything done in its name. And with all the hatred and violence in the world, why knock a loving relationship between any two people? Because love, in and of itself, does not make a relationship right. In fact, contrary to the touchy-feeling wisdom of the times, love is not always such a good thing.

An essay on homosexuality and ethics puts it well:

One of the most popular errors in the realm of Christian ethics has been the effort to make love an omnipotent spiritual quality which has the power to sanctify anything that is done its name.[71]

Love can, according to Jesus, interfere with God's plan for an individual. He warns His followers that love for anyone, no matter how legitimate the relationship, becomes sin when it surpasses our love for Him (Mt 10:37). King Solomon, in a similar vein, loved his foreign wives. Problem was, they turned his heart away from God (1 Ki 11:3-4). In his case, love became a snare.

Love is not enough to justify a relationship. An unmarried Christian couple may be very much in love; if they become sexually involved before marriage, it will still be sin, no matter how much love went into it. And it will still be wrong. A married man can fall deeply in love with a woman other than his wife; that will never sanctify adultery.

Likewise, two men, or women, may be in love. Their love may run very deep, they may pledge fidelity to each other and live as happily as any married heterosexual couple. Again, that will not, of itself, justify a homosexual relationship. Scripture places boundaries on human relationships, offering no compromise, even if love is present and desires to cross those boundaries. If a form of sexual relating is wrong, it remains wrong no matter what degree of love goes along with it.

We would rather be nice. That is a strange tendency creeping into the church: "niceness" is taking precedence over truth. Immorality-even among Christian leaders-is going unconfronted, and many churches seem more concerned with making people comfortable than arousing in them a sense of their need for God. In such an environment, it is no wonder erroneous teachings like the pro-gay theology are flourishing. Evangelist and Pastor Greg Laurie summed up the problem nicely:

What is being depicted to individuals is a 'user-friendly' God who will smile benignly down upon their lifestyles of choice, as they continue to live as they like.[72]

But, however the social justice arguments of the pro-gay theology compel us towards "niceness," the God we represent places a higher premium on truth than accommodation. May we, by His grace, never shun the two-fold mandate to speak the truth, in love.

Scriptural Arguments

This part of the pro-gay theology offers what appears to be a series of conservative, fundamentalist responses to conservative, fundamentalist objections. That is, it meets every Bible verse referring to homosexuality head on, and attempts to explain why each verse is misunderstood today. It is the boldest part of pro-gay theology, and, for many Christians, the most difficult for which to give response.

That is because these arguments take what is obvious and claim to have discovered it has a different, heretofore hidden meaning. To illustrate, let us take a fairly straightforward scripture:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest. (Mt 11:28, KJV)

The meaning is clear: Jesus invites the weary to come to Him for rest. No need to check the original Greek or review the cultural context; the scripture is clear.

Now suppose someone tells you they have done an extensive word study on this verse, and discovered Jesus was *really* inviting pregnant women to stay at His maternity ward in Nazareth. It seems ridiculous; the context so clearly points to something else. But if you have not taken the time to study the original Greek in this verse, you cannot technically refute the "maternity ward" idea, though common sense tells you it is nonsense.

That is the power of the pro-gay theology. It takes scriptures we are all familiar with, gives them an entirely new interpretation, backs its claims with well-credentialed scholars, and gives birth to a new sexual ethic. Common sense may reject it, but until it is examined a bit more closely, it is difficult to refute.

To approach this portion of the pro-gay theology, we will review each scripture referring to homosexuality, establish the traditional view of the scripture, name the pro-gay arguments against that view, and offer a response to each.

Creation/Created Intent
Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 23-24

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Traditional View:

God's intention for human sexual relationships is limited to heterosexual union between a man and a woman in marriage.

Pro-Gay Argument:

The Genesis account does not *forbid* homosexuality; it simply does not refer to it, for obvious reasons. A gay couple could hardly begin the population process. But these verses cannot be seen as a model for all couples: many heterosexual couples are childless, or unable to have sexual relations. Are they in sin because they do not conform to the Genesis account?

Response #1:

While it is true this passage does not forbid homosexual relations, it does provide the primary model for sexuality by which other forms of sexual expression must be judged. Thomas Schmidt puts it well:

It [Genesis] provides a basis for Biblical commands and for subsequent reflection on the part of those who wish to construct a sexual ethic to meet changing situations-it is appropriate for us to explore the relevance of Biblical commands about marriage and to evaluate modern homosexuality in light of Genesis.[73]

Stanton Jones, regarding creation as a model for sexuality, adds:

The heart of Christian morality is this: God made sexual union for a purpose-the uniting of husband and wife into one flesh in marriage. God uses sexual intercourse, full sexual intimacy, to weld two people together.[74]

Response #2:

The male-female union, introduced in Genesis, is the only model of sexual behavior consistently praised in both Old and New Testaments. While other forms of behavior (polygamy and the use of concubines, for example) are introduced and even allowed in the Old Testament, a monogamous relation between husband and wife is the standard upheld as the ideal within scripture. While the old phrase, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" seems flippant, it is a fair assessment of created intent: whereas heterosexuality is commended throughout the Bible, not once is a homosexual relationship mentioned in anything but negative terms.

The Destruction of Sodom
Genesis 19:4-9

Before they [the angels visiting Lot to judge the wickedness of Sodom and determine whether or not to spare it] had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom-both young and old-surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring

them out to us *so that we can have sex with them* [lit., 'so we may know them']." Lot went outside to meet them... and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men... ." ...And they said, "We'll treat you worse than them."

Traditional Position:

The men of Sodom were attempting homosexual contact with Lot's visitors. Sodom was subsequently destroyed for its great wickedness, homosexuality playing a major role in its destruction.

Pro-Gay Argument #1:

Sodom was destroyed because of the inhospitality of its citizens, not because of homosexuality.

Professor John Boswell, in *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press 1980), supports this view, basing it on two assumptions: first, that Lot was violating Sodom's custom by entertaining guests without the permission of the city's elders,[75] thus prompting the demand to bring the men out "so we may know them"; second, that the word "to know" did not necessarily have a sexual connotation.

The Hebrew word *yada* appears 943 times in the Old Testament; it carries a sexual meaning perhaps 10 of those 943 times. The argument, then, is that the men of Sodom had no sexual intentions towards Lot's visitors.

Response:

The argument makes no sense in light of Lot's responses. His first response, "Don't do this wicked thing," could hardly apply to a simple request to "get to know" his guests. His second response is especially telling: he answered their demands by offering his two virgin daughters-another senseless gesture if the men wanted only a social knowledge of his guests. And why, if these men had innocent intentions, was the city destroyed for inhospitality? Whose rudeness was being judged-Lots', or Sodom's citizens?

The theory raises more questions than it answers. While Boswell and Bailey are correct in pointing out the seriousness of inhospitality in Biblical times, inhospitality alone cannot account for the severity of Lot's response to the men, or for the judgment that soon followed.

Pro-Gay Argument #2:

Sodom was destroyed for attempted rape, not homosexuality.

This argument is more common; it is proposed by lesbian author Virginia Mollenkott and others, and is far more plausible than the "inhospitality" theory.

"Violence-forcing sexual activity upon another- is the real point of this story," Mollenkott explains.[76] Accordingly, homosexuality had nothing to do with Sodom's destruction; had the attempted rape been heterosexual in nature, judgment would have fallen just the same. Violence, not homosexuality, was being punished when Sodom fell.

Response:

The argument is partially true; the men of Sodom certainly were proposing rape. But for such an event to include "all the men from every part of the city of Sodom-both young and old," homosexuality must have been commonly practiced. Mollenkott makes a persuasive case for the event being much like a prison rape, or the kind of assaults conquering armies would commit against vanquished enemies,[77] but her argument is weakened by Professor Thomas Schmidt's cited evidence in early literature connecting Sodom with more general homosexual practices:

The second-century BC Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs labels the Sodomites 'sexually promiscuous' (Testimony of Benjamin 9:1) and refers to 'Sodom, which departed from the order of nature' (Testament of Nephtali 3:4). From the same time period, Jubilees specifies that the Sodomites were 'polluting themselves and fornicating in their flesh' (16:5, compare 20:5-6). Both Philo and Josephus plainly name same-sex relations as the characteristic view of Sodom.[78]

Pro-Gay Argument #3:

The real sins of Sodom, according to Ezekiel 16:49, were that it was "arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy." These have nothing to do with homosexuality.

Response:

Again, the argument is partially true. When Sodom was destroyed, homosexuality was only a part-or symptom-of its wickedness. Romans Chapter One gives a similar illustration, describing the generally corrupt condition of humanity, while citing homosexuality as a symptom of that corruption. But Ezekiel also says of the Sodomites: "They were haughty

and did detestable things before me" (16:50). The sexual nature of these "detestable" things is suggested in 2 Peter 2:6-7:

If he [God] condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men...

And again in Jude 7:

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Dr. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary mentions other references to Sodom's sexual immorality in 3 Maccabees 2:5: "the people of Sodom who acted arrogantly, who were notorious for their vices." And again in Jubilees 16:6: "the uncleanness of the Sodomites."[79]

The pro-gay interpretation of Sodom's destruction has some merit: homosexual rape was attempted, and the Sodomites were certainly guilty of sins other than homosexuality. But in light of the number of men willing to join in the rape, and the many other references, both Biblical and extra-Biblical, to Sodom's sexual sins, it is likely homosexuality was widely practiced among the Sodomites. It is also likely that the sin for which they are named was one of many reasons judgment finally fell on them.

The Levitical Law (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13)

Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is *detestable* [or, 'an abomination'].

If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is *detestable* [or, 'an abomination']. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

Traditional Position:

Under Levitical Law, homosexuality was one of many abominable practices punishable by death.

Pro-Gay Argument:

The practices mentioned in these chapters of Leviticus have to do with

idolatry, not homosexuality.

The Hebrew word for "abomination," according to Boswell, has less to do with something intrinsically evil and more to do with ritual uncleanness.[80] The Metropolitan Community Church's pamphlet, "Homosexuality: Not A Sin, Not A Sickness," makes the same point:

The (Hebrew word for abomination) found in Leviticus is usually associated with idolatry.[81]

Gay author Roger Biery agrees, associating the type of homosexuality forbidden in Leviticus with idolatrous practices. Pro-gay authors refer to the heathen rituals of the Canaanites-rituals including both homosexual and heterosexual prostitution-as reasons God prohibited homosexuality among His people. They contend homosexuality itself was not the problem, but it is association with idolatry and, at times, the way it was practiced as a part of idol worship. In other words, God was not prohibiting the kind of homosexuality we see today; He forbade the sort which incorporated idolatry.

Response #1:

The prohibitions against homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20 appear alongside other sexual sins-adultery and incest, for example-which are forbidden in both Old and New Testaments, completely apart from the Levitical codes. Scriptural references to these sexual practices, both before and after Leviticus, show God's displeasure with them whether or not any ceremony or idolatry is involved.

Response #2:

Despite the UFMCC's contention that the word for abomination *(toevah)* is usually associated with idolatry, it in fact appears in Proverbs 6:16-19 in connection with sins having nothing to do with idolatry or pagan ceremony:

There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are *detestable* [an abomination or *toevah*] to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Idolatry plays no part in these scriptures; clearly, then, *toevah* is not limited to idolatrous practices.

Response #3:

If the practices in Leviticus 18 and 20 are condemned only because of their association with idolatry, then it logically follows they would be permissible if they were committed apart from idolatry. That would mean incest, adultery, bestiality and child sacrifice (all of which are listed in these chapters) are only condemned when associated with idolatry; otherwise, they are allowable. No serious reader of these passages could accept such a premise.

Paul on "Natural" and "Unnatural"
Romans 1:26-27

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Traditional Position:

Paul views homosexuality as a symptom of fallen humanity, describing it as unnatural and unseemly.

Pro-Gay Argument #1:

Paul is not describing true homosexuals; rather, he is referring to heterosexuals who, as he says "exchanged natural relations." The real sin here is in changing what is natural to the individual. Boswell takes this argument up when he states:

The persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons. The whole point of Romans 1, in fact, is to stigmatize persons who have rejected their calling, gotten off the true path they were once on.[82]

Mollenkott agrees, saying, "What Paul seems to be emphasizing here is that persons who are heterosexual by nature have not only exchanged the true God for a false one but have also exchanged their ability to relate to the opposite sex by indulging in homosexual behavior that is not natural to them."[83]

In short, Paul in Romans 1 describes heterosexuals who have deliberately committed homosexual acts, thus violating their true nature.

Homosexuality, if committed by true homosexuals, is not a sin.

Response:

Paul is not speaking nearly so subjectively in this passage. There is nothing in his wording to suggest he even recognized such a thing as a "true" homosexual versus a "false" one. He simply describes homosexual behavior as unnatural, no matter who it is committed by.

His wording, in fact, is unusually specific. When he refers to "men" and "women" in these verses, he chooses the Greek words that most emphasize biology: *arsenes* and *theleias*. Both words are rarely used in the New Testament. When they do appear, they appear in verses meant to emphasize the gender of the subject, as in a *male* child (arsenes). In this context, Paul is very pointedly saying the homosexual behavior committed by these people was unnatural to them as males and females (*arsenes and theleias*). He is not considering any such thing as sexual orientation. He is saying, in other words, that homosexuality is *biologically* unnatural-not just unnatural to *heterosexuals*, but unnatural to *anyone*.

Additionally, the fact these men were "burning in lust" for each other makes it highly unlikely they were heterosexuals experimenting with homosexuality. Their behavior was born of an intense inner desire. Suggesting, as Boswell and Mollenkott do, that they were heterosexuals indulging in homosexual behavior requires unreasonable mental gymnastics.

Besides which, if verses 26-27 condemn homosexual actions committed by people to whom they did *not* come naturally, but do not apply to people to whom those actions *do* come naturally, then does not consistency compel us to also allow the practices mentioned in verses 29-30-fornication, backbiting, deceit, etc.-so long as the people who commit them are people to whom they *do* come naturally?

Pro-Gay Argument #2:

This scripture describes people given over to idolatry, not gay Christians who worship the true God.

Perry states:

The homosexual practices cited in Romans 1: 24- 27 were believed to result from idolatry and are associated with some very serious offenses as noted in Romans 1. Taken in this larger context, it should be obvious that such acts are significantly different than loving, responsible lesbian and

gay relationships seen today.[84]

Response:

Idolatry certainly plays a major role in Romans Chapter One. Paul begins his writing by describing humanity's rebellion and decision to worship creation rather than the Creator. The pro-gay theorist seizes on this concept to prove that Paul's condemnation of homosexuality does not apply to *him*-he does not worship idols, he is a Christian.

"But," Schmidt cautions, "Paul is not suggesting that a person worships an idol and decides therefore to engage in same-sex relations. Rather, he is suggesting that the general rebellion created the environment for the specific rebellion. A person need not bow before a golden calf to participate in the general human denial of God or to express that denial through specific behaviors."[85]

A common sense look at the entire chapter bears this out. Several sins other than homosexuality are mentioned in the same passage:

Fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers; backbiters, haters of God, disobedient to parents.... (vv 29-30)

Will the interpretation applied to the verse 26-27 also apply to verses 29-30? Any sort of intellectual integrity demands it. If verses 26-27 apply to people who commit homosexual acts in connection with idolatry, and thus homosexuals acts are not sinful if *not* committed in connection with idolatry, then the same must apply to verses 29-30 as well.

Therefore, we must assume that fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness et al are also condemned by Paul *only* because they were committed by people involved in idolatry; they *are* permissible otherwise.

Which is, of course, ridiculous. Like homosexuality, these sins are not just born of idol worship; they are symptomatic of a fallen state. If we are to say homosexuality is legitimate, so long as it's not a result of idol worship, then we also have to say these other sins are legitimate as well, so long as they, too, are not practiced as a result of idolatry.

Paul and 'Arsenokoite'
1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor *homosexual offenders* ['abusers of themselves

with mankind']... will inherit the kingdom of God.

We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels... for adulterers and *perverts* ['them that defile themselves with mankind']...

Traditional Position:

"Them that defile themselves with mankind" comes from the word Greek word *arsenokoite*, meaning "homosexual." Paul is saying homosexuality is a vice excluding its practitioners from the kingdom of God.

Pro-Gay Argument:

'Arsenokoite' is a word coined by Paul. It never appeared in Greek literature before he used it in these scriptures. There were, at the time, other words for "homosexual." Had he meant to refer to homosexuality, he would have used one of the words already in existence. Most likely, he was referring to male prostitution, which was common at the time.

Boswell points out, accurately, that the word is peculiar to Paul, suggesting he did not have homosexuality in mind when he used it.[86] Prostitution is Boswell's first choice. If not that, he suggests Paul was condemning general immorality. At any rate, the term, according to this argument, means some sort of immoral man but not a homosexual.

Response:

Paul coined 179 terms in the New Testament. The terms do not, because they are original, significantly change the context of the verses they appear in.

Nor is it remarkable he would have coined this one, considering he derived it directly from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint):

meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gyniakos
(Lev 18:22)

hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaikos
(Lev 20:13)

In other words, when Paul adopted the term *arsenokoite*, he took it directly from the Levitical passages-in the Greek translation- forbidding homosexual behavior. The meaning, then, could not be clearer: Though

the term is unique to Paul, it refers specifically to homosexual behavior.

As for the inference that it applies to male prostitution, a breakdown of the word shows it implies nothing of the sort. 'Arsene,' as mentioned earlier, appears few times in the New Testament, always referring to "male." 'Koite' appears only twice in the New Testament, and means "bed," used in a sexual connotation:

Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in *sexual immorality* [koite] and debauchery... (Rom 13:13)

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage *bed* [koite] kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Heb 13:4)

The two words combined, as Paul used them, put "male" and "bed" together in a sexual sense. There is no hint of prostitution in the meaning of either of the words combined to make *arsenokoite*.

I remember clearly, and with inexpressible regret, the day I convinced myself it was acceptable for me to be both gay and Christian. Not only did I embrace the pro-gay theology-I promoted it as well, serving on the staff of the local Metropolitan Community Church and presenting the arguments cited in this series. Twelve years have passed since I realized my error, and during those years the pro-gay theology has enjoyed unprecedented exposure and acceptance, both in mainline denominations and among sincere (albeit sincerely deceived) believers.

Many Christians are unaware that there is such a thing as pro-gay theology, much less a movement built around it. And many who are aware of it have no idea how to answer its claims. Yet an answer is required; the pro-gay theology, like the gay rights movement it represents, grows daily in scope and influence. With the love Christ showed while weeping over Jerusalem, and the anger He displayed when clearing the Temple, the Church must respond.

[This article was revised and abridged from the book, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*, by Joe Dallas (Harvest House 1996).]

Endnotes

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